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North Warren Goes Head To Head Against Belvidere in Wrestling



North Warren took on Belvidere High School in wrestling on January 16th, North Warren was defeated, 37-24. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

North Warren Takes on Lenape Valley In Boys Basketball



North Warren took on Lenape Valley in boys basketball on January 15th, but they were defeated, 57 to 50. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

Boscola Announces Nearly \$2 Million in Park, Trail and Conservation Grants for Seven Northampton County Projects



Senator Lisa M. Boscola (D-Northampton) announced the awarding of \$1,910,300 in grants by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources through its Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2) for seven critically important park, trail, open space and conservation projects in Northampton County.

"The Lehigh Valley is blessed with an extensive network of community parks, trails, and open space that improve the quality of life of our region," Boscola stated. "Through the Community Conservation Partnerships Program, the Commonwealth is able to partner with local governments and conservation organizations to further enhance our community parks, trails and open space."

Seven grants through the C2P2 program were awarded to Northampton County projects:

- Bethlehem City, \$250,000, Development of the South Bethlehem Greenway in Bethlehem City, Northampton County. Work to include the construction of approximately 0.10 miles of trail from New Street to Third Street, amphi-

- theater, rain garden and lighting; ADA access, landscaping, project sign and other related site improvements. This funding brings the Commonwealth's partnership with the City of Bethlehem to over \$3 million on the South Bethlehem Greenway.

- Easton City, \$500,000, Payment toward the acquisition of approximately 17.57 acres in Easton City and West Easton Borough, Northampton County, to provide approximately 1.14 miles of trail for the development of the Easton Highline.

- Hellertown Borough, \$280,000, Further development of Tumminello Park in Hellertown Borough, Northampton County. Work to include construction of a pedestrian bridge and pedestrian walkways; ADA access, landscaping, project sign and other related site improvements.

- Nazareth Borough, \$350,000, Payment toward the acquisition of approximately 41 acres in Nazareth Borough and Upper Nazareth Township, Northampton County for passive recreation and open space.

- Wildlands Conservancy, **WIND GAP cont'd on pg 2**

SNOW DELAY

**Keep an eye out for other sporting events
that were postponed due to the weather!**

WIND GAP

Continued from page 1
Inc., \$160,000, Restoration of 2,000 feet of three unnamed tributaries in the Lehigh River Watershed, Lehigh and Northampton counties. Work to include dam removal; streambank stabilization; installation of instream habitat structures and riparian forest buffer; landscaping, project sign and other related site improvements.
- Wildlands Conservancy, Inc., \$120,300, Restoration of the Black River in Lower Saucon Township, Northampton County. Work to include dam removal; streambank stabilization; installation of riparian forest buffer; landscaping, project sign and other related site improvements.
- Wind Gap Borough, \$250,000, Rehabilitation of Wind Gap Park in Wind Gap Borough, Northampton County. Work to include construction of pavilion;

installation of utilities; ADA access, landscaping, project sign and other related site improvements.
The C2P2 program is administered by DCNR's Bureau of Recreation and Conservation to provide financial and technical assistance to local governments, rail and trail organizations, land trusts and other non-profits for park, recreation, conservation and greenway projects. The grant program is funded with a variety of state and federal funding sources including the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund (Key); the Environmental Stewardship Fund (ESF); the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) subject to National Park Service approval; the federal Pennsylvania Recreational Trails Program (PRT), and the Pennsylvania Heritage Area Program (HA).

Commissioner Kern Shares Model Ordinance to Assist Municipalities in Evaluating Data Center Siting

Warren County Commissioner James R. Kern III has shared a model ordinance with mayors and governing bodies across Warren County to assist municipalities in evaluating the siting of large scale data centers and their potential impacts on local communities, infrastructure, and environmental resources. As a member of the Warren County Planning Board, Commissioner Kern emphasized the importance of careful land use planning as communities consider this emerging development trend.
The model ordinance is offered as a planning resource as interest in data center development continues to grow across New Jersey. It is not prescriptive and does not require action by any municipality. Instead,

it is intended to support local discussion and review of how this type of development may align with municipal master plans, zoning goals, and community priorities.
“Many Warren County residents rely on private wells for their drinking water, and protecting those water supplies must be a priority,” said Commissioner Kern. “At the same time, our county sits at the heart of the New Jersey Highlands, one of the most critical drinking water regions in the state. More than seventy percent of New Jersey residents receive some or all of their drinking water from the Highlands, which means land use decisions here carry consequences well beyond our local borders.”
Warren County’s location within the New Jersey Highlands represents one of the County’s most valuable natural assets. Its clean groundwater, surface waters, and protected landscapes are essential to supporting residents, local businesses, agriculture, tourism, and long term economic stability.



Safeguarding these resources preserves their value for current and future generations and ensures that the Warren County community receives the full benefit of these invaluable natural resources, with resulting positive effects extending beyond the County. The model ordinance supports this goal by encouraging municipalities to proactively evaluate groundwater availability, protect water quality, and plan for the long term sustainable use of resources fundamental to the County’s current and future prosperity.
Large scale data centers can also require substantial electrical capacity and supporting infrastructure that may ex-

ceed traditional commercial or industrial uses. The model ordinance provides a framework for municipalities to assess these impacts while preserving local land use authority under state law.
The ordinance designates data centers as a non permitted use across all zoning districts should a municipality determine that such an approach is appropriate based on local conditions. Municipalities are encouraged to consult with their municipal attorneys, planners, and land use professionals when reviewing the ordinance or any portion of it.
“This is about giving towns the tools they need to make informed decisions that protect residents, natural resources, and community character,” Kern said. “Local governments, with the right tools and information, are best positioned to decide what fits within their communities.”
The model ordinance has been provided to Warren County municipalities for consideration as part of their ongoing land use and planning efforts.

