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97th YEAR NO. 16

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2019

PHONE: (216) 441-2141 • EMAIL: NNEWS1923@AOL.COM

FREE

Our Opinion

Partisan politics alive and well in Cuyahoga County Brancatelli punished for endorsing a Republican judge

Cleveland Ward 12 Councilman Tony Brancatelli, who represents the Slavic Village area and parts of the Old Brooklyn neighborhood, Brooklyn Center, Industrial Valley and Tremont area, has been booted out of the Cuyahoga County Democratic Party's executive committee for endorsing Republican Judge Ron O'Leary in last November's election.



Ward 12 Councilman Tony Brancatelli

Brancatelli will also be denied his party's endorsement the next time he runs for office, presumably in the 2021 Ward 12 council race, and has been stripped of his position as deputy ward leader for Ward 12.

he committed in breaking his party's bylaws merit that kind of reprisal? Is the Democratic leadership of Cuyahoga County afraid of a Republican invasion should Brancatelli's endorsement of a Republican judge go unpunished?

"You should be able to be a Democrat and still be able to vote for the best candidate," Brancatelli told The Neighborhood News.

O'Leary was appointed by Governor John Kasich in April 2017 to fill the vacancy on the city's housing court created when Judge Ray Pianka passed away in January 2017. O'Leary was elected to the position the following November when he beat Democrat Mona Scott.

He again ran to keep his seat last November once more against Scott, who ultimately won the election. After Brancatelli's endorsement of her opponent, Scott filed a formal complaint with the Democratic Party against him and refused to withdraw it, even after she had already won

"Mona never asked for my endorsement, and there was noway of evaluating her credentials since she never filled out any of the mainstream candidate reviews like Judge for Yourself or cleveland.com," Brancatelli said.

He said he planned on endorsing O'Leary no matter the consequences as he was the best candidate for housing court judge, as his outstanding job performance had

said, a judge much loved in the Slavic Village community for his tough stand on absentee property owners and code violations and advocating for tenants' rights.

'O'Leary brought that same kind of caring and compassion to his housing court," Brancatelli said.

As the councilman from Slavic Village, which had the highest foreclosure rate in the United States 10 years ago, Brancatelli said housing remains one of the most important issues for his residents.

Many Cleveland residents are outraged at what the Democrats did to Brancatelli as evidenced by scores of Facebook postings like that of Michael Banks: "Shame on you, Cuyahoga County Dems and so called leaders in local housing advocacy. Judge O'Leary was the better candidate and you all knew it. Cm. Brancatelli was the only one of you to publicly acknowledge that truth and to return the favor you boot him from leadership. In this you prove that you care more about yourselves than what is best for those you proclaim to serve and are not deserving of ne votes vou get.

Even Judge O'Leary has weighed in on Facebook per Cleveland Scene: "Tony and I have worked together on code-enforcement and housing issues for the last 15 years. He has worked tirelessly for his neighborhood and his Does the so-called crime city as Slavic Village Development Corporation's director, the County Landbank's chairman, and as Ward 12's Councilman.

> Tony has been one of Cleveland's leading voices on every major housing issue for nearly 20 years: predatory lending, mass foreclosure and vacancy, providing demolition funding, and eviction prevention. He is an expert both locally and nationally. Tony is my colleague and my friend. I appreciate his support. In whatever I do after I leave Housing Court, Tony will have my support.'

> Brancatelli voted his conscience for who he believed was the best person for housing court judge, the best person to make decisions which could impact Ward 12 for years to come. Isn't that what his constituents expect of him? Why they have kept him as their advocate for the last 14

> And come 2021, if Brancatelli decides to run again for council, the lack of an endorsement by the Cuyahoga County Democratic Party should not matter in the least and will be seen as the badge of courage of an honest, principled public servant.

Bedford High teacher charged with sexual battery

Bedford High School teacher Laura E. Dunker was charged last week with six counts of sexual battery for allegedly engaging in sexual activity with two male students, according to Rick Suts, deputy chief of the Bedford Police Department.

The incident report, dated Nov, 6, 2019, states that "He really stepped into the shoes of Ray Pianka," Brancatelli Bedford City School District officials informed the school resource officer of a possible inappropriate sexual relationship between a female teacher and a male student.

> Bedford police detectives followed up with the investigation which led to a determination that sexual activity between a female teacher and two male students occurred.

> Suts said none of the sexual contact happened at the school, as far as the investigation shows. He said the incidents took place in her vehicle and at her home. She is listed on the report as being a resident of Bath, Ohio.

