

The Monocacy

MONOCLE

Keeping an Eye on Local News

A Biweekly Newspaper

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In a Historic Decision, BOE Supports Expanded Gym And Additional Funds for PHS

By Rande Davis

The Montgomery County Board of Education (BOE) approved the first of two phases of construction funding for the reconstruction of Poolesville High School at its meeting on January 13. At the same time, staff for the school system recommended to the board that it also approve an additional \$30 million for the project and the expansion and renovation of its main gym in the second

phase of the project. The BOE is likely to do so in coming weeks in the form of either an amendment to the current Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) or as a supplemental appropriation request to the Montgomery County Council. The council must then approve the proposal in its budget considerations later this spring. The money will come from Build Back Better funds the

county will receive from the state, so staff noted the additions would be "budget neutral."

These actions are the capstone of a major community effort to convince the BOE to reverse course on its initial decisions to recommend appropriating only a little more than \$71 million for

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Jessica Gomez-Koehn of Mexican Grill was the first person in line to receive COVID-19 test kits. See more pictures on page 2.



Over 4,000 COVID test kits were handed out to the public. See pictures on page 2.



Vandals stole and dumped the top part of the Town of Poolesville's Christmas tree. Story on page 8.



Scott Davis named new baseball coach at PHS. Details on page 12.



The hard workers from the Fair Access Committee were thrilled with the latest action from the Board of Education.

Serial Bank Robber Caught, Former Poolesville Resident

By Jack Toomey

The serial bank robber that had been sought by police for a month was arrested on January 12. He had robbed the BB&T (now Truist) branch in Poolesville on December 14 and then returned to the bank on January 11 with the intention of committing another robbery. On that occasion, an employee saw him approaching the bank doors and quickly locked the door to the lobby. On January 5, the same man robbed the SunTrust branch at 11400 Darnestown Road in Darnestown.

BB&T had hired off-duty Montgomery County officers to work inside their banks during this spree, but it could not be determined if an officer was at the bank on January 11.

After the man failed to get into the Poolesville BB&T branch on January 11, he apparently went to the Capitol One Bank branch in the 21000 block of Frederick Road in Germantown. Upon entering that bank, he was confronted with a reinforced glass partition, thought better of his plan, and left the bank. Within minutes, the man appeared at the M&T bank across the street and made off with an undetermined amount of cash. Witnesses were able to see that the robber rode off on a dirt bike.

Officers in Montgomery County were provided with a description of the robber, and on January 12, a Rockville City officer saw a man riding a



Former Poolesville resident, Steven Beitzel, age 31.

dirt bike on Research Court without a helmet. They followed him onto Shady Grove Road where he was stopped. The man attempted to run, but officers

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Family Album

Handing Out COVID-19 Tests



Kerri Cook oversaw Hand-Out Station #2.



Lori Kocur's dog seems to think a COVID-19 test might be a tasty treat.



Commissioner Eck with Montgomery County's Regional Office Director Greg Wims. Wims credited the smoothness of the operation to having so many citizens who volunteered.



Commission President Jim Brown helped to line up cars with a smile.



Ed Reed handled traffic control at the intersection of Fisher Avenue and Milford Mill Road.



The line snaked up Norris Road to Wootton Avenue and then back toward Fisher Avenue.

Town Government

New Commission Leadership Focuses on Openness Initiatives and New Direction on Town Manager

By Link Hoewing

At the first Town of Poolesville commission meeting under the leadership of returning President Jim Brown on January 18, the commissioners conducted a wide-ranging discussion about new approaches to inform citizens about town activities and to respond to concerns. They also discussed a new approach to the hiring of the next town manager. In essence, they decided to amend their original strategy by allowing current consulting town manager, Tony Tomasello, to stay to complete a set of specific projects he has been leading and rehire former town manager Wade Yost to address a series of near-term problems that have remained unaddressed.

With regard to openness, President Jim Brown said that he has heard the calls for more public input with regard to commissioner meetings and activities. He understands that with the unique situation that has faced the town with most meetings being online, more active public involvement and give-and-take have been more difficult. He feels it is possible to allow for more discussion in the public comments section of meetings and still ensure that everyone has a fair chance to comment who wishes to do so. He pointed out that, at commissioner meetings, there is a full complement of expertise ranging from the commissioners to the town engineer to the town attorney to the town manager. While a set time for comments is important to ensure that everyone has a chance to comment who wishes to, commissioners can ask clarifying questions where needed, and where an answer is clear or an explanation is available, it can be given during the meeting.