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Volunteer Firefighters Wanted In Frelinghuysen Township, NJ



Frelinghuysen Township is a rural community, and like most rural towns, our emergency services depend on neighbors stepping up for neighbors. The Frelinghuysen Township Volunteer Fire Company, Station 84, is actively looking for new volunteer members, men and women who care about their community and are willing to serve when it matters most. You do not need prior firefighting experience. We provide training, equipment, and mentorship. What you do need is a willingness to learn, a sense of responsibility, and the understanding that when the call comes in, someone’s worst day may be on the other end of it. Volunteering with Station 84 isn’t just about fire calls. It’s about community protection, teamwork, preparedness, and knowing that your time and effort directly impact the safety of your friends, family, and neighbors. It’s also about pride, being part of something bigger than yourself and helping build a department that will serve this township for generations. If you’re 18 or older (or 16 for our junior program), live in or near Frelinghuysen Township, and have ever thought, “I wish I could help,” this is that opportunity. If you have questions, want to stop by, or would like a tour of the firehouse, reach out. There’s no pressure, just a conversation. Our town depends on volunteers. Station 84 depends on community members willing to answer the call.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Estate Of: William F. Gates | Date Of Death: February 9, 2025

TO ALL PERSONS, FIRMS, AND CORPORATIONS HAVING CLAIMS AGAINST THE ESTATE OF THE ABOVE-NAMED DECEDENT:

Notice is hereby given that Taryn L. Gates and Shawn E. Gates, as Executors, has been appointed to administer the estate of the late William F. Gates, of Columbia, NJ.

All creditors of the deceased are hereby notified to present their claims, in writing, to the undersigned Personal Representative or may file them with the State of NJ, Warren County Surrogate's Court, Attn: Michael J. Doherty, 323 Front Street, Belvidere, NJ 07823, within 90 days from the date of the first publication of this notice, or within the time provided by law, whichever is later.

Claims should be sent to:
Taryn L. Gates, 174 Polkville Road, Columbia, NJ 07832
Shawn E. Gates, 7 Niles Drive, Woodstock, NY 12498

Failure to present your claim within the specified timeframe may result in the claim being barred and unenforceable against the estate.

Further information may be obtained by contacting the Personal Representative or by reviewing the estate file at the office aforementioned.

Dated: January 1, 2026

New in the Bangor Public Library

Adult Fiction:

The Briars by Sarah Crouch;The First Time I Saw Him: A Novel by Laura Dave; Order of Royals by Jude Deveraux; Anatomy of an Alibi by Ashley Elston; The Right to Remain by James Grippando; Quick Silver by Callie Hart; The Storm: A Novel by Rachel Hawkins; Woman Down: A Novel by Colleen Hoover; The Shop on Hidden Lane by Jayne Ann Krentz; The Rest of Our Lives: A Novel by Benjamin Markovits; Skylark: A Novel by Paula McLain; The Viper by Brad Meltzer; The Murder at World’s End by Ross Montgomery; The Invisible Woman by James Patterson; Private Rome by James Patterson; Canticale by Janet Rich Edwards; The Devil’s Daughter: A Novel by Danielle Steel; The Bookshop Below by Georgia Summers

Adult Non Fiction:

The Microsoft Office 365 Bible: The Most Updated and Complete Guide to Excel, Word, PowerPoint, Outlook, OneNote, OneDrive, Teams Access and Publisher from Beginners to Advanced by James Holler; Inside the Cartel: How an Undercover FBI Agent Smuggled Cocaine, Laundered Cash, and Dismantled a Colombian Narco-Empire by Martin Suarez; Asian American Herbalism: Traditional and Modern Healing Practices for Everyday Wellness by Erin Masako Wilkins

Easy Fiction:

Happy Birthday Wonderful You!; Encouraging Imaginative Play and Social Skills by Rachel Accurso; Zip Zap Wickety Wack: A Story About Sharing by Matthew Diffie; Late Today by Chong-Yun Ho; Love Finds a Way by Vern Kousky; For the Fans! By Angela Song

Easy Non Fiction:

Swan Lake by Katy Flint; The Story Orchestra: The Nutcracker by Katy Flint; The Planets: Press the Note to Hear Gustav Hoist’s Music by Helen Mortimer

Junior Fiction:

Chickenpox by Remy La; Keeper of the Lost Cities: The Graphic Novel Part 2 by Shannon Messenger; Three’s A Crowd by Francine Pascal; Minecraft: The Manga 4 by Kazuyoshi Seto; A Sea Monster Conundrum by Lisa Yee

Junior Non Fiction:

An Anthology of Stargazing: A Collection of Stars and Constellations by Abigail Beall; What was the Industrial Revolution? By Jim Gigliotti; Are There Rainbows in Space?: A Colorful Compendium of Seriously Cool Science by Sheila Kanani; An Anthology of Fossils by Dean R. Lomax; About Time: A Children’s Guide to the History and Science of Time by Alom Shaha

Young Adult Fiction:
Dragon Cursed by Elise Kova

Young Adult Non Fiction:
The Amazing Generation: Your Guide to Fun and Freedom in a Screen-Filled World by Jonathan Haidt

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Kean, Norcross Introduce SEPSIS Act to Strengthen National Effort to Combat Sepsis

Representatives Tom Kean, Jr. (R-NJ) and Donald Norcross (D-NJ) introduced the Securing Enhanced Programs, Systems and Initiatives for Sepsis (SEPSIS) Act to strengthen national efforts to combat sepsis, a life-threatening condition caused by a severe immune response to infection or traumatic injury.

“Sepsis can impact anyone – young or old, sick or healthy – and preventing deaths depends on early recognition and timely intervention,” said Congressman Kean.

“Today, Congressman Norcross and I are introducing this bipartisan legislation to strengthen sepsis care through expanded education, national information-sharing on best practices, and improved pediatric data collection. New Jersey has long been a leader in the fight against sepsis, and I am grateful to partner with a fellow member of our state’s delegation to bring this critical effort to the federal level.”

“Last year, I experienced a medical emergency on an airplane and devel-

oped sepsis, a medical condition caused by a severe infection. Each year, 1.7 million people in the United States develop sepsis and it is the third leading cause of death in American hospitals. I was one of the lucky ones,” said Congressman Norcross. “I am here today because of the excellent doctors and nurses who saved my life, but too many families aren’t as lucky. With the SEPSIS Act, we can change that. We can save lives and reduce the devastating toll this condition has on our loved ones.”

