

IthacaTimes



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County Approves Tax Exemption to Attract Volunteer First Responders

BY MATT DOUGHERTY

urge all local municipalities and school districts to adopt the measure.

The Town of Enfield passed a similar measure in April 2022 but it could not take effect until passed by the county legislature, as well as passed by the New York State Legislature and signed into law by the Governor.

Governor Kathy Hochul signed a statewide exemption for volunteer first responders into law in December of 2022 and the Tompkins County Legislature passed the resolution during their February 7th meeting, so municipalities across the state that have passed similar laws can now put them into effect.

An estimated 30 counties across New York have passed similar legislation.

According to a statement by the NYS Department of Taxation and Finance, “the new law gives municipalities, school districts and fire districts throughout the State the option to provide a property tax exemption of up to 10% to volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers.” It continues saying that the exemption is only valid on “property used exclusively for residential purposes.”

The statement explains that volunteers “must live in the community served by their volunteer organization and meet a minimum service requirement of between



The Tompkins County Legislature has approved a 10% property tax reduction for volunteer first responders in response to staffing shortages. (Photo: Staff Photo)

two and five years,” the requirement will be set by your local taxing jurisdiction.

The statement continues saying that a lifetime exemption will be provided for volunteers with at least 20 years of service, “as long as they maintain their primary residence in the county they have served.”

Legislator Lee Shurtleff (R-Groton) told the legislature that according to his calculation, allowing a 10% property tax exemption for volunteer first responders could cost the County \$20,000. The current volunteer membership is less than 600 current volunteers across the County. Shurtleff also said that not all current volunteers are homeowners, so additional incentives other than just a property tax exemption should be considered if the county wants to appeal to a wide range of volunteers.

Volunteers can seek more information and apply for the exemption with the Tompkins County Assessment Department, though if someone takes the State income tax credit for similar purposes it may outweigh the local exemption benefits.

In a society that systemically underfunds public safety, we have become reliant on volunteers to act as the backbone for emergency services in municipalities of all sizes across the country.

The volunteers that keep emergency services operating — which should be considered a full-time job itself — are usually working additional jobs to pay the bills. As wages fail to keep pace with inflation, people are forced to work longer hours to cover for increased costs of living. These issues have been made worse by years of pandemic related stress that has made workers more prone to burnout.

As a result, the number of emergency service volunteers in Tompkins County have been declining. This mirrors statewide trends as the number of certified EMS providers in New York has declined 9% over the last 10 years, according to the New York State Department of Health Bureau of EMS. This has forced the county to consider measures that it can take to incentivize residents to become volunteer first responders.

During a recent meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature, a resolution passed 13-0 which authorized the county to offer a small property tax exemption to qualified volunteer first responders.

The exemption will take 10% off of the County’s taxable value on a property owned by a qualified volunteer. Legislator Greg Mezey (D-Dryden) recommended an amendment to the Legislature that would

TAKE NOTE

After several months of construction, the Cecil A. Malone bridge near Nates Floral Estates and Ithaca’s waterfront reopened to vehicle traffic on Friday, February 10th at 5 p.m.

The bridge has been closed to vehicle traffic since June 2022 and has severely limited access to the rest of the city for residents living on the west side of the inlet.

The project began eight months ago and set out to “replace the existing bridge with a new 75 ft. single span structure consisting of two 11 ft. travel lanes, 5 ft. bike lanes, and new sidewalks on both sides of the bridge.”

Officials have said that the bridge was replaced because of “structural deficiencies” and to “provide a wider bridge deck to accommodate heavy industrial traffic, pedestrians and bicyclists.”

According to the city, the bridge still needs additional work and won’t be officially completed until this spring, but it is scheduled to open in the interim by 5 p.m. on February 10.

In Other News:

The author of “December 20, 2022, at eighty-one” which appeared on page 10 of the Readers Write issue published on January 11th, 2023 was Daniel R. Schwarz.

ON THE COVER:

The Cornell University Clock Tower
(Photo Credit: Josh Baldo)

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By Josh Baldo

WHAT IS THE BEST PART OF YOUR DAY?



"Getting up very early around 3:30-4:00 a.m."

— Kara R.



"Waking up with my three cats."

— Faith F.



"My first cup of coffee."

— Susan E.



"Morning snuggles with my 6 yr old."

— Peaches L.



"Getting into bed with a book."

— Ian M.

County Evaluating Feasibility of Renovating Public Safety Building

By MATT DOUGHERTY

During a lengthy public comment period of the five hour meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature that took place on February 7th, residents confronted legislators about plans to form a task force to consider making renovations to the public safety building.

The resolution to create a task force to consider renovations passed 14-0, moving forward a review of potential designs and estimated costs associated with making improvements of the public safety building, which houses the Tompkins County Jail.

Several members of the public spoke about the jail renovation project, asking it to be tabled citing a lack of updated data and other considerations that they would recommend regarding the facility and its cost. Speakers referenced the County's success reducing the jail population over time, staying below 50 individuals on average.



The Tompkins County Legislature is forming a task force to consider making renovations to the public safety building, which houses the county jail. (Photo Credit: Tompkins County)

However, according to the county the jail currently has a population of 58 individuals.

Residents who spoke to the legislature also cited previous studies and public scrutiny on the topic of jail expansion and community services to address recidivism. They advocated that the County continue to seek out perspectives and lived experiences by formerly incarcerated individuals.

Legislator Rich John (D-Ithaca) cited the County's low incarceration rate and spoke about how the jail is only one piece of the equation. According to John, the court system, Sheriff's priorities, staff, and community advocates all contribute to re-

ducing the number of individuals housed at the jail.

John also clarified that the resolution is in favor of gathering more information with the building's continuing deterioration while the decisions are made. John also spoke about why it may not be an advantage to the county to make the jail too small, and that the County has been committed to not boarding individuals out to other facilities around the State.

However, the county currently has five individuals boarded out to other New York State jails.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

Janie E. Bibbie Named Tompkins County Poet Laureate

By MATT DOUGHERTY

During the February 7th meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature, longtime county resident Janie E. Bibbie was honored with the title of Poet Laureate.

Bibbie has been a Tompkins county resident for the last 50 years and serves as trustee, deaconess and leader of the caregiver group of Calvary Baptist Church. She is also a member of Business Leaders of Colors, GIAC's Senior Program, and the Tompkins County Quilters Guild.

She is the author Alzheimer's Up Close and Personal and twelve volumes of poetry, including Pieces of Life: Poems from Smooth and Broken Places and Keep Moving: Poems for What's Next.

Ms. Bibbie is the 11th Poet Laureate to be appointed in Tompkins County. She succeeds Dr. Christine Kitano, who served

from 2021 through 2022. The position of Tompkins County Poet Laureate was established by the Tompkins County Legislature in 2001 to honor local outstanding poets, integrate poetry into the community, enrich the education of our young people, and enhance the county's position as a cultural center.

Explains Megan Barber, Executive Director of the Community Arts Partnership, which administers the Poet Laureate selection process, "We received nominations for eight outstanding local poets, each with unique ideas about how to put poetry in service to the community. We are so excited about Janie's appointment."

Ms. Bibbie states, "I am honored to have the opportunity to encourage members of our community to join me in reading, writing, and sharing poetry."

Amanda Champion, Tompkins County Legislator, had this to say: "The Tompkins



Janie E. Bibbie

County Poet Laureate plays an important role in uplifting the art of poetry in our community. Words have the power to inspire and transform lives. I look forward to seeing how Ms. Bibbie will share her gift of poetry with the residents of Tompkins County."

IC Says Thanks, Others No Thanks for New Turf Field

BY MATT MINTON

Ever since Ithaca College's football field was first installed in 1958, it has been home to many games full of excited football fans. After being named the Jim Butterfield Stadium in 1992, the field has since undergone many renovations and changes over the years. The most recent decision to replace the field's natural grass with artificial turf has led to many environmental concerns from local activist groups.

The installment of the artificial turf, which is expected to be ready for playing by Fall 2023, comes after Monica Bertino Wooden '81 donated \$3 million. After reaching out by email, the Athletic Department at Ithaca College did not agree to an interview.

Alexis Goldsmith, national organizing director at Beyond Plastics, said that the main concerns surrounding the artificial turf field include health, heat island and injury concerns.

"[Artificial turf] is quite simply plastic," Goldsmith said. "It's plastic turf that is usually filled with tire crumbs. It needs six to 10 inches of fill, which amounts to large amounts of tire crumb. There's runoff concerns, so microplastics runoff into waterways from the plastic being on the ground when it rains. It breaks down with UV light, and then microplastics wash away. It just breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces, which then find their way into our food, water and air."

When being pitched by petrochemical interests, Goldsmith said that artificial turf is deceptively marketed as being a safer alternative with low maintenance required.

