

Murals

Local artists and groups collaborate to paint new murals for Phillis Wheatley Elementary School. See page 12A.



God Bless America

Sports

APK girls basketball beat Osceola. See page 1B.



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SRO talks 'head in right direction,' police chief says

By Teresa Sargeant
 Apopka Chief Staff

Negotiating parties haven't come to an agreement yet over the ensuing school resource officers (SROs) contracts, but it may be going in the right direction, Apopka Police Chief Michael McKinley told the Apopka City Council at its Wednesday, January 15 meeting.

"We did meet with the all the cities and chiefs, and a couple of the city managers met with the (Orange County) school board yesterday (Tuesday, January 14)," McKinley told the City Council. "We had very constructive conversations. We didn't come to an agreement yet. I think we're headed in the right direction. We left them with a proposal that they are taking up with the (OCPS) superintendent to present to her. And I'm sure we'll see a counter-proposal. We haven't set another negotiation date. If we can resolve it in talks, we can maybe not have another one. But I think everybody's optimistic that we're going to be able to resolve this in the very near future."

The biggest debate in the negotiation was reim-

bursement.

When the police chiefs, municipalities, and OCPS officials met on Tuesday, there was a small language change added to the contract.

"This is what we asked to be put in the contract, that when the contract expires, that if we go into the next school year without a contract, then the previous amount will carry over until we have a contract," McKinley said. "Then that contract will be retro back to the beginning of that school year. That way, we're not sitting here without a contract that's covering everything until we can do a new contract."

On Tuesday, the negotiating parties also agreed to including language in the contracts that if anyone were to opt out of the SRO program, a six months' notice should be given so there would be time to replace an SRO, McKinley said.

Negotiations over the SRO programs in Orange County schools began last month. OCPS currently has a one-year contract with the law enforcement agencies in Apopka, Ocoee,

See CITY Page 3A



With a January 10 groundbreaking, the city marked start of construction of the Apopka Action Sports Park near the Fran Carlton Center on North Forest Avenue. Pictured (l to r) are Radley Williams, city Parks and Recreation director; Diane Velazquez, city commissioner; Nick Nesta, city commissioner; Suzanne Wheeler, Smooth Wheeler and Josh Wheeler, city residents; Bryan Nelson; Nadia Anderson, City commissioner; John Drago, Apopka Community Redevelopment Agency Board member; and Christine Moore, Orange County District 2 commissioner.

City breaks ground for its new skate park and pump track

By Teresa Sargeant
 Apopka Chief Staff

The city kicked off the construction of its new \$500,000 skate park and pump track with a groundbreaking ceremony on Friday, January 10, at the site of the new park, located just north of the Fran Carlton Center on North Forest Avenue in Apopka.

The new Apopka Action Sports Park is an

See PARK Page 11A



Mayor Bryan Nelson (l) and city parks and recreation director Radley Williams (r) unveil the renderings of the Apopka Action Sports Park at the groundbreaking ceremony.



A rendering of the new inclusive playground at the Northwest Recreation Complex, for which there will be a groundbreaking on Friday, January 24, on the south end of the complex between the baseball fields and Wolf Lake Middle School. Rendering by Rep Services, Inc.

Ground to break for new playground

There will be a groundbreaking for the new inclusive playground at the Northwest Recreation Complex on Friday, January 24, at 3:30 p.m., on the south end of the complex between the baseball fields and Wolf Lake Middle School. Parking for the ceremony will

See PLAYGROUND Page 3A

16th annual MLK Parade is Jan. 20

The 16th annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. parade will be held on Monday, January 20, beginning at 2 p.m., 519 South Central Avenue and ending at the John H. Bridges Community Center. It is organized by the South Apopka Ministerial Alliance.

Martin Luther King, Jr., whose original name is Michael King, Jr., was born January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia and died April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee. He was a Baptist minister and social activist who led the civil rights movement in the United States from the mid-1950s until his death by assassination in 1968.

His leadership was fundamental to that movement's success in ending the legal segregation of African Americans in the South and other parts of the United States. King rose to national prominence as head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which promoted non-violent tactics, such as the massive March on Washington (1963), to achieve civil rights.

He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

2024 continues with festival, city/VFW agreement

By Teresa Sargeant
 Apopka Chief Staff

Note: This is the second of a four-part series reviewing the news in Apopka in 2024 as written in the pages of The Apopka Chief. This week covers April, May, and June.

April

The Apopka City Council decided to table the vote on authorizing a renewed recreation facility use agreement with Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 10147, over the use of the Apopka Community Center. ... Elzbieta Weron of

DeLand, one of dozens of artists who will feature their work at the 62nd annual Apopka Art and Foliage Festival during the last weekend of April, referred to herself as a "late bloomer" in the photography world. ... The Apopka Historical Society hosted a special event in honor of Women's History Month featuring city of Apopka Commissioner Diane Velazquez and local artist Delia Miller at the Apopka Museum on Thursday, March 28. ... On Monday, April 1, Orange County's Tourist Development Tax Application Review Com-

mittee opened its application window for capital grants from \$2 million to \$15 million and will accept applications through April 30.

The Foliage Sertoma Club of Apopka honored Francina Boykin with the Service to Mankind Award, which recognizes an individual for civic efforts reflecting the club's motto of "service to mankind." ... At the April 3 Apopka City Council meeting, Mayor Bryan Nelson gives the Apopka Woman's Club a proclamation about the 62nd annual Apopka Art and Foliage Festi-

val. ... Kyle Becker has resigned as city commissioner of Seat 3 and vice mayor, citing the sale of his Apopka home and moving out of the city as the reason. As such, he will miss what would have been his last City Council meeting, scheduled for Wednesday, April 17. ... Forty-five schools in Orange County Public Schools, including Wolf Lake Elementary School in Apopka, earned the State Board of Education's Schools of Excellence designation for the 2022-23 school year.

On Wednesday, April 17, the Apopka City Council

voted unanimously to authorize the renewal of a recreation facility use agreement with Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 10147, over the use of the Apopka Community Center. ... Construction of Miller's Ale House is progressing on the corner of South McGee Avenue and U.S. Highway 441/Main Street. ... Apopka police are searching for a missing and endangered woman who hasn't returned home since she left it early this week. ... Thursday, April 11, ended week number

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This week

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

Apopka Event of the Week

VFW Post 10147, 519 S. Central Ave., at noon on Saturday, January 18, will hold its community service awards ceremony. Awardees are: Community Business, Teachers of the year for high school and elementary schools, student essays for Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen, Also honored are APD Officer, AFD Fireman and AFD Paramedic of the year.

Quotable

Ms. Boykin always had the desire to delve into legal and civic matters. It is without a doubt she's strictly a civic-minded individual, beginning with the civil rights issues of the 20th century.

