



JOURNAL TRIBUNE

EST. 1884

YORK COUNTY'S ONLY DAILY NEWSPAPER

VOL. 131, NO. 10

THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2015

journaltribune.com • 75¢

Public Pre-K program mulled

By LIZ GOTTHELF
Staff Writer

DAYTON — The school board would like to hear what parents of youngsters think about the possibility of a public pre-kindergarten program.

A brief survey for parents with children 4 years old and younger can be accessed online, through the town's website: www.dayton-me.gov. The survey asks participants if they'd be interested in such a program, and if so, would they prefer a program that is half-day or full-day and four days a week or five.

Superintendent of Schools Jeremy Ray said there are currently "no solid plans" for a public preschool program, but as pre-kindergarten programs become more prevalent across the state and country, the town is exploring its options.

Ray said studies have shown that third-grade students who attend pre-kindergarten programs are more likely to have higher reading levels than those students who began school in kindergarten. Also, those who attend pre-kindergarten programs are less likely to spend time in prison later in life, he said.

Ray said there is space in Dayton for a preschool program. He said if there is state funding available and the town decides it wants to pursue a pre-kindergarten program, he'd like to get in on it in the beginning.

"You never know when the money is going to dry up," he said.

School Board Chairman Denis Elie said he doesn't know how the general population in town feels about a public pre-kindergarten program, and he's hoping the survey will help the board gauge the level of interest.

"It's a good idea to explore the possibility," said Elie. He said a public pre-kindergarten program would put kindergartners on a "level playing ground." Students who don't go to preschool often

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SUBMITTED PHOTO/Courtesy of Waterboro Public Library

Waterboro Public Works Director Douglas Foglio descends through a newly cut trap door in the floor of the Waterboro Public Library Wednesday to try and determine the cause of a foul odor that, among other reasons, has caused a closure of the facility.

Long term solution sought Library stink may be fixed; code issues remain

By TAMMY WELLS
Senior Staff Writer

WATERBORO — The discovery of an uncapped vent pipe at Waterboro Public Library Wednesday may hold the key to the rotten-egg smell that has permeated the building off and on for years.

That's the potential good news.

But the building, constructed, library officials say, in about 1912 as a school, has some significant code violations. Codes enforce-

ment officer Glenn Charette says the basement, which has been used as a location for children's story hours, scout meetings and some tutoring, should not be used for that or other community events ever again.

The library has been closed since the discovery of the problems by Charette Jan. 9. And while town personnel are confident they'll be able to get the first floor up-and-running soon, they're thinking about the future of the library build-

ing long-term.

At Tuesday's Board of Selectmen meeting, Selectman Gordon Littlefield asked Charette if he thought that fixing all of the issues at the library would be applying "lipstick on a pig."

"Yes. It's a nice old building. And that's it," said Charette.

"It's not in the best interests of anyone to walk away from it, but we need to look

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UNE intercampus bus gets a makeover

By ANGELO J. VERZONI
Staff Writer

BIDDEFORD — University of New England President Danielle Ripich was greeted with a hug by Biddeford Mayor Alan Casavant as she stepped off of the school's intercampus bus in front of the Harold Alfond Forum Ice Arena on Wednesday morning.

The bus had just made the 23-mile trip from UNE's Portland Campus, where it was given a send-off by Portland Mayor Michael Brennan, to the school's Biddeford Campus.

The bus itself, which shuttles students and faculty from UNE's Biddeford Campus to the city's downtown area, up to its Portland Campus and back again, isn't new; it started running last fall, said Ripich. But, as if to start off the spring 2015 semester with a spark of new life, the bus has received what you might call a makeover.

As crowds of dozens gathered in the two cities to catch a glimpse of the 60-seat behemoth, many chattered about the bus's new look, enthusiastically declaring it a "moving billboard."

"We want the message of UNE to go around," said Ripich of the newly wrapped bus. "We want people to know we're here. We think we're one of the best-kept secrets in Maine, and we're still building the idea of UNE for people." On the right side of



ANGELO J. VERZONI/Journal Tribune

Mayor Alan Casavant, right, welcomed University of New England President Danielle Ripich to the university's Biddeford Campus Wednesday, after she arrived on UNE's newly wrapped intercampus bus.

the bus, students are pictured engaged in academic activities, such as laboratory bench work and marine-science fieldwork, while the left side celebrates the university's sports teams, picturing student athletes and a cloud-and-lightning-bolt logo that reads, "UNE Nor'easters."

