

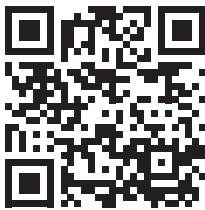


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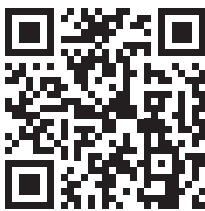
It was a beautiful day October 12 for the annual Blessing of the Animals at the Franklin Township Animal Shelter.



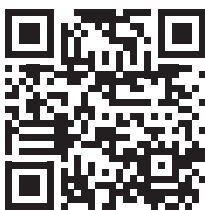
We speak with Caylia Wallace, Head Coach of the Franklin High School Dance Team, about the team's upcoming nationals competition in Orlando, Fl.



At the East Franklin Volunteer Fire Department open house, speaking with Chief Dan Krushinski.



From the Franklin High School Homecoming football game ... The Award Winning Franklin High School Marching Band



Fire District 3 Contract Dispute Ends; Commissioners, Firefighters Claim Victory



MAKING HIS CASE – East Franklin Volunteer Fire Department Chief Dan Krushinski speaks to the Fire District 3 Board of Commissioners on October 8.

More than 6-month standoff ended October 8 when a new contract was signed by the East Franklin Volunteer Fire Department and the Fire District 3 Board of Commissioners.

EFVFD has been operating without a contract since April 1, when fire department brass refused to sign the new proposed agreement.

The District enters into yearly contracts with fire departments which allow the departments to fight fires. Fire District 3 contains roughly 30,000 residents, and also includes Community Volunteer Fire Department. Community signed the new contract in March.

At the crux of the issue with East Franklin were new stipulations the Commis-

sioners included in the proposed contract, to which the EFVFD membership objected.

Those stipulations included removing new policies giving fire chiefs input into proposed policy changes, installing new video and audio recording devices in department vehicles and apparatus, and ending reimbursement for fire fighters' personal

property damaged or lost while responding to calls.

Board Chairman Sherrod Middleton drew the ire of the EFVFD membership when he threatened to shut down the fire department, reclaim all apparatus and firefighting gear – which the District owns and pays to store at the EFVFD fore house – and hire per diem firefighters to bridge the gap.

But EFVFD refused to budge, culminating in a September 17 meeting among Commissioner Kenneth Reid, Board Clerk Fatiima Braxton, and two members of EFVFD, which resulted in the agreement signed on October 8.

EFVFD Chief Dan Krushinski said the new contract was a victory for the fire department.

"We got 100% what we wanted," he said after the meeting.

The new contracts contains a stipulation that if the department chiefs object to any new policy proposed by the Commissioners, a writ-

Continued on Page 7

Township Foundation Donates \$7K In Sensory Supplies To Claremont Elementary



SCHOOL DONATIONS – Makeda Fryson and Kwame Breedy of the Triple B Foundation, and Claremont Elementary School vice-principal Angela Pape (left to right) talk about the supply donation made by the Foundation to the school.

A township-based foundation made the wishes of a number of Claremont Elementary School teachers come true October 28 with the donation of \$7,100 worth of sensory teaching aids.

The supplies, donated by the Triple B Foundation, will be used in the school's neurodivergent program in grades Pre-K to 6, said vice-principal Angela Pape.

The supplies were on

teachers' "wish lists," which were submitted to the Foundation for fulfillment, Pape said.

"It's to help with their sensory needs," Pape said. "So there's different fidgets, there's different balance boards, stepping stones to help with proprioceptive activities."

Proprioception is a sense that lets us perceive the location and movements of our body parts, according to Sci-

enceDirect.com.

Also donated were calming supplies, timers, kinetic sand, and sensory tables to put the sand or water in, Pape said.

The Foundation was formed by two siblings, Makeda Fryson and her brother, Kwame Breedy, and gets its name from the matriarchs of their family.