NN to publish holiday New Year's edition

The Neighborhood News will publish a New Year's edition to be delivered on Thursday, Jan. 2, instead of ts usual Wednesday delivery.

News and advertising deadlines will be Monday at 12 noon. The NN offices will be closed Tuesday and Wednesday, Dec. 31 and Jan. 1, for the New Year's

Indy exerts 'home rule' power to exempt retailers from county's plastic bag ban

Independence Council met in regular session on December 10th and passed an ordinance to exempt retailers within the city from the Cuvahoga County ordinance creating a countywide disposable bag ban, with Councilwoman Patricia Wisnieski as the lone dissenter.

According to the legislation passed, Cuyahoga County Council did not seek the input of the cities that will be affected by the ordinance, and the bag ban will "place on undue burden on retail businesses, residents and customers of the retail establishments... by banning disposable plastic bags and non-permitted paper bags.

Independence Council noted in the bill that it was its intention "to employ its home-rule authority in order to regulate collection and recycling of disposable plastic bags.'

The legislation defines "retail establishment" as any convenience store, retail store, store, shop, service station or restaurant and any other sales outlet occupying 10,000 square feet or more of usable space where a customer can buy goods or food.

A "disposable plastic bag" is defined as a bag made from either non-compostable plastic or compostable plastic provided by a retail establishment to a customer at point of sale, but does not include bags specifically intended for multiple reuse.

According to the Independence legislation, retail establishments in the city must follow certain rules to be allowed to circumvent the county's plastic bag ban. Stores must provide a disposable plastic bag bin available to customers who wish to recycle their plastic bags. Retailers must collect, transport and recycle all the disposable plastic bags they collect from customers, except those that are not "sufficiently free of foreign material to enter the recycling stream.'

Whoever violates any provision of the ordinance will be guilty of a minor misdemeanor, and each day's violation will constitute a separate offense.

Togliatti farewell

With the upcoming swearing in of mayor-elect Gregory Kurtz on Jan. 2, 2020, this was Anthony Togliatti's last regular council meeting as mayor and in his report to

(Continued on Page 7)

Bedford officials reflect on 2019, look ahead to new year at last week's council meeting

By Judith Goldsworth

"It was a good year for the city," Mayor Stan Koci pronounced at the Bedford Council meeting last week

Koci said he would go more in depth on Bedford's continuing progress in his annual State of the City address, to be held early next year, but wanted to give a brief update at the final meeting of this year.

"It has been a much better year, as far as we had more good things happen than bad, and after 10 years of an economy going down, down, down, and we were just fighting every day just to keep the people's jobs and services to the community, we can now look forward and we're bouncing up," Koci said.

He said it's due to a lot of hard work by the city administration, including City Manager Mike Mallis, Finance Director Frank Gambosi, Law Director John Montello, "and the whole City Hall crew and all of our employees... they just do a great job, day in and day out. I just want to give kudos to all of them.

In his report to council, Mallis also reported on possible improvements coming for the city, including seeking funding for a project, which if approved, would restore and enhance the historical and aesthetic appearance of a longtime natural attraction that is part of the Cleveland Metroparks system.

He stated that Economic Development Director Jennifer Kuzma had worked on and completed a State Čapital Budget Request, which was close to a million dollars, for the Viaduct Connector Project. This project will focus on the city's historic viaduct in the Tinkers Creek waterfall area, around Broadway Avenue and Northfield Road.

Mallis said, "Alot of details went into that, and there was a lot of support that we received, not only locally, but we



received county support and the Cleveland Metroparks' support, so we will keep an eye on that request.

Koci commented that State Senator Kenny Yuko and State Representative Juanita Brent have also been involved with the project in efforts to obtain funding.

"Just as a quick overview," Mallis said. "The entire project, from Egbert Road, would be building a standard bridge kind of mimicking what used to be there, the historic bridge connecting to downtown Bedford, connecting from downtown Bedford down Willis and tying into the trail.

He added that total cost of the project was currently estimated at about \$1.7 million, "so obviously, any assistance that we can look into and identify grant dollars, we're going to do so.

Mallis also stated, "I want to mention that we did formally apply for the CDBG (Cuyahoga County Community Development Block Grant) for \$50,000 to televise a quarter of the city's sewers, and obviously, we'll utilize that information to determine more large scale repairs that need to be made.

Regarding the purchase of new vehicles for the fire department recently approved by council to replace aging equipment, Mallis said that Fire Chief Dave Nagy has received information regarding some of the new fleet that is currently being built. "It looks as if the new squad will be delivered sometime in February, and then the engine's target right now is late April.