“We thank Congressman Norcross and Congressman Kean for their unwavering leadership in championing this life-saving sepsis legislation,” said Ciaran and Orlaith Staunton, founders of END SEPSIS, The Legacy of Rory Staunton. “Thirteen years ago, sepsis claimed the life of our 12-year-old son, Rory. That heartbreak changed our lives forever-and it fuels our fight today. Today, sepsis still takes hundreds of thousands of lives each year while

costing our healthcare system \$64 billion annually. This bill is a critical step toward making early detection, timely treatment, and accountability the national standard—so preventable sepsis deaths become the exception, not the rule. Our son Rory loved helping people, lifting others up whenever he could. In this moment, he is still lifting us all, urging us to fight harder and do better.”

“New Jersey hospitals have made significant investments in evidence-based protocols, staff training and quality improvement to identify and treat sepsis as early as possible. Continued attention to sepsis – such as this important legislation – is critical to supporting hospitals’ ongoing efforts to save lives,” said Cathy Bennett, New Jersey Hospital Association President and CEO.

The SEPSIS Act directs the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to dedicate staff and resources to sepsis, create an education program to help hospitals adopt best practices for prevention



and treatment, and provide Congress with updates on progress toward reducing deaths and complications. The bill also calls for the development of a national outcome measure and creates a recognition program to highlight hospitals with effective prevention and treatment efforts.

Sepsis is the body’s extreme reaction to infection and is one of the leading causes of death in hospitals, killing more than 350,000 Americans each year and costing the health care system billions.

In April 2025, Congressman Norcross was hospitalized with a gallbladder infection that developed into sepsis, leaving him in critical condition. He has since made a full recovery, but his experience highlighted the urgent need for more national attention on sepsis prevention and treatment.

Senators Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Susan Collins (R-ME), and Andy Kim (D-NJ) joined Representatives Donald Norcross (D-NJ) and Tom Kean Jr. (R-NJ) in introducing the legislation in the U.S. Senate.

The bill is supported by END Sepsis Inc., Sepsis Alliance, American Hospital Association, Federation of American Hospitals, Infectious Diseases Society of America, Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society, New Jersey Hospital Association, and Society of Healthcare Epidemiology of America.



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Zrinski Administration Introduces Cabinet to Lead Northampton County Forward

Northampton County Executive Tara M. Zrinski today introduced her Cabinet at a press conference, unveiling a leadership team tasked with guiding the County toward a future that works for all residents.

“I am bringing together a team that will lead Northampton County toward the abundant future we know is possible for everyone,” said Executive Zrinski. “This team includes those who are respected in their fields and will bring compassionate leadership and true community care to the County.”

The Cabinet and appointees represent a wide range of expertise in public safety, human services, community and economic development, and administration. They were selected not only for their professional accomplishments but for their commitment to partnership, equity, and service to the community.

“Coming off last week’s Northampton Coun-

ty Executive Summit, where we gathered input on the needs and service gaps across our cities and municipalities, we are ready to hit the ground running,” Executive Zrinski said. “I’m excited to convene our partners and support solutions that help all residents of the County.”

Executive Zrinski noted that one key Cabinet role, Director of Fiscal Affairs, has not yet been filled. “We have not yet finalized our decision and did not want to rush it for the sake of the press conference,” she said. “We want to be deliberate and cautious to find the right fit for a role that plays such an important part in County government.

Cabinet:

Director of Administration - Mark Aurand brings more than three decades of legal, non-profit, and public-sector leadership to his role as Director of Administration, most recently serving as Deputy Controller for Northampton Coun-

ty, where he supervised staff, managed audits, and ensured compliance with state reporting requirements. A seasoned attorney and former founder of a community-driven law practice, Aurand has extensive experience guiding nonprofits, small businesses, and public entities through complex financial, operational, and governance matters.

Director of Court Services – Ken Brown, a dedicated public servant with a strong background in community development and leadership, having earned his degree from East Stroudsburg University and served as Director of Programs for the Easton Boys & Girls Club, Executive Director of Shiloh Manor Inc. for over 25 years, and Northampton County’s Director of Court Services for the past eight years. A martial arts enthusiast and seasoned basketball official, he holds black belts in judo, jiu-jitsu, and karate, and has taught self-defense

for many years.

Public Defender – Nuria Diluzio has been the Chief of the Public Defender’s Office since 2018. She oversees 15 attorneys who represent indigent clients from the area. Ms. Diluzio is a graduate of the Temple University Beasley School of Law and has been practicing criminal defense in Northampton County for over 20 years.

Director of Public Works – Michael Emili joined Northampton County as the Director of Public Works in 2018 after serving as a Project Engineer for the City of Bethlehem and a construction inspector within the private sector. He is a licensed professional engineer and holds a Master’s Degree in Civil Engineering.

Director of Corrections – DeAnn L. Lawrence joins Northampton County as our Director of Corrections with over 25 years of legal and law enforcement experience in rehabilitative services and public safety operations. In this role, DeAnn will oversee strategic initiatives focused on facility security, staff development, modernizing inmate programming, and fostering community partnerships for successful re-entry.

Coroner – Zachary Lysek was originally appointed to the position of Northampton County Coroner in 1992, after having served as a Deputy Coroner under Mr. Joseph Reichel for several years. Zachary has earned Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from DeSales University. He is a lifelong resident of Northampton County and has been honored to

serve its residents with integrity and dedication for over 34 years.

Solicitor – Melissa M. Rudas is a cum laude graduate of the Dickinson School of Law and Duke University alumna who has served as Northampton County Solicitor since 2018, bringing more than three decades of legal experience in public service and private practice. Admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar, Middle Eastern District of Pennsylvania Federal Court, and the United States Supreme Court, she has been recognized as one of Lehigh Valley’s 20 Exceptional Women and named a Top Lawyer of 2025 by the Morning Call.

