

Fire Prevention

AFD teaches fire prevention at schools.
See page 3A.



Sports

Apopka bowlers take home trophy.
See page 1B.



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The Apopka Chief

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Volume 101 Number 43

Friday, October 27, 2023 / 50 cents

Take a swing



This little girl rides a carnival swing at the Fall Family Festival held Thursday, October 19 through Sunday, October 22, at Kit Land Nelson Park in downtown Apopka. The Rotary Club of Apopka organized the 22nd annual event. See more festival pictures on page 8A.

City Council approves notices of sales of downtown CRA properties

In three separate votes on Wednesday, October 18, the Apopka City Council voted 5-0 to have city staff publish notices about the disposal, or sale, of multiple properties in downtown Apopka's CRA (Community Redevelopment Agency) District.

The properties up for discussion were the Station Street Project, one lot located at 207 E. Eighth Street, and four single-family lots on the northeast corner of East Eighth Street and South Highland Avenue.

The property disposal for all seven properties are done in accordance to CRA district requirements in Florida Statutes 163.380.

Station Street Project

The Station Street Project, which encompasses Fifth Street and most of West Station Street in downtown Apopka, is about 3.43 acres in size with an appraisal price of \$900,000



This lot located at 207 E. Eighth Street (pictured) is comprised of one 0.11-acre lot valued at \$27,000 as of July 8, 2022, when an appraisal last took place. The CRA property was one of many the city of Apopka approved to advertise for disposal or sale.

as of January 16, 2019.

"The City owns various properties that have been acquired in the past, and, as a result of new planning efforts and use needs, these properties are now available to be disposed of in accordance with Florida Statutes 163.380," says

the city staff report in the October 18 City Council meeting agenda. "This set of properties is known as the Station Street Project, and was out for a development bid in October 2022. The negotiations surrounding the Development Agreement stalled earli-

er this year, but are now moving forward due in part to the change of attorney. Additional legal requirements have been identified to ensure City compliance with Florida Law, and the City has identified specific

See CRA Page 5A

Mobility Week raises awareness of road safety October 27-November 4

By Teresa Sargeant
Apopka Chief Staff

The city of Apopka is hosting its free second annual Lake Apopka Eco-Bike Ride in celebration of Mobility Week, which is a cooperative effort by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and its partner agencies to promote awareness of safe, multimodal transportation choices.

Mobility Week begins today, Friday, October 27, and ends Saturday, November 4.

The Eco-Bike Ride will take place Saturday, October 28, from 7:30-9 a.m. at the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive on Lust Road in Apopka.

Bicyclists and walk-

ers can park their cars at the city of Apopka's birding park on the right of the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive entrance.

At the October 18 City Council meeting, Mayor Bryan Nelson read a proclamation recognizing 2023 Mobility Week.

"... Mobility Week is an ideal time for counties, cities, and transportation agencies to highlight achievements, introduce new initiatives, and/or implement new policies promoting sustainable transportation," Nelson read from the proclamation. "... Mobility Week is an opportunity for individuals to explore various transportation choices available and consider how multimodal transportation reduces traf-

fic congestion, benefits the environment, and promotes community health. ... Mobility Week is consistent with the city of Apopka's key priorities of pedestrian safety and healthy transportation options."

Paul Schoelzel, multimodal coordinator for the FDOT, thanked the city on behalf of the FDOT and other organizations for the proclamation. According to Schoelzel, the FDOT had 800 events with over 40 organizations over the past eight years.

"So, we want to keep it moving, and we look forward, actually to the bike ride on the 28th with you, Mayor," Schoelzel said.

Register for the Eco-Bike Ride online at www.apopka.gov/bikeride.

Austin Duran Truck Camp



Photo courtesy of Apopka Fire Department/Facebook

Forty students participated in the Apopka Fire Department's second annual Austin Duran Truck Camp on Wednesday, October 18, at the Gilliam Training Center in Apopka. The students came from several local fire departments and even from Texas. Bassel Ibrahim of Proactive Rescue Operations and his team of instructors led the training. This year's special guest and recipient of the donation, in honor and remembrance of Austin Duran, is Tom "Bull" Hill from BullsFitPit.

Peek-a-boo



This gator peers out from underwater at Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive, located on the North Shore of Lake Apopka. The drive is free and open to the public each Friday through Sunday and federal holidays. The entrance gate to the 11-mile, one-way drive is located at 2850 Lust Road, Apopka, and opens at 7 a.m. and closes at 3 p.m. The exit gate on Jones Avenue in Zellwood closes at 5 p.m.

Food pantry gears up for holiday donations

Loaves and Fishes is again gearing up for the upcoming holidays and is seeking food donations to help the community for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Loaves and Fishes' holiday closures are Thursday, November 23 for Thanksgiving, Friday, December 22 through Sunday, January 7, is Christmas break. Loaves and Fishes will reopen Monday, January 8.

Immediate needs are as follows:

*Thanksgiving and Christmas food needs: boxed stuffing, boxed po-

tatoes, Hamburger Helper, boxed macaroni and cheese, canned fruit, small chocolates (Hersey's Kisses, Miniatures, Nuggets, etc.)

