



## AMENIA

Lin-Manuel Miranda Has Private Viewing Party At Drive-In Theatre **A5**



## PINE PLAINS

Mourning The Loss Of A Major Contributor To The Town, Bob Couse Sr. **A3**

**COMPASS** Celebrating Art In Sharon; Band Camp; Cakes As Works Of Art; And More **B1-2**

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## A day for diplomas

A member of the Stissing Mountain High School Class of 2021, Britney Mercado toasted her graduation from the Pine Plains Central School District with her parents, Juana and Raymond, on the football field behind the high school. For more coverage on graduation and moving-up ceremonies from around the Harlem Valley, turn to Pages A3, A5, B3 and B5.



PHOTO BY KAITLIN LYLE

## Numbers are close in Amenia's GOP Primary Election

By **WHITNEY JOSEPH**  
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AMENIA — The Dutchess County Board of Elections (BOE) was collecting the last few absentee ballots for the Amenia Republican Primary that took place on Tuesday, June 22, one week later on Tuesday, June 29, at its office on Market Street in Poughkeepsie. A total of 24 absentees were mailed out for the primary, and as of noon on Monday, June 28, nine had been returned to the BOE. Election workers said they didn't have a time line for counting the absentee ballots as of Monday, but might by later that

afternoon; they didn't. The race was both contentious and close for those seeking the three slots on the Republican line on the ballot for the General Election come November. The candidates are hoping to serve on the Amenia Town Board come 2022. Some of the candidates also ran on additional party lines.

Ballots were cast exclusively at the Wassaic firehouse on the 22nd as it was only a primary, but that doesn't mean it didn't get exciting, with a candidate being challenged from voting on Election Day.

The town supervisor's seat and two Town Board seats were up for grabs in the GOP Primary, along with two

See **PRIMARY RESULTS, A6**

## Consensus reached in Pine Plains!

# Planning Board OKs site plan for Church Street restaurant

By **KAITLIN LYLE**  
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PINE PLAINS — After hearing from the community about a proposed restaurant at 2938 Church St., the Pine Plains Planning Board approved KTB Properties LLC's site plan application at the public hearing continued on Wednesday, June 23.

From Crumpets to the New Age Diner, the Church Street building

has housed a variety of restaurants during the last three decades. For its next incarnation, KTB principal Jack Banning wants to rent the building to former Stissing House owners Michel and Patricia Jean, who want to open "a restaurant serving primarily French food for dinner five nights a week and brunch on Sundays," according to Banning, the applicant before the Planning Board.

The project received an outpour-

ing of support from local residents as well as complaints from its neighbors, Bill and Patti Hollick. Complaints and praise were voiced when the public hearing for the site plan opened on Wednesday, June 9, and again when it continued during a special Planning Board meeting on the 23rd. Both meetings can be viewed online on the "Pine Plains Planning and Zoning Boards"

See **RESTAURANT, A6**

## Pine Plains Planning Board declares itself lead agency

# Durst development plans call for July scoping sessions

By **KAITLIN LYLE**  
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PINE PLAINS — The Hudson Valley Project (formerly known as the Durst Project) appeared before the Pine Plains Planning Board at a special meeting on Wednesday, June 23, when the board declared itself lead agency for the project's review process.

### Project details

The Durst Organization submitted an application to the Planning Board in April proposing a 237-lot conservation subdivision on its 2,655-acre property west of the main hamlet, at the former Carvel Country Club (once

owned by the late ice-cream magnate Thomas Carvel). There will also be 51 residential lots in Milan. The site fronts both sides of Route 199 and also borders the Taconic State Parkway. Of the total 3,100-acres, 2,655 acres will be in Pine Plains, with the remaining 445 acres located in Milan.

### Planning strategies

The board adopted a positive declaration during the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) process (meaning it perceives potential significant adverse environment impacts could result from the project) and scheduled scoping sessions for the project in July.

Scoping, explained planner Sarah Yackel from BFJ Planning, which is advising the Planning Board, refers to developing a document that outlines the environmental impact of a proposed action.

### Lead Agency status

On the 23rd, Yackel told the board BFJ Planning received a letter from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) signing off on the Planning Board acting as lead agency. She added the board was at a point to make a negative or positive declaration.

See **DURST, A6**



PHOTO BY KAITLIN LYLE

## Stissing Sprint

Emerging from the calm waters of Stissing Lake in Pine Plains, the athletes who participated in the Stissing Triathlon on Sunday, June 27, prepared for the next part of the competition as they began their sprint across the beach. See Page A4 for the full story and more photos.

## Thorne Building and Bennett Park join forces

By **JUDITH O'HARA BALFE**  
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MILLBROOK — In anticipation of an upcoming press release, The Millerton News had a conversation with Oakeigh Thorne, chairman of the Thorne Building Community Center (TBCC) project, about a collaboration between it and Bennett Park.

