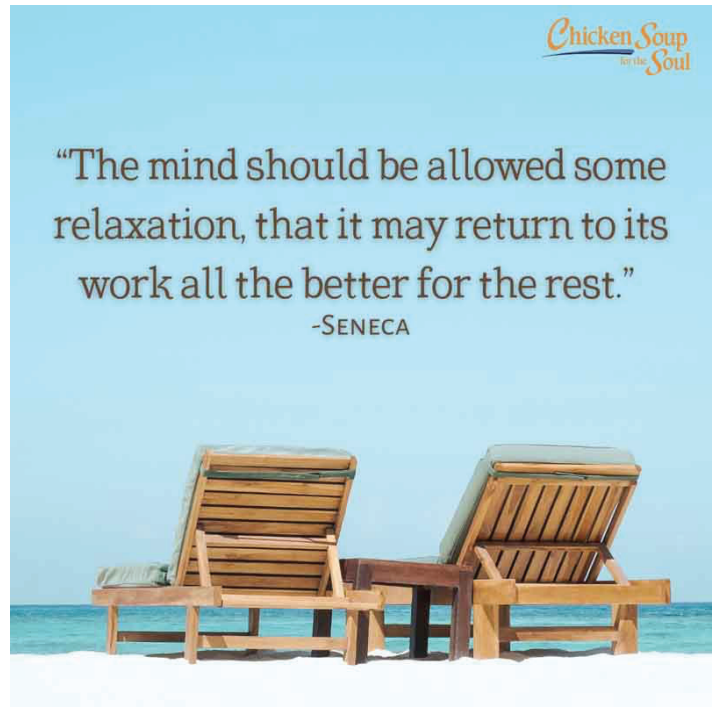


Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 1 of 55

- [1- Truss Pros Help Wanted Ad](#)
- [1- Service Notice: Cheri Strom](#)
- [2- John Sieh Agency Help Wanted Ad](#)
- [2- New Deal Tire Help Wanted Ad](#)
- [3- Jr. Legion beats Moorhead, loses to Brandon Valley](#)
- [4- PraireDoc Column: The Butterfly Effect](#)
- [5- Harry Implement Ad](#)
- [6- Weekly Vikings Roundup](#)
- [7- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [8- Weather Pages](#)
- [11- Daily Devotional](#)
- [12- 2021 Community Events](#)
- [13- News from the Associated Press](#)
- [54-55- School Board Agenda for Thursday's Meeting](#)



Strom Service Notice

Memorial services for Cheri Strom, 57, of Groton will be 2:00 p.m., Thursday, July 15th at New Life Fellowship, 619 8th Ave NW in Aberdeen. Pastor Micah Westby will officiate. Cheri passed away in Groton on July 10, 2021 after a courageous battle with cancer.

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Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 2 of 55



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Groton Jr Legion Beats Moorhead By 14 Runs

Groton Jr Legion easily did away with Moorhead 15-1 on Sunday

Groton Jr Legion fired up the offense in the first inning, when Tate L doubled on a 0-1 count, scoring one run.

Groton Jr Legion scored seven runs in the fifth inning. Kaleb H, Colby D, Logan R, and Cole S powered the big inning with RBIs.

Kaleb took the win for Groton Jr Legion. The pitcher went four and a third innings, allowing one run on four hits and striking out six. Jordan B threw two-thirds of an inning in relief out of the bullpen. Jordan recorded the last two outs to earn the save for Groton Jr Legion.

#10 started the game for Moorhead. The hurler allowed five hits and six runs over one inning. #11 and #18 entered the game from the bullpen, throwing three and a third innings and two-thirds of an inning respectively.

Groton Jr Legion socked one home run on the day. Tate went deep in the second inning.

Groton Jr Legion racked up 18 hits. Colby, Jordan, Tate, Cole, Dillon A, and Andrew M each had multiple hits for Groton Jr Legion. Tate, Jordan, and Colby each collected three hits to lead Groton Jr Legion.

Despite Collecting Seven Hits, Groton Jr Legion Falls To Brandon Valley

Groton Jr Legion out-hit Brandon Valley seven to six, but it wasn't enough in an 8-1 loss on Sunday

The Groton Jr Legion struggled to put runs on the board and had a tough time defensively containing Brandon Valley, giving up eight runs.

#19 led things off on the hill for Brandon Valley. The bulldog allowed seven hits and one run over six innings, striking out three and walking one.

Colby D was on the hill for Groton Jr Legion. The pitcher went one and two-thirds innings, allowing five runs on two hits and striking out three. Jordan B and Dillon A entered the game from the bullpen, throwing two and two-thirds innings and two-thirds of an inning respectively.

Groton Jr Legion totaled seven hits. Andrew M and Jordan all collected multiple hits for Groton Jr Legion. Jordan and Andrew each collected two hits to lead Groton Jr Legion.

Brandon Valley was sure-handed and didn't commit a single error. #16 made the most plays with six.

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The Butterfly Effect

My daughter recently brought home a monarch caterpillar. We cared for it in a container making sure it had a supply of fresh milkweed leaves and kept its cage clean. It seemed perfectly content to munch on leaves all day. After a few days it hung upside-down from the lid of the cage and we waited for it to form a chrysalis, and eventually convert to a butterfly.

We used the time lapse video capability of our cell phone to capture the transformation. Watching the video, the change seems easy, quick, and effortless. There does not appear to be any major effort or pain involved for the caterpillar. However, after researching the subject, we came to appreciate the significant process the caterpillar undergoes which is not apparent to the naked eye of the observer.

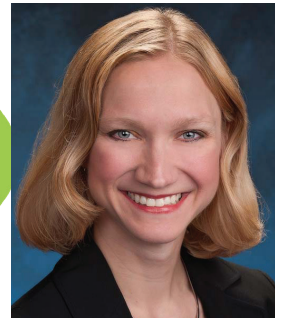
Unless we take time to learn about the butterfly's makeover, we may tend to minimize it as an uncomplicated process. Literally everything about the caterpillar changes. Its old body is completely broken down for the new one to form. Enzymes are released to break down the caterpillar skin and hormones allow new body parts to be formed. To the spectator, it looks easy, to the caterpillar, it is a monumental task.

This got me thinking about how change is difficult for people, and how important it is for us to support each other as we attempt it. Many changes in life are painful and complicated, especially those we make to improve our health, or our physical, emotional, or spiritual wellbeing.

Breaking old habits and creating new, healthier behaviors involves a transformation. It requires that we learn new ways of thinking and practice positive self-talk which is sometimes uncomfortable and challenging work. Quitting smoking, walking every day, choosing different healthier foods, and avoiding junk food are changes that offer long-term benefits. The work may not seem worth it in the short-term. You may want to give up, especially when others do not seem to notice your struggles or understand how you are feeling inside. You may miss the way things were before you embarked upon your journey.

Look to the butterfly for encouragement to continue your transformation. Change may feel like a struggle, but when your wings emerge and you take flight thanks to your healthier habits, the change will be its own reward.

Jill Kruse, D.O. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices family medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. For free and easy access to the entire Prairie Doc® library, visit www.prairedoc.org and follow Prairie Doc® on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show streaming on Facebook and broadcast on SDPB most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



By Jill Kruse, DO ~ Prairie Doc® Perspectives

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Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 6 of 55

Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Dominique Clare

We are at a point in the offseason where there isn't a lot of news. The players are gearing up for camp and enjoying their final bit of free time with their families.

This week, we continue our roster breakdown with the linebackers.

The linebacker position is particularly important in the Mike Zimmer system. He likes to run a 4-3 base with three very versatile linebackers. Two of those linebackers will often line up in both A gaps so the offense must respect the potential of constant pressure. The Vikings have a couple of guys Zimmer already trusts and will need someone to step up to the plate after that.

Eric Kendricks – You can't talk about underrated players in the NFL without mentioning Eric Kendricks. He has been a top linebacker in the NFL the last few years despite only one All-Pro recognition.

Kendricks is elite in all fashions of the game. He is excellent at tackling, can cover like a defensive back, can blitz very well, and is almost always in the right position to make the play. His being on the roster allows Mike Zimmer to call games exactly the way he wants to. Especially when paired with another athletic linebacker.

Anthony Barr – While not as good as Kendricks, Anthony Barr is a very good linebacker. I don't think he gets the respect he deserves from the Vikings fan base. He has taken a lot of criticism for his recent struggles in coverage, and while that may appear to be the case, it was more an issue of a bad matchup that was never adjusted for during the game.

Barr missed last season due to injury and his loss showed just how valuable he is to this Vikings team. What they could do on defense with their backup linebackers was very limited. With Barr back, the 1-2 punch between him and Kendricks will give the Vikings a top LB unit in the league again.

Ryan Connelly – Although most teams prefer pulling their third linebacker in favor of an extra cornerback, the Vikings defense is a little more old-school and gives the third linebacker plenty of reps. This player is going to have a big impact, and the success of this unit rides on whichever player claims the spot. Right now Ryan Connelly is the frontrunner to start heading into camp.

That could change as the Vikings get a closer look at new addition Nick Vigil and draft pick Chazz Surratt. Connelly was picked up by the Vikings in 2020 after being waived by the New York Giants. He started a few games for the Giants in 2019 before suffering a season-ending ACL injury. The Vikings are hoping he can pick up where he left off before his unfortunate injury.

Nick Vigil – It's good to have backup players that are starting material because the defense rotates a lot of players in and out (in addition to injuries as the Vikings saw last year). Nick Vigil is just that.

He is definitely capable of starting, coming to the Vikings with great experience. Last season for the Chargers he played in 15 games, two of them being starts. His career is trending in a great direction as he joins the Vikings.

Chazz Surratt – It's always difficult to predict where a rookie is going to enter the mix, especially in a Mike Zimmer defense that is known for making rookies "earn it." The Vikings drafted Chazz Surratt with the 78th overall pick of the 2021 draft. It was a move that puzzled some, but the Vikings must see something in him.

Surratt entered the University of North Carolina as a quarterback before switching to linebacker and having a great career. The Vikings feel he is an instinctual player that can bring a lot to the table. He truly is a wild card for this upcoming season.

Troy Dye – Because of the injuries last season, Troy Dye stepped in as a rookie and got some early experience for the Vikings. I liked what I saw from him for the most part. He was no Anthony Barr, but he showed potential and is worthy of being on the final 53-man roster.

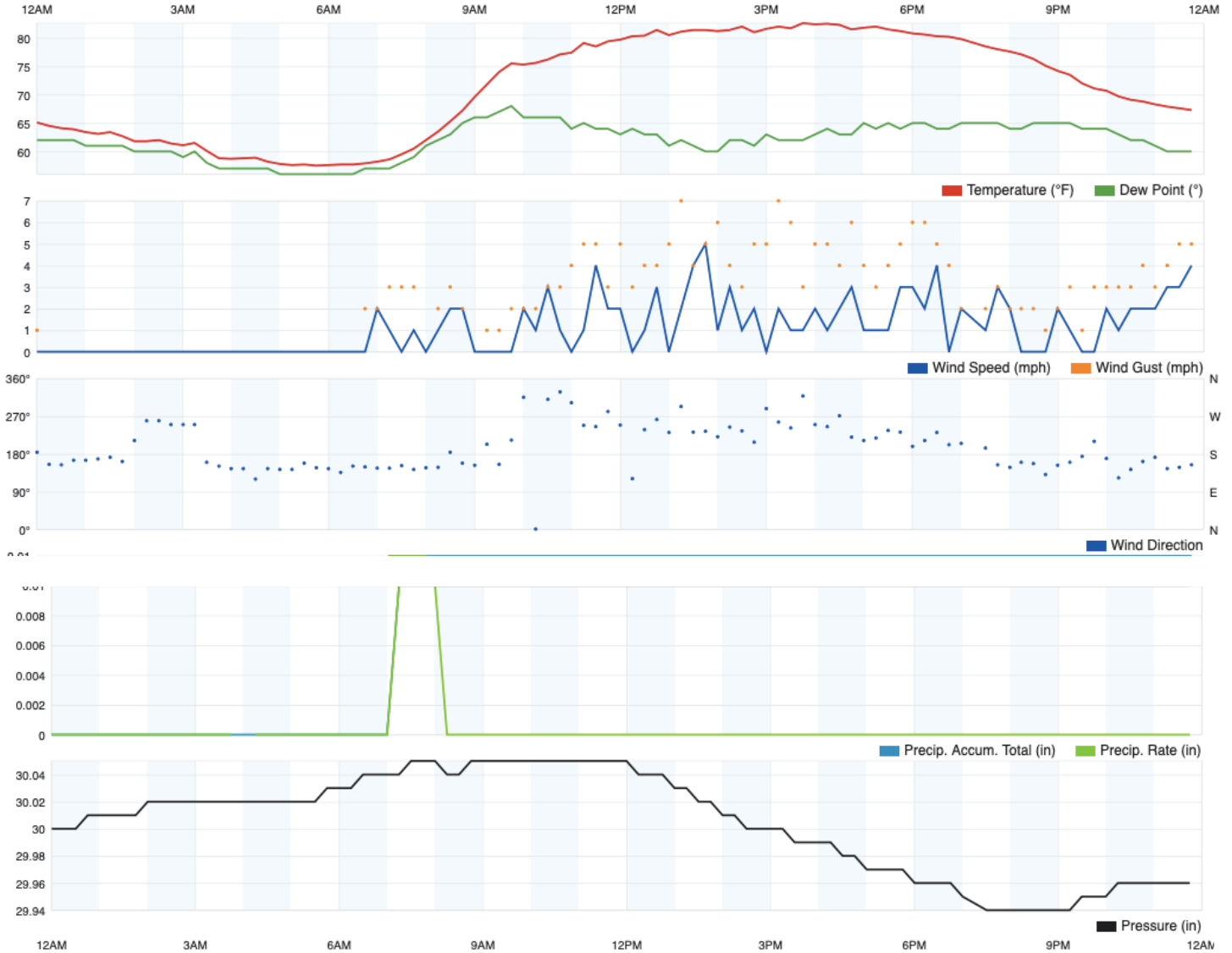
I am comfortable with Dye stepping in for a rotation or filling in for an injury at any time. He may eventually develop into a starter as he is only 24 years old right now.

The Rest – After those 6 players, the Vikings have some others fighting for spots on the team. Their names are Blake Lynch, Tuf Borland, Cameron Smith, and Christian Elliss. Keep an eye on Smith, who sat out the entire 2020 season after doctors found a heart irregularity during Covid checkups.