*Homeless food items: Vienna sausages, Pop Tarts, packaged crackers, individual small-bagged chips

*Christmas gifts: \$10+ gift cards to Winn-Dixie, Wal-Mart, etc.; new toys for ages 0-12

*Immediate non-food needs: feminine pads, dish soap, size 4 or 5 diapers

Drop off donation

See FOOD Page 7A

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Section D

Legal ads 1-8D

Find Public Notices
Online at: TheApopkaChief.com/public-notices OR
FloridaPublicNotices.com



Apopka Event of the Week

City of Apopka's 2023 Halloween in the Park event will take place Saturday, October 28, 10 a.m. to noon at Kit Land Nelson Park, 10 N. Forest Ave. This is a free family-friendly trick or treating event with kid activities, vendors and more. It is meant to be a fun and safe trick-or-treat alternative for the children of Apopka.

Quotable

According to federal data, 736 known or suspected terrorists were apprehended at U.S. border in fiscal year 2023 alone, the most ever recorded according to available data.

Guest writer on threat from terrorists entering U.S. illegally

Opinion

The Apopka Chief
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Our position

Terrorists crossing our border are a real threat

By Casey Harper |
The Center Square –

Hundreds of immigrants on the federal terror watch list have been caught at the southern and northern U.S. borders in recent years, and national security experts say there is a real threat of a terrorist attack on American soil as a result.

With the conflict between Israel and the Gaza-based terrorist group Hamas escalating, that threat has only grown. U.S. Customs and Border Protection's San Diego field office warns that Hamas may attempt to send individuals to the U.S. through the southern border.

"San Diego Field Office Intelligence Unit (SDFO-FITU) assesses that individuals inspired by, or reacting to, the current Israel-Hamas conflict may attempt travel to or from the area of hostilities in the Middle East via circuitous transit across the Southwest border," an unclassified document from the office reads.

"Foreign fighters motivated by ideology or mercenary soldiers of fortune may attempt to obfuscate travel to or from the US to or from countries in the Middle East through Mexico."

Lora Ries, a former acting deputy chief of staff for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, told The Center Square that there is a real threat from illegal immigrants connected to Hamas, the terror group that killed more than 1,400 in Israel and took dozens of hostages this month.

"A terrorist attack facilitated or inspired by Hamas is absolutely a real threat in the United States," she said. "The visceral hatred toward Israel and America that's on display here at home and around the world should be a wakeup call. Since Biden took office, millions of inadmissible aliens have flooded through the open borders and into our country from over 160 countries around the world – including those harboring terrorists."

U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Mark E. Green, R-Tenn., raised similar

concerns, pointing to federal data showing the high number of terrorism-connected migrants caught at the both the northern and southern border.

"Every American should be concerned about the state of our homeland security under this administration," Green told The Center Square. "President [Joe] Biden and Secretary [Alejandro] Mayorkas' refusal to properly enforce the laws passed by Congress or provide our frontline law enforcement with the policies they need to accomplish their mission has empowered our nation's enemies."

According to federal data, 736 known or suspected terrorists were apprehended at U.S. border in fiscal year 2023 alone, the most ever recorded according to available data. In recent years, there have been thousands of these migrants on the Terrorist Screening Center list.

Those figures do not account for migrants who were undetected or evaded capture from border patrol agents.

"How many known or suspected terrorists have successfully evaded apprehension alongside the nearly 1.6 million known gotaways at the Southwest border?" Green said. "And how many more do we have to apprehend at the border before Secretary Mayorkas feels it warrants real action? Communities across the country are in danger because of Secretary Mayorkas' dereliction of duty. It is beyond unacceptable that Congress is still waiting for full transparency on these threats."

These terror-connected migrants are part of a flood of millions of illegal migrants since Biden took office.

The increased illegal immigration has put increasing pressure on the Biden administration, which announced earlier this month that it would restart construction on a small Texas portion of the southern border wall, a Trump administration project that was largely derided by Democrats.



Tips to pay off student loan debt faster

Make a Budget: Take a look at where you are spending your money and see where you can cut back in order to afford your student loan payment. Once you have a plan in place, follow it as best as you can and review it periodically for additional cost-cutting opportunities.

Increase Your Income: You may be able to add some additional cash-flow with a part-time job or side hustle, or you can consider a different job altogether that offers better pay.

Research Loan Forgiveness and Repayment Programs: These programs may help eliminate some or all of your student loan debt. Some professions, such as teachers, doctors, nurses and other medical professionals, qualify for unique forgiveness programs.

Check with Your Employer: Some

employers will offer perks to employees who further their education. Check and see if your employer offers any tuition reimbursement programs that could help you pay down your debt.

Make Your Payments On Time: Making on-time payments will help you avoid any unnecessary fees or additional interest charges. If you have some extra cash, you should prioritize paying down your most expensive debts and not necessarily your student loans.

Refinance Your Student Debt: If you have a good or excellent credit score, you could transfer some of your student debt to a card with a 0% intro APR to stop interest from accruing and pay off what you owe sooner. Just be sure to pay off your balance before the card's high regular interest rate takes effect.

Teachers, drivers are needed now

This week, Superintendent Maria Vazquez held a town hall meeting at Wekiva High School. This is just one of the 44 town hall meetings she is holding all across the district this school year, just as she did last year during her first 100 days in the role.

Monday night's meeting at Wekiva High School was well attended, in fact the Media Center was just about full. There were staff members and administrators from nearby schools, parents of students in the northwest part of Orange County, as well as cabinet level administrators to help answer individual questions.

Vazquez began the

Orange County School Board, District 7



Melissa Byrd

evening by conducting a thought exchange, which is like an online survey where the public was asked to share what they wanted to know more about. Then the participants were able to rate all the suggestions, and the topics were ranked by interest level of the group.

