

LOCAL

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POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

Baker admits to being chicken over Turkey Day

Daily News Staff and News Services

Thanksgiving is coming, and this year the traveling associated with that holiday is being portrayed not as a tribute to the family and friends that form our lifelines, but as an act of selfishness with potentially deadly consequences.

"I'm scared to death about Thanksgiving. I mean, I'm not kidding when I say that," Gov. Charlie Baker told business executives during a Zoom call on Nov. 13.

The governor said he understands how "incredibly off-putting" it is for people to hear him urge them to stay home on the cherished holiday, but pointed to an explosion of people in Canada requiring hospital care for COVID-19 two weeks after residents of that country gathered to celebrate its version of Thanksgiving on Oct. 11.

AAA on Nov. 12 said it expected 50 million to travel on Thanksgiving, down from 55 million in 2019. That's only a projected 10% drop, but still the largest decrease since the 2008 recession.

Soaring COVID-19 numbers across the country are already straining hospitals and in the absence of stronger federal restrictions, a patchwork of state-by-state actions continues, with many believing a lockdown or something approaching that may be around the corner.

U.S. Rep. Katherine Clark was elected Wednesday by her fellow Democrats in the House to the position of assistant speaker, making her the fourth-highest ranked member of House leadership in Congress.

Clark rises in House

Clark, who was first elected to Congress in a special election in 2013, gave up her position as vice chair of the Democratic caucus to attempt to climb the ranks of leadership, and she was rewarded. Her 5th Congressional District includes much of MetroWest.

Already the second-highest ranking woman in the Democratic caucus behind Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Clark defeated Rhode Island Rep. David Cicilline in Wednesday's party leadership elections.

She now ranks only behind Pelosi, Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and Majority Whip James Clyburn in the House, increasing the clout of the delegation that also counts Rules Committee Chairman Jim McGovern and Ways and Means Chairman Richard Neal.

Clark won her fourth full term earlier this month when she defeated Republican Caroline Colarusso with 74% of the vote. Before joining Congress, Clark served in both the House and the

superintendent, Lally was also an assistant superintendent and principal in Tewksbury. She also taught college courses at American International College and University of Phoenix.

Superintendent of Schools Kevin McIntyre said he hopes to kick off a search for Tahon's long-term replacement in February or March.

Alison Bosma can be reached at 508-634-7582 or abosma@wickedlocal.com. Find her on Twitter at @AlisonBosma.

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Change for high needs students

They won't return to in-person learning in Framingham in December

By Zane Razzak
The MetroWest Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK

FRAMINGHAM — The school district announced Friday that it has decided to not bring a new wave of students with high

needs back to in-person learning next month, delaying that move until mid-January.

On Nov. 13, school officials said they were planning to invite the remainder of the district's students with learning needs back to school buildings. On Dec. 7, a group of these students would be able to return to elementary schools. Then, on Dec. 14, more would return to

middle schools, the high school and Thayer campus.

This would have been the district's final group of students with high needs to return. The first group — students with the highest learning needs — returned in October, with a second group of students with high needs following earlier this month.

"Students and staff that are

currently learning and teaching in-person will remain in their programs as they have been since October 5th and November 5th... While these decisions are often difficult to make, and sometimes even harder to hear, please know that we are adjusting to new information that evolves daily, leading us to

See STUDENTS, B2

Confident to Thrive

Marlborough martial arts program boosts self-esteem for people with disabilities

By Jeff Malachowski
The MetroWest Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK

MARLBOROUGH — Ryan Regan was nervous.

Viet Nguyen, owner of Kwon's Martial Arts Center and Regan's martial arts instructor, stood a few feet in front of Ryan holding a wooden board. Ryan had taken martial arts classes, but never broke a wooden board.

Ryan, 18, made a fist, threw a punch and seconds later the board was in two.

"He was very excited to break the wood," said Eugenia Regan, Ryan's mother.

Ryan, who is on the autism spectrum and has attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), is one of a handful of members of Thrive Support and Advocacy — a Marlborough-based organization providing social and support services for youths and adults with developmental disabilities — to take an adaptive martial arts course at Kwon's Martial Arts. Thrive and Kwon's Martial Arts formed a partnership last year allowing Thrive clients to take martial arts classes once a week for little or no cost.

The class helps those with developmental disabilities build confidence and self-esteem, develop a positive mindset, persevere through adversity and strengthen teamwork skills in a comfortable setting.

