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07/08/2025, 07/15/2025, 07/22/2025, 07/29/2025

linda tutt

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 29 day of July, 2025

Notary Public
State of Wisconsin, County of Brown

exp: 3.7.27

KAITLYN FELTY
Notary Public
State of Wisconsin

Tax Watch

Continued from Page 1A



Erin Crowley, deputy district director for Rep. Mike Lawler, talks to staff before a Lawler town hall on June 8 in Mahopac. KELLY MARSH/ SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL NEWS

After two Lawler critics were carried out of the hall by New York State troopers, Thomas posted that chat group members should leave the auditorium to protest Lawler's crackdown on dissent and his evasive answers to questions from the audience.

"Should we walk out en masse?" posted Thomas. "Make a point we won't tolerate his bullsh** anymore."

Crowley, 40, in her first term in the Putnam County Legislature, was named Lawler's deputy district director in 2023 and runs his district office at Carmel Town Hall. She's seeking election to a second term in the Putnam County Legislature in November.

Lawler, R-Pearl River, a frequent guest on national television news shows, was reelected to a second term in 2024 by almost 24,000 votes in a district with a Democratic enrollment advantage. He had said he would make a decision in June on running for governor in 2026, but had yet to declare his intentions as of July 7.

Fight Lawler co-founder Maureen Morrissey, 63, of Mount Kisco, a retired teacher who worked in the Port Chester and Pelham school districts, said the group's digital sleuthing turned up evidence that is yet to be refuted.

"She infiltrated our Signal group," Morrissey said. "We are so sickened by it."

Signal is an encrypted communications app used by groups to secure internal conversations. In the Signal mobile app, a user's mobile number is a principal identifier. While Signal users can adopt a handle – the person who sought entry to the Fight Lawler chat used @jakethomas.08 – the actual name of a Signal user making a post will come up on other users' phones if their mobile number is already in the contacts.

Jen Colamonico, who chairs the Putnam County Democratic Committee, discovered Crowley's mobile phone number in the Fight Lawler organization's private Signal chat around midnight on the early morning of May 5, hours after the Town Hall.

A post that had appeared on Colamonico's Signal feed during the Town Hall at 6:38 p.m., under Erin Crowley's name, urged Lawler foes in the Kennedy auditorium to boo her boss. Colamonico had Crowley's mobile number in her contacts.

Meanwhile, on the Signal feed of Fight Lawler cofounder Ann Starer, the same statement about booing Lawler had appeared under the name Jake Thomas.

Starer said she suspected that Crowley, or the person using her number, tried to rile up the crowd to discredit Lawler's opponents and get them to leave.

"Walking out of the hall would have been to their benefit," said Starer. "That would have been great for them. I said on the chat that I didn't think it was a good idea."

As of June 24, Crowley's mobile number was no longer connected to the Signal app.

Ciro Riccardi, Lawler's director of communications, did not respond to two emails and a phone message seeking comment over the past three weeks. Crowley has not responded to three email requests for comment since first contacted on the issue May 20. She walked away from this writer on June 16 when asked about the Signal group following a meeting of Putnam County legislative committee in Carmel. She did so again on July 1, as she was escorted by a Putnam County deputy sheriff to a legislative meeting.

Crowley and Riccardi were asked whether Lawler's office knew that Crowley's phone number was used to gain entry into Fight Lawler's Signal group or that Crowley's phone number was used to live post during the Town Hall. They were also asked whether Crowley herself used a fake identity to infiltrate the group chat, and whether she made those live posts during the Town Hall.

Whoever is behind Jake Thomas' Facebook account did not respond to a message sent there seeking comment.

Who is Jake Thomas?

Colamonico was so troubled by seeing Crowley's name pop up in the private Fight Lawler group, which discussed logistics for the May 4 event, that she texted Starer.

"Ann, just so you know, Erin Crowley works for Lawler here in Putnam," said Colamonico, of Mahopac. "You might remove her."

Colamonico had the same mobile number for Crowley that I used in late March to communicate with Legislator Crowley, by voice and text, on the issue of farmland protection in Putnam County.

Starer said that an individual using the name Jake Thomas had joined the Fight Lawler group's Facebook page and sought an invitation to the Signal group on April 30. Thomas told organizers he and his wife wanted to attend Lawler's Town Hall meeting five days later in Somers.

Thomas referred the group to his Facebook page, which features a cheery couple in their 20s. The cover photo shows a man who is supposed to be Thomas in military fatigues, accompanied by a man brandishing a knife and another holding a rifle. Thomas has 26 Facebook friends. His profile lists no home address or profession.

The Facebook profile shows a bipartisan spirit. The account follows Democrats such as the Clarkstown Democratic Committee, the Putnam County Democratic Committee and the campign committee of Rockland County Legislator Beth Davidson, who is seeking the Democratic nomination to face Lawler in 2026.

