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New sports complex, 'Volley Hall' facility proposed

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE – At a press conference at the Volleyball Hall of Fame last Tuesday, Mayor Joshua Garcia and other community members came together to announce an initiative to create a sports complex in Holyoke.

This project was started by Cesar Ruiz, who is the primary investor in the project.

Three years ago, Mayor Joshua Garcia and Ruiz began discussing the sports complex. At the time, Ruiz was focused on building his own company. However, another year or so later, they had a second conversation, and Ruiz was inspired.

"I was on fire," Ruiz said. "I couldn't sleep for weeks because of this vision. I said 'we can do this.' I told the mayor, 'we're going to do this.'"

The goal is to create a sports complex with an indoor and outdoor facility throughout Holyoke, and move the Volleyball Hall of Fame to one of those locations.

"Holyoke: The Sports

*"Holyoke:
The Sports Capital
of New England.
That is our tagline
to bring the
Volleyball Hall of Fame
to a new home and make
Holyoke a domestic
and international
volleyball
tournament center,
right here..."*

- Cesar Ruiz



A press conference was held at The Volleyball Hall of Fame to discuss the ideas behind a new sports complex in Holyoke.



One of several renderings of a proposed sports complex.

Turley photos by Quinn Suomala

See COMPLEX, page 12

CPA ballot discussion heats back up

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE – The Holyoke City Council again addressed the CPA ballot question at their meeting on Feb. 6.

After a discussion, they made the 9-4 decision to table the matter so that individual council members can have the time they need to research remaining questions they have on the matter.

Councilor Israel Rivera in particular had questions regarding whether or not the wording of the ballot question was legal.

Previously, councilors had brought the CPA ballot question before a judge in order to get it on the ballot for the November 2023 election. One of the concerns the judge had brought up was that the council had not followed proper procedure to put the question on a ballot.

In a previous meeting regarding the CPA ballot, the city attorneys had said that the council needed to take a stance on the CPA question to put it on the ballot, despite the fact that that was not what they'd needed to do in the past when the question had been put on the ballot.

Therefore, Rivera was concerned that there had been no changes made to the wording

of the ballot question, given these previous legal opinions.

"We have to right that wrong before we move forward," Rivera asked.

Other councilors mentioned that in a more recent meeting further research had been completed by the attorneys and they had decided that those opinions were inaccurate.

"Attorney Degnan came into the finance committee meeting on the matter of whether the question in proper form and it would be received by the state, and affirmed to the committee that yes it was," Councilor Linda Vacon said.

Despite Degnan's decision on the matter, Rivera was still hesitant to vote on the CPA question, as he wanted confirmation from the state that the council had everything in proper order.

"It's been done before where we have gone through certain places and we come to find out later on that it wasn't necessarily that process, I would be more rest assured if we had a letter from the DOR saying that reusing the same process that we used in the past is okay to use now," Rivera said.

Due to this, Councilor Juan Anderson-Burgos made the motion to table the matter so that Rivera would have

a chance to get his questions answered.

"I want to make sure that everyone in this room has all their questions answered so we can move forward...so it's all of us making a solid yes," he said.

Other councilors felt that Rivera's question was already answered, given Degnan's decision and did not want to delay further on the matter.

"I'm totally on board, if there was some, open legit question, I would say, 'send it back, table, all that,'" he said. "But that question was asked. I specifically and Kathy addressed it point blank, answered that specific question, said 'I did all the research. The DOR approved the language the first time and I addressed it, and I'm approving it this time. I feel totally comfortable.'"

Due to this contention, the council made a vote to table the matter until their first meeting in March.

The vote passed 9-4, with Councilors Jourdain, Linda Vacon, Carmen Ocasio and Howard Greaney voting against it.

Therefore, the council will discuss at a future meeting. They have until 35 days before the November election to make a final decision on this matter.

Education commissioner defers receivership decision

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE – Holyoke has received no confirmation on ending receivership from Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Jeffery Riley.

In his response to Mayor Joshua Garcia, the school committee and Receiver Anthony Soto, Riley had stated that "the Department would like to further confer with the Receiver and the School Committee about how to sustain and build upon the district's progress as we make plans for returning the district to local control."

In other words, he deferred a final decision on Holyoke's petition to end receivership until a later date.

One of the reasons for this deferral was that while Riley felt that Holyoke had made some significant progress since it had entered receivership, there were still areas that needed improvement.

Riley felt continued collaboration between Soto and the School Committee was needed in order to ensure continued progress for Holyoke Public Schools.

Riley also wrote in his letter that "continuing concerted

Capital of New England," Ruiz said. "That is our tagline to bring the Volleyball Hall of Fame to a new home and make Holyoke a domestic and international volleyball tournament center, right here in New England."

The plan is to bring an Olympic-style venue to Holyoke, and to use various present and new assets of the area to bring the complex and the city to life.

There will be entertainment areas, hotels, volleyball tournaments, fields, bowling and more.

"We're going to create a facility and a complex that is going to draw not only youth but also seniors," Ruiz said.

The indoor facility alone is estimated to be 140,000 square feet, with 16 courts for volleyball, family activities, such as an arcade and rock climbing, and candlepin bowling.

This facility is estimated to bring in 30,000 room nights a year.

"We're going to need another three to four 3-star,

investments in the district's teaching and learning systems and continuing prioritization of student attendance will be key to sustaining this progress."

The school committee had submitted a "petition to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to release the City of Holyoke from State Receivership" to the commissioner on September 18, 2023.

They had hoped that, with the support from Garcia and from Soto, Holyoke would receive permission to begin planning a way to exit receivership.

Soto had submitted a letter of support for Holyoke's existing receivership, though in this letter he had also pointed out some remaining challenges HPS is facing.

These issues included academic achievement, attendance, mental health support for students, staffing needs and support for diverse learners.

Soto was, according to a press release, "encouraged by the commissioner's commitment to continuing the conversation about a return to local control."

He plans to continue to

See RECEIVERSHIP, page 5

Celebrate Irish heritage all month long in March

HOLYOKE – The Ancient Order of Hibernians James A. Curran Division One and the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians Division Two of Hampden/Hampshire Counties will celebrate Irish American Heritage Month of March with an Irish flag raising ceremony at Holyoke City Hall, on Friday, March 1, at 10 a.m. The public is invited to attend. Mayor Joshua A. Garcia and Holyoke city officials plan to be in attendance.

Hibernian President Joe O'Connor will preside as Master of Ceremonies. St. Patrick's Parade President Hayley Dunn, Massachusetts State Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians represented by Barbara Twohig and Noranne Duquette, Paula Paoli President of LAOH Division Two of Hampden/Hampshire Counties and Irish Cultural Center of Western New England, Sean Cahillane plan to attend.



Piper Matt O'Connor will play the Pipes at the event and Sheila Moreau will sing the American and Irish Anthems. This is a time for all of us to reflect upon this heritage, learn more about it, and celebrate.

There are over 31.5 million residents who claim Irish Ancestry in America.

The colors of the symbolic Irish flag represent: Green for Roman Catholics and Nationalism, Orange for the Protestant Minority, and the white in between the two colors as Hope for lasting Peace between the two.

The U. S. Congress designated March as Irish American Heritage Month in 1991 to recognize contributions Irish Americans have made to the country. The Ancient Order of Hibernians were founded in Ireland in 1520; established in New York City in 1836 and 1880 in Holyoke.

Parade to be held March 17

HOLYOKE – The St. Patrick's Committee of Holyoke is excited to announce the 71st annual Holyoke St. Patrick's Parade will be held on Sunday, March 17. The Parade will air live at noon on WWLP-22News and be live-streamed on WWLP.com.

"The St. Patrick's Committee is thrilled to host the 71st Holyoke St. Patrick's Parade on St. Patrick's Day this year" said 2024 Parade President, Hayley Dunn. "The Committee has been working hard all year to secure phenomenal talent and entertainment for all to enjoy on Parade Day. We can't wait to see you along the Parade Route!"

In order to arrive at Holyoke High

School in time for the noon broadcast, the Parade will step-off at approximately 11:10 a.m. from the former Kmart Plaza. The parade's website, www.holyokestpatricksparade.com, will provide all of the details regarding the parade route and parking information for spectators.

22News Anchors Rich Tetterer and Taylor Knight, along with Sheila Moreau from the Parade Committee, will serve as Parade hosts. Throughout the event, the 22News team will provide interviews from the Parade route with participants and bystanders throughout the coverage.

St. Patrick's Road Race will be held on Saturday, March 16.



Conference for women on May 9

SPRINGFIELD – The third annual Pioneer Valley Conference for Women will be held May 9 at the Marriott Springfield Downtown from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. The conference will be held in person and virtually. This year's theme is Unleashed. Sponsors include M&T Bank and USI.

Dr. Christina Royal will serve as emcee for the conference. The former president of Holyoke Community College, Royal is now president and CEO of Infinite Unlearning, LLC, a woman, BIPOC, and queer-owned executive coaching and consultancy service supporting mid to senior leaders and their organizations. Her goal is to educate leaders on a new paradigm of the future of work and help them shed their limiting beliefs and lead from a place of potential.

Keynote speakers are Meghan Rothschild, president, and owner of the marketing and public relations firm Chikmedia, and Jessika Rozki, founder of Rozki Rides, a transporta-

tion service focusing on children and seniors.

Rothschild is an award-winning business owner, public speaker, and social influencer. As a speaker, she is known for engaging audiences on topics such as social media, marketing strategy, public relations, women in business, melanoma survivorship, and living with endometriosis.

Rozki's career in transportation began 15 years ago as a school bus driver in Chicopee. In 2019, with the resolve to balance her professional aspirations and family life, Rozki launched Rozki Rides. Based in Greater Springfield, the company started as a professional transportation service catering primarily to families.