The mobile advertisement touts UNE with the phrases "Building Maine's marine economy," "Innovating health care education," "Exploring global cultures," and "#1 return on investment in Maine - Payscale.com." In 2014, Payscale.com, a website that provides data about salaries and careers, ranked UNE first among Maine institutions, both private and public, in terms of 20-year return on investment.

The idea of having an intercampus bus was the

brainchild of the school's Environmental Council, which is made up of students, staff and faculty, said Ripich.

"The council looked at different ways to reduce UNE's carbon footprint," she said, "and this was one of the ideas they came up with."

With many university employees living in the Portland area who must commute to Biddeford each day, as well as there being many students who have classes on both campuses, the bus serves as a means of eliminating all of those cars from being on the road, she said. It also serves as a way to "tie the two communities more closely together."

"I find that the university is always cutting-edge in so many ways," said Mayor

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Sanford father faces child endangerment charges

By TAMMY WELLS
Senior Staff Writer

ALFRED — The father of an infant who sustained what public safety officials have called critical burns, after a spark from a backyard fire pit ignited the child's father's coat, has been indicted on child endangerment charges.

A York County grand jury handed up the two-count indictment earlier

this month, charging Dirk Jeising, 44, of 70 River St. in Sanford, with misdemeanor child endangerment. The charges stem from an incident that took place in May.

Jeising, who suffered minor burns, told firefighters he was holding his 15-day-old son Callum and a 2-year-old while lying on a couch next to the outdoor

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Thornton tuition increase freezes district budget

By LIZ GOTTHELF
Staff Writer

SACO — The school district has been put on a budget freeze to absorb an unexpected increase in Thornton Academy tuition.

"Tonight I am before you asking for a modified freeze ... I wasn't expecting to ask you this this year," said Interim Superintendent of Schools Mike Pulsifer at Wednesday night's school board meeting at City Hall. Pulsifer said the school will put a hold on spending for non-essential items.

Thornton Academy is a private institution that serves as Saco's high school, and tuition is paid for Saco high school students through a contract negotiated with the school.

The Maine Department of Education determines a maximum allowable tuition rate that schools like Thornton can charge by taking the average cost of public high schools across the state.

The contract the city has with Thornton allows tuition to be adjusted by the maximum tuition rate. This year, the maximum tuition rate increased 5.9 percent, significantly higher than it has in past years, and higher than school board officials had budgeted for, said Pulsifer. The contract has no tuition cap, and under the contract, tuition rates can not be discussed until the 2016-2017 school year, said Pulsifer.

Because of the unexpected

increase, the school district must pay \$592,000 of tuition costs that it hadn't budgeted, said Pulsifer.

"My hope, by the end of the school year, is to have enough money to cover that additional tuition cost," he said.

Pulsifer said Thornton Academy tuition costs have increased more than 10 percent from last year, at a total of \$877,000.

School Board Member Cynthia Chadwick Granger said the school district is struggling and already has had to make cutbacks. She said she felt the school board should talk with officials from Thornton Academy and try to renegotiate.

"We're all in the same community, and I think we need to sit down and talk about this," said Granger.

Pulsifer said he and School Board Chairman Kevin Lafortune have an upcoming meeting with Thornton Academy regarding a different topic, but will use the meeting as an opportunity to discuss the contract.

"I'll be quite honest with you; contractually we are bound by a signed agreement that their trustee chair and our city manager have signed," said Pulsifer.

School board member Beth Johnston said the contract was not negotiated

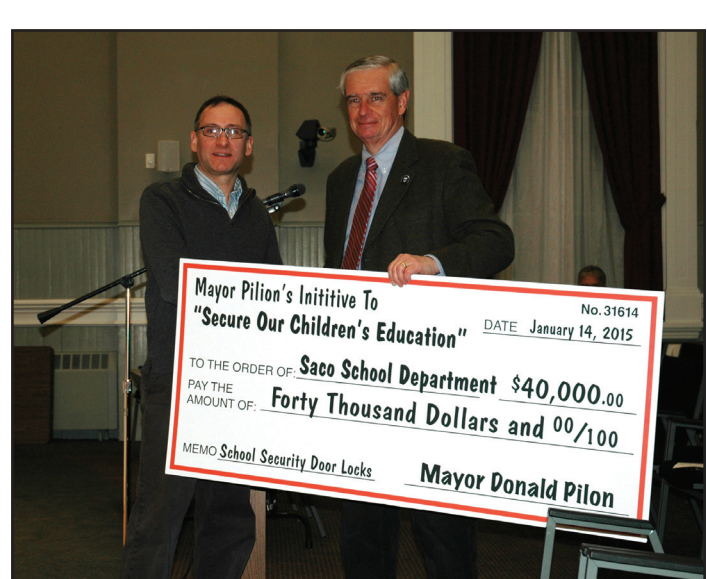
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LIZ GOTTHELF/Journal Tribune

