

Too little, too late for Providence

PC's furious come back for naught vs. UConn

SPORTS, B1



THE TIMES

Friday, March 10, 2023



S&G tribute to play PPAC

Duo re-creates legendary folk-rock show

SPORTS, B1



Photos by Ernest A. Brown

Davies Career and Technical Director Mary Watkins, right, leads a tour of the aging Davies facility with Governor Dan McKee, Rhode Island Department of Education Deputy Commissioner of Instructional Programs Lisa Odom-Villella, RIDE CEO Mario Carreno and Rhode Island state legislators and officials from the William M. Davies, Jr. Career and Technical High School on Wednesday.

McKee touts school spending during tour of Davies Tech

By JON BAKER

jbaker@pawtuckettimes.com

LINCOLN - When Gov. Dan McKee proposed his FY24 #RI-Ready Budget months ago, he specifically requested \$35 million in financing from the R.I. Capital Plan Fund over the next three years for the redesign of and reconstruction of the 1970s wing at the William M. Davies, Jr. Career & Technical High

School.

On Wednesday morning, McKee, R.I. Department of Education Deputy Commissioner of Instructional Programs Lisa Odom-Villella, RIDE Chief Operating Officer Mario Carreno, Town Administrator Phil Gould and other town and state officials went on a guided tour of the 50-plus year old wing.

Led by School Director Mary Watkins, she pointed out numerous

issues, including leaky, old windows, cracks in concrete, under-utilized or unused hallways and square footage and other problems costing the state money.

McKee now will use that information to reinforce his request, as it's so badly needed.

"Through the RIReady budget, we will transform Davies Career &

See DAVIES, page A2



Photos by Cat Lane

From left, Hillel Rosenshine (Jonah), Nora Eschenheimer (Melody), Sarah Corey (Daphna), John Hardin (Liam) perform in the Gamm Theatre production of "Bad Jews."

Gamm Theatre's 'Bad Jews' explores heated family drama

By KATHIE RALEIGH

Contributing Writer

WARWICK - Joshua Harmon's provocatively titled play "Bad Jews" is heating up the stage - and the sidewalks - at the Sandra Feinstein-Gamm Theatre.

The "heat" outside was a peaceful protest about the title, but inside it was all about the scintillating performances by a cast of four, directed

with insight and even-handedness by Tony Estrella, The Gamm's artistic director.

The story brings together three cousins following the death of their beloved Poppy, a grandfather who survived the Holocaust. It's New York City and accommodations are scarce, so the cousins and one girlfriend all are staying in one, cramped apartment.

Amid the heightened emotions

funerals and families can generate, the cousins get into a heated dispute over who should inherit a religious heirloom deeply tied to Poppy's life.

Daphna, the one most zealously devoted to Judaism, believes the piece is most meaningful to her. Liam, her more secular cousin, lays claim by reason of being, among other things, the eldest. In the middle is

See Gamm, page A3

Council again denies Halo Lounge's name, model changes

By JON BAKER

jbaker@pawtuckettimes.com

PAWTUCKET - For the second time in six weeks, the City Council, acting as the Board of License Commissioners, voted unanimously (9-0) on Wednesday night to deny the owner of the Halo Lounge to not only change its name to Halo Lounge & Hookah but also allow it to sell and serve hookah.

At-Large City Councilor Neicy Narcisa Coderre cited the "Doctrine of Administrative Finality" as the reason for the latest rejection. Simply put, that means Proto, first, made the request too quickly, and, second, did so without providing concrete evidence it had changed back to the original business model.

The reasons for the "double denial" run deep, but in effect stems from the fact that before the board issued Halo Owner Diana Proto a Class B victualling license last August, she and second owner Jeremiah Sullivan had told the members they wanted to provide an upscale atmosphere where folks and/or families could grab a nice meal and a couple of cocktails while listening to light jazz or R&B music.

In November and December, however, board members learned Proto had shifted from that initial concept, was selling hoo-

kah and allowing its use despite state law prohibiting such, and that she was hosting a weekly event called "Thursday Night Vibz."

When Proto asked for the change in name and business model in a meeting on Jan. 11, Council President Terry Mercer - after viewing questionable videos of the occurrences at one Thursday Night Vibz session - said it looked more like a nightclub than a lounge, and that irked Proto, but not enough to prevent her from asking again on Wednesday.