According to a report by the Connecticut Department of Public Health, "The advantages of these fields include less maintenance costs, ability to withstand intense use and no need for pesticides."

It continues saying that Environmental Protection Agency studies have not shown "elevated risk from playing on fields with artificial turf or tire crumbs." However, uncertainty still exists as to whether or not these studies are accurate and opponents say that more research needs to be done.

"I think that's very tempting to athletic directors," Goldsmith said. "They're motivated to get as much playing time out of the field as possible. But the fact is, they're really expensive. They don't last forever. They have to be replaced every seven to 10



A national debate over the safety and environmental impact of turf fields has come to Ithaca College. (Photo provided)

years, and it's not recyclable. So all of the plastic infill being used in the turf itself is just going to a landfill, or it's going to an incinerator."

Kyla Bennett, science policy advisor for Public Employees for Environmental Responsibilities (PEER), points out that artificial turf fields are used for purposes even outside of football games, like marching bands, graduation ceremonies and pep rallies.

"There's a lot of people that are going to be exposed to these chemicals," Bennett said. "Not to mention the fact that it leeches off and gets into water. And of course, Ithaca is on that hill, where everything is flowing off of it. So it's really scary."

Bennett, who is familiar with the Ithaca area due to her daughter having attended Ithaca College, hopes that if Ithaca College students educate themselves, the administration will listen to them and be willing to open up a dialogue.

"Part of the problem is that the athletes and the coaches have been sold a bill of goods as well," Bennett said. "Making them realize that they've been lied to is sometimes difficult to do, but I think you have to try. A lot can be accomplished on campuses from student activism, and there's no doubt in my mind that there are probably professors at Ithaca that would be willing to help the students out once they understand what's going on here."

Yayoi Koizumi, founder of Zero Waste Ithaca, said that Cornell University is looked up to as the high standard in the town for sustainable measures. Koizumi urges Ithaca College to be a leader in the community and not simply follow Cornell's path.

"[For example], Cornell is really, really big on GMO," Koizumi said. "It's not sustainable. It's just a false solution."

In addition to the numerous environmental concerns, data suggests that artificial turf fields pose a higher physical risk to field-goers.

Following Odell Beckham Jr.'s injury in the 2022 Super Bowl on an artificial turf field, NFL players began a petition titled "#FlipTheTurf" targeted toward the NFL. So far, the petition has collected 28,961 signatures as of Feb. 12, 2023. According to NFL injury data collected from 2012 to 2018, there have been 28% more non-contact lower body injuries and 69% more non-contact foot and ankle injuries on turf fields than natural grass.

Bennett said that although college students can't fight all of the issues facing their generation today, they can help and shouldn't doubt themselves.

"They're dangerous fields," Bennett said. "I mean, the [NFL Players Association] doesn't want to use them anymore. So why should college football fields have them?"

UPS & DOWNS



Ups
Last Friday's United Way Wine & Dine Radiothon on Friday, raised over \$13,000 for this year's United Way Campaign.



Downs
More than 30,000 people are reported dead in Syria and Turkey after an earthquake earlier this week. The Cornell and Ithaca College community are being asked to contribute to help survivors struggling with basic needs.

HEARD & SEEN



Heard
Downtown Ithaca Alliance Executive Director Gary Ferguson has announced that he will be retiring from his position after 24 years of service at the end of June.



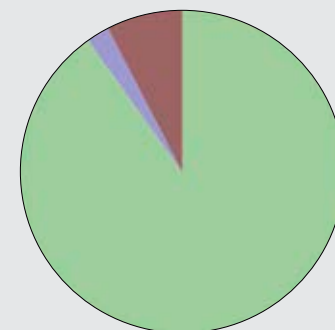
Seen
A horse was detained by Ithaca Police Officers on Wednesday after it got loose from its trailer and disrupted traffic on State Street.

IF YOU CARE TO RESPOND to something in this column, or suggest your own praise or blame, write news@ithacatimes.com, with a subject head "U&D."

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Should Cornell University contribute an additional \$1.25 million to TCAT to help the organization go fare-free?

- 90.2% Yes, they can afford it.
- 2.3% No, they can't afford it.
- 7.6% They can afford it but still shouldn't do it.



NEXT WEEK'S QUESTION:
How much of your income do you spend on rent?

Visit ithaca.com to submit your response.

Going Old School

BY CHARLEY GITHLER

There was an interesting document among the top secret files found in Joe Biden's garage. Or maybe it was Donald Trump's. Or was it Mike Pence? It was one of those guys who took advantage of the federal government's new Eyes Only Keepsake Program, where former politicians can take home up to 300 collectible classified documents home as souvenirs. Anyway, this particular file revealed that the recent Chinese surveillance balloon that appeared in American air space was not the first. In fact, the Chinese government has been sending balloons over the United States for at least a couple of years. It got me wondering: Balloons? Really?

I reached out on a secure phone line to a CIA intelligence analyst old friend of mine, George Cornstarch, who agreed to talk to me on condition of absolute anonymity. [Editor's note: Oops.] For security purposes, I had a transcript made of the conversation.

ME: George, what gives with the balloons? I thought the Chinese would have the latest spying technology, like satellites that can count the pepper flakes on my avo-

cado toast. The last time balloons were on the cutting edge of military spyware, Napoleon Bonaparte was an artillery captain.

C*RNSTARCH: Just between us? Because it would be my ass if the agency found out.

ME: I swear.

C*RNSTARCH: You'd best be sitting down. This thing is huge, and it's not just balloons. Their military, it's...it's a fraction of what we believed it be. They're relying on old, sometimes ancient technologies. Instead of satellites, balloons. Catapults instead of rockets. We discovered an order for two million blunderbusses from GunBroker.com in the name of one "X. Jinping". The whole thing's a house of cards.

ME: But...why? I thought...

C*RNSTARCH: We all thought. That's the point. The old weaponry works, and it's cheap. And as long as the world thinks they have modern weapons, they don't actually need them. They can get loads of longbows, flintlock pistols, lances and whatnot for a few million...

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Old and Young, Poetry and Music

BY MARJORIE Z. OLDS



Katharyn Howd Machan recalls her childhood in a struggling tumble-down household in Woodbury, Connecticut. "My grandfather was a music professor in Prague, and in the 1890s in Ohio all of his children became professional musicians. My father played in the Army Band in WWI...one funeral after another in France. After he resumed his musical career in the U.S., he provided the music for the *Helen Hayes Radio Hour* during the Depression. At home music was the core of our home."

Katharyn's family never achieved economic security, but she got to take all kinds of dance classes because her father provided music for the dance school. "I wasn't the best, but I could *smile*." And very young she fell in love with poetry. She began to perform it in high school and pursued her interest in that art form throughout her education and all these years since. Dance and poetry became central to Katharyn's life, and she continues to share it with others of all ages.

Looking back now, at 70, she realizes that her empathy with the changes that age brings has always enabled her to connect well with the elderly.

"I grew up around old people. My father was 59 when I was born, and my grandmother was my caretaker, since my mother became ill when I was a toddler. The summer I was 16, I was hired to live and work with ten residents at the Swiss Home for the Aged in Mount Kisco." Cleaning rooms and assisting with meal preparation and service, Katharyn spent many hours engaged with the elderly. "Miss Grasset required meals served in her room. Ninety-three, she regaled me with stories of her days in France, attending balls, being given jewels as party favors."

In 1975, at age 22, Katharyn began teaching writing and literature and speech at Tompkins Cortland Community College. At that time TC3 actively recruited "returning" students. "One of my first students was 58 years old, and we bonded as fellow poets. I missed generational differences when I moved on to teach at Ithaca College."

Doctoral study in the performance of literature took her to Northwestern University in 1980. Her dissertation, "The Writer as Performer," shines the light on how and why writers read their work, and why we go to listen to them read. In 2002 Katharyn was selected as Tompkins County's first Poet Lau-

reate. "I never could act, but I love to bring to life the written word in solo performance. I have an ability to connect with audiences, of all ages, in my poetry and my dance."

Along with words, belly dancing became part of her life in 1979. Her appreciation of the sensual music and movement was instantaneous, and her love for this art has deepened over the decades. As Zajal she performs with the troupe Mirage, and as Zajal the Sugarplum Fairy she offers StoryDance for children.

Residents at Kendal of Ithaca, the retirement community where Mirage holds practices on Monday evenings and offers shows in the auditorium, smile when they hear belly dancers pass through the halls in their exotic garb of tinkling coins and flowing veils.

Visitors to Longview at Ithaca, another senior residence, near Katharyn's Ithaca College office on South Hill, may be surprised to see Zajal's elderly participants in wheelchairs, adorned with sparkling scarves draped around their bodies or swung in their hands as rhythmic music plays. Swaying bodies, tapping feet, delighted laughter, and keen attention enliven every Thursday morning. "Over the years, I have had close connections with residents at Longview, Kendal, Cayuga Ridge, and Oak Hill. Belly dancing is a joyous expressive way to exercise together, and the dancing brings music to life."