Saco Mayor Don Pilon presents Saco School Board Chairman Kevin Lafortune a \$40,000 check at Wednesday night's school board meeting in city hall. The money is being used to replace classroom door locks so they can be locked from the inside, to prevent teachers from having to go out into the hallway to lock the door in the case of a suspected intruder in the building. The locks have already begun to be installed, and can be removed and installed on doors in a new building in the future. Pilon raised the money from donations through businesses, organizations and private individuals.

Child Endangerment

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fire pit adjacent to his street apartment, when, at about 10:30 p.m. that night, sparks from the fire ignited his coat. Investigators said Jeising had been drinking. In a news release issued following the mishap, Maine Public Safety spokesman Steve McCausland didn't characterize the gathering as a party, but he said neighbors had been there earlier in the evening. "It has not been deter-

mined if alcohol was a factor in the incident, but certainly poor judgment was," said McCausland in a follow-up telephone interview, pointing to the combination of a fire pit, a flammable couch and very young children. The couch and fire pit were located in a small yard behind the driveway of 6 Weymouth St., a multi-unit apartment building, when the incident took place. Sanford Fire Chief Steve Benotti said after the call came in around 10:30 p.m. that night, the infant

was quickly transported by ambulance to Sanford Medical Center and was later taken to the burn center at Shriners Hospitals for Children in Boston. Endangering the welfare of a child is a Class D misdemeanor. The maximum prison term upon conviction is one year. — Senior Staff Writer Tammy Wells can be contacted at 324-4444 (local call in Sanford) or 282-1535, ext. 327 or twells@journaltribune.com.

Library Stink

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at the (library) long term," said Selectman Dennis Abbott. "Either tear the pig down or modernize it." There was a movement some years ago to build a new library. There was significant community fundraising, and land was donated on Route 5 on which to build a new library. The referendum, however, came in 2010, when Maine and the country was still in the grip of a world-wide recession, and voters nixed the proposal by a 400-vote margin, 1,440 to 1,040.

first floor are related to the placement of exit signs and emergency lighting and inaccessibility of wheelchairs due to the placement of book aisles, the basement poses some significant problems. Charette's report says the stairwell, walls and ceiling are layered with asbestos wallboard, which is to be encapsulated. Handrails don't meet code, there's no running water in a sink next to the basement bathrooms and a window installed some years ago to provide another way out in an emergency doesn't comply because it is a casement and needs a crank to open. As well, part of the basement is a dirt floor, and one area of that space is for the children's story hour, and needs to be covered and sealed to prevent mold, Charette said. Another sink near the children's story area has a sign posted saying, "lead in the water, do not drink."

build a new library failed at the polls in 2010. A new roof and new windows have been installed, and there are new air conditioners and fans to make working there more comfortable. In the lead up to the 2010 referendum, Blake estimated the 4,000-square-foot library had 2,000 regular patrons and another 1,000 seasonal patrons and carried 22,000 volumes, and several computers for public use. The children's story hour had been moved to the basement because of space issues on the first floor; Blake on Wednesday said in the short term, space will have to be found on the first floor to accommodate story hour. Selectmen and Town Administrator Gary Lamb talked about possible solutions Tuesday but agreed selectmen should visit the library to see the situation first hand. Brigit McCallum, president of the board of trustees, said the town had stepped up to make the building a better place to work in and visit. She welcomed Charette's report. "I think this a watershed moment in the history of the Town of Waterboro's relationship with its library both as a town department and as a cultural center of the community," she wrote in an email. — Senior Staff Writer Tammy Wells can be contacted at 324-4444 (local call in Sanford) or 282-1535, ext. 327 or twells@journaltribune.com.