In addition, there will be 10 different panels that women can choose to attend in the morning and afternoon. Panelists, all local women, will be announced in the coming months.

For more information, visit <https://sheslocal.org/pioneer-valley-conference-for-women/>.

HMC celebrated its 2024 Gala

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Medical Center celebrated its 2024 Gala on Saturday, Feb.10, at the Log Cabin in Holyoke. The Gala returned for the first time since 2019 and will featured the following award presentations.

Holyoke Medical Center proudly paid tribute to the late Kimat Gul Khatak, MD with the Lifetime Achievement Award for his outstanding dedication and hard work on behalf of Holyoke Medical Center and the local community for over forty years. Members of the Khatak family were present to accept the award.

Also recognized were select members of the Valley Health Systems staff who exemplify exceptional care in the categories of Best Physician, Best Caregiver, Best Nurse, Best Supporting Employee and Best Leader. This year's finalists were: Best Physician Finalists; Francis Martinez, MD, General Surgery;

Ted Mlapah, MD, Hospitalist; Miguel Rodriguez, MD, Pulmonology.

Best Caregiver Finalists; Kristie Harrington, FNP-BC, Neurology & Sleep; Lucyna Nigro, FNP-BC, Gastroenterology; Samantha Ramirez, Holyoke VNA Hospice Life Care.

Best Nurse Finalist: Brenda Fuller, BSN, RN, Oncology; Roberta Keefe, RN, Short Stay Surgery; Dawn Rogers, RN, Behavioral Health.

Best Supporting Employee Finalists: Shane Coffey, Information Systems; Maritza I. De Hoyos, Environmental Services; Janet Laroche, Development & Volunteer Services.

Best Leader Finalists; Kathryn D. Girardin, Au.D., Speech & Hearing and Work Connection; Alexa Mignano, School Based Programs at River Valley Counseling Center; Jody Peltier, MSN, RN HN-BC CH CCAP, Center for Learning.

Holyoke's 150th commemorative book available for purchase

HOLYOKE – Holyoke's Sesquicentennial celebrations lasted all 2023 and ended with an amazing 150th Masquerade Gala, the closing of the Holyoke Time Capsule, the return of the Rotary Club's Eat, Drink & Be Holyoke event, as well as the annual Christmas Tree lighting and first night Jr celebrations at Heritage State Park.

Relive the events of 2023, read about our shared history, recognize the pride we all share in the Holyoke 150th Commemorative book.

With nearly 200 pages, written by the organizers, business owners, community leaders and members of Holyoke who are passionate about our city, you see the spirit of Holyoke come alive on the page. 100's of photos

and interesting facts about the city, the Holyoke 150th Commemorative book will be a keepsake for generations to come.

Only 1500 copies will be printed. Pre-orders are available at a temporary reduced cost of \$40. Regular orders placed on or after January 29th, 2024, will be priced at \$50.

The book will be available in mid-February for pickup of the book at the Greater Holyoke Chamber and Artery or you can have the book mailed for an additional charge.

Visit [ExploreHolyoke.com/150th](https://www.exploreholyokey.com/150th) page to preorder your book at <https://www.exploreholyokey.com/guide/pre-order-the-holyoke-150th-commemorative-book/>.

St. Jerome's hosting 'Irish Night'

HOLYOKE – Our Lady of Guadalupe Community Center will host "Irish Night" fundraiser for St. Jerome parish on Saturday, March 9. The event will go from 7 to 9 p.m. with doors opening at 6 p.m. and will feature refreshments, a cash bar, and other beverages. Tickets can be purchased at

the end of all weekend masses beginning Feb. 10 and 11. Tables of 8 may be reserved in advanced by contacting Jennie McGiverin at 413-250-2093 or John Kelley at 413-650-0493. Black Rose Academy of Irish Dance will perform at 6:30 p.m. Deirdre Reilly will be the headline performer following that.

COLLEGE NOTES

Goodwin University's President's List

EAST HARTFORD, CT – Tanairie Montijo of Holyoke, earned a place on

Goodwin University's president's list for the fall 2023 Session.

HCC celebrating African Americans and the Arts

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Community College is celebrating Black History Month in February with a series of events highlighting this year’s national theme: “African Americans and the Arts.”

Events at HCC kick off Thursday, Feb. 8, at 11 a.m. with a presentation by HCC visual art professor Raishad J. Glover, of Northampton, whose artwork is now on display in the college’s Taber Art Gallery in a show titled “Geo-Spec: Cultural Introspection Wealth.” Glover’s talk, followed by a Q&A, will be held in Room 303 in HCC’s Kittredge Center for Business and Workforce Development.

On Wednesday, Feb 14, at 11 a.m., the college’s Black Student Alliance and Latinx Empowerment Association will

co-host an open mic and “Taste of the Diaspora” event on the second floor of the Campus Center, with live student performances accompanied by food representing cultures of people whose descendants came from Africa.

“Black History is made every day,” President George Timmons said last week in a message to HCC students, faculty, and staff. “Let’s explore, teach, and celebrate Black history in February and beyond. As part of my own celebrations, I pay tribute to the members of the Black community on our campus, and in particular to my colleagues and members of the student body. I am proud to work and learn alongside you.”

Black History Month events at HCC will continue on Wednesday, Feb. 21, at 11 a.m. with a performance by

the Amherst Area Gospel Choir in the Leslie Phillips Theater.

On Thursday, Feb. 22, at 11 a.m., in Room 224 of the Campus Center, performance poet, playwright, and pop culture critic Nicole Young-Martin, Ed.D., will lead a program titled “Write the Way,” during which Young-Martin will read from her own work and engage in a discussion with students about the importance of including marginalized voices in the literary canon.

Black History Month at HCC concludes on Wednesday, Feb. 28 at 11 a.m. with a “Phenomenal Black Women’s Panel” in Room 224 of the Campus Center. Julissa Colón, director of HCC’s El Centro program, will moderate a panel that includes Jada J. Waters, Ed.D., director of Equity,

Diversity and Inclusion at Middletown, Conn., public schools; Erika Slocumb, a Black history scholar and director of interpretation and visitor experience at the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center in Hartford, Conn.; Kandice E. Jones, a counselor from the Center for Human Development; and Qua’Nae Golston-Thomas, a student activist at Holyoke High School and podcast host of “Let’s Talk With Qua’Nae” on Holyoke Media.

“With this panel, we are creating an opportunity for our students to see their reflections mirrored, learning from the participants’ insights about what it means to aspire to our dreams and what it takes to live them,” Colón said.

To learn more about Black History Month months at HCC or to participate over Zoom, please go to: hcc.edu/bhm.

MakerLoan awarded to business

HOLYOKE – The Holyoke Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (HEDIC) awarded Raw Beauty Brand LLC the very first HEDIC MakerLoan. Raw Beauty Brand was awarded the maximum award with \$25,000 at a 0% interest at a 5-year term. This money will be used to expand and grow the business through the purchase of new equipment, wholesale ingredients for products, and working capital. The agreement was finalized February 8th. HEDIC Vice Chair Callie Flanagan said “This loan program provides access to capital to small, early stage and start-up maker businesses in Holyoke. With this loan, Crystal will be able to increase her manufacturing capacity, hire employees, and take her business to the next level. I am excited to welcome Raw Beauty Brand as a new addition to Holyoke’s vibrant maker community and look forward to witnessing Crystal’s success here in Holyoke.”

Raw Beauty Brand (www.rawbeautybrand.com) creates artisanal soaps and skincare with an emphasis on organic ingredients that are safe for sensitive skin. Crystal Heady, owner and founder started making her artisanal soaps to try and ease her children’s sensitive skin issues and allergies. With time this small endeavor grew to a successful online shopping experience and Crystal began bringing her products to sell at events all around the area. Averaging 20 events a month, Raw

Beauty began growing rapidly and was ready for the next step. Raw Beauty will be using the funds to purchase industrial equipment that will speed up production time allow them to increase inventory and take on bigger contracts with stores.

Raw Beauty applied for the HEDIC MakerLoan program. This zero-interest loan program offers maker type businesses financing during the early stages of growth. A “maker” business is a business that creates a good that then goes to market. To qualify applicants must be in business less than three years, be in Holyoke, be a maker, and not yet qualify for more traditional financing options. The mission of this program is to fill in gaps financially that other lenders cannot take on due to higher risk, as well as enhance Holyoke’s rich tradition of manufacturing. Callie Flanagan said, “The key to a business’ success is having adequate access to business resources and capital. I am proud to live in a city that offers both: resources through EforAll/EparaTodos, our vibrant Chamber of Commerce, and our TDI District; and access to capital through HEDIC’s new maker loan program. It can be very difficult for a small, early-stage business to acquire financing. Unfortunately, without capital, it can be difficult for these businesses to grow or even start at all.”

To learn more about the program visit <https://www.holyoke.org/makerloan/>.

HCC seeking Holyoke Junior College alumni for reunion

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Community College is putting out a call to all alumni who graduated from Holyoke Junior College between 1947 and 1964 to attend a special reunion celebration later this spring at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute.

The first-ever reunion event for graduates of Holyoke Junior College, the predecessor of HCC, will be held Wednesday, June 5, from 3-6 p.m., at the culinary arts institute on Race Street.

Founded in 1946, Holyoke Graduate School changed its name to Holyoke Junior College in April 1947. After HJC joined the state’s community college system in 1964, the name was changed yet again to Holyoke Community College, which was then located downtown on Sergeant Street and Pine Street in the former Holyoke High School building, which burned down in 1968.