Since that previous meeting on Jan. 25, "police details have stopped by the lounge on a weekly basis, and we've been in compliance," Proto told the board during the public hearing. "We've lost business. I would say our clients like hookah; hookah has never caused any problems for us. We've had a lot of folks come into Halo requesting hookah, and some folks stay and many leave once they find out we don't have it. Understandably so.

"I will say that we don't want to be a hookah lounge; we don't want to be known as Halo the hookah bar," she added. "We just want the opportunity to offer it when folks ask for it. We have limited hours for hookah because not everybody wants it, but

See LOUNGE, page A2

'Master thief' convicted of Super Bowl ring theft back in prison

FALL RIVER, Mass. (AP) - The self-described "master thief" and New England Patriots fan convicted of stealing New York Giants Super Bowl rings in 2008 is back behind bars after a judge determined he had violated the terms of his probation, prosecutors said.

Sean Murphy, 58, was sentenced last Thursday in Fall River Superior Court to 18 months in state prison for, among other things, allegedly posing as

a homeless veteran and soliciting donations outside a supermarket for a fake veterans' charity, according to a statement Wednesday from the office of Bristol District Attorney Thomas Quinn III.

The judge also determined he had lied to his probation officer on multiple occasions about his whereabouts and place of residence, the DA's office said.

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# Letter claims cartel handed over men who killed Americans

By **ALFREDO PEÑA, MARK STEVENSON and JAMES POLLARD**

Associated Press

CIUDAD VICTORIA, Mexico (AP) — A letter claiming to be from the Mexican drug cartel blamed for abducting four Americans and killing two of them condemned the violence and said the gang turned over to authorities its own members who were responsible.

In a letter obtained by The Associated Press through a Tamaulipas state law enforcement official, the Scorpions faction of the Gulf cartel apologized to the residents of Matamoros where the Americans were kidnapped, the Mexican woman who died in the cartel shootout, and the four Americans and their families.

“We have decided to turn over those who were directly involved and responsible in the events, who at all times acted under their own decision-making and lack of discipline,” the letter reads, adding that those individuals had gone against the cartel’s rules, which include “respecting the life and well-being of the innocent.”

Drug cartels have been known to issue communiques to intimidate rivals and authorities, but also at times like these as public relations work to try to smooth over situations that could affect their business. And last Friday’s violence in Matamoros was bad for cartel business.

The Americans’ killings brought National Guard troops and an Army special forces outfit running patrols that “heat up the plaza” in narco terminology, Mexican security analyst David Saucedo said.

“It is very difficult right now for them to continue working in terms of street-level drug sales and transferring drugs to the United States; they are the first ones interested in closing this chapter as soon as possible,” Saucedo said.

A photograph of five bound men face-down on the pavement accompanied the letter, which was shared with The Associated Press by the official on condition that they remain anonymous because they were not authorized to share the document.

State officials did not immediately publicly confirm having new suspects in custody.

A separate state security official said that five men had been found tied up inside one of the vehicles that authorities had been searching for, along with the letter. That official also spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak about the case.

The cousin of one of the victims said his family feels “great” knowing that Eric Williams, who was shot in the left leg, is alive but does not accept any apologies from the cartel blamed for kidnapping the Americans.

“It ain’t gonna change nothing about the suffering that we went through,” Jerry Wallace told the AP on Thursday. Wallace, 62, called for the American and Mexican governments to better address cartel violence.

Last Friday, the four Americans crossed into Matamoros from Texas so that one of them could have cosmetic surgery. Around midday, they were fired on in downtown Matamoros and then loaded into a pickup truck. A Mexican woman, Areli Pablo Servando, 33, was also killed, apparently by a stray bullet.

Another friend, who remained in Brownsville, called police

after being unable to reach the group that crossed the border Friday morning.

Brownsville Police Department spokesman Martin Sandoval said Thursday that officers followed protocol by checking local hospitals and jails after receiving the report of the missing people. A detective was assigned to the case within the hour and then alerted the FBI after realizing the people had crossed into Mexico. Shortly after, the FBI took over the case as social media videos began to show a shootout with the victims matching the description of the missing people.

Authorities located them Tuesday morning on the outskirts of the city, guarded by a man who was arrested. Zindell Brown and Shaheed Woodard died in the attack; Williams and Latavia McGee survived.

On Thursday, two hearses carrying the bodies of Woodard and Brown crossed the international bridge to Brownsville, where the remains were handed over to U.S. authorities.

