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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NORTHERN DUTCHESS NEWS welcomes your letters. Letters must be submitted via e-mail to be considered for publication; e-mail to northerndutchess@sdutchessnews.com and include the phrase "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line. Include a telephone number and address for verification purposes. Letters may be edited for legal considerations, reader interest and length. We look forward to hearing from you.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NOTE: Letters to the Editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Northern Dutchess News. Letters must be e-mailed to be considered for publication. We cannot accept handwritten or faxed letters.

Drop NYS Bridge Authority, thruway merger

To the editor:

Last week the NYS Assembly along with The NYS Senate both agreed to drop the proposed merger of the NYS Thruway and the NYS Bridge Authorities out of the Budget. They as the voices of the people of NYS have listened and responded to their constituents' wishes.

This was not just the Hudson Valley to have a say, this was NYS. From Niagara's Falls to the Empire State Building, from the western end of Chautauqua to the very tip of Long Island. The people have spoken.

In a normal democracy, that is all that's needed to dismiss a bill. Unfortunately in NYS the Governor can make deals with the speaker of the senate (Andrea Stewart Cousins) and the speaker of the assembly (Carl Heastie) to bring this back from the dead.

I urge everyone to call the "3 men in a room" and let them know that NY has spoken. Drop the merger once and for all.

Jeff Smith
Rhinebeck

An airborne Titanic

To the editor:

A recent documentary compared the designing of the first Air Force One to the current behemoths.

Often dubbed 'The White House,' 'the flying Oval Office' and 'Angel,' it has a crew of 26 with a 102-person maximum capacity. Range 7,800 miles. Travels at 600 miles per hour. Fueled to capacity holds 53,611 gallons. Is six stories high. Long as a city block. A virtual Titanic of the Sky.

There are three stories in the plane. The president's lush quarters include his small oval office, lavatory, gym, bathroom, conference room. Accommodations for press/guests. A vast, sophisticated, complicated communications section, kitchen, luxurious lounges. An electronic/radar system to jam radar. Quite extraordinary.

Two new Air Force Ones are currently being constructed by Boeing at a cost of \$3.9 billion. An estimate from other sources puts the total cost at 5.2 billion. With our infrastructure crumbling, our outrageous national debt, cut backs of this current administration, homelessness, etc., how does anyone justify such exorbitant spending? It's sickening to see such lavish foolishness while humanity and mother earth slip deeper into despair.

Remember the Titanic? The ship touted as unsinkable? Nothing is fool-proof. Why this throw-away-what-works-fine mentality? Is one man worth \$5.2 billion? I wonder.

Joyce Benedict
Hyde Park

'We will get through this'

'Be kind, be brave, be a helper'

"The impact of the coronavirus (COVIC-19) will test our society on every level. Anxiety is high. Understandable as we go through this unprecedented situation.

"So let what we do next - neighbors helping neighbors, friends caring for friends, family supporting family - be what defines us. Let us begin.

"The way we get through this is by leaning on each other. Don't be afraid to ask for help, and don't be afraid to offer it."

Dutchess County Executive Marcus Molinaro

Area schools, colleges closed through March 30; turn to online options

by Rich Thomaselli

Schools are places of schedule and structure, whether it's kindergarten or the final year of college.

Never has education been in such flux.

The rapid spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) has sent school districts across the country into a state of disarray, including in Dutchess County.

Here's a look at what's happening around the area.

COLLEGES

Marist - A Marist commuter student has received a presumptive positive diagnosis for COVID-19. Marist Health Services has notified all students, faculty, and staff who had contact with this individual.

As many colleges have done, Marist extended its spring break from one week to two. Students will be off completely until March 30. Prior to that date, school president Dennis J. Murray said Marist "will be using our extended spring break to monitor the spread of the virus, and re-evaluate the risk of continuing our campus-based education. I will update all members of our community early next week about our decision." If students cannot come back to campus they will finish the semester with online courses.

SUNY New Paltz this week announced distance learning for the rest of the semester.

Bard - An employee has been diagnosed with the virus. As a result, Bard said all classes will be moved online.

Culinary Institute of America - All campuses, including Hyde Park, were closed on Friday the 13th through April 6. "This closure will replace the planned inter-session and part of our traditional summer

break, so there will be minimal disruption to our students' education," the CIA said on its website. The CIA's famed restaurants are also closed during this time.

Dutchess Community College - All classes canceled until March 30.

Vassar - Spring break ends on March 23, at which time the school will switch to online classes through April 6 and re-evaluate from there.

Public Schools

All Dutchess, Ulster and Putnam county schools are closed until March 30 as per the state of emergency declared in each county. For the most part, each district has already informed students and parents that at least the first week, from March 16-23, will be completely off. Each district will then determine whether the second week will be spent with online learning from home.

Much also depends on whether the county lifts the state of emergency on March 30 or extends it. Also, 13 of the 17 school districts in Dutchess County agreed to postpone high school sports until April 30.

FDR Hyde Park - Off until March 30. The annual spring theater production, "Mr. President," has been postponed indefinitely.

Millbrook - Off until March 30. In an email to families, Millbrook noted that Monday, March 16, was a day for teachers to come up with a plan "to further develop instructional plans for continued student learning during this period of closure.

Chromebooks will be available for pick up by parents/guardians between the hours of 2:00 pm and 6:00 pm at Alden and the Middle School for students in grades 3-8."

Arlington - Off until March 30, will assess the situation prior to that.

Beacon - Off until March 30. "Supplemental learning activities for stu-

dents" has been implemented for students' return.

Our Lady of Lourdes - Off until March 30; remote learning begins Wednesday.

Pine Plains - Off until March 30. It's face-to-face, classroom learning after that as Pine Plains has declined to attempt remote learning.

Red Hook - Will begin to implement remote learning in two separate phases.

Rhinebeck - School officials met Monday to finalize learn-from-home options.

Roy C. Ketcham, John Jay, Webutuck, Spackenkill, Poughkeepsie - Off until March 30. Will decide this week how to handle the return of classes.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Our Lady of Lourdes - Off until April 20; remote learning begins Wednesday.

Superintendent of Catholic Schools Mr. Michael J. Deegan has announced Catholic Schools within the Archdiocese of New York will close all elementary schools effective Monday, March 16 until Monday, April 20, with the possibility of a lengthier closure.

"Informed by expert health officials and the Health and Safety Task Force of the Office of the Superintendent of Schools, this decision was made out of an abundance of caution," Deegan said. "The health and safety of our students, staff and families is of the utmost importance." Additionally, after consultation with the leadership of the Catholic Youth Organizations and the Catholic High School Athletic Associations, all activities and all sporting events and practices have been cancelled indefinitely.