“This is a time for our oldest alumni to meet our new leader, President George Timmons, catch up with classmates, and reminisce about the good old days,” said Julie Phillips, HCC director of development.

Reunion guests will be able to tour the culinary arts facility and also enjoy a dinner prepared by HCC culinary arts students and faculty.

“I’m getting older, and there are people I miss because they live far away,” said Angela Wright, a graduate of Holyoke Junior College from the Class of 1954 and a member of the reunion planning committee. “You don’t often have a chance to catch up with classmates from your school. I don’t know how many of us are left. I’d be thrilled to see them and just chat.”

Also on the reunion planning committee are alumni Maurice Ferriter ‘52, Frances Kane ‘56, Carl Iger ‘56, Pat Bresnahan ‘57, Peg Wendlandt ‘58, Jim Izatt ‘59, and Richie Sobon ‘64.

“Holyoke Junior College was very good to me,” Kane said recently at a reunion planning meeting. “I was young. Coming out of high school, I didn’t know where I was going to go. I went to Holyoke Junior College, which set me on my pace. I came back to the college in the early ‘70s to serve on the Board of Trustees under President David Bartley, and later on the HCC Foundation board of directors. It’s been wonderful to me. I’ve made a lot of friends, and I’d like to see who’s left from my class.”

For more information about the event or to secure your spot for the reunion, please contact John Sieracki at jsieracki@hcc.edu / 413-687-0322.

Dr. Ilyasah Shabazz, daughter of Malcolm X, to speak at STCC

SPRINGFIELD – Dr. Ilyasah Shabazz, the daughter of the late activists Malcolm X and Dr. Betty Shabazz, will speak at Springfield Technical Community College on Feb. 29 at Noon as part of the college’s celebration of Black History Month.

Shabazz, an accomplished educator, author and activist, will share her insights and experiences rooted in the rich legacy of African American history and culture.

Shabazz will speak in the auditorium of Scibelli Hall (Building 2) at STCC. The event is free and open to the public. Attendees are encouraged to pre-register. To register for the event, please visit stcc.io/shabazz.

Shabazz is chairperson of the Malcolm X & Dr. Betty Shabazz

Memorial and Educational Center Board of Trustees. In her work to preserve the legacy of her parents, she has dedicated herself to institution-building and inter-generational leadership development with the tenets of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Her books include a memoir, “Growing Up X,” and a children’s book, “Malcolm Little: The Boy Who Grew Up to Become Malcolm X.”

Shabazz has furthered her community impact with the City University of New York’s Office of Academic Affairs, where she created a curriculum to encourage higher education for underserved, inner-city and marginalized high school dropouts.

She has worked with the Office of the Mayor in Mount Vernon, as direc-

tor of Public Affairs & Special Events. She founded and produced a young adult development program to provide historical context on social justice - encouraging personal empowerment and community service as a way of life.

As president and founder of Ilyasah Shabazz Enterprises, she produces a variety of forums dedicated to power, possibility and sovereignty.

“We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Shabazz to STCC,” said Dr. Kiyota Garcia, assistant vice president of Student Affairs and Interim Chief Equity Officer at STCC. “We want our students, staff and faculty and the community to prepare to be enlightened and empowered by Dr. Shabazz. She will illuminate the significance of Black history and its enduring impact on society.”



Dr. Ilyasah Shabazz to speak at STCC. Photo courtesy of STCC



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Gardening questions that pose a challenge



A recent visit to mom's house prompted the following question about poinsettias. Now, don't worry, I haven't forgotten what the date is. Sure, the poinsettia hasn't been in its glory for a few weeks now, but that doesn't mean she is going to give up on it.

You see, my mother likes a challenge, especially when it comes to plants. She wanted some advice on how to encourage new healthy growth before trying to coax it into re-bloom next fall.

Read on to learn how it's done:

In early April cut back the plant to eight inches. Fertilize with an all-purpose house-plant fertilizer once a month. New growth should appear by the end of May.

After the danger of frost has passed, move the plant outdoors. Continue to water but increase fertilization to every two weeks.

Pinch plants in late June or early July to promote bushy growth. At this time you may also wish to repot the poinsettia. Select a pot one size larger, filling around the root ball with a good potting soil.

Bring the plant indoors as temperatures fall in late summer.

The poinsettia is photoperiodic, and long nights of uninterrupted darkness encourage it to bloom. In greenhouses, growers go to great lengths to withhold light, as even small amounts can delay or stop the plant from set-

ting bud.

At home, putting the plant in the closet for 14 hours each night is your best bet. Setting a reminder alarm or making a note helps to keep on track.

Most people get on a 5 p.m.-8 a.m. schedule beginning Oct. 1 and continue it for eight-10 weeks until color shows on the bracts. Night temperatures should be no higher than 70 degrees or flowering may be delayed.

This all sounds fairly straight forward. I think the biggest frustration for her over the years has been missing a night of darkness, especially near the end of the routine.

Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. Still fun to try, however.

A friend of mine recently asked what I thought of the cloth grow bags that are all the rage right now. Although I haven't used them myself, another friend, Chris, has been gardening up a storm the last few years using these bags.

She has an amazing flower border that you would think is growing in the ground, but it is a collection of dozens of bags in various sizes, holding everything from cannas to dahlias, zinnias and marigolds. She has great success with potatoes and other vegetables, too.

Read on to learn about the benefits of these bags.

I guess the one benefit that I never thought of is breathability. Because the fabric is permeable there is good air exchange, the roots grow to the edge, are air-pruned and branch out.

This is altogether different than plastic or glazed ceramic pots that don't breathe and encourage tangles of roots that encircle the pot eventually becoming bound. When a plant is root bound, it suffers until it is repotted; not so with grow bags!

Another pro would be drainage. The grow bags hold only what moisture the soil can hold and the rest of it drains away. Sure, the flip side is that you will need to water often in times of drought, but it's nice to know that if we have another summer like we did last year, the plants won't rot, either.

Other more obvious benefits include portability, heat resistance and ease of storage. If you purchase bags with handles, you can move them around the yard much easier than you could if the plants were in heavy pots.

The bags weigh next to nothing compared to clay or ceramics. Grow bags also do not heat up the way glazed or plastic pots do; roots are cooler and the plants are happier.

When the season is over, you can wash the bags and flatten to store. Most brands say that they last for four-five seasons or longer with good care.

Do some research to pair the size bag you use with the plants you are growing. A quick check gleaned that 10 gallon bags are good for three seed potatoes or a single indeterminate tomato plant. Bush type tomatoes would grow well in a seven gallon pot.

Also research the best potting soil or compost mixes to use; there are many out there. Chris uses a blend and uses organic fertilizers, crediting that to her success.

The apple may not fall far from the tree. Mom likes her challenges, and I like mine. I think trying out grow bags is in my near (gardening) future.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 33 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.

How is my Social Security benefit calculated?



Dear Rusty

I appreciate your recent article dispelling the myth that politicians have stolen Social Security money.

As a Certified Public Accountant, I dispel this myth repeatedly to clients, who falsely claim SS funds have been raided. But another thing I deal with often is how SS benefits are calculated. I know the formula for determining each person's benefit amount is complex, but I have had to explain numerous times that

those, who put the most into Social Security get the lowest rate of return and those who put the least in get the highest return based on the way the benefit formula is structured.

I get tired of people complaining that monthly Social Security payments are higher for retired doctors and other highly paid individuals. Can you please explain how Social Security is weighted in favor of lower income workers?

Signed Tired of the Misunderstandings

Dear Tired

Please don't be frustrated. Because of the program's complexity, Social Security is prone to misunderstanding and educating the misinformed is an important professional duty we share. Here's how each person's SS benefit is determined:

The first thing to know is that each person's SS retirement benefit is not based on their financial contributions to the program. Social Security's purpose is to provide a benefit, which replaces a portion of the person's pre-retirement income, so the SS benefit is based on actual lifetime earnings, not on the payroll taxes withheld from those earnings.

Social Security has your lifetime earnings record, obtained annually from the IRS and that record determines your "Primary Insurance Amount." Your "PIA" is initially determined in your eligibility year usually age 62 and is the amount you will get if you claim for benefits to start exactly at your Full Retirement Age.

To develop your PIA, Social Security first adjusts (indexes) each year of your lifetime earnings up to the annual payroll tax cap to account for inflation. They then select the 35 inflation-adjusted years in which you earned the most, from which they compute your average monthly earnings over your lifetime, this is called your Average Indexed Monthly Earnings. They then break your AIME into three segments, the first of which includes a majority of and possibly all of your AIME.

They then take a percentage of each segment and total those three amounts to determine your PIA. The first segment is the largest and 90% of that first segment contributes most of your PIA. Smaller percentages of the other two segments (32% and 15% respectively if your AIME is higher), are then added to the first computation to arrive at your full PIA - the amount you get if you start benefits in the month you reach your FRA. Note that since most of the PIA comes from the first large segment of each person's AIME, lower income workers get a higher percentage of their lifetime average monthly amount.

Since benefits are based on earnings, those with lower lifetime earnings do, indeed, get a smaller benefit than those with higher average lifetime earnings, but the percentage of pre-retirement replacement income lower income workers receive is higher than for

See SECURITY, page 5

60th Anniversary of Beatles invasion



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the Sun
TEAM



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We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions. Libelous, unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks or defamation of character are not allowed.

Deadline for submissions is Wednesday at noon.

Please email (preferred) letters to thesun@turley.com. Mailed letters can be sent to *The Sun*, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069.

in my BACKYARD
By Ellenor Downer

I received an email from a Brimfield resident who counted 36 plus American goldfinch in his yard during a snow storm. The next day he saw about a dozen.