City council has approved numerous pieces of legislation this past year to improve and update signage in Bedford, and Mallis also gave an update on that effort. 'We are working on a CDSG (Cuyahoga County Community Development Supplemental Grant) due in the middle of January, and that is to fund the remaining portion of our sign initiative, and that's going to be completed in 2020," he said.

Legislative agenda

Council approved an ordinance authorizing a change order with Terrace Construction Co., Inc., for the Tinkers



5841 Turney Rd., Garfield Heights 216-475-4040

Creek Commerce Park/Art of Beauty Waterline Replacement Project, in the amount of \$12,108.40, due to an unanticipated increase in the scope of the needed work for this project.

Council also passed an ordinance to amend this year's budget and close the books on 2019.

We took some major hits with the Health Insurance Fund. We're going to need a transfer of funds there,' Gambosi said.

He said that money was added to the Firefighters Pension Fund, and the Eagles Club gave a couple of nice donations to the fire and police departments. "We also had a \$2,000 grant for the Food Bank, and Dick's Sports gave us \$2,500 for Recreation, and we had a couple of other items, like our water lines, that we had on the agenda tonight that we just passed. We have a budget for that change order and that's pretty much it. I ask council to pass this so we can finish up the year 2019.'

Council passed legislation for a pay raise for Bedford Municipal Courts Clerk Tom Day, as the state of Ohio mandates a 1.75% raise to clerks of municipal courts, $coinciding with judicial \, pay \, raises. \, Day's \, annual \, compension \, and \, compensi$ sation will be increased from \$117,980 (from 2019) to \$120,045, effective Jan. 1, 2020, per the ordinance.

The Bedford Municipal Court is a regional court, serving not only the city of Bedford, but also 13 other communities, according to the court's website.

'Clerks get 85% of the judges' pay, and the good thing about that is [Cuyahoga County] pays 40% and the other 60% is divided between the 14 communities that utilize the court system. It's based on usage by those communities, and our percentage is about 15 percent," Koci explained.

Council moved to approve the Planning Commission's decision to accept the site plan approval of Richard Kieley, architect of Beachwood, representing Light of Hearts Villa, 283 Union Street, proposing a two-story addition to the existing structure at this location.

Light of Hearts, a co-sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati and the Sisters of Charity Health System, is a senior residential living facility located in the former Lumen Cordium High School complex.

Kieley, who was present at last week's meeting, stated, "Thank you, I appreciate the input. We're happy to have the approval, and we're looking forward to construction in the spring.

Placed on second reading were two ordinances: One to establish rental rules, regulations and fees at the Archibald Willard Park Pavilion at the Ellenwood Recreation Center, and the other to amend an existing ordinance pertaining to "Fees, Deposits and Charges regarding Recreation Centers" in the city. Both will be discussed by council before possible passage at a future meeting.

Announcements

The first Bedford Council meeting of 2020 will be an organizational meeting at 8 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 2, at City Hall, 165 Center Rd.

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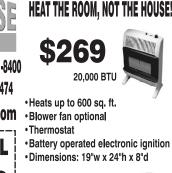


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During this season of giving, the American Red Cross urges eligible donors to give the gift of life to help ensure patients don't have to worry about the availability of blood this winter. Blood and platelet donations of all types are needed, especially type O.

Holiday travel and severe winter weather often lead to a decline in blood donations. However, a patient's need for lifesaving treatment doesn't take a vacation or stop for nasty weather. Blood and platelets are needed every day for those receiving treatment for cancer and leukemia, accident and burn victims and surgical patients, among others.

As a special thank you for being the lifeline for patients this holiday season, those who come out to give blood or platelets with the Red Cross through Jan. 5 will receive a long-sleeved Red Cross T-shirt, while supplies last.

To schedule an appointment to donate, download the free Red Cross Blood Donor App, visit RedCrossBlood.org, call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or enable the Blood Donor Skill on any Alexa Echo device.

Upcoming blood donation opportunities:

Garfield Heights

Dec. 31: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Marymount Hospital, 12300 McCracken Rd.

Jan. 6: 1 to 6 p.m., Garfield Heights Civic Center, 5407 Turney Rd.

Independence

Jan. 7: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Park Center Building 1, 6100 Oak Tree Blvd.

Jan. 8: 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Crown Centre II, 5001 Rockside Rd.

Jan. 13: 1 to 7 p.m., Independence Community Center, 6363 Selig Dr.

Valley View

Jan. 14: 2 to 7 p.m., Valley View Community Center, 6828 Hathaway Rd.

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G.H. mayor, passes away

Frank W. Petrancek, 87, former mayor of Garfield Heights, passed away on Wednesday, December 18.