Director of Community and Economic Development – Tina Smith has served as Director of Community and Economic Development since 2018, cultivating strong partnerships across the region and helping to launch the Northampton County Festival and the award-winning Digital Navigator Coalition. Before joining the County, she spent ten years as President of the Nazareth Bath Area Chamber of Commerce and remains deeply involved in the Lehigh Valley community.

Director of Human Services – Susan Wandowski graduated with her master’s degree from the University of Pennsylvania and has worked in child welfare and human services for over 25 years. As the Director of Human Services, Sue and her team have utilized data-driven approaches to identify and build new systems to

better serve our county residents.

Director of Human Resources – Mary Lou Zieger has been the Director of Human Resources since September 2021. She began her career with the County as the Deputy Director of Human Services/HR at Gracedale in January of 2018. She has a Bachelor’s degree from East Stroudsburg University and more than twenty years of experience in human resources, benefits, and payroll.

Sheriff – Christopher Zieger brings more than 33 years of law enforcement experience to his role, having served as Sheriff since June 2025, following nearly a year as Acting Sheriff and more than two decades in leadership positions within the department. Over the course of his career, he has led critical initiatives including the Crisis Negotiating Team, planned high-profile trials, helped achieve agency accreditation, and completed advanced training through the U.S. Marshal’s Service, FBI, and the Pennsylvania Deputy Sheriff’s Academy.

Executive Zrinski emphasized that her administration will focus on teamwork and empowerment. By putting the right people in the right roles, the County will ensure that employees have the support and autonomy to make meaningful improvements. “Our administration will be a place where county employees are valued as experts, residents are treated as partners, and transparency isn’t a slogan, it’s a daily practice,” she said.



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Commissioner Sarnoski Elected First Vice Chair of NJTPA

Warren County Commissioner Jason J. Sarnoski was elected to a two-year term as First Vice Chair of the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) at the January 12 Board of Trustees meeting.

“I am thankful for the opportunity to serve as First Vice Chair of the NJTPA,” said Commissioner Sarnoski. “The decisions made here directly affect how communities move people and goods every day. I am especially focused on ensuring that regional planning efforts remain practical, responsive, and grounded in the real transportation needs of our region.”

The NJTPA oversees regional transportation planning and partners with local and state agencies to help fund more than \$3 billion in transportation investments annually for 13 counties in northern and central New Jersey.

Commissioner Sarnoski was elected to the Warren County Board of County Commissioners in 2010 and joined the NJTPA Board of Trustees in 2011. He first joined the Executive Committee in 2020. He has served as Second



Vice Chair, Third Vice Chair, and Secretary.

During his time on the NJTPA Board, Commissioner Sarnoski has served as Chair of the Planning and Economic Development and Freight Initiatives committees and as Vice Chair of the Project Prioritization Committee, helping guide decisions related to goods movement, infrastructure investment, and the allocation of federal transportation funding. He will Chair the Project Prioritization Committee for the 2026-2027 term.

At the meeting, the NJTPA Board elected Middlesex County Commissioner Charles Kenny as Chair of the Execu-

tive Committee. Other members elected to serve alongside Commissioner Sarnoski include Union County Commissioner Michèle S. Delisfort as Second Vice Chair and Passaic County Commissioner John W. Bartlett as Secretary. In accordance with the bylaws, Chairman Kenny appointed Morris County Commissioner Stephen Shaw to

the position of Third Vice Chair.

The Executive Committee provides guidance and leadership to the full Board on a wide range of planning, policy and administrative issues. It meets as needed to review financial, personnel and policy matters. Board membership is an uncompensated position.

The NJTPA is the met-

ropolitan planning organization (MPO) for 13 northern New Jersey counties. Under federal legislation, MPOs provide a forum where local officials, public transportation providers and state agency representatives can come together and cooperatively plan to meet the region’s current and future transportation needs. It establishes the region’s eligibility to receive federal tax dollars for transportation projects.

The NJTPA Board con-

sists of one local elected official from each of the 13 counties in the region (Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, Union and Warren), and the cities of Newark and Jersey City. The Board also includes a Governor’s Representative, the Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Transportation, the Executive Director of NJ TRANSIT, the Chairman of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and a Citizen’s Representative appointed by the Governor.

The E. Bangor United Methodist Community Church welcomes Dr. Hun Ju Lee, North District Superintendent, as the guest preacher at their 9:30 a.m. worship service on Sunday, January 25th. The church is located at 136 W. Central Ave. (Rt. 512), E. Bangor. The service is, also, offered online (go to www.ebumc.org) (610-588-4453)

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Letter to the Editor: Summary of the January 12, 2026, Knowlton Township Committee Meeting

Report from the Tax Assessor: In addition to reports from the Township's Department of Public Works, Knowlton Fire & Rescue, and the newly re-formed Knowlton Environmental Commission, Township Tax Assessor Rich Motyka updated the Committee on 19 parcels of property owned by the Township that did not sell at auction. Mr. Motyka explained that most of these parcels have little market value, including several lots that are smaller than one acre located within the railroad right-of-way near Tunnel Field. Other lots, he noted, cannot be sold at all, such as three properties on Route 46 that were acquired through FEMA buyouts due to repeated flooding.

Mr. Motyka noted that Knowlton has not undergone a municipal property tax revaluation in 25 years. He urged the Committee to consider moving forward with a townwide revaluation, which he estimated would cost approximately \$250,000. By comparison, Hardwick Township recently completed one at a cost of \$150,000. The need for a revaluation, he explained, stems from the fact that Knowlton's home assessments currently average about 50% of market value, resulting in significant inaccuracies. It was noted that a revaluation does not increase the overall tax levy. It simply dis-

tributes the tax levy more fairly because it takes into account the changes that have occurred since the last revaluation.

He noted that the first step in the revaluation is already underway: updating the Township's tax maps. That process is expected to take a year or more to complete before a full revaluation can begin.

Feedback on Shooting Range: During public comment, a resident who objected to the recent ordinance prohibiting outdoor commercial shooting ranges in Knowlton voiced his objections and offered to help the Committee adjust the ordinance. As public comments are limited to three minutes, Mayor Shipps advised him that he could submit written comments to the Committee with his suggestions for improvement and they would consider them.