See THRIVE, B2



Ryan Regan, 18, of Northborough, works on his front kick during an Adaptive Martial Arts class at Kwon's Martial Arts



A student uses a kick to break a board during an Adaptive Martial Arts class at Kwon's Martial Arts Center in Marlborough, Nov. 19, 2020.

Milford middle school looking for a new principal again

By Alison Bosma
The Milford Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK

MILFORD — Stacy Middle School principal Tahon Ross is leaving Milford, just under a year and a half after taking the job.

The district hired former Croydon, New Hampshire, and Holbrook Superintendent of Schools Patty Lally as interim principal.

A Daily News call to the middle school was not returned, and Ross' school email bounced



Ross

back Friday morning. His LinkedIn page lists him as a principal in Providence Public Schools as of November.

Ross began at Stacy Middle School in July 2019, taking over from Principal Nancy Angelini, who had held the job for 13 years. Angelini stayed within the district, becoming director of grants, technology and media.

More than 60 parents, teachers, administrators and other community members took part in the roughly monthlong search that resulted in Ross' hiring last year. A Springfield native who secured his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Ross previously worked in the Washington District of Columbia Public Schools, as well as schools in New York City and Atlanta.

Lally will begin work Nov. 30. In addition to her classroom teacher work and two stints as

superintendent, Lally was also an assistant superintendent and principal in Tewksbury. She also taught college courses at American International College and University of Phoenix.

Superintendent of Schools Kevin McIntyre said he hopes to kick off a search for Tahon's long-term replacement in February or March.

Alison Bosma can be reached at 508-634-7582 or abosma@wickedlocal.com. Find her on Twitter at @AlisonBosma.

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Boxborough man charged with assault after poker game

Daily News Staff

AYER — A Boxborough man was arraigned last week on several charges in connection with an alleged physical assault on a male victim that occurred over several days late last month at the defendant's home.

Authorities say Corey Convey, 34, faces charges of assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, strangulation, kidnapping and intimidation of a witness.

Convey was arraigned Wednesday in Ayer District Court, according to a joint press release from Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan and Boxborough Police Chief Warren

Ryder.

He was held pending a dangerousness hearing scheduled for Monday.

Police say the victim reported on Tuesday that he had allegedly been physically assaulted and held against his will at Convey's home in Boxborough for three days in late October.

Based on a preliminary investigation, police say the victim and the defendant have known each other for about a year and have a history of gambling together, but that Convey allegedly became physically violent over time.

According to the police report, Convey and the victim attended a poker game last month. Following

the game, the defendant allegedly became angry with the victim over money that he thought was owed him.

Convey allegedly drove the victim back to his Boxborough apartment and physically assaulted him, including strangling him until he lost consciousness.

Following the assault the defendant allegedly sent threatening emails and text messages in an attempt to keep the victim from reporting the incident.

Convey was arrested Tuesday by Boxborough police without incident.

Authorities say the investigation continues.

Framingham man faces pot charge

By Norman Miller

The MetroWest Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK

FRAMINGHAM — A local man who was recently pulled over for driving without a license allegedly did so again in front of the same officer on Thursday, and he now also faces a drug distribution charge, authorities said.

Police arrested Diego Vasquez, 19, at 10:45 a.m. Thursday, according to police spokeswoman Lt. Patricia Grigas.

Officer Zachary Winkelman was on patrol Thursday when he saw Vasquez get into a car and begin to drive.

"He (Winkelman) knew Vasquez didn't have a license because he pulled him over recently," said Grigas. "Winkelman pulled the



Vasquez

car over and he (Vasquez) was shaking, claiming the officer was harassing him."

The officer ordered both Vasquez and a passenger out of the car because he was going to have it towed. However, when he looked inside, the officer found a "large bag" of marijuana shoved into the sleeve on the passenger door, according to Grigas.

Also inside the car, the officer found two large boxes of vape cartridges, scales and a box of sandwich bags, Grigas said.

Although the exact amount of marijuana was not listed in the police report, the report indicated

it appeared to be more than what would be expected for personal use. That and the fact that there were scales and sandwich bags indicated the marijuana was for sale, police wrote in the report.

Police arrested Vasquez, of 15 Georgetown Drive, and charged him with possession of marijuana with the intent to distribute and driving without a license.