Groton Daily Independent





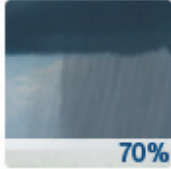
Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 7 of 55

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs


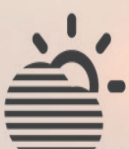





Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 8 of 55

Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
				
Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Partly Cloudy then Chance T-storms	Showers Likely
High: 85 °F	Low: 61 °F	High: 87 °F	Low: 62 °F	High: 75 °F

A Dry Start to the week, then Rain Possible Wednesday

Today	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
				
Smoke will produce a filtered sunshine	Smoke remains, with increasing clouds in the evening	Showers likely, with a chance of thunderstorms	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny, with increasing clouds late
HI: 80-92F	HI: 84-92F LO: 59-63F	HI: 74-80F LO: 60-64F	HI: 79-87F LO: 57-61F	HI: 82-90F LO: 58-63F

Updated: 7/12/2021 4:02 AM Central
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Filtered sunshine is expected again today as smoke from wildfires continues to move over the region. The only precipitation chances this week will come around the middle of the week, which will also bring cooler temperatures to the area.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 9 of 55

Today in Weather History

July 12, 1993: A thunderstorm dumped up to four inches of rain in 30 minutes, 25 miles west of Pierre. This storm washed hay into big blocks up to five feet high. The heavy rains also caused water to spill over an irrigation dam. Another severe thunderstorm occurred over Dewey County and produced strong winds, damaging hail, and flooding rains which destroyed crops and hay fields. The storm knocked out windows and screens in the Lantry area. Runoff from the storm rushed through the streets of Eagle Butte causing water damage to homes and businesses. Water was reported flowing four to five feet deep through a cafe. High winds also tipped over a house trailer.

July 12, 2004: Hail up to the size of softballs fell in and around Onaka, in Faulk County, damaging vehicles, farm equipment, and homes. Lightning struck a house in Britton starting a fire in the attic, which resulted in significant damage to the home. High winds along with hail up to the size of baseballs caused some structural, vehicle, crop, and tree damage in and around Astoria and Toronto in Duel County.

1951 - The Kaw River flood occurred. The month of June that year was the wettest of record for the state of Kansas, and during the four days preceding the flood much of eastern Kansas and western Missouri received more than ten inches of rain. Flooding in the Midwest claimed 41 lives, left 200 thousand persons homeless, and caused a billion dollars property damage. Kansas City was hardest hit. The central industrial district sustained 870 million dollars property damage. (The Kansas City Weather Almanac)

1980 - Lightning struck a large broiler house in Branford, FL, and the ensuing fire broiled 11,000 nearly ready broilers. Firemen were able to save a few thousand chickens, however. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Cool air invaded the High Plains Region. Eight cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Sheridan, WY, with a reading of 37 degrees. Thunderstorms developing along the cold front in the central U.S. produced 6.5 inches of rain at Fort Dodge, IA, and 2.5 inches in one hour at St. Joseph MO. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Evening thunderstorms produced severe weather over the Dakotas, including baseball size hail at Aberdeen, SD, and softball size hail near Fullerton, ND. Thunderstorms produced heavy rain in Arkansas and northeastern Texas, with 6.59 inches reported at Mesquite, TX, in just an hour and fifteen minutes. Garland, TX, reported water up to the tops of cars following a torrential downpour. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Early morning thunderstorms over eastern Kansas deluged McFarland with more than six inches of rain. Afternoon thunderstorms in Wyoming produced up to eighteen inches of dime size hail near Rock Springs, along with torrential rains, and a three foot high wall of mud and water swept into the town causing more than 1.5 million dollars damage. Evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in Oklahoma and Arkansas, deluging Dardanelle, AR, with 3.50 inches of rain in less than twenty minutes. About seventy cows were killed when lightning struck a tree in Jones County, TX. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1995: An intense heat wave affected much of the Midwest for a 4-day period beginning on this day. The worst effects of the heat were noted in the Chicago metropolitan area, where 583 people died from the heat. Temperatures across the region reached as high as 104 degrees, overnight lows on falling to the upper 70s to low 80s. Dew point temperatures in the upper 70s to low 80s created heat indexes peaking at 125 degrees. Electricity and water usage reached record levels, causing periodic outages.

1996: Hurricane Bertha makes landfall near Wrightsville Beach, NC with maximum winds of 105 mph, but the storm surge dealt the most devastation. The U.S. Virgin Islands, along with North Carolina, were declared federal disaster areas. Surveys indicate that Bertha damaged almost 2,500 homes on St. Thomas and St. John. For many, it was the second hit in the ten months since Hurricane Marilyn devastated the same area. The primary effects in North Carolina were to the coastal counties and included storm surge flooding and beach erosion, roof damage, piers washed away, fallen trees and damage to crops. Over 5,000 homes were damaged, mostly from storm surge. Storm total rainfall amounts ranged from 5 to 8 inches along a coastal strip from South Carolina to Maine. Overall, as many as 12 deaths resulted with 8 in the U.S. and territories.

Groton Daily Independent

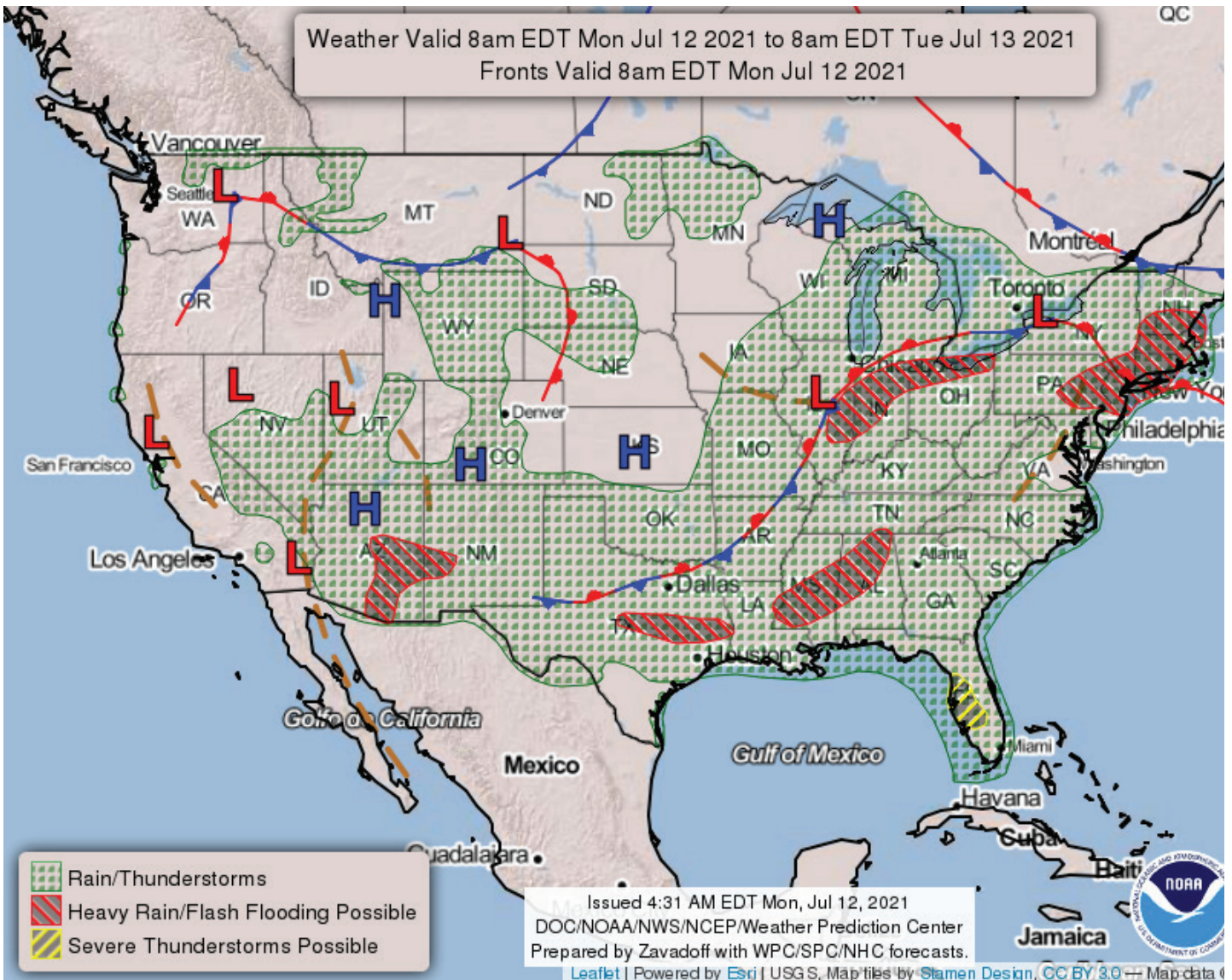
Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 10 of 55

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 83 °F at 4:10 PM
Low Temp: 58 °F at 5:36 AM
Wind: 7 mph at 1:11 PM
Precip: 0.01

Today's Info

Record High: 107° in 1936
Record Low: 40° in 1941
Average High: 85°F
Average Low: 60°F
Average Precip in July.: 1.26
Precip to date in July.: 1.73
Average Precip to date: 12.27
Precip Year to Date: 6.48
Sunset Tonight: 9:21 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:58 a.m.



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 11 of 55



IT COMES FROM SOMEWHERE!

A long time, political figure was asked, "How much power does it take to satisfy politicians?"

After thinking about the question for a moment, he responded with a twinkle in his eye: "Just a little more!" And then added, "The more we have the more we want."

Politicians rise and fall, come and go, do helpful things and some things that seem to cause confusion and chaos. Whatever they do comes from the power that we seem to give them. Or does it?

Insightfully, the Psalmist said, "No one...can exalt a man...It is God who judges: He brings one down, He exalts another." After all is said and done, there is no power apart from God. He is Almighty. He rules.

We often think of ourselves and others as being self-contained. We live, we breathe, we walk and talk, we do this and that, but – in fact – we live breath by breath and moment by moment according to God's plan for our lives. Our physical life, and the life of those whom He allows to have power and influence over us, do so as He wills and wishes.

These are days of turbulence and turmoil, fear and frustration, uncertainty and anxiety. We do not know what is going to happen before our next heartbeat. But it is comforting to know that God is in control of everyone and everything. He has fixed limits on their terms and their time in office. He also has a plan in place for them and everything.

God often seems to move at the pace of a snail – but He is indeed moving. We can rest assured that all is well.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for the assurance in Your Word that You are righteous and just, and that Your love and faithfulness endures. Thank You for hope. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: It is God alone who judges; he decides who will rise and who will fall. Psalm 75:7

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 12 of 55

2021 Community Events

- Cancelled** Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)
03/27/2021 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
04/10/2021 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
04/24/2021 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
04/25/2021 Princess Prom (Sunday after GHS Prom)
05/01/2021 Lions Club Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
05/31/2021 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
6/7-9/2021 St. John's Lutheran Church VBS
06/17/2021 Groton Transit Fundraiser, 4-7 p.m.
06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
06/19/2021 U8 Baseball Tournament
06/19/2021 **Postponed to Aug. 28th:** Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon
06/26/2021 U10 Baseball Tournament
06/27/2021 U12 Baseball Tournament
07/04/2021 Firecracker Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
07/11/2021 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 10am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
07/22/2021 Pro-Am Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/30/2021-08/03/2021 State "B" American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
08/06/2021 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course
08/13/2021 Groton Basketball Golf Tournament
08/28/2021 Lions Club Crazy Golf Fest 9am Olive Grove Golf Course
09/11/2021 Lions Club Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
09/12/2021 Sunflower Classic Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
09/18-19 Groton Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
10/08/2021 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
10/09/2021 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm (Saturday before Columbus Day)
10/29/2021 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
10/31/2021 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
11/13/2021 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
11/25/2021 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
12/11/2021 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon

News from the Associated Press

Development nearly rebuilt after 2011 Missouri River flood

By RANDY DOCKENDORF Yankton Press and Dakotan

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — For Doug and Linda Larson, the 2011 Missouri River flooding still affects their lives and property a decade later.

The couple owns and operates Larson's Landing, a riverfront development west of Yankton. Their original 84-unit rental park — both mobile homes and campers — was inundated from May-September 2011.

However, the clean-up and repair work has continued to this day.

"After 10 years, we're nearly done," Doug said. "Now, it's mostly maintenance. We've rebuilt just about everything. We're pretty well under control."

Doug said the family didn't hesitate to rebuild after the 2011 flood.

"Back then, people asked, 'What are you gonna do now?'" he said. "I told them, we're going to start again and redo it."

The historic flooding arose from a combination of large mountain snowpack and unusually heavy spring rainfall over a large portion of the upper basin, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The flooding continued for months, creating millions of dollars in damage across the basin, the Yankton Press and Dakotan reported.

"I can't believe it's been 10 years gone by already," Doug said. "We're finally just about rebuilt. It looks a little different, doesn't it?"

The Larsons pointed to the changes over the years — new utilities, roads, trees, parking pads and even playground equipment. No cleanup could begin until the water receded, meaning little major work could commence until 2012, Doug said.

"Really, it was the middle or end of September (2011) before the flooding ended," he said. "We did a lot of cleanup. The debris was mostly trees, and we had help with cleanup. Then we had to rebuild all the utilities. It was sad."

The expanded beach during this year's drought marks a sharp contrast from the flood water that ravaged most of the development during the 2011 event.

The sandbagging efforts at the time sought not only to keep out flooding but also to offer any bank stabilization, Doug said.

"If you (previously) saw the shoreline, it gradually sloped way out. After the flood, it dropped 14 feet straight down because of the bank erosion," he said. "Right out by the light pole, the sandbags were 7-8 feet high, and the water still went over it."

The surprise was not only the quick arrival of the flooding but also its massive power and duration, Linda said. The combination of factors made recovery much more difficult than any other disaster, she added.

"We had homes on the west side (of the development) that tipped over because the water was coming so fast," she said. "If you listened to the water rush by, it just roared."

Doug noted one unusual way that animals adjusted to the flooding.

"The water was coming here so fast that the beavers were eating the trees, gnawing and gnawing, and then the flood would come and take the trees down," he said. "The beavers were like, 'Well, I better go get another one.'"

For the Larsons, the 2011 flooding brought a double economic blow — not only the property damage but also the loss of their rental income from displaced residents and campers.

"Most of our business is really seasonal, and the flood hit right before Memorial Day and the start of our busy summer season," Doug said.

The Corps of Engineers gave notice when it was going to raise the releases, Doug said. Because of the rapidly rising river levels, the Larsons said they sometimes received a few hours' notice of a major increase in releases.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 14 of 55

Besides the official notices, the Larsons said they could observe the rising floodwaters.

"It was Memorial Day, and I remember (our son) kept hearing the water coming up," Linda said. "We really didn't think when it started that it would keep coming up that high."

Officials told the family where to expect flooding, but the situation became much worse than anticipated, Doug said.

The Larsons were no stranger to flooding. Doug had owned the business since 1980, and he rebuilt after the 1997 flood that saw releases of 70,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) from Gavins Point Dam near Yankton.

Similar releases had come from Fort Randall Dam upstream at Pickstown, which also allowed for the inflow from tributaries before the river reached Gavins Point.