I also had about 20 plus goldfinch eating on the ground under my feeder. I had seen two or three mixed in with juncos and sparrows from time to time, but not this many. In winter, they are found in flocks that wander in search of food.

The American goldfinch is five inches long. The male during breeding season has a bright yellow body and black cap, wings and tail. The wings also have



Goldfinch



Bluebird

white bars. The female is yellowish, green overall with black wings and tail.

In winter, the male looks more like the female with a yellowish brown, yellowish wash on the face and chin and black wings with white wing bars. The female in winter is grayish brown with a little yellow and dark brown wings with white wing bars.

Goldfinch feed on the ground, on weed stalks, thistles and foliage. At feeders, they prefer hulled sunflowers and thistle (Niger) seeds.

The female lays three to seven light, blue eggs in a nest of strands from weeds and vines, downy elements from wind-dispersed seeds such as thistles bound with caterpillar webbing placed in a shrub or tree.

Bluebirds

A flock of about eight male and female bluebirds continue to come to my raisin suet cake and the feeder with mealworms. I fill it once or twice during the day as I enjoy watching them as I work

at my desk. During the snow on Tuesday, they visited the mealworm feeder and suet feeder frequently. The blue against the white snow was almost as striking as the red of the cardinal against fresh snow.

Bald eagles

I received a photo of a pair of bald eagles taken by a Palmer resident at Forest Lake in Palmer. They were in the top of a pine tree by the lake.



Bald eagles

Photo by Kyle Tourville

Brimfield birds

A Brimfield resident sends emails of the birds in his yard on a regular basis. He said, "One day last week a Carolina wren showed up for a day. The warm brown coloration of the bird caught my eye when I glanced out at the feeders. It was feeding on the suet cakes and the 'log' made of suet, berries and mealworms."

He counted 36 plus goldfinch in the yard during a snow storm. The next

day there were over a dozen still about. Usually it is three or four goldfinch that show up.

He shared an email from a friend in Belchertown, "We had a female redwing at the seed trays today. It's unusual to get one here this early. We also had four bluebirds show up and munch on the suet. They seem to make a visit when the weather is crappy.

The Belchertown resident also said, "We're inundated with goldfinch. The thistle seed bag is covered with them. I had to fill the hearts feeder three times today due to the numbers of goldfinch around."

The Brimfield resident reported a large number of juncos, four white-throated sparrows and come house finch. He said, "A pileated woodpecker did a fly by the other day. That is how we most often see then although a few years ago a male was coming to our suet feeders. The female came close to the feeders but never feed that I saw." His wife drove past Wheeler Pond in town and was surprised to see the pond was not completely frozen and that there were two pair of hooded mergansers on the pond.

Birds on Feb. 13

The Brimfield resident observed ten species of birds in his yard during the snow on Tuesday, Feb. 13. He counted five mourning doves, one downy woodpecker, one hairy woodpecker, two black-capped chickadees, three tufted titmice, two house finches, one American goldfish and 80 dark-eyed juncos.

People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by calling me at 413-967-3505, leaving a message at extension 100, emailing mybackyard88@aol.com or edowner@turley.com or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.

SECURITY, from page 4

those with higher monthly average lifetime earnings. The Social Security benefit for lower income workers is typically about 40% of their pre-retirement average monthly income, while those with higher lifetime average earnings may get a benefit as little as 20% of their average monthly pre-retirement earnings.

In that sense, the Social Security benefit formula is progressive and weighted in favor of lower income workers. Nevertheless, albeit a smaller replacement percentage, higher income workers receive a higher monthly SS benefit because of their higher lifetime earnings. Even so, those higher earners did, indeed, contribute more payroll taxes from their higher earnings.

So, each person's SS retirement benefit amount is a percentage of their pre-retirement income. Coincidentally,

those with higher pre-retirement income also contributed more to the Social Security program than did those with lower earnings. But their higher SS benefit amount is based on their higher pre-retirement earnings, not on payroll taxes paid from those higher earnings.

The Association Mature Citizens Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. This article is intended for information purposes and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the Association Mature Citizens Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association. To submit a question, visit amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.

RECEIVERSHIP, from page 1

work with the city and the commissioner to ensure that the best path possible is taken for HPS.

Mayor Joshua Garcia was admittedly disappointed by the lack of concrete response from the commissioner.

He felt that Holyoke should have received a resounding "yes" from the commissioner on the matter and he had hoped to begin laying out a concrete plan to exit receivership.

Instead, Holyoke was told that they would have to continue conversations with the Commissioner.

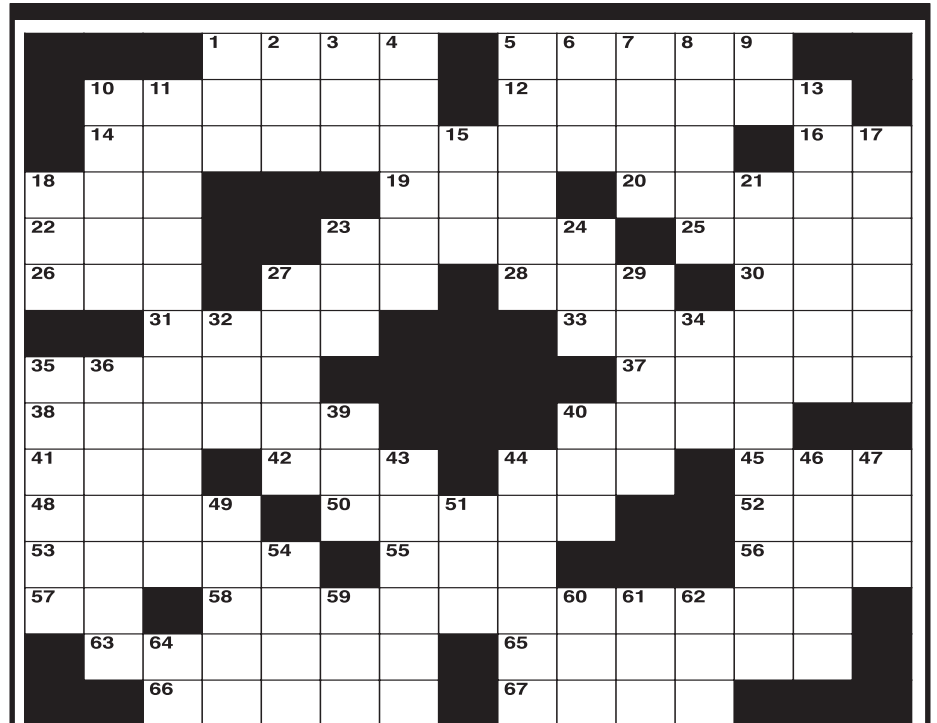
"I have no other thought but to think that the Board of Education and the Commissioner of Education representing the Commonwealth of

Massachusetts have no idea what they're doing or what they want to do with the receivership situation," Garcia wrote in a recent press release.

Garcia encourages residents to reach out to elected officials, the State Board of Education, the Commissioner's Office and the Governor's Office to ask for a "clear path" in regaining local control.

Garcia is grateful for all that Soto has done to support HPS during the process of receivership and the attempt to exit.

"I'm proud of the work our School Committee and Superintendent have done on behalf of Holyoke's students and families," he wrote. "That work will continue, and the day will come when we regain local control."



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Gene type
- 5. Persian male given name
- 10. Type of protection
- 12. Cloud
- 14. One who returns to life
- 16. Gym class
- 18. General's assistant (abbr.)
- 19. Baby's dining accessory
- 20. Enchantress
- 22. Prefix denoting "in a"
- 23. Spiritual leader
- 25. Cavities
- 26. Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
- 27. Foot (Latin)
- 28. Sweet potato
- 30. Pharaoh of Lower Egypt
- 31. Land
- 33. More inquisitive
- 35. Dog breed: __ Apso

CLUES DOWN

- 1. DC Comics superhero
- 2. Brew
- 3. Play
- 4. Single-celled animals
- 5. Rough to the touch
- 6. Small island (British)
- 7. Often noted alongside cons
- 8. Preparation of rootstock
- 9. Atomic #44
- 10. Egyptian unit of capacity
- 11. About secretary
- 13. Particular groups
- 15. Poke fun at
- 17. Make certain that something occurs
- 18. Financial term
- 21. Justify
- 23. Arbitrator
- 24. 007's creato
- 27. Czech name for Prague

CLUES ACROSS

- 37. Stood up
- 38. Direct and uninhibited
- 40. Authorless
- 41. Blocking type of drug (abbr.)
- 42. Retrospective analysis (abbr.)
- 44. Root mean square (abbr.)
- 45. Macaws
- 48. Actress Remini
- 50. Polynesian wrapped skirt
- 52. City of Angels hoops team (abbr.)
- 53. Fitzgerald and Baker are two
- 55. Bowling alley must-have
- 56. A way to cool down
- 57. Ethnic group in Asia
- 58. A way to alter
- 63. Set of five
- 65. Removes from the record
- 66. Dummies

CLUES DOWN

- 29. Groans
- 32. American time
- 34. No seats available
- 35. __ Stahl, journalist
- 36. Cleft lip
- 39. Talk incessantly
- 40. Expresses atomic and molecular weights (abbr.)
- 43. A part of a river where the current is very fast
- 44. Curdled milk
- 46. Running competitions
- 47. A team's best pitcher
- 49. Carthaginian explorer
- 51. World-renowned city
- 54. Most common Japanese surname
- 59. The bill in a restaurant
- 60. They __
- 61. City of Angels football team (abbr.)
- 62. Distinctive practice
- 64. One quintillion bytes

CROSSWORD ANSWER on page 15

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25th HCC Jazz Festival set for March 1 and 2

HOLYOKE – Hot off a win for Best Latin Jazz Album at the 66th annual Grammy awards, pianist, composer, and band leader Luis Perdomo will be the featured guest artist at the 25th anniversary Holyoke Community College Jazz Festival, March 1 and March 2.