Short-Term Rental Ordinance: The Committee discussed a proposed ordinance, drafted and approved by the Land Use Board, that would regulate short-term rentals (STRs) in Knowlton. Committeewoman Starrs, who along with Committeemen Mazza and Baley served on the Land Use Board last year, explained that the ordinance would apply to dwellings listed on online platforms such as Airbnb and VRBO that are rented for less than 30 days.

She noted that the need

for STR regulation first came to her attention after the owners of a home on Ivan Road a few years ago began advertising online and, in exchange for payment, renting the property on weekends to visitors who were alleged to have hosted parties at a nearby community-managed lake. Because the Township did not previously regulate short-term rentals, there were limited options to address the complaints.

Under the proposed ordinance, short-term rental owners would be required to obtain an annual permit from the Township and to self-certify compliance with several conditions. These include confirming that all taxes are fully paid, that the property is not being used as affordable or low-income housing, that smoke detectors have passed inspection, adherence to a maximum occupancy limit, and the establishment of quiet hours between 8:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m., among others requirements.

The ordinance provides that two violations, which would be investigated by the Township Zoning Officer, would result in revocation of the permit and a \$500 fine. Mrs. Starrs also noted that Airbnb and VRBO offer mechanisms for filing complaints against problematic property owners, allowing guests to raise concerns directly through those

platforms. After discussing minor revisions with the Township attorney, the Committee agreed to move forward with introducing the ordinance at the February 6 Township Committee meeting, though Committeeman Mazza noted he is not in favor of STRs.

Resolutions: The Committee passed a series of routine resolutions, renewing membership with the Township's insurance provider, amending the personnel policy to account for new GPS time clocks, approving a consent order for Knowlton's state-mandated low-income housing requirement, appointing volunteers to the Knowlton Land Use Board, and appointing a new township emergency management team in Vince Gaeta and Knowlton Township Fire Chief Travis Christine. The Committee also authorized a continuing lease between the NJDEP and the Township for the Ramsaysburg Historic Homestead. The original 20-year lease expired in December.

Hiring Update: The Township hired an additional snowplow driver and a new janitor for the municipal building, following the retirement of the longtime employee who had been responsible for cleaning the space.

Electricity Update: Mayor Shipps reported that JCP&L's representative will attend the February 6, 2026, Knowlton Township

Committee meeting. Committeewoman Starrs, who is tasked with following up on utility issues along with Mayor Shipps, said that she would like to use the opportunity to discuss what more we can be doing to improve electric reliability in Knowlton besides routine tree trimming. For example, she plans to ask how many heavily loaded feeders serve Knowlton and how we can add redundancy to them. She intends to ask whether all older poles have been replaced with storm-rated poles. In addition, she would like to discuss whether adopting a tree-clearing ordinance that streamlines approval for aggressive removal of trees would lead to more thorough trimming by JCP&L. Finally, Mrs. Starrs said she has requested a list of outages on Knowlton's two most affected streets and what could be done to address them.

Starrs said she has requested a list of outages on Knowlton's two most affected streets and what could be done to address them.

During public comment, a resident stated that Knowlton needs to engage with higher-level officials at JCP&L in order to see change. Committeewoman Starrs responded that while this is true, the process has to begin with the Township's assigned JCP&L representative. She noted that when the matter is brought to the Board of Public Utilities, the Township will be asked what response it received from JCP&L, making it necessary to interact with our assigned representative first.

Committeeman Mazza noted that the last time Knowlton's JCP&L representative attended a Township meeting, some residents behaved disrespectfully toward her. He added, and Mayor Shipps agreed, that our JCP&L rep is highly attentive and frequently responds to the Committee at all hours, saying that she is not responsible for our electric problems.

Potential Grant for Senior Activities: Committeewoman Starrs reported on a grant she found that could be used to develop age-friendly initiatives to support the health and well-being of older residents. The program, offered through the NJ Department of Human Services, is not accepting new applicants now, but a new round is expected to open soon. The borough of Bound Brook, she explained, received \$100,000 in the last round of grant funding to offer gentle exercise classes, strength training, educational workshops, and social activities to seniors in that town. Another organization received \$100,000 for a "senior rides program," in which the agency partnered with a ride-providing business to offer transportation to seniors needing a driver to medical appointments.

Mrs. Starrs suggested that the Township could apply for grant funds to add benches or exercise equipment at Tunnel Field, fund exercise classes and perhaps renovate the bathrooms, making them more accessible for older residents.

The Committee liked the idea of finding long-term funding to support wellness for seniors and some suggested finding out what kinds of support and activities the County and Knowlton Seniors Organization offer, so that there would be no duplication in services. The Committee agreed that the next step would be for Committeepersons Starrs and Lembeck to form a subcommittee of Knowlton seniors to help identify needs and inform the development of a future grant application.

--Adele Starrs

Please note the summaries are intended only to inform residents of issues that might be of interest to them. The summaries are not the official minutes and have not been approved by the Township Committee. They reflect the views of the author only.

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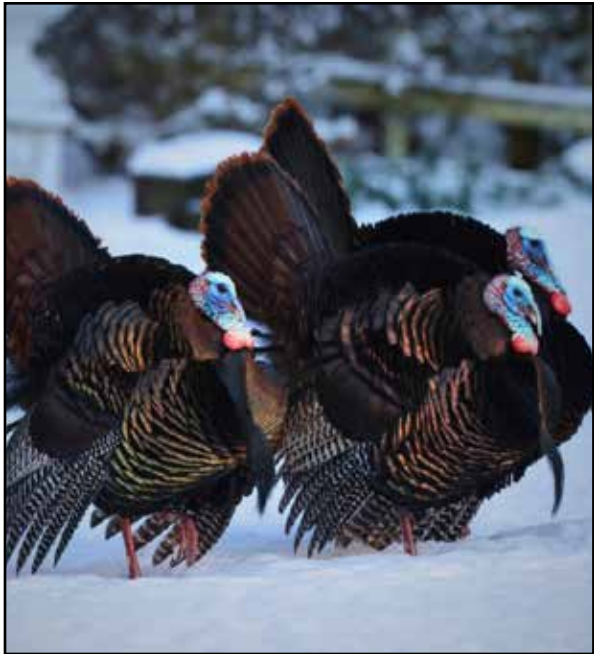
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The East Banger UMC Church welcomes you to a FREE "Pasta with Meat Sauce" Dinner on Sunday, February 1st, from 4:00 to 4:30 p.m. This is TAKE-OUT only at 136 W. Central Ave. (Rt. 512), East Banger, PA (www.ebumc.org)

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Garden Dilemmas? Ask Mary?



