



TOM BROWN, VOLUNTEER STONY POINT FIRE POLICE OFFICER

P2A



ATTEMPTED MURDER CASE MOVES FORWARD



FUN AND FOOD WAS HAD BY ALL

P6B

# ROCKLAND COUNTY TIMES

ROCKLAND'S OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1888™

130th Year, No. 41

PUBLISHED WEEKLY - THURSDAY OCTOBER 12 - WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 18, 2017

14 PAGES

75¢

## ON THE TRAIL WITH MICHAEL BRUNO

Can one man's vision spark a renaissance in Rockland?

BY DYLAN SKRILOFF  
PHOTOS BY MICHAEL MUNDY

SLOATSBURG- When 7 Lakes Bike Barn holds its grand opening celebration 1 p.m., Sunday, October 15 it could mean more than a new store catering to area cyclists, tourists and anyone looking to immerse themselves in the beauty of Harriman State Park.

If the winds of fate are at the back of entrepreneur Michael Bruno the celebration could mark the beginning of a prosperous new era for the Sloatsburg-Tuxedo Rt. 17 corridor and beyond. The event marks Bruno's "hello" to a community he has invested heavily in, a village he believes can become a regional destination and magnet for creativity and social life.

Since opening the Blue Barn Farm Stand in August 2016, Bruno and his team have quietly pieced together a vision for the village center that includes a bed and breakfast [Valley Rock Inn], an expanded organic farm, facilities to host large parties such as weddings, the preservation of historic buildings, a parking lot and open space connecting to the Sloatsburg Rail Station and now the bike shop on 27 Mill St.

The bike barn's grand opening will be celebrated in style as champion American cyclist Floyd Landis joins Bruno and other cycling enthusiasts. To add to the intrigue, a presentation on health benefits cyclists can reap

from CBD hemp oil will be offered. Research and first-person accounts have been tilting the public dialogue on this issue.

Bruno is best known as the founder of "1stdibs," the first-ever and largest global online marketplace for antiques. He also has found a niche creating digital services for the design industry. But Bruno's career started in real estate and finding hidden gems has long been a passion. "My first love is old houses, old buildings," he told the Rockland County Times, adding with a laugh, "They need antiques to go in them."

As he drove along Rt. 17 a decade or so ago, Bruno said he found the scenery and the structures of Sloatsburg and Tuxedo, where he has a home, attractive and inspiring. The most appealing part of the village were the old homes and buildings untouched by time.

In Sloatsburg's village center Bruno sees the opportunity to preserve old, attractive buildings, while giving them a brand new use. In a county where residents are exhausted over the constant barrage of new and often ugly development, Bruno's ideas are a breath of fresh air. He has bought up a large share of the east side of Sloatsburg's village center, launched several new businesses therein and done so seemingly without disturbing the surrounding environment.

Sloatsburg Mayor Carl Wright is enthusiastic about Bruno's



7 Lakes Bike Barn [above]. The grounds of Valley Rock Inn [below].



entrepreneurial efforts. "He is wonderful. It is wonderful what he is doing," Wright said.

If Bruno's vision comes to full fruition, his numerous business and real estate investments in the area will pay off several-fold as Sloatsburg-Tuxedo turns into a "Gateway to the Hudson Valley."

Visit the opening of the 7 Lakes Bike Barn next Sunday and while you're there, take a look around the grounds that Bruno has both preserved and transformed.

Dream a little. With a dash of old fashion American ingenuity, Bruno is proving that Rockland County has a future.



Current library on East Main St. [above] and proposed site for new library on West Main St. [below]

## Rose Memorial Library gives presentation to Stony Pt. Board

Skeptical town board says lack of detail means bloom is off the proposed new "Rose"

BY KATHY KAHN



Rose Memorial Library's successful Article 78 lawsuit against Stony Point will put a proposition on the November ballot to add \$717,000 to its annual budget. Town Board members and residents at the October 10 meeting voiced concern over the practicality of the idea.

Library Director James Mahoney and two trustees said buying the empty former high school on Main Street would enable them to add more programs, space for a children's library and craft room, meeting rooms for the public, install more computers and provide adequate parking. Though the school's façade has been updated by the building's current owner, the interior remains unchanged and the cost factor to upgrade it both physically and technologically are unknown.