Author shares historical knowledge of leaders in NW Orange County's growth

Opinion

The Apopka Chief

A weekly newspaper founded in 1923

Publisher Emeritus John Ricketson Mar. 5, 1940 - July 16, 2024

Publisher T. Jerrod Ricketson

Marketing Director Jackie Trefcer

Consultant Emeritus John Peery Mar. 28 1956 - Oct. 12, 2023

Reporters Teresa Sargeant Marshall Tempest Neal Fisher

General Mgr Emeritus Neoma Knox Feb. 12, 1929 - Sept. 18, 2021

Our position

Author shares knowledge of NW Orange County's growth

Our nation is honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on January 20, and Apopka will mark the occasion with a parade at 2 p.m. Monday. As we remember his dedication to achieving equality for all races, we are re-publishing an article about local individuals who shared their abilities to help fuel the successful growth of our area.

Excerpt from The Pennings of Perrine Slim

(Published February 26, 2010, in The Apopka Chief)

John T. Vereen of soul brother's heritage was nurtured in Orange and Seminole counties (Forest City) and is now retired in Plymouth at his home and citrus fruit processing area. John attended public schools locally, colleges in Florida and New York during the 1940s-1950s. Later in the 1950s, John became interested in citrus processing, initiating with the harvesting phase. During the 1960s, Vereen was publicized in several magazines as being the first person of his race to have accomplished so much in the processing arena pertaining to citrus. John harvested more citrus than his competitors (of his heritage) and had a thriving citrus juice business called "John-John" that lasted well into the 1990s. Also, John established a packinghouse processing plant that was located south of the current U.S. Highway 441 and Maitland Boulevard that was totally destroyed by fire. Nowadays, it is very interesting to chat with John as to the changes involved in citrus processing.

Francina Boykin, nurtured in Apopka, received primary and secondary education in Apopka and went on to receive a college degree. Ms. Boykin always had the desire to delve into legal and civic matters. It is without a doubt she's strictly a civic-minded individual, beginning with the civil rights issues of the 20th century. Although relatively young, she has played a significant role in arbitration for people of her heritage in areas pertaining to

civil rights, public health, neighborhood watch programs supervised sporting events at parks, public education, street maintenance, low-income housing accommodations, school zoning, and gang activities. Francina Boykin has penned numerous articles in several leading Central Florida and Jacksonville newspapers in recent years.

Nowadays, Ms. Boykin is constantly stopping at street corners for great lengths of time, conversing with youngsters about achievements, truancy, self-esteem, respect for others, dress code (boys with breeches below their buttocks; girls with too much body exposure) and offering concrete advice. Ms. Boykin has gained an outstanding level of respect and notoriety in the ghetto, and even in the upscale communities in Orange County for her high quality of standards and the need to assist others over the years of being the "people's advocate." Francina attributes her success to the likes of the illustrious principal of Apopka Memorial High School, Roger Williams in the 1960s and her grandfather, a civil rights activist and union organizer, in the 1940s.

Willie Lewis Freeman was favorably called "Mailman" or "Government" by all ethnic groups in the Apopka area for approximately 40 years after the mid-20th century, stemming from his employment with the United States Post Office, and most of all, his concern, care and dedication to mankind. Freeman, on numerous occasions, became involved in safety measures, social attributes and legal issues not relative to the post office. Slim often commends "Mailman" through our conversations for the knowledge that he has given to citizens of the entire Apopka mail delivery area. Without a doubt, he definitely knows 90 percent of the families by name in the area. Thanks, Willie Lewis Freeman.

Apopka has produced outstanding

See HISTORY Page 4A



Wheatley's art project is incredible

I've always said, great things happen when the community comes together for our schools. Well, recently this once again proved true at Phillis Wheatley Elementary School.

When a call was made for just one small art project, the community responded beyond expectations. The result was something far better and more transformative than anyone could have imagined.

It all started with our amazing partner, Shaunte Jemison of Re-Imagine Communities, a non-profit in the Apopka area with a

Orange County School Board, District 7



Melissa Byrd

strong emphasis on helping schools and students in our area.

Shaunte wanted to help transform Wheatley's media center and create a community art project that would inspire the children who walk through the doors each day. She

reached out to the wonderful principal of the school, Tabitha Brown, who was on board with the vision.

Principal Brown wanted something to brighten up the school and give her scholars a sense of pride. When students have pride in their school, it pays off in various ways, and most of all, helps build excitement for school and learning.

The idea at the time was to just get a simple mural painted. Little did they know that the community would come together and

See BYRD Page 4A

Septic to Sewer Program is explained

Florida's natural water resources, including the Wekiwa River and Wekiwa Springs, are vulnerable to human activity, which can generate excess phosphorus and nitrogen. These nutrients cause algae, which impairs the water quality, kills fish, and damages local ecosystems. Septic tanks have been identified as the source of 29 percent of nitrogen in the springs.

For those who are not aware, Orange County Utilities kicked off the Wekiwa Springs Septic to Sewer Program in the summer of 2021. The partnership between Orange County, the St. Johns River Water Management District, and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection is a

County Commissioner District 2



Christine Moore

multiyear, multiphase effort to convert almost 2,000 homes from septic tanks to an Orange County central sewer system.

The current Wekiwa and Rock Springs Basin Management Action Plan mandates that, within the Priority Focus Area, properties smaller than one acre with conventional septic systems must either connect to the sewer system or

upgrade to enhanced nitrogen-reducing septic systems. This requirement applies to existing systems that will not be connected to sewer within the next five years. The timelines and procedures for enforcement will be established by the state.

Orange County Government has recently released a new website for those located in the Wekiwa Springs Septic to Sewer Program. This website is a great resource for those wanting to know where they are in the process, and what they should expect during construction.

The website offers maps of each phase of our

See MOORE Page 4A

This Week In God's Word

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Mark 11:24

Mema Says

Be yourself, warts and all.

Even though written about the past, these same conditions still exist

The older I get, the more understanding I have about my lack of knowledge. It was told to me, "The older you get the more wisdom you gain." Somewhere I must have lost my way, as I do not feel any wiser, just older! I am not complaining though, it beats the alternative. Some of my youthful exuberance has led me into many learning experiences that almost have to be learned by "hands on."

I tell my children that a college degree costs a lot



Ike Hayden

of money, and although we learn a lot faster through the school of hard knocks, the cost requires flesh more than money. Sometimes wisdom is evident by the scars that are carried by a person, and yet

there are times when scars are there because the lesson was not fully learned the first time. The secret is, never stop trying. When the trial gets so hard you cannot see your way out, I like the advice given by Tom T. Hall. He said, "Knuckle down, buckle down, do it, do it, do it!" Remember the Grand Canyon started because of a small stream that persevered.