The account also follows Republican groups – Robert Kearns for Carmel Town Board and state Sen. George Borrello, R-Chautauqua. The account showed Carmel hometown cred by following the Italian American Club, Carmel Water District #2, and a memorial page for the late Ed Scott, a legendary volunteer in the Mahopac Fire Department.

The public posts on the page are all pictures. The oldest posting was an updated cover photo on Sept. 24, 2021, with the quote: "Bravery is the capacity to perform properly even when scared half to death." The most recent post, on March 7, pictures a man and woman, identified as Thomas and his wife, posing in front of flowering cherry trees.

Person suspected of being Crowley would not appear on video

After hearing from Colamonico, Starer and Morrissey spent the next several days investigating whether Crowley was masquerading as Jake Thomas. Then they confronted whomever was behind the Jake Thomas profile with their information, asking them to go live on the Signal video chat to prove their identity. The person would not do so.

On May 9, Jake Thomas was removed from the Signal and Facebook groups, said Starer.

That evening, Starer called Thomas' number on Signal, which allows person-to-person calls from people with whom you have had contact. On the fifth try, a man picked up. Starer said she told the man that it appeared that Jake Thomas was actually Erin Crowley.

Starer said the man, who was curt with her, did not deny it.

Then a three-day-long Signal chat ensued between Starer and the Jake Thomas account, according to the chat on Starer's Signal feed, seen by this writer.

On the morning of May 10, one day after Thomas would not be identified, Thomas was upset about being kicked out.

"I have never experienced being thrown out of a group because I felt the same way," Thomas wrote at 10:34 a.m. "I'm a bit taken aback and bothered. The same people who stood up for someone not to be removed did the same to me, and I don't even understand why. Let's grab coffee one day and talk, but honestly that was pretty crappy. Made me feel like I should find another group who is more supportive of its members. "

Starer said she looked forward to connecting.

"I just need to know that you are not Erin Crowley," wrote Starer at 10:44 a.m. "And then I will make that clear to everyone. That's the reason you were removed, not because you felt the same way as everyone. Please prove me wrong."

Starer hadn't heard a word by 5:44 p.m. She reached out again.

"If you do not want to demonstrate that you are Jake Thomas and not Erin Crowley, then I guess the documentation that we have will speak for itself," she wrote. "I would love to be wrong about this especially because I'd like to think that an elected official and Congressman Lawler's deputy district director is not posing as someone else to infiltrate groups that oppose the Congressman."

The person identifying as Thomas did not respond.

Crowley's rise in Putnam GOP circles

Crowley burst on the Putnam County political scene after moving to Mahopac in the early 2020s. Her star rose quickly in Republican circles. She mounted an improbable challenge in 2022 to Putnam Legislature Chairman Neal Sullivan, R-Mahopac. Sullivan failed to obtain enough valid signatures to appear on the ballot and Crowley was elected.

In 2023, she landed a job with Lawler to run his Putnam County district office in Carmel Town Hall. In 2025, she's paid at an annual rate of $60,332, based on her pay from January through March, according to Legistorm.com. Her husband, Kevin Osika, serves as a deputy sheriff in the Putnam County Sheriff's Department.

Crowley made the news in January after she was sued by a friend in Putnam County Supreme Court, seeking a judgment against her for allegedly failing to repay a $40,000 loan that Crowley used to purchase a pontoon boat for cruises on Lake Mahopac. The case was settled, with attorneys for both parties agreeing to discontinue the matter on June 30.

David McKay Wilson is a columnist who writes about tax issues and government accountability. Follow him on Twitter @davidmckay415 or email him at dwilson3@lohud.com.

Crimes

Continued from Page 1A

reported three years earlier.

Clarkstown Supervisor George Hoehmann said in an interview that the latest increase was due to both store thefts and a new problem fueled by readily available technology. More and more, fraudsters are preying on businesses and seniors with the help of artificial intelligence to mimic voices and do other types of deception.

"There's absolutely a spike in AI-generated crime," Hoehmann said, noting that one business recently was taken for hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The FBI warned in December of a rise in scams that harness AI to be more believable. Among the examples: phony social media profiles that are used to solicit money; fake websites that promote cryptocurrency investments; and audio clips that impersonate someone and ask for money.

Police agencies across the mid-Hudson region reported 22,379 property crimes in 2024, down 8% from the previous year. That region takes in the following seven counties: Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Dutchess, Orange, Sullivan and Ulster.

The region's violent-crime total edged upward by 1% to 3,956, despite large decreases in reported rapes and robberies. That was due to a spike in aggravated assaults – attacks that are meant to kill or cause serious injury and may involve a weapon.

