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Statewide propositions on ballot November 7

By Kate Goldsmith

When you're voting in the General Election this year, don't forget to turn over the ballot. There are two statewide proposals for all New Yorkers to vote on, both amending the state's constitution; and some municipalities have propositions to increase the budget of their town's library.

The first proposal would create an amendment to remove small city school districts from a special constitutional debt limitation. The proposed amendment to Article 8, section 4 of the Constitution removes the special constitutional debt limitation now placed on small city school districts, so they will be treated the same as all other school districts.

A small city school district is one that includes at least part of a small city. A small city is a city with less than 125,000 people.

The State Constitution limits how much debt a small city school district can incur. Their debt cannot be more than five percent of the value of taxable real estate in the district. There are exceptions for certain expenses. Other school districts are not subject to a constitutional debt restriction, but have a different debt limit provided by state law. State law says their debts cannot be greater than 10 percent of the value of taxable real property.

If this Constitutional Amendment passes, small city school districts would be eligible to have the same debt limit as other school districts enacted via legislative action.

The second proposal would allow an extension to exclude sewage project debt from the debt limit. The proposed amendment to Article 8, section 5 of the Constitution extends for 10 years the authority of counties, cities, towns, and villages to remove from their constitutional debt limits debt for the construction of sewage facilities.

The Constitution limits the debt counties, cities, towns and villages can incur. This debt limit does not include debt for sewage treatment and disposal construction projects. The sewer debt exception expires on January 1, 2024. This amendment extends the sewer debt exception for ten more years until January 1, 2034.

The full text for both proposals can be viewed at <https://www.elections.ny.gov/2023BallotProposals.html>. Visit <https://elections.dutchessny.gov/> for sample ballots and more information.

Dutchess County prepares to open new, modern Justice & Transition Center

Facility is \$20M under budget, has expanded space for rehabilitation



Dutchess County Executive William F.X. O'Neil, left, and County Sheriff Kirk Imperati led the speakers on Oct. 10 to announce the completion of the Dutchess County Justice & Transition Center. The 161,987 square foot facility features a larger state-of-the-art medical infirmary, including a women's medical unit with enhanced medical and mental health services, expansive classroom and programming areas, professional, industrial kitchen and laundry and improved staff areas.

-Photos by Curtis Schmidt and courtesy photo

Dutchess County Executive William F.X. O'Neil joined Dutchess County Sheriff Kirk Imperati on Tuesday, Oct. 10 to recognize those involved in the development and construction of the Dutchess County Justice & Transition Center (DCJTC), a modern, new facility serving as the cornerstone of Dutchess County's innovative restorative justice efforts, addressing the root causes of criminal activity to rehabilitate offenders for suc-

cessful transition back to the community and prevention of future recidivism.

The more efficient, safer facility will open more than \$20 million under budget later this year and is expected to significantly reduce annual operational costs compared to the former facility.

Sheriff Imperati said, "This new facility enhances the safety and dignity of both those who are incarcerated and our correctional team who work here. It

is the result of the hard work of many people coming together to address long-standing problems. I am grateful to my predecessor Sheriff Adrian 'Butch' Anderson, as well as former County Executive Marc Molinaro and so many others for making the Dutchess County Justice & Transition Center a reality."

Continued on page 2

Beacon Flag Football to begin Winter Season in November

By Kristine Coulter

The Beacon Flag Football League is set to begin its winter season in November.

"The age range for the league is approximately 18-25," said Richard Rinaldi, with BFFL. He noted, "We are at full capacity for the upcoming season."

Rinaldi remarked, "There are five teams in the league. The games typically are played on weekends at the Beacon High School turf field. The winter season runs from November through January."

The BFFL is "looking to gain support from our local community before the season begins," explained Rinaldi.

Businesses that are interested in sponsoring the BFFL can reach out to info@thebffl.com or call 845-275-2805. Community members can help by showing support at games, said Rinaldi. To keep up to date with the schedule and everything BFFL, follow BFFL at Instagram @beaconflagfootballleague.