The Thorne Building sits at the head of Franklin Avenue — handsome,

but empty and forlorn. The Bennett College property is at the foot of Franklin Avenue, off Route 343, with Halcyon Hall in particular looking desolate and foreboding.

Nearing a very long-awaited handing over of the Thorne Building from the Village of Millbrook (VOM) to the 501(c)3 nonprofit TBCC, the announcement will be welcome news

See **JOINING FORCES, A6**



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### OPINION

Good News From The Pine Plains Planning Board; Columns; Letters; **B4**

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**RESTAURANT** *Continued from Page A1*

YouTube channel.

Before opening the hearing up for comments, the board displayed the site plan so that Banning could go over any changes or additions made to the plan based on changes requested at the previous meeting. Banning noted changes made to the lighting, the configuration of the seating area and the areas where they would like to plant cyprus or arborvitae. He mentioned that KTB's attorney met with the Hollicks and their attorney Wayne Thompson to discuss any concerns.

Thanking Banning for referencing the meeting between the Hollicks and the attorneys, Thompson reported they made some significant progress and said he submitted a letter to the board saying they were "extremely close to coming to an agreement to having all the concerns addressed."

Regarding the Hollicks' objections, he explained they never objected to the restaurant opening,

but rather the site's rear dining area's lack of privacy next to its commercial usage, which borders their residential property.

Thompson asked Banning which side he was planning on planting the cyprus or arborvitae on, since the line of greenery for the restaurant and its neighbors "provides a wonderful noise attenuation, light barrier and a privacy hedge all in one."

Though there was a request for 20 12-foot arborvitae to be planted 3 feet apart, Banning said he assumed they were going to plant something in the 4- to 6-foot range and let them grow over time, since a 12-foot tree would be "pretty out of scale for everything else that's around."

Thompson asked Banning if he'd consider planting something in the 6- to 8-foot range for his clients. Beyond that and other project aspects, he said if it goes forward and "we agree on that, then we've met the Hollicks' objections to the project and wish

everybody to move forward."

Patti Hollick explained she and her husband mainly worry potential noise (particularly the sound of people walking over patio stones) and a lack of privacy in their backyard could be jeopardized by the restaurant. She said they are hoping for either a solid fence or shrubs to create a sound and visual buffer for privacy, while her husband suggested planting 8- to 10-foot bushes to create a wall. The Hollicks also suggested moving the restaurant's compressor and shared their concerns about its closing time.

As the hearing opened for other public comments, the Planning Board heard from residents who spoke in full support of the restaurant. Though he mentioned noises he used to hear coming from former The Stissing House, Pine Plains resident Douglas Koch pointed out other noises that can be heard in the town, such as those coming from the

local gun club and passing motorcycles.

"I find it hard to believe that a few tinkling wine glasses is going to add to the noise in Pine Plains," Koch said.

After the hearing closed at 9:34 p.m., Planning Board Chairman Michael Stabile asked the board if they had any questions or conditions about the site plan. Planning Board Attorney Warren Replansky reminded its members they must look at Part 2 of the mandated State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) process, which the board promptly reviewed and approved.

A draft resolution for the site plan's approval was brought up to assist the board as it discussed restrictions that should be included, like hours of operation, smoking, amplified music and screenings like hedges or other plantings. By 10:37 p.m., the board unanimously approved the site plan resolution as amended.

**PRIMARY RESULTS** *Continued from Page A1*

seats on the Dutchess County Republican Committee. The supervisor and committee posts hold two-year terms while the councilmember seats hold four-year terms.

Incumbent town Supervisor Victoria Perotti is seeking her fifth term in office and also ran on the Conservative line; she won with 114 votes out of a total of 221 ballots cast over opponent Julie Doran, who also ran on the independent Amenia Strong party line. Amenia Strong has ties with the Silo Ridge Field Club luxury development and has been connected to the development's lawsuit fighting the town's 2019 property reassessment. Doran, who works for Silo Ridge, is also suing the town with two other litigants regarding property values.

"I appreciate that voters came out and showed me the support that they did and also the other two Town Board candidates," said Perotti. "I was delighted with the results. I put a lot of work into being supervisor and there are still other things I want to accomplish... I think it also says that a lot of people have a lot of different opinions but basically the town residents do not want a takeover by a corporation of their Town Board."

Incumbent Town Board member James Morris, who is seeking a second term, won with 122 out of a total of 221 votes cast; he ran only on the GOP line.

"I'm surprised Victoria didn't win by more votes; people do not realize how much she does and how hard she works," said Morris. "I didn't know what to expect. This election had some issues... with the Amenia Strong and Silo Ridge thing, I kind of expected more people to be voting, so that was a surprise. It seems to me these people have a conflict of interest and I still believe that. I don't know how you can run for the town you're suing, and I still believe that... I'm a lawyer; I know what conflict of interest is all about."