She then shared a slideshow with some key statistics about our school

district such as we are the eighth largest school district in the United States and the fourth largest in the state. We have 25,000 employees, 14,000 teachers, 210 schools, and almost 211,000 students. Also impressive was the fact that we have opened 65 new schools since 2002!

After discussing our stats, she dug into the questions and topics that the group collectively shared that were important to them earlier in the evening and the top two topics were, not surprisingly, the bus driver shortage and the teacher shortage.

She did not shy away

See BYRD Page 6A

This Week In God's Word

"Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture."
Psalm 37:3

Mema Says

Pay close attention to the details.

The Apopka Chief is published every Friday and entered as Periodicals, postage paid at Apopka Post Office, under the Act of Congress of March 23, 1879. The Apopka Chief newspaper is published by Foliage Enterprises, Inc., every Friday at 400 N. Park Avenue, Apopka, Fla., 32712-3417. An annual subscription is \$25 in Orange County and \$30 outside Orange County, Phone 407-886-2777. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Apopka Chief, PO Box 880, Apopka, Fla., 32704-0880.



See HAMAS Page 6A

Past events, good or not so good, are important to future growth

We never get tired of "what if." Sometimes we get so caught up in thinking of what might have been, our "today" seems irrelevant and we miss the opportunity to learn.

We all are teachers; it is what we teach that is as important, as whom we teach.

That is what makes daily lessons so important, and necessary. When we get wrapped up in things of yesteryear, we never consider the failures, the errors, or the interference that



Ike Hayden

might have been involved. The past is always seen in the best of scenarios and settings.

I went to one of my class reunions years ago and that "what if" girl-

friend ruined all my dreams of what might have been. I was so happy that my dreams of yesterday did not come true! BUT, the next time I turned around, I was thinking, once again, of "what if."

Someone asked me once "if I could start over, knowing what I know now, would I want to?" My knee jerk reaction was yes, but when I really pondered the question and even considered the painful experiences that I had endured, I had to say no.

You see, some of the most poignant lessons learned, and some of the best opportunities for teaching were when I was in the middle of a crisis over which I had no control.

Even in the worst of those times, someone received a blessing or some good out of it, and I would not want that taken away. I like to think, "it is my life, and I'll do as I please!" The truth of the matter is that I had nothing to do with putting my life together, and

my goal should be to honor those who did.

My mom and dad had such high hopes for me. My dad taught me integrity, honesty, and commitment. My mom taught me empathy, kindness, and love for others. Both my parents were unselfish to a fault. My dad would give the shirt off his back and mom would help him take it off. They taught me that everything that happens in our lives has meaning only if we learn something from it. Not to store it away just for

our knowledge, but to share it with others so that they may not experience the pain or suffering from making bad decisions. Also, that they may learn the joy from making the proper decisions.

So, I would not want to live my life over again and lose the lessons, or the blessings gained by the occurrences in my life for others, and myself. We see so much of "me first" attitude in today's young people

See HAYDEN Page 6A

Fire Prevention Month



Photo courtesy of Apopka Fire Department/Facebook

As a part of this year's Fire Prevention Month, Apopka firefighters have been visiting schools around the community to teach students about fire safety. On Thursday, October 19, the firefighters dedicated their morning to educating Dream Lake Elementary students on important fire safety topics. Fire Prevention Month is every October.

REGAL

Fri. October 27, 2023
thru
Sun. October 29, 2023

AFTER DEATH (PG-13)
12:50; 3:50; 6:50; 10:00
FIVE NIGHTS AT FREDDY'S (PG-13)
12:00; 12:30; 1:30; 2:00;
2:40; 3:20; 4:20; 4:50;
5:20; 6:00; 7:00; 7:30;
8:00; 8:40; 9:40; 10:10;
10:40

KILLERS OF THE FLOWER MOON (R)
12:10; 3:00; 7:20

TAYLOR SWIFT | THE ERAS TOUR (PG-13)
1:20; 6:00; 9:50
THE EXORCIST: BELIEVER (R) 12:20;
4:30; 7:40; 10:20

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FUNDRAISING YARD SALE: SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28, 9 A.M. 743 S. Central Avenue, Apopka

N.A.O.M.I. KIDS, a local non-profit organization, stands for Never Alone Overcoming Many Issues and the organization is passionate about everything it can do for families.

There is a fundraising yard sale on Saturday, October 29, beginning at 9 a.m. at 743 S. Central Ave., between 7th and 8th streets. There will be lots of brand new and gently used items. such as clothing, toys, appliances, bicycles, housewares, construction items, accessories and much more.

The organization came from a vision the founder had at the age of 12 to help children. Sometimes, members can help more than they put in writing.

Contact N.A.O.M.I. KIDS at 407-883-5585.

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FWC 5th accreditation has been announced for Law Enforcement

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Division of Law Enforcement is seeking its fifth accreditation and will host assessors from the accrediting body for Florida law enforcement agencies, the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation (CFA) Dec. 12-14. The assessment team will review the FWC Division of Law Enforcement's equipment, policies, procedures and facilities.

"Accreditation demonstrates our commitment to maintaining professional standards for the people of Florida and the protection of Florida's natural resources," said Col. Brian Smith, Director of the FWC Division of Law Enforcement. "I am proud of the professionalism shown in every aspect of our division and look forward to hosting our assessors."

The FWC Division of Law Enforcement has been an accredited law enforcement agency since achieving its initial accreditation from CFA in 2009.