Town attorney Jay Gullo said that a time limit for speakers helps the commission and residents by ensuring that everyone is treated fairly and that answers that are offered are accurate and carefully considered. It is not illegal to do sessions in a different way, but he explained that that while public commenters may have weeks to prepare their questions and comments, commissioners are sometimes put on the spot and aren't familiar with an issue or don't know all of its dimensions, causing misunderstanding and confusion. Clarifying questions, though, can be helpful.

Commissioner Martin Radigan expressed concerns about going too far beyond the guidance already provided by the town attorney. He advised caution but added that there should be ways to allow for more interaction if done carefully.

Commissioner Jeff Eck said that, originally, he had been skeptical about the need for a three-minute time limit for public comments; however, he had taken a class on running effective town meetings led by the town attorney and now understands how meetings can spiral out of control and not lead to positive dialog without some limits. At the same time, he feels that if an answer is known, it should be given in real time. If it is not, an established process should be followed to ensure responses and answers are given to public commenters. "Residents have the right to hold our feet to the fire," he said, but he acknowledged that "we may not always have an accurate answer" at the time the question is asked.

Commissioner Ed Reed said there is a need for "an established process to follow up on public questions." A key part of ensuring good responses is to focus on what type of question is being asked. If it is personal, it likely will require a different approach than would a policy question or a question about a prior commission decision. In many cases, a question is on the minds of many residents and that is why it is important to follow up and ensure a response is made public.

Commissioner Kerri Cook said she knew that her comments may upset some. She added that every email or contact she receives from the public is answered. She said that the State of Maryland does not require a public comments section in municipal meetings. "We do it because it is the right thing to do."

She expressed concern, however, because in her view the town "actually allows a very select few to have an inordinate influence" on town affairs. She said that a "wink, wink, nudge, nudge relationship" exists in town government that has allowed some former town elected officials and even staff to have too much say in decisions. "Certain members of the public, because of their personal or even

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Rande(m) Thoughts

COVID-19 Test Kit Distribution Process Was Amazing

By Rande Davis

A great advantage in writing my column and articles on my MacPro is that I can never be sure where I will be. I have written articles most everywhere, in my living room, dining room, once at the beach, and another time near the C&O Canal. Once in a while, I even get formal and write in my knotty-pined office on my antique rolltop desk, but this time has to qualify as the most unusual location yet. As I write this, I am on Fisher Avenue right in front of the Poolesville Post Office in my GMC Terrain. I am in line to get my allotment of a COVID-19 testing kit, and I estimate there are at least forty cars ahead of me and who knows how many behind me.

I have been busy though. I already got a picture of the first person in line—Jessica Gomez-Koehn of Mexican Grill—another of Commission President Jim Brown, orange cone in hand, assisting people to get in line and, not surprisingly, chatting with all comers along the way.

While all is well that ends well, there were some concerned in the beginning that Poolesville would be forgotten in the COVID-19 test kit distribution.

Fortunately, we are a town of action-oriented people, and the county came through—in a big way. They sent us 4,190 test kits.

Typical of our area folks, when Commissioner Jeff Eck asked Cathy Bupp to notify the public that volunteers were needed to help, he got over a dozen volunteers immediately. Greg Wims, Montgomery County Director of the Regional Office, credited the extraordinary volunteer response for the exceptionally smooth distribution process in Poolesville.

To help out, our commissioners were on hand to assist in the project, and I must say they organized this extremely well, considering how tight our space is. The lineup of cars started at the Nightingale Library, and then it moved back toward the Old Town Hall Bank Museum, all the way down Fisher Avenue, turning left at Norris Road and then turning left again down Wootton Avenue, back toward Fisher. Even with more than a hundred cars in line, traffic did not get tied up at all. The organization had three handout stations that greatly accelerated the process. Commissioner Kerri Cook participated, volunteering at station two, Ed Reed directed cars on Fisher Avenue so through traffic did not get tied up, and Jeff Eck, who supervised the process from beginning to end, also pitched in wherever he was needed.

How smoothly did it go? Just consider this: When I got in line, it was 11:35 a.m. The line began moving at precisely 12:01 p.m., and I was handed my kits at 12:04 p.m.

Congratulations to all the folks involved, here and down county, who helped get the kits distributed to town. Another date for more kits is expected to occur within a couple of weeks. If you need a kit, stay tuned.

Letter to The Editor

Last week, I attended the Montgomery County Zoom meeting of municipal leaders. The meeting discussed the planning for distributing the COVID at-home test kits. Dr. Stoddard of Montgomery County, Emergency Management and Homeland Security, led the session. He showed a slide of the sites to receive the kits. Poolesville was not on the slide; however, Dr. Stoddard said, "Poolesville is a Priority." Then he repeated it! "Poolesville is a Priority."