Mary E. Stone
Stone Associates
Landscape Design
& Consulting,
Blairstown, NJ

Hello, fellow readers,
I recently received the New Jersey Tree Survey in the mail. It always makes me smile — and pause at the irony. A large, printed document arrives, urging us to save trees on paper made from trees. Still, its arrival feels like an invitation to reflect.
The survey comes from the Arbor Day Foundation. Over the years, its messaging has evolved. What once felt like a simple demographic questionnaire now highlights something I genuinely appreciate: how trees support mental health and community well-being, provide wildlife habitat, clean our air and water, and offer beauty and shade. The letter even creates a sense of being

“chosen,” noting that only a small percentage of residents receive the survey. Yes, it’s a marketing tactic — but one rooted in a cause I believe in. Behind the fundraising is truth— Trees matter. They matter deeply.
Some of the survey questions made me smile: Do trees reduce stress, improve mood, inspire creativity, encourage mindfulness? Of course they do. I can’t imagine many people checking the box that says trees have no impact on well-being. Trees are beautiful. Trees are purposeful. Trees belong.
One gift offered with your donation this year is ten fast-growing Norway spruce (*Picea abies*). They are not native here — originating in northern and eastern Europe, and they’ve become invasive in parts of North America, outcompeting native plants. I wish the Arbor Day Foundation offered native species instead, such as our beloved Eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*). Still, Norway spruce has value. They provide year-round shelter for birds, act as windbreaks, absorb carbon, and grow quickly into privacy screens.
When I drive toward Newton, I pass a large home with a sweeping



lawn lined with tiny spruce trees in contrived rows. They look a bit like rows of toy soldiers standing at attention. The owners lovingly mow around each one. I suspect the trees came from the Arbor Day Foundation. Even contrived beginnings will mature into meaningful purpose. One day, they’ll grow into a living wall, softening the busy road beyond.
The survey also asks what we value most about trees. I can’t imagine anyone would check the box that says: “There is nothing I value about trees.” Even those without yards benefit from the quiet grace trees offer simply by existing among us.
Evaluating charitable organizations can feel daunting. We want to know if our donations make a difference. Independent nonprofit evaluators such as Charity Navigator show that the Arbor



Day Foundation directs a substantial portion of its resources toward its core mission of planting trees and supporting forestry programs. Like many large organizations, it also invests heavily in fundraising — but notably, the Arbor Day Foundation is transparent about its finances and is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit — meaning donations are tax-deductible, unlike other well-known conservation groups.
While I’m not suggesting membership in the Arbor Day Foundation, I’m promoting planting and nurturing trees. Even when leafless, roots are quietly working, preparing for the subsequent unfolding of growth— helping to purify and protect our world.
My connection with trees has always been personal, even spiritual. Years ago, a massive Eastern hemlock



fell in our woods after a nor’easter. A neighbor cut the trunk so the root ball would flap back into place. Growing beside it, a young beech tree landed back into place.
With great reverence, I brushed away the sawdust of the giant hemlock to reveal the rings of this glorious tree, shallow-rooted in shale near Jacksonburg Creek, where I live. It had stood there for nearly two centuries. Today, eight years later, that young beech tree stands strong — a quiet promise of re-

newal.
Trees have taught me that growth is rarely urgent. Roots work silently long before branches show change. Forests heal slowly. Seasons arrive in their own time. Beneath uncertainty, beneath noise, beneath fear — something steady is still growing.
I hope today’s reflection reminds you, as it reminds me, that hope sometimes takes the form of a tree. Garden Dilemmas? Visit AskMaryStone.com or listen on your favorite Podcast App.

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Brown to Introduce Legislation Strengthening Local Government Transparency and Accountability

I will soon be introducing legislation to strengthen public confidence in local government by establishing a waiting period for municipal elected officials who seek paid employment within the same municipality after leaving office.

My office regularly hears from residents across the 40th Senatorial District about concerns related to municipal operations. While I strongly believe local governments must retain the autonomy to make decisions that reflect the voices of their communities, state law should provide clearer guardrails that promote transparency, accountability, and public trust.

When gaps in state law create opportunities for actions that erode public confidence, it becomes our responsibility as lawmakers to address them. That is where my constitutional authority lies.

Under current law, a municipal elected official may resign and immediately apply for or accept a paid position within the



same municipality. This practice can undermine voter intent, raise concerns about backroom arrangements, and weaken the accountability the public expects from those in office.

Recent events and concerns brought to my attention have called into question whether the will of the people is truly being upheld. In one instance, an official elected by the voters was sworn in, resigned, and then appointed to a paid municipal position in the very same meeting. It is understandable that residents would question whether their vote mattered when something like this occurs. Voters must

have confidence that their choices carry through and are not undone behind the scenes. When that trust falters, faith in both the electoral process and local government is weakened.

My legislation would establish a one-year waiting period before a municipal elected official could apply for or accept a compensated position within the same municipality after resigning or retiring. This one-year window would apply whether the official left midterm or completed their full service.

This is a commonsense safeguard. It supports clean transitions, helps prevent favoritism, and reinforces the principle that public service is about honoring the role voters entrusted to you.

I appreciate the feedback residents continue to share with my office and encourage ongoing engagement in local government at every level.