To achieve this status, the FWC must prove compliance, uniformity and consistency with approximately

240 CFA accreditation standards. These standards reflect best practices critical to life, health, and safety issues and essential law enforcement requirements. To learn more about the accreditation the standards manual is available on the CFA website at FLaccreditation.org under the standards tab.

The CFA team will conduct assessments at several FWC Division of Law Enforcement field offices, evidence facilities and regional communications centers. Once the Commission's assessors complete their review, they report to the full Commission, which then determines reaccreditation status. Reaccreditation status is valid for three years.

As part of the assessment, agency members and the public are invited to offer comments to the assessment team.

Written comments regarding the reaccreditation of the FWC Division of Law Enforcement should be submitted to: CFA, P.O. Box 1489, Tallahassee, Florida, 32302, or email to flaccreditation@fdle.state.fl.us.

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PITYFitness cuts ribbon



The Apopka Area Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting ceremony for PITYFitness at the studio's location, 418 S. Park Ave., Apopka, on Wednesday, October 25. Chelsea Young (holding the scissors) and Rhiannon Young are the co-owners. PITYFitness (Prove It To Yourself Fitness) offers one-on-one personal training, morning group classes, macros coaching, program planning, mobility and stretching, and sports conditioning.

Wekiwa Springs Baptist Church

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PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

SMALL-SCALE FUTURE LAND USE AMENDMENT CITY OF APOPKA

NOTICE is hereby given pursuant to Secs. 163.3184 and 166.041(3) (c), Florida Statutes and the Apopka Code of Ordinance, Part III, Land Development Code, Article II, Section 2.4.7.B, that **CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON AND ALBERT MCKIMMIE** have made an application to the City of Apopka Planning Commission and the City Council for a **CHANGE IN THE FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATION FROM RURAL SETTLEMENT TO MIXED-USE FOR 20 +/- ACRES.** This application relates to the following described properties:

ORDINANCE NO. 3025

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF APOPKA, FLORIDA, AMENDING THE FUTURE LAND USE ELEMENT OF THE APOPKA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF THE CITY OF APOPKA; CHANGING THE FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATION FROM RURAL SETTLEMENT TO MIXED-USE FOR CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY GENERALLY LOCATED EAST OF GOLDEN GEM ROAD, WEST OF SR 429 AND SOUTH OF ISLE ROYAL PLACE, OWNED BY CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON AND ALBERT MCKIMMIE, COMPRISING 20 ACRES, MORE OR LESS, PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

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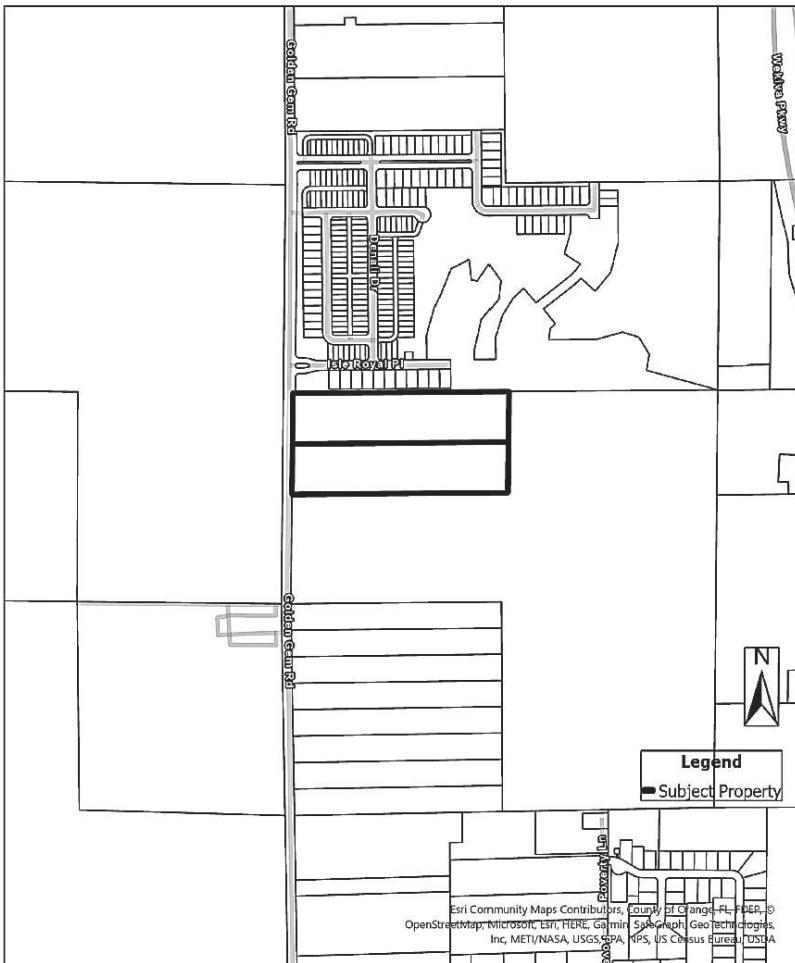
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Parcel Identification Numbers: 24-20-27-0000-00-108 and 24-20-27-0000-00-099
Contains: 20 +/- acres

NOTICE is given that a public hearing for Ordinance No. 3025 will be held by the **City of Apopka City Council** at its regularly scheduled meeting in the City Council Chambers of the Apopka City Hall, 120 E. Main Street, Apopka, Florida on **Wednesday, November 15, 2023 beginning at 7:00 P.M. AND Wednesday, December 6, 2023 beginning at 1:30 P.M.** or soon thereafter.