Recently, when Mirage shared their winter holidays celebration at Longview, the enthusiastic crowd of residents were surprised to learn that the five dancers in the troupe range in age from 28-year-old Natalya Cowilich to 81-year-old Jackie Ferretti (with her special solo as Frosty the Snowman, in a white fake fur belly dance costume she created) to the Roches' version of the song). Carol Openshaw, Zajal's first teacher and the creator of Mirage in 1981, traveled from her home to be in the audience, celebrating the troupe's show and filming it to share with others.

"Dance and poetry keep me vital and connected to the world," Katharyn/Zajal asserts. "I'm an elder myself now, and I feel and believe that what I offer to others—whatever age—is not only personal but political. Embracing the power of music and words gives people an inner power, the encouragement to keep on living. There's almost a kind of magic to it."

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

Valentine, my love for you is a verifiable fact!

If you were a book, I would never ban YOU... from my heart!

DESANTIS FOR PRESIDENT

Please ignore anything the fake news media says to the contrary.

Unless you mentioned African American history or any of that gender stuff.

Dearest Valentine, the way I feel about you is NO HOAX--

Valentine, there's NOTHING I crave more... than the approval of random right-wing Twitter trolls!

I'd incite an insurrection for YOUR heart any day!

--unlike the Fauci flu and the so-called vaccine!

But you're definitely somewhere on the list.

Wait, did I say insurrection, I meant a peaceful gathering of well-intentioned patriots.

TOM TOMORROW © 2013-02-06 ... JOIN SPARKY'S LIST: thismodernworld.com/subscriptions

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Shame on Congressman Langworthy!

Nick Langworthy is the new Republican Congressman for the 23rd District. Here is what he said recently about New York's climate policy. "We have natural gas reserves in the Southern Tier that rival Saudi Arabia. The Left won't allow us to harvest that. We need to get real about their dreams of electrification. The technology isn't there. We need American energy independence." Langworthy is simply falling in line with the natural gas lobbyists and doesn't seem to be aware of any updated information. He is clearly not supporting New York's climate goals. Shame on him!

I would suggest that Nick read up on the work of energy efficiency guru Amory Lovins (The Guardian 3/26/22), a brilliant technologist, who has worked out of the Rocky Mountain Institute for decades. Lovins says of energy efficiency "It's the largest, cheapest, safest, cleanest way to address the (climate) crisis." Lovins has been lecturing all over the country and asserts that we can solve the climate crisis while using a lot less fossil fuels.

He says "In the US we could save at least half the oil and gas and three

quarters of the electricity we use and that efficiency investment would cost only about an eighth of what we're now paying for those forms of energy". Lovins prefers using the word energy "efficiency" over "conservation" because conservation connotes privation, discomfort, and curtailment while efficiency means "doing more and better with less energy and money, but with more brains and technology".

The public needs to keep its eyes open to what our new Congressman is spouting, since he is uninformed. Nick, why don't you call Sustainable Fingerlakes to see what's coming down the pike? But read Amory Lovins first.

Dorothy Pomponio

Bridge Suggestions

Years ago when the pedestrian bridge for the Black Diamond trail over RT 13 at Buttermilk Falls was proposed, I talked to the engineer of the project about the idea of building a covered wood bridge. But the steel bridge now in place was already being engineered so my idea then went nowhere.

I would like to make two suggestions now about that bridge and the idea of building a pedestrian bridge across Rt 13 at the north end of the city, say

on 3rd st near the farmer's market a covered wood bridge doesn't seem appropriate in that location but:

1. Build steel pedestrian approach ramps on either side of Rt 13 at 3rd St. and move the existing pedestrian bridge to the new site and install it on the new approach ramps. I believe the bridge is

low enough that with proper rigging the bridge can be moved with little or no removal of signage or wires and at minimum disruption of traffic. And the job can be completed much earlier and less costly than building the approach ramps and a new bridge.

2. Build a replacement pedestrian bridge for the Black Diamond Trail. Which would be a more rustic covered or uncovered wood bridge. And that approach to or exit from the city next to Buttermilk Falls seems very appropriate.

The span of the existing pedestrian bridge is about 160 feet. Certainly long enough for the 3rd St. location and is not a particularly long span for a traditional wood bridge.

Rick Lazarus

Responding to "City of Ithaca; A Lot to Fix"

I'm not sure what the point of this gloomy essay is. Yes there are problems in Ithaca, but there are also many many good things going on. Some of the restaurants listed as closed are not actually closed, and I'm not sure why the author felt the need to make up facts to help paint his nightmare picture. He mentions the restaurant What's Your Beef closing as one example of how Ithaca is headed in a dangerous direction. What's Your Beef closed so long ago, I couldn't find it mentioned on the internet. Was it 15 years ago? And "heavy traffic 24/7"? First of all, that is nonsense. There is no heavy traffic outside of normal weekday work and commute hours. And if a city wants restaurants and other businesses to thrive, it probably needs some heavy traf-

fic to support them. The author is grumpy, but is not providing meaningful analysis or suggestions of how to make Tompkins County an even better place to live.

Snickerdoodle

Whitman's Handwerker Review

Arthur Whitman's review of Dara Engler's current exhibit at the Handwerker Gallery helps to showcase one of Ithaca's wonderful figurative painters. Mr. Whitman is a long time art critic and his historic and contemporary knowledge of the "art scene" is always on display in his reviews but this statement both surprised and confused me, "Painting and drawing may seem archaic... esoteric or elitist. The purview of snobby elites." Really? Painting and Drawing the purview of snobby elites?! How so, Mr. Whitman?

William Benson

RTE 13 Bridge Idea

"Assessing and planning for other transportation improvements"; and a pedestrian bridge is NOT in the discussion? Look at the traffic on south 13 in the afternoons, and you want to make another intersection? lower the speed limit? its already 30 in the city. Thats a bottle neck. the head in the sand attitude concerning vehicular usage is foolish. The majority of us will NOT park and ride. Levitation notwithstanding, a gradual ramped overpass sure seems a strong contender for moving pedestrians across a busy, economic roadway.

Tomt44

SURROUNDED BY REALITY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

ME: ...while we spend trillions trying to "keep up". Like chumps.

C*RNSTARCH: Nine hundred billion this fiscal year.

ME: How solid is this intelligence? I mean...are we sure?

C*RNSTARCH: How do you think they could afford a high-speed rail network that could circle the earth? Meanwhile, their motorized divisions? War elephants. And nobody would believe that the most populous country, the second-largest economy, relies on balloon reconnaissance.

ME: I saw on the internet that it was an Underdog balloon. Was that a joke?

C*RNSTARCH: No. They have a mole at Macy's. They're pretty good at finding deals.

ME: So what's the plan? What are we going to do?

C*RNSTARCH: Nothing. At all. We don't want them to have an actual modern military. Right? We can shoot down balloons all day long. The status quo works. That is, as long as it remains in utmost secrecy... Maybe I've said too much. I have to go.

With that, the phone went dead, and my mind was blown. Time to invest in helium futures.

RENOVATING PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Legislator Travis Brooks (D-Ithaca) spoke about both his support for moving forward by passing the resolution while also encouraging additional community input. Brooks proposed an amendment that would create a task force with members of the Public Safety and Facilities and Infrastructure Committees, the Sheriff's Office, and the community to evaluate the Public Safety Committee report on the current facility and inform the Facilities and Infrastructure Committee moving forward.

The amendment passed unanimously. The task force will include

Legislators Brown, John, and Mike Lane (D-Dryden) who chairs the Facilities and Infrastructure Committee as well as the community and Sheriff's Office representatives.

In a recent interview, Tompkins County Communications Director Dominick Reckio said that the legislature has "been looking at this for quite some time."

According to Reckio, "There are currently renovations being considered at the jail because it's a very old building that's in need of significant repairs." He continued saying that there are also ongoing conversations regarding alternative models of staffing the jail.

The jail is currently structured in a way that requires more corrections officers due to the fact that it has long hallways that officers aren't

able to patrol effectively. Supporters of making the renovations say that if the jail was restructured in a way that made it easier for officers to patrol, the county would need to hire fewer of them.

The ideas for redesigning the jail comes at a time when the corrections decision in the jail is "very low on staffing" according to Reckio.

"If it was a system where people who were incarcerated were essentially around a circle, we would need fewer corrections officers observing those individuals," said Reckio. He continued saying that the renovations are being considered to make the facility a safe and efficient place for both the workers and the people who have to spend time there.

Cornell's Tax-Exempt Status And Ithaca's Bottom Line

BY MARGHERITA FABRIZIO

This is a big year for the city of Ithaca, a community heavily taxed though perennially cash-strapped, partially due to the tax exemption of 60 percent of its property. This year is the last of a Memorandum of Understanding signed twenty years ago, laying out Cornell University's cash contribution to its host city.