Larson chose to remain in business after the 1997 flood, rebuilding his property to withstand any more releases of that magnitude.

However, the Corps needed to release much higher volumes of water during the 2011 flooding, including 160,000 cfs — one million gallons of water per second — from Gavins Point Dam.

"I decided to rebuild so (flood damage) wouldn't happen again," he said at the time. "But that was for 70,000. Now, it's (160,000), and I don't see any way of protecting for that."

While state officials were initially dealing with flooding at Pierre-Fort Pierre, then-Lt. Gov. Matt Michels of Yankton led operations in the southeast part of the state.

As the Larsons dealt with the rapidly rising flood waters, word spread quickly of their situation. The couple was both stunned and grateful for the outpouring of volunteer support in sandbagging efforts.

"We didn't ask for any help, but we sure needed it," Doug said.

Linda was amazed at the arrival of help not only from Yankton but from the surrounding region. "We had about 500 volunteers down here. A lot of it was just word of mouth," she said.

Even the people being evacuated from Larson's Landing volunteered for sandbagging, Doug said.

"One of the good things was that it started three days before Memorial Day, so most of our campers were already in the park," he said. "They were able to pull their units out and then they started sandbagging. More and more, the word got out that they needed help out at Larson's Landing."

For three weeks, an army of residents, volunteers and the South Dakota National Guard built a 500-foot-long wall of 5,000 to 10,000 sandbags. Some of the sandbags were breached, but quick work helped stabilize the area.

Workers built a wall at least six feet high, which still wasn't enough to hold back the flood waters, Linda said. The arrival of water meant the exodus of residents in its wake, he said.

Eventually the force and duration of the floodwaters overtook the wall of sandbags, which became partially visible from a distance.

By the close of the effort, about 200,000 sandbags were used, Linda estimated. Of those remaining, some were buried and others disintegrated. Some sandbags still emerge from burial places, she said.

As the flooding encroached, the Larsons helped evacuate their property. "We had to displace several mobile homes out there. People lost their homes and the rest were displaced," Doug said.

During the 2011 flooding, the Larsons looked out at the submerged homes and the empty lots where recreational vehicles once stood. The inundated structures included their own home, with its orange shutters one of the few visible features at the time.

"Our home was right here," Linda said, pointing to the location that now serves as a community center for the park's occupants. "We couldn't stay in our house, and we couldn't even get to it because it was under water. When Doug finally did get there and was taking pictures, there was big, puffy mold in my beautiful house."

In the meantime, the Larsons lived in a camper on site while looking for other accommodations. They moved furniture to garages in town and boxed up possessions for storage units.

"We got another (home) above the flood plain, just up the street," Doug said. "But we would be sitting out front of our new house, and the water came within 10 feet of us. Linda was worried if we had to move again."

At the same time, Larson's Landing took another financial hit, Linda said. Because of the prolonged

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 15 of 55

evacuation, the Larsons lost their entire summer season of rental income. The family did have flood insurance and received a Small Business Administration (SBA), the Larsons said, but many of their tenants didn't have flood insurance.

"This went on for 24 weeks. Usually, when you have a flood, it's three or four days and then you start cleaning up," Linda said. "This (flood) just kept going on and on. And we didn't have any (income) because we had to give the campers all their money back."

The Larsons also gave mobile home owners a subsidy to help cover their moving expenses, Doug said. Some mobile homes were totally ruined, Doug said, while he heard other units ended up as housing in North Dakota oil fields to meet a severe housing shortage for workers.

The utilities had been cut to empty homes in the development, Doug said at the time of the flooding. Some residents moved elsewhere, including a Yankton apartment, and others stayed with relatives in the aftermath.

About a month after the flooding started, only five homes and 15 recreational vehicles remained out the original 84 units.

Amidst the 2011 flooding, the Larsons checked out their deserted development on golf carts. They kept out intruders, and the evacuated residents came back on weekends to check their property. In addition, the Yankton County sheriff's office came out to the development to check on things.

Today, the park has regrown as people flock back in the rebuilt areas. The development currently has 93 campers and seven mobile homes.

This weekend, the Larsons expect 400-500 guests for the Fourth of July weekend. While they enjoy the park's resurrection, they also have taken valuable lessons from the flooding experience.

"One thing it taught us is humility because we had the cat's meow, and in three days, it was all gone," Linda said. "It really humbles you. When I think about all the people in the community who lost what they had, it makes me sad."

Doug also expressed gratefulness for the ability to come back.

"You found out how helpless you can be," he said. "You just pray and hope that some help comes along."

Endangered butterfly gaining momentum in North Dakota

By AMY R. SISK The Bismarck Tribune

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — It's Christmas in July for the Dakota skipper, a yellow-beige butterfly that crawls up bunchgrass this time of year and flutters about the coneflowers blooming across the rolling plains.

While it slurps up nectar, surveyors working with energy companies and conservation groups scour the hills -- carefully -- to document the skipper, which is considered threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

One of those surveyors is Luke Toso, who in early July can often be found among "a bunch of guys with hats and cameras stumbling around the prairie looking for butterflies," as he described it one recent morning before heading out into the field.

"We're scanning the tops of ridges and flowers looking for these skippers," he said. "Males patrol the ridges looking for females, and they bounce around the tops of grasses."

The Dakota skipper can be seen flying about the prairie for just two to three weeks in the early summer, during which time it mates and the females lay eggs before they die, The Bismarck Tribune reported.

"It's a very limited amount of time to get to know this species," Toso said.

Research and recovery efforts for the butterfly are gaining momentum in North Dakota -- the primary place the species calls home. Its range once extended as far east as Iowa and Illinois, but the butterfly can no longer be found there. Habitat loss has depleted the species' population over the past few decades, limiting it to the prairies of North Dakota and select parts of neighboring states and Canadian provinces.

"It's only on very pristine, native prairie," said Elisha Mueller, a conservation biologist with North Dakota Game and Fish. "It needs a very specific ingredient list."

The skipper was listed as threatened in 2014, meaning it's on the verge of becoming endangered. A species gains certain protections under federal law if it's listed as threatened or endangered. Conserva-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 16 of 55

tion efforts aim to help the species' population recover and, if successful, can have the added benefit of improving the habitat where other critters also reside.

Government officials and conservationists who work in the states and provinces where the skipper lives formed a recovery council last year to better coordinate their efforts.

"We feel we need to understand more about where skippers are and where they aren't before we can get too engaged in a reintroduction project," said Eric Rosenquist, conservation program coordinator for the North Dakota Natural Resources Trust, a group that partners with companies, organizations and governmental agencies on habitat and wildlife projects.

Early efforts to survey skipper populations took place in the 1990s, at which point the species already appeared to be in decline. The butterfly is thought to cover a wide swath of North Dakota. Its population is particularly high in McKenzie County, which is also the core of the Bakken where oil and gas development further threatens its habitat.

The conservation work funded by the Natural Resources Trust is paid for through a variety of government and private sources, including energy companies looking to offset the impact of their projects. One goal of conservationists is to ramp up survey work in places such as eastern North Dakota outside of the skipper's known hot spots.

"We're hoping to find new populations of skippers and add to the scientific knowledge that's out there," Rosenquist said.

The trust is working with surveyors such as Toso, who is a senior environmental scientist with the Bismarck-based company Beaver Creek Environmental. The telephoto lens on his camera allows him to document the skipper without hurting it by wading into its habitat, and to verify it's the right species. North Dakota is home to a number of types of skippers, many of which are a similar color yet distinguishable by other markings.

"The skipper is like an F-16," Toso said, referring to the fighter jet. "It is shaped in a way that makes it go extremely fast. It's hard to get an estimate of how many there are in a landscape."

On his best day in the field, he and his colleagues have documented 200 of the butterflies at a single site. But, he said, he "couldn't even hazard a guess" as to how many total exist in the Northern Plains.

Surveyors such as Toso also look for Dakota skippers when energy companies hire them. For example, an oil company might want to put a well pad on U.S. Forest Service land and need federal permits to do so. That will trigger a review of the site for critters like the skipper listed under the Endangered Species Act.

If the butterfly is present, the company might move its well pad to a less-intrusive spot. If that's not feasible, the developer could opt for capturing the skippers there and releasing them elsewhere. Often, the company ends up offering money to offset its project's impact, Toso said. Those funds might make their way to an entity such as the Natural Resources Trust, which would use them for conservation work.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service plays a role in the process. Oil companies need to consider things like dust control at their project sites so as not to unnecessarily send up clouds of dirt that cover the flowers that make up the skipper's habitat, said Drew Becker, North Dakota ecological services supervisor for the federal agency.

"I would consider the oil industry a real partner in skipper recovery," he said. "They've been very helpful trying to provide offset funding to really be proactive to figure out where skippers are, how we can avoid them and how we can try to recover them by protecting some big blocks of habitat so that we can do both -- so we can recover skippers and we can also extract oil."

Scientists are still trying to pinpoint how to best help the butterfly. At top of mind is whether they can they plant the right combination of grasses and flowers to attract the skipper to sites that are not native prairie.

"Those are tough questions we just don't have answers to yet," Mueller said.

Last year, a team found the skipper flying across crested wheatgrass, which is not native prairie.

"That's encouraging because it's an indication that maybe there is a possibility of doing habitat restoration," Toso said.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 17 of 55

Skippers have been documented in native prairie around the Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuge next to cultivated fields. The Natural Resources Trust is involved in efforts to plant a mix of grasses and flowers in the area to see if it can re-create a habitat that will support the skipper.

"We're just getting started getting seed in the ground," Rosenquist said. "It's going to be a few years before we have much indication of what works."

One other recent project involved a partnership with the Minnesota Zoo, which collected Dakota skippers from a proposed oil and gas site in 2019. The skippers laid their eggs in captivity, and the butterflies were released back into the wild in western North Dakota. Work will take place this summer to evaluate the success of that effort, Rosenquist said.

The Dakota skipper is one of several pollinators in North Dakota listed as threatened or endangered. Unlike some of them, it can be tough to drum up excitement around the species because its looks do it few favors.

Even Becker, one of the skipper's biggest cheerleaders, admits it can appear "a little drab."

"It's easy to get some momentum behind a ferret because they're cute and they're fuzzy," he said. "Monarchs are so showy, and they're in grandma's backyard. Skippers? Not so much."

But Dakota skippers are important, nevertheless, because their presence is indicative of the health of a habitat that supports other important species, he said.

"If it's not suitable for a skipper, is it suitable for bumblebees?" Becker asked. "Is it suitable for honeybees? Is it suitable for whatever critter you might care about?"

Toso said the skipper's listed status helps to protect native prairie, an ecosystem that's worked "for thousands of years."

"The Dakota skipper on its own may not be really impressive to everybody," he said. "But it represents something bigger than the bug itself."

1 suffers life-threatening injuries in Lead apartment fire

LEAD, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say one person suffered life-threatening injuries in a weekend apartment fire in the northern Black Hills.

KELO-TV reports crews responded to the fire burning on South Stone Street in Lead Saturday morning. Heavy smoke was coming from the building when crews arrived.

Firefighters were able to keep the blaze from spreading to other nearby buildings.

An ambulance crew took the injured person to Monument Hospital in Deadwood.

The Red Cross and local churches are helping residents displaced by the fire.

Bonus pay for essential workers varied widely across states

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — For putting their health on the line during the coronavirus pandemic, prison guards in Missouri got an extra \$250 per paycheck. Teachers in Georgia received \$1,000 bonuses. And in Vermont, nurses, janitors, retail workers and many others got as much as \$2,000.

Over the past year, about one-third of U.S. states have used federal COVID-19 relief aid to reward workers considered essential who dutifully reported to jobs during the pandemic. But who qualified for those bonuses -- and how much they received — varied widely, according to an Associated Press review. While some were paid thousands of dollars, others with similar jobs elsewhere received nothing.

As society reopens, momentum to provide pandemic hazard pay appears to be fading — even though the federal government has broadened the ability of state and local governments to provide retroactive pay under a \$350 billion aid package enacted by President Joe Biden in March.

So far, only a few states have committed to paying workers extra with money from the American Rescue Plan.

Florida is giving \$1,000 bonuses to teachers and first-responders. Minnesota plans to distribute \$250 million

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 18 of 55

in bonuses to essential workers, though a special panel won't determine who qualifies until later this year.

This past week, Hawaii Gov. David Ige vetoed a budget provision to pay teachers \$2,200 bonuses. The Democratic governor said lawmakers didn't have the authority to tell the state Department of Education how to use the federal money.

Some states remain reluctant to enact bonus programs.

An Oregon proposal to use federal pandemic aid to provide bonuses of up to \$2,000 for essential workers failed to make it into the budget that took effect July 1, despite a union lobbying campaign that included thousands of emails and hundreds of phone calls to lawmakers. The proposal would have covered workers in numerous fields, including education, health care, public safety and transportation.

"I don't think anyone was opposed to it," said Melissa Unger, executive director of Service Employees International Union Local 503. But "no one prioritized it."

Although states have until the end of 2024 to decide how to spend the latest federal aid, some advocates worry the realistic window for providing worker bonuses may be closing as more parts of society re-open.

"Unfortunately, the longer you delay doing it, the less it's going to be on the top of minds of voters and those policymakers," said Molly Kinder, a fellow at the nonprofit Brookings Institution who tracks pandemic hazard pay policies.

Premium pay is one of just several options provided to states under Biden's aid package. States also can use the money to backfill budget holes, help businesses and households affected by the economic downturn, fund certain infrastructure projects and pay for public health programs such as COVID-19 testing and vaccinations.

Illinois lawmakers used the federal money for dozens of initiatives in the budget that took effect July 1 — from \$75,000 for a high school mentoring and violence prevention program to \$200 million for hospitals. Nothing was earmarked for extra pandemic pay, even though Illinois had paid it in the past.

Democratic Gov. J.B. Pritzker's administration provided a temporary 12% pay boost last year to nearly 24,000 state workers whose jobs put them at risk of contracting COVID-19. Most of the \$62 million cost was covered with federal funds.

"Morale-wise, that was a critical thing for my co-workers and I," said Crosby Smith, a care provider at a state home for the developmentally disabled near Chicago. "Because at that time, when COVID hit our facility ... we felt kind of abandoned."

Smith and his fiancée were among numerous staff and residents at the Ludeman Developmental Center who contracted the virus last year. He said the hazard money helped pay down credit cards and avoid further debt when buying clothing and shoes.

Most states that have provided COVID-19 hazard pay used money from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act signed by then-President Donald Trump in March 2020. While some states limited payments to particular public employees, others passed out money to a wide range of private-sector workers deemed to be doing important jobs.

Louisiana spent more than \$38 million last year providing \$250 payments to more than 152,000 "front-line workers" earning less than \$50,000 annually, according to state data provided to the AP. Health care workers received the largest share of the money, followed by grocery store workers and law enforcement personnel. But payments also went to gas station workers, child-care providers, janitors, bus drivers and others.

Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf, a Democrat, used \$50 million in federal aid for grants to over 600 businesses to provide a temporary \$3 hourly boost to employees earning less than \$20 an hour. Health care providers got most of the money, followed by the food industry, according to state data provided to the AP. But millions of dollars also went to cleaning companies and private security firms.

By contrast, South Dakota limited hazard pay to state workers and only for the time they were potentially exposed to COVID-19. One therapy assistant got an extra 40 cents, a pharmacist received \$1.80 and a maintenance supervisor got \$4, according to state data provided to the AP.

In some states, the cost of hazard pay programs far exceeded initial expectations.

Missouri originally budgeted about \$24 million in federal aid to provide an extra \$250 per two-week

paycheck for state employees working in close-contact institutions such as prisons, mental health facilities and veterans nursing homes. The stipend applied to anyone without unscheduled absences at any facility with at least one COVID-19 case — ultimately covering a lot more people for a much longer period than policymakers had anticipated at the onset of the pandemic.

Missouri ended up paying more than \$73 million in hazard stipends to more than 18,000 employees, triggering an additional \$24 million in fringe costs such as pension payments and federal taxes, according to state data provided to the AP. The payments ended June 30, and the state has no immediate plans to resume them.

“Without a doubt, it was worth it,” said Missouri Gov. Mike Parson, a Republican. “Some people did some incredible jobs in this state to stay the course and to stay in the line of duty.”

Vermont’s hazard pay program also swelled in cost. Last August, the state allotted \$28 million of federal funds to pay up to \$2,000 to health care employees who worked during the early stages of the pandemic. It later added \$22 million to expand the program to retail and grocery workers, child care providers, janitors, trash collectors and others. When those funds were depleted, the state added \$10 million more to cover all eligible applicants.

Employees in Vermont’s retail and grocery industries received nearly a third of the total money, almost matching the amount that went to health care fields, according to data provided to the AP.

Demand was high, in part, because Republican Gov. Phil Scott encouraged hesitant big businesses, such as Walmart, to apply on behalf of their employees, said Mike Pieciak, commissioner of the Vermont Department of Financial Regulation. He said consumer spending spiked around the time the payments were distributed.

“The primary goal was to say thank you to those frontline workers, but it had that nice benefit as well of getting the money into the economy,” Pieciak said.

Top US commander to exit Afghanistan amid Taliban surge

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The top U.S. commander in Afghanistan is to hand over his command at a ceremony in the capital of Kabul on Monday, as America winds down its 20-year military presence and Taliban insurgents continue to gain territory across the country.

Gen. Scott Miller was poised to transfer authority to Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie, the head of U.S. Central Command, according to a U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity to confirm the developments.

McKenzie, also a four-star general, will operate from Central Command headquarters in Tampa, Florida. He will assume authority to conduct possible airstrikes in defense of Afghan government forces, at least until the U.S. withdrawal concludes by Aug. 31.

The handover ceremony was taking place in the heavily fortified Resolute Support headquarters in the heart of Kabul, at a time of rapid territorial gains by Taliban insurgents across Afghanistan.

The Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces, mostly funded by the United States and NATO, have put up resistance in some parts of the country, but overwhelmingly Afghan government troops appear to have abandoned the fight.

In recent weeks, the Taliban have gained several strategic districts, particularly along the borders with Iran, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

The Taliban control more than one-third of Afghanistan’s 421 districts and district centers. A Taliban claim that they control 85 percent of the districts is widely seen as exaggerated.

After Miller’s departure, a two-star admiral based at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul will oversee the U.S. military’s role in securing the American diplomatic presence in Kabul, including defending the Kabul airport.

Miller’s departure does not reduce the scope of the U.S. military mission in Afghanistan, since McKenzie will assume the authorities now held by Miller to conduct airstrikes in defense of Afghan government forces under certain circumstances.

The conditions under which such strikes might be used are not clear, nor is it known for how long McK-

enzie will keep the strike authority.

Italy erupts as Europe's soccer champions come home to Rome

KARL RITTER Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Europe's soccer champions returned home at dawn on Monday to the ecstatic cheers of Italians who spent the better part of the night honking horns, setting off fireworks and violating all sorts of coronavirus precautions to celebrate their team's 3-2 penalty shootout win over host England at Wembley Stadium.

Captain Giorgio Chiellini, his fist pumping the air, and coach Roberto Mancini hoisted the trophy high over their heads as they descended from their Alitalia charter flight at Rome's Leonardo da Vinci airport. Amid cheers from airport workers, defender Leonardo Spinazzola hopped down the steps on one foot, his other one in a cast after he injured his Achilles tendon earlier in the tournament.

"Grazie Azzurri," read a banner on the tarmac — a sentiment felt across the country after Italy took home its first major trophy since the 2006 World Cup.

The national team was being feted officially by President Sergio Mattarella and Premier Mario Draghi later on Monday, joined by tennis player Matteo Berrettini, who had given Italians another reason for pride on Sunday by reaching the Wimbledon singles final. Berrettini lost to Novak Djokovic, but he joined Mattarella at Wembley to watch the Azzurri finish 1-1 after extra-time and then win on penalties.

For Italians, the championship was a new beginning for their youthful national team and a country that's been yearning to return to normality after being hit hard and long by the pandemic.

A cacophony of honking cars, fireworks and singing fans filled the night in Rome as thousands of people took to the streets. As the sun rose on Monday, the noise had died down but not the sentiment.

"It seems to me that this victory is so good for the national spirit after all that suffering for COVID," said Daniela Righino, an Italian living in Uruguay who was back in Rome for the final. "Yesterday was an explosion of joy. I'm happy."

Many Italians saw the European Championship as a relaunch for a country that spent much of the past 16 months in various stages of lockdown. Italy was the first country outside Asia to get hit by the pandemic and suffered immensely, particularly in the spring of 2020 when hospitals in northern Italy were overwhelmed with patients and the death toll soared.

Italy has recorded more than 127,000 COVID deaths, the highest in the 27-nation European Union.

"It's been a complicated year for everyone but especially for us who were one of the first countries hit. This is a signal of a new beginning," said Michela Solfanelli, a 30-year-old event producer based in Milan.

Most virus restrictions have been lifted since the spring and those that remain were largely ignored by the mass of fans who danced in the streets of the capital chanting "we are champions of Europe."

David Bellomo, a 23-year-old from the southern city of Bari, pointed out this was Italy's second big victory this year, after Italian band Maneskin won the Eurovision Song Contest in May.

"Thanks to Eurovision and thanks to this game and soccer we've managed to come back this year," he said. "We almost got a triple," he added, referring to Berrettini.

Shoulder to shoulder, fans nervously watched the penalties on two big screens set up on Piazza del Popolo, an elliptical cobblestone square at the edge of Rome's historic center. A deafening roar rose to the sky as Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma saved England's last penalty.

Among the sea of blue shirts was an immigrant family from Senegal, who came from the town of Zagarolo, an hour outside Rome, to experience the final with the crowd in the piazza.

"I am not Italian, but I can feel the emotions. I feel it, as if I were Italian," said Falilou Ndao, 42. "We really love this country."

His 13-year-old son Yankho, an Italy fan and young soccer player, was impressed by the team.

"They showed courage. They never gave up, even when they were down by a goal," he said. "It is so well-deserved. They have been playing great the entire tournament. Go Italy!"

Though people are still required to wear masks in crowded situations, police made no attempts to inter-

vene as throngs of supporters poured out of the piazza, singing the national anthem and lighting flares. Fireworks cracked overhead as fans cruised through the city waving Italian flags from their cars.

Dr. Annamaria Altomare, a 39-year-old gastroenterologist, watched the spectacle with a friend from a safe distance. They were among the few wearing masks.

"We want to avoid the delta variant in this mess," she said, laughing.

Pfizer to discuss COVID-19 vaccine booster with US officials

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pfizer says it plans to meet with top U.S. health officials Monday to discuss the drugmaker's request for federal authorization of a third dose of its COVID-19 vaccine as President Joe Biden's chief medical adviser acknowledged that "it is entirely conceivable, maybe likely" that booster shots will be needed.

The company said it was scheduled to have the meeting with the Food and Drug Administration and other officials Monday, days after Pfizer asserted that booster shots would be needed within 12 months.

Pfizer's Dr. Mikael Dolsten told The Associated Press last week that early data from the company's booster study suggests people's antibody levels jump five- to 10-fold after a third dose, compared to their second dose months earlier — evidence it believes supports the need for a booster.

On Sunday, Dr. Anthony Fauci didn't rule out the possibility but said it was too soon for the government to recommend another shot. He said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the FDA did the right thing last week by pushing back against Pfizer's assertion with their statement that they did not view booster shots as necessary "at this time."

Fauci said clinical studies and laboratory data have yet to fully bear out the need for a booster to the current two-shot Pfizer and Moderna vaccines or the one-shot Johnson & Johnson regimen.

"Right now, given the data and the information we have, we do not need to give people a third shot," he said. "That doesn't mean we stop there. ... There are studies being done now ongoing as we speak about looking at the feasibility about if and when we should be boosting people."

He said it was quite possible in the coming months "as data evolves" that the government may urge a booster based on such factors as age and underlying medical conditions. "Certainly it is entirely conceivable, maybe likely at some time, we will need a boost," Fauci said.

Monday's planned meeting between Pfizer and U.S. health officials was first reported by The Washington Post.

Currently only about 48% of the U.S. population is fully vaccinated. Some parts of the country have far lower immunization rates, and in those places the delta variant is surging. Last week, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the CDC director, said that's leading to "two truths" — highly immunized swaths of America are getting back to normal while hospitalizations are rising in other places.

Fauci said it was inexplicable that some Americans are so resistant to getting a vaccine when scientific data show how effective it is in staving off COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations, and he was dismayed by efforts to block making vaccinations more accessible, such as Biden's suggestion of door-to-door outreach.

Gov. Asa Hutchinson, R-Ark., agreed Sunday that there is a vaccine resistance in Southern and rural states like his because "you have that more conservative approach, skepticism about government."

Describing his efforts to boost vaccinations in his state, which is seeing rising infections, Hutchinson said "no one wants an agent knocking on a door," but "we do want those that do not have access otherwise to make sure they know about it."

The grassroots component of the federal vaccination campaign has been in operation since April, when supplies of shots began outpacing demand. It was outlined and funded by Congress in the \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill passed in March and overwhelmingly is carried out by local officials and private sector workers and volunteers.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 22 of 55

Rep. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., blasted opposition to vaccination efforts from some GOP lawmakers as "absolute insanity." He said House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy of California and others in the party need to speak out against "these absolute clown politicians playing on your vaccine fears for their own selfish gain."

Fauci appeared on CNN's "State of the Union," ABC's "This Week" and CBS' "Face the Nation"; Hutchinson spoke on ABC, and Kinzinger was on CNN.

Listen up: Biden speaks volumes in a whisper to make a point

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden was at a public transit station in Wisconsin, talking about repairing roads and bridges, when he shifted gears and began defending his plan to send money to parents for each minor child, payments some critics call a "giveaway."

Biden folded his arms, rested on the lectern, leaned into the mic and lowered his voice.

"Hey, guys, I think it's time to give ordinary people a tax break," he said, almost whispering as he addressed his critics. "The wealthy are doing fine."

It was the latest instance of Biden speaking volumes by whispering.

The White House and communications experts say Biden's whispering is just this veteran politician's old-school way of trying to make a connection while emphasizing a point.

Biden's critics on the right as well as some late-night TV talk show hosts say the whispers are "creepy" and "weird." Conservatives use the dramatic soft talk to fuel the narrative that the Democratic president is unfit for the job, and comedians deploy it to generate laughs.

"It's an intimate form of communication," said Vanessa Beasley, associate professor of communication studies at Vanderbilt University.

Biden whispered some of his answers to reporters' questions during an impromptu White House news conference last month after he and a group of Senate Republicans announced they had reached a deal to spend \$973 billion on rebuilding the nation's infrastructure.

As he stood in the East Room, Biden was questioned about his timeline for providing additional financial help to families. He leaned in, eyes wide, and whispered: "I got them \$1.9 trillion in relief so far. They're going to be getting checks in the mail that are consequential."

During a lengthy response to a separate question, he whispered, "I wrote the bill," before bending down to get closer to the microphone and adding, "on the environment."

On the subject of employers' hiring difficulties, Biden leaned into the mic again, arms resting on the lectern and said softly that the solution is to "pay them more."

Beasley said the use of whispering by Biden, who was a U.S. senator and vice president for a total of more than 40 years, is a throwback to a long-ago time of chummier relations between lawmakers and members of the Washington press corps.

"I think it's a symbolic gesture to a kind of intimacy and familiarity," she said.

Beasley and others noted the contrast between Biden and former President Donald Trump, who often spoke loudly and angrily.

"One of the things that Trump never did was whisper," said Robin Lakoff, professor emerita of linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley.

Public speakers — lawmakers, celebrities, corporate executives — often raise or lower their voices for dramatic effect or tell jokes to keep their audiences following along instead of falling asleep.

Beasley said the tone of political discourse these days seems set to loud so that "it sort of sets everybody back a little bit when you see someone going in a different direction and reducing their volume."

Lakoff said what Biden does isn't really whispering because his vocal chords vibrate and make sound.

"A true whisper is something you wouldn't be able to hear very well," she said, comparing what Biden does to a "stage whisper" in which an actor in a play steps out of character to share a secret with the audience or preview some action that's about to happen.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 23 of 55

The White House defended Biden, saying conservatives who criticize the way he speaks, including his stuttering, do so because they don't have a better agenda to offer voters.

"Under President Biden's leadership, COVID cases have plunged by over 90%, we've achieved an historic level of job creation, the economy is growing at its highest rate in 40 years, and we've achieved a breakthrough on the world stage to stop the offshoring of American jobs," deputy press secretary Andrew Bates said.

"And this performative criticism is just the latest acknowledgement by Republicans that he's running the table on them while they're grasping for a case to make," Bates whispered.

Kayleigh McEnany, a White House press secretary for Trump, called Biden's whispering "peculiar" and "crazy" before panelists on the Fox News Channel program she co-hosts discussed it. Other Fox News personalities and guests also panned Biden's low-volume speech.

On the late-night talk show circuit, comedian Stephen Colbert featured what he called Biden's "new rhetorical flourish" in a recent monologue on his CBS show.

After airing clips of the president, Colbert leaned into a hand-held microphone and whispered: "Mr. President, Mr. President. You know I'm a fan, but the way you lean forward and whisper. Guess what? It's a little creepy. It's a little creepy."

On the flip side, Biden raises his voice, too, as he did while addressing the nation from the White House lawn on July Fourth.

"On this sacred day, I look out to those monuments on our National Mall, and beyond them, into the hearts of our people across the land and I know this," he said, voice rising as he neared the conclusion of his speech. "It's never, ever been a good bet to bet against America. Never.