Woodard’s cousin, McGee, had surprised him with the fatal road trip as a birthday get-

away, according to his father, James Woodard. He said he was speechless upon hearing that the cartel had apologized for the violent abduction that killed his son and was captured in footage that quickly spread online.

“Just being helpless — not to be able to do anything, not to be able to go there and just rescue them — it’s real painful,” James Woodard said.

Thursday’s letter was not an unheard of cartel tactic.

Cartels’ community relations efforts are well-known within Mexico. In contested territory, one cartel might hang banners around a city blaming a rival for recent violence and distinguishing themselves as the gang that does not mess with civilians.

Last November, such banners appeared around Guanajuato state, purportedly written by the Jalisco New Generation cartel, that blamed a rival for a spate of killings in bars and other businesses.

In other situations, the message is more blunt: Bodies are left inside a vehicle with a note or hung from a highway overpass on a heavily transited road. The motivation is terror.

## Lounge

Continued from page A1

there is a significant group of folks, especially during our more popular events, like Sunday Brunch.

“Our customers are requesting hookah, so we’d love the opportunity to increase our business and offer hookah to those who request it. We’d like to be approved for that change of use and see how it goes, prove that there are no problems associated with that hookah use.”

Mercer immediately told

Proto, “There seems to be a miscommunication or a misconception as to why it was denied last time. It had nothing to do with compliance or things of that nature. It had to do with the significant departure from what you told us you were going to do, and we unanimously denied it.”

As part of the public hearing, Sullivan spoke via Zoom, and said that the establishment hasn’t changed its concept, and that everything he and Proto had initially pitched to the board last August is true to form now.

“I just want to address any reservations the board may have with hookah because I don’t think hookah is the reason for any issues,” Sullivan said.

Coderre disagreed.

“Last December 7, Halo Lounge submitted a formal request asking to be allowed to provide hookah at the licensed premises and to change its fictitious name,” she said. “On Jan. 25, Halo Lounge was given the opportunity to speak; that night, this board voted unanimously to deny that request.”

“The very next day, the board’s denial was formalized in the form of a communication issued by the City Clerk,” she continued. “Just two weeks later, Halo Lounge submitted a second request which was identical to the one of Dec. 7, 2022, the one we denied.”

“The doctrine of administrative finality requires that when an agency like

the Board of License Commissioners receive a request and denies it, a subsequent request may not be granted if it’s absent in showing a material or substantial change in circumstances in between the two requests.

“After reviewing the two requests, I see no difference between their respective conscience and unwillingness to demonstrate that somehow there has been a substantial or material change.”

After the board denied the ask, Proto remained standing by the podium and appeared confused.

“You asked, and we said, ‘No,’” Mercer told her. “You came back three weeks later and said, ‘I’m asking again.’ The answer

is nothing has changed since we first made the unanimous decision, so there’s nothing for us to act on. There’s no change in circumstances. You asked us if you could change your name and business strategy to include hookah — you were denied.

“You’ve come back with nothing new except, ‘We’d like to try again.’”

Proto responded, “What would I have to do to show how that’s changed?” and Mercer replied, “I don’t know what you could show.” Proto then asked, “Then how do I ever do this again if there’s nothing I can show?”

Mercer answered, “Perhaps never. You can continue to apply, but the fact is nothing has changed. You

asked us back in August for a license, told us how you planned to move forward, and we gladly gave you the license, but then found that you had moved forward in a different way. You said you wanted to change from what you had originally told us you were going to do.

“We listened to you, and we said, ‘We disagree,’” he added. “Now you’re back before us with no change in circumstance other than you’d like to try again, so that whole doctrine is carried out through zoning, through licensing and through all sorts of administrative proceedings. Nothing has changed, so there’s nothing for us to really consider.”

## BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE



**Maria R. Neves**

March 10

She was a mother so very rare  
Content in her home  
and always there  
On Earth she toiled,  
In Heaven she rests  
God bless you mother  
You were the best.  
Love, Brother, Children  
& Spouses, Granddaughters &  
Spouses and Great-Grandchildren

## Thief

Continued from page A1

According to media reports, Murphy was charged in Essex County with violating the state’s stolen valor law by dressing in camouflage shorts and Marine Corps T-shirt

and collecting donations outside a Whole Foods in Swampscott in September 2021.

A clerk magistrate in Lynn District Court issued a criminal complaint Tuesday.

Message were left Wednesday with two attorneys for Murphy, Frank Sanchez and Col-

leen Tynan.

Murphy, described by authorities as a career criminal, was the leader of a group that disabled the alarm and cut a hole in the roof of the E.A. Dion Inc. jewelry company in Attleboro, Massachusetts, in 2008 and stole \$2 million worth of gems, precious metals

and Super Bowl Rings for the Giants, who had beaten the Patriots 17-14 in February 2008 to spoil the Patriots effort for an undefeated season. The rings were later recovered.

After years of delays, Murphy was convicted of the theft in December 2019 and sentenced to

two years in prison and five years of probation, prosecutors said.

Murphy was also convicted of breaking into a Brink’s warehouse in Columbus, Ohio, in January 2009 and in 2012 received a 20-year sentence in that case, which was reduced on appeal.

## LOTTERY NUMBERS

Thursday’s RI Daily

Mid-day: 0-1-3-6

Evening: n/a

Thursday’s Mass. Daily

Mid-day: 9-8-7-6

Evening: n/a

Wednesday’s Wild Money

15-16-20-36-38 EB 28

Wednesday’s Mass Cash

4-7-20-23-33

Wednesday’s Powerball

26-27-43-61-69 PB 4

## Davies

Continued from page A1

Technical High School into an efficient and inspiring 21st-Century learning environment,” he told the media assembled in the school library, which is stationed in that ‘70s, or south, wing. “My administration is committed to improving student outcomes and providing both educators and students with the school facilities they deserve.

“The idea right now is to do multiple things in the state of Rhode Island. One is to focus on education, whether it has to do with state universities, our district schools or our regional schools, but we also understand the value of the career and technical education aspect. That’s why it wasn’t a hard ask for me to give you the first step here for the \$35 million ask.

“It’s the right thing to do to invest in our students, but also the right thing to do for the state of Rhode Island and its overall economic future.”

The budget proposes to support new construction that will replace that south wing, which is in poor condition and inefficiently designed. That \$35 million

would be spent over three years, with \$2.5 million for design, engineering and demolition the first year, \$30 million for actual construction the second and \$2.5 million for the purchase of furniture, fixtures and equipment the third.

“We’re looking forward to building a strong case for the General Assembly,” McKee said. “That’s why we had \$250 million on a bond last November for further investments in our schools; investing in these projects are so important. We’re going to continue doing that, and I think this is a very good first step to invest here in the Blackstone Valley and the town of Lincoln.”

According to Carreno, the state has enjoyed a school construction boom since 2018, including two separate \$250 million bonds/capital funds passed, but three state schools are exempt from receiving those funds, including The Met School, R.I. School for the Deaf and Davies. Because the former two are still relatively new, Davies was next on the list for a capital budget request.

“When we started with this process over a year ago, we looked at what it would cost to do the whole

school over, and it was between \$120-150 million,” he said. “Then we looked a little deeper and found that the 1990s wing was very workable. They recently put about \$5 million into the advanced manufacturing center, which looks brand new.

“We decided to focus on the 1970s wing; as you go through these spaces, those massive hallways cost a lot of money to heat and cool and maintain, and the kids don’t use it. When we looked at this, this space is actually much bigger than it needs to be because about 40 percent of it is hallways that we don’t need.

“The plan is to do about a 50,000-square-foot replacement for this wing, which is considerably smaller than it is now, but it would have more leaning space.”

That new addition would house academic classrooms, a media center/library, CTE lab and theory spaces. Carreno also warned that the previous 2017 assessment cost for Davies has risen due to inflation.

“I think it went well; the governor came in with State Sen. Thomas Paolino, Town Administrator Phil Gould and other

state officials, and we also had three members of our Board of Trustees here, including Larry Gemma, Megan Hearne and Alyssa Alvarado. The thing is, we can shrink the square footage and still have more for students’ education, facility equity and better working conditions for teachers.

“The new wing will reclaim underutilized square footage in the current design and repurpose it to create new, state-of-the-art facilities reflective of equivalent workplaces of tomorrow’s economy,” she added. “These spaces will support innovative teaching and learning, as well as safety, security and environmental well-being of students and staff.”

Said Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Chair Patti DiCenso: “To prepare our students to compete in a global economy, all aspects of our education system must be aligned and focused on 21st-Century learning. This includes the environments in which students learn.

“On behalf of the council, I share my gratitude with the McKee Administration for sharing a bold vision for Davies and other school communities throughout Rhode Island.”

# THE TIMES

75 Main Street, Woonsocket, RI 02895

www.pawtuckettimes.com

Newsroom fax: (401) 765-2834

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