Affected parties and the public may appear at the above listed hearings to speak. The proposed Future Land Use Application can be inspected at the Apopka Community Development Department located at Apopka City Hall on weekdays between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. City Hall address shown below. Please be advised that, under State law, if you decide to appeal a decision made with respect to this matter, you will need a record of the proceedings and may need to ensure that a verbatim record is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), persons with disabilities needing assistance to participate in any of these proceedings should contact the City Clerk's Office at 120 East Main Street, Apopka FL 32703, Telephone: 407-703-1704, no less than 48 hours prior to the proceeding.

Apopka City Council
Apopka Planning Commission
Community Development Department

October 27, 2023
Publish: The Apopka Chief

175070

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CRA: One lot is considered for site of homeless resource center

Continued from page 1A

needs relating to site development.”

A single bid was submitted by Standard Investments & Holdings, LLC, which was presented to the City Council on October 19, 2022, and approved for negotiations.

The current concept for the Station Street Project envisions a multi-use development including affordable housing, downtown public parking, an extension of the Downtown Apopka Trail, and construction of approximately one acre of public event space, according to the city staff report.

In 2022, the city went through a request for proposal process to solicit development concepts for the property because all of the properties are located in the CRA. In compliance with Florida Statutes 163.380, the city must invite proposals from anyone interested in redeveloping or rehab-

ilitating CRA parcels before moving forward with any contractual agreement for disposition of the property.

Although appraisals were done in the past, new appraisals will be completed for all parcels to establish a value. For parcels targeted for affordable housing, those lots may be available for the CRA’s Residential Impact Fee Assistance Program.

207 E. Eighth Street

The lot located at 207 E. Eighth Street is comprised of one 0.11-acre lot and is valued at \$27,000 as of July 8, 2022, when the last appraisal took place.

Water is adjacent to the site, and sewer would need to be extended from S. Forest Ave. to the west.

The city has had discussions regarding this site being a possible location for the Apopka Resource Center, which would provide a hub for local government, local businesses, and faith-based organizations to coordinate

efforts in helping the needy of the community.

The Apopka Resource Center project is being spearheaded by the Next Step foundation, an extension of the First Baptist Church of Apopka’s weekly homeless ministry that leverages resources and helping hands of other churches and the general community to further assist the homeless.

East Eighth Street/South Highland Avenue

For the four lots totaling 1.55 acres located at the northeast corner of East Eighth Street and South Highland Avenue, the City Council approved publication of the notice of property disposal once the plat process has been completed. The four lots were last appraised on January 8, 2021 at \$169,000.

A plat and surveys were created to establish a 0.83-acre neighborhood park and four new single-family homes. It is intended that the neighborhood park

located to the rear (north) of the four lots will be funded in part from the CRA budget at \$105,000, according to the city staff report.

The Planning Commission and City Council will still need to approve the plat before any negotiated sale or conveyance could take place, with the City Council having the final say on whether any sale or conveyance could happen.

The city is looking to sell four lots for one affordable single-family home on each lot. The single-family home sites include a corner lot at 0.22 acres, or 80 feet by 120 feet; and three lots fronting East Eighth Street at 0.17 acres each, or 60 feet by 120 feet each.

The Apopka CRA is comprised of 644 acres that has a mix of residences, businesses, and historic properties. The CRA is bound on the south by Tenth and 11th Streets, Hawthorne Avenue to the west, Oak Street to the

north; and sections of multiple streets to the east including but not limited to

Highland Avenue, Monroe Avenue and Alabama Avenue.

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Hamas: The border crisis is costing states, municipalities billions of \$\$\$

Continued from page 2A

A group of Democratic state and local elected leaders sent a letter to the White House earlier this month calling on Biden to address the border crisis, which is costing states and municipalities billions of dollars to address.

The FBI maintains the Terrorist Screening Center, a multi-agency effort created after the 9/11 attacks to centralize one list of whom to watch across federal agencies.

When asked, the FBI gave few answers, deferring to the Department of Homeland Security. “Specific intelligence-related

criteria must be met for a person to be added to the TSC watchlist,” an FBI spokesperson told The Center Square.

A DHS spokesperson told The Center Square that the increased immigration from South America is a key cause for the increase in suspected terrorists but that the agency is focused on the problem.

They also said these encounters with suspected terrorists still represent a fraction of one percent of the overall encounters. In addition, sometimes family members or “known affiliates” of suspected terrorists could be counted on the watch list as well.

“As we learned on 9/11, it only takes a handful to destroy lives,” Ries, who now works with the Heritage Foundation, told The Center Square. “Meanwhile, Biden and his allies are burying their heads in the sand, refusing to secure our border or admit their progressive policies leave us open to attack.

Americans should go about their daily lives as usual but (they should) add a layer of vigilance given the global atmosphere, dangerous lack of immigration enforcement, and clear anti-American sentiment that has grown in the U.S. after years of demonization from the Left.”

Byrd: Applicants are needed now

Continued from page 2A

from the stark reality of both situations, and the news was not good.

The teacher shortage is being addressed as fervently as possible by the district, but the reality of the situation is that there are fewer people going into the education profession today than in years past. Many universities are closing their education colleges because of a lack of students wanting to enter the teaching profession.