He was the husband of MaryAnn (Zurwell) for 57 years; father of Frank J. (Kim Findley); son of Frank M. and Louise (nee Opava) (both deceased); brother of Doris Freidman (deceased) and Shirley Mowchan (Patrick); brother-in-law of Bernadette Peterson; "Uncle Frank" and "Uncle Pete" to many.

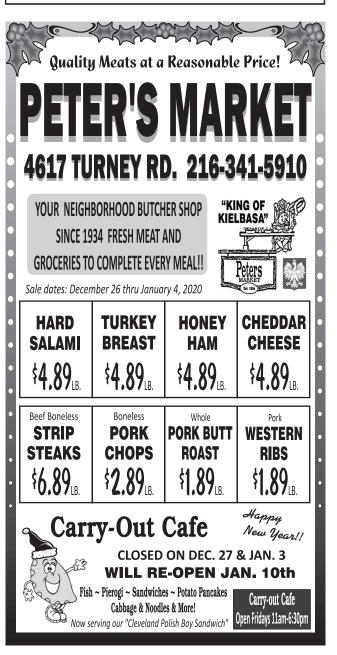
Mr. Petrancek was a star basketball player at Garfield Heights High School, graduate of Northwestern University and the Western Reserve School of Law. He spent many years with the city of Garfield Heights as former president of council and mayor, and he was instrumental in the building of the recreation center.

He loved to fish, hunt, golf and cook and was famous for his Labor Day rib burn-off, and he spent several years as an assistant scout master for Troop 220.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated last Saturday, December 21, at Saints Peter and Paul Church, 4750 Turney Rd., Garfield Heights. The family suggests donations in Mr. Petrancek's name to the Sisters of Saint Joseph, Third Order of Saint Francis, 12215 Granger Rd., Garfield Heights, to Saints Peter and Paul Church at the address above, or to a charity of your choice.

Funeral arrangements were handled by Golubski Deliberato Funeral Home. Online condolences may be submitted at GDFH.net

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Cuyahoga County Board of Elections to hold Job Fair for March 17th presidential primary election

a.m. to 2 p.m., at the Cuyahoga County Garage, 2501 Harvard Ave., in Newburgh Heights, as part of its effort to hire over 4,000 individuals to assist voters on Election Day as precinct election officials (PEOs).

In addition, there are openings for ride along officials, drop-off assistants, rovers and over 300 openings for in- walks through the doors," said Perlatti. house full-time temporary clerks.

The Cuyahoga County Board of Elections is inviting the Day. "Competition with the holiday is making it a public to attend a Job Fair on Monday, Jan. 6, from 10 challenge to find all of the people we need to administer this very important election," said Anthony Perlatti, director of the Board of Elections. "Attending the job fair is a great way to learn about our work and how easy it is to join our great team. There are openings for every skill level, so we will seriously consider every individual who

Precinct election officials earn \$172.10 and clerks are The presidential primary election falls on St. Patrick's paid \$11.50 per hour for assignments that can last several added as the website evolves.

weeks to three months dependent on the assignment.

People don't have to wait for the Job Fair to apply for work. The Board is taking applications now. They may apply by calling 216-443-6600 or online at www.443VOTE.us.

Neighborhood News online

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Requirements include Bachelor's degree or higher in business economics, urban planning or related field. Five years of related experience is required. Experience may be substituted for education requirement. Knowledge of marketing and business/economic development; management skills; and designated as a Certified Economic Developer (CEcd) or able to achieve such designation is

Applications/Resumes will be accepted at City Hall 5353 Lee Road, Maple Heights, OH 44137 attention HR or email to: jstevenson@mapleheightsohio.com. EOE, drug/smoke free workplace. Position is OPEN UNTIL FILLED.

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Indy exerts 'home rule' power

(Continued from Page 1)

council thanked the residents of Independence for the opportunity to have served as mayor for the last four years.

To the applause of council and the audience he said, "I am grateful to have served this community with this amazing group of dedicated community-driven people; and I am very proud of the work we have done.