Our nation is in turmoil, and it seems that every effort we make toward sanity seems futile. When

I compare what we are experiencing today with what our Constitution guarantees us as citizens of the greatest nation of the world, I see a vast discrepancy.

For instance, the preamble of our Constitution states: "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity,

do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Our "more perfect Union" is to be established by "We the People." That means all of us, not a chosen few. That Union is to be formed for the securing of the rights given to us by our Creator; not given by the Union. The government today is dictating to us what rights we have, not defending them. This administration has taken away or distorted our rights to the point our nation al-

most resembles a Socialist/Marxist regime. Our "common defense" is slowly being bastardized by making it a social experiment, not a fighting, protecting military.

Nationally, our police forces have been made to second-guess every move they make to the detriment of their life or limb. They have been ridiculed, harassed by those who have an ideology that does away with police presence. All

See HAYDEN Page 4A

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.



Playground: Facility to include accessible pathways, sensory garden

Continued from page 1A

Gate 1.

The new inclusive playground is being funded with the city's recreation impact fees along with a donation by Unlimited Capabilities for \$110,000; \$100,000 of that total is being donated by one of the organization's long-time funding partners, the Hall-

day Foundation. "The city is excited to build this playground which will provide an inclusive environment for children of all abilities to play and grow together. It will be a great amenity for our families and the community as a whole," said Mayor Bryan Nelson in a press release.

The new inclusive

playground, designed with input from community partners, the Apopka Parks and Recreation Department, and REP Services, Inc. will include features such as a Zip-Krooz, Go-Rounds, multiple styles of swings, accessible pathways to the various structures, a sensory garden, and more.

Plans for a new exit-roadway, additional park-

ing, and sidewalks to service the playground are also in the final stages of planning.

Unlimited Capabilities is a local non-profit organization that strives to "provide members of our community with special needs or disabilities opportunities that foster independence and community connection by offering recreational ac-

tivities, scholarships, and sponsorships," according to the group's website.

Rep Services, Inc., "a family-owned business dedicated to enhancing communities through thoughtful design and superior outdoor spaces," according to the group's web-

site, was chosen to design and build the new inclusive playground.

Many of Rep Services' designs and projects can be found throughout Central Florida, from Sanford and Lake Mary, to Orlando and Kissimmee.

City: All SROs are still in Apopkas schools

Continued from page 1A

Winter Garden, Winter Park, and Windermere, which secures SROs on campuses for the 2024-25 school year in compliance with the Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act, a bill that the Florida Legislature passed on February 14, 2018, after the shooting at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. The act aims to improve school safety and security.

Throughout the negotiations, the city of Apopka never removed any SROs from any of the schools, McKinley confirmed. In 2018, Apopka was the first city in Orange County to

put SROs in every one of its schools based on the Marjorie Stoneman Douglas Act.

The district has a three-year contract with the remaining four agencies: Orange County Sheriff's Office, Orlando Police Department, Maitland Police Department, and Eatonville Police Department.

The Orange County School Board conducted a December 10, 2024, work session to discuss the possible use of school guardians on campuses the five municipalities. The school board continued discussions on Tuesday, January 14.

If an agreement cannot be reached, the Guardian Program is the only option

allowed by Florida law to provide the added security to school campuses, according to OCPS in a news release from early December.

For the current school year, OCPS offered all municipalities a 20 percent increase from last year's reimbursement rate and proposed a \$75,000 rate for the 2026-27 year — a 25 percent increase from the 2023-24 year, according to an email OCPS sent out to district families on Tuesday, December 17. The district-proposed SRO reimbursement increase far exceeded the 11 percent salary increase given to OCPS teachers and support staff over the last two years.

Four of the nine law

enforcement partners have agreed to a three-year contract, but the five listed municipalities have not agreed to a contract beyond the current school year, according to a December 2024 OCPS email.

The SRO negotiations could impact the following Apopka schools: Apopka High, Apopka Memorial and Wolf Lake middle schools, Kelly Park School, Dream Lake, Apopka, Lakeville, Rock Springs, and Wolf Lake elementary schools.

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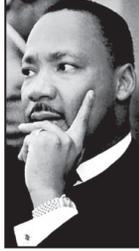
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History: Slim shared more of his appreciation and respect in 2011

Continued from page 2A

ing law enforcement officers that persons of Slim's era would certainly have known, regardless of ethnicity, for the cities of Apopka, Miami, and New York, state of New York and a Federal U.S. Marshal, namely, H.D. Miley, Fred Risener, J.S. Parrish, Henry Glover, Norman Betts, L.G. Nolle, George Fiall, Herman "Doc" McQueen and Earl Mott, Jr.

Previously, Slim recognized that so much information pertaining to his black achievements would have to wait until the year 2011 to include many persons of our younger generation that should be written about.

Slim wants to thank numer-

ous reputable white and black individuals, who made time and effort to supply Slim's gray matter with such valuable information regarding Apopka's past and present history. Oh, yes! The Honorable Mayor John H. Land of Apopka, considered the "dean" of mayors throughout this good ole U.S.A., winning his 19th term as mayor, shared invaluable knowledge. Mrs. Annie Belle D. Gilliam, whom Slim calls the "Southern Belle," was reared in the area, thus obtaining a substantial wealth of knowledge through businesses (grocery, citrus grove management) and old timers' oral conversations pertaining to people and incidents occurring in the 20th and 21st century

M. Gladden, Jr., longtime en-

trepreneur (grocery, citrus grove, laundromat) lived more than 55 consecutive years below the TO&A Railroad tracks. Last, but not least, Ms. Mildred A. Board was the originator and former columnist for "Bits 'n' Tips" in *The Apopka Chief* weekly newspaper.

They are definitely some of those individuals aforementioned Slim credits with an enormous ap-

preciation and respect for their care, concern and knowledge of Northwest Orange County (Clarcana, Piedmont, Lakeville, Apopka, Plymouth, Tangerine, Zellwood and Rock Springs). In 2011, folks, Slim will see yah!

Slim's book, The Pennings of Perrine Slim, is sold in the Museum of Apokans at 122 E. 5th Street, Apopka 32703.

Byrd: Five artists create graphics

Continued from page 2A

expand that vision.

Shaunte then reached out to the Creative Hub of Apopka, a non-profit art studio in Apopka that allows community members to foster their creativity in a warm setting. She also reached out to Delia Miller, a local Apopka artist who has painted beautiful community artwork around town.

They leveraged their resources and connected with another community member representing Apopka, Murals and Downtown Barbers Apopka, to issue a call to action. And, the community artists answered the call! Five, yes five, local artists joined in

to help.

Each of the five artists poured their heart into creating something truly special, transforming not just the media center, but several spaces within the school into works of art.

Delia Miller took on the main stairwell, designing a stunning feature wall with the school's panther mascot.