We are working on partnerships with our local colleges to train our own employees who might only have a two-year degree but would like to pursue a teaching career so they can get their degree at a reduced cost. We are consistently holding job fairs and recruiting wherever we can. There are many other ideas that we are pursuing, as well.

The bigger problem is the bus driver shortage because there is no viable solution to this major problem for us and districts across the country.

Our transportation team is in contact with school districts across the nation frequently to brainstorm ideas to solve the problem. Many districts have had to discontinue of-

fering bus services to students because of the driver shortages. There are just not enough people interested in being bus drivers anymore, especially when the opportunity to drive for so many companies abound with better pay.

For example, Amazon offers drivers salaries over \$100,000. We also compete with theme parks here in Central Florida, and drivers are paid substantially more for those jobs as well since they are private companies.

We are aggressively trying our best with the resources we have to address the problem. For example, if a person does not have a commercial driver license, we will train to help them obtain one.

To improve the interest of applicants, we are offering up to \$12,800 in incentives for new first year bus drivers. Current OPCS school bus drivers can receive up to \$10,800 dollars in incentives, plus a retention bonus.

We have driver training classes starting every two weeks, regardless of how many new trainees we have so that we don’t lose them.

We are holding job fairs every two weeks but the applicants are just not there.

Vazquez was frank at

the meeting and was extremely honest with the community and shared that there is no solution in sight. We are looking at some alternative ideas such as parent carpooling apps and outside companies to contract with, but even those do not solve this massive problem.

Our current drivers are all making double runs in the mornings with our high schools. This means that some students have to be picked up earlier than normal, dropped off, and the driver goes back and picks up a second group of students.

It is the same in the afternoon except it means that our last group, middle school, has to stay at school later to wait for drivers to get back to pick them up after the first run. Some students are not getting picked up until 5:30 at our middle schools.

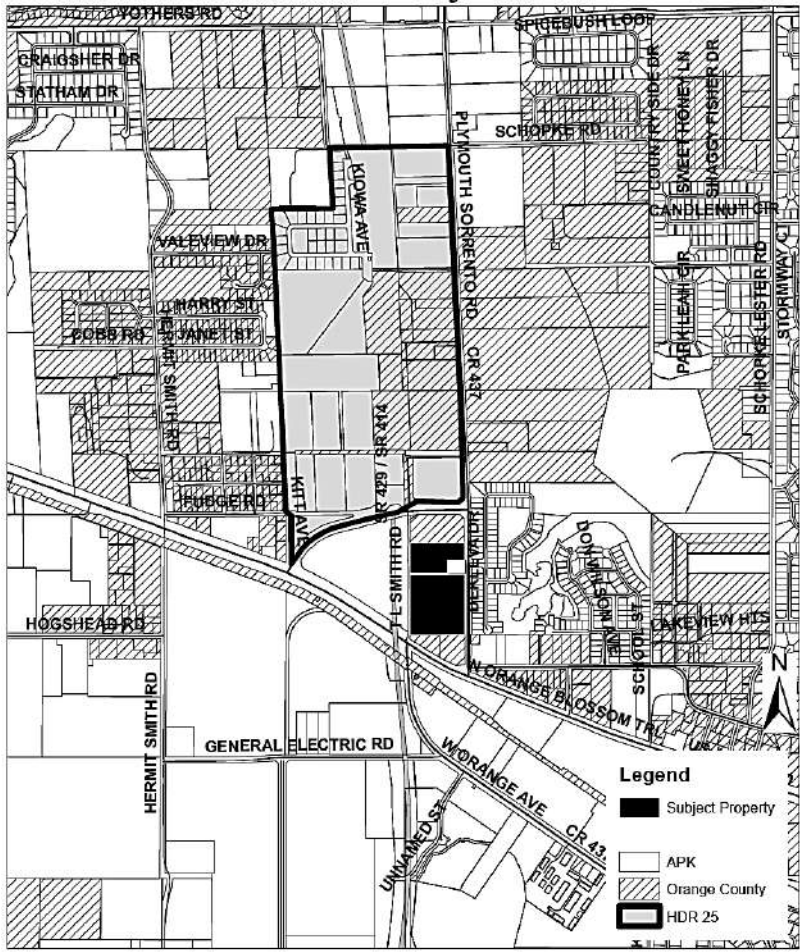
It is certainly a problem and one we wish had an easy solution. In the meantime, we will continue to recruit.

If you know of anyone that would be interested in driving a bus for our district, please have them contact me directly at melissa.byrd@ocps.net and I will put them in touch with our Chief of Staff.

CITY OF APOPKA PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE CHANGE OF ZONING

NOTICE is hereby given that **APPIAN ENGINEERING, LLC c/o LUKE CLASSON, P.E** has made an application, in accordance with Florida Statutes 163.3187(c) and the Apopka Code of Ordinances, Part III, Land Development Code, Article II, Section 2.4.7(B) to the City of Apopka Planning Commission, and City Council for a **REZONING OF PROPERTY**. This application relates to the following described property:

**ORDINANCE NO. 3038
AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF APOPKA, FLORIDA, CHANGING THE ZONING FROM C-C (COMMUNITY COMMERCIAL) DISTRICT AND T (TRANSITIONAL) DISTRICT TO PD (PLANNED DEVELOPMENT) DISTRICT, FOR CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY GENERALLY LOCATED WEST OF PLYMOUTH SORRENTO ROAD, NORTH OF U.S. 441, AND EAST OF SR 429; COMPRISING 13.04 ACRES MORE OR LESS, AND OWNED BY GARY D CHARLTON LIVING TRUST, PEGGY G CHARLTON LIVING TRUST 1/2 INT AND GARY D CHARLTON LIVING TRUST 1/2 INT; PROVIDING FOR DIRECTIONS TO THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, SEVERABILITY, CONFLICTS, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**