"We just have to remember who we are. We are the United States of America," Biden thundered. "And there's nothing — nothing — we can't do if we do it together."

California and other parts of the West broil and burn

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

Firefighters working in searing heat struggled to contain the largest wildfire in California this year while state power operators urged people to conserve energy after a huge wildfire in neighboring Oregon disrupted the flow of electricity from three major transmission lines.

A large swath of the West baked during the weekend in triple-digit temperatures that were expected to continue into the start of the work week. The California Independent System Operator that manages the state's power grid issued a five-hour "flex alert" starting at 4 p.m. Monday and asked consumers to "conserve as much electricity as possible" to avoid any outages.

California and other parts of the West are sinking deeper into drought and that has sent fire danger sky high in many areas. In Arizona, a small plane crashed Saturday during a survey of a wildfire in rural Mohave County, killing both crew members.

The Beech C-90 aircraft was helping perform reconnaissance over the lightning-caused Cedar Basin Fire, near the tiny community of Wikieup northwest of Phoenix.

Officials on Sunday identified the victims as Air Tactical Group Supervisor Jeff Piechura, 62, a retired Tucson-area fire chief who was working for the Coronado National Forest, and Matthew Miller, 48, a pilot with Falcon Executive Aviation contracted by the U.S. Forest Service. The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating the crash.

In Oregon, the Bootleg Fire exploded to 224 square miles (580 square kilometers) as it raced through heavy timber in the Fremont-Winema National Forest, near the Klamath County town of Sprague River. The fire disrupted service on three transmission lines providing up to 5,500 megawatts of electricity to neighboring California.

The largest wildfire of the year in California was raging near the border with Nevada. The Beckwourth Complex Fire — a combination of two lightning-caused blazes burning north of Lake Tahoe — grew by a third Sunday to 134 square miles (348 kilometers). However, firefighters working in temperatures that

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 24 of 55

topped 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) were able to gain some ground, doubling containment to 20%.

Late Saturday, flames jumped U.S. 395, which was closed near the small town of Doyle in California's Lassen County. The lanes reopened Sunday, and officials urged motorists to use caution and keep moving along the key north-south route where flames were still active.

"Do not stop and take pictures," said the fire's Operations Section Chief Jake Cagle. "You are going to impede our operations if you stop and look at what's going on."

Cagle said structures had burned in Doyle, but he didn't have an exact number. Bob Prary, who manages the Buck-Inn Bar in the town of about 600 people, said he saw at least six houses destroyed after Saturday's flareup. The fire was smoldering Sunday in and around Doyle, but he feared some remote ranch properties were still in danger.

"It seems like the worst is over in town, but back on the mountainside the fire's still going strong," Prary said.

A wildfire in southeast Washington grew to almost 60 square miles (155 square kilometers) as it blackened grass and timber while it moved into the Umatilla National Forest.

In Idaho, Gov. Brad Little declared a wildfire emergency Friday and mobilized the state's National Guard to help fight fires sparked after lightning storms swept across the drought-stricken region.

For democracy, it's a time of swimming against the tide

By TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

The old Nicaraguan revolutionary, with his receding hairline and the goatee that he had finally let turn grey, spoke calmly into the camera as police swarmed toward his house, hidden behind a high wall in a leafy Managua neighborhood. Surveillance drones, he said, were watching overhead.

Decades earlier, Hugo Torres had been a revered guerrilla in the fight against right-wing dictator Anastasio Somoza. In 1974, he'd taken a group of top officials hostage, then traded them for the release of imprisoned comrades. Among those prisoners was Daniel Ortega, a Marxist bank robber who would become Nicaragua's elected president and later its authoritarian ruler.

And on this hot Sunday in mid-June, amid a weeklong clampdown to obliterate nearly every hint of opposition, Ortega had his old savior arrested.

"History is on our side," Torres said in the video, which was quickly uploaded onto social media. "The end of the dictatorship is close."

But history -- at least recent history -- is not on Torres' side. In the last few months, the growing ranks of dictators have flexed their muscles, and freedom has been in retreat.

The list is grim: a draconian crackdown in Nicaragua, with laws that now let the government paint nearly any critic as a traitor; a military takeover in Myanmar, with bloody repression that the United Nations says has left more than 850 people dead since Feb. 1 and more than 4,800 arbitrarily detained; a tightening grip by Beijing on Hong Kong, the semi-autonomous enclave where activists and journalists have been harassed and imprisoned under a sweeping national security law.

In mid-June, Hong Kong's last remaining pro-democracy newspaper shut down operations after police froze \$2.3 million of its assets and arrested five top editors and executives, accusing them of foreign collusion.

"Why does it have to end up like this?" asked an Apple Daily graphic designer, Dickson Ng.

The backsliding of democracy, though, goes back far before 2021, with a long string of countries where democratic rule has been abandoned or dialed back, or where democratically elected leaders now make no secret of their authoritarianism.

2020 was "another year of decline for liberal democracy," said a recent report from the V-Dem Institute, a Sweden-based research center. "The world is still more democratic than it was in the 1970s and 1980s, but the global decline in liberal democracy has been steep during the past 10 years."

Countries like Sweden, Germany and the United States can seem like democratic outliers in a world

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 25 of 55

increasingly dominated by authoritarian leaders.

"It's an open question if we as a democratic grouping can push back against the Russias or the Chinas of the world and 'win' the 21st century," said Torrey Taussig, a scholar of authoritarianism and great power politics at the Harvard Kennedy School. "Can the democracies rally to push back against this authoritarian tide that we've seen resurgent?"

It wasn't supposed to be like this.

The late 20th and early 21st centuries saw country after country transition to democratic rule. The Soviet Union collapsed amid Mikhail Gorbachev's attempts at political and economic reform. Eastern European nations that had long been controlled by Moscow became independent. In Latin America, decades of military dictatorships gave way to elected governments. A wave of democratization swept across Africa, from South Africa to Nigeria to Ghana.

"We had the largest number of democracies that ever existed in the world. It was unparalleled," said Sheri Berman, a political science professor at Barnard College, Columbia University. "It seemed that liberal democracy was the way of the future."

But within just a few years the cracks began to show.

Maybe the world was just too optimistic. Democracy is messy.

"It takes a lot to make democracy work," said Berman. "Getting rid of the dictators is not the end. It's the beginning."

As a result, many scholars aren't too surprised when countries like Nicaragua or Myanmar stumble into authoritarianism. Both are very poor, with little history of democracy.

Hard times and turmoil are mother's milk for authoritarians.

Russia's experiment with democracy, for example, was short lived after the collapse of the Soviet Union. A plunging standard of living, a weak leader in Boris Yeltsin, thug businessmen and budding oligarchs fighting for control of state-owned businesses opened the way for Vladimir Putin.

Then came the financial crisis of 2007-2008, which began in the U.S. and rippled around the world. In the U.S., banks teetered on the verge of collapse and top officials worried about another Great Depression. In the European Union, America's troubles helped lead to a debt crisis that sucked in Greece, Ireland and other nations that needed outside economic bailouts.

Those financial troubles, combined later with the political firestorms of the Trump administration and years of angry negotiations over Britain's exit from the European Union, made liberal democracy look risky.

"The more attractive the U.S. and Europe looks, the better that is for the folks fighting for democracy," said Berman. And the opposite is also true.

Frustration has grown, with a 2019 Pew Research Center survey of 34 countries showing a median of 64% of people believing elected officials don't care about them.

Today, a man like Viktor Orban can look very attractive to many voters.

Orban, the nationalist Hungarian prime minister who returned to power in the wake of the financial crisis, feeding on an electorate that distrusted the traditional elite, spoke proudly of leading an "illiberal democracy."

He now talks about Hungary's "system of national cooperation," a process that has hobbled the court system, re-written the constitution and given immense power to himself and his party. The country's media is largely now a factory producing pro-Orban content.

Rival parties are regularly investigated by government auditors and sometimes fined to the brink of bankruptcy.

"We have replaced a shipwrecked liberal democracy with a 21st-century Christian democracy," Orban proudly told lawmakers after a landslide 2018 election victory.

The world has a string of such leaders.

Some are authoritarians of varying degrees of power, from Putin in Russia to Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey to Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines. Others are in the politically foggy wilderness between a one-party state and a solid democracy, like Jaroslaw Kaczynski, who runs the ruling party in Poland and

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 26 of 55

Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, whose father ruled the country for three decades and turned it into an affluent city-state.

The pandemic has sped up a democratic decline in Africa, scholars say, with elections postponed or opposition figures silenced from Ethiopia to Zimbabwe.

But in a world where democracy is often swimming against the political tide, scholars also see some good news. It just requires a longer view of history.

Eighty years ago, there were perhaps 12 fully functioning democracies. Today, the Democracy Index put out by the Economist Intelligence Unit says there are 23 full democracies, and nearly half the planet lives in some form of democracy.

Then there are the protesters, perhaps the most visible sign of a thirst for democratic rule.

Thousands of Russians flooded the streets earlier this year after opposition leader Alexei Navalny was imprisoned. Neighboring Belarus was shaken by months of protests sparked by the 2020 reelection of President Alexander Lukashenko, which were widely seen as rigged. Political protests are common in Poland and Hungary.

Such protests regularly fail. The demonstrations in Russia and Belarus, for instance, ended with heavy-handed crackdowns.

But political scientists say even suppressed protests can be important political sparks.

Plus, sometimes they succeed.

In Sudan, 2019 mass protests against the autocratic president, Omar al-Bashir, led to his ouster by the military. The country is now on a fragile path to democracy, ruled by a transitional government.

In a recent report, the U.S.-based rights watchdog Freedom House, saw signs of hope in the European Union's sanctions against the Belarusian regime, exile Central Asian journalists and bloggers continuing their work from overseas, and the way a string of eastern European governments have slowed business ties with China, concerned about transparency and national security. Meanwhile, Hungary's Orban faced surprisingly united opposition.

Some scholars also see hope in the way President Joe Biden has reached out to America's longtime European allies, reversing the approach of the Trump administration.

Biden's recent trip to Europe, said Taussig, the Harvard Kennedy School scholar, was "an attempt to rally America's democratic partners" against the authoritarian tide.

So maybe that old, arrested Nicaraguan revolutionary does have reason for optimism.

"These are the desperate blows of a regime that feels itself dying," Torres said in the video before his arrest.

Maybe. As summer wore on, he remained in prison.

Democratic primary in Ohio emerges as test for progressives

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

CLEVELAND (AP) — Amid relentless sunshine and intensifying humidity, Nina Turner led a small procession of voters last week to a polling place on Cleveland's east side, guiding the group down a long block to the crosswalk even though darting across the street would have been easier.

"We don't want you breaking the law," an aide admonished. "Let's go down to the light."

Turner built a national reputation as a leading voice for Bernie Sanders' presidential campaigns, bringing crowds in packed auditoriums to their feet with rousing calls for universal health care and bold action to combat climate change. But as she faces an election of her own next month, Turner is focused on more mundane aspects of campaigning, like avoiding jaywalking as she encourages supporters to vote and offering reassurances that her brand of politics still has a place in the Democratic Party.

"Something I can add, whether mainline Democrats get this or not, is I can speak the language of people from all walks of life," Turner said in an interview. "That is important for the expansion of the Democratic Party."

Turner is the best known of more than a dozen Democrats vying to replace former Rep. Marcia Fudge,

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 27 of 55

who left Congress to become President Joe Biden's housing chief. The Aug. 3 primary is shaping up as one of the final tests this year for progressives, who have faced setbacks in other races, including Democratic primaries for Virginia governor and New York mayor.

With just a six-seat advantage in the House, some Democrats are taking aggressive steps to blunt Turner and back more centrist alternatives.

House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn, the highest-ranking Black member of Congress, whose support helped Biden secure the Democratic nomination last year, is backing county councilwoman Shontel Brown over Turner. Hillary Clinton, the political arm of the Congressional Black Caucus, several leading unions and more than 100 local leaders are doing the same.

Federal rules prohibit Fudge from endorsing in the race, but her mother appeared in a commercial for Brown.

While the contest is emerging as a proxy for the future of the Democratic Party, local leaders say voters are more worried about issues like creating jobs, addressing crime and improving access to health care, which remains elusive for many, despite Cleveland's high concentration of major hospital chains.

"People are trying to make this like it's moderate versus progressive. I don't see it that way," said Cleveland Councilman Blaine Griffin, who has endorsed Turner but is friends with everyone running. He added that, regardless of ideology, no one "likes poverty, speeding cars down the street, bad roads or bridges."

The district is shaped like a hatchet with an oversize head, snaking from Cleveland to Akron, nearly 40 miles to the south. The population is 53% African American, and nearly a quarter of residents live in poverty. The winner of the primary in the solidly blue district will likely cruise to victory in November's general election.

A 53-year-old community college professor, Turner served on the Cleveland City Council, was a state senator and ran unsuccessfully for Ohio secretary of state before crisscrossing the country with Sanders during his 2016 and 2020 presidential bids.

Her signature phrase, "Hello, somebody!" became a campaign fixture, prompting crowds across the country to yell back with delight. But those who worked with Turner years ago in Cleveland remember her for another catchphrase, "Do you feel me?" which she first used addressing audiences of otherwise unresponsive young people.

As she talks to voters, Turner explains her support for universal health insurance coverage under "Medicare for All" by pointing to the experience of her mother, who was uninsured and died when she was just 42. Turner also says she wants student debt eradicated because she knows its sting: She and her son owe nearly \$100,000 combined in loans she's still paying off.

But the hard-fought presidential primary between Biden and Sanders has left some lingering resentments. The advocacy group Democratic Majority for Israel has produced ads seizing on Turner once likening supporting Biden to being forced to eat excrement.

Brown has pointed to such moments to argue that she will be able to accomplish far more, far quicker in Washington.

"I don't have to start with a long letter of apology," Brown said from her campaign office in a onetime pet store. "I can just walk in the door with good relationships and get to work on behalf of the constituents."

The Rev. Aaron Phillips, executive director of the Cleveland Clergy Coalition, blames Sanders and Turner for so dividing Democrats, which he says helped Republican Donald Trump win the presidency in 2016.

Brown, meanwhile, "has been a faithful Democrat all of her life," Phillips said. "She has never varied."

Turner says she remains a proud progressive. And while some like-minded candidates haven't won their races lately, she said they are nonetheless "moving the narrative in this country." The cargo van that serves as her mobile campaign office is emblazoned with the slang phrase "corporate Democrat want a puppet."

As Turner briefly hung out in the van's shade after the walk to the polling place, Sam Cooke's "Everybody Loves to Cha Cha Cha" blared over the speakers, and she started dancing.

"I can do this. But no singing," she said, laughing. "There are people with that talent. I am not one of them."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 28 of 55

The Rev. Regis Bunch of Cleveland's Fifth Christian Church said Turner makes personal connections with voters and insisted most aren't scared away by big progressive goals, which he said "are not as far off as many believe."