Newcomer Brad Rebillard fared second best, with 106 votes; he also ran on the Amenia Strong party line.

"The absentee ballots will be counted [Tuesday]," said Rebillard. "Too close to call at the moment. Remember, Amenia Strong is on the ballot in November. Based on how close the results were for Jamie, Julie and myself I'd say people definitely want change. A low voter turnout for the primary and our great results indicate we will do good in the

election in November."

Another newcomer, Jamie Vitiello, placed third with 105 votes; he also ran on the Amenia Strong ticket.

"It definitely was an interesting primary," Vitiello said. "I think that the turnout was impressive for a single party primary in a town the size of Amenia... One thing I feel a little frustrated with is this 'others' [idea]; the principle argument against myself and Julie, too, is win the election for locals. What? Don't I live here? When I got to the ballots, Sharon Kroeger objected to my even voting at all."

In fact, Kroeger, a poll watcher for the Democrats, "challenged the vote of Vitiello based upon the fact that he has not adequately established residence in Amenia," according to an email she sent to this newspaper following the primary.

Because of the challenge, Vitiello had to swear under the threat of perjury that he was a legally registered voter in the town of Amenia, which both Democratic and Republican election inspectors verified before handing him a ballot and allowing him to vote. Kroeger's claim was also vetted and negated by BOE Republican Commissioner Erik Haight.

"I turned to my daughter and said, 'This is the ugly side of democracy,'" Vitiello said.

Incumbent Michele Somogyi, who only ran as a Republican in the primary, came in last place with 101 votes.

The race for the Dutchess County Republican Committee garnered a total of 49 ballots, 19 of which were undervotes, meaning those 19 votes weren't counted because of an unclear marking on the ballot by the voter.

Incumbent committee member Mark Doyle was challenged by Jean Rebillard (wife of Town Board candidate Brad Rebillard) and Apostolis Stefanopoulos for the two open seats on the committee. Doyle won one of the seats with 33 votes while Rebillard and Stefanopoulos were tied with 23 votes each. That tie could lead to a runoff if it's not broken once the absentees are counted.

Until the absentee votes are tallied, the primary results will not be certified by the BOE — and the actual outcome could change as the numbers are quite close. The BOE stressed until then, the above numbers reflect the unofficial results. For more, go to [www.elections.dutchessny.gov](http://www.elections.dutchessny.gov).

**JOINING FORCES** *Continued from Page A1*

to many. The initial contract between the village and the TBCC took place in 2019, but certain conditions had to be met first.

**A brief history**

The Thorne family donated the building and property to be used solely for educational purposes, which encouraged the village to incorporate as such in 1895 in order to receive the property. If it ceased to be used as a school it was written in the contract that the building would revert back to the Thorne family.

After a long and arduous process, the village has finally settled the reversion clause and all of the necessary work has been done by the Millbrook Early Education Center to allow it to use the property's playground. A zoning overlay was also created to permit the community center its various uses. The village expects the property to exchange hands shortly.

Thorne said the sale of the building for \$1, which was paid to the village, will allow the pricey renovation plans to begin with Phase 1 including asbestos removal and the preservation of the edifice's exterior. First the proper permits must be acquired.

**The planning process**

A series of public meetings were held to help decide the future of the Thorne Building before its use as a community center was settled upon. Many of the current plans have evolved from those meetings.

Asked how the pandemic has

hampered the project's progress, Thorne said, "We actually got a lot done over that time. We're ready to come out of the gates now that we can get together. It's exciting."

Former Planning Committee Chair for the TBCC Charles Pierce released a press release on June 26 in which he addressed the efforts to work on the dual projects.

"Capitalizing on a once-in-a-century opportunity to reimagine two village icons, The Millbrook Community Partnership, Inc. [MCP], a 501(C)3 organization, has been established to create a new park on the former Bennett College property while simultaneously renovating and restoring the Thorne Building into a community center."

How to best deal with both buildings in the village has weighed on the minds of residents for years and been raised repeatedly at Village Board meetings, in newspaper articles and on social media.

**Enter Tribute Gardens**

The Millbrook Tribute Garden is working with the TBCC and the Thorne family to make up a partnership that will be charged with raising \$20 million to complete both projects. It will eventually oversee the development and finally the operation of the two facilities.

"We want to take two of our community's greatest liabilities... and transform them to be among our greatest assets," Thorne said.

Now president of the MPC, he added, "These two facilities will create a vibrant platform for MPC and other local nonprofit organizations to deliver a plenitude of indoor and outdoor, civic and cultural programs."

Thorne said that the safe demolition of the Bennett College buildings is of utmost importance, as there is known to be asbestos in them, a major concern of residents living in Bennett Commons.