The Video can be found at: vimeo.com/1155123018/7a-4c688eeb

Chili Open Fundraiser to Benefit Project Self-Sufficiency - Initiative Raises Funds for Housing



Plans are underway for the annual Chili Open Golf Classic fundraiser to be held at the Sussex County Fairgrounds on Saturday, January 31st. Proceeds will benefit Project Give Shelter, a Project Self-Sufficiency initiative to help Sussex County residents who need emergency temporary shelter or stable housing. Funds raised from Project Self-Sufficiency's Chili Open events were used to help 265 local families, including 401 adults and 342 children, by providing over 1,900 shelter nights and restoring heat and electricity to 60 households.

"Success in becoming self-sufficient is built on a stable foundation of secure and safe housing," said Project Self-Sufficiency Executive Director Deborah Berry-Toon. "It's difficult to find a job, hold a job, get an education, or receive training when you don't know where you're going to sleep at night, or you must constantly relocate."

Funds from the Chili Open will provide emergency shelter, security deposits, rent, and utility payments as necessary and appropriate, Berry-Toon said. The agency's Project Give Shelter initiative is part of a longer-range effort to fight homelessness and is designed to aid both renters and landlords. "Project Self-Sufficiency has comprehensive wrap-

around programs and the staff to coordinate our efforts with other community providers to assure families and children are not left out in the cold," explained Berry-Toon.

The annual Chili Open Golf Classic, which has become a beloved wintertime tradition, has been played on a makeshift course at Sussex County Fairgrounds for more than 20 years. Golfers play a scramble format of two of the four nine-hole, par-three courses before heading indoors for lunch featuring a variety of fare donated by area restaurants, including a selection of chili, with music provided by R.E.N.O. the Band, as well as a putting contest, beverages, raffles and a 50/50 drawing.

Rotary Clubs in Branchville, Newton, and Wallkill partner with Project Self-Sufficiency to organize and serve breakfast and lunch, staff a cash bar and provide souvenir photos of the golfers, among other event assistance.

"Many golfers have been attending the Chili Open for years," said Bruce Tomlinson, Project Self-Sufficiency Development Director, and a longtime Chili Open participant. "In some ways, the Chili Open is like an annual community family reunion."

Over the years, the Chili Open has been played in a wide variety of conditions, from below zero windchill to relatively

moderate temperatures. In some years, snow needed to be plowed from the makeshift fairways and the golf cups were filled with ice. "Golfers of all skill levels have a great time, regardless of the weather," Tomlinson observed. "But they do seem to like the challenge of less-than-ideal conditions."

Because the Chili Open is a fundraiser to help those facing housing crises in Sussex County, sponsors and golfers are needed and welcomed. Chili Open Golf Classic registration details and sponsorship opportunities can be found on the Project Self-Sufficiency website, www.projectselfsufficiency.org/chili-open.

Project Self-Sufficiency has assisted low-income individuals and families in northwestern New Jersey since 1986. Services offered at Project Self-Sufficiency include high school equivalency education, computer courses, employment skills training, job placement services, support groups, parenting classes, childcare and preschool, legal assistance and education, counseling and advocacy, referrals, and help with emergency basic needs, like food and clothing. For more information about the programs and services offered by Project Self-Sufficiency, visit www.projectselfsufficiency.org or call 973-940-3500.

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Board of Game Commissioners To Consider 2026-27 Hunting Seasons And More At Upcoming January Meeting

The Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners will hold its first meeting of the new year on Friday, Jan. 23, and Saturday, Jan. 24, 2026. Among other agenda items, the Board will consider preliminary hunting seasons and bag limits for the 2026-27 license year.

The meeting will include two proposals for the Board to consider regarding the start of the firearms deer season. The first proposal would open the firearms season on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. The second proposal would maintain the current season structure, with the season opening on the Saturday following Thanksgiving.

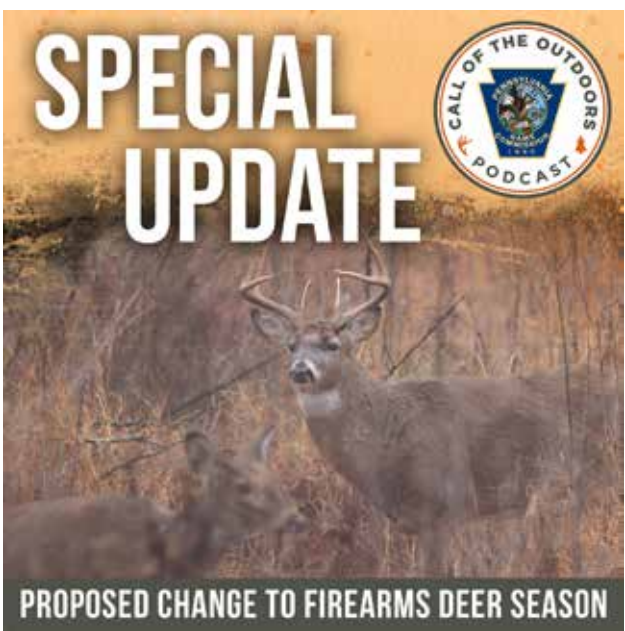
Regarding the proposal to open the firearms season before Thanksgiving, Pennsylvania Game Commission Executive Director Steve Smith said, "This change would give hunters an earlier start

and provide more opportunities for families, young hunters, and those who travel longer distances to enjoy opening weekend without competing with the Thanksgiving holiday. Opening the season earlier could improve access for hunters and continues the Board's focus on structuring seasons in ways that maximize participation."

To accommodate a potential earlier start date, the first proposal would move the firearms bear season one week earlier and shorten the early bear muzzleloader, archery, and special firearms season to a single weekend.

Executive Director Smith discussed the potential change this week on an episode of the agency's podcast, Call of the Outdoors.

The Board also will consider allowing Sunday hunting during the 2027 spring gobbler season. To offset the potential for increased



harvest associated with Sunday hunting, the proposal recommends limiting the spring gobbler bag limit to one bird, eliminating the option to purchase a second spring turkey tag for the 2027 season.