Of course, I wanted to credit myself for being on the call. This was definitely not the case. The Fair Access Committee, led by Link Hoewing, Jim Brown, Ed Reed, and others, has laid the "Poolesville is a Priority" groundwork for several years. Whether you support Marc Elrich or not, he and the Montgomery County Executive Office are now listening and, more importantly, acting.

I know first-hand because of the COVID test kit distribution. Greg Wims and Lindsay Bolt, both from Marc Elrich's office, have called me personally to ask, "What do you need, Jeff? How can we help?" not just once, but several times. Lindsay Bolt called me again on Monday, January 17, before our distribution began, to ask, "How is it going? Do you need anything?" I told her we needed warmer weather.

Plus, Greg Wims from Marc Elrich's office came to Poolesville to help with the distribution. This is action, and we all know that action speaks louder than words.

I credit the Fair Access Committee, they may have started in the background, but they have most assuredly worked their way into Montgomery County's foreground.

Thank You, Fair Access Committee!

—Jeffery Eck,

Town of Poolesville Commissioner

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Would you like to announce a meeting, club, or upcoming event in **Things to Do**?

Then let us know! Send it along to
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In a Historic Decision, BOE Supports Expanded Gym and Additional Funds for PHS

the reconstruction of the high school and to complete the project without expanding the main gym. For months, the Fair Access Committee (FAC), local PTSA's, the commissioners, and local citizens have been pressing the board to add funds to the project, arguing that it was far smaller than other major high school renovation and reconstruction projects. They also made the case that these failures would lead to the construction and renovation of a high school that is not able to serve the needs of all of its students in the years ahead.

The local groups argued strenuously that the main gym at the high school is by far the smallest in the county, even though PHS has an athletics program that is on par with, and in many cases far larger, than other much larger high schools' programs. Documentation the groups put together demonstrated that PHS's gym is far smaller than schools who have much smaller numbers of athletes participating in their programs. This makes it very hard for PHS to ensure its athletes are able to practice and are prepared to compete with those from other schools. The groups argued the failure to expand and renovate the gym is another example of treating the Upcounty unfairly.

They also noted that the school system is planning to expand the student population of PHS to 1,800 students in the not-too-distant future. At that point, the gym's inadequate size will be even more untenable, and the county would have to spend far more money to tear down some of what had just been rebuilt to expand the gym.

David Griffith, president of the PHS PTSA said, "I was very pleased to hear that there is \$30 million for Phase II of our project. Most importantly, I am thrilled that an expansion of the competition gym will be included in the second phase of the construction project.

"The inclusion of the gym and the increase in the project budget are a testament to all of the efforts made by the town, our school community, the cluster, and Fair Access who relentlessly made the case to the school district and county council. Principal Carothers was a steady presence who helped keep parents informed, and Link Hoewing, Kerri Cook, and Jim Brown were great leaders in marshaling the support of Poolesville residents. I'm also appreciative of all the board of education members who understood the history, challenges, and importance of the issue to Poolesville High School.

"Having said all that, there still are some important details about the Phase II budget and inclusion in the CIP that the board still has to sign off on later this spring, so it's not a formally done deal yet, but it is close and very encouraging."

In another somewhat unexpected exchange during the January 13 meeting, BOE members asked staff about a proposal the FAC has been promoting to co-locate a community center with the renovated school. Staff responded that there has been email traffic between it and county department staff who have responsibility for planning and overseeing the construction of community centers. School system staff said they did not know exactly what the county departments are planning, but the fact that such discussions have apparently been occurring indicates that active consideration is being given to building a community center in Poolesville. The staff said they have "master planned" space to allow for co-locating a community center should the county decide to move forward. They noted that funding and management of such a project does not fall within the scope of the BOE's authority but rather must come from the county executive. Fair Access Committee leaders believe the county executive is working with his staff to come up with a proposal to build such a center.

Andrew Friedson, the councilmember currently representing much of the Upcounty and Poolesville said the decision represents a significant step forward and noted "the significant contribution of the local advocates in making sure your needs were properly understood. I am just pleased to have been helpful in recognizing those needs, and while we are not quite over the finish line and we have a bit to go yet, we just have to continue to make all sure our needs are heard by all the right people."