"BBB stands for the matriarchs of our family," Fryson said. "My grandmother, Charlotte Bayley; my mom, Jenny Breedy, and my aunt, Cecily Barrington.

The Foundation's mission, she said, "is really to just tap into our communities, specifically for our neurodivergent students, our elderly, anyone in our community that is in need."

"We grew up here, we went through our entire education here," she said. "Our goal was to give back, because that was the goal of my grandmother, Charlotte Bai-

ley. And so because of that, we just wanted to make sure that we achieve this mission."

Fryson said she was a substitute teacher at Claremont, so she knew first-hand the needs of the students in that program.

"And these students here, just based on my own personal experience, I was able to see first-hand what it is when they are able to have access to certain resources," she said. "Let's give them what they needed there, and then we'll build from that and grow. So we're excited to see where this goes from here, and we're hoping that people will see the good that we're trying to do, hopefully donate to our foundation and allow us to have a much larger impact and reach."

This isn't the first time the Foundation has offered a helping hand, but this donation is the largest, Fryson said.

Continued on Page 7

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Township Studying State Guidance On Affordable Housing Obligation

Township planning officials are studying a state Department of Community Affairs report, released last week, designed to provide guidance on state towns' affordable housing obligation over the next decade.

The report, described by the state DCA as "guidance" as opposed to a mandate, sets 714 as the number of affordable homes Franklin should accommodate between 2025 and 2035.

The number is the highest in Somerset County, and in the top 15 in the state, according to state DCA calculations.

Hillsborough has the second-highest proposed obligation in Somerset County with 565 units.

"We are still reviewing/digesting the DCA report," Township Principal Planner Mark Healey said in an emailed comment.

According to the DCA press release, the proposed affordable housing obligation numbers were reached through a calculation of criteria set by a bill signed into law in March by Gov. Phil Murphy. The bill was designed to establish "a new

framework for determining and enforcing municipalities' affordable housing obligations under the New Jersey Supreme Court's Mount Laurel doctrine and the State's Fair Housing Act."

The calculation included a number of different factors mandated by the new law. Those factors include present need and deficient low- and moderate-income occupied housing, which towns qualify as Urban Aid Municipalities, prospective need for individual regions, changes in non-residential property valuations, the extent to which a municipality's income level differs from that of the lowest-income municipality in its Housing Region, and total developable acreage for each town.

"The calculations help address New Jersey's housing shortage by equipping municipalities with clear numbers so they can better plan on how to provide affordable housing options in their communities," DCA Commissioner Jacquelyn A. Suárez said in a press release about the report. "The new law provides a unique opportunity to develop 'missing middle' housing – options like townhouses, duplexes, and other types of multi-family units – that bridge the gap between single-family homes and large apartment complexes, offering the diverse housing choices that New Jersey families desire and need."

Township Attorney Lou Rainone said at the October 22 Township Council meeting that the DCA report notwithstanding, the final affordable housing obligation numbers will be determined by towns. The deadline to do so is January 31, 2025.

"So when everybody says, well, our number is X and now we're gonna have to build all of this affordable housing, the answer is we don't know, we just got that

number the same day that the public got it, the municipalities got it, and all the background data," Rainone said. "We're in the process of analyzing it."

"What our ultimate number is, is the number that the township determines, is the number based upon the guidelines that are in the state statute, and with the guidance of the DCA number," he said.

"This is just a preliminary step in a process that starts really next year," Rainone said.

Rainone noted that this new process is different from prior rounds of determining affordable housing obligations.

"In the last two rounds, in round two and in the beginning of round three, DCA published a number that was your number," he said. "That's not what happened last Friday. What happened last Friday is DCA put out a number that is a non-binding number and it is advisory, the determination as to the actual number is going to be based upon a resolution passed by the council next year."

"I guess that's the main point, that people shouldn't be glued to that number," he said.