Here are the 2023-24 trends for each county:

- **Dutchess**: 518 violent crimes, unchanged; 2,950 property crimes, down 13%
- **Orange**: 658 violent crimes, down 9%; 3,868 property crimes, down 14%
- **Putnam**: 62 violent crimes, up 29%; 455 property crimes, up 12%
- **Rockland**: 503 violent crimes, up 12%; 3,706 property crimes, up 1%
- **Sullivan**: 137 violent crimes, down 16%; 736 property crimes, up 3%
- **Ulster**: 215 violent crimes, up 11%; 1,449 property crimes, down 5%
- **Westchester**: 1,863 violent crimes, up 3%; 9,215 property crimes, down 10%

Chris McKenna covers government and politics for The Journal News and USA TODAY Network. Reach him at cmckenna@gannett.com .

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PSC No. 90 – Gas - Schedule for Gas Service
PSC No. 119 – Electricity - Schedule for Electric Service
PSC No. 120 – Electricity - Schedule for Electric Service
PSC No. 121 – Electricity - Schedule for Electric Service (Street Lighting)

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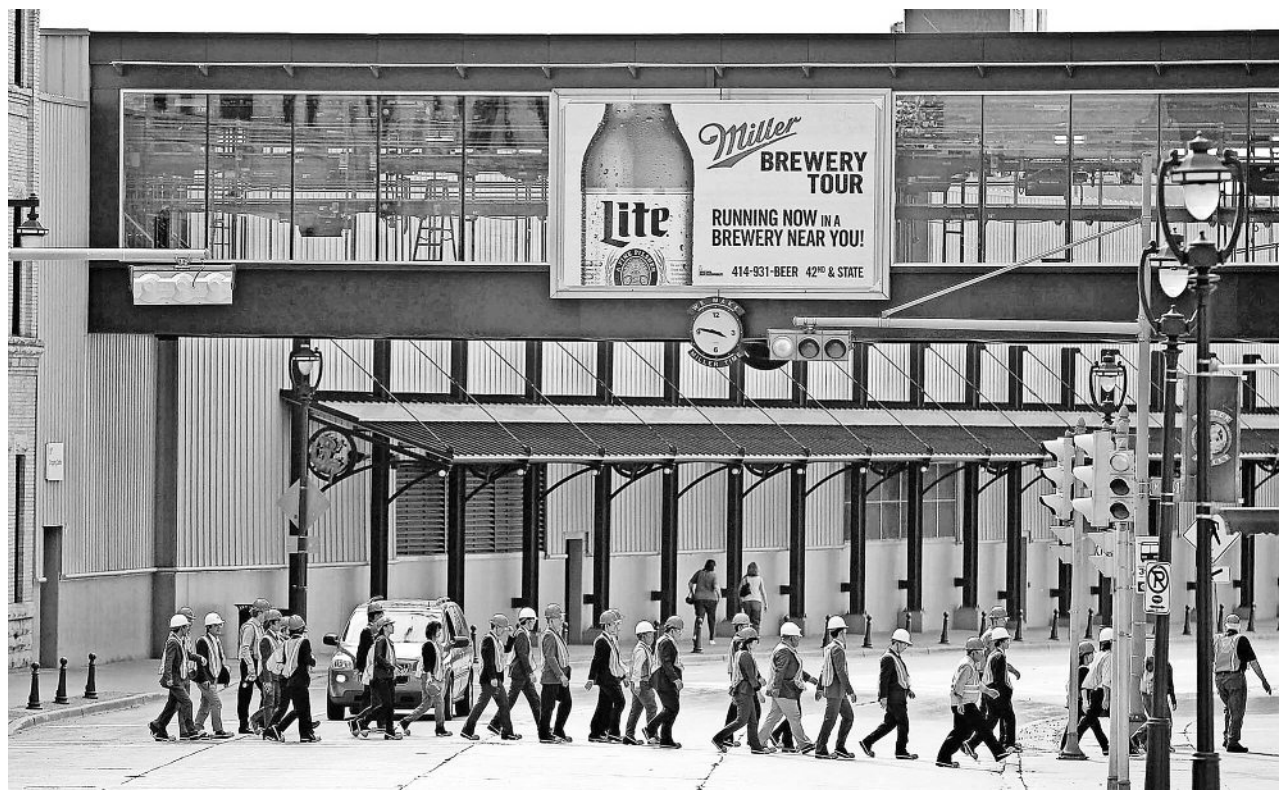
Miller Lite

Continued from Page 1A

But Miller survived and even grew, jumping from the nation's seventh-largest brewer in 1970 to No. 2 by 1980. It has stayed there and kept major brewing operations in Milwaukee, as Miller Brewing, MillerCoors and, since 2016, Molson Coors.

You could make a case that Milwaukee kept its identity as Brew City thanks to Miller, and Miller stayed Miller thanks to Miller Lite.

"People ask me sometimes why did Miller survive and Pabst and Schlitz and Blatz didn't, and I tell them, the short answer is Miller Lite," Daniel Scholzen, archivist for Molson Coors, said in an interview.