Jim Brown, a cofounder of FAC said, "We owe considerable thanks to the County Executive Marc Elrich, our County Councilmember Andrew Friedson, and the board of education members, who have stood up for the Poolesville High School community in a big way. The Fair Access Committee, led by Link Hoewing and Kevin Schramm, and all those who have fought the battle before us, deserve big congratulations, too. We redefined advocacy for the western county, and the results are huge."

If the proposed CIP amendment is approved by the council, and the FAC leadership believes they will be, the PHS project should be on track for completion in about two years.

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Senior News

Poolesville Seniors Presents Virtual and In-Person Programs

Poolesville Seniors is offering a wide variety of programs in January and February that meet community needs for exercise, information, and socialization. Visit their website poolesvilleseniors.org or call 301-875-7701 to register for the virtual events listed below. All events are open to the entire community.

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays Indoor Pickle Ball

Fully vaccinated players are welcome, and masks are required in accordance with Montgomery County regulations. Family Life Center, Poolesville Baptist Church. 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Mondays

Tai-Chi with Maureen Ivusic. 10:45 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Virtual.

PS Book Club. Now on the third Monday of the month. 7:00 p.m.

Wednesdays

Chair Yoga with Twyla Insalaco. 11:00 a.m. Virtual.

Zumba Gold with Karen McPhatter. 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Virtual.

Trivia Game Night

If you love Trivia, come join a team with Poolesville Seniors. For more information, email info@poolesvilleseniors.org. 7:00 p.m. Virtual.

Thursdays

Mahjong with Joyce Kral. Fully-vaccinated beginner and seasoned players are welcome in person. Masks are recommended. Poolesville Presbyterian Church's Speer Hall. 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Fridays

Breath-Mind-Body with Kathy Jankowski. Please register for each Friday class. 12:00 p.m. to 12:45 p.m. Virtual.

January 27

Off the Beaten Path in Philadelphia: The City of Brotherly Love

Need a getaway close to D.C. without the crowds? Join travel expert Barbara Paulson as she helps you plan your next "stay-cation" to Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love. Watch cannoli being filled by hand, check out Al Capone's prison cell, take a selfie strutting your stuff in a Mummer's costume,

Continued on page 7.

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Serial Bank Robber Caught, Former Poolesville Resident

quickly arrested him. A search of his clothing revealed evidence that tied him to the bank robberies.

The man was identified as Steven Beitzel, age 31, now of Germantown. Beitzel had lived in Poolesville for most of his life. Beitzel was charged with Bank Robbery and other assorted crimes. Upon the release of a press notification, Facebook lit up with comments from people who know Beitzel. Many described him as someone who had lost direction in his life.

Investigation is ongoing to determine if Beitzel is responsible for other robberies in the county. Anyone who might have information about Beitzel is asked to call the Major Crimes section of the Montgomery County Police at 240-773-5070.

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Senior News

have a third-generation cheese monger help you select just the right pecorino in the Italian Market, and visit the nation's first art school and museum (200-plus years old). 7:00 p.m. Virtual.

February 10

The SEHP Dorsey Archeology Project

Join Montgomery College anthropology professor Tara Tetrault when she delves into the SEHP Dorsey Archeology Project excavating the late 1800s log home of Basil and Nancy Dorsey in Sugarland. 7:00 p.m. Virtual.

February 11

PS Heart and Sole Online Auction

Poolesville Seniors presents its first online auction, featuring wonderful items from original works of art, a vacation stay, an amusement park trip, gift certificates, and pickleball lessons! Virtual.

For more information or to register for any of the programs listed here and receive the Zoom link for each, visit the Poolesville Seniors website: poolesvilleseniors.org. Many of these presentations are also streamed live on their Facebook page and recorded for later viewing on YouTube. Did you know that you don't need a computer to participate? You can join the Zoom presentation using your smartphone or just listen in using the local telephone number from Zoom and the Poolesville Seniors meeting ID and Password. Call or text them at 301-875-7701 to learn how.

Tidbits

The Grinch Who Stole Our Town Christmas Tree

When Lisa Roberts of Poolesville was walking her dog around Whalen Commons a few weeks ago, like so many of us, she marveled that she was part of such an idyllic scene. The park was so beautifully decorated, other couples walking and enjoying the day, kids playing on the bandstand, and a small group of teens around the red barn where Santa pre-COVID used to sit. She saw an old-fashioned 3D painting of small-town Americana, Like our December cover of the *Monocle*.

Then it happened. The kids began yelling and one of the teens grabbed the top of the Christmas tree and ran away with it. A few years ago, one young malcontent went around smashing bulbs from the trees and decorations, but, for the most part, we have been free of vandals and pranksters.