Vasquez was scheduled to be arraigned in Framingham District Court. Results were not immediately available.

Norman Miller can be reached at 508-626-3823 or nmiller@wickedlocal.com. For up-to-date crime news, follow Norman Miller on Twitter @Norman_MillerMW or on Facebook at facebook.com/NormanMillerCrime.

Police: Assault, robbery may have been a set-up

By Norman Miller

The MetroWest Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK

FRAMINGHAM — A Somerville man told police he was jumped by two other men on Thursday and robbed after he came to Framingham with a woman he met online, authorities said.

The robbery is not random and there is no danger to the public, police spokeswoman Lt. Patricia Grigas said Friday.

The victim told police that he met a woman on social media and she went and picked him up in Somerville and brought him back to Framingham. Once in Framingham, she said she had to use the bathroom and stopped at the plaza at 5 Edgell Road and went into one of the restaurants.

When the woman came out, the victim saw her speak to two men.

"The two males came over

and started to fight," said Grigas. "The two males were hitting, punching and kicking him. It could have been a set-up."

The victim said the two men began beating him and one of the men was armed with a collapsible baton. The man was not clear if someone hit him with it and was not forthcoming with a lot of information, Grigas said.

The man claimed that he dropped his phone and the men took it before leaving.

"It doesn't appear this was random," Grigas said.

Police are still investigating and no one has been charged, the lieutenant said.

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NOTEBOOK

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Senate in Massachusetts.

Dooley seeks to lead GOP

Secretary of State William Galvin announced Thursday that 3,657,972 ballots were cast on Nov. 3 in Massachusetts, accounting for 76% of all registered voters in the state and blowing past the previous record for raw votes set in 2016.

That turnout, which is always higher in a presidential election year, made this cycle a difficult one for Bay State Republicans.

But state Rep. Shawn Dooley, R-Norfolk, believes he might have done better had he been at the helm of the MassGOP instead of his former colleague Jim Lyons.

Dooley, whose district includes part of Millis, announced that he would challenge Lyons for the party chairmanship in January.

Lyons says he's proud of what Republicans were able to accomplish, even if they didn't pick up seats. Lyons said they lay the groundwork in districts around the state for a strong showing in 2022.

Tracking COVID-19

The Framingham Public School District has unveiled a COVID-19 dashboard, providing information on positive cases in a school-by-school analysis.

The data show which schools have had students or staff test positive from COVID-19, as well as the total number of quarantine cases. The numbers only reflect those who are doing in-person learning or teaching.

As of Friday evening, the dashboard recorded a total of seven positive cases since Sept. 1. As a result of those cases, 41 people have had to quarantine.

In an email to School Committee members and union leaders, Superintendent Robert Tremblay said the district would not use the reporting tool to disaggregate the staff vs. student data, noting the contact-tracing nurse maintains that information.

"The reporting focus is on individuals and the potential for contact with others, irrespective of staff or student designation. This is a consistent practice among school districts and is a privacy safeguard for everyone involved," wrote Tremblay.

Milford Town Meeting

Maybe you've heard this before.

Milford has once again postponed its fall Town Meeting, this time pushing it into the new year.

It is now scheduled for Jan. 6.

The meeting, expected to feature dozens of decisions for Town Meeting members to make, was originally scheduled for Oct. 26. It was first pushed to Nov. 9, then Dec. 9, as officials

sought for ways to make the meeting safe during the coronavirus pandemic.

Milford has been categorized by the state as "red," or high-risk, for COVID-19 for several weeks, including after the state revamped its metrics.

The plan was to coordinate a fully remote Town Meeting.

According to Milford IT Director Christopher George, about 30 of Milford's 266 representative Town Meeting members have no technology at home "whatsoever," and therefore cannot participate in a remote Town Meeting.

And George said he needs the additional time to find and implement a solution.

Markey hires Walsh as chief of staff

John Walsh, who helped engineer Deval Patrick's successful first run for governor and this year managed the re-election campaign of U.S. Sen. Edward Markey, is moving inside government.

Markey on Wednesday announced that Walsh will join his office as chief of staff.

"John drove my re-election campaign to an historic victory. He is

a brilliant strategist, an effective leader, and a committed public servant," Markey said in a statement. "John has the experience and visionary thinking to drive our progressive movement forward and pass a Green New Deal. I look forward to continuing our partnership and friendship, and creating bold, progressive change across our country together."