A brewery tour crosses West State Street at MillerCoors LLC at Miller Valley in Milwaukee. Miller has kept major brewing operations in Milwaukee, as Miller Brewing, MillerCoors and, since 2016, Molson Coors.
MIKE DE SISTI/MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL FILE

How Miller Lite was born

How did Miller Lite save Miller Brewing?

It started with an acquisition. Make that a double.

Founded in Milwaukee in 1855, Miller Brewing had been a solid company for more than a century. But even under the dynamic leadership of Frederick C. Miller — who died in 1954, in a plane crash that also killed his son and likely successor, Fred Jr. — Miller Brewing couldn't crack the top five of America's largest beermakers.

It was even No. 3 in its hometown, trailing both Schlitz and Pabst.

That began to change when tobacco conglomerate Philip Morris bought a controlling interest in Miller Brewing in 1969.

Like most national breweries, Miller had never been shy about advertising. But Philip Morris was in another league.

"Philip Morris spent more money on marketing than anybody ever had spent on marketing before in the industry," Scholzen said. "Miller was transformed by that acquisition."

First, Philip Morris set out to boost Miller High Life, the brewery's sole national brand at the time, with a massive marketing campaign to rebrand "the champagne of bottled beers" as a workingman's brew. The company filled tons of television time and print space, using a winning jingle ("If you've got the time, we've got the beer") and one of the most enduring slogans in brewing history: "It's Miller time."

But to take Miller to the next level, the new owners needed more national brands. So Miller bought the assets of Meister Brau, a Chicago brewery then in bankruptcy. Among its assets was a low-calorie product called Meister Brau Lite.

Brewing industry legend Joseph Owades, a biochemist by trade, is credited with inventing light beer. The first product, released in 1967, was Gablinger's Diet Beer. Meister Brau used a version of Owades' recipe to create Meister Brau Lite.

There was only one thing wrong with Meister Brau Lite: It didn't taste very good.

"Whereas other breweries saw it as a joke, a novelty at best — *diet beer?* — Miller saw an opportunity," Scholzen said, for a quality beer "that just happened to have fewer calories, rather than a low-calorie version of an existing brand."

The decision to lean into making a beer with lower calories without sacrificing taste came during a time when baby boomers were starting to reach legal drinking age — a key factor in helping Miller Lite catch on quickly with new beer drinkers when Miller Lite launched in 1975, Steinman said.

"The market was just ready for light beers to erupt on the scene," he said. "And Miller Lite was the first embodiment of that — with the perfect advertising message."

Marketing in another league

If not perfect, pretty close to it.

To sell a lower-calorie beer without treating it like a diet product, Miller's advertising agency, McCann-Erickson, put together a marketing campaign that combined humor with male celebrities — from Hall of Famers like Mickey Mantle and Frank Robinson to pop-culture punch lines like Rodney Dangerfield and "Marvelous" Marv Throneberry.

Paired with good copywriting, some more great beer slogans — the tastes-great-vs.-less-filling mock debates, as well as "Everything you always wanted in a beer. And less" — the celebrities in the ads quickly became celebrities *for* the ads.

Among them: Milwaukee native and Brewers broadcaster Bob Uecker, who appeared in more than a half-dozen Miller Lite ads, one of which is immortalized in a statue at Milwaukee's American Family Field ("I must be in the front row!").

"That's been a reason we've been a part of culture," Ann Legan, global vice president of the Miller family of brands at Molson Coors, said in an interview. "We've leaned into different personalities, whether it was Bob Uecker or John Madden or Dick Butkus in our early



Bob Uecker jokes with photographers and well wishers in 2014 during the unveiling of his statue in section 422 at Miller Park in Milwaukee known as the "Uecker Seats." The statue pays tribute to the popular Miller Lite "All Stars" advertising campaign from the 1970s that featured Uecker's famous tagline, "I must be in the front row."
MARK HOFFMAN/MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL FILE

days. Where you had these larger-than-life personalities who I think haloed back on the brand and over time, that became the spirit of the brand."

Light beer takes over

Miller Lite's quick rise in popularity helped light beer in general become brewing's No. 1 market segment. In 1973, two years before the first Miller Lite was poured out, the premium light beer category accounted for shipments of 440,000 barrels nationwide, according to Beer Market's Insights data. By 1980, the category had jumped to 18 million barrels — and 12.9 million of those were Miller Lite.

Miller Lite and the rival light beers that followed — including Bud Light, which was introduced in 1982 — helped expand the market for beer overall, but some of their growth came at the expense of traditional beer-brand leaders, including Schlitz, Pabst, Budweiser and Miller High Life.

"People were shifting to light beer, and Miller Lite was the one that leaned into it, and had the first-mover advantage," Steinman said. "They were the first one to really focus on it, and it created havoc."

For a beer that created havoc in the industry, initially Miller Lite's look was pretty quiet.