The New Jersey Judiciary will resolve disputes about municipalities' affordable housing responsibilities and their plans to satisfy those responsibilities with assistance from a new dispute resolution program called the Affordable Housing Dispute Resolution Program, according to the release.

The law outlines how municipalities may receive "bonus credits" that allow affordable housing units to be credited as 1.5 or 2 units in certain circumstances, according to the release. This bonus credit system is designed to incentivize age-restricted housing, housing set aside for individuals with spe-

cial needs, and other location or purpose-specific housing projects, such as housing near mass transit stations.

The law limits bonus credit units to 25 percent of a municipality's prospective need, according to the release. It establishes related parameters for how much of a municipality's responsibilities must be satisfied through housing available to families with children and rental housing.

The Department will support municipalities by appointing housing liaisons to streamline affordable housing efforts, helping cities meet their obligations, utilize affordable housing trust funds, and track project completion, according to the release. There will be ongoing training for these liaisons and administrative agents.

Launching in early 2025, NJ Housing Opportunities for Municipal Equity and Success (NJHOMES) will offer comprehensive support for municipalities to develop affordable housing that aligns with community needs, according to the release.

This initiative will provide financial resources, technical assistance, and tools to address opposition and promote sustainable development, according to the release. NJHOMES will also introduce an Affordable Housing Playbook & Toolkit, featuring best practices, zoning guidance, case studies, and outreach materials to assist municipalities in developing affordable housing that meets their communities' individual needs.

Additionally, the NJHOMES Institute will offer virtual and in-person training while planning grants and technical assistance will help municipalities develop effective housing strategies, according to the release.

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Party Registration Ordinance Sent Back For Further Review



QUESTIONS PROPOSAL – Township Councilman Alex Kharazi was among the Councilmembers who said they were not comfortable with a proposed ordinance that would require registration of private parties with more than 100 guests.

An ordinance that would have required the hosts of private parties with more than 100 guests to register with the Township was shelved by the Township Council at its October 22 meeting.

Council members said they had concerns that the proposed ordinance was “over-regulating” what residents can do on their own property.

The proposed ordinance amendment called for a number of informational items to be provided by applicants, including parking diagrams, drawings of any tents or can-

opies that were to be used, and layouts of any cooking areas, benches and chairs that were planed to be used.

The proposed amendment also called for a construction permit to be issued for any tent larger than 900 square feet.

The issue was brought to the Council at its October 8 meeting by Public Safety Director Quovella Maeweather, who said it was needed to ensure public safety and regulate parking at large private parties.

“We’re not trying to fine people, we’re not trying to write tickets, we just want

everyone to be happy and celebrate and do what they want to do the right way,” Maeweather said at that meeting.

“We’re not going to get rich off of this. We just want to direct them to something and say, here, this is what you should do.”

Several Council members who expressed discomfort with the proposal at the October 8 meeting had not changed their opinions for the October 22 meeting.

“I understand the main reason behind this, which is to make sure that people stay safe, there’s no traffic issues, parking issues, and then in

an emergency, the township vehicle can reach out,” Councilman Alex Kharazi (D-At Large) said. “But I’m not 100 percent sure that we need to have a permit for the citizens of this township to go through the application and all the other stuff that is going to come with this to just have a personal party.”

“What I believe is needed is some guidance to be provided to the community members that if you’re going to have a large party, Township is here to help guide you some of the things you can do and you can’t do, and then we can inform the public in many ways that we have so they know what are the good ways to have their special events,” he said.

“Having another permit and application and waiting for somebody to answer in the Township and even some of the details that they ask and see where you’re going to be put in the benches and so forth, I believe it’s just too much work,” he said. “So I’d like to just propose that we have a guidance and let the community members discuss it.”

Councilman James Vasanello (D-Ward 5) agreed.

“I do in general think

there’s ways to do it without mandatory permitting process,” he said.