He said some of his favorite highlights of his time in office include the completion of the Hemlock Trail, Topgolf, Vista Springs, the formation of federal partnerships with the city's safety forces, and "the generations these projects will benefit for years to

Other legislation passed

Also passed at the December 10th council meeting include:

- ${\color{gray}\bullet} \textbf{Change order for the Upper Brookside Road/Sidewalk Improvements Project;} \\$
- Entering into a lease agreement with Independence Cooperative Nursery School for the building at 7121 Valley View Dr.;
- Amending an ordinance establishing benefits for all regular, non-bargaining unit, full-time municipal employees;
- Adopting a five-year capital improvement plan for 2020-2024;
- Entering into an agreement with the International Association of Firefighters, Local 2375, AFL-CIO;
- Entering into a Jobs and Commerce Economic Development Agreement with the State of Ohio, Department of Transportation in connection with the Rockside Woods Boulevard North and Brecksville Road Improvements Project;
- Entering into a Relocation and Job Creation Grant Agreement with Saucy Brew Works, LLČ to move its operations to Independence;
- Authorizing an increase in the amount of funds requested from \$47,500 to an amount not to exceed \$65,000 for professional services by Clemans Nelson & Associates in connection with labor relations, consulting and negotiation;
- Granting a U-3 Special Use Permit to Orbis Education Services for property at 6050 Oak Tree Blvd.

Special council meeting

At a special meeting of Independence Council on December 17th, legislation passed

 \bullet Renewing the contract of United Survey, Inc. for the city's 2020 sanitary and storm sewer maintenance and repairs through March, 2020, with the city to review prior to March 31, 2020 through December 31, 2020;

- Renewing the contract with Dura Mark, Inc. for the city's 2020-2021 street striping program through March 31, 2020, with an option to renew prior to March 31, 2020, through December 31, 2021;
- Renewing a contract with C.A. Agresta Construction for the city's 2020 concrete road maintenance and repairs through March 31, 2020, with an option to renew prior to March 31, 2020, through December 31, 2020;
- Renewing a contract with Geotech Services, Inc. for the city's 2020 creek, utility and infrastructure maintenance and repairs through March 31, 2020, with the option to renew prior to March 31, 2020, through December 31, 2020.

Also approved at the December 17th special council meeting were the annual 2019 appropriation ordinance and the 2020 temporary appropriation ordinance.

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Maple Heights Council closes books on 2019, passes 2020 budget

By Judith Goldsworth

Maple Heights closed the books on 2019 by passing several pieces of legislation, including an ordinance for the 2020 budget, at its final meeting of the year last week.

The budget, for the fiscal year ending Dec. 31, 2020, had to be passed by the end of this year and presented to the county fiscal officer by Dec. 31, 2019, the ordinance stated.

Finance Director Tinita Tillman was contacted for the total figure of next year's budget, but that information was not available as of press time. Council also passed legislation to amend this year's budget, as recommended by Tillman.

Also regarding financial matters in the city, council passed two resolutions, one authorizing Tillman to change the fiscal year 2018 "Advance of Monies" in the amount of \$30,544.57 from the General Fund to the Police Levy Fund, to a "Transfer of Monies" from the General Fund to the Police Levy Fund, "thereby requiring no reimbursement to the General Fund" before the end of this year, the legislation states.

The other resolution authorizes Tillman to correct the internal audit classifications of fiscal year 2018 expenditures in the total amount of \$74,500 out of the General Fund to certain Special Revenue Funds (Street Lighting Fund, Ambulance Billing Fund, EMS Grant Fund) from "advances" to "transfers," therefore requiring no reimbursement to the General Fund before the end of 2019.

Council also passed an ordinance amending existing legislation concerning renewal of rental registrations and tenant rental licenses and establishing fees.

Effective January 1, 2020, each owner of residential and commercial properties in Maple Heights, or the agent in charge of rental units in the city, is required to register all such rental units on a rental registration form, per owner or agent in charge, with the Building Department on an annual basis, no later than March 31 of each calendar year for a non-refundable rental registration fee of \$75 per owner or agent in charge, according to the legislation.

The ordinance also states that if the owner or agent in charge acquires additional rental units during the calendar year, then, within 30 days after the date of acquiring ownership or transfer of the title, and while the unit is still vacant, the owner or agent in charge must file an updated rental registration with the Building Department for a nonrefundable fee of \$35. The form to be used to register all their rental units will be contained in a rental registration packet available from the Maple Heights Building

Building Department by January 31 of each calendar year, and before any tenant shall move into the unit. Also, effective January 1, 2021, upon return of the tenant forms, a tenant rental license fee of \$150 per rental unit shall be required to be paid by the owner or agent in charge for the first unit owners, and \$35 for each additional unit owned.

 $submitted, and the owner or agent must pay an additional \, rental \, registration \, fee \, of \, \$35,$ and pay an additional tenant license fee of \$150, according to the ordinance.

Council passed a resolution authorizing Mayor Annette Blackwell to enter into a contract with Medical Mutual of Ohio to provide health insurance to full-time city employees, effective Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2020.

And council also passed a resolution authorizing the Community Life and Education Committee to expend funds to host a City Wide Holiday Party with a toy giveaway for