Walsh served as chair of the Massachusetts Democratic Party from 2007 to 2013. A graduate of Cardinal Spellman High School in Brockton and later Princeton University, Walsh was a selectman in his hometown of Abington for 10 years beginning in 1983.

They said it...

"It doesn't make us look very good, and I really wish that we had put something out (about how the investigation was going), and I'm sure there's legal reasons why we couldn't, but we have to stop hiding behind the legal reasons, and we've gotta do something." — Franklin Town Councilor Debra Pellegri, on the council's decision to enter into executive session to discuss a "spear phishing" incident that removed \$522,000 from a town account.

"Tonight, we were supposed to celebrate her upcoming retirement. (I'm) heartbroken we can't do that." — Justine St. John, chairwoman of the Maynard Board of Selectmen, speaking of town treasurer/collector Cheryl Kane, who was fatally shot at her Wayland home on Thursday afternoon.

Contributors to the Political Notebook this week include Deputy Director of Multimedia Dan O'Brien, multimedia journalist Alison Bosma and the State House News Service.

Viet Nguyen, owner of Adaptive Martial Arts Center in Marlborough, helps Ryan Regan, 18, of Northborough, get his balance during an Adaptive Martial Arts class on Thursday, Nov. 19, 2020. Working his way down the course, at left, was Jake Bartolane, 18, of Hudson.

[DAILY NEWS AND WICKED LOCAL STAFF PHOTOS/ANN RINGWOOD]



THRIVE

From Page B1

"We make them feel like it's a safe environment to try new things and feel like they're not being judged," said Nguyen.

Robert Gustafson, a member of Thrive's board of directors and Nguyen's business partner, brought the two parties together to form the partnership. Caitlin Devaney-Fortwengler, Thrive's director of youth services, said those with disabilities are often vulnerable to bullying and abuse. The program teaches them how to protect themselves physically and emotionally, and instills confidence and self-esteem.

"It has been very well received," she said.

Thrive members are also integrated with Kwon's students who do not have developmental

disabilities. That integration helps the students without disabilities learn patience, empathy and how to interact with those with disabilities. Thrive members are able to improve their social skills and patience through the interaction.

"You're really creating benefits for both sides," said Devaney-Fortwengler. "We're opening their eyes to a different world."

Each 45-minute class begins with a warmup, stretching and some words of wisdom from Nguyen before the martial arts instruction begins. The repetitiveness of the exercises and instruction is beneficial, said Devaney-Fortwengler.

During shutdowns that occurred during the outset of the coronavirus pandemic, classes were held virtually. That was critical to ensuring the Thrive clients not only got exercise, but did not feel isolated.

"We knew we needed to be creative to avoid isolation," said Devaney-Fortwengler.

One of the biggest accomplishments for Thrive students is breaking a wooden board.

"Breaking a board to a lot of individuals is a scary thing," said Nguyen. "I use that as a tool to break their fears and build self-esteem."

Nguyen, Devaney-Fortwengler and Regan have all noticed budding confidence in the Thrive students throughout the course of the program. Ryan's favorite part of the martial arts classes is standing in line and doing the kicking and punching exercises.

"Ryan really enjoys it," said Regan. "The program is good. (Nguyen) takes time if the kids need more help."

For more information on Thrive and the martial arts program, visit www.icanthrive.org.

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STUDENTS

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abandon previous plans at times despite hours of planning and best intentions," reads a statement from the district.

The start time at the high school will remain at 9 a.m. until mid-January. More information will be available next week.

On Thursday, Framingham was officially back in the red zone

for coronavirus spread. The day before, city officials reported that 63 additional residents had tested positive since Monday, bringing the number of active cases in Framingham to 383. That is the highest number of active cases in the city since June 5, when there were 389.

The city briefly dropped to the yellow zone after the state Department of Public Health changed the metrics it uses to rank communities by risk level this month. Prior to the metric change, Framingham spent

several weeks as a high-risk, or red zone, community.

Under the new metrics, municipalities of Framingham's size are considered to be in the red zone if they average 10 or more cases per 100,000 people daily over the prior two weeks and have a test positivity rate of 4% or higher.

As of Thursday, Framingham had averaged 34.2 cases per 100,000 people daily over the prior two weeks and its positivity rate — the percent of residents tested who got a positive result — increased to 4.36%.