The two-day festival opens on Friday, March 1, with an 8 p.m. concert with Perdomo performing with the Amherst Jazz Orchestra under the direction of David Sporny on the stage of the Leslie Phillips Theater in the HCC Fine & Performing Arts building.

The Friday night concert is free for HCC students, faculty and staff, and \$10 for the general public.

“Luis is a great musician, a great teacher, and a great guy,” said festival organizer and HCC music professor

Bob Ferrier. “I know him from the Jazz in July program at UMass, where we teach together. He just won a Grammy for the number one Latin Jazz Album, so that’s special. We’re very happy to have him here at HCC for our 25th anniversary festival.”

The festival will continue on Sat., March 2, in the Leslie Phillips Theater with jazz combo performances. Jazz clinics, workshops and jam sessions will be held throughout the day in the HCC Recital Hall.

Perdomo will conduct two music clinics, one at 11 a.m. and another at 1 p.m.

A concluding concert will be held in the theater Saturday afternoon featuring Perdomo with HCC students and festival faculty.

In addition to his work as a per-

former, Perdomo is a composer, bandleader, and teacher. He began performing in his native Venezuela as a teenager and now makes his home in New York City. He is also an associate professor of music at Berklee in Boston.

A prolific sideman, he has appeared on more than 200 records, playing with the likes of artists such as David Sanchez and David Gilmore as well as recording seven albums as a bandleader. He was a member of Ravi Coltrane’s Quartet for 10 years and is a founding member of the Miguel Zenon Quartet.

The Amherst Jazz Orchestra, led by trombonist David Sporny, has been a mainstay of the HCC Jazz Festival since the first one in 1998. The HCC Jazz Festival has been held every except for 2020 and 2021 when it was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Pianist Luis Perdomo will be featured at the HCC Jazz Festival. Submitted photo

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Easter egg hunt set for March 23

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Parks and Recreation cordially invites the community to Holyoke’s annual Spring Celebration and Easter Egg Hunt. This community event will take place on Saturday, March 23, from 10 am to noon



at Holyoke Heritage State Park.

Enjoy unlimited free rides at the Holyoke Merry Go Round and take pictures with the Easter Bunny.

Music, spring crafts, pony rides and balloons will also be available.

Easter Egg Hunt Times: 10 a.m. - Toddlers; 10:30 a.m. - 4-6-year-olds; 11 a.m. - 7-9-year-olds and

11:30 a.m. - 10 - 12-year-olds.

This event is free of charge and will occur rain or shine. In the event of rain, all activities will be moved inside the Holyoke Merry Go Round.

The Holyoke Children’s Museum will also be open. Children are encouraged to bring their own baskets for egg collecting.

For more information visit our web site at www.holyoke.org or call the Parks & Recreation Department at (413) 322-5620.

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Hibernian Irish Cultural Awards for 2024
www.aoh-holyoke.com

L to R: LAOH President Paula Paoli; Woman of the Year - Patricia A. Clayton; Center - Polish National Credit Union CEO, James P. Kelly, 2024 Christian Charity Award Winner; Man of the Year - John M. Gaughan; AOH President Joe O'Connor

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Knights put hurting on Terriers

HOLYOKE – Last Thursday night, Holyoke boys basketball took down West Springfield 88-53. The big offensive output was Holyoke's largest of the season and came at a good time as the Knights won their 12th game of the season. Dylan Rohan had the big game for the Knights with 28 points. Dominick Renaldi had 17 points for the Knights and 11 different players were able to register points in the win.



Shawn Rivera dribbles into the paint under pressure.



Aden Cabrera dribbles while contemplating a next move.



Jordan King-Perilli flies for the underhand layup.



Luis Figueroa charges the lane.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli



Evangeline Cauley looks to pass inside the arc.



Kylie Blaha tries to keep hold of the ball after making an offensive rebound.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli



Amilyan Treadwell-Mercedes goes for a bank shot.



Jaylaness Santiago fakes before looking to shoot.



Victoria D'Amico eyes a rebound.

Playoff hopes diminished

HOLYOKE – Despite defeating Longmeadow for its fourth win of the season, Holyoke High School girls basketball is falling in the power rankings and will likely not qualify for the state tournament. The Knights do

have two games remaining on its schedule, one against Southwick, and another against SICS, but they are currently ranked No. 41 and are unlikely to make up enough ground to get into the final bracket.

Justin Bonsignore opens season with second-place finish

NEW SMYRNA, FL – Justin Bonsignore drove the No. 51 Phoenix Communications modified to a second-place finish in Saturday's NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour opener at New Smyrna Speedway.

Bonsignore qualified fourth and ran inside the top-five for the duration of the race. After a pit stop in the final 20 laps,

Bonsignore raced from fifth up to second, trying to chase down Ron Silk in the final laps. Although he closed in, he had to settle for second.

The run opened the 2024 season for Bonsignore, who will chase his fourth NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour title in the Ken Massa Motorsports machine this season.

"We were just a little bit too snug on both sets of change tires," Bonsignore said. "All in all, it was a really good night to start the year. We have to thank Phoenix Communications for everything they do for our team and Ryan Stone and the pit crew for a great job with a brand new car they built over the winter. It takes a lot to come down here to Florida to open the season.

We will try and build off this and get better with this new car."

Bonsignore will return to the track driving the No. 30 for Rette Jones Racing in the ARCA Menards Series season opener at Daytona International Speedway on Saturday, February 17. The NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour is back on track at Richmond Raceway on Friday, March 29.

Railers pick up win over Mariners

WORCESTER – This season's Railers have been imperfect, but indefatigable.

Twenty-fours after squandering a three-goal lead and losing in overtime to the Maine Mariners, 5-4, Worcester bounced back Saturday night with a strong effort and a 3-2 victory that was not easy.

Games with Maine never are.

The Railers took a 2-0 lead late into the third period on goals by Artyom Kulakov and Anthony Repaci, then Maine closed the gap on William Provost's goal at 12:57. Given the unhappy endings of Worcester's two previous games with the Mariners, things looked shaky; even shakier when Trevor Cosgrove was called for high sticking at 17:50.

However, Jake Pivonka hit an empty net at 18:54. Sigh of relief?

Not quite. With goalie Shane Starrett on the bench and Cosgrove still in the box, Ethan Ritchie made it 3-2 with 37 seconds left. The Railers kept Maine bottled up in its own zone for the duration, however, and came away with two pure points.

Coach Jordan Smotherman was not surprised with the way his team responded.

"We love our room," he said. "You could tell (Friday) night, even after the game before they left, that the guys were ready to go. That's one of the biggest differences between last year's team and this year's — these guys really want to be here."

The victory extended Worcester's points streak to four games. The

Railers have earned seven of eight points in that time and have 48 points overall. That is five more than both Maine and Trois-Rivieres, tied for fifth.

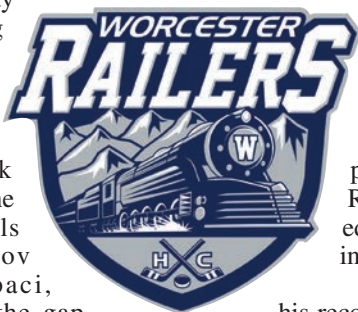
Kulakov gave the Railers a 1-0 lead at 5:52 of the second period as he fired a 35-foot wrist shot past Starrett through a screen. Ashton Calder set him up with a great pass from the right side. Repaci scored shorthanded at 15:04 on a deflection in close.

John Muse improved his record to 9-3-1 with the win. He stopped 26 of Maine's 28 shots. Worcester has earned 19 of a possible 26 points with Muse in goal, a .731 winning percentage.

The triumph sent the Railers off on the longest road trip, time-wise, in franchise history. They will play six games in Florida, three in Orlando against the Solar Bears, then three in Fort Myers against the Florida Everblades. Worcester will be gone for 14 days and does not play another home game this month.

Florida in February — almost every New Englander's dream. Smotherman was asked if he was concerned that the Railers will look at this as a vacation, not a work assignment.

"One hundred percent," he said. "I've been the guy on the Florida trip before. I know how that works, but we trust our group, and that's the other part of it. They are professionals. They need to be professionals. Everything that we've seen so far is that they've bought in and they want to win hockey games."



T-Birds wins on 'Ice-O-Topes' Night

SPRINGFIELD – The Springfield Ice-O-Topes (22-19-3-2) rebounded from a 1-0 deficit to knock off the Hershey Bears (37-9-0-2) by a 6-3 score before a sold-out MassMutual Center crowd of 6,793 on Saturday night.

Neither team could find a firm offensive footing in the opening half of the first period, with both squads going 0-for-2 on their first two power play chances. 20 seconds after Hershey's second man-advantage expired, the visitors finally got the game's opening goal as veteran Garrett Roe crashed the top of the crease to jam a rebound through Malcolm Subban at 14:02 to make it 1-0 for the Bears.

The Ice-O-Topes' second power play came and went, but like the Bears, continuous offensive pressure paid off less than 30 seconds after the advantage concluded. Adam Gaudette made a quick change of direction at the top of the slot area before funneling a shot toward the goal. Zach Bolduc made himself available for a deflection at the edge of the crease, and the rookie executed to perfection, squeezing it past Clay Stevenson to tie the score at 17:48.

With the game tied at 1 after 20 minutes, the 'Topes parlayed Bolduc's goal into a firestorm of offense in the middle frame. It began just 2:55 into the second, as Mathias Laferriere dropped a pass in the left circle for Kean Washkurak, who curled the puck to a better shooting lane and snapped a wrister through Stevenson's five-hole to make it a 2-1 game.