**Joint vision**

Both Thorne and Pierce described their vision of the renovated properties. Bennett Park, with 32 acres, will be a green gateway to the village with walking, hiking and bike trails incorporated into the plans. A landscape architectural firm has been retained to oversee other enhancements that will take place after public comments are heard and reviewed.

MCP has already received bids for the demolition of the college buildings. Once it raises enough money it will begin demolition. It is also planning a meeting with Bennett neighbors and the community to give information on the demolition and to seek input on the project.

Sloane Architects, P.C., a Millbrook firm, has been retained for the Thorne project, which plans to include a film and theater program, music and art studios, gallery space, culinary programs, a computer gaming room, a technology

center — it will be a complete and well-rounded community center. There will also be room for public meetings and other events.

Plans for Bennett Park are contingent upon agreements with several parties and will encompass land now occupied by the Bennett Commons swimming pool and tennis courts, Halcyon Hall, the Alumna Building, the Chapel, Carroll Hall, Melon Arts Center and the Kettering Science Center.

There were an additional 8 acres of land located north of the campus that are also included in the park plans. An agreement was reached between the Halcyon Master Association Inc. (Bennett Commons) and the Tribute Garden late last year to relocate the tennis courts and swimming pool to land closer to the condominiums.

The Tribute Garden donated an additional 12 acres and the Thorne family donated an additional 20 acres.

The demolition and renovation at both Bennett College and at the Thorne Building have taken years, but now seem to be coming to fruition. When completed, those behind the project hope it will benefit the community and its citizens, and perhaps attract young families and visitors to the area who will avail themselves of the village's many shops, restaurants and social and recreational activities that abound.

**DURST** *Continued from Page A1*

BFJ Planning prepared Parts 2 and 3 of the Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) for the board to review. As the applicant, Durst was responsible for preparing Part 1 of the EAF, which was submitted in April.

Based on Parts 2 and 3 of the EAF, Yackel said BFJ assumed the board would adopt a positive declaration, which would direct Durst to prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

**Scoping sessions**

Yackel next scheduled scoping sessions; she advised holding two.

The first will be Wednesday, July 21, with a formal scoping session at 7:30 p.m. with an opportunity to view maps and graphics concerning the project at 6:30 p.m.

The second will be Saturday, July 31, and will begin with an opportunity to view project maps and graphics from 9 to 10 a.m. and follow with a formal scoping session at 10 a.m.

Both sessions will be held at Stissing Mountain Junior/Senior High School at 2829 Church St. (Route 199), in the auditorium.

Following the July 31 session, the scoping process will remain open for an additional 10 days. Written comments will be accepted until Tuesday, Aug. 10, at 4 p.m., so the public can review the scope and make comments in-person, in writing or via email.

Comments may be sent to Planning Board Secretary Tricia Devine, Pine Plains Town Hall, 3284 Route 199, Pine Plains, NY

12567; or emailed to [planning-board@pineplains-ny.gov](mailto:planning-board@pineplains-ny.gov). For more details, call Devine at 518-398-7155, ext. 204.

BFJ Planning will then take all comments and put them into a final scoping document for the Planning Board to review.

**EAF forms**

Yackel walked the board through Parts 2 and 3 of the EAF form, highlighting SEQRA standards for declaring a positive impact and the various impacts to be examined, such as those on land, groundwater, plants and animals, aesthetic resources and so forth.

She also touched upon the impacts that will be studied in the DEIS, such as potential impacts on human health.

Planning Board Chairman Michael Stabile asked Yackel to explain the significance of a box not checked off on the EAF. Yackel said if an item is checked as having "small to no" impact versus "large to moderate" impact,

it doesn't necessarily mean the issue won't be studied during the scoping process.

Likewise, if a comment is raised, new information is brought to light or if the project description changes in any way, she said it will be studied.

She added the planners anticipate there may be additional issues raised during the scoping process that weren't included in the EAF. However, Yackel said it wouldn't bind the Planning Board to any specific course of study, but rather set a framework for what will go into the scoping process.

**Self-contained**

Planner Stuart Mesinger from engineering firm, The Chazen Companies, said the project's infrastructure is entirely self-contained.

"We're not creating any infrastructure that would service other development, so any other development would have to develop its own infrastructure," he

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The Town of Salisbury has entrusted Fred Schmidt, who grew up on the lakes, to be responsible for monitoring and controlling the water levels of Twin Lakes. As there are different water level requirements for each lake, it takes experience and a light touch to balance the entire system. For example, high water is a problem in East Twin and a blessing in West Twin. Fred was interviewed recently by the Twin Lakes Association and you can either find his comments on the association's website at [twinlakesassociation.org](http://twinlakesassociation.org) or I'm happy to email a copy.



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