Roberts was so upset that her peaceful moment of reflection was so disturbed, she began yelling for the boy to return the tree to no avail. In this small town, perhaps someone, even one of the kids who was there, will know where the tree-top was dropped and find it. The right thing to do to is to return it to town hall.

Getting a Facelift

Poolesville Presbyterian Church recently underwent a rebuilding of the brick parapet on the front of the church. The brickwork, dating from 1847, was beginning to weather and come apart. This past summer, the church held "Together a Miracle," a series of events to raise funds for this renovation. In addition, funding for this project was provided in part by a generous grant from Preservation Maryland and the Maryland Historical Trust. The church welcomes donations from area friends and local history buffs.



Major renovations are underway to the Poolesville Presbyterian Church. You can help, too.

Friend of George Washington to be Honored at Monocacy Cemetery

At 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, February 6, the Fairfax Resolves Chapter of the Virginia Society Sons of the American Revolution, and the General William Smallwood Chapter of the Maryland Society Sons of the American Revolution will honor the memory and legacy of Rev. Townshend Dade, Jr. with a grave-marking ceremony. The ceremony will be held at Rev. Dade's gravesite at Monocacy Cemetery in Beallsville and will include a color guard in Revolutionary War attire and a musket salute.

Rev. Townshend Dade, Jr. (1742-1822) was a longtime friend of George Washington and the officiant at President Washington's funeral mass. He was also one of the twenty-five signatories of the Fairfax Resolves in 1774. The Resolves put forth a claim of equal rights for colonists under the British constitution, rejected the British Parliament's regulation and taxation of the colonies without colonial representation, and called for the colonies to govern themselves with their own assemblies or parliaments with the blessing and protection of the British Crown. The Resolves also called for an end to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The ideals of the Resolves regarding self-government helped pave the way for American independence once relations between the British government and its colonial subjects irreparably collapsed.

Founded in 1889, Sons of the American Revolution is a non-partisan genealogical society comprised of the male descendants of the patriots who fought for and supported American independence. The national society and its state and local chapters encourage patriotism, good citizenship, and the study of the Revolutionary period.

Test Distribution Volunteers Delivered!

The Town of Poolesville commissioners wish to extend a huge thank you to these hardy volunteers for helping with the COVID-19 At-Home Test Kits. Monday, January 17, 2022 was cold, windy, and slippery with frozen snow, yet they

persevered with the distribution. Mr. Greg Wims from the Office of the County Executive said he had never seen so many volunteers at any Montgomery County test kit distribution site. Great Job, Poolesville!

Right: Report your COVID-19 at-home test results (positive or negative) to the Montgomery County COVID-19 Test Self-Reporting Portal by using this QR Code.



Local volunteers answered the call and distributed more than 4,000 COVID-19 test kits to Poolesvillians.

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New Commission Leadership Focuses on Openness Initiatives and New Direction on Town Manager

worse fiduciary relationship with certain members of the commission, are very happy to influence...bully members of this commission and staff." She said these problems have long been unaddressed and are very important to confront.

In the end, while no definitive guidance was announced, it appears the commissioners will remain with the three-minute time limit but allow for limited interaction depending on the nature of the inquiry and whether there is a valid, accurate response that can be made. There is also a clear commitment to coming up with a process for responding to public questions and a possible alternative set of public forums chaired by commissioners to encourage further dialog.

In terms of the town manager, Brown said he had decided that a pivot in the previously-agreed strategy is needed. There is a long list of issues that are on the town's agenda that have not gotten a lot of public attention but require addressing in the near future. He proposed that the town bring Wade Yost back on as full-time staff to manage many of the near-term issues that need to be dealt with, leaving the consulting town manager, Tony Tomasello, to complete key projects in which he is well versed, including the completion of the human resources manual and the transition to a new budget and finance system to replace the town's out-of-date process.

Town engineer John Strong listed a number of infrastructure and construction issues that need attention—including some failures of the builders of the new Westerly Grove addition to follow agreed-upon conditions. Town attorney Jay Gullo could not publicly list all of the legal issues that need attention, but there appear to be a number that are piling up and require guidance and decisions. When asked about the situation, Strong answered, "In my opinion, you need someone on the ground now" to provide leadership and guidance. "It is very valuable to have someone (in town government) to help me get decisions made. I'm doing the best I can, but it is a load."

Consulting Town Manager Tony Tomasello said that when he first heard of the "pivot idea I wanted to hate it." After further reflection and after taking into consideration all of the near-term issues facing the town and Yost's knowledge and expertise, he had come around to supporting the revised approach. He understood too that it is vital to deal with as many of these near-term issues as possible, so that the next town manager has a better chance to succeed.