1:35 later, Gaudette was in the middle of the action once again. After Hunter Skinner whipped a pass off Gaudette's foot deep in the left-wing corner, Matthew Peca pushed a second-chance shot wide of the goal. With Stevenson still trying to recover back in front of the net,

Gaudette used the opportunity to bank it off Stevenson's pants and into the twine to extend the lead to 3-1. With the tally, Gaudette vaulted himself back to the top of the AHL goal-scoring race with his 25th of the season.

After a quiet stretch of play yielded nothing on the scoreboard, Hugh McGing changed things with a determined rush deep in the Hershey zone. McGing's pressure caused a mishandle between Stevenson and Dylan McIlrath, and McGing was there to jab a backhand through Stevenson, making it a 4-1 game at 15:24. The pesky winger now has seven points over his last seven games.

Former T-Bird Jake Massie gave Hershey a much-needed reply with a one-time shorthanded goal at 17:42, set up by Jimmy Huntington, and the defending champs were back within two heading into the third.

Chances heavily favored the Bears in the third to the tune of an 18-5 shot discrepancy, but Subban and the defense bent without breaking, and Will Bitten added some extra insurance, beating Stevenson on a breakaway backhand through the wickets at 10:54 to make it 5-2.

The Bears' power play would not allow the game to end quietly, as Alex Limoges redirected a Mike Vecchione shot through Subban at 13:30 to cut the lead to 5-3. However, in the end, the visitors ran out of time, and Dylan Coghlan snapped a 15-game goal drought by drilling an empty net with 48.6 seconds to play to make it four consecutive wins on Ice-O-Topes Night for Springfield.

Springfield next takes its game down to Charlotte for a two-game set against the Checkers inside Bojangles' Coliseum next Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 17-18. Puck drop for both games is set for 4 p.m. in North Carolina.

► In The News

Local woman shares her TAVR success story during heart month

PALMER – When Beverly Flamand of Ware visited her doctor about some shoulder pain she was experiencing, little did she know it would lead to two other potentially life-saving procedures. As part of a pre-op visit to have her shoulder repaired, her doctor referred her to a cardiologist to ensure she was healthy enough to undergo the anesthesia and surgery needed to repair her shoulder.

That visit to Grace LaValley, a cardiology nurse practitioner at Baystate Cardiology in Palmer, would help to ensure that she was healthy enough to undergo the anesthesia and surgery needed to repair her shoulder. It was during that pre-op visit that LaValley, a cardiology nurse practitioner at Baystate Cardiology in Palmer, ordered an echocardiogram, a test that uses sound waves to make a moving picture of her heart, due to a murmur heard on the exam.

"Grace explained that because I occasionally experienced shortness of breath, the test was a safe way to see how well my heart was working," said Flamand. "It was the echocardiogram that showed that my heart valve was

not working as well as it should. Grace explained that a TAVR procedure was recommended and that I was a good candidate for the procedure."

Aortic stenosis is a heart valve disease where the aortic valve narrows, obstructing blood flow from the heart. It is often caused by age-related calcification or fusion of leaflets, congenital heart defects, or rheumatic fever. Common symptoms include chest pain, shortness of breath, fatigue, and fainting.

"A Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement procedure is a minimally invasive alternative to open heart surgery in patients with severe aortic valve stenosis," said Flamand "This innovative treatment option has revolutionized the field of cardiology, providing hope for patients who are not suitable candidates for surgery. The procedure involves a valve that is crimped on the end of a catheter. This catheter is placed in a blood vessel under x-ray. The calcified valve is pushed aside and the new



Beverly Flamand

TAVR valve becomes functional."

"We are now doing more TAVR cases than traditional open-heart aortic valve surgery," said LaValley. "This is because TAVR has now been approved for low-risk patients as well, whereas traditionally it was originally designed for higher-risk and inoperable patients."

Many patients still undergo open-heart surgery, often because their valve isn't anatomically suited for TAVR, and surgery remains an excellent option for some patients.

"I liked that I was going to have a minimally invasive procedure instead of open-heart surgery," said LaValley. "I was scheduled for the TAVR procedure and was home just one day later feeling great. However, a few days later I experienced some lightheadedness and went to the emergency department to get checked out. The ED was very busy, but they took very good care of me, and my daughter was allowed to stay with me. After a few tests, I was told that

my heart was beating too slowly and that I needed a pacemaker. I trusted my doctors and later in the afternoon, I had the pacemaker procedure. Once again, I was back home in one day, feeling even better than before."

"My recommendation to everyone reading my story would be to get checked out, and the sooner the better. I got the best care ever," LaValley said. "The doctors and nurses were unbelievable. They saved my life and have helped me to be able to continue doing the things I love to do, like be with my family and my six grandchildren!"

LaValley, nurse practitioner, joins Dr. Brian Laliberte, chair of Baystate Palmer Cardiology, Dr. Zachry Zichittella, and Elizabeth Jarry, nurse practitioner, the team specializes in both invasive and non-invasive cardiology care, including the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of a wide variety of cardiovascular diagnoses including hypertension, coronary artery disease, heart failure, and valve disease at Baystate Cardiology Palmer. For more information or to make an appointment at Baystate Cardiology in Palmer please call 413-370-7880.



MONEY MATTERS

BUILDING FINANCIAL FUTURES:

PV Financial Group's Commitment to Trust and Personalized Service

In the ever-evolving world of finance, PV Financial Group looks to stand out for its unwavering dedication to building lasting relationships with its clients. At the core of the firm's philosophy is the belief that true financial success is rooted in trust, communication, and a personalized approach.

Trust Beyond Transactions

PV Financial Group takes a refreshing departure from the transactional norms of the financial industry. Instead of focusing solely on transactions, the firm's financial advisors prioritize cultivating strong relationships with their clients. This commitment ensures that every interaction is characterized by a delicate balance of care, skill, diligence, and objectivity.

Communication as the Cornerstone

The firm firmly believes that effective communication is the bedrock of a thriving client-advisor relationship. PV Financial Group's comprehensive process involves open and transparent communication to understand each client's unique financial situation, goals, and preferences. This commitment to communication extends through every step of developing and managing clients' financial lives.

A Team of Professionals

PV Financial Group boasts a team of trained and courteous financial profes-

sionals who collaborate seamlessly to provide clients with the highest level of personalized service. Through continuous training, the team stays well-informed and equipped to navigate the complexities of the financial landscape. The courteous approach reflects the firm's commitment to treating clients with respect and professionalism.

Comprehensive and Meticulous Approach

The firm's comprehensive process involves a meticulous examination of each client's financial needs and aspirations. Financial advisors exercise balance, care, and skill in crafting personalized financial plans, considering factors such as risk tolerance, financial goals, and market conditions. Diligence is a hallmark of PV Financial Group's approach, ensuring thorough research, analysis, and ongoing monitoring of clients' portfolios.

Objectivity in Action

Objectivity is a guiding principle in decision-making at PV Financial Group. Financial advisors maintain a clear and objective perspective, always acting in the best interests of the clients. This commitment ensures that recommendations align with each client's unique circumstances and financial objectives, fostering a relationship built on trust and integrity. PV Financial Group, through its cli-

ent-centric approach, aims to be a reliable partner on the journey toward financial success for every client. With a focus on trust, effective communication, and a team of dedicated professionals, the firm is making waves in the financial landscape by prioritizing relationships over

transactions. As we navigate the intricate world of finance, PV Financial Group stands out as a beacon of personalized and trustworthy financial guidance, dedicated to building a secure and prosperous future for its clients.




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THE ROAD TO

Financial Wellness

The Benefits of Using a Financial Planner

In today's complex financial world, many investors seek out financial planners to help them navigate the intricacies of personal finance. The benefits of having expert financial help are manifold, including investment advice, retirement planning, tax strategies and estate planning.

Most financial planners collaborate with their clients to choose an asset allocation that melds the client's risk tolerance with their goals. After investments are chosen, often the advisor plays the role of cheerleader. Keeping clients from making rash decisions and veering off course from their financial plan may be one of the most important roles an advisor plays. All advisors have seen clients panic and try to make changes to portfolios in response to political or economic events that soon pass.

Retirement planning may be one of the most important acts that an advisor can perform. Everyone would love a stress-free retirement. A good planner can help calculate how much you will need to save to retire. He or she will also create a

strategy for claiming social security and any pensions in order to meet retirement spending needs.

An often-overlooked benefit of having a good financial expert is tax planning. Should you invest in a traditional 401k or a Roth? When should you begin withdrawing from your taxable accounts? Do you have to pay taxes on social security? When do you need to take Required Minimum Distributions and are you taking the correct amount?

In addition to all the above, proper estate planning is imperative to make sure that your assets end up where you would like them to, with the least amount of hassle. Do you need trust or is your will sufficient? Is your house protected from Medicaid in the future? Hiring a good financial expert can greatly enhance your financial life.

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- Collecting all life insurance, rents, and other amounts due to the estate.
- Preparing and filing estate and inheritance federal and state tax returns.
- Paying related estate and inheritance taxes.
- Preparing a final accounting of the estate.
- Distributing the estate to the beneficiaries as directed by the Will.



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New amendment added to gun bill by Velis

BOSTON – During the Senate’s gun bill debate, an amendment by Sen. John Velis (D-Westfield) was unanimously adopted with bi-partisan support to create a legal mechanism to ensure that repeat violent offenders of gun crimes, who have violated the conditions of their release can be detained until trial.