Parcel Identification Number(s): 06-21-28-7172-08-050 and 06-21-28-7172-08-040
Contains: 13.04 +/- Acres

Notice is given that the City of **Apopka Planning Commission** will hold a public hearing to consider Ordinance No. 3038 at its regularly scheduled meeting in the City Council Chambers of the Apopka City Hall, 120 E. Main Street, Apopka, Florida on **Tuesday, November 14, 2023 beginning at 5:30 P.M.**, or as soon thereafter as possible.

FURTHER NOTICE is given that a public hearing for Ordinance No. 2830 will be held by the **City of Apopka City Council** at its regularly scheduled meetings in the City Council Chambers of the Apopka City Hall, 120 E. Main Street, Apopka, Florida on **Wednesday, December 6, 2023, beginning at 1:30 P.M.**, AND **Wednesday, December 20, 2023** or as soon thereafter as possible.

Affected parties and the public may appear at the above listed hearings to speak. The proposed zoning ordinance and Master Plan can be inspected at the Apopka Community Development Department located at Apopka City Hall on weekdays between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. City Hall address shown below. Please be advised that, under State law, if you decide to appeal a decision made with respect to this matter, you will need a record of the proceedings and may need to ensure that a verbatim record is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), persons with disabilities needing assistance to participate in any of these proceedings should contact the City Clerk’s Office at 120 East Main Street, Apopka FL 32703, Telephone: 407-703-1704, no less than 48 hours prior to the proceeding.

Apopka City Council
Apopka Planning Commission
Community Development Department

October 27, 2023

Publish: The Apopka Chief

175071

Hayden: Unity will become strength

Continued from page 2A

ple, and my first impulse is to reach out to them with a “board of education to the seat of knowledge,” forgetting that the youth of today are but a mirror of what our nation has become.

They have learned well the lessons we have taught them. I look for common decency in today’s societal behavior, and speech, but it is getting harder and harder to find. We want our youth to be respectful of others, but do we show it in our daily teachings? Our police, firefighters, city officials, and others who have chosen a career of protecting our communities and our people must be wary of where they go, and their surroundings, because of the violence shown toward them. We see the witnesses of these travesties stand and take videos or photos instead of stepping in and trying to diffuse the situation.

Have we turned into

such cowards that we are not able to stand up for right? I know all the arguments; I have used them myself at various times, but does that exonerate me from guilt? Or, as I have felt, shamed me for lack of courage?

Our strength in America does not come from our weapons, does not come from our government, does not, nor will it ever, come from our elected officials, but it comes from the fact that we are all joined together as Americans. One strand of twine is weak and can be broken easily, but twenty strands of that same twine can bind a strongman when braided together as one line.

We are Americans, bound together as one by the Constitution of the United States of America. We need to quit whining about “what if” and start standing up for each other. If you do not agree with what is stated in our Constitution or in our Declara-

tion of Independence and you think your life is better with the government you have left to come here, then by all means, pack your ditty bag, and go back to where you came from. We do not need a different form of government; we just need to bring ours back to where it belongs, under the rule of “*We the People*.”

Our government may be derailed for a time, and the administration we have in power now may not have the best engineer on the line, but we know how to hire a new engineer, and an administration that can straighten the rails, put the train back on the right track, and get us back to where we belong.

I reiterate: If you do not like our government and the way it should be run, sing the Aussie’s song “Waltzing Matilda” as you pack your goodies and leave. You can do the “what if” thing somewhere else.

We are AMERICANS!

ALL ABOUT APOPKA

The Apopka Chief

Established 1923
(USPS 545-440)

The Apopka Chief is published every Friday and entered as Periodicals, postage paid at Apopka Post Office, under the Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. The Apopka Chief newspaper is published by Foliage Enterprises, Inc., every Friday at 400 North Park Avenue, Apopka, Fla., 32712-3417. An annual subscription is \$25 in Orange County and \$30 outside Orange County. Phone 407-886-2777. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Apopka Chief, P.O. Box 880, Apopka, Fla., 32704-0880.

The Apopka Chief is a consistent award-winning community weekly newspaper and a member of the Florida Press Association. The newspaper won the group’s award as its best newspaper in 1982, 1987, and 1988, the only three-time winner. Letters to the editor are welcome, but must be signed and include a daytime telephone number, address, or email address for verification. Management reserves the right to edit letters.

www.theapokkachief.com, news@theapokkachief.com



City of Apopka Telephone Numbers

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Mayor’s Office	407-703-1701
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Community Devel.	407-703-1712
Code Enforcement	407-703-1738
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Fire (non-emerg.).....	407-703-1756
Parks and Rec. Dept.	407-703-1741
Police Chief	407-703-1769
Police (non-emerg.).....	407-703-1771
Job Line	407-703-1743
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Street Maintenance	407-703-1731
Utility Billing	407-703-1727
Medical, fire emergency.....	911
The city of Apopka was chartered in 1882. It is located at 28°30 north latitude and is 150 feet above sea level. Its population is about 48,000 and its total area is more than 30 sq. mi. www.apopka.net	