"We need something more wide than this liberal paradigm we've been living in," said Bunch, 34, who said he supported Sanders in the primary and only voted for Biden last fall "by force."

Turner nonetheless denies that she'll be a congressional provocateur, arguing that she worked well with both parties in the state Legislature. She's also aired TV ads promoting her past work as the Ohio Democratic Party engagement chair.

Brown counters that she can actually achieve the kind of bipartisanship Turner only talks about.

"I feel like the 'all or nothing' approach ends up with nothing. So we have to be able to find compromise," she said. "Being a partner doesn't mean being a puppet."

Bucks blowout: Giannis has 41, Suns' NBA Finals lead now 2-1

By BRIAN MAHONEY AP Basketball Writer

MILWAUKEE (AP) — When Giannis Antetokounmpo crashed to the court just two weeks ago with what appeared to be a serious knee injury, there was no guarantee he'd be back this season.

Maybe, he feared, he might even miss a year.

Antetokounmpo refused to stay down.

These Milwaukee Bucks just won't, either.

Antetokounmpo had 41 points, 13 rebounds and six assists in the NBA Finals' return to Milwaukee, and the Bucks pounded Phoenix 120-100 on Sunday night, cutting the Suns' lead to 2-1.

"We knew what kind of game this was going to be," Antetokounmpo said. "We knew that if we lose the game you're in the hole."

Instead, the Bucks started climbing out of one.

The first NBA Finals game in Milwaukee since 1974 went to the home team in a romp, with Antetokounmpo and the bigger Bucks overwhelming the smallish Suns to the tune of a 20-2 advantage in second-chance points.

Game 4 is Wednesday night, with the series guaranteed to go back to Phoenix afterward.

"I said it after last game. This team's not going to give in. They're going to keep playing all the way through," Suns star Devin Booker said. "So we have to bring that same effort that we had in the first two games and I think we'll be in good shape."

Antetokounmpo, who missed the last two games of the Eastern Conference finals because of a hyper-extended left knee and was no sure thing to even be ready to start this series, followed up his 42-point, 12-rebound performance in Game 2 by doing it all again — even making his free throws this time.

Back in front of his own fans and free of the loud counts he's been hearing on the road, Antetokounmpo went 13 of 17 at the line. With two straight 40-point games in the NBA Finals, he's halfway to Michael Jordan's record — set against the Suns.

Chris Paul had 19 points and nine assists, but the Suns got next to nothing from his star backcourt mate. Booker shot 3 for 14, scoring just 10 points.

Jrue Holiday bounced back from two poor games in Phoenix with five 3-pointers and 21 points to get the Bucks going again onto the comeback trail, having already overcome one 2-0 deficit in this postseason. Khris Middleton added 18.

"We all hate to lose and we know the ultimate goal," Holiday said.

Fans broke out their "Bucks in 6! Bucks in 6!" chant as Milwaukee started to pull away in the first half and then again as the benches emptied with the final minutes.

The Bucks are seeking their second NBA title and hadn't even played for one in 47 years. They grabbed control of this game by outscoring Phoenix 30-9 over the last nine minutes of the second quarter, then ending the third with a 16-0 finish.

Fans began making their way to the Deer District outside the arena in the middle of the afternoon, with

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 29 of 55

so many fans decked out in green that Fiserv Forum felt more like Fiserv Forest.

They didn't get to cheer as much as they wanted early after a strong start by the Suns, who got 12 points from Deandre Ayton in the opening period. But Ayton was hampered by foul trouble and the Bucks soon ran past and kept right on going.

Antetokounmpo had seven straight points to finish a 9-0 run in the second that gave Milwaukee a six-point lead, and after Phoenix scored four straight, the Bucks took off again on a 16-3 run.

Bobby Portis had the last two baskets in the half, finishing off a pretty fast break with a dunk for one of them, and it was 60-45 at the break.

The lead was 13 with under eight minutes left in the third when Cam Johnson took a pass near midcourt with an open path to the basket. P.J. Tucker tried to step in but was too late, and Johnson threw it down over him while drawing the foul.

That triggered a 14-5 run that cut it to 74-70 and seemed to have the Suns back into the game. Just as quickly, they were out of it again.

Holiday made two 3-pointers in the next minute and Milwaukee pushed the lead back to nine, and by the end of the third it had ballooned to 98-76.

The Bucks, who lost the first two games against Brooklyn in the second round, avoided falling into a 3-0 hole from which no NBA team has escaped.

They limited the Suns to nine 3-pointers after Phoenix hit 20 in its Game 2 victory.

Ayton and Jae Crowder each had 18 points for the Suns. But Mikal Bridges, who had a career playoff-high 27 in Game 2, took only four shots and had four points.

TIP-INS

Suns: Torrey Craig had two points in 15 minutes after hurting his right knee in Game 2. He came up gingerly after lunging to save a bad pass by Paul that went out of bounds in the second quarter. ... Frank Kaminsky, the former college player of the year at Wisconsin, had six points after going scoreless in the two games in Phoenix.

Bucks: Antetokounmpo had his 11th game with 30 points and 10 rebounds, passing Kareem Abdul-Jabbar in 1974 for most by a Bucks player in one postseason. Only Shaquille O'Neal (13, 2000) and Elgin Baylor (12, 1962) had more. ... The Bucks said there were 25,000 fans in the Deer District. ... Portis and Brook Lopez each scored 11 points.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Monty Williams, in his second season as coach, said he has received text messages from Steve Nash and others from the Suns' past as he tries to lead the organization to its first title.

"That's been pretty cool because I'm new to it and they have adopted me like I've been in it for a long time, but it's really not even two years yet," Williams said. "So the way that they have embraced me has been pretty cool."

Condo collapse victim fought at failed Bay of Pigs invasion

By LINDA A. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

Sixty years before Juan Mora's Florida condo building came crashing down, killing him and at least 89 others, he was among hundreds of Cuban exiles who signed up for a covert, CIA-funded operation to overthrow Fidel Castro's Soviet-backed dictatorship.

Mora's dream of restoring democracy in his homeland took him from military training at a Guatemalan jungle camp to the failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, where he was captured and then crammed into a decrepit, rat-filled Cuban prison for 20 months, friends once imprisoned with him told The Associated Press.

Authorities on Wednesday identified the remains of 80-year-old Juan A. Mora, also known as Juanito, recovered from the rubble of the Champlain Towers South building in Surfside. Others killed included his wife, Ana, and their adult son, Juan Mora Jr., who worked in Chicago and had been staying with his parents when their 12-story building suddenly pancaked on June 24.

Mora Sr. was a much-liked figure in the Miami area Cuban-American community, once active in the Bay

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 30 of 55

of Pigs Veterans Association and the Bay of Pigs Museum it houses, museum board member Humberto Lopez said Friday. Mora was "always trying to help," organizing events, writing editorials about the invasion and emailing with other members of the veterans group, Lopez recalled.

Lopez said he and the loquacious Mora were close for the past decade, and described his wife as "charismatic."

Ana Mora had worked as assistant to the president of a prestigious Catholic high school in Miami, Belen Jesuit Prep, from which the couple's son had graduated, said another family friend, Johnny Lopez de la Cruz, president of the museum and veteran's association.

Mora Jr. was a manager for Morton Salt's road salt business in Chicago, according to a close friend there, Matthew Kaade, who graduated with him from Loyola University in Chicago in 2011.

Lopez de la Cruz said Mora Sr. also had two daughters from a prior marriage. Another friend, Humberto Diaz Arguelles, said Mora's first wife died of cancer.

Mora Sr. was part of a band of Cuban exiles funded by the CIA late in the Eisenhower administration to help counter Soviet influence and missiles placed in Cuba. The volunteers were sent to training camps in Guatemala's jungle in 1960 and early 1961. The force came to be known as Brigade 2506 — the ID number of the first casualty, a man who fell off a cliff during a training accident, said Diaz Arguelles, who trained at one of the camps with Mora.

They lived in tents, eating food that was sometimes spoiled and drinking river water as they learned to use machine guns, grenades, bazookas and mortars.

"We were so convinced about what we were doing to go free Cuba that nobody complained," Diaz Arguelles remembered.

He said Mora, a radio operator in the brigade's Battalion 3, was lively and popular and "always talking about every subject you can think of."

When training ended in April 1961 and the fighters headed to Cuba, they realized they weren't getting the help they'd been promised by the U.S. military, including aerial support and a "navy armada," Diaz Arguelles said. Roughly 1,400 men were transported from a Nicaraguan port in rusty merchant cargo ships to the Bay of Pigs on Cuba's southern coast, then had to climb down ropes in the dark to board "18-foot aluminum boats from Sears" and reach the beach — while under fire, because Castro had learned of the invasion in advance.

"There was no time to get scared," said Diaz Arguelles, whose boat sank after hitting a reef, forcing him to swim ashore with a mortar tube and two boxes of ammo.

President John F. Kennedy, who authorized the mission barely three months into his term, had canceled a second planned airstrike after U.S. support for the April 17, 1961, invasion became known, according to the JFK Library.

After three days fighting the overwhelming Cuban force, hiding in swamps and running out of ammunition, water and food, more than 100 members of the 2506 Brigade had been killed. Diaz Arguelles and about 20 invaders were surrounded by Cuban troops and taken to Castillo del Principe, or Castle of the Prince, a huge military fort in Havana. There Diaz Arguelles again met Mora, who like him had been captured.

Diaz Arguelles said the prison was deteriorated and full of fungus, and they had to sleep on the floor with rats running over them at night. Their meager food had rats and cockroaches in it, and contaminated water left the men sick and weak.

Lopez also was imprisoned there and spent about eight months in the same cell with Mora, who was then moved elsewhere in the prison.

Nearly 1,200 prisoners eventually were returned to the U.S. in exchange for \$53 million in food and medicine, according to the JFK Library. The Brigade 2506 survivors were flown to Florida just before Christmas 1962 and reunited with whatever family they had there.

Diaz Arguelles said he and Mora both got jobs and worked their way through college.

The men had drifted apart for years but reconnected after retirement. Diaz Arguelles recalled Mora had owned a business selling hurricane-proof windows and doors for at least a decade, and said they last spoke a couple months ago, naturally about the Bay of Pigs veterans group.

Trump lawyers might be penalized over Michigan election case

By ED WHITE Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — A federal judge is considering whether to order financial penalties or other sanctions against some of former President Donald Trump's lawyers who signed onto a lawsuit last year challenging Michigan's election results.

The lawsuit alleging widespread fraud was voluntarily dropped after a judge in December found nothing but "speculation and conjecture" that votes for Trump somehow were destroyed or switched to votes for Joe Biden, who won Michigan by 2.8 percentage points.

Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the city of Detroit now want the plaintiffs and a raft of attorneys, including Trump allies Sidney Powell and L. Lin Wood, to face the consequences of pursuing what they call frivolous claims.

"It was never about winning on the merits of the claims, but rather (the) purpose was to undermine the integrity of the election results and the people's trust in the electoral process and in government," the attorney general's office said in a court filing.

U.S. District Judge Linda Parker in Detroit is holding a hearing by video conference Monday.

There is no evidence of widespread fraud in the 2020 election. Indeed, election officials from both political parties have stated publicly that the election went well, and international observers confirmed there were no serious irregularities.

The lawsuit was filed on behalf of six Republican voters who wanted Parker to decertify Michigan's election results and impound voting machines. The judge declined, calling the request "stunning in its scope and breathtaking in its reach."

The case appeared to be mostly handled by Detroit-area attorneys. But the lawsuit also carried the names of Powell, Wood and four more lawyers from outside Michigan.

The roles of Powell and Wood are unclear; they never filed a formal appearance in the case, according to the docket. But they've been targeted in the request for penalties.

Whitmer and Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, also a Democrat, want the state to receive at least \$11,000 in legal fees. Detroit is asking the judge to disgorge any money that lawyers have collected through a post-election fundraising campaign. The city also wants the lawyers to face disciplinary hearings in their respective states.

In response, attorney Stefanie Lambert Junttila insisted there was plenty of evidence to support the lawsuit.

"They are a new form of political retribution," she said of possible sanctions. "Such abuse of the law has no place in this court and is contrary to the law it hypocritically invokes."

In New York, Rudy Giuliani has been suspended from practicing law because he made false statements while trying to get courts to overturn Trump's election loss.

Demonstrators in Havana protest shortages, rising prices

By ANDREA RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Thousands of Cubans marched on Havana's Malecon promenade and elsewhere on the island Sunday to protest food shortages and high prices amid the coronavirus crisis, in one of biggest anti-government demonstrations in memory.

Many young people took part in the afternoon protest in the capital, which disrupted traffic until police moved in after several hours and broke up the march when a few protesters threw rocks.

Police initially trailed behind as protesters chanted "Freedom," "Enough" and "Unite." One motorcyclist pulled out a U.S. flag, but it was snatched from him by others.

"We are fed up with the queues, the shortages. That's why I'm here," one middle-age protester told The Associated Press. He declined to identify himself for fear of being arrested later.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 32 of 55

Cuba is going through its worst economic crisis in decades, along with a resurgence of coronavirus cases, as it suffers the consequences of U.S. sanctions imposed by the Trump administration.

An official in the Biden administration tweeted support for Sunday's demonstrations.

"Peaceful protests are growing in #Cuba as the Cuban people exercise their right to peaceful assembly to express concern about rising COVID cases/deaths & medicine shortages. We commend the numerous efforts of the Cuban people mobilizing donations to help neighbors in need," tweeted Julie Chung, acting assistant secretary for state for Western Hemisphere affairs.

Cuba's director general for U.S. affairs, Carlos F. de Cossio, dismissed her remarks in his own tweet: "US State Department and its officials, involved to their necks in promoting social and political instability in #Cuba, should avoid expressing hypocritical concern for a situation they have been betting on. Cuba is and will continue to be a peaceful country, contrary to the US."

The demonstration grew to a few thousand in the vicinity of Galeano Avenue and the marchers pressed on despite a few charges by police officers and tear gas barrages. People standing on many balconies along the central artery in the Centro Habana neighborhood applauded the protesters passing by. Others joined in the march.

Although many people tried to take out their cellphones and broadcast the protest live, Cuban authorities shut down internet service throughout the afternoon.

About 2 1/2 hours into the march, some protesters pulled up cobblestones and threw them at police, at which point officers began arresting people and the marchers dispersed.

AP journalists counted at least 20 people who were taken away in police cars or by individuals in civilian clothes.

"The people came out to express themselves freely, and they are repressing and beating them," Rev. Jorge Luis Gil, a Roman Catholic priest, said while standing at a street corner in Centro Habana.

About 300 people close to the government then arrived with a large Cuban flag shouting slogans in favor of the late President Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution. Some people from the group assaulted an AP videojournalist, disabling his camera, while an AP photojournalist was injured by the police.