The amendment, which was supported by both the Massachusetts Chief of Police Association and the Massachusetts District Attorney Association, focuses directly on individuals without a license-to-carry who have been charged with a gun or violent offense, released following a hearing, and who subsequently have violated the conditions of that release by committing yet another gun crime or violent offense.

“If we keep allowing repeat violent firearm offenders who have no regard for the conditions of their release, our gun laws, or human life back on the streets then we are going to continue to see lives lost by senseless violence and

families forever devastated by what should have been preventable,” stated Velis. “The violent gun crimes that we are seeing and hearing about in our communities, are overwhelmingly being committed by individuals without a legal license to have a gun, who have a known demonstrable propensity for violence, and it’s past time that we had a mechanism to address that.”

“I am fully supportive of this amendment as it will give law enforcement an additional tool in keeping victims and the general public safe from those who repeatedly pose significant risk to public safety.” said Hampden District Attorney Anthony D. Gulluni. “We are increasingly seeing the same offenders out in our community brazenly re-offend and ignore our serious gun and drug laws. This would be a signif-



Sen. John Velis

icant step in keeping law abiding people and families safe in their communities.”

In the Velis’s floor remarks, he noted several recent gun crimes in Western Massachusetts that this amendment aims to address, including the arrest of an individual charged with murder just last week in Springfield. The individual had not only been convicted of a prior firearm offense but was out on bail for three separate gun charges at the time of his arrest. Velis also recounted the tragic death of an infant this past fall in the City of Holyoke where an innocent pregnant woman was struck by a stray bullet while traveling on a PVT bus resulting in devastating loss of her baby. One of the suspects charged with the infant’s horrific murder was out on bail for an unrelated open firearm charge at

the time of the shooting.

“We cannot lose sight of all the people who live in constant fear of the gun violence happening right outside their front door or across the street from their child’s school on a daily basis by the offenders who are released over, and over, and over again,” said Velis, who noted that the City of Springfield’s shot spotter had picked up 9 separate instances of gun fire on Wednesday afternoon, including a couple hundred yards away from an elementary school. “We have an opportunity today that would send a clear message to these violent repeat offenders, if you are released for a violent crime or unlawful gun offense and go back into our communities and cause more of the same havoc you will be detained until your trial, and we will not let you cause more senseless harm.”

With the amendment included in the Senate’s final gun bill, the legislation will now be a part of the House-Senate negotiations on a final compromise bill.

Trolley Museum looking for volunteers

EAST WINDSOR, CT – Connecticut Trolley Museum will hold a Volunteer Recruitment Day on Feb.17. There will be two sessions to visit, 10 a.m.to noon and 1 to 3 p.m. Visit alone or bring the family. There will be snacks and refreshments to enjoy. Registration is required at www.ct-trolley.org.

Join the Museum for our Volunteer Open House. The Museum was founded in 1940 and ever since than the Museum has relied on volunteers who are enthusiastic about volunteering. Without volunteers the Museum would not be able to exist and serve the mission of interpretation, preservation, and education of Trolley History. Volunteers do not have

to specifically be enthusiastic about trolley history to volunteer at the Museum. There are many departments to fulfill your volunteer need such as- Education, Operating, Woodworking, Mechanical Work, Restoration, Grounds Works, Track Work, Signal & Communication Work, Special Events, Clerical Work, Tour Guides and more.

The Connecticut Trolley Museum is located at 58 North Road (Rt. 140) and is a short 15 minutes north of Hartford or a short 15 minutes south of Springfield. For more information, please call our business office at 860-627-6540 or visit our website at www.ct-trolley.org.



Valley Opportunity Council starts 2024 tax assistance program

HOLYOKE – Valley Opportunity Council, which manages the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program providing free tax preparation to those of low- and moderate-income, has begun its 2024 tax preparations on Monday, Jan. 29.

VITA in-person tax preparation appointments are available from Jan 29 through May 15 at 35 Mt. Carmel Ave., Chicopee; 300 High Street, Holyoke; and new this year, 20 Lathrop Street in West Springfield.

To schedule an appointment, call (413) 612-0206. Those eligible for the VITA program must live in Massachusetts with an income of up to \$60,000. Appointments are available on weekdays, evenings and Sundays.

Certified volunteer tax professionals help qualified individuals prepare and file basic state and federal tax returns and prior year returns. VOC also offers free electronic filing (e-filing) of tax returns, allowing for individuals to receive their refunds much quicker than paper filings.

The core mission and goal of VITA is to assist low- to moderate-income taxpayers in satisfying their tax responsibilities and minimize financial hardships, in turn saving taxpayers thousands of dollars in filing fees.

In 2023, VOC helped 743 individuals file their state and federal tax returns through the VITA program. VOC has been providing the VITA program for 25 years in the communities of Chicopee, Holyoke, and more recently, Westfield.

The Valley Opportunity Council is the largest and most diverse Community Action Agency in Western Massachusetts with an annual budget of \$45 million. With this Federal designation, the VOC has established a powerful network of support and collaborative services intended to encourage community members to actively achieve self-sufficiency for themselves and their families. VOC employs over 250 staff members and has 150 local vendors, providing a significant economic investment in the community.

Consider becoming an organ donor and help save lives with that decision

SPRINGFIELD – Consider adding becoming an organ donor.

“Every nine minutes a new person is added to the national transplant wait list, which is already overcrowded with more than 100,000 men, women and children waiting for a lifesaving organ. Over 40,000 transplants were performed in 2022, a record year for transplants in the United States, but many more people could benefit from a lifesaving organ transplant,” said Dr. Kenneth McPartland, Medical Director, Transplant Division, Baystate Health, in a press release.

Making your wishes known is easy. If you would like to become a donor, your wishes can be indicated on your driver’s license, or you can register online at www.donatelife.net/register.

While doing so, let your family know about your decision to become an organ donor so that they along with friends know and understand your wishes in advance.

There are many common misconceptions about donation that persist today.

Donate Life America offers the following facts to help you better understand organ, eye and tissue donation:

- Anyone can be a potential donor regardless of age, race, or medical history.
- All major religions in the United States support organ, eye and tissue dona-

tion and see it as the final act of love and generosity toward others.

- If you are sick or injured and admitted to the hospital, the number one priority is to save your life. Organ, eye and tissue donation can only be considered after you are deceased.

- When you are on the waiting list for an organ, what really counts is the severity of your illness, time spent waiting, blood type, and other important medical information, not your financial status or social status.

- An open casket funeral is possible for organ, eye and tissue donors. Through the entire donation process the body is treated with care, respect and dignity.

- There is no cost to the donor or their family for organ or tissue donation.

- Information about an organ donor is only released to the recipient if the family of the donor requests or agrees to it.

“Deceased donors leave a legacy by giving the gift of life after they pass, but did you know that this gift can be given during your lifetime? As a living kidney donor, an individual can live a long and healthy life with one kidney while giving someone else a second chance at life,”



Dr. Kenneth McPartland

said Nancy Dias, BSN, RN, Living Donor Coordinator, Baystate Medical Center.

Baystate Medical Center offers many options in living kidney donation. The transplant program works closely with the National Kidney Registry as a Donor Care Center of Excellence to facilitate national exchanges or kidney swaps, as well as voucher donations.

Compatible and incompatible pairs can donate and receive kidneys with one of the many options available. Visit the NKR website for more information <https://www.kidney-registry.org/>.

Baystate Transplant Program offers the only Transplant Services in western Massachusetts for adult patients requiring kidney transplantation. In 2023, Baystate has performed close to 70 kidney transplants, the most ever performed in a single year since the program started over 30 years ago.

The program has over 150 patients on the national transplant waiting list and is continuing to find ways to increase access to kidney transplantation.

Today, more and more people are making a difference in someone’s life

by becoming a living kidney donor to a patient on the Baystate Health waiting list, an alternative to waiting for a kidney from a deceased donor. More information about the process of living donation is available on the Baystate Health Transplant Program website at baystatehealth.org/transplant.

Transplant surgeons use the latest techniques, including minimally invasive surgery, so that patients experience a faster recovery and spend less time in the hospital. In addition to experienced surgeons, the Baystate Transplant Team includes nephrologists, nurse transplant coordinators, dietitians, pharmacists, social workers, financial counselors, as well as administrative and clinical assistants to help guide patients through the process.

Living or deceased donor renal transplants are offered as treatment of end-stage renal disease.

Life is meant to be shared. It takes only five minutes to sign up as an organ donor at www.organdonor.gov/sign-up.

To learn more about becoming a living kidney donor, call Baystate Medical Center’s Transplant Program at 413-794-2321 Option 2 and speak with the living donor coordinator or sign on to the Baystate Transplant website at baystatehealth.org/transplant for a confidential screening process.

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THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION – HIGHWAY DIVISION NOTICE OF A PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING

Project File No. 613320

Public Informational Meetings (PIMs) will be held by MassDOT to discuss the proposed Corridor Improvements on High and Maple Streets project in Holyoke, MA. For convenience, the following two meeting venues, with similar contents, are offered:

IN-PERSON:

WHERE:

Holyoke Public Library
250 Chestnut Street
Holyoke, MA 01040

WHEN: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 @ 5:30 PM

VIRTUAL:

WHERE: <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/highway-division/events>

WHEN: Wednesday, March 6, 2024 @ 5:30 PM

PURPOSE: The purpose of these meetings is to provide the public with the opportunity to become fully acquainted with the proposed Corridor Improvements on High and Maple Streets project and solicit input. All views and comments made at the meeting will be reviewed and considered to the maximum extent practical.