One of the BFFL players is Carter Pedersen. Pedersen is a long-time BFFL player, said Rinaldi. Pedersen said, "I joined because I wanted to have fun and be around my friends while



The Beacon Flag Football League's winter season begins in November. The league is looking to gain support from local businesses.

-Courtesy photo

staying active."

Rinaldi described Pedersen as "a star wide receiver" who has won an MVP award in the past.

Pedersen said he "enjoy[s] the competitiveness of the league while also being able to play with and against lifelong friends."

"The league would also like to shout out the company that we ordered our jerseys from, Those Guys Print, for their quality work and great prices. We would recommend them to anyone looking to order custom merchandise," remarked Rinaldi.

County prepares to open modern Justice & Transition Center



Clockwise from top left, Transition Team members include Col. Gerry Lennon, Investigation Sgt. Will Moore, Corrections Officer Gina Toth, Corrections Officer Shafic Dhalla, Deputy Kate Holder, Corrections Officer Anthony Lewis, Corrections Officer Chion Scott, Deputy Jail Administrator Anthony Pica, Corrections Officer Tim Robinson, Jail Maintenance Supervisor Andrew Richard and his maintenance team, plus Sheriff Kirk Imperati, County Executive William F.X. O'Neil and Public Works Commissioner Robert Balkind. Next photos include a Programming Classroom and the Recreation Area and Meals Area within all housing units.

-Courtesy photos

Continued from cover

County Executive O'Neil said, "The Dutchess County Justice & Transition Center is a testament to persistence – a legacy project. Dutchess County Government has again demonstrated the exceptional collaboration, multi-faceted expertise and a fierce determination to overcome challenges and implement solutions. There are have so

many aspects to this project - unique, progressive design; restorative justice strategy; careful budgeting and financial modelling and tracking; a highly complex construction plan and the ever-changing environment for criminal justice law; public engagement and the economic impacts on construction costs and material and labor availability – and now we stand at the finish line, ready to open this building and serve as a statewide leader for restorative justice."

The new DCJTC will meet the County's



needs for years to come. The 161,987 square foot facility features a larger state-of-the-art medical infirmary including a women's medical unit with enhanced medical and mental health services; expansive classroom and programming areas; professional, industrial kitchen and laundry; and improved staff areas. The design incorporates substantially more natural light than the current facility and is fully climate-controlled, creating a better environment for both incarcerated individuals and the correctional officers charged with their care.

The contemporary design employs the innovative direct supervision strategy used nationally for inmate management, and housing unit design that minimizes the need to move people from place-to-place within the facility, minimizing risk and reducing the number of required correctional officers. Compared to 12 housing units with a separate recreational area in the old building, the new 328-bed facility features six housing units, each with its own recreational area, including one female unit and units specifically designed for the RESTART program. Enhanced security features, additional cameras and improved sight lines also add to the facility's efficiency and help provide a safer, more appropriate workplace for the County's valued Corrections team. These staffing and operational efficiencies will result in lower annual operating costs compared to the old facility, in addition to the savings the County has already reaped from reducing housing out costs and staff attrition.

The construction of the DCJTC followed several years of analysis and research that began in 2012, when then-County Executive Molinaro directed the Dutchess County Criminal Justice Council (CJC) to undertake a comprehensive needs assessment to address the County's long-standing, costly issue of "housing-out" incarcerated individuals in other counties' jails due to lack of capacity in the Dutchess County Jail. The existing jail's capacity was limited to 250 inmates. With daily average population reaching as high as 550, the County was forced to house out hundreds of inmates daily. Housing out was costing taxpayers up to \$8 million annually and had serious, negative implications, including disruption of the judicial process, extended length-of-stay, increased

risk for correctional officers, and limited access to critical programming and family visitation for incarcerated individuals.

U.S. Congressman Molinaro said, "Today, the goal we set 11 years ago has been met. Dutchess County now has a modern facility with the needed space to expand the County's nationally renowned alternatives to incarceration and restorative justice programs, increasing public safety and delivering savings to taxpayers. This new Dutchess County Justice & Transition Center will serve as a criminal justice model that helps individuals get the support and services they need to successfully return to the community. I am proud to have been part of making this day a reality and offer my congratulations and thanks to the many people who it made it possible."