This gorgeous wall quickly became a centerpiece of pride when the students returned. Several other spaces were just as amazing including an inspiring wall mural in the gym. And they are not done yet. There are more murals to come!

Shaunte said it best, "What these artists accom-

plished wasn't just painting walls - they created a legacy. Their work not only reimagined the physical space but also uplifted the spirit and morale of the entire school community. Now Phillis Wheatley's students have something beautiful and inspiring they can cherish for years to come."

Most important to me is the message it sends to these students. A message of hope, that they are loved by their community. There really is no other message more important for our young people.

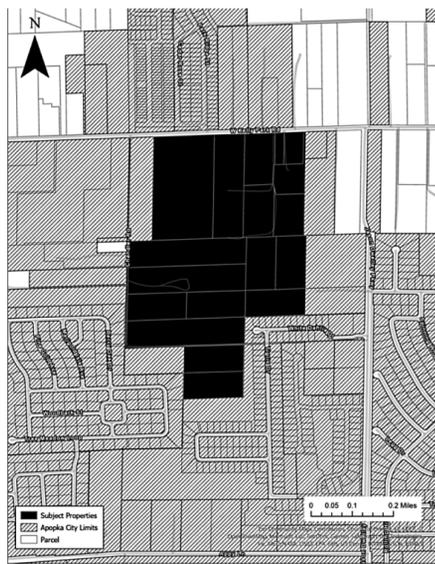
Thank you to our community, to Shaunte, and to all of these artists who came together to show these students just how loved they are!

CITY OF APOPKA PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE CHANGE OF ZONING

NOTICE is hereby given pursuant to Sec. 166.041(3)(a), Florida Statutes and the Apopka Code of Ordinances, Part III, Land Development Code, Article II, Section 2.4.7.B, that **Jonathan Huels, Esq.** has made application relating to the following described property.

ORDINANCE NO. 3093

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF APOPKA, FLORIDA, CHANGING THE ZONING FROM COUNTY A-1 (CITRUS RURAL DISTRICT), COUNTY A-2 (FARMLAND RURAL DISTRICT), CITY T (TRANSITIONAL), AND RESIDENTIAL SINGLE-FAMILY ESTATE (RSF-1A) TO KPI-MU (KELLY PARK INTERCHANGE MIXED USE) WITH AN ASSIGNMENT OF NEIGHBORHOOD OVERLAY, FOR CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY GENERALLY LOCATED SOUTH OF W. KELLY PARK ROAD AND EAST OF CHANDLER ROAD; OWNED BY KELLY PARK ROAD PROPERTY, LLC; COMPRISING 117.16 ACRES, MORE OR LESS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY, CONFLICTS, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.



Parcel Identification Number(s): 18-20-28-0000-00-132, 18-20-28-0000-00-031, 18-20-28-0000-00-105, 18-20-28-0000-00-050, 18-20-28-0000-00-049, 18-20-28-0000-00-061, 18-20-28-0000-00-048, 18-20-28-0000-00-052, 18-20-28-0000-00-106, 18-20-28-0000-00-035, 18-20-28-0000-00-034, 18-20-28-0000-00-032, 18-20-28-0000-00-033, 18-20-28-0000-00-037, 18-20-28-0000-00-051, 18-20-28-0000-00-080, 18-20-28-0000-00-119, 18-20-28-0000-00-046, 18-20-28-0000-00-047

Contains: 117.16 +/- acres

Notice is given that the **City of Apopka Planning Commission** will hold a public hearing at its regularly scheduled meeting in the City Council Chambers of the Apopka City Hall, 120 E. Main Street, Apopka, Florida on **Tuesday, February 11, 2025 beginning at 5:30 P.M.**, or as soon thereafter as possible.

FURTHER NOTICE is given that a public hearing 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, February 19, 2025 beginning at 7:00 P.M. AND Wednesday, March 5, 2025 at 1:30 P.M.**

Affected parties and the public may appear at the above listed hearings to speak. The proposed Rezoning 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, Florida 32703, Telephone: 407-703-1704, no less than 48 hours prior to the proceeding.

Apopka City Council
Apopka Planning Commission
Community Development Department

January 17, 2025

Publish: The Apopka Chief

177840

Moore: Phases are near completion

Continued from page 2A

Wekiwa Springs Septic to Sewer Program. The project has seven phases with some completed, and others nearing completion. On the website you will find:

- Construction status of each phase
- General project information answered in an

easy-to-use FAQ format

- What to do if you have a broken irrigation pipe or sprinkler head, landscape/hardscape damage, or plumbing issues as a result of construction
- Answers on how to pay for your portion of the conversion
- Contact names, numbers, and email addresses

for project leaders

The website is a helpful tool for those wanting to learn more about or if there are questions regarding the Wekiwa Springs Septic to Sewer project. You may visit the web page here: Septic 2 Sewer, or feel free to contact my office at 407.836.5850 as well, if you have any questions.

Hayden: Americans stand together

Continued from page 2A

policemen and all first responders need to know we support them, and we do not want to live in a community without them. I have been pleasantly surprised to see an individual jump in to help protect an Officer of the Law when that officer was being overpowered by a criminal.

Where are the men that used to be the protectors of justice?

Have we given up the privilege of being the daddy (a little girl's first love, and a boy's first hero), the provider, the family uniter, and the example of leadership for daily living?

It is time to promote the General Welfare by standing up to those who will disparage policemen and first responders and then we will insure domestic tranquility." Let all of us be lovers of the "Blessings of Liberty to ourselves

and our posterity." Love is not the tingling that comes from an emotional encounter, but a solid, unconditional commitment that is a choice we make. Once made, that commitment may waiver, but it should never fail.

Are emotions involved with a commitment? Ask me that when I see "Old Glory" being raised to the "Star Spangled Banner" and the tears start flowing when I think of the men and women who have sacrificed their lives in defense of what that banner stands for.

Is our love of nation being tried? You bet it is! Look at today's headlines and listen to the newscasts that promote progressive ideals and woke attitudes that will bring our nation to its knees.

We must be ready to stand in the gap and not back down when we are faced with those forces.

The Marine motto, "Semper Fidelis" (Always Faithful), should be the beat of our hearts. Our national motto, "In GOD we trust" should sustain us when we feel we cannot do this by ourselves. As I said in the beginning, it is not the "flash in the pan" that makes a difference, but the one who, when being tested, holds his or her head up and stands solid in the freedoms given to us by our Creator.

Keep on keepin' on. Start with your neighbors. Let them know you are concerned for them and you are willing to defend them and your neighborhood.

Race or different nationalities should have nothing to do with our decisions if we stand together as Americans, blessed to be together in the greatest nation the world has ever experienced, the United States of America.

Got EVENTS? PUBLICIZE THEM...