Councilman Ram Anbarasan said he was “not too keen on over-regulating a private party in a house. While the problem, I get it, it’s a traffic issue that a street may not be able to hold so many cars at a party. How do we know that there are going to be, that there are 100 people? Let’s say somebody has a 98-person party, they are exempt from this rule, yet they’re going to have the same number of cars as a 100-person party.”

“So, I think this ordinance is misplaced,” he said. “I’m not too thrilled about it.”

“Yes, I understand that we have to provide a safe parking environment for gatherings, private gatherings,” Anbarasan said. “I think that can be done maybe on a more on a guidance basis like Councilman Kharazi suggested. I’m not too keen on this particular ordinance as it is written.”

Deputy Mayor Ed Potosnak said that he liked the idea of registering, “and with that, maybe there’s a few things that you get, like a checklist, like the Councilman Kharazi mentions, for guidance, and

the ability then to stay active with your party, to let’s say 11 o’clock at night instead of the noise ordinance, which is 10 (p.m.).”

“I don’t feel like it’s a government overreach to say, if you’re gonna have 100 people at your house and you wanna go later than the noise ordinance, please take a moment to fill out a form in advance so that you know that everything’s going to be above board, and you’re not going to have your wedding for your child shut down somehow because of something,” he said.

Potosnak said that requirements such as submitting scale drawings of the event space “seem like a lot for a homeowner to go through.”

“Next they’ll be asking for architectural satellite drawings and 3D models to bring in or something, which might be fun, but really doesn’t get to the point, right?” he said.

Potosnak motion that the amendment be sent back to the Council’s Administration sub-committee for further review was unanimously passed.

There was no time frame set for the Council’s reconsideration of the proposed amendment.

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Faith Temple Church Celebrates 43rd Anniversary



ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION — Pastor Rodney Staton speaks to the congregation during the Faith Temple anniversary celebration.

The congregation of Faith Temple gathered at their home at Temple Beth El on Hamilton Street on October 27 to celebrate a milestone: the church's 43rd anniversary.

Founded in February 1981 by the late Elder Horace Staton and his wife, Pastor Lydia Staton, as Faith Tabernacle Church, the congregation has called several locations in the township home during its four-decade existence.

The congregation first met at Pine Grove Manor School in March 1981, and in its early years also met at MacAfee Road School and the community center.

In 1982, the congregation teamed with that of Emmanuel Baptist Church, with which it met jointly for 20 years.

In 2003, the congregation met in a pastor's home for a while before joining service with Harvest Temple in New Brunswick.

Later that year, the church changed its name from Faith Tabernacle to Faith Temple.

"The congregation had been tabernacleing for 23 years," Pastor Rodney Staton, the founder's son, told the congregation at the anniversary service. "They had experienced many losses, hardship, and disappointment."

Tow months later, the congregation found a new home on Railroad Avenue.

"Ironically, this was the same building Pastor (Horace Staton) did inquire about two years before, but the inquiry did not come to fruition," Rodney Staton said. "However, to everything, there is a season and time, to every purpose."

Elder Horace Staton died in 2015, after which his wife, Pastor Lydia Staton, was installed as Interim pastor and, in 2018, as senior pastor.

"Under Pastor Staton's leadership ... the church was led here to Temple Beth El in Somerset," Rodney Staton said. "Once again, the hand of God was on them; it was leading them as He led the children of Israel."

"We found favor and have been worshipping in this synagogue, and on January 1st of 2025, it will be eight years," he said.

"We celebrate 43 years of consistent, steadfast ministry," Staton said. "Some said we wouldn't make it, but we're still here to declare the wonderful works of the Lord. We have been time-tested and heaven-approved."

"For this cause, we bow

our knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in

"The congregation had been tabernacleing for 23 years, They had experienced many losses, hardship, and disappointment."

heaven and Earth is named," he said. "We continue up to this day, witnessing both the small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come."

Jersey Mike's Helps With FHS Dance Team's Florida Goal

The Franklin High School Dance Team took its fundraising for a national competition to Jersey Mike's in Veronica Plaza on October 29.