This annual payment has been made in lieu of property taxes otherwise collected to cover fire, police, water and sewer, garbage collection and disposal, snow removal, roads and bridges, parks, youth services, and other amenities which make Ithaca an attractive community in which to live. Under Federal and State law, colleges and universities, because of their educational purposes, receive tax-exempt status.

Tompkins County 2022 assessment data shows Cornell's city property exempted from taxes totals more than \$2.7 billion. Cornell pays city taxes on only about \$8 million worth of property. Cornell's operating budget is currently \$5.5 billion and its endowment is \$10.5 billion.

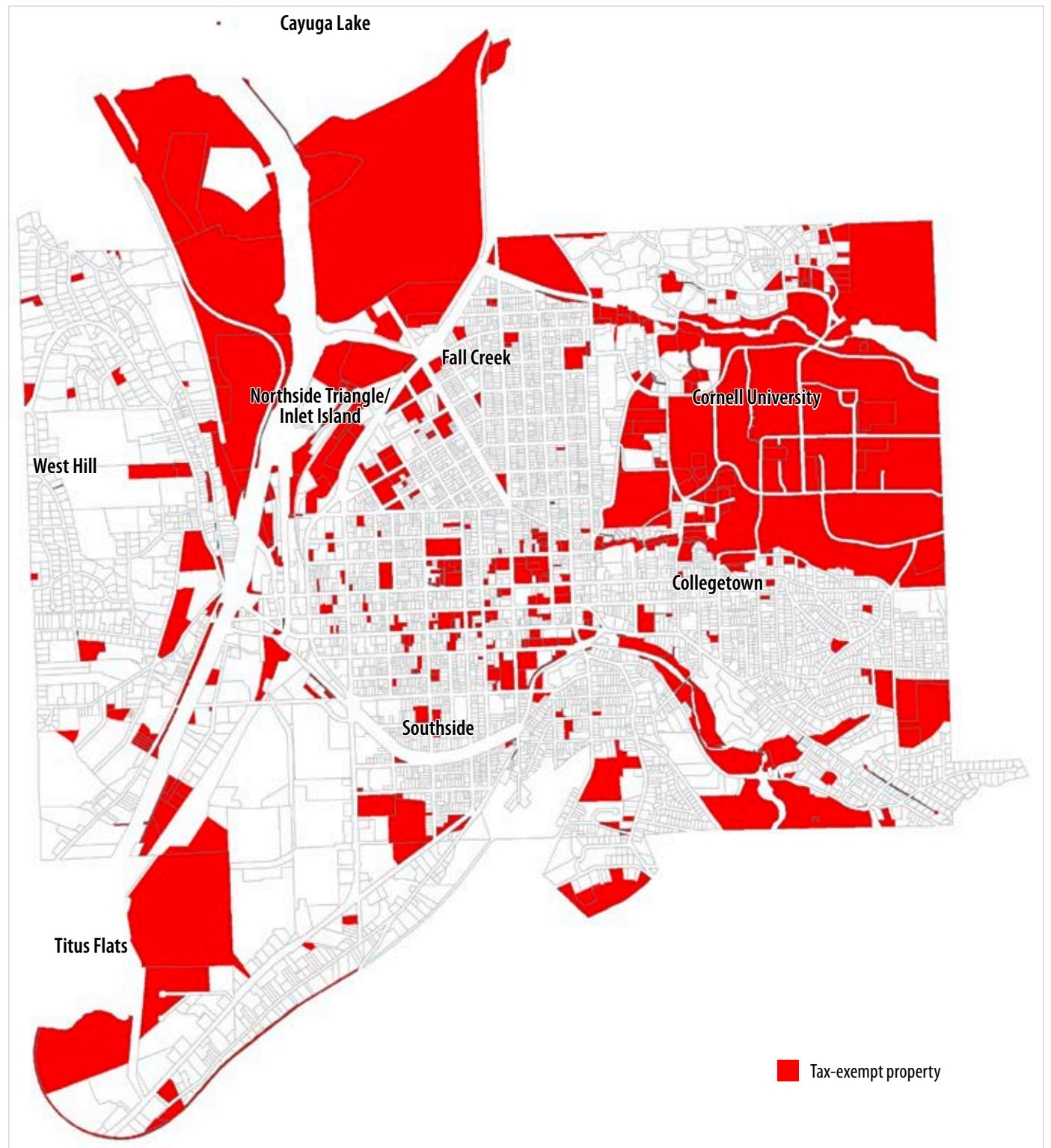
According to Jay Franklin, Tompkins County Assessor, "The bookstore, Statler Hotel, dining halls, and residence halls are all considered in furtherance of educational purpose, and are thus, not taxable. Additionally, all property within the statutory college, regardless of its use, is exempt because of NYS ownership interest in it."

THE HISTORY

In 1995, former Ithaca Mayor and Cornell professor Ben Nichols, worked to increase Cornell's contribution for basic services provided to both campus and the university's 25,000+ students living in its neighborhoods. Through what Nichols' obituary referenced as a "creative use of building permits," he secured an agreement for funding to move from \$143,000 to \$250,000 the next year, and then to \$1 million by 2007.

Nichols estimated, nearly 30 years ago, that the actual cost for services provided to Cornell was millions of dollars. In 2003, the agreement was reviewed and approved to run through June 30, 2024. In this final year of the agreement, Cornell will contribute \$1,575,204. Over \$900,000 is obligated to the fire department budget.

Without a significant voluntary contribution to the city, wealthy institutions, especially in small



ITHACA'S TAX-EXEMPT PARCELS COMPRISING 60% OF CITY PROPERTY VALUE. (PROVIDED BY TOMPKINS COUNTY ASSESSMENT)

cities, are being subsidized by a small number of taxpayers. Cornell pays \$96,307 on a small amount of taxable city property and \$1.6 million in taxes to the Ithaca City School District. They also pay taxes to Cornell Heights, Town of Ithaca, and Tompkins County, making their total tax bill about \$2.8 million.

The year ahead offers the possibility of working toward better compensation for city services the university campus and its students require. In recent years, communities hosting Ivy League schools with multi-billion-dollar endowments are more emphatically demanding institutions pay an amount, that at a minimum, covers services received. Many are demanding that they do even better than that to help ensure their communities thrive and taxes are less onerous.

Residents and government do not dispute the many ways that universities contribute to host communities. Cornell is the county's largest employer. Student spending is in the hundreds of millions annually. Cornell's contribution to visitor spending is huge. The university spends millions on construction and purchasing annually. Thousands of student volunteers provide extraordinary assistance from community engaged coursework to academic support for grades K-12 and more.

The university makes Ithaca a uniquely international destination in upstate New York. Many residents choose to live in college towns like this because of their many free, cultural amenities.

But with university ownership of billions of dollars of tax-exempt property, how do college towns balance their books, provide basic services, and keep taxes manageable, let alone be visionary. The fact is, Ithaca is becoming more and more unaffordable every year despite it being the envy of other municipalities for its seemingly endless building spate of luxury and affordable housing projects.

THE HARD NUMBERS

As reported by Ithaca's local radio station, WRFI, February 1, 2023, "according to the rental real estate listing service Dwellsy, Ithaca has the highest rent of any small city in the U.S. The study shows the average price for a one-bedroom was \$1908 per month in 2022, up 4.5% over 2021. Only eight cities had higher average rents...New York, Boston, San Francisco, San Jose, Washington DC, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, and San Diego."

Sometimes forgotten in high rent areas, is that rents and property taxes are connected. Some assume landlords wanting to

2023 TAX RATES

	\$ per \$1000 assessed value
City of Ithaca	11.98
Town of Ithaca	2.47
ICSD	16.84
Cayuga Heights	6.18
Tompkins County	5.65

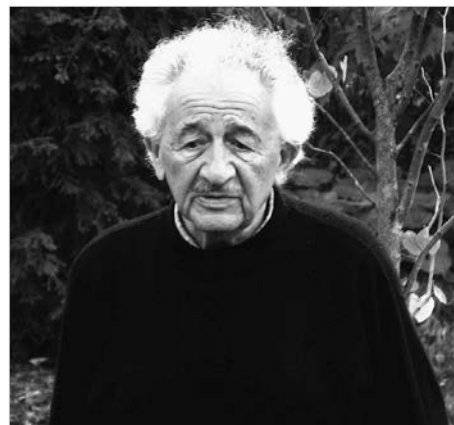
maximize profits are behind high rents, but landlords must pay local taxes, too, and this is a large factor in establishing rents. Ithaca and Tompkins County taxes are exorbitant by many standards across the country.