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Call **The Apopka Chief** at 407-886-2777,
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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

City Hall	407-703-1700
Mayor's Office	407-703-1701
City Administrator	407-703-1649
City Clerk	407-703-1704
Community Devel.	407-703-1712
Code Enforcement	407-703-1738
Finance Dept.	407-703-1725
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
Solid Waste Collect.	407-703-1731
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

Orange County Telephone Numbers

Animal Services	407-836-3111
Auto/Boat Tags	850-617-2000
Building Dept.	407-836-8550
County Mayor	407-836-7370
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	
Rick Scott (Rep.)	202-224-5274
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	
The Apopka Chief	407-886-2777
Museum of the Apokans	407-703-1707
Chamber of Commerce	407-886-1441

Couples can marry in group ceremony on Valentine's Day

The Orange County Clerk of Courts office invites families to join the office and other couples to say their vows in the Valentine's Day group wedding ceremony.

The event will take place Friday, February 14, on the courtyard steps of Orange County Courthouse, 425 North Orange Ave., Orlando.

Participation in the group event costs \$70, which includes a commemorative certificate, wedding photos, and a special gift.

Participants will still need to pay the required fee for the marriage license in addition to the \$70 pack-

age fee. To participate, a couple must first obtain their marriage license prior to the event. Getting a marriage license can be done on the Marriage page of MyOr-

angeClerk.com. After obtaining their marriage license, the couple can visit shorturl.at/E71-Hh to register for the Valentine's Day group wedding ceremony.

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3:10; 6:20; 9:20
MOANA 2 (PG) 12:30;
3:50; 6:40; 10:30
DEN OF THIEVES 2:
PANTERA (R) 12:40;
3:30; 6:50; 9:40
SONIC THE
HEDGEHOG 3 (PG)
12:50; 3:40; 6:30; 9:30
ONE OF THEM
DAYS (R) 1:00; 4:00;
7:10; 10:20
WOLF MAN (R) 1:10;
4:10; 7:00; 9:50
MUFASA: THE LION
KING (PG) 1:20; 4:20;
7:20; 10:10
NOSFERATU (R) 1:30;
4:30; 7:30; 10:00

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The Apopka Chief



California's burning! Newsom's Fiddling!

When my husband left the Marine Corps, we moved from Hawaii to Los Angeles where his family lived. We were there for a little more than ten years before moving to Colorado.

I really loved California, and I have a mixed bag of memories from those years. A couple of the things I remember very well are the Santa Ana winds and brush fires/wildfires. They're different from anything I've ever experienced.

I always thought of Santa Ana winds as being Otherworldly, perhaps influenced by the fact that they're also called "Devil Winds." They're among the world's most famous winds; strong, dry, intense winds from inland desert regions toward the coast. Typically, they happen in fall and winter, reaching their peak between September and March, and occur 10 to 25 times a year. Gusts often exceed 60 miles per hour, but speeds up to 100 mph have been recorded. The Santa Ana's, however, bring extremely low humidity, often below 10 percent. (I don't know about other Floridians, but, personally, 10 percent humidity would feel like I'd died and gone to heaven! Just kidding.) The downside, of course, is that the low humidity dries out vegetation and increases the risk of wildfires, which California is now experiencing. Again.

What's amazing is that this has happened every year for as long as I can remember, and it's always the same ... first come the "brush" fires, which grow into monsters, devouring everything in their paths, destroying lives, homes, businesses, wildlife, and more.

The 2025 Pacific Palisades Fire burned down over 2,000 structures, and it was the worst in the history of Los Angeles. Devastation and Heartbreak. Again, year after year. Unnecessary!

Suppose, every year you had a "Grease Fire" in your home. Every year! Yet, year after year, after year, you allowed all the grease

in your kitchen, for whatever reason, to accumulate ... until you had another grease fire. Now, how many years would it take you to connect the dots between the accumulation of grease in your kitchen and your ongoing grease fires?

I'm not an expert on the subject of wildfire prevention, but here's what they say, from Newsweek: "As wildfires continue to burn out of control across Los Angeles, questions have turned to why and how California authorities allowed the perfect conditions — arid, uncleared forests, hillsides and brush — to proliferate during an already dangerous fire season made worse by a Santa Ana wind event that hits the area with relative frequency. Why it matters: Well, before those dangerous conditions aligned and sparked the massive blazes that tore through some of L.A.'s most affluent neighborhoods this week, the region was already a tinderbox due, in part, to a lack of prescribed fires. Also known as controlled burns, those are fires intentionally set by forest managers to reduce hazardous fuels like brush, dead trees and other highly flammable materials. The main benefit of prescribed fires is to "reduce the risk of unwanted wildfires in the future," according to the Forest Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The reason California hasn't conducted more of these controlled burnings comes down to existing environmental laws in the U.S. that have posed bureaucratic obstacles to prescribed fires. It often takes years for proposals to go through reviews before any controlled burning can actually take place." Tahra Jirari, the director of economic analysis at the tech-aligned Chamber of Progress, told Newsweek, "that while there are several factors that could have mitigated the fires in Los Angeles, if prescribed fires have been conducted at the rate they should have, the damage would have been lessened."

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A Dream, A Movement, An Inspiration to the World Martin Luther King Jr.

'I Have a Dream' By *The Rev. MARTIN LUTHER KING Jr.*, August 28, 1963

I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose

symbolic shadow we stand, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering in-

justice. It came as a joyous day-break to end the long night of captivity.

But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. So we have come here today to dramatize an appalling condition.

In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults

of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check - a check that will give us, upon demand, the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment and to underestimate the determination of the Negro. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into

the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.

We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we

are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that, one day, this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that, one day, on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood.

Continued on page 7A

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As we commemorate the legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., let's remember:

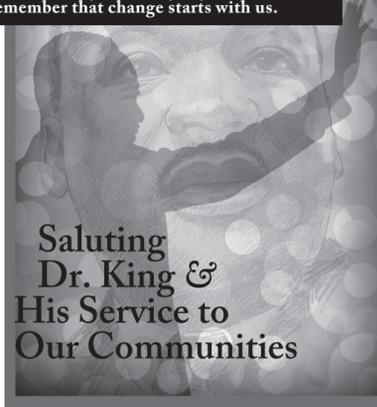
"Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'" -MLK



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We can all honor and uphold Dr. King's legacy through community service. On MLK Day and every day, let us all remember that change starts with us.



Saluting Dr. King & His Service to Our Communities

A tireless advocate for civil rights, Martin Luther King, Jr. served as an inspiration and an agent of change for our country and the entire world with his dedication to achieving equality for all people through nonviolent protest. We honor his dedication, his vision, his contributions and his legacy, as he continues to inspire new generations with words and actions.



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A Dream, A Movement
An Inspiration To The World

As we remember Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his contributions to our country, we are both humbled and inspired by his vision, courage, commitment and hard work. Together, let's honor and uphold his message of equal opportunity and service to our communities in our thoughts, our words and our actions.