Demonstrations were also held elsewhere on the island, including the small town of San Antonio de los Banos, where people protested power outages and were visited by President Miguel Díaz-Canel. He entered a few homes, where he took questions from residents.

Afterward, though, he accused Cuban of stirring up trouble.

"As if pandemic outbreaks had not existed all over the world, the Cuban-American mafia, paying very well on social networks to influencers and Youtubers, has created a whole campaign ... and has called for demonstrations across the country," Diaz-Canel told reporters.

Search in Florida collapse to take weeks; deaths reach 90

By FREIDA FRISARO and BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

SURFSIDE, Fla. (AP) — Authorities searching for victims of a deadly collapse in Florida said Sunday they hope to conclude their painstaking work in the coming weeks as a team of first responders from Israel departed the site.

Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava said 90 deaths have now been confirmed in last month's collapse of the 12-story Champlain Towers South in Surfside, up from 86 a day before. Among them are 71 bodies that have been identified, and their families have been notified, she said. Some 31 people remain listed as missing.

The Miami-Dade Police Department said three young children were among those recently identified.

Crews continued to search the remaining pile of rubble, peeling layer after layer of debris in search of bodies. The unrelenting search has resulted in the recovery of over 14 million pounds (about 6.4 million kilograms) of concrete and debris, Levine Cava said.

Miami-Dade Fire Chief Alan Cominsky said it was uncertain when recovery operations would be completed because it remains hard to know when the final body would be found.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 33 of 55

When the recovery phase began Wednesday, officials were hoping it could be done within three weeks. In an interview Sunday morning near the site, Cominsky said it might now be as few as two weeks, based on the current pace of work.

"We were looking at a 14-day to 21-day timeframe," he said, adding that the timeline remained "a sliding scale."

Surfside Mayor Charles Burkett stressed the care that rescue workers are taking in peeling back layers of rubble in hopes of recovering not only bodies but also possessions of the victims. He said the work is so delicate that crews have found unbroken wine bottles amid the rubble.

"It doesn't get any less difficult and finding victims, that experience doesn't change for our search and rescue folks," he said. "It takes a toll, but you've got to love the heart that they're putting into this and we're very grateful."

On Saturday night, members of the community walked along Collins Avenue, the city's main thoroughfare, to celebrate the crews that have come from across the country — and as far as Israel and Mexico — to help in the rescue, and now recovery, effort. The Israeli search and rescue team arrived in South Florida shortly after the building collapsed on June 24 and was heading home Sunday.

Members of the crews that have been searching the site 24 hours a day since the collapse lined both sides of the street, shaking hands and bidding farewell to the Israeli team.

The Israeli team joined other task forces from around the United States to assist first responders from Miami and Miami-Dade County, working in 12-hour shifts. They have searched through South Florida's intense summer heat, and in pouring rain, pausing only when lightning was spotted nearby. They also paused operations as officials made plans to implode the still-standing portion of the condo tower on July 4.

The Israeli team used blueprints of the building to create detailed 3D images of the disaster site to aid in the search. They also gathered information from families of the missing, many of who were Jewish, to build a room-by-room model laying out where people would have been sleeping during the pre-dawn collapse.

Levina Cava said the memorial walk on Saturday night was "a beautiful moment." She gave the keys to the county to the Israeli commander and colonel — her first two handed out as mayor.

Four teams from Florida, Indiana and Pennsylvania are still dedicated to the recovery effort, Cominsky said. Teams from Virginia, New Jersey and Ohio are preparing to leave.

"To give you an answer when we feel we'll recover everyone, I can't give you an exact date," the fire chief said. "We're doing everything that we can — everything possible — until we feel that we've delayed every floor."

Biden backs Trump rejection of China's South China Sea claim

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration on Sunday upheld a Trump-era rejection of nearly all of China's significant maritime claims in the South China Sea. The administration also warned China that any attack on the Philippines in the flashpoint region would draw a U.S. response under a mutual defense treaty.

The stern message from Secretary of State Antony Blinken came in a statement released ahead of this week's fifth anniversary of an international tribunal's ruling in favor of the Philippines, against China's maritime claims around the Spratly Islands and neighboring reefs and shoals. China rejects the ruling.

Ahead of the fourth anniversary of the ruling last year, the Trump administration came out in favor of the ruling but also said it regarded as illegitimate virtually all Chinese maritime claims in the South China Sea outside China's internationally recognized waters. Sunday's statement reaffirms that position, which had been laid out by Trump's secretary of state, Mike Pompeo.

"Nowhere is the rules-based maritime order under greater threat than in the South China Sea," Blinken said, using language similar to Pompeo's. He accused China of continuing "to coerce and intimidate Southeast Asian coastal states, threatening freedom of navigation in this critical global thoroughway."

"The United States reaffirms its July 13, 2020 policy regarding maritime claims in the South China Sea," he said, referring to Pompeo's original statement. "We also reaffirm that an armed attack on Philippine armed

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 34 of 55

forces, public vessels, or aircraft in the South China Sea would invoke U.S. mutual defense commitments.”

Article IV of the 1951 U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty obligates both countries to come to each other's aid in case of an attack.

Prior to Pompeo's statement, U.S. policy had been to insist that maritime disputes between China and its smaller neighbors be resolved peacefully through U.N.-backed arbitration. The shift did not apply to disputes over land features that are above sea level, which are considered to be "territorial" in nature.

Although the U.S. continues to remain neutral in territorial disputes, it has effectively sided with the Philippines, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam, all of which oppose Chinese assertions of sovereignty over maritime areas surrounding contested South China Sea islands, reefs and shoals.

China reacted angrily to the Trump administration's announcement and is likely to be similarly peeved by the Biden administration's decision to retain and reinforce it.

"We call on (China) to abide by its obligations under international law, cease its provocative behavior, and take steps to reassure the international community that it is committed to the rules-based maritime order that respects the rights of all countries, big and small," Blinken said in the statement,

China has rejected the tribunal's decision, which it has dismissed as a "sham," and has refused to participate in arbitration proceedings. It has continued to defy the decision with aggressive actions that have brought it into territorial spats with Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia in recent years.

As last year's statement did, Sunday's announcement came amid heightened tensions between the U.S. and China over numerous issues, including the coronavirus pandemic, human rights, Chinese policy in Hong Kong and Tibet and trade, that have sent relations plummeting.

China claims almost all of the South China Sea and routinely objects to any action by the U.S. military in the region. Five other governments claim all or part of the sea, through which approximately \$5 trillion in goods are shipped every year.

China has sought to shore up its claims to the sea by building military bases on coral atolls, leading the U.S. to sail its warships through the region on what it calls freedom of operation missions. The United States has no claims itself to the waters but has deployed warships and aircraft for decades to patrol and promote freedom of navigation and overflight in the busy waterway.

Racist abuse targets 3 English players who missed penalties

LONDON (AP) — Three Black players who missed penalty kicks for England in the decisive European Championship shootout against Italy on Sunday night were subjected to racist abuse online, prompting the English Football Association to issue a statement condemning the language used against the players.

Bukayo Saka, at 19 one of the youngest players on the England squad, missed the penalty that gave the title to Italy and denied England its first international trophy since the 1966 World Cup.

It was England's third straight failure from the penalty spot in the shootout, with Marcus Rashford and Jadon Sancho also missing.

The FA said in a statement it was "appalled" by the abuse of the three players. The team had taken a knee before games at the Euros to signal its support for an end to racial inequality, and the young, multi-ethnic squad won the hearts of the soccer-mad country before the shootout failure brought out all-too-familiar messages of hate.

"We will do all we can to support the players affected while urging the toughest punishments possible for anyone responsible," the FA statement said. "We will continue to do everything we can to stamp discrimination out of the game, but we implore government to act quickly and bring in the appropriate legislation so this abuse has real-life consequences."

London's Metropolitan Police also said it was investigating "offensive and racist" messages on social media.

Rashford, who plays for Manchester United, noted the racial abuse he received on social media in May after the team lost the Europa League final.

England coach Gareth Southgate was criticized for his strategy of bringing in Rashford and Sancho off the bench to take penalties while star Raheem Sterling was sidelined in the shootout.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 35 of 55

"They were the best takers we had left on the pitch," Southgate said. "We win and lose together."

Italy wins Euro 2020, beats England in penalty shootout

By STEVE DOUGLAS AP Sports Writer

LONDON (AP) — Italian soccer's redemption story is complete. England's painful half-century wait for a major title goes on.

And it just had to be because of a penalty shootout.

Italy won the European Championship for the second time by beating England 3-2 on penalties on Sunday. The match finished 1-1 after extra time at Wembley Stadium, which was filled mostly with English fans hoping to celebrate the team's first international trophy since the 1966 World Cup.

"It's coming to Rome. It's coming to Rome," Italy defender Leonardo Bonucci shouted into a TV camera amid the celebrations, mocking the famous lyric "it's coming home" from the England team's anthem.

For England, it was utter dejection again — they know the feeling so well when it comes to penalties — after Gianluigi Donnarumma, Italy's imposing goalkeeper, dived to his left and saved the decisive spot kick by 19-year-old Londoner Bukayo Saka, one of the youngest players in England's squad.

That was England's third straight failure from the penalty spot in the shootout, with Marcus Rashford and Jadon Sancho — players brought on late in extra time seemingly as specialist penalty-takers — also missing.

As Saka and Sancho cried, Donnarumma was mobbed by his teammates as they sprinted toward him from the halfway line at the end of the second penalty shootout in a European Championship final.

Then Italy's jubilant players headed to the other end of the field and ran as one, diving to the ground in front of the Italian fans who have witnessed a rebirth of their national team.

It was less than four years ago that Italy plunged to the lowest moment of its soccer history by failing to qualify for the World Cup for the first time in six decades. Now, they are the best team in Europe and on a national-record 34-match unbeaten run under Roberto Mancini, their suave coach who has won an international trophy in his first attempt to add to the country's other European title — in 1968 — and its four World Cups.

Mancini joined his players on the podium as Italy captain Giorgio Chiellini lifted the Henri Delaunay trophy to the backdrop of fireworks and tickertape.

"It was impossible even to just consider this at one stage," Mancini said, "but the guys were just amazing. I have no words for them."

For England, it's the latest heartache in shootouts at major tournaments, after defeats in 1990, 1996, 1998, 2004, 2006 and 2012. They ended that losing streak by beating Colombia on penalties in the round of 16 at the 2018 World Cup, but the pain has quickly returned.

"The boys couldn't have given more," England captain Harry Kane said. "Penalties are the worst feeling in the world when you lose. It's been a fantastic tournament — we should be proud, hold our heads up high. It's going to hurt now, it's going to hurt for a while."

England's first major final in 55 years had all started so well, too, with Luke Shaw scoring the fastest goal in a European Championship final by meeting a cross from opposite wing back Kieran Trippier with a half-volley that went in off the post in the second minute.

It was Shaw's first goal for England and it prompted a fist-pump between David Beckham and Tom Cruise in the VIP box amid an explosion of joy around Wembley, which had at least 67,000 fans inside. Maybe more, given dozens of ticketless England fans managed to barge their way past stewards and police and into the stadium in unsettling scenes before kickoff.

That was the only time Italy's famously robust defense was really opened up in the entire 120 minutes.

Indeed, after Shaw's goal, England barely saw the ball for the rest of the game.

Italy's midfielders dominated possession, as widely predicted before the match, and England simply resorted to dropping deep and getting nine or even all 10 outfield players behind the ball. It was reminiscent of the 2018 World Cup semifinals, when England also scored early against Croatia then spent most of the game chasing its opponent's midfield before losing in extra time.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 36 of 55

Italy's equalizer was merited and Bonucci was the unlikely scorer. He put the ball in from close range after a right-wing corner was flicked on to Marco Verratti, whose stooping header was tipped onto the post by goalkeeper Jordan Pickford.

England managed to hold on for extra time — the way three of the last six European finals went — and actually had the better of the final stages.

Just not the shootout, again.

After the misses of Rashford — he stuttered up to the ball and then hit the post — and Sancho, whose shot was saved by Donnarumma again down to his left, Jorginho had the chance to win it for Italy.

Incredibly, the midfielder who converted the decisive penalty in a shootout win over Spain in the semi-finals also failed to score as Pickford tipped the effort off the post.

It was Donnarumma who then made the crucial saves and within minutes he had also been named player of the tournament, the first goalkeeper to be so honored.

So instead of coming home, the trophy is headed to Rome.

"We'd heard it day in, day out from Wednesday night — we heard it would be coming home to London," Bonucci said. "I'm sorry for them, but the cup will be taking a nice flight, making its way to Rome so Italians all over the world can savor this."

4 arrested, guns seized at hotel near All-Star Game events

By THOMAS PEIPERT and MICHAEL BALSAMO undefined

DENVER (AP) — Four people have been arrested and more than a dozen weapons and hundreds of rounds of ammunition have been seized at a downtown Denver hotel that is close to several events planned in conjunction with the upcoming Major League Baseball All-Star Game.

Officers responding to a tip searched two rooms at the Maven Hotel, a block from Coors Field, on Friday night. Three men and a woman in their 40s were arrested, and two vehicles were impounded to be searched for evidence.

The recovered weapons included several rifles, a law enforcement official told The Associated Press.

So far, investigators have not found any evidence to suggest the group was plotting a mass shooting or other similar attack, the official said, while cautioning that the investigation is still in its early stages. The official could not discuss the matter publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Authorities were called after an employee found the guns in a hotel room, the official said.

The men who were arrested are being investigated for possession of a weapon by a previous offender, and the woman, who has a separate warrant, is being investigated on a drug charge.

"We have no reason to believe this incident was connected to terrorism or a threat directed at the All-Star Game," the FBI said in a statement released Sunday. "We are not aware of any threat to the All-Star Game events, venues, players or the community at this time."

Meanwhile, Mayor Michael Hancock and police Chief Paul Pazen praised the hotel's staff for alerting authorities and sought to ease any concerns that the area around the ballpark is unsafe. They declined to say what, if anything, the suspects were planning to do with the firearms.

"We don't know what we don't know. That's what the investigation is all about," Pazen said during a news conference. "We need to identify exactly, to the extent possible, why (the) individuals were here in the first place, why (the) proximity to downtown. We don't have those answers."

Coors Field will host the All-Star Game on Tuesday, but festivities have been underway in and around the ballpark and downtown for the past several days.

Police said in a statement that visitors should always be aware of their surroundings and report any suspicious or illegal behavior.

Florida breaks annual manatee death record in first 6 months

STUART, Fla. (AP) — More manatees have died already this year than in any other year in Florida's recorded history, primarily from starvation due to the loss of seagrass beds, state officials said.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 37 of 55

The Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission reported that 841 manatee deaths were recorded between Jan. 1 and July 2, breaking the previous record of 830 that died in 2013 because of an outbreak of toxic red tide.