PROPOSAL: The proposed project consists of transportation safety and mobility improvements along the High Street and Maple

Street corridors from South Street to Lyman Street in Downtown Holyoke. The project is still in the preliminary design phase. At the project meeting, MassDOT and their team will present the project scope, discuss the existing conditions, and solicit feedback from the community with respect to current concerns and challenges on High Street and Maple Street from a transportation safety and mobility perspective that will help to inform the development of future design concepts. Safe and accessible conditions for all modes of transportation including walking, biking, transit (bus), and driving will be considered in accordance with applicable design guidelines.

This location is accessible to people with disabilities. MassDOT provides reasonable accommodations and/or language assistance free of charge upon request (including but not limited to interpreters in American Sign Language and languages other than English, open or closed captioning for videos, assistive listening devices and alternate material formats, such as audio tapes, Braille and large print), as available. For accommodation or language assistance, please contact MassDOT's Chief Diversity and Civil Rights Officer by phone (857-368-8580), fax (857-368-0602), TTD/TTY (857-368-0603) or by email (MassDOT.CivilRights@dot.state.ma.us). Requests should be made as soon as possible prior to the meeting, and for more difficult to arrange services

including sign-language, CART or language translation or interpretation, requests should be made at least ten (10) business days before the meeting. **If special accommodation is requested, please indicate whether it is for the in-person meeting on Feb 28th or the virtual meeting on March 6th.**

In the event of inclement weather, a cancellation announcement will be posted on the internet at <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/highway-division/events>.

JONATHAN GULLIVER
HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR

CARRIE E. LAVALLEE
CHIEF ENGINEER
02/16, 02/23/2024

Notice of Public Hearing

The Ordinance Committee of the Holyoke City Council and the Planning Board will hold separate public hearings to hear a zoning ordinance change proposal to allow cannabis businesses beyond the IG zone and allow priority for social equity applicants and those negatively impacted by war on drugs. Ordinance Committee meeting will take place on **Wednesday, February 28, 2024 at 6:30 pm** at Holyoke City Hall 536 Dwight St and can be accessed remotely via www.zoom.us Meeting ID 838 4251 5233 Meeting Passcode 202874 or by call in at 1-646-558-8656 with same Meeting ID and Passcode. Planning Board meeting will take place on **Tuesday, February 27, 2024 at 5:30 pm** at City Hall Annex, 20 Korean Veterans Plaza, Room

403, and can be accessed remotely via www.zoom.us Meeting ID: 836 3939 8493 or by call in at 1-646-558-8656 with same meeting ID. To provide comments to the Ordinance Committee, please contact City Council Admin Asst Jeffery Anderson-Burgos at Anderson-BurgosJ@holyoke.org or by phone 413-322-5525. To provide comments to the Planning Board, please contact Jeff Burkott at JBurkott@holyoke.org

Ordinance Chair
Israel Rivera

Planning Chair
Mimi Panitch
02/09, 02/16/2024

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Probate and Family Court 50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 (413)748-7758 Docket No. HD24P0217PO

In the matter of: The 2015 Gerald E. Kelly Revocable Trust TRUST CITATION

To all interested persons: A Petition has been filed by: **Ruth Pinon of Suffield CT** requesting the Removal of McClair Mailhott as Trustee and Appointment of Ruth Pinon as Successor Trustee to serve **Without Sureties on the Bond.**

You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this

Court before 10:00 a.m. on **03/08/2024.**

This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an Affidavit of Objections within thirty (30) days of the return date, action may be taken without further notice to you.

WITNESS, Hon. **Barbara M Hyland**, First Justice of this Court.

Date: February 09, 2024
Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate
02/16/2024

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

The Holyoke Planning Board will hold a Public Hearing on **Thursday, March 7, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. via Zoom.com**; ID: 878 0431 1703 CALL IN *67 646 558 8656 to hear the petition of Volta Charging, LLC who is requesting a variance from Section 6.4.3.6 (Electric Signs) and Section 6.4.6.8 (a) (off-Premises Signs) for the property located at 28 Lincoln Street, Holyoke, MA. (073-00-034).

For a complete copy of the application contact Planning at 413-322-5575.

APPLICANT:
Volta Charging, LLC.
BOA: Josh Knox
02/16, 02/23/2024

City of Holyoke PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

The Holyoke Planning Board will hold a Public

Hearing on **Tuesday, February 27, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom.com**; ID: 836 3939 8493 CALL IN *646 558 8656 to hear, pursuant to the Holyoke Zoning Ordinance Sec 6.1.9, a Special Permit to allow for a common driveway located on 525-527 Pleasant Street (091-00-073).

For a complete copy of the application contact Planning at 322-5575.

APPLICANT:
Alex Vilkhovoy
PLANNING BOARD:
Mimi Panitch
02/09, 02/16/2024

Notice of Public Hearing

The Ordinance Committee of the Holyoke City Council will hold a public hearing on **Wednesday, February 28, 2024 at 6:30pm** to hear a special permit application extension ACMJ Inc to build and operate a marijuana cultivation and processing establishment at 532 Main St (026-03-012) Meeting will take place at Holyoke City Hall 536 Dwight St and can be accessed remotely via www.zoom.us Meeting ID 838 4251 5233 Meeting Passcode 202874 or by call in at 1-646-558-8656 with same Meeting ID and Passcode. For an electronic copy of this application or to provide comments for the public hearing, please contact City Council Admin Asst Jeffery Anderson-Burgos at Anderson-BurgosJ@holyoke.org or by phone 413-322-5525.

Ordinance Chair
Israel Rivera
02/09, 02/16/2024

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The Holyoke Sun
OBITUARY POLICY

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Holyoke Sun





Executive Director of the Volleyball Hall of Fame George Mulry welcomed all attendees to the press conference on the sports complex in Holyoke.



Director of Planning and Economic Development Aaron Vega discussed the financial opportunities the sports complex could bring to Holyoke.



Mayor Joshua Garcia showed his support for the sports complex. *Turley photos by Quinn Suomala*

COMPLEX, from page 1

4-star hotels here in Holyoke,” Chief Operating Officer of the Project Andrew Melendez said.

Additionally, it is estimated that each visitor to the complex will bring in \$147, between going out to eat, visiting the children’s museum in Holyoke and otherwise supporting the local economy.

Overall, Ruiz estimates that this will be about \$100 million of privately invested funds into the city of Holyoke, and that it will generate millions of economic impact for the community.

“Holyoke is going to have a renaissance with this initiative,” Ruiz said.

The indoor facility should bring in \$15 million in economic engine yearly and the outdoor facility will bring in \$26 million, making the complex to have an estimated \$41 million economic drive.

It will also bring many new jobs to the city. Just in the first year of the indoor facility, it should bring in 12 full-time staff and 30 part-time staff.

“This is staff that will be making \$100,000;

\$70,000; \$80,000; \$90,000,” Melendez said. “These aren’t low paying jobs.”

Melendez also mentioned that they plan to work with Holyoke Public Schools to ensure that students have access to the facility for their training and games.

“Holyoke is going to have a renaissance with this initiative.”

- Cesar Ruiz

Holyoke is a great city for a sports complex. With its connections to volleyball, Holyoke already draws a lot of attention for athletics. This complex will capitalize on that.

“Having a sports complex has been a desire of many Holyokers from every corner of this city since I was a kid, simply because we are a sports city,” Garcia said.

To ensure this project would stay on the right track, Ruiz brought in Sports Facility Company, based out of Clearwater Florida.

“They eat and breathe sports complexes,” Ruiz said. “From 30,000 square feet to 200,000 square feet across this country.”

This company has built at least 70 sports complexes throughout the United States, and Ruiz has faith in their ability to help bring the best to Holyoke.

“We’ve selected the gold standard of the industry,” Ruiz said.

Ruiz’s goal moving forward is to finalize the sites for the locations of the complex, ideally by March in time for this presentation with the Massachusetts Development in mid-March.

Then he hopes to have a beginning date of construction in early 2025.

Ideally, Ruiz hopes to have the first ribbon cutting for one of the locations by the end of 2026.

In the meantime, Garcia and others working on the project hope to get a stakeholder group together so community members can weigh in on the topic.

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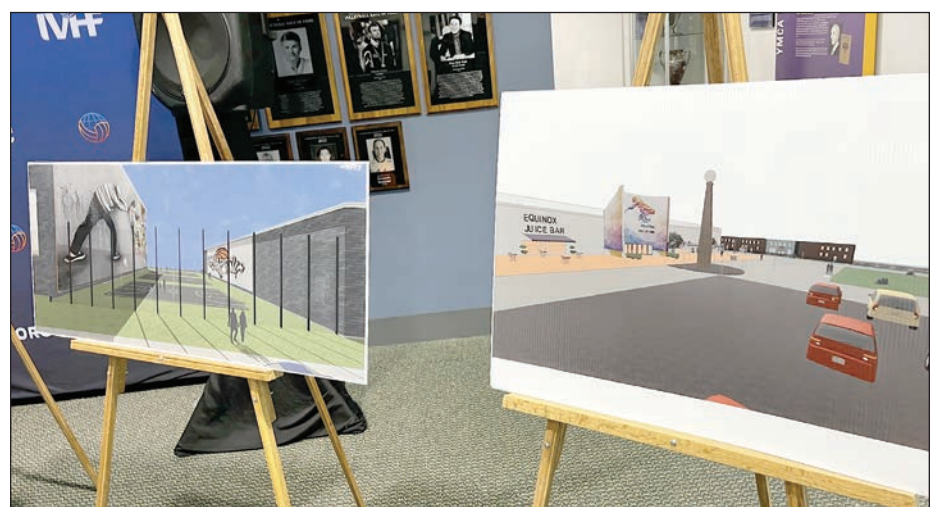
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The drawings were available to view at the press conference.



The complex would have multiple sports facilities and plenty of parking.



A rendering of the indoor facility being proposed.