Borrowing the script typeface from Meister Brau Lite, the beer was labeled simply Lite. The original cans sported a German-looking family crest, "emphasizing Miller's German heritage and, by extension, Lite's lineage as a beer, and not a 'new' product," Scholzen said.

On the other hand, the ad campaign for Lite was almost as popular as the beer it promoted. When advertising industry reports suggested in late 1988 that Miller was dropping the athlete-centric "Tastes Great/Less Filling" ads, it created an uproar, and Miller promised that the Miller Lite All-Stars, as the more than 100 celebrity pitchmen had been dubbed, weren't going anywhere.

(After a hiatus, the Miller Lite All-Stars were revived in a new ad campaign in 2024.)

In 1983, Lite passed High Life as Miller's No. 1 brand by volume, Steinman said. And Lite continued to grow through the 1980s, peaking with 19.3 million barrels in 1990.

Despite the rise in light-beer competitors trying to capitalize on Lite's success, Miller kept the brand's marketing and packaging pretty consistent. According to Scholzen, there were no major changes in Lite's look in cans or bottles for nearly 20 years.

But starting in the early 1990s, facing aggressive competition from Anheuser-Busch's Bud Light, Coors' Coors Light and others, Lite's look began to change — a little. "Miller" was added to the label, the typeface for Lite became bolder and, in 1994, an eagle circle logo, tying to the Miller logo, was added.

The brewery even tried new advertising slogans, including the puzzlingly vague "It's it, and that's that."

After losing the No. 1 spot in the light-beer category to Bud Light, Miller Lite in the late 1990s went through a "major refresh," Scholzen said — including repurposing the "Miller time" slogan.

"It's a callback that ... beer drinkers embrace as that kickoff to a moment that Miller Lite sparks," Legan said. "When you talk about iconography, 'It's Miller Time' is probably the strongest asset that we have."

At Lite's peak in 1990, the brand made up nearly 45% of the 43 million barrels of premium light beer shipped in the United States, according to Beer Marketer's Insights. Within a few years, Bud Light surpassed Miller Lite, but the light-beer category continued to grow, peaking at 78.5 million barrels in 2007, Steinman said.

'What Miller Lite created'

Overall light beer numbers have dropped since then; by 2020, light beer shipments were down about 33% from that 2007 peak. Blame it on the rise of imports, craft beer and especially hard seltzers, which directly took market share from light beer, Steinman said.

While hard seltzer's fizzy rise was striking, it wasn't the same as the revolution that light beer, and Miller Lite, had wrought, he added.

And while Miller Lite and its light-beer brethren are off their peak in overall numbers, they're still a major part of the American beer-drinking market.

According to Beer Marketer's Insights estimates, Bud Light was the No. 1 beer in the United States in 2024 by volume, with Modelo Especial No. 2. Following them, in order: Michelob Ultra, Coors Light and Miller Lite — making four of the top five beer brands in the United States light beers.

In other words, Steinman said, beer today is dominated "by what Miller Lite created."

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The Journal News
Tuesday, July 15, 2025



Debates about adequate parking are nothing new in New Rochelle. However, the stakes feel higher now as more residents compete for fewer spaces. JOHN MEORE/THE JOURNAL NEWS

Parking

Continued from Page 1A

"There's two things," she said. "The increase of population and the construction that is going on that's causing roadblocks and limited space."

The city told The Journal News/lohud of plans to add downtown parking spaces and to create a broader plan for addressing the city's current and future parking needs to support what City Manager Wilfredo Melendez called a "more walkable, accessible and thriving downtown for all."

In 2015, New Rochelle's former Mayor Noam Bramson launched an aggressive 10-year redevelopment plan. It included a vision for a walkable, bikeable city with a thriving downtown, and aimed to add rental units and condos that would eventually bring in 15,000 to 20,000 new residents.

The city utilized a special, fast-tracked system of housing and zoning policies, allowing building developers to gain approval of projects within 90 days.

Since the plan was put in place, more than 10,500 rental units and 500 condos have been approved. As of December 2024, New Rochelle had added 6,370 housing units, 1 million square feet of retail, 2.4 million square feet of office space and 1,200 hotel rooms.

The addition of so many downtown developments has made parking scarce at times. As construction continues, sections of roads or whole blocks are restricted, removing parking options for the residents who live there or potential patrons who'd like to shop there.

Those roadblocks then cause increased traffic congestion, according to residents, as some people resort to double parking, which blocks lanes to other drivers.

"I have not gone to certain restaurants because I knew I wasn't getting parking," Tuck said.

Trying to park by Postos 22 and Modern Restaurant, two popular downtown restaurants, "is a nightmare," she said "There is no parking whatsoever."

Parking could be made even more difficult by major projects in the works, like the new Vanguard District, a $100 million renovation for the train station expected to start in 2026, and The LINC, a massive, community-oriented green space with plazas and bike lanes scheduled to break ground later this year.