The team has qualified for the Universal Dance Association National in Orlando, Fla., in January. Now team members are in 'fundraise mode' to raise money to offset the cost of getting there.

The Jersey Mike's event was accompanied by a Trunk or Treat, with a half-dozen dance parents setting up in the restaurant's parking lot with their decorated autos.

According to Jersey Mike's manager Cody Papa, the event was another example of the chain's commitment to their communities.

"We're trying to just build a community and show that we're here to support ev-

erybody from within Jersey Mike's, and just show that anybody is welcome to come in at any time and just be part of our family," Papa said.

The event was co-sponsored by the Franklin High School Athletics Booster Club. The club's president, Monique Severino, also happens to be a "dance Mom."

"I love that they {Jersey Mike's} want to be a part of the community, because that's what it's all about, right?" she said. "They're new here for the most part, right? And any new business that comes into our area I think should reach out and pour out to the community. And I think that the community in return should support as well. So that's what we're doing tonight."

The evening was a dine to donate event, with a portion from Jersey Mike's day sales donated to the dance team in

its effort to get to Florida.

Passers-by could also donate cash at the various trunks, and a GoFundMe has been created for the effort to raise \$35,000.

The GoFundMe is "over \$5,000 right now," Severino said. "So it's climbing, not as fast as we would like, but it's climbing."

"We leave to go to Nationals on January 30th," she said. "So we would like to have the kids not to have to pay, or the parents not have to pay for the kids to go. It's a bit of a stretch for some families, and we'd like to eliminate that."

Severino said the team has planned a number of events to raise the money.

"This is our first time doing it with Jersey Mike's, but it won't be our last," she said.

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Sister 2 Sister Holds Annual 5K Walk/Run For Breast Cancer

The 19th annual edition of the Sister 2 Sister 5K Run/Walk for Life was held under sunny skies in Colonial Park on October 5. Hundreds of walkers and runners – spanning the age gap from child to senior citizen – showed up to show their support for the 24-year-old organization headquartered on Hamilton Street.

Sister 2 Sister’s mission is to provide “sanctuary, support, education, advocacy and administers breast cancer related programs for minority and underserved breast cancer survivors,” according to its web site.

“We raise our money so that we can given back to the women we serve,” said Dorothy Reed, the organization’s president and co-founder. “We are there to support them and the money that we make today goes to them.”

“So far we’ve raised \$42,000,” she said. “We’re trying to raise \$50,000 this year.”





Rutgers Plaza Apartment Building Hearing Postponed To 2025



PROPOSED APARTMENT BUILDING – An artist’s rendering of the proposed four-story, 200-unit apartment building proposed for the former K-Mart location in Rutgers Plaza.

The October 17 Zoning Board of Adjustment hearing on the Levin Properties application to build 200 apartments in Rutgers Plaza has been postponed until 2025.

The township published an online notice, saying that Levin had requested the postponement. There was no reason given.

A note was placed on the meeting’s agenda, saying that the meeting would be held on

January 9, 2025, in the Township Council chamber in the Municipal Building.

Levin’s proposal is to raze the former K-Mart building in Rutgers Plaza on Easton Avenue, as well as some spaces behind it, and build a four-story apartment building that will hold 200 units.

The plan has come under fire from residents who argue that although housing is needed, it should not be placed in a commercial zone,

which is where the plaza sits. Opponents say that if Levin is allowed to break the zoning, developers will want to do the same thing in retail areas along Route 27 and elsewhere.

Levin officials have argued that they tried unsuccessfully to lure more retail chains into the space when K-Mart left, and that housing is the only other option they have.



CELEBRATING 100 YEARS – Mayor Phil Kramer speaks during the Centennial celebration at Kingston Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 on October 5.

Kingston VFC No. 1 Celebrates 100 Years

The 100th anniversary celebration for the Kingston Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 continued on October 5 with a short program and a barbecue.