Stony Point budget currently is about \$255,000 annually for The Rose Library, matched by a \$200,000 contribution by North Rockland School District each year. If the referendum passes in November, Stony Point will be obligated to budget \$972,371 annually for Rose, which will still receive the same funding from NRSB.

Mahoney argued the Town of Haverstraw's library is drawing Stony Point residents to use that one instead of their own. Councilman Tom Basile said Haverstraw, with its diverse population and lower income levels, gets NYS funding and grant money, something Rose Library, a 501 (3) c corporation, is not entitled to.

"We have asked you to come before the town several times to let us all know what your plans are, but this is the first time you have responded to our requests...we haven't even had the courtesy of a phone call," said Basile. "Now that the referendum will be on the ballot, you have an agreement with the current owner to purchase the building, but when will the people of Stony Point learn the true cost? Let the voters decide based on facts."

Town Board members told Mahoney and his staff members the old ambulance building next to Rose Library is for sale and could be retrofitted to use for additional library space. But library board members disagreed, saying the old high school would be more beneficial to the community as a whole.

"We are talking simple math," said Supervisor Jim Monaghan. "You're asking residents for a 300 percent budget increase annually without knowing the true costs or conditions."

"The Ambulance Corps has a new building, but is facing financial difficulty. It hasn't been able to sell its old building," added Councilman James White. How is the Rose Library going to manage buying the old high school without knowing the true cost of renovation or if they, too, will have difficulty selling its old building? Have you gone to the Zoning Board and asked for a variance? The old high school is in a commercially zoned area."

Rose Library said it would hold an information session at the library on Tuesday, October 17, beginning at 7 p.m. The project's website is [www.stonypoint.improveourlibrary.org](http://www.stonypoint.improveourlibrary.org). Members of the Library Board of Trustees will be available to speak with the public every Saturday at the library between 10 a.m. & 5 p.m.

## Community, candidates rally behind Hamlet of Ramapo

BY DYLAN SKRILOFF

Ramapo and Rockland voters are rallying behind longtime residents of the Hamlet of Ramapo off of Tome Valley Rd. in unincorporated Ramapo. Last week the town sent residents of 15 homes there notices asking them to leave by the end of November.

The community has roots dating back to when it was a 'factory town' for the Ramapo iron ore industry. Many of the residents have spent their lives there, even though they only have month-to-month leases. The town took ownership of the properties sometime last decade. Several residents claim former Supervisor Chris St. Lawrence promised to never sell their homes to commercial developers, which is exactly what the

town seeks now.

GOP candidate for Ramapo supervisor Bill Weber objected to the attempt to rush residents out of their long-time homes. "I am not in the eviction business," he said, countering Interim Supervisor Yitzchok Ullman's statement that the town is not in the landlord business.

Weber questioned whether it was necessary to remove residents from their homes at all. He said if such a course of action were ever deemed necessary a transition period of at least one year would be appropriate. Asking tenants, some whom are elderly, to leave in two-months right before winter is unconscionable, he said.

Weber's opponent Michael Spect also released a statement saying as supervisor he'd nix the

evictions. However, his own running mate Yitzchok Ullman is the interim supervisor who spearheaded the current effort.

As it turns out, the notices sent by the town were unofficial and thus not actual eviction notices. If and when tenants receive real eviction notice they are prepared to call Legal Aid and fight for their rights.

Resident Felicia Heddy lambasted the town for blaming the entire community for late rents of a few properties. Official paperwork shows that six of 15 tenant properties are significantly behind on rent, but nine others are timely payers. Even with the late payers, the town receives about 90 percent of expected income from the hamlet.

Heddy wrote on the Rockland

County Times Facebook page: "I lived there for 35 years and have never been late with my rent ever! There were maybe four who were behind in rent but they should have gone after them for their back rent. My house and most of the houses are very nice and cozy and in good shape. How can this new acting supervisor make a statement like that when they never came in our homes to inspect them when Ramapo Land sold the property? Ramapo Land made yearly inspections and they all passed now all of a sudden the homes are in despair! If that's the case they should not have been taking our rent for the past seven years! Talk about rattlesnakes in this whole thing!"