Are regulations to blame for parking woes?

Parking debates are nothing new in New Rochelle (the city famously resisted installing parking meters until 1942). But the stakes feel higher now as more residents compete for fewer spaces.

In some cases over the years, municipal lots have been sold to developers, removing parking options for some residents.

"They took away a municipal parking lot on Church Street, (a) tiered parking lot," said Angela Paolucci, who lives downtown near New Roc City.

Parking regulations in New Rochelle are strict, too.

New Rochelle has 14 municipal parking facilities, some with as little as 24 spots available. Residents can purchase permits at a discount to use these facilities; however, permits must be displayed exactly as required and must be renewed punctually, as there are no grace periods for expiring permits.

Metered street parking is limited and heavily regulated; meters top out at two hours during the day, three in the evening.

Meanwhile, alternate-side-of-the-street parking on residential roads have strict rules to keep streets clear for cleaning and traffic flow, while also limiting how long cars can reman on crowd[illegible]

While rigid regulations help the city [illegible]es like maintenance and traffic flow, they also m[illegible] difficult for residents, their guests and others visi[illegible]

city to find a place to park.

The city's police department handles parking enforcement and issued nearly 22,000 parking citations last year alone. As of July 11, over 9,000 tickets had been handed out – a sign that the need for creative parking solutions is high.

Parking meters that 'never work'

It's not just the limits and regulations that cause frustration among residents. The functionality of the city's parking meters is a common complaint.

"There are always problems with the meters," said Milandros Betharte, a downtown resident. "When we take the yoga class in the (New Rochelle Public Library), people have that problem."

Betharte said that some of her classmates even leave yoga early because they have issues with the parking meters by the library.

Another resident, Diane Young, who lives by Iona University, shared a similar observation.

"My concern is usually the machines," she said. "They never work."

Young experiences problems with the meters most often when she visits City Hall. "That machine never works there," she added.

Providing 'innovative' parking solutions

City Hall is very much aware of residents' concerns regarding parking. The city is working on "exciting projects" to provide solutions to the parking challenges, Melendez, the city manager, said.

One of those solutions is hiring consultant company NV5, Melendez said, who'll help the city create "an innovative" parking plan.

"The plan will evaluate the current and future parking needs of residents, businesses, and visitors alike, providing data-driven recommendations to meet those needs," Melendez said.

The city also plans to add 160 new public parking spaces downtown.

"Through an expanded agreement at Skyline Garage and RXR's Two Clinton Park residence," Melendez said, "each site will offer 80 additional municipal spaces for community use."

Still, for many who live in New Rochelle, the question is whether these solutions can keep up with a building boom that shows few signs of slowing down.

Cram Fire in Oregon nears megafire status

Christopher Cann
USA TODAY

Firefighters in central Oregon made significant progress in their battle against a colossal blaze that triggered evacuations and a state of emergency as it tore across swaths of rugged land, destroying four homes and threatening hundreds of other buildings.

The Cram Fire, which has become the nation's largest wildfire this year, has charred 150 square miles of land, an area larger than the size of Las Vegas. The blaze broke out on July 13 and burned for several days before undergoing explosive growth fueled by strong winds, high temperatures and low humidity. It was at 73% containment as of July 20.

The fire ignited near Willowdale, a sparsely populated area about 133 miles southeast of Portland, and swept through grasslands and rangeland in the region, fire officials said. The cause of the blaze is unclear and remains under investigation, officials said.

If the blaze grows by more than 4,200 acres, it will reach what's known as megafire status, meaning it will have burned more than 100,000 acres of land.

Evacuation orders and warnings remained in place across at least three counties on July 20, according to Central Oregon Fire Information. In a statement, fire officials said they anticipate cooler weather, possible rain and higher humidity to "moderate fire behavior."

Firefighters in Oregon have been aided by increasingly cooler and humid weather, which is expected to continue for the next few days.

More than 930 fire personnel responded to the blaze and worked to stop its rapid spread. On July 20, crews traversed rugged terrain as they used bulldozers to carve containment lines. They recently focused on the southern edge of the blaze, thinning juniper trees along the fire lines to reduce potential fuels.

Some personnel who were brought in to protect homes, businesses and other structures will be released as containment grows and cooler weather lingers, according to the Central Oregon Fire Information. "Remaining personnel will continue working around structures to extinguish hot spots and ensure any lingering threats to homes are addressed," the fire agency said.

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Cell phone ban

Continued from Page 1A

has been negatively impacted by cell phone usage. Even more – 72% – say they believe cell phones have had a negative impact on their students' mental health, according to the NCES.

What are districts' plans for phone ban?

Middletown district middle- and high-schoolers have been putting their phones in magnetically locked Yonder pouches since the 2022-23 academic year; kids in grades K–5 were allowed to keep turned-off phones tucked away.