The TCPalm website reports that more than half the deaths have died in the Indian River Lagoon and its surrounding areas in Volusia, Brevard, Indian River, St. Lucie and Martin counties. The overwhelming majority of deaths have been in Brevard, where 312 manatees have perished.

Some biologists believe water pollution is killing the seagrass beds in the area.

"Unprecedented manatee mortality due to starvation was documented on the Atlantic coast this past winter and spring," Florida's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute wrote as it announced the record Friday. "Most deaths occurred during the colder months when manatees migrated to and through the Indian River Lagoon, where the majority of seagrass has died off."

Boat strikes are also a major cause of manatee deaths, killing at least 63 this year.

The manatee was once classified as endangered by the federal government, but it was reclassified as threatened in 2017. Environmentalists are asking that the animal again be considered endangered.

The federal government says approximately 6,300 manatees live in Florida waters, up from about 1,300 in the early 1990s.

The Latest: Italians celebrate Euro 2020 victory in Rome

By The Associated Press undefined

The Latest on soccer's European Championship:

Celebrations erupted in downtown Rome as thousands of people took to the streets after Italy beat England in a penalty shootout to win the European Championship at Wembley Stadium in London.

Fireworks lit the sky as cars honked non-stop and ecstatic fans waving Italian flags spilled out of the Piazza del Popolo where they had watched the match on big screens.

They chanted "we are champions of Europe," danced in the streets and set off flares as police stood watch nearby.

Riot police are trying to disperse crowds outside Wembley Stadium after England lost a penalty shootout to Italy in the European Championship final.

Beer bottles have been thrown and police are standing by. England fans are chanting songs against Italy. London police say there had been 45 arrests by officers policing the final.

This year's European Championship has been the highest scoring edition in the tournament's modern era. Leonardo Bonucci's 67th-minute goal for Italy in the final was the 142nd of the 51-game Euro 2020 tournament.

That's an average of 2.79 goals per game.

It was only 2.12 per game at Euro 2016. The most goals in a modern edition was the average of 2.74 at Euro 2000. There were 31 games at that tournament.

There were higher goals per game averages when tournaments involved only four teams from 1960 to 1976.

Prince William has congratulated Italy after the team won the European Championship and says England's players should be "so proud" of themselves for their efforts.

Italy beat England 3-2 in a penalty shootout following a 1-1 draw at Wembley Stadium.

William is the president of the English Football Association. He wrote on Twitter "Heartbreaking. Congratulations @Azzurri on a great victory."

He says to England "sadly this time it wasn't our day. You can all hold your heads high."

Portugal forward Cristiano Ronaldo has finished as the top scorer at the European Championship with

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 38 of 55

five goals.

Ronaldo had the same number of goals as Czech Republic forward Patrik Schick but the Portuguese great will get the award because he had an assist.

Portugal was eliminated from the tournament after losing to Belgium 1-0 in the round of 16.

Gianluigi Donnarumma became the first goalkeeper to win player of the tournament at the European Championship after Italy beat England in penalty shootout in the final at Wembley Stadium.

Donnarumma made two saves in the shootout and he has been outstanding for Italy throughout Euro 2020.

Italy has earned 34 million euros (\$40.4 million) in prize money from UEFA's tournament record fund of 371 million euros (\$440 million) for winning this year's European Championship.

England will get 30.25 million euros (\$36 million) after losing a penalty shootout to Italy following a 1-1 draw at Wembley Stadium.

Each of the 24 teams was guaranteed a basic 9.25 million euros (\$11 million) with bonuses for wins and draws in the group stage and for advancing through each knockout round.

Italy won the European Championship by beating England 3-2 in a penalty shootout after a 1-1 draw.

Domenico Berardi, Leonardo Bonucci and Federico Bernardeschi scored for Italy in the shootout and Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma made two saves at the end of the shootout.

The European Championship final will be decided on penalty kicks after the match finished with England and Italy tied at 1-1.

Italy had a chance for a winner in the 107th minute. England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford bobbed a swerving free kick from substitute Federico Bernardeschi but he eventually gathered it.

The European Championship final is going to extra time with Italy and England level at 1-1.

Italy defender Leonardo Bonucci equalized in the 67th minute with a tap-in. He celebrated in front of the Italian fans by standing on top of the advertising hoardings with both his arms raised and fists clenched.

England had been leading 1-0 for most of the match after Luke Shaw scored in the second minute.

The teams will play 30 minutes of extra time. It will be split into two 15-minute halves.

The match will then go to penalty kicks if the score is still tied.

A fan ran onto the field at Wembley Stadium in the 87th minute. It took four stewards to remove him.

Leonardo Bonucci has scored for Italy in the 67th minute in the European Championship final. Italy and England are tied 1-1.

Fans without tickets have stormed past security and gained access to the European Championship final between England and Italy.

Wembley Stadium says "there was a breach of security and a small group of people got into the stadium."

Fans could be seen standing in the stadium bowl unable to access their seats.

Wembley's statement says officials "are now working closely with stadium stewards and security to remove these people. Anyone inside the stadium without a ticket will be instantly ejected."

The 90,000-seat Wembley has a pandemic-restricted capacity of about 67,000.

England is leading Italy 1-0 at halftime in the European Championship final after wingback Luke Shaw scored in the second minute.

A cross from Kieran Trippier found Shaw at the far post and he shot it in on the half-volley. Shaw's goal

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 39 of 55

was the quickest scored in a European Championship final.

Italy had a chance for an equalizer in the eighth minute but forward Lorenzo Insigne's free kick sailed over the crossbar. Federico Chiesa came closer in the 35th when the winger made a forward run but his shot went just wide of the near post.

_____ Luke Shaw's goal for England was the quickest scored in a European Championship final.

Shaw scored 1 minute, 57 seconds into the match against Italy at Wembley Stadium.

It was the fifth fastest ever scored in the history of the tournament and the third fastest at Euro 2020.

The previous fastest goal scored in a European Championship final was in 1964 when Chus Pereda scored for Spain 5:17 into the match against the Soviet Union. Spain won 2-1.

_____ Luke Shaw has scored for England in the second minute in the European Championship final. England leads Italy 1-0.

_____ The European Championship final between Italy and England has started at Wembley Stadium in London.

The England and Italy players took a knee before the starting whistle to bring attention to racial injustice. The England players have done that at all of their matches at Euro 2020.

_____ The European Championship closing ceremony is underway before England takes on Italy in the final at Wembley Stadium.

A huge inflatable trophy was brought onto the field as a light show and pyrotechnics got things going. Soldiers in bearskin hats played long trumpets. Dancers then got the crowd fired up.

_____ England players have taken the field for their warmup with about 35 minutes until kickoff in the European Championship final against Italy.

Goalkeeper Jordan Pickford waved to the crowd as fans cheered before the rest of the players came out. England needs to beat Italy to win its first major trophy since the 1966 World Cup.

_____ Italy's players have started coming onto the field to warm up before the European Championship final against England.

A light drizzle is coming down with just over an hour before kickoff.

_____ England has changed its formation to a 3-4-3 and recalled Kieran Trippier for the European Championship final against Italy.

Winger Bukayo Saka dropped out of the team to accommodate the inclusion of Trippier at right wing back.

Mason Mount will move into the three-man forward line alongside Raheem Sterling and Harry Kane.

The change of system will be regarded as a defensive move by England coach Gareth Southgate. He did something similar for the 2-0 win over Germany in the round of 16.

Italy has selected the same team that started against Spain in the semifinals.

_____ Italy's players walked onto the field at Wembley Stadium in street clothes soon after England ahead of the European Championship final.

_____ Fans outside Wembley Stadium have tried to get into the stadium through a low barrier for the European Championship final between England and Italy.

Stewards and police sought to hold the fans back as they pushed through barriers.

A Wembley statement says officials "are dealing with an incident that occurred at the outer security perimeter area of the stadium."

The statement adds that "safety measures were quickly activated in the relevant areas and there were

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 40 of 55

no security breaches of people without tickets getting inside the stadium.”

England players in sweatsuits have walked around the field at Wembley Stadium to the cheers of their fans before the European Championship final against Italy.

England captain Harry Kane walked out first with his hands in his sweatpants. He looked calm as he took it all in.

Wimbledon champion Novak Djokovic tried to give a diplomatic answer when asked which team he thinks will win the European Championship final.

Djokovic spoiled Italy’s hopes of a double triumph in London when he beat Matteo Berrettini in the Wimbledon final for his 20th Grand Slam title. He was then asked by BBC presenter Sue Barker about an “unbiased view” on how the Euro 2020 final between England and Italy at Wembley Stadium will go.

Djokovic says “you’re putting me in a very awkward position right now. I’m a huge football fan. So I will enjoy the football tonight.”

That answer was at least enough to draw a big ovation from the crowd at the All England Club.

The England and Italy team buses have arrived at Wembley Stadium about 90 minutes before kickoff in the European Championship final against Italy.

Thousands of England fans have descended on central London before the European Championship final against Italy.

Bottles and other objects are being thrown and Leicester Square is full of litter like beer cans, empty boxes and plastic bags. So far no violence has been reported but the scenes are chaotic. One man threw a large yellow cone high in the air and as it came down another man headed it like a soccer ball. Police with helmets were seen walking through Leicester Square.

The official fan zone is in nearby Trafalgar Square and thousands more are there. A large contingent of police are on standby.

The leading contender to succeed Angela Merkel as chancellor in Germany’s upcoming election says he is rooting for Italy to beat England in the European Championship final.

Armin Laschet tells public broadcaster ARD that he is “an Italy fan.”

The 60-year-old Laschet says the Italian team has “played great” at Euro 2020 and “they would deserve it” if they win.

England knocked Germany out of the tournament in the round of 16.

England fans are starting to take their seats at Wembley Stadium ahead of the European Championship final against Italy.

They started coming in with about three hours to go before kickoff. Several dozen Italy fans were allowed in about a half-hour earlier and are sitting behind one of the goals.

Thousands of fans have created a party atmosphere outside Wembley Stadium before the European Championship final between England and Italy.

A large group of fans set off red and yellow flares and some were banging drums. It started getting rowdy about four hours before kickoff with beer cans being thrown into the air.

Fans started hurling cans at one man who had climbed a tall light pole and he was trying to dodge them. He then slid down like a firefighter to the cheers of the crowd and the pole started to wobble.

Several dozen Italy fans were allowed into the stadium about three and half hours before the start. The normal entry time for supporters is three hours.

England is trying to win a major soccer tournament trophy for the first time in 55 years.

One more match will decide if Italy or England will be European champion.

The two teams will meet at Wembley Stadium in the European Championship final.

England is trying to win its first title in the competition. It's also trying to win its first major title since the 1966 World Cup.

Italy won the European Championship in 1968 but has also won four World Cup titles. The most recent was in 2006.

The Euro 2020 final will be the last of 51 games in the competition after being delayed a year by the coronavirus pandemic.

In Jordan sedition trial, U.S. defendant alleges torture

By KARIN LAUB and OMAR AKOUR Associated Press

AMMAN, Jordan (AP) — A U.S. citizen and former top aide to Jordan's King Abdullah II alleged he was tortured in Jordanian detention and fears for his life, his U.S.-based lawyer said Sunday, on the eve of a verdict in the high-profile sedition trial linked to a rare public rift in the kingdom's ruling family.

Along with the mistreatment allegations, the closed-door trial before Jordan's state security court "has been completely unfair," Michael Sullivan, a former federal prosecutor hired by defendant Bassem Awadallah's U.S.-based family, told The Associated Press.

The allegations of mistreatment, denied by Jordanian officials Sunday, were raised just days before Jordan's king is to become the first Arab leader to meet with President Joe Biden at the White House on July 19. Jordan is a key Western ally in an unstable Middle East.

Awadallah and co-defendant Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, a distant cousin of the king, have pleaded not guilty to sedition and incitement charges, which carry lengthy prison terms.

The defendants were accused of conspiring with a senior royal — Prince Hamzah, a half-brother of the king — to foment unrest against the monarch while soliciting foreign help. The indictment portrayed Hamzah as a disgruntled royal who never forgave Abdullah for taking away his title of crown prince in 2004. Hamzah, who was placed under house arrest in April and has been seen in public just once since then, denied he incited against the king, saying he was being punished for calling out high-level corruption.

Despite the serious nature of the charges against Awadallah and bin Zaid, the trial ended after just six sessions. The court denied requests by Jordanian defense lawyers to call witnesses and prosecutors only shared purported transcripts, but not audio, from surveillance of the alleged plotters.

The prosecutor's office at the state security court denied the trial was unfair. Awadallah was "guaranteed due process" in line with Jordanian law, the prosecutor said in a statement to the AP. "He has not been mistreated in any way, and his allegations of torture of any kind are false."

The U.S. State Department said that U.S. consular officials visited Awadallah five times and that "we also take seriously any allegations of abuse and lack of minimum fair trial guarantees."

Sullivan, a former U.S. attorney for Massachusetts and former acting director of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, said that based on the way the trial was conducted, a guilty verdict appeared to be a foregone conclusion. He said any conviction would be appealed.

The U.S. legal team, which has remained in the background until now, will play a more open role in the appeals stage, said Sullivan. He said the aim is to raise awareness about Awadallah's case in the United States and internationally. This includes "the serious concerns about his safety and security in the short term and the complete unfairness in terms of the process, as well as obviously the torture and violation of a number of international conventions, treaties and laws," Sullivan said.

The prosecutor's office said Awadallah didn't raise torture allegations during the court hearings, his 17 meetings with his Jordanian lawyer or the first four meetings with U.S. consular officials in Jordan. "He only made these claims at his most recent meeting with the consul, as the ruling's pronouncement (verdict) neared," the statement said.

Sullivan said Awadallah told his visitor that he had been beaten, subjected to electrical shock and

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 42 of 55

was threatened with future mistreatment "if he didn't confess."

The prosecutor's office said Awadallah gave a voluntary statement about the case, denying it had been extracted by force.

Awadallah's family said late last week that he fears for his life. "Bassem is justifiably fearful of being killed in prison after the sentencing, especially because he held several high ranking and sensitive positions in the Jordanian government," the family said.

Awadallah, who also holds Jordanian and Saudi citizenship, served as head of the royal court and government minister in Jordan. He has extensive business interests in the Gulf and has advised Saudi Arabia's powerful crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, on attracting foreign investment.

The Awadallah family urged the Biden administration to call for Awadallah's release.

Laub reported from Berlin, Germany.

Texas GOP advances voting restrictions as hundreds push back

By ACACIA CORONADO and PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas Republicans advanced bills Sunday that would make voting harder in a state that already has some of the nation's toughest restrictions after hundreds spoke against the proposals — with some waiting to speak for almost 24 hours.

Republicans made clear they intended to advance a new election bill — which would prohibit 24-hour polling places, ban drop boxes and stop drive-thru voting — this weekend, with a first major vote on the proposals expected this week. That timeline is pushing some Democratic lawmakers toward calling for a second walkout to again stop the restrictions from moving