The celebrations began with a dinner on February 29, the actual day in 1924 on which the fire company was started.

There was also a parade in July, said George Luck Jr., chairman of the 100th Anniversary Committee.

The village of Kingston is shared between Franklin and South Brunswick, with the dividing line being Route 27. Kingston Volunteer Fire Company is part of Fire District 4.

Kingston Volunteer Fire Company was started in

1924, after a fire destroyed a dry goods shop and two adjacent homes on Route 27.

Also on hand to celebrate the anniversary was Mayor Phil Kramer, who delivered a proclamation congratulating the fire company for a century of service.

Noting that the fire company survived with community support, Kramer said, “It’s hard to find that nowadays.”

Sixty-two members started this and there are 45 members now,” Kramer said. “In a day of lack of volunteerism, that’s truly amazing and I congratulate you.”

“This is kind of a culmination of the year of celebrations,” Luck said. “It’s open to the public because we want to say thank you



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Fire District 3 Contract Dispute Ends; Both Sides Claim Victory

Continued from Page 1

ten complaint is made, and the District's two chiefs will negotiate with two commissioners.

If no agreement is reached, then the matter goes to Public Safety Director Quovella Maeweather for mediation.

"That's what we asked for in March," Krushinski said.

All of the policies that were included in the proposed contract rejected by the EFVFD will have to be negotiated, Krushinski said.

"The main concern for the firefighters if they've lost a watch, they broke their phone, or they broke their eyeglasses that this Board wanted you to pay for it yourself," Krushinski said. "And that was one of our big fights. That's been taken completely out of the contract and the insurance company will pick up the tab for anything that's broken, damaged, at a fire scene.

Also removed from the contract is any time limit on extensions for signing new agreements, Krushinski said.

"I think we're pretty happy with what happened here,"

he said. "With the Board attorney and the two commissioners that sat down and met with my deputy chief and my ex-deputy chief, who was also a former fire commissioner, who wore both hats and understood both sides of it, that met with Commissioner Reed and Commissioner Braxton, who spent I guess two hours on September 17th to try and make all this come to a head tonight and it did."

On October 15, the Board of Commissioners issued a statement on the new contract.

"We are pleased that we have reached an agreement that ensures public safety and maintains the transparency and fiscal responsibility owed to the taxpayers of Franklin Township," Sherrod Middleton, Board Chairman, said in the release. "We are confident that Director Maeweather, as a neutral third party, will provide fair and balanced oversight should any future disputes arise. This resolution allows us to move forward, ensuring the protection of the residents without further delays."

According to the release,

the new contract "follows months of intense negotiation between the two parties. Central to the conflict was a provision in the previous contract that allowed the East Franklin Volunteer Fire Department to override policies enacted by the Fire Commissioners. The new contract corrects this imbalance, aligning the department's agreement with the terms governing other fire companies in Franklin Township."

"I think we're pretty happy with what happened here."
— Chief Krushinski

"In the spirit of compromise, the Board of Commissioners agreed to introduce a process whereby, if the East Franklin Volunteer Fire Department disagrees with any policy proposed by the Commission, they may appeal to Director Maeweather," according to the release. "This ensures that both parties retain a voice while preserving the Board's authority to make decisions in the best interest of the community and its taxpayers."

Township Foundation Donates \$7K In Sensory Supplies



Continued from Page 1

Working in conjunction with the Franklin Youth Center, the Foundation has contributed to the Center's Medley March Madness program, and also awarded four scholarships to students enrolled in the Youth center, she said.

"But this was our biggest,

the one that we are just so excited to be able to unveil and present," Fryson said. "And we want to be able to do that to other schools in the district once we understand what the needs are and how we can again be most impactful."

Her brother, Kwame Breedy, said he was inspired

to join his sister by their grandmother.

"Just following in her footsteps, the values she instilled in us and just making an impact in the community and hopefully we can receive donations and get the guidance from what people need and pass it forward," he said.



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