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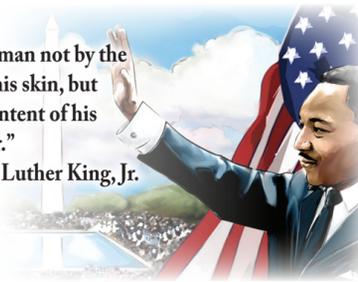



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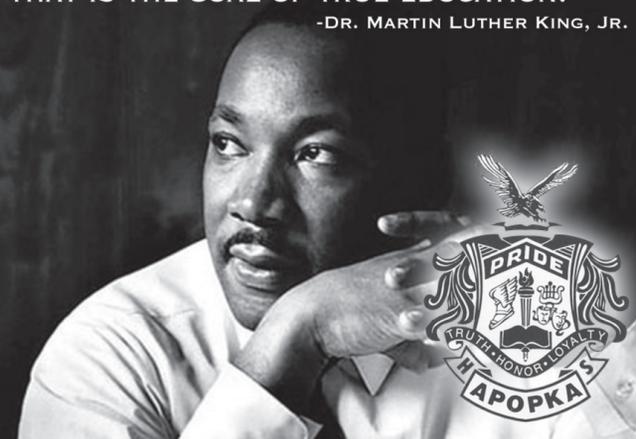
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-DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.




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Honoring Martin Luther King Jr.

Continued from page 7A

I have a dream that, one day, even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today. I have a dream that, one day, the state of Alabama, whose governor's lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today. I have a dream that, one day, every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to

struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring."

And if America is to be a great nation this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New

York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado!

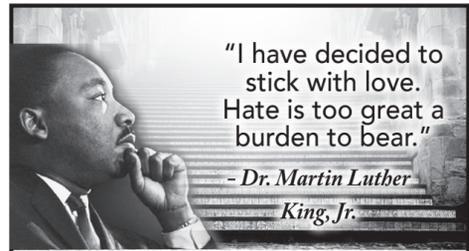
Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California!

But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia!

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee!

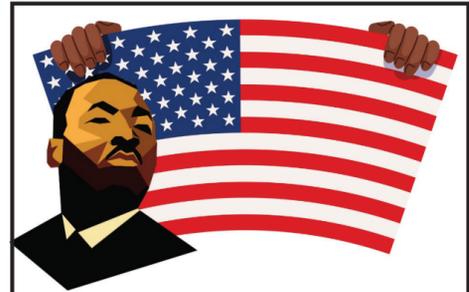
Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"



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-MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.



"Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives." ~ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

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As we celebrate the birthday of a civil rights leader, we also celebrate the strides we've made toward achieving his dream of freedom and equality for all Americans, regardless of color or creed. On Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, let's take a moment to honor his memory and make a pledge to uphold his message of nonviolence, love, tolerance, reconciliation and service to humanity.



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Review: Nesta, Anderson take oath of office for City Council

Continued from page 1A

seven of the 2024 Apopka Citizens Police Academy. ... At its April 9 meeting, the Apopka Planning Commission recommended approval of the follow-

ing: a special exception for a Hogshhead Road property intended to be used as temporary outdoor storage, and recommended approval for plats at Crossroads at Kelly Park, and at the Mid-Florida South Logistics indus-

trial park. ... After a hiatus of a couple years, the Crazy Hats are back at the 62nd annual Apopka Art and Foliage Festival.

Wreaths Across America recently visited the community with its mobile education exhibit as part of its national tour. The tour is designed to raise awareness about Wreaths Across America's mission of remembering the fallen, honoring those who served in the military, and teaching the next generation the value of freedom. ... The Lake Apopka Natural Gas District Board of Directors unanimously approved three ordinances about an energy choice initiative, giving homeowners the freedom to choose their most preferred energy

source. ... April is Autism Acceptance Month. During the Wednesday, April 17, Apopka City Council meeting a proclamation was read honoring and recognizing Autism Acceptance Month. ... The Orange County School Board approved a resolution ordering a referendum election for this November's ballot to continue the half-cent sales tax. ... A driver who was reported missing and operating a stolen vehicle at the time of a vehicle crash in Apopka died from sustained injuries. ... The city of Apopka received the results of its forensic audit, which was presented at the Wednesday, April 17, City Council meeting. ... On Saturday, April 20, the People of Wekiwa Springs

hosted the free community event Pancake Palooza at Wekiwa Springs Baptist Church.

May

The Apopka City Council voted on Wednesday, May 1, to table the appointment of a candidate as the new city administrator to the next meeting on May 15 so one of the city commissioners could interview the candidate. ... Newly elected Nadia L. Anderson and re-elected incumbent Nick Nesta were sworn in as city commissioners in the Tuesday, April 30, Oath of Office Ceremony in the Apopka City Hall council chambers. ... The 62nd Apopka Art and Foliage Festival showcased the work of juried artisans and crafters, and top foliage growers. The event was held at Kit Land Nelson Park on Saturday, April 27, and Sunday, April 28. ... The Orange County District 2 town hall meeting for Orange Code took place on Monday, April 29, at Zellwood Elementary School in Zellwood, one of several recent town halls around the county to keep the public engaged in the county's revision of its land development code. ... As the Hilton Garden Inn and the Highland Manor await new owners, Steve Gunter, whose company Events by Dubsread runs the Manor,

is reassuring clients that the popular event venue will continue its operations uninterrupted.

The Apopka Area Chamber of Commerce has retained an attorney in its fight to keep its office building, located at 180 E. Main St., as well as requesting a new 10-year lease agreement with 10-year renewal terms. ... An airplane made an emergency landing 2.5 miles southeast of Apopka-Orlando Airport with no reported injuries of the two passengers that were on-board, according to Apopka police. ... Between 350 and 400 people attended this year's Apopka Mayor's Prayer Breakfast, which coincided with National Day of Prayer that falls on the first Thursday of May.