Charette told selectmen Tuesday that the smell of sewer gas was prevalent in numerous areas of the building when he investigated Jan. 9. In a written report, Charette said sewer gas, properly termed hydrogen sulfide, can cause headaches, fatigue, dizziness and other maladies. The rotten-egg smell has permeated the building intermittently for years. The library utilizes a septic tank and leachfield; there is no public sewer system. Custodian Peter Cote and Public Works Director Douglas Foglio cut a new trap door inside the library to a crawl space where some plumbing pipes are located Wednesday and, according to librarian Ruth Blake, found a vent pipe that was never capped when some older toilets were removed some years ago. But other code violations remain. While some on the

Charette was appointed the Waterboro codes enforcement officer late last year. Prior to his visit Jan. 9, it is unclear the last time a CEO visited the library. Blake, the librarian, said Fire Chief Matt Bors has visited to perform fire associated inspections. As well, she said the building had been radon-tested four or five years ago and that the water was tested at that time. "That's when we found out about the lead," she said. Drinking water has been supplied by Poland Spring. The library has gone through somewhat of a renaissance since a bid to

UNE Bus

FROM PAGE A1

Casavant. "This is just another example of doing something that's environmentally correct but also something that works so well for the students." The intercampus bus was provided to the school through a partnership with Custom Coach and Limousine, a Portland-based transportation company, said Ripich. She said the university has

had a partnership with Biddeford's city bus line for several years, and those buses continually travel from UNE's Biddeford Campus to the city's downtown area and the Five Points intersection and back. UNE students are able to use their meal cards to purchase food from several restaurants in the Saco-Biddeford downtown area, said Ripich, and with the development of the mill

buildings, more students will likely be moving into downtown Biddeford – so all of these connections between UNE's campuses and that area are important. "As the mills develop, we expect more of our students will be living in downtown Biddeford, so this bus will give them a loop to both campuses," she said. — Staff Writer Angelo J. Verzoni can be contacted at 282-1535, ext. 329 or averzoni@journaltribune.com.

School Freeze

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by members of the school board, but by representatives from the city of Saco. "At the very least, it seems the city and its repre-

sentatives should work with us to try to solve this problem," she said. Johnston said she felt it was "probably unwise" for the withdrawal committee not to get input from school

officials when drawing up the contract with Thornton Academy. — Staff Writer Liz Gotthelf can be contacted at 282-1535, ext.325 or egotthelf@journaltribunecom.

Pre-K

FROM PAGE A1

are behind on skills when they enter kindergarten. Elie said the school board will also study the impact on tax payers of a pre-kindergarten program when making a decision.

The Department of Education recently issued new standards for public preschool programs. Under the standards, public preschool programs can have a maximum classroom size of 16 children and the adult to student ratio must be 1:8, with one staff member

a teacher and the other an educational technician. Under state standards, a preschool program must run a minimum of 10 hours a week for 35 weeks. — Staff Writer Liz Gotthelf can be contacted at 282-1535, ext. 325 or egotthelf@journaltribune.com.

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Top row of photos DAN HICKLING, Bottom two photos JEFF LAGASSE

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Indictments

From staff reports

ALFRED — The following indictments were recently handed up by a York County grand jury. An indictment is not a finding of guilt, but a finding that enough evidence exists to move forward with prosecution: Corey J. Robinson, 24, 560 Elm St., Biddeford, receiving stolen property Oct. 16 in Biddeford. Donald C. Smith, 36, 2017 North Road, Mount Vernon, operating under the influence Oct. 28 in Biddeford. David Stauffer, 26, 25 Mount Kineo Road, Kennebunkport, 2 counts possession of sexually explicit materials July 10 in Kennebunk. David A. Thomits, 48, 71

Fountain St., Haverill, Mass., aggravated assault, assault Sept. 30 in Old Orchard Beach. Trina M. Tidwell, 26, 29 Bethany St., Sanford, operating under the influence operating without a license July 30 in Old Orchard Beach. Jennifer Walls, 34, 21 Komusin Lane, Cranberry Isles, theft by deception Aug. 25 in Biddeford. Benjamin James Walls, 35, 61 Bacon St., Apt. 2, Biddeford, theft by deception Aug. 25 in Biddeford. Alan F. Woodruff, 78, 464 Hope Road, Lincolnville Center, operating under the influence, reckless conduct, driving to endanger May 17 in Arundel. Bryce M. Burnham, 20, 99 Weeks Road, Parsonsfield,

cluding an officer, operating after suspension Sept. 3 in Cornish. Richard A Dixon Jr., 33, 308 Chick Road, Lebanon, theft Sept. 10 in Acton. Christopher Fisher, 51, 19 Rainbow Road, Shapleigh, reckless conduct, assault June 5 in Shapleigh. Dylan J. Girard, 19, 83-A River St., Sanford, 2 counts receiving stolen property Sept. 27, 2013 in Limington.

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