The CJC's Needs Assessment Report, validated by nationally recognized, industry expert Ricci Greene Associates in 2013, called for a two-pronged approach: enhance the County's nationally recognized, innovative work with Alternatives to Incarceration programs to divert people away from the jail and drive down recidivism; and develop a larger jail facility, designed as a transition center campus to expand the County's ability to institute additional evidence-based rehabilitative and re-entry programs.

Following years of developing the design, size and scope of the DCJTC, in partnership with leading experts in criminal justice and social work and with extensive community engagement, including evaluation of multiple site options, including the former Hudson River Psychiatric Center in the Town of Poughkeepsie; in March 2016, the Dutchess County Legislature, in a bipartisan vote, approved \$192.2 million for the design and construction of the new facility – planned, at the time, for a capacity of up to 569 beds. The project planned for the demolition of most of the existing jail facility, except for the section built in 1995, which would be renovated and incorporated within the new building design. The plan required the original Sheriff's Office building be demolished to make room on site. The new 56,000-square-foot Law Enforcement Center, with enhanced design efficiency and greater public access, was built at the site of former Taylor Manufacturing building on Parker Avenue and was opened in 2019.

As the project got underway, the County remained committed to expanding efforts to reduce jail population through its robust alternatives to incarceration programming; the introduction of multiple mental health intervention services, including the Mobile Crisis Intervention Team; and opening the 24/7 Stabilization Center, as well as the addition of the RESTART program.

These efforts, combined with the new Bail Reform laws enacted by New York State in 2020 that drastically decreased cashless bail and the need to remand defendants before trial; enabled the administration to reduce the size and capacity of the DCJTC and reduce the planned cost. Following the New York State Commission of Correction's (COC) final approval of the DCJTC design, construction began in December 2020.

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Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival honors Harley, Kulleseid; raises \$200,000 at annual gala

Gratitude filled the air at the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival's (HVSF) annual gala held at The Garrison on Sunday, October 8.

Honoring the remarkable contributions of Margot Harley and Marit Kulleseid, long-standing leaders and mentors to the HVSF community, the evening was a symphony of live music, cocktails, dinner and auctions, both live and online. Raising nearly \$200,000, the funds will directly support HVSF's onstage productions, arts education programming, and community engagement initiative.

Margot Harley, co-founder of The Acting Company and a Hudson Valley resident, and Marit Kulleseid, co-founder and founding president of HVSF, were each celebrated for their significant impact on the theater community and the organization. Harley, renowned for her Broadway productions and mentorship, played a pivotal role in shaping the careers of many HVSF performers, while

Kulleseid's outstanding leadership has helped nurture the vibrant arts community in the region.

Founded in 1987, Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival (HVSF) is a critically acclaimed (The New York Times, The New Yorker, The Wall Street Journal), professional, non-profit theater company. The Festival has established a reputation for lucid, engaging, and highly inventive productions staged in rotating repertory under an iconic, open-air theater tent overlooking the Hudson River. In recent years, the Festival has also ventured beyond the tent, touring its work to other venues throughout the Hudson Valley as part of its HVSF On the Road series, transferring productions to other theaters, engaging its community through radically participatory art-making, and reaching over 50,000 students and educators annually through its year-round education programs.

For more information, visit: hvshakespeare.org or follow HVSF on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter.



From left: HVSF's Artistic Director, Davis McCallum, HVSF's Board President, Robin Shelby Arditi, Gala Honorees, Marit Kulleseid and Margot Harley, and HVSF's Managing Director, Kendra Ekelund.

-Courtesy photo

'A Tree Grows in Beacon' set for November 5

Community members are invited to the inaugural human Christmas tree – "A Tree Grows in Beacon" – at Memorial Park, at the pavilion across from Ron's Ice Cream, on the first Sunday, November 5th at 4 p.m. The rain date will be the second Sunday, November 12th at 4 p.m.

Here is the idea - wear a dark coat or an "ugly" holiday sweater (which is

optional) and bring a lantern or flashlight. Businesses are welcome to participate. All ages are welcome.