According to realtor.com, the median sold home price in Ithaca was \$337,500 in 2022. This equates to a 2023 city tax bill of \$4,043, county bill of \$1,909, and school tax bill of \$5,683. Additionally, city residents minimally pay \$851 per year for water, \$80 to a sidewalk repair fund, an \$80 solid waste fee, and \$4.50 and \$1.50 for each garbage and yard waste collected curbside. The bill is about \$13,000 though many pay more. By contrast, the average American household spends \$2,471 on property taxes each year for a median home valued at \$268,800, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, as reported by WalletHub in March 2022.

If all property were taxable in Ithaca, the city tax rate would drop more than 50% and the Ithaca City School District tax rate would decrease 45%.

It is not unheard of for houses in the city to sell as much as \$100,000 over the asking price and with the county performing yearly assessments to ensure current market values are reflected in assessments, homeowners may see assessment increases of \$40,000 or more in one year, sometimes in consecutive years in the most popular neighborhoods, potentially further increasing tax bills.

State school aid, abatements, county, federal, and other state funds also determine tax rates, as do local legislators. In fact, adding to the homeowner's tax bill, Ithaca's Com-



FORMER ITHACA MAYOR BEN NICHOLS WAS A MEMBER OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA AND SERVED FOR THREE TERMS FROM 1989-1995. HE PASSED AWAY ON NOV. 24, 2007. (PHOTO CREDIT: FRANKLIN CRAWFORD)



TOMPKINS COUNTY ASSESSOR JAY FRANKLIN SAYS THAT ALL PROPERTY OWNED BY CORNELL UNIVERSITY IS "NOT TAXABLE" REGARDLESS OF ITS USE "BECAUSE OF NYS OWNERSHIP INTEREST IN IT." (STAFF PHOTO)

mon Council approved a 2023 budget of \$89.9 million, an increase of 9.47%, or more than \$2.3 million over 2022's tax levy. The Ithaca city tax rate is currently more than twice the county's and nearly 5x the neighboring Town of Ithaca. Though taxpayers are feeling maxed out, workers are still feeling underappreciated and underpaid.

The city's 2023 budget allocation for road maintenance is \$6 million, though the city's potholes are legendary. While a community-wide resource, the city's street maintenance is not paid for by any funds other than city taxes. Ithaca's small tax base frequently finances at 100% or at a very disproportionate share, many such resources including its parks (\$1.6M) and youth services (\$10M). The city receives less than \$700,000 from other municipalities for the Youth Bureau, seen by some as an example of the city taking on more than its fair share.

The city's public safety budget is \$14.8 million. Ithaca is an equal partner with Cornell University and Tompkins County in the local bus system, TCAT. Some residents see this plus other expenditures (like a sheriff's department and a police department, a city prosecutor and district attorney's office), as a sort of "double taxation." City residents pay for TCAT as city and as county taxpayers. Though residents overwhelmingly support public transportation, TCAT funding is contentious. According to TCAT staff, 70% of its users are associated with Cornell, though Cornell only pays 1/3 of the cost. Another pricey community-wide service is sewage treatment and disposal, budgeted at \$7.4 million.

The fire department budget totals \$12.2 million with a small percentage coming from neighboring communities for services received. According to Interim Chief Rob Covert, "Downtown and Collegetown [housing] developments have increased demands on the

fire department. As the Ithaca Fire Department operates today under its current staffing model, we do not meet nationally recognized standards for fire department staffing."

Running a city is clearly no cheap proposition, especially when a majority of the city's total assessed properties are tax exempt. To help understand how billions of dollars of tax-exempt property affect the cost of living, Assessor, Jay Franklin, estimates that if all property were taxable in Ithaca, the city tax rate would drop more than 50% and the Ithaca City School District tax rate would decrease 45%. If all Cornell property was taxable at the same rate as all homeowners pay, Cornell would owe the city \$33 million, the county \$15 million, and the school district \$46 million.

Knowing this, how does a community calculate an equitable number for the next agreement. Cornell's 2023 contribution of \$1,575,204, as stipulated in the current Memorandum amounts to just a bit less than the amount collected by the city for dog and other licenses and permits.

There are examples within the Ivyies worth reviewing. One is for institutions with property valued over \$15 million, to pay 25% - 40% of the property taxes they would owe if they did not have tax exempt status. This is done in the form of a PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes). For Cornell with nearly \$3 billion worth of city property, the 25% minimum would equal \$8.25 million for the city. The county would receive \$3.8 million and the school district \$11.5 million.

COMPARING IVIES

A review of the last several years shows this long-smoldering issue between host cities and Ivyies has built momentum and resulted in more positive partnerships.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

2021 IVY LEAGUE ENDOWMENT FIGURES

Harvard (\$53.2 billion), Yale (\$42.3 billion), Princeton (\$37.7 billion), UPENN (\$20.5 billion), Columbia (\$13.5 billion), Cornell (\$10 billion), Dartmouth (\$8.5 billion), and Brown (\$6.9 billion)

TAX-EXEMPT STATUS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Many Ivyies have stepped up. State legislatures are also looking at how to implement mandatory contributions.

In 2021, after years of pressure culminating in a “Respect Caravan” which clogged traffic in downtown New Haven, Yale significantly increased its contribution to the city, from \$13.2 million annually in 2022 to over \$24 million annually by year 5 of the agreement. Their total pledged contribution over a 6-year period will be \$135.4 million. This is in addition to other voluntary contributions plus funds for fire services.

The University of Pennsylvania is the largest private landowner in Philadelphia, holding more than \$5 billion in tax-exempt property. Activists there questioning whether wealthy universities should be exempt from property taxes also won an historic agreement in 2020 when the university pledged to donate \$100 million in lieu of taxes to help Philadelphia public schools in the form of \$10 million per year for 10 years.

Despite this win, according to the Penn for Pilots website, “While this gift is a step in the right direction, Penn has further to go. ... We have called on Penn to pay 40% of what it would owe in property taxes every year... approximately \$40 million per year—four times what the university has offered.”

In 2007, Brown University established a \$10 million endowment goal to benefit local education. University fundraising lagged until Brown authorized \$8.1 million from unrestricted University-endowed funds to complete its pledge. Now each year, approximately \$400,000 to \$500,000 from this fund plus an additional \$800,000 directly supports Providence public schools.

Princeton University is the largest property taxpayer in its host municipality, and for decades, has made contributions to the town. In late 2020, a new agreement committing the University to contribute nearly \$8.5 million in 2021 and 2022 was adopted. It also included an additional \$850,000 for the Princeton Fire Department and \$250,000 for Public Works. Princeton paid more than \$9.8 million in taxes in 2021, which includes \$6.2 million in voluntary tax payments for properties eligible for exemption.

Dartmouth is Hanover, New Hampshire's largest taxpayer. According to the college's Impact Statement, in 2020, they paid approximately \$8 million in taxes. Unlike in NYS, Dartmouth pays taxes on all dormitories, dining-rooms, and kitchens with values above \$150,000. This accounts for \$6.2 million to Hanover. They also own commercial properties and pay over \$1 million in taxes for these, and approximately \$1.3 million

for 500 off-campus rental housing units. Additionally, they have led downtown development projects and partnered on public school expansions. While Dartmouth's endowment is the closest to Cornell's among the Ivyies, their student enrollment is far less at only 6700 compared to Cornell's 25,000.

According to a PQ Prime article dated March 2021, “...a spokesperson for Columbia said the university pays taxes on about 500,000 square feet of commercial property, makes payments to a Harlem development agency, and contributes to affordable housing and city parks.”

Boston and Cambridge are far ahead of Ithaca. PILOTs were first formalized there in 2010 and they now request all nonprofit organizations, not just universities, with property holdings valued at upwards of \$15 million to contribute 25% of the property taxes they are exempt from paying.

Harvard, though, has not fully complied with Boston's PILOT request, contributing \$10.8 million in 2022, or 79% rather than 100% of the city's recommended amount of \$13.7 million.

For years, Harvard and other Boston schools, have been criticized for not fulfilling the whole request and this non-compliance with voluntary payments resulted in a pending Massachusetts state bill to make mandatory previously optional payments supplanting city property taxes.

The bill, H.D. 3207, mirrors Boston's Payment in Lieu of Taxes program, and comes as part of a broader movement to get institutions to pay an entire not partial PILOT payment.

As reported in The Tufts Daily February 2022, State Rep. Erika Uyterhoeven, said it is intended to ensure that “large endowment” institutions such as Harvard are legally bound to pay their “fair share” in a way they are not currently under PILOT.

“Right now, payment in lieu of taxes is voluntary, ... so some institutions just don't pay,” Uyterhoeven said. “But this would enable municipalities to say, ‘No, this is an agreement that you actually have to abide by.’” PILOT payments would be used to fund basic services that the institutions themselves benefit from, Uyterhoeven explained.