By a 4-1 vote, with Cook voting against, the commissioners agreed to keep Tomasello on to complete key issues he has already been working on, such as the finalization of the HR manual while Yost comes aboard as a full-time manager to address the many near-term issues outlined by the town engineer and attorney.

At the same time, the commissioners will ask the citizen search committee, which had been gearing up to conduct a search for a new town manager, to instead focus on identifying and selecting a new assistant town manager. This person will be in place and learning the ropes, so once Yost has completed his work, a new town manager can be selected who will have the assistance of a new but seasoned assistant who can help ensure a smooth transition.



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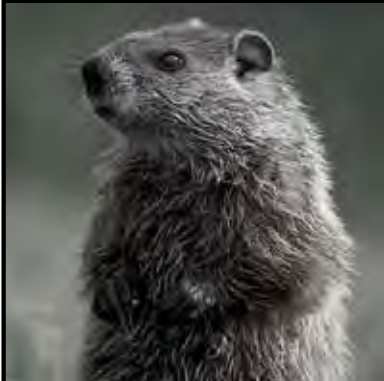
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School News

PHS Students Protest Conditions

By Jack Toomey

On January 13, as many as seventy-five Poolesville High School students conducted a preplanned walkout to protest the conditions inside the school. At about 9:30 a.m., the students left the building and congregated in a circle on the athletic practice field near the student parking lot.

A FOX5 news helicopter hovered over and streamed the event live.

The school announced ahead of time that a student-led walkout was scheduled and that participation was optional and approved by the school. The announcement also said that absences

were to be excused but that missed schoolwork was to be made up.

The students were upset about the crowded conditions inside the school at this time of the COVID epidemic. Freshman Camden Scholz said that she was part of the walkout. "We were protesting for safety in our schools. We are fighting for the immune-compromised and the students who can't be at school because of COVID." She added that "MCPS is not doing what is needed for the students who actually go into the building every day in this pool of germs." Camden invited residents to walk into the school building during lunch when the hallways are crowded and people are not wearing masks. She estimated that about seventy-five percent of the students regularly wear masks, but some wear them improperly, letting the masks droop down over their chins.



PHS students participated in a protest walkout. Image via FOX5 helicopter.

Fun Fact...

bestcolleges.com

Throughout history, students have used protesting to let their voices be heard on a wide range of topics. While peaceful protests are encouraged, some are not so peaceful.

In 1507, the professors at the University of Padua (Italy) canceled student vacations for the celebration of Carnevale—the sixteenth-century equivalent of spring break. Instead of partying in Venice, students were told to attend lectures on Aristotle. In response, the students rioted, destroying lecture halls and attacking faculty members to vent their rage.

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January 25

PHS Varsity Home Game

Boys' basketball vs. Sherwood. 7:15 p.m.

January 26

PHS Varsity Home Game

Girls' basketball vs. Clarksburg. 7:15 p.m.

January 27

PHS Varsity Home Game

Boys' basketball vs. Northwest. 7:15 p.m.

January 28

PHS Varsity Home Game

Girls' basketball vs. Seneca Valley. 7:15 p.m.

January 31

PHS Varsity Home Game

Boys' basketball vs. Paint Branch. 7:15 p.m.

February 1

Commissioners' Meeting

Zoom (online), visit webpage. 7:30 p.m.

Feb. 2

PHS Varsity Home Game

Girls' basketball vs. Rockville. 7:15 p.m.

February 5

PHS Varsity Home Game

Wrestling vs. Gaithersburg. 1:00 p.m.



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Youth Sports

Scott Davis to Replace Orsini As PHS Varsity Baseball Coach

By Jeff Stuart

On December 9, 2021, the PHS Athletics Department named Scott Davis as the new varsity baseball coach. Davis played baseball at Good Counsel High School and continued his career at Clemson University. He teaches mathematics at John Poole Middle School and has many years of baseball coaching experience.

Replacing a successful coach is never easy, but Scott is looking to make the transition as smooth as possible. "I am looking forward to continuing Coach Orsini's legacy at PHS," said Davis, "and working with the community to promote strong student-athletes here in Poolesville, and to use my experiences as a player and coach to help develop young players into champions on and off the field.

"I think I bring experience and organization to the program. I am a players' coach, so I think I am good at creating relationships with the kids and motivating them. I try to get the most out of them individually and then pull them together as a team. I think that is the key to coaching, knowing that you have nine players that may be playing at one time. Each kid is very different and has his own skill set, but it is a team game, and they need to pull together.