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County Commission.....	407-836-7350
County Attorney	407-836-7320
Clerk of the Court.....	407-836-2065
Elections Supervisor.....	407-836-2070
Fire/Rescue	407-836-3111
Solid Waste	407-836-6601
Garbage Collection.....	407-703-1731
Health Dept.	407-836-2600
Hunting/Fishing Lic	888-347-4356
Parks and Rec. Dept.	407-836-6200
Property Appraiser	407-836-5044
Sheriff Administrative	407-254-7000
Non-Emerg. Complaint.....	407-836-4357
Utilities	407-836-5515
All other departments	407-836-3111
Medical, fire emergency.....	911
www.orangecountyfl.net	

Other Area Numbers of Note

U.S. Senators	
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Marco Rubio (Rep.).....	407-254-2573
U.S. Representative	
Daniel Webster (Dist. 11).....	352-241-9220
State Representatives	
Doug Bankson	407-476-6787
Carolina Amesty (Dist. 45).....	unknown
State Senators	
Geraldine Thompson (Dist.11)	407-297-2045
Orange County Commissioner	
Christine Moore	407-836-7350
Orange County Public Schools	
Pupil assignment.....	407-317-3233
Bus routes.....	407-317-3800
Superintendent.....	407-317-3200
School Board.....	407-317-3200
Miscellaneous	
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Museum of the Apopkans.....	407-703-1707
Chamber of Commerce.....	407-886-1441

Food: Loaves and Fishes serves over 300 clients each week

Continued from page 1A

dates for Thanksgiving are now (Monday-Thursday) 9 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Loaves and Fishes will be available

for last minute Thanksgiving donations on Friday, November 17, 9 a.m. - noon. Donations are taken in the back of the building at blue doors.

Drop off donation dates for Christmas are now (Monday-Thursday) 9 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. until December 14.

Loaves and Fishes is a

non-profit, non-denominational, Christian organization serving a nine-zip code area. It has been serving the community since 1984, currently serving over

300 qualified clients each week. The organization is supported only by donations from local churches, schools, businesses, organizations, and individuals;

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Visit loavesandfishes-apopka.com to donate online or learn more about the nonprofit.

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Animal companions give so much to humans, and part of the responsibility to care for them is helping them to stay healthy. The staff at **Park Avenue Animal Hospital** offers some helpful hints on ways to focus on your pet's well-being.

Remove dangerous household items

- Protect your animal friends by learning and thinking about common household items that can poison pets. Items that seem ordinary to you but that are harmful to pets include: Plants, medications, chemicals, human food, and household cleaners. And, if your pet eats everyday items lying around the house, a neglected sock or small toy can require emergency surgery if it doesn't pass.

Spend time with your companions - If you are rushing around without seemingly any time to even breathe, it's important to stop and sit down with your animal friends. You can sit quietly and listen to the world around you, gently stroking and loving on your pet, even if your friend has feathers or scales. Time spent together can benefit them and you. They'll know they're loved and can be prevented from becoming bored and feeling neglected, and your life will become so much richer and more meaningful.

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Park Avenue Animal Hospital is a full-service veterinary clinic providing a variety of services for dogs, cats, birds, rabbits, reptiles, and other exotic small animals. Ready to care for your beloved pet are Dr. Rubinstein, Dr. Turgai, Dr. Nelson, and Dr. Hinton. Not pictured are Dr. Dworek and Dr. Patty.

- An important part of helping your animal friends stay healthy is by offering quality food. Learn to read labels.

Schedule regular wellness checks

- Take your pet for regular wellness appointments. Scheduled veterinary care can spot potential health problems so you can manage any concern early. This includes dental issues and problems with kidneys and joints.

Park Avenue Animal Hospital is your partner in keeping your pet healthy. Since 2008, Park Avenue Animal Hospital has been providing a wide variety of services to keep your furry, four-legged friends in the best of health. Their experienced team treats each pet that comes into their facility with the utmost care. With cutting edge technology and the bedside manner of a small-town doctor, they're equipped to handle almost any ailment your pet may face.

Voted Best of Apopka Pet Care Facility since 2010, it's obvious that their personal

commitment to you is grounded in assuring your pet receives the finest in veterinary care by providing them with the best technology and diagnostic tools.

While dogs and cats are by far the most popular choice for most pet owners, the doctors at **Park Avenue Animal Hospital** have a special place in their hearts for all animals, furry, feathery, or scaly.

With more than 60 years of combined quality veterinary experience, the doctors have gone well beyond standard veterinary education and practice to further their knowledge of animal care to include: reptiles, rabbits, ferrets, birds, guinea pigs, and more. Whether it's an annual checkup or a critical emergency, they are prepared to handle any situation.

Fully equipped with diagnostic and surgical tools to meet practically any situation, **Park Avenue Animal Hospital** provides reasonably priced medical and surgical care without sacrificing quality, in a set-

ting designed to take the stress out of visiting your vet.

Routine examinations, vaccines, dentistry, and nutritional and behavioral advice are just some of the services provided by the doctors and staff in a beautiful office that is as comfortable as your own home.

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Both Websites have searchable capabilities.

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Wonderful weekend for the 2023 Fall Family Festival in the park



Apopka's Fall Family Festival took place Thursday, October 19, through Sunday, October 22, at Kit Land Nelson Park in Apopka. The annual event is organized by the Rotary Club of Apopka Foundation, the Fall Family Festival included carnival rides, a beer and wine garden, live music and vendors. The weather for this years festival was warm and clear.