## THE Dirt pile removed from Sloatsburg's public fields

BY CAROL MCILMURRAY

Sloatsburg's ballfields is finally rid of 15,000 cubic yards of once-contaminated soil. The dirty dirt sat in the park since 2009 when the Rockland Sewer Board dumped the material following excavation on local sewers.

The dirt remained there for years even after the Town of Ramapo received \$400,000 from the Sewer District to remedy the matter in 2012. Soil from the same project was also left piled high at the Gates of Praise Church in Hillburn, as well as two locations near an unused reservoir in Hillburn.

Work removing the dirt was completed on Sept 12. The dirt filled a total of 1,071 truckloads, according to Diane Phillips, executive director of the Sewer Board. Contractor Kevin Downes Tree Service Co. transported the soil to its facility in Hawthorne, NJ and delivered rocks and boulders to a private property in Tuxedo. The soil at the Hillburn church has also been removed, according to Phillips.

A recent independent analysis of the soil commissioned by the Sewer District found the material in the Sloatsburg park and Hillburn church to no longer be contaminated, but the two piles at the unused

reservoir was deemed non-hazardous contaminated soil, Phillips reported to local officials. According to Sewer Board Chairman George Hoehmann, the county and Sewer Board will proceed to sue Town of Ramapo to recover money paid for work that was never completed.

The previous chairman of the Sewer Board was Christopher St. Lawrence, who was also the supervisor of Ramapo during the years when the town failed to remove the soil from the Sloatsburg parkland. "It's very clear Ramapo was paid \$400,000 and they never did the job," Hoehmann told the Journal News.

Judge Walsh dismissed some of the District's claims against the town in September on the grounds that it's past the statute of limitations, and because the town did remove part of the soil in previous years. Walsh upheld that Town of Ramapo did not meet timelines to remove the soil. "They got what they paid for," Ramapo attorney Dennis Lynch countered.

The county and sewer district have appealed the decision. The FBI has also expressed interest in the case, describing the no-bid \$400,000 payment from the Sewer District to the town as suspicious.

## Minisceongo Stabilization Completed in W Haverstraw

Officials last Thursday, Oct. 5 announced the completion of a flood-prevention project along the Minisceongo Creek in West Haverstraw. County Executive Ed Day was joined by West Haverstraw Mayor Robert D'Amelio and Vincent Altieri, executive director of the Rockland County Drainage Agency. The Minisceongo Creek Embankment Stabilization Project was a cooperative effort between the County, the Drainage Agency, West Haverstraw and GenOn, an energy company. Day said, "We fully expect the cost to be reimbursed by FEMA." The project cost about \$963,214, which is under the contracted amount of \$1.12 million. It is near another embankment stabilization project along the Minisceongo Creek for which the county received \$1.02 million in FEMA reimbursement over the summer. During Hurricane Irene in 2011, raging flood waters severely eroded the bank of the creek for hundreds of feet, including areas where GenOn has utilities.

## Carlucci: Clean Water Grants Make a Splash

David Carlucci (D-Rockland/Westchester) announced two new grants under the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2017. The Town of Clarkstown and Village of Suffern will receive \$623,667 and \$180,378 respectively for clean water infrastructure improvements. The Town of Clarkstown's grant money is going towards a \$2.5M

project, the replacement of the Western Highway Sewer Pump Station. The Village of Suffern's grant money is going towards a \$721K project, the first phase of a Sanitary Sewer System Abatement. Carlucci said, "New York is once again leading the nation in providing our towns and villages with modernized, sustainable water systems."

**Rockland County Vet Housecall Services**

All your basic pet needs done in the convenience of your own home!

**Hospital Services Available**

**Dr. George Chondris**  
Housecall Veterinarian & Chief, Blauvelt Fire Co.

**845-496-9058**  
**917-846-9150**  
(cell)

**cahwash15@yahoo.com**  
**www.cahwash.com**

**Haverstraw Knights of Columbus Knights at the races**

**October 20, 2017**

**\$10.00 admission Includes: buffet dinner, coffee and dessert.**

**6:00pm dinner, 7:00pm gates open races begin**

**Cash bar Available 845-429-5850**