CITIZENS UNITE

Many Ithacans feeling the weight of local taxes can envision such a piece of legislation for New York State ultimately, “if schools don't pay their fair share. The burden is too great for the very few of us,” said a decades-long resident. “Establishing a fair payment from Cornell commensurate with all the services it and its students receive is essential. This is about Cornell investing in their home base. A PI-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Sports

Two Bright Sports Lights Flickered Out Recently

By Steve Lawrence

A workout facility can be a great equalizer.

When I took a job at Cornell University's fitness center, Teagle Hall, in 1981, everyone looked pretty much the same in their baggy Teagle-issued drab gray shorts and t-shirts. It was difficult to ascertain a person's station in life, if you will, but it was still easy to know a nice person from a not-so-nice person.

One of the nicest people to come through the facility was a tall gentleman named Dave Dunlop, who passed a few days ago at the age of 85. Back in the day, he looked fit and healthy, but nothing in his appearance or demeanor would suggest that he was barely 20 years removed from being a beast on the wrestling mat, an Eastern Intercollegiate Wrestling Association champion in 1958 and one of the best wrestlers in the NCAA. Dave helped the wrestling team to three straight Ivy League championships and also played on the Big Red football team. He was inducted into the Cornell Athletic Hall of Fame in 1991.

Andy Noel — the just-retired athletic director at Cornell — met Dave when Noel took the head wrestling coach position in 1974 and knew him as a neighbor, a friend, a mentor and an ally. “He took me under his wing,” Noel said. “He interviewed all my recruits in his office, and he and his wife, Peggy, were always so warm and magnanimous with the students and their parents. He helped me immensely.”

After making his mark as an elite wrestler, Dave took his special brand of excellence into his work as a fundraising expert at his alma mater. Cornell's website says, “In his 38-year development career at Cornell, Dave, who graduated from the School of Industrial and Labor Relations in 1959, changed the landscape of education fundraising, emphasizing the need to build meaningful, long-lasting relationships with donors.” In Noel's words, “Dave was very well-known in the world of fundraising, and he won the first national award given out.” Andy added, “I don't know what the award was called, so I'll call it the Heisman Trophy of fundraising.”

In a letter to the Cornell wrestling community, Big Red wrestling coach Mike Grey wrote, “It is with great sadness I write to let you know that David Dunlop '59 has passed away. David means so much to Cornell University and is one of the most beloved Cornell citizens ever. David is also respon-



Dave Dunlop started his long association with Cornell as a champion wrestler in the 1950's.

sible for the formation of the Principal Gifts Office within the Office of Alumni Affairs and Development. The Cornell fundraising system is regarded as one of the best in academia and this is attributed to David's leadership, innovation, kindness and sincerity. Above all, David was a wonderful person who personified everything that is good and wholesome in the world. He will be deeply missed by so many people. I am extremely honored to have my position endowed in his name and I vow to make sure all future Cornell wrestlers know how special David was and is to this program. Please keep his wife Peggy and the rest of the Dunlop family in your prayers during this difficult time.”

I saw Dave several times per year, at various athletic contests and functions, and his warmth and sincerity never faded. He was such a kind man, and when he and Peggy suffered a heartbreaking tragedy three decades ago — losing their daughter to an act of violence — his response to a reporter left an enduring impact on me. At a time when many people would be consumed by anger, Dave put forth a statement that exuded compassion, empathy and, just maybe, forgiveness. He was a wonderful man.

• • •

The Ithaca community said goodbye to another bright light last week, as Joan de Boer went to join her husband, Tobias, on the other side. At Tobias' funeral in 2016, I stated that the de Boer family is, to me, what the Kardashians are to the paparazzi, in that they provided me with a steady stream of material. Tobias was a world-class cyclist in his younger years, their daughters are superb athletes (Claire swam the length of Cayuga Lake and Yvette won many ultra-endurance races) and Joan was fit and spry well into her eighties.

KEEPING IT BRIEF

Reviewing the 2023 Academy-Award-Nominated Shorts

BY BRYAN VAN CAMPEN

You may have seen some of the year's Oscar nominees for Best Picture, like "The Fabelmans," "Top Gun Maverick," "Elvis" and "Women Talking." Maybe you're rooting for a certain supporting actor-actress, or maybe you're a fan of a certain film editor or production designer. Or are you all about the director?

One thing's for sure: thanks to a long-standing Ithaca tradition, Cornell Cinema gives you an annual look at 2023's Oscar-nominated animated shorts (February 18 at 7 p.m. and March 5 at 5 p.m.), live action shorts (February 23 at 9:30 p.m. and March 4 at 5 p.m.) and documentary shorts (February 19 at 4:30 p.m. and March 10 at 7 p.m.). Cinemapolis will have its own screening of Oscar-nominated shorts on February 17. Except for one animated nominee, Charlie Mackesy and Matthew Freud's "The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse" (UK, 33 min.) here are thoughts on all of the shorts, as well as picks for each category. Good luck with your office Oscar pool.

ANIMATED SHORTS

Lachlan Pendragon's "An Ostrich Told Me the World is Fake and I Think I Believe It" (Australia, 12 min.) had me thinking about "Free Guy" (2021). In "Free Guy," Ryan Reynolds plays a bank teller who comes to realize that he's a bit player in a video game. Here, an awkward office flunky comes to realize that he's a character in a stop-motion animated film. We see sped-up hands and animators around the periphery of every shot through the camera. Pendragon's film owes a lot to the



Ryan Reynolds voices the character of a bank teller who finds himself in a video game in "An Ostrich Told Me the World is Fake and I Think I Believe It"

animation style of Aardman, and it's one of the best shorts I've seen since Aardman's "Creature Comforts" (1989).

"The Flying Sailor" (Canada, 8 mins.), by Amanda Forbis and Wendy Tilby, takes the true story of a man blown sky high when a ship laden with explosives collides with another ship. Forbis and Tilby use a mixture of 2D and 3D animation and wispy, hand-drawn cells to lend a sense of dreamy whimsy to our character's "flight."

João Gonzalez and Bruno Caetano's "Ice Merchants" (Portugal-France-UK, 15 mins.) utilizes a similar delicate hand-drawn style to tell the story of a father and son who live precariously on the side of an icy cliff and what happens when dad forgets his parachute.

"My Year of Dicks" (USA, 26 mins.) is a smartly observed series of "chapters" telling the story of a teenage girl's attempts to lose her virginity. Animators Sara Gunnarsdóttir and Pamela Ribon use a dizzying variety of mediums, drawing on video and a spindly, funky rotoscope flair that really fits the candid diary approach of the story. There will be a 30-second pause for kids to leave the screening, but it's appropriate for thoughtful teens.

LIVE ACTION SHORTS

Even more so than the year's Foreign Film nominations, this year's crop of live-action shorts are from all over the globe. In "Ivalu" (Denmark, 17 min.) by Anders Walter and Rebecca Pruzan, a young girl's beloved sister goes missing. Her father doesn't care, and she's desperate to find Ivalu.

A stoic short lady hijacks her local tram and gets more than a free trip, breaking up an ugly fight in Eirik Tveitan and Gaute Lid Larssen's "Night Ride" (Norway, 16 min.) It's that kind of Norwegian cinema where you can really feel the cold in every steamy breath; this would make a good curtain raiser for a screening of Jim Jarmusch's "Night on Earth" (1991).

In Alice Rohrwacher's "Le Pupille" (Italy 39 min.), a gaggle of girls in a strictly disciplined religious boarding school at Christmas submit to greed and anarchy. An Iranian girl arrives in the city via train and changes her life through the simple act of removing her head scarf/hijab in Cyrus Nowshahi's "The Red Suitcase" (Luxembourg 18 min.).

The spirit of Bill Forsyth is sweetly evoked in "An Irish Goodbye" (UK, 23 min.) by Tom Berkeley and Ross White, in which two feud-



In "An Irish Goodbye" two feuding brothers debate how to honor their recently-deceased mother.

ing brothers have very different ideas about what to do with their dead mother's ashes, and more importantly, how best to honor her memory. The film has a goofy deadpan flavor that leads to a funny and very touching culmination.

DOCUMENTARY SHORTS

The concept for Jay Rosenblatt's "How Do You Measure a Year?" (USA 29 min.) is as basic and simple as it gets. Rosenblatt sits his daughter Ella in front of a camera every year on her birthday from age two to 18, and asks her the same questions: What do you love? What are you most afraid of? What do you want to do when you grow up? What is power? A miniature version of Richard Linklater's "Boyhood," we see the formation of a person in just under a half-hour.

With Guneet Monga, Kartiki Gonsalves debuts with the heartfelt "The Elephant Whisperers" (India, 40 min.). An indigenous couple are entrusted with an orphaned baby elephant named Raghu, and we see what a special bond develops between the three. (It's also on Netflix.)



An indigenous couple are entrusted with an orphaned baby elephant named Raghu in the heartfelt documentary short, "The Elephant Whisperers".