The Apopka City Council voted to hire Jacob Smith as the new city administrator at the Wednesday, May 15, meeting at Apopka City Hall. ... Operation Best Foot Forward conducted its latest quarterly safety enforcement from April 30 to May 10, with 18 law enforcement agencies across six counties, issuing 488 warnings and citations to drivers that failed to yield to pedestrians. ... On Tuesday, May 14, the Apopka Planning Commission voted 5-1 to recommend approval of an ordinance for

See REVIEW Page 10A

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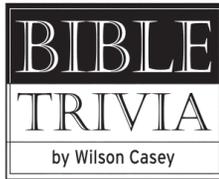
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Nebuchadnezzar sees men walking in the fiery furnace

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 3. Who was stoned to death for preaching that Jesus was the Savior? Stephen, Joel, Asa, Malachi
 4. How many men did Nebuchadnezzar see walk-



ing in the fiery furnace? 2, 4, 20, 40
 5. According to Luke 2:4, what village was known as "The City of David"? Nimrod, Antioch, Bethlehem,

Babylon
 6. From the Bible, who could be called "Mr. Patience"? Naaman, Jairus, Philippi, Job
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Inscrutability

"The inscrutable wisdom through which we exist is not less worthy of veneration in respect to what it denies us than in respect to what it has granted." -Immanuel Kant
 The above quote from Kant highlights an important facet of our existence, i.e., while it is impossible to know with certainty why we exist, or why anything exists, the cosmos is intelligible. We can measure and understand the cause and effects of phenomena. The character trait of inscrutability is an important one in many eastern Religions. Sages and saints often speak in parables or allegorically, saying just enough to pique our interest, but not explicitly explaining everything in detail. This is not so that they might appear wise, but so that everyone may interpret and draw their own conclusions from what they say. In this way, a pithy aphorism truly becomes one's own wisdom.

Philosophers have a habit of over-explaining. Sages and saints will often say very little and leave it to the listener to make their own truths. But there is another, and perhaps deeper reason to be inscrutable, and that is because God's ways are inscrutable, and indeed unfathomable. Why is there something rather than nothing? Who can say? (Perhaps it is because God is love and love always wants to share; creation is God's way to share Himself.) Why is there evil in the world? Who knows? All the great truths of religion, and indeed existence itself, are inscrutable? We can formulate reasonable questions, questions that mean something, but there are no definitive answers, and in the end, we just have to say "We don't know." And that is why wise men and women are inscrutable. They also don't know.

-Christopher Simon

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But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:31

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.
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Inscrutability
 (See message above.)
 "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!"
 Romans 11:33 NIV

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.
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Review: Dog mayor election, holiday events fill spring 2024

Continued from page 8A

revising the city's transportation element, and to let the City Council transmit the document to the state Department of Commerce for review. ... On Saturday, May 11, the National Association of Letter Carriers conducted its annual national Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive, the nation's largest one-day food drive.

The community gathered for a Wednesday, May 15, vigil at the Farmworker Association of Florida's Apopka office on Apopka Boulevard to pay respect to the eight farmworkers who died in an Ocala bus accident on the morning of Tuesday, May 14. ... The Magnet Academy of Culinary Arts at Wekiva High School is ending the 2023-24 school year on several high notes yet again, such as another recognition for the program director as National Teacher of the Year and a contest the magnet has entered, which will end on August 3. ... The Apopka Museum is celebrating its 55th anniversary, and the Apopka Historical Society presented a history of the museum and the city of Apopka at the May 15 City Council meeting at City Hall. ... The St. Johns River Water Management District will be perform-

ing maintenance work on Laughlin Road just south of McDonald Canal Road from May 28 to June 13. ... The city celebrated Emancipation Day two days early with an event at Alonzo Williams Park on Saturday, May 18. ... Apopka police are searching for a suspect who committed an armed robbery at Fifth Third Bank at 1725 S. Orange Blossom Trail on Monday, May 20, the second Fifth Third Bank robbery happening this month in the city.

Whatever you do or say, don't say "Happy Memorial Day," according to "Navy Mom Mary" Ingrassia. An Army veteran herself who is called "Navy Mom" because her son is a Navy veteran, Ingrassia said she intends to teach people about the significance of Memorial Day, a day for honoring and remembering all who died in defense of the nation. ... Apopka High School graduated its Class of 2024 on Tuesday, May 28, at the Kia Center in Orlando. Wekiva High School had its commencement ceremony on Thursday, May 30, at the University of Central Florida. ... Consumers can purchase qualifying disaster preparedness supplies exempt from tax during the 2024 Disaster Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday begin-

ning this weekend. ... The community may be closer to finding the right property to set up a permanent homeless resource center in, but negotiations for the city to acquire it are still in the works. ... Police arrested and charged a man with committing the two Fifth Third Bank robberies in Apopka this month after he confessed during police interrogation. ... Orange County Public Schools is modifying its operating hours for the summer. The entire district will be on a four-day work week.

June

Orange County School Board Chair Teresa Jacobs and Orange County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Maria Vazquez discussed the district's progress of ongoing programs as well as strategy, goals, budget, continuation of the half-cent sales tax and new initiatives while touching on the district's performance and impact on Orange County. ... On Tuesday, June 4, Wyld Oaks unleashed a public crowdsourcing initiative for dog lovers nationwide to help design "America's top dog park." This stage of the dog park design crowdsourcing initiative will run through July 22. ... Under business items of the Wednesday,

June 5, meeting agenda, the City Council voted unanimously, 5-0 on the following items: Kelly Park multifamily phase 3 plat, the Marshall Lake Business Center major development plan, and the major development plan for the Plymouth Sorrento Apartments. ... Former Senator Randolph Bracy III intends to file a lawsuit against Senator Geraldine F. Thompson, challenging her legal residency and therefore her qualification to run in the upcoming State Senate District 15 primary and general elections.

Thirty years after human remains were discovered in Apopka, detectives were able to confirm that they belonged to 48-year-old Richard Wick. Orange County Sheriff's Office confirmed on its Facebook page on Tuesday, June 11. ... This year marks the second Apopka Dog Mayor election. The inaugural election in 2023 raised more than \$19,800 in \$1-donation votes, for five Central Florida Animal Rescues and after more than 5,600 votes, the incumbent candidate, Asher, was elected the city's first-ever Honorary Dog Mayor. ... On Friday, June 7, residents and community leaders gathered at the Linda Chapin Theatre inside the Orange

County Convention Center to hear Orange County Mayor Jerry L. Demings' 2024 State of the County address. In his speech, the mayor focused on Orange County's accomplishments and challenges over the past year. He emphasized its strategic public, private and philanthropic partnerships that have fostered a community culture of building better together. ... The Apopka Juneteenth will be on Saturday, June 15. The parade starts at 2 p.m. at the Apopka Community Center/VFW Building on 519 S. Central Ave., Apopka. ... Monday, June 10, kicked off the Apopka Youth Fire Experience at the Billie Dean Community Center Summer Camp. This week, June 10 to 14, campers explored the world of fire safety.

On Wednesday, June 19, the City Council voted 3-2 to reimburse Mayor Bryan Nelson's attorney fees amounting to \$1527.50 related to an ethics complaint filed against him, but allowed the vote to die on the floor on rescinding the censure put on Nelson last year. ... The Miss Apopka Scholarship Competition Committee and the community wished Miss Apopka Reilly Cardella the best of luck as she competes in the upcoming Miss Florida

competition. ... Over the last 40 years, Loaves and Fishes in Apopka has provided much needed support to the west Orange County community and beyond. ... This July, Orange County Library System continues to bring summer entertainment, education, and adventure for kids and adults to 15 library locations and pop-up events throughout the county - all for free. ... In remembrance of the two-year anniversary of the day that Apopka firefighter Austin Duran was injured, the Duran family and The 2650 Foundation is inviting the community to join in the third annual community vigil.