Nanuet already had phone restrictions for students at A. MacArthur Barr Middle School. At Nanuet High School, students will be expected to put turned-off devices in their lockers starting this fall, where they should stay until dismissal.

Clarkstown's high school students will be expected to store phones and other devices in their lockers, Superintendent Marc Baiocco said.

"It will be a cultural shift because kids post-COVID don't use their lockers anymore," Baiocco said of a trend seen at many schools.

Some districts were still figuring out details of the ban.

"This should have been going through the policy already," said Mount Vernon Superintendent Demario Strickland, who joined the district this month from Rochester, which already had a ban in place.

Strickland said in districts with existing cell phone restrictions, "you haven't heard anything about it because the kids don't mind, they're used to it."

Mount Vernon, he said, was "behind the eight ball already."

How to securely store cell phones

Mechanics of the ban – whether devices go in students' bags, a locker, a Yondr pouch or a lockbox – are up to every district. The procedure may even vary from school to school within one district.

Hochul has touted $13.5 million in funding to help schools purchase storage solutions.

Districts were awarded $10.99 per students in grades 7-12 enrolled in 2023-24.

Yondr pouches typically cost up to $30 each.

There are more costs than just paying for pouches. Districts may need more morning and afternoon monitors, for example, to handle the mechanics of locking up devices.

"From an operational standpoint, logistics are going to be problematic once school begins," Baiocco of Clarkstown said.

Baiocco's district has two big high schools and one giant middle school, Felix Festa, that serves almost 1,900 students. Having kids turn in phones or get them locked in a pouch would create a bottleneck that could cause delays. Then imagine kids forgetting to pick up or unlock their phones and running back into the building, holding up buses, Baiocco said.

Seeking feedback

How do students feel about the bell-to-bell bans? We want to hear from students at all grade levels. Email Nancy Cutler at ncutler@lohud.com if you want to be interviewed.

The district has also had success with students reporting dangerous behavior via Anonymous Alerts, a phone app-based program. Will they use their larger and more visible district-issued Chromebooks to do that, Baiocco wondered.

Baiocco said he understands why Hochul and the Legislature pushed for a bell-to-bell ban. But he sees another path. "Our focus should be more on teaching kids to use (technology) responsibly," he said. "If we were able to do that as a collective, both at home and in schools, it would be more effective."

Strickland of Mount Vernon pointed out at a July 22 public hearing that a ban is just one step; districts would have to update their Code of Conduct to reflect expected behavior and potential consequences around the new regulations.

What happens if kids don't comply?

The state law also mandates districts to track how many students faced disciplinary measures because of electronic device use.

Data must be analyzed to ensure enforcement is not showing any bias toward certain groups of kids. Districts have to issue a report every year, starting in September 2026; if "disparate enforcement" is revealed, then the schools need to show a "mitigation action plan."

Janine Fertile, a Mount Vernon PTA leader, said during the July 22 public hearing she was concerned that a too-strict policy would lead to "overpolicing" children.

Other parents have expressed safety concerns, especially during an emergency in a school building. A 2024 survey by the National Parents Union found that 78% of parents whose children take a cell phone to school say that they want their child to have that phone available in the event of an emergency at their school.

Cynthia Crenshaw, a former Mount Vernon PTA leader who is a substitute teacher, expressed support during the July 22 meeting.

"I think it's a good thing with the phone situation," said Crenshaw, because students are too districted compared to when kids were in school prior to cellphones. "If you had the emergency, you go to the office."

Strickland said the district had to get a formal plan from each principal to understand how they would uphold the law. "The state has made it very clear suspension shouldn't be first rung," he said. What about repeat offenders? "We will have to fetter that out as the school year goes along."

Crenshaw didn't seem to see a downside to the bell-to-bell ban. "It's good for the students, it's good for the teachers, and I say it's good for the parents also."

Charged

Continued from Page 1A

groped her as they were talking at the dog park on Sprout Brook Road, said Kieran O'Leary, a spokesperson for the Westchester County Department of Public Safety.

O'Leary said the woman told investigators that she and McCain were casual acquaintances. The police charged McCain after an investigation by detectives with the department's General Investigations Unit.

McCain, who lives in Verplanck in Cortlandt, was being held July 25 in the Westchester County jail on $25,000 bail, according to the jail's website. His next appearance in Cortlandt Justice Court was scheduled for July 28.

McCain's arrest in Westchester County awoke the worst fears for Lois Bohovesky, who is 93 and spent years opposing parole for both men. She and her son Peter live with memories of Paula Bohovesky being brutally killed.

"For a long time, one of the things we always said was if they got out again, they would do it again," Lois Bohovesjy said on Friday. "This is on the edge. I was so afraid of this. I am glad they got him. I sure hope he will spend more time in jail."