The Pop Warner Field House will be open with refreshments available. This will be a fundraiser for them.

Contact Dennis Pavelock, event coordinator, at 845-416-5330 for more information.

Martial arts students, instructors, families raise \$1900 for American Cancer Society



Anthony Quattrochi's Martial Arts Institute instructors, students and family members put their muscle to the test to benefit the American Cancer Society on October 1. The group raised \$1,900 in donations to enter the 2023 Hudson Valley Plane Pull, which was held at Stewart Airport. The school had two teams participate; some members pulled a full-sized passenger plane 100 feet twice in succession in the endeavor.

The school encourages community groups to join them next year at this unique, challenging and meaningful event.

-Courtesy photo

Women's Parish Club to host annual Fall Garage and Rummage Sale

The Women's Parish Club of the Church of St. Joachim-St. John the Evangelist in Beacon will be holding its Annual Fall Garage and Rummage Sale. The sale will be held October 26th from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.; October 27th from 9

a.m. to 2 p.m. and October 28th from 9 a.m. to noon. in the St. Joachim gymnasium, 61 Leonard Street, in Beacon. Come in and shop – there will be values galore!

Lunch will also be available.

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VOTE NOVEMBER 7

New sensory playground opens in Town of Fishkill



Students and staff from Fishkill Elementary School in the Wappingers Central School District joined Town of Fishkill officials for the opening of a new sensory playground.

-Courtesy photos

By Kristine Coulter

The Town of Fishkill opened its new playground, Fishkill Sensory Playground, earlier this month. The playground, which has been in the planning stages for more than two years, is behind Doug Philips Park, near the intersection of Route 82 and Route 52.

The first playground "guests" were from Fishkill Elementary School in the Wappingers Central School District (WCSD). The students are in Bonnie Muller's class. The students and their parents joined Fishkill elected officials and employees during the dedication. Also in attendance was Richard Zipp, who is the WCSD assistant superintendent student support services.

"The introduction of a sensory playground for the families and children of our community is a wonderful development. Such playgrounds provide numerous benefits for children of all abilities, but especially for children with sensory needs and other abilities," said Zipp in an email to Southern Dutchess News.

The project was spearheaded by Town of Fishkill Councilmember Louise Daniele and former board member Kenya Gadsden with Fishkill Supervisor Ozzy Albra. The project was completed with the assistance of Councilmember Carmine Istvan. The Fishkill building and grounds team, led by Brandon Knapp, helped from beginning to end to make it all possible, Daniele said. There was a balloon arch to welcome those who attended which was created by Maryann vonEgypt from the Fishkill

Recreation Center.

"We hope the playground will be a fun place for all children to play and express themselves freely for years to come" Daniele told Southern Dutchess News.

Zipp explained, "The sensory playground has been designed to be inclusive, ensuring that children with various sensory needs can play and have fun together. This fosters a sense of belonging and helps promote understanding and empathy among children and toward others. In addition, sensory play is known to stimulate cognitive development, as children can engage with various textures, sounds, colors, and shapes, enhancing their problem-solving skills and creativity. These experiences will have a positive impact on their learning and development."

He added: "The calming and stimulating elements of the sensory playground will provide a safe and enjoyable environment for our children and will hopefully become a hub of activity for families in the community. It's a great place where parents and caregivers can meet, support each other, and build a strong sense of community."

Muller said, "This playground gives students with special needs an absolutely wonderful opportunity to run, jump, play without physical restrictions. This sensory playground is a wonderful addition to the Fishkill community."

Zipp remarked, "The new sensory playground will be a valuable addition to the Town of Fishkill community, and I hope it brings joy and growth to the children who use it."



A new sensory park opened in the town of Fishkill earlier this month. It is off Route 52, behind Doug Philips Park.

-Courtesy photo

Sun shines on annual Pumpkin Festival in Beacon



The Beacon Sloop Club held its annual Pumpkin Festival on October 15 at the Pete & Toshi Seeger Riverfront Park in Beacon. Soup and pumpkin pie slices were available for attendees. The Hudson River was the backdrop during the festivities. Music filled the air during the five-hour event.

-Photos by Alan Thomas.

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