The two-day public

meeting begins Friday, Jan. 23, at 1 p.m., and will include staff presentations on a range of wildlife management topics, including elk and turkey management, as well as other key agency initiatives. No public comment

will be accepted on Friday.

The meeting resumes Saturday, Jan. 24, at 8:30 a.m. Public comment, limited to five minutes per speaker, will be accepted on a first-to-register, first-to-speak basis. Registration begins at 7:45 a.m. in the headquarters lobby. PowerPoint presentations will not be permitted during public comment.

Following public comment, the Board will proceed with its regular agenda and new business. The full agenda is available on the Game Commission's website under "About Us" and "Public Meetings."

In addition to preliminary seasons and bag limits, the Board will consider items related to Pennsylvania's elk application process, Chronic Wasting

Disease response, the Certified Hunter Program, approved trapping methods, fluorescent orange on game lands for non-hunters during the fall hunting seasons, changes to the regulations authorizing baiting in the Special Regulation Areas, and other wildlife management issues.

The Board is set to adopt final seasons and bag limits for the 2026-27 license year at its next meeting, on Saturday, April 11, 2026.

The meeting will be held at the Pennsylvania Game Commission headquarters, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, just off the Progress Avenue exit 69 of Interstate 81. Those unable to attend may watch the meeting live on the Game Commission's YouTube channel.

Living History: Preserving Your Personal Museum
With Melissa Hough and Rachael Winston



WHEN: Sunday, February 8th at 2:00pm
WHERE: Slate Belt Heritage Center
Located at 30 N. 1st Street in Bangor

Living History is an interactive public program that demystifies the world of artifact conservation. While most people don't own 2,000-year-old pottery, nearly everyone has a "shoebox of history" fragile family photos, a grandmother's wedding veil, or a collection of vintage ticket stubs. This session translates professional museum protocols into **practical, low-cost strategies** for the everyday person. By the end of the program, attendees will walk away with the confidence to handle their most meaningful possessions like a pro, ensuring their personal legacy remains intact for years to come.

This educational program is open to the public and admission is free. We hope you will join us!

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Congressman Tom Kean, Jr. (NJ-07) announced the launch of his annual “Valentines for First Responders” program. Residents, schools, and local youth organizations are invited to create handmade Valentine’s Day cards to express gratitude to first responders in New Jersey’s 7th Congressional District. **The deadline to submit completed Valentine’s Day cards is Friday, February 6, 2026. Cards may be dropped off or mailed to the Lebanon Borough District Office at 100 Corporate Drive, Suite 106, Lebanon, NJ 08833.** The homemade valentines will be delivered to local police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel during the week of Valentine’s Day. “Our first responders sacrifice so much to keep our families and communities safe,” said Congressman Kean. “The Valentines for First Responders program gives us the opportunity to thank them and share gratitude on behalf of the people they serve across the Seventh District. These valentines are a small gesture that represents our deep appreciation for all that they do.” Residents interested in participating or seeking additional information about the program can contact Congressman Kean’s District office at (908) 547-3307.



Ah, love and chocolate are in the air! For Chocolates on Broadway, these boxes are more than just packaging; they represent the stories and the love our community has shared through the years. They have been a small part of Valentine’s traditions for a long time now, and seeing the shop finally ready for the season of love is one of our favorite milestones in the community. Stop in to share a little bit of sweetness with the people who matter most.

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Classified Ad Order Form

Non-commercial classified ads (Misc., Vehicles, Recreation, Wanted, Pets, Yard Sales) are \$5 per week, per inch (1.8" W x 1" H). There is no charge for Free items. Services, Rentals, Real Estate, Homes For Sale and Help Wanted ads are \$15 per week, per inch. Please specify the category in which your ad should appear, the size your ad should be (boxes on right), and how many weeks your ad will run. Please PRINT ad information.

NAME: _____

PHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CATEGORY: _____

WEEKS RUNNING: AMOUNT PAID: _____

Please PRINT Your Ad Information Below

Ads with Photos!
\$18

One inch
(actual size shown here)

Two inches
(actual size shown here)

CLASSIFIEDS MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN NOON ON FRIDAY IN ORDER TO BE PRINTED IN THE UPCOMING EDITION.

All classified ads must be paid in full, in advance. Credit cards are NOT accepted for charges less than \$25 Classifieds may be submitted by mail: The PRESS Classifieds 106 Kline, St. Bangor PA 18013; email: thepressads@gmail.com or fax: 610-599-1185. Classifieds are NOT accepted by phone Help Wanted ads are free for current advertisers.

Make Checks Payable to: The Free Weekly Press, LLC

**ATTENTION**

WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR LOCAL NEWS STORIES! SEND THEM TO US AT:
thepressads@gmail.com

**THE FREE WEEKLY PRESS**

Have You Recently Lost A Loved One?

We run obituaries to help spread the word to the community about the services for your beloved family members.

Contact Us at: thepressads@gmail.com for details on pricing





**Explosive Deals For January To Help
Your Business Start 2026 Off With A Bang**

**FRONT PAGE
TOP BANNER**
(10IN X 2IN)

ONLY \$175
**First Come,
First Serve**

Full Page
(15.5 in x 10 in)

\$300

1/2 Page
(8in x 10in)

\$200

1/4 Page
(4.95in x 8in)

\$100

Valid Now-Feb 5, 2026, New Clients or Current Clients who want to do a larger ad

Email: thepressads@gmail.com or call 484-988-0969

**- PLUS -
GET READY FOR
VALENTINE'S DAY!**

**HEART ADS CAN BE PURCHASED FOR
BUSINESSES OR FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO
WANT TO SEND A SPECIAL
VALENTINE'S DAY MESSAGE
EMAIL MELISSA AT:
THEPRESSADS@GMAIL.COM**

*** No Later than Friday, January 30th, 2026 ***

A large red heart shape. Inside the heart, the text 'Happy Valentine's Day', 'Tiffany, I Love You', and 'Love, Kyle' is written in a cursive, black font with a white outline. Below the heart, the text '\$35 Heart Ads Actual Size Shown!' is written in a bold, yellow font. Two red curved arrows point from the bottom text up towards the heart.