McCain and Richard LaBarbera were convicted of second-degree murder on June 6, 1981, after a joint trial in the Rockland County Courthouse in New City. Both men were sentenced to life terms in prison, becoming eligible for parole in 2005 after 25 years.

A parole board voted to release McCain in August 2021. LaBarbara received parole in July 2020.

LaBarbara's initial parole lasted three weeks, as officials revoked his release for getting drunk. He was later released again after serving more time.

McCain, who hailed from Arkansas, and LaBarbera, once a Pearl River resident, were convicted in 1981 of murdering Bohovesky, an aspiring artist and actor, on Oct. 28, 1980.

The two men had spent the day drinking at the High Wheeler bar on Main Street when they saw Bohovesky on the street, according to police and court testimony. The Rockland County jury found McCain beat her head on pavement, while LaBarbera stabbed her multiple times. Medical Examiner Frederick Zugibe found evidence of sexual abuse.

Both McCain and LaBarbera denied killing the teenager, blaming each other.

McCain told the parole commissioners during a hearing that police interrogated him for 14 hours. He also told them that when Bohovesky was killed, he was drunk at the time, didn't kill her, and was not at the murder scene. He claimed the police framed him.

Peter Modafferi, chief of detectives for the District Attorney's Office, called McCain's denial "absolute nonsense" in a July 2021 interview after McCain spoke to a state parole board.

Modafferi interviewed McCain in Arkansas, where he had been detained a few days after Orangetown police found Bohovesky brutally murdered.

"McCain confessed to me within minutes of our first encounter in Drew County, Arkansas," Modafferi told The Journal News/lohud. "He spoke in vivid detail about what he had done to Paula and voluntarily agreed to return to Rockland."

Tariffs

Continued from Page 1A

planning for a potential meeting between Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping in late October or early November. The Financial Times reported on July 28 that the United States had paused curbs on tech exports to China to avoid disrupting trade talks with Beijing and support Trump's efforts to secure a meeting with Xi this year.

In Washington, DC, senators from both major parties plan to introduce bills this week targeting China over its treatment of minority groups, dissidents, and Taiwan, emphasizing security and human rights, which could complicate talks in Stockholm.

Previous U.S.-China trade talks in Geneva and London in May and June focused on bringing United States and Chinese retaliatory tariffs down from triple-digit levels and restoring the flow of rare earth minerals halted by China and Nvidia's H20 AI chips, and other goods halted by the United States.

"As we await full details of the new EU-U.S. trade agreement, one thing is clear: this is a moment of relief but not of celebration,"

Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever
Statement on X

So far, the talks have not delved into broader economic issues. They include U.S. complaints that China's state-led, export-driven model is flooding world markets with cheap goods, and Beijing's complaints that U.S. national security export controls on tech goods seek to stunt Chinese growth.

European governments and companies reacted with both relief and concern on July 28 to the framework trade deal struck with Trump, acknowledging what was seen as an unbalanced deal but one that avoided a deeper trade war.

The agreement, announced on July 27 between two economies that account for almost a third of global trade, will see the United States impose a 15% import tariff on most EU goods – half the threatened rate but much more than what Europeans hoped for.

Many of the specifics of the deal were not immediately known, however.

"As we await full details of the new EU-U.S. trade agreement, one thing is clear: this is a moment of relief but not of celebration," Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever wrote on X. "Tariffs will increase in several areas and some key questions remain unresolved."

Trump said the deal, including an investment pledge topping the $550 billion deal signed with Japan last week, would expand ties between the trans-Atlantic powers after years of what he called unfair treatment of U.S. exporters.

It will bring clarity for European makers of cars, planes and chemicals. But the EU had initially hoped for a zero-for-zero tariff deal. And the 15% baseline tariff, while an improvement on the threatened rate of 30%, compares to an average U.S. import tariff rate of around 2.5% last year before Trump's return to the White House.

European Commission chief Von der Leyen, describing Trump as a tough negotiator, told reporters on July 27 that it was "the best we could get."

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz welcomed the deal, saying it averted a trade conflict that would have hit Germany's export-driven economy and its large auto sector hard.

French government ministers said the deal had some merits – such as exemptions they hoped to see for some key French business sectors such as spirits – but was nevertheless not balanced.

Industry minister Marc Ferracci stressed more talks would be needed before the deal could be formally concluded. "This is not the end of the story," he told RTL radio.

European companies, meanwhile, were left wondering whether to cheer or lament the accord.

Among the many questions that remain to be answered is how the EU's promise to invest hundreds of billions of dollars in the United States and steeply increase energy purchases can be turned into reality.

It was not immediately clear if specific pledges of increased investments were made or whether the details still must be hammered out.

And while the EU pledged to make $750 billion in strategic purchases over the next three years, including oil, liquefied natural gas and nuclear fuel, the United States will struggle to produce enough to meet that demand.

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