Brother and sister duo Evgenia Arbugaeva and Maxim Arbugaev's "Haulout" (UK, 25 min.) follows the Russian scientist Maxim Chakilev observing an overwhelming migration of thousands of walrus at Cape Heart-Stone in the Chukchi Sea. The effect is at first overwhelming and comic and ultimately tragic. We watch the man and the walrus with no

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

On TC Library Wall is Art from Behind Prison Walls

By Olivia Stanzi

“Behind the Wall”, a traveling art exhibition that is made up of creative works by incarcerated people, will be showcased at the Tompkins County Public Library for the entire month of February.

Organized by Story House Ithaca, curated by Treacy Ziegler, art director of the Prisoner Express Program, from the work submitted to the Prisoner Express program, and showcased at five different libraries within the next six months, this exhibit is a collaborative effort between multiple organizations around the Tompkins County area.

The exhibit includes 140 pieces of work — drawings, paintings, letters, stories and poems — from 90 incarcerated people residing in detention facilities in 22 states. It

also includes a letter-writing station where visitors can write to the artists.

Asia Bonacci, communications and engagement librarian at Tompkins County Public Library and coordinator of art exhibits at the library, said one of the reasons the library decided to host this exhibit was because they like to collaborate with other organizations in the area.

“We also just thought that the content of the exhibit was really compelling because it is giving a voice to incarcerated people who aren’t typically allowed this sort of thing,” Bonacci said.

Gary Fine, director of the Durland Alternatives Library, oversees the Prisoner Express Program, which is one of the outreach programs that is hosted by the library. The Prisoner Express Program allows incarcerated people to take part in



Art from 90 incarcerated persons from 22 states is on exhibit through February at the Tompkins County Public Library.

initiatives as a way to help alleviate the sense of isolation that comes with being incarcerated.

“Anybody who’s in the public library will be served to stop by just explore the creativity of people who aren’t in our community, but are of our community,” Fine said. “They’re human beings and they’re

living lives and so they’re part of the human community. And they often get isolated. It’s [the art exhibit] just a good reminder of the complete humanity of everybody.”

“We started out by being a service that provided incarcerated men with informa-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

REVELRY YARDS
R 111 N Aurora St
 ELEVATED EATS
 MICROBREWERY
 WINE & COCKTAILS

THE DING DONGS
 WRITTEN BY BRENDA WITHERS
 DIRECTED BY REBECCA BRADSHAW
KITCHEN theatre company
JAN 31- FEB 19
 KitchenTheatre.org | 607.272.0570
 Featuring Karl Gregory, Erica Steinhagen, and Nael Nacer

REP Studio
 110 North Cayuga St., Ithaca
 repstudio.com • 607-272-4292

NEW YORK PRESS ASSOCIATION Award Winner
 Statewide Design and Editorial Contest April 2022
ithacaTimes
 Finger Lakes Community Newspapers

BEST NEWS WEB SITE
SECOND PLACE
 Ithaca Times, Ithaca
 Nice Navigation bar gives quick access to many sections of interest. Page design says “news.” Wide range of coverage is evident.

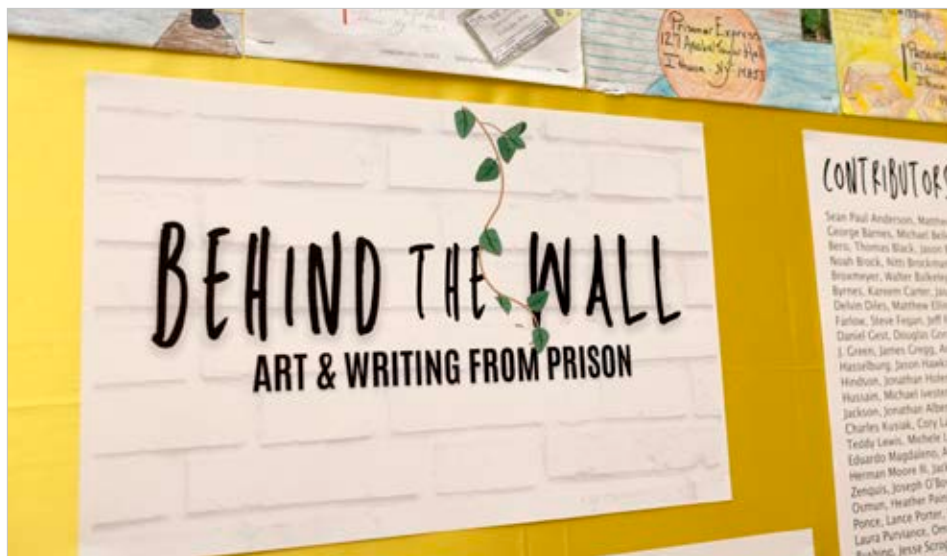
THOMAS G. BUTSON AWARD FOR INVESTIGATIVE IN-DEPTH REPORTING
SECOND PLACE
 Ithaca Times, Ithaca
 Tanner Harding & Martin McEwen
 Excellent reporting on big moves to reform the police dept. in Ithaca. Thoughtful, thorough and balanced. I can’t tell if the retired police chief’s editorial was considered in the reporting on the whole issue, but it was a great complement to the overall story of this community grappling with its police dept. in the wake of cries for police reforms. And the SWAT truck reference (and artwork) felt so representative. The entire endeavor felt like a considered dialog about a critical issue. Excellent all around.

BEST COLUMN
THIRD PLACE
 Ithaca Times, Ithaca
 Charley Githler
 Very well written. Even though the column is too long for many readers in today’s soundbite world, it manages to keep your interest.

GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATION
SECOND PLACE
 Ithaca Times, Ithaca
 Tanner Harding & Marshall Hopkins
 Love the size, style of drawings and color of the numbers. Great colors. Well Placed drawings to illustrate points.

BEST HOUSE AD/AD CAMPAIGN
HONORABLE MENTION
 Ithaca Times, Ithaca
 Marshall Hopkins & Casey Martin
 Wonderfully put together series of ads.

BEST COVID-19 NEWS STORY
THIRD PLACE
 Ithaca Times, Ithaca
 Tanner Harding
 Good subject matter is the first ingredient of a good story. The reporter did a fine job with this story about the much-needed fight against vaccine misinformation.



In this exhibit, no artists will be present as the Behind the Wall exhibit presents works from artists who are incarcerated.



Art patrons can write letters to the artists in the Behind the Wall exhibit at Tompkins County Public Library.

EXHIBIT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

tion, education and opportunities for creative self expression in a public forum. ... The projects often involve creative writing, critical thinking [and] art.”

“Libraries are one of the few public places anymore where people can go and there’s no obligation to buy anything, and you’re welcome to be there just to be there,” Fine said. “And so it’s a really appropriate place for us to put this artwork where people are welcomed and there’s free things for them. Prisoners are so deprived of books and materials.”

According to the Prison Policy Initiative, for every 100,000 residents, 573 are incarcerated in the United States, making it the country with the highest incarceration rate in the world.

The Prisoner Express Program has volunteers who often write letters to the prisoners, encouraging them to keep up the good work.

“I thought that would be good for the prisoners, hearing from people,” Fine said. “But what I learned really, after doing it with the students at Cornell and the vol-

unteers, is that people writing the letters were also having profound experiences by sharing correspondence with people [by] feeling supported and feeling like that they were doing good in the world.”

Ziegler said one incarcerated person whose work is showcased in the exhibit told her that the letters he received from students helped to heal his familial relationships.

“They never came to see him,” Ziegler said. “But [when] he started receiving these letters from students [who had a] positive response to his art, he then took the letters and started sending them back to his parents. And they were then able to see someone else’s opinion about him through his artwork. After 15 years and ignoring him, they went to visit him.

Before volunteering at the Prisoner Express Program, Ziegler worked in seven different prisons within four different states.

“The people that I taught in prisons were handpicked to be part of the arts classes,” Ziegler said. “Often it was white prisoners over black prisoners so there was an element of racism that was involved. So this program [Prisoner Express program] and

writing letters to people in prison makes it so I don’t have to answer to any prison.”

Fine said the Prisoner Express program has served about 36,000 people and that they currently have more than 4,000 active participants. To be considered an active participant, the program must have been in contact with the member once over the past six months.

“We’ve incorporated a lot of letter writing as a part of our program, one to support the prisoners but also because it

educates people really about the humanity of incarcerated men and women,” Fine said. “It starts changing their minds about the system of incarceration, not that people don’t need rehabilitation, but [it makes them question if] the current model [is] doing anything to improve the situation.”