"I've met with maybe nine or ten of the kids so far. We had a short meeting before the holiday break. I've met with all five seniors. I had some long discussions with them for about an hour and a half. I met with them first because I wanted to know what they liked or enjoyed about Coach Orsini for the last three years, and I wanted to keep that going and kind of just add my twist to it.

"I coached travel league ball for twenty years. I started Clarksburg Baseball and Softball. I coached the Clarksburg Keys and the B-CC Big Train Baseball. Luke Pearre played for me for a year and a half. That is how I got in the door here. Luke's father, Jody, called me and said, 'Hey, Orsini's stepping down. I know you are working at Poole Middle School. Would you be interested in applying for the job?'"

Continued on page 13

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Remembrances

Mary Lou Berger

Mary Lou Berger, 81, of Poolesville, passed away on January 10, 2022.

She was the loving wife to the late David W. Berger.

Born on September 22, 1940 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, she was the daughter of the late Gilbert and Helen (Lynch) Twigger.

Mary Lou is survived by her children, Kimberly Mills (Daryl), Lee Berger (Patty), and David S. Berger (Sandy); six grandchildren, Brian Mills (Caitlin), Casey Mills (Pete), Nicole Mills (Brett), Steven Berger, Sarah Berger, and Emily Berger; one great-grandchild, Montana Wolgemuth; and Shirley Prasada-Rao, whom she loved like a daughter.

Mary Lou was preceded in death by her siblings, Nellie Leonhardt, Gilbert Twigger, Jack Twigger, Virginia Posa, Harry Twigger, and Richard Twigger.

Mary Lou was an avid Pittsburgh Steelers fan and participated in Fantasy Football leagues for several years. She was an Elvis fanatic and was thrilled to be able to make a trip to visit his home in Graceland. Spending time with her family was the most important to her. She loved family gatherings for holidays and birthdays. Christmas was by far her favorite.

She had a generous heart and will be greatly missed by many family and friends.

The family will be receiving friends for a celebration of life on Friday, January 28 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at Hilton Funeral Home, 22111 Beallsville Road, Barnesville, MD 20838, where a funeral service will be held on Saturday, January 29 at 11:00 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in her memory to the ASPCA.



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Andrew James Dimopoulos

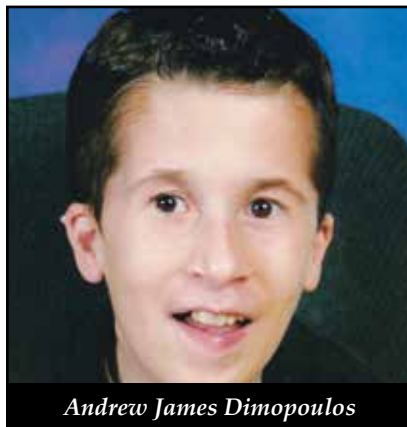
Andrew James Dimopoulos, 31, of Poolesville passed away on January 10, 2022 from pneumonia.

Born on August 26, 1990, he was the son of James G. and Melanie Dimopoulos.

Andrew was survived by his parents; his siblings, Angela Bielecki (Matt) and Christopher Dimopoulos (Carli McGoff); his nieces and nephews, Gracie, Cora, Lucas, Chloe, Amelia, and Theodore; and his caregiver, Maria Caro.

Funeral service and interment are private. Andrew's final resting place will be at Parklawn Memorial Park, 12899 Veirs Mill Rd, Rockville, MD 20853.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in his memory to the Lollipop Kids Foundation, 7901 Beechcraft Ave. Unit V, Gaithersburg, MD 20879 (lollipopkidsfoundation.org).



Andrew James Dimopoulos

Fun Fact...

thefactsite.com

The Roman calendar originally had only ten months, and it excluded January and February. King Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome, is responsible for adding both January and February to the Roman calendar. He did this so calendars would be equivalent to a lunar year. Even so, it only had thirty days. Finally, Julius Caesar added the thirty-first day to January. Within the Julian and Gregorian calendars, January is the first month of the year, and the first of seven months to be thirty-one days long.

Continued from page 12.

Scott Davis to Replace Orsini as PHS Varsity Baseball Coach

This is not Scott's first coaching position in high school. "I was the varsity softball coach at B-CC High School and the JV baseball coach at Wootton High School."

When asked about a memorable moment as a player or a coach, he said, "In high school, I played in a Maryland All Star game at Oriole Park, so I got to play there, and we had dinner with Brooks Robinson."

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Police Blotter: Past and Present

By Jack Toomey

Present Crime

Assault: 21000 Clarksburg Road.