The Apopka City Council approved 5-0 each on three road transfers from Orange County to the city so the city could upgrade these infrastructures to keep up with local growth. ... The Apopka Museum celebrated its 55th anniversary with its "55 & Still Alive!" celebration on Saturday, June 22, with food and refreshments, a tour of the museum and remarks from community leaders. ... The Apopka City Council will conduct its budget workshops next month, reviewing all of the city departments' finances for fiscal year 2025.

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Park: Construction is expected to last between 6-7 weeks

Continued from page 1A

Apopka Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) project using tax increment fund revenue from the city of Apopka and Orange County government.

At the groundbreaking, Mayor Bryan Nelson recognized the CRA Board members, Orange County District 2 Commissioner Christine Moore, and the city parks and recreation department including its director Radley Williams.

Moore said it was exciting to see the CRA board choose the skate park as a project, which Orange County is helping to fund. She was also glad that Williams chose a location for the skate park on the West Orange Trail, making the park more accessible to youth and families.

"It's always exciting when you get to be at a groundbreaking for something new," Moore said. "I had a friend of my son's and he - I have to tell you - he's probably 32 (years old) now, talking about a skate park in this community for a decade. So, it was exciting to see that the CRA board chose this as a project and Orange County government is also proud to be helpful."

The Parks and Recreation Department looked to the American Ramp Company to help with the de-

sign and construction of the park. The American Ramp Company has experience working for over 20 years developing skate and bike park facilities nationwide and throughout 44 countries worldwide.

Located downtown, the Apopka Community Redevelopment Area is comprised of 633 acres and has a mix of residences, businesses, and historic properties. The area is bound on the south by 10th 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.

The local government created the Apopka CRA Board to direct the agency. This board comprises Apopka City Council members, an Orange County Board of County Commissioners representative, and other individuals appointed by the local government.

Since the COVID pandemic, Apopka residents Josh and Suzanne Wheeler have advocated for a community skate park, both on social media and in person with city officials and employees. Their son Smooth, 11, is a BMX scooter rider. The family lives across the street from where the Apopka Action Skate Park is being built.

"He rides his bike to school every day ... so he'll be able to, next year, he'll go to Apopka Elementary in sixth grade, he'll be able to come here after school and ride the park, and then go across the street to the house," Josh Wheeler said.

"My wife just did a little bit of a push on her social media and it kind of grew legs and grew wings," Josh Wheeler said.

The Wheelers take Smooth to several other skate parks in Central Florida, but "they're all a hike," Josh Wheeler said.

"I think the closest one is maybe 30 to 45 minutes of a drive," he said. "So now we'll be five minutes up the street. Apopka has never had anything like this. They've got football fields and soccer fields, but to have an action park like this; they've got the water splash pad and stuff like that. This is groundbreaking for the city of Apopka."

Construction of the Apopka Action State Park began this week, with an estimation of completion being between six and seven weeks, pending weather. As the park gets closer to a solid completion date, a grand opening ceremony with a ribbon cutting will be scheduled and announced, Radley Williams said via email.

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Artists beautify Wheatley School with new murals



Multiple artists and organizations have collaborated to paint murals at various locations of the Phillis Wheatley Elementary School including the main stairwell and the gymnasium. Participating artists are Savannah Vargas, Mark Baiz, Alfredo Barranco, Pedro Bentancourt (Downtown Barbers owner and Wheatley alumnus), Luis Rivera of Downtown Barbers and Apopka Murals, Michael Delgado, Tiffany Somar, Delia Miller, and Melanie Jankun. Organizations involved with the community art project included Re-imagine Communities, The Creative Hub of Apopka, and The Downtown Barbers of Apopka. In the far-left photo, Miller paints the main stairwell with Wheatley's panther mascot. In the immediate left photo, one of several murals created as part of the mural project.

Photos courtesy of Tabitha Brown.

Proposed road upgrade plan gets second public input meeting

By Teresa Sargaent
Apopka Chief Staff

The city conducted its

second public input meeting on Monday, January 13, at the Apopka City Hall council chamber, where

four residents attended the meeting, for the proposed improvements on the northern portion of Ocoee-Apopka Road, an estimated \$28-million project that would improve the safety and capacity for current and future users.

The Ocoee-Apopka Road Safety Widening Project proposes the widening the northern portion of Ocoee-Apopka Road from a two-lane undivided road to a four-lane divided corridor to provide additional roadway capacity, construct a multi-use trail along the corridor to connect with the countywide trail system, improve and restore sidewalks along the project corridor, and add bicycle lanes.

At the public input meeting, Mike Woodward of Kimley-Horn and As-

sociates discussed details about the project itself including the proposed enhancements, safety and traffic, as well as schedule and funding.

Kimley-Horn and Associates is the project consultant; city planner Jean Sanchez is the project manager.

Ocoee-Apopka Road is currently a two-lane undivided roadway with no bicycle facilities or bike lanes. There are some existing sidewalks on Ocoee-Apopka Road at the Harmon Road intersection, Oakmont Distribution Center, and South Bradshaw Road intersection to South Hawthorne Avenue.

The average adjusted annual average daily traffic along the project corridor is 10,117 vehicles per day. The current traffic volumes discourage use of

sidewalks and paved shoulders for bicycling. Traffic signals are currently being installed at the Keene Road and Marden Road intersection.

A total of 100 crashes occurred during the five-year historical period (2019-2023) on Ocoee-Apopka Road. Forty of 100 crashes resulted in injury, and one resulted in a fatality at Hawthorne Avenue.

The Ocoee-Apopka Road renovation might cost \$28 million for the estimated 1.8-mile stretch of road. The city of Apopka is pursuing outside funding including federal dollars from the U.S. Department of Transportation Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability (RAISE) grant program.

Once funding is obtained, the next steps are to spend year one for project

development and environmental study; year two and three on design, work plan, and budget completion; year four on right-of-way acquisition; and year five to six on construction. This schedule is a "best case scenario," Woodward said.

The first public input meeting about the Ocoee-Apopka Road Safety Widening Project took place on December 9, 2024, at the Fran Carlton Center.

Other engagement opportunities included virtual outreach and targeted outreach to employees of businesses located along the Ocoee-Apopka corridor. The virtual outreach included the public survey, which launched last month, ended on Wednesday, January 15.

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SUDOKU ANSWERS

PUZZLE CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 2B

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8	4	5	6	2	1	9	7	3
2	9	7	8	3	5	6	4	1
6	5	1	2	8	3	7	9	4
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The Crossword Puzzle is found on page 2B