Fine said because the program is constantly receiving works created by prisoners, they decided to collage all the art and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Cayuga RADIO GROUP		ITHACA RADIO DIRECTORY	
Radio Station Name	Genre	Dial Position	Key Programming
103.7 Q Country	Country	103.7 FM, 103.3 FM	Today's best country
Lite Rock 97.3	Adult Contemporary	97.3 FM	Listen at work radio
News Talk WHCU	News	870 AM, 97.7 FM	News, Talk, & Cornell Sports
Iconic Rock I-100	Rock	99.9 FM, 100.3 FM	Rock & Buffalo Bills Football
Z955	Pop, Top 40	95.5 FM, 94.9 FM	Today's top hits
Pure Oldies	Oldies	1470 AM, 94.1 FM	Music from 1955-1974
Rewind 107.7	Classics	107.7 FM	Hits from the 60's, 70's, & 80's
96.7 The Vine	Adult Alternative	96.7 FM	Eclectic & hip music
Alt 95.9	Alternative	95.9 FM	100% Alternative for Ithaca
96.7 The Buzzer	Sports	96.3 FM	Featuring NY Giants Football

TAX-EXEMPT STATUS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

LOT should be a top priority for legislators.”

Recently published Cornell materials about their \$5 billion “To Do the Greatest Good” campaign launched October 2021, stated \$3 billion will be directed to the Ithaca campus. More than \$3.5 billion has already been committed. According to the Cornell Chronicle September 2022, Alumni Affairs and Development staff said this is “...the highest amount raised in Cornell’s history exceeding last year’s record-setting total by 12%.”

A member of a newly formed Ithaca citizen advocacy group said, “We’re not looking for a gift. We want the university to minimally pay for what it costs the city. They should be doing beyond that. A small number of taxpayers, thousands 60 and older, sub-

sidizing an institution with the resources and fundraising power Cornell has, is unsustainable and unconscionable.”

“Now is the time for change. Cornell is lagging way behind its peers in its financial support of its host community, but we’re hopeful they will see it’s time to be a real partner and a leader among the Ivyies. Ithaca and Tompkins County needs Cornell, and Cornell needs a healthy community that people can afford to live in.”

See previous reporting by the Ithaca Times regarding Cornell University’s tax exempt status online at Ithaca.com by searching “Cornell Compared: Ithaca Mayor Calls Out His Alma Mater on Financial Contribution” & “Best Way To Get Cornell To Contribute To The City”. Residents interested in joining a citizens advocacy group exploring PILOTs are invited to contact the author at fabriziomargherita@gmail.com.

EXHIBIT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

display it within their own library, which inspired the “Behind the Wall” art exhibit.

“One day, the folks from Story House Ithaca came up to the library to speak to me about the Prisoner Express Project and what it was,” Fine said. “And when they saw that wall that we have here they thought, ‘Oh, we’d love to make an art exhibit of something like this.’ ... I provided the materials. They’ve done much more of the logistics of setting up the show.”

Lesley Green, co-founder of Story House Ithaca, said those logistics included applying for a grant through Humanities New York. Jonathan Miller, co-director of Story House Ithaca said they took part in this project to provide incarcerated people a way to communicate to the broader world.

“The idea behind ‘Story’ [in the name Story House Ithaca] is that there are many, many ways of communicating with people and communicating life experiences,”

Miller said. “We’re really open to doing all sorts of programming that has to do with story. Story is about charting a path through a mess of information to make sense of it. And not just to make sense of it to yourself, but to make sense of it to somebody else.”

Miller said the exhibit isn’t about shaping the artwork in a way to create a narrative but that it is about sharing the outpouring creativity that incarcerated people have.

“It’s incredible to think of how many people, nearly two million people, are in prison and in detention centers around the country, and their minds and their hearts are so active,” Miller said. “And this is just a little bit of a window into that.”

The exhibit will move to five of the largest libraries within the Finger Lakes Library System: Seymour Library in March, the Seneca Falls Library in April, Coburn Free Library in May and the Cortland Free Library in June, according to Story House Ithaca.

*Behind the Wall
At Tompkins County Library
Through Feb. 28*

2023 ACADEMY-AWARD-NOMINATED SHORTS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

locator keys or narration until the end of the film, creating a devastating effect.

In Joshua Seffel and Conall Jones’ “Stranger at the Gate” (USA, 25 min.), a U.S. Marine with 25 years of service plots to bomb an Indian mosque but changes his plans when he gets to know his intended victims.

In “The Martha Mitchell Effect” (USA, 40 min.) Anne Alvergue and Beth Levison explore Mitchell’s impact on the Nixon presidency by talking about Watergate and how his administration tried to gaslight her. (It’s on Netflix.)

Oscar Shorts

Cornell Cinema

- Animated shorts: February 18 at 7 p.m. and March 5 at 5 p.m.
- Live action shorts February 23 at 9:30 p.m. and March 4 at 5 p.m.
- Documentary shorts February 19 at 4:30 p.m. and March 10 at 7 p.m.

Cinemapolis

February 17.

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Freedom and Free Societies presents

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Monday, February 20, 2022 @ 5:30 PM
Free and open to the public

In person: Statler Hall, Room 198
Via Zoom: Registration required:
https://cornell.zoom.us/join/registration/WN_rclK5jKITC0wgm_M690k6w

Jayanta Bhattacharya
STANFORD UNIVERSITY

David Shmoys
CORNELL UNIVERSITY

The College of Arts & Sciences | Cornell Brooks Public Policy

You can cut your heart disease risk

CMC treatments and patient education programs are reducing a leading cause of death in our region

Hearth disease has been the leading cause of death in Tompkins and surrounding counties for five of the last 10 years. Mortality records show heart disease and cancer trading places as the top cause of death nearly every other year in the region.

For men, heart disease accounts for one in four deaths; for women the rate is one in five. About half of those who die suddenly from heart disease had no previous symptoms.

Men and women can do a lot to lower their heart disease risks, improve their cardiovascular well-being and lower their risk of a heart attack or stroke.

While heart disease is most common in older adults, the factors that can lead to heart disease begin decades earlier. Establishing heart healthy habits early in life reduces the risk factors for developing cardiovascular disease, says Lynn Swisher, MD, a cardiologist with the Cayuga Heart and Vascular Center at Cayuga Medical Center. The greatest risks for developing heart disease and stroke are smoking, diabetes, obesity, hypertension, family history (genetics) and abnormal cholesterol. Sedentary lifestyle, unhealthy diet, sleep apnea contribute other risks. Individuals can control or change some risks (smoking, diet, exercise), others will need their doctor's help and make lifestyle changes, she notes.

Cardiologists recommend several lifestyle changes to optimize your cardiovascular health. High on that list of recommendations are:

Healthy eating habits. No matter your age, you can decrease your risk of heart disease by opting for a healthy, well-balanced diet each day. Choose foods that are low in saturated fat, trans fat and sodium while packing in tons of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and fish. If you eat meat, select the leanest cuts available to you.

Donna Sandidge, MD, the medical director of the Cayuga Center for Health Living, recommends avoiding bacon, cold cuts and other processed meats and choosing healthy proteins such as fish, poultry, beans, soy and nuts. Use healthy oils (like olive and canola oil) for cooking, on salads and at the table, she says. Drink water, tea or coffee. Go easy on juice. Avoid sugary drinks. Make fresh fruit your regular dessert.



Reduce stress levels. When you are under stress, it causes your heart rate and blood pressure to increase, putting you at risk. Leveraging stress-management techniques such as deep breathing and meditation can help stop damage to your artery walls before it ever starts.

If you feel stressed out much of the time, you should make changes in your life, advises Qutaybeh Maghaydah, MD, FACC, a cardiologist with the Cayuga Heart and Vascular Center at Cayuga Medical Center. Strategies that can help you manage stress include learning relaxation techniques, breathing exercises, and practicing yoga. Lifestyle change can be difficult and the Cayuga Center for Healthy Living can teach you how to manage stress.

Regular exercise. It doesn't take much time each day to get enough moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity to help your heart. While 30 minutes of brisk walking or swimming and push-ups, squats five times a week is the widely accepted goal, few people start at that level, notes Dr. Sandidge. A daily 10-minute walk around the neighborhood is a good start. Slowly work up to hitting a goal of 150 minutes of exercise each week by incorporating more walking, stairs and muscle-strengthening activities where you can. When you maintain a healthy weight, your risk for heart disease lowers.

Avoid smoking. Over time, smoking contributes to plaque buildup in your arteries and can reduce the flow of blood to your heart.

Smokers are up to four times more likely to have heart disease than nonsmokers. Even smoking in your 20s speeds up developing heart disease. The longer you smoke, the greater your risk of developing cardiac heart disease, says Dr. Swisher. Even smoking one cigarette a day raises the risk for heart disease by about 50 percent and increases the risk of stroke by about 25 percent. If you quit now, within a year, your heart disease risk is half of what it was while you smoked. Within 10-15 years, your heart disease risk is the same as a woman who never smoked.

For more information on heart disease and prevention, call the Cayuga Heart and Vascular Center at **(607) 272-0460** or the Cayuga Center for Healthy Living at **(607) 252-3590**.