Attempted Bank Robbery: 19600 block of Fisher Avenue (see article on page 1).

Past Crime: 1950 to 1954

County police, assisted by armed citizens, recaptured a man who had been arrested for raping a nine-year-old girl while she walked home from school. The girl was walking through a wooded area near Bethesda when a man came out of the brush and raped her. She described her attacker to the first officer on the scene who then located the man hiding in the woods. The man was then taken to the Bethesda detective office for questioning, but while the detective was getting some documents, the man ran down the back stairway and onto Wisconsin Avenue. He hailed a taxicab, and when the cab reached the area of the White Flint Golf Course, he jumped out and ran onto the course. Officers managed to catch up, and after firing several shots at him, the assailant gave up.

Apparently, the time-honored tradition of accusing police officers of working under a quota system stretched back to the 1950s. An attorney representing a speeder accused an officer of writing a

ticket simply to meet his quota. Chief Orme, who happened to be in court, asked to be heard and told the attorney and judge that there was no quota system and that his officers were allowed to write as many tickets as they wished.

A fifteen-year-old stole a county police car that was parked in front of a business in Rockville. He began shouting into the police radio that he would kill the first police officer that he came across. Nearly the whole patrol force was mobilized, and the cruiser was soon sighted. Officers were given a shoot-to-kill order, and an officer fired several shots at the youth, who was not struck by any bullets, but it caused him to give up.

Sergeant Mason Gray, III of Poolesville died of polio at the Frederick Hospital. Sergeant Gray had been in charge of the police communication section at police headquarters. Sergeant Gray had joined the department in 1941 then joined the military at the outbreak of WWII and saw action in the Mediterranean and at the invasion of France.

A sixty-four-year-old Rockville man was arrested for practicing medicine without a license. Police were alerted to a man advertising his services as a naturopath. A detective made an appointment and went to see the man. The detective complained about pain in his back and the "doctor" rubbed his back and charged him ten dollars. When the detective was able to prove that the man was not a doctor but in

fact a carpenter, he came back and arrested him. The fake doctor admitted that times were hard and that he had seen only one other patient.

Some of the material in this column was obtained from the archives of the Washington Post.



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Thoughts on the Omicron Variant of COVID-19 and Your Pets

Peter H. Eeg, DVM

As the omicron variant continues to spread, COVID-19 cases are on the rise. Some are wondering if they should worry about their pets if they get infected and have to quarantine. As more people face the possibility of a positive infection from the Omicron variant, some owners are asking whether their pets can catch the illness?

The simple answer is YES. Both cats and dogs have been infected with COVID-19, although this remains very rare. Pets that do get infected often have mild symptoms or remain asymptomatic. These pets often also have other diseases that lower their immunity to all viruses.

On social media, there is a lot of talk about the growing number of Omicron COVID-19 cases. This is as the omicron variant continues to spread through communities big and small.

Some experts confirm that animals like cats and dogs can get the including the variant that causes COVID-19.

The virus that causes COVID-19 can spread from people to animals during close contact with multiple members in the same family. These cases are extremely rare. The AVMA released data in March 2021 which found that infections had been reported in just 115 cats and 81 dogs across the globe.

According to the AVMA, the infection had also been reported in 419 mink farms, 27 captive big cats, three captive gorillas, one domestic ferret, and one wild mink.

The USDA also tracks these infections and found that in the U.S., 108 cats have tested positive for COVID-19 so far, and 94 dogs have done so. These are very, very small numbers, because again, it is a disease of people primarily.

We have not seen a single COVID-19 positive animal at our veterinary office. This demonstrates both how rare the illness is in pets, as well as how limited the symptoms are. We are not routinely testing for it and have not to date seen a pet that caused us concern that it might have COVID.

According to the CDC, animals like dogs and cats face very limited symptoms if they get infected with COVID-19.

“Pets infected with this virus may or may not get sick,” the CDC wrote. “Of the pets that have gotten sick, most only had mild illness and fully recovered. Serious illness in pets is extremely rare.”

Possible symptoms for the rare few that get sick include fever, coughing, difficulty breathing, lethargy, sneezing, runny nose, eye discharge, vomiting, and diarrhea, according to the CDC.

The CDC said that typical social distancing methods can be used to limit the passing of COVID-19 to a pet.

“If you are sick with COVID-19 (either suspected or confirmed by a test), you should avoid contact with your pets and other animals, just like you would with people,” the CDC wrote. “Contact includes petting, snuggling, kissing, licking, sharing food, and sleeping in the same bed.”

This social distancing is recommended even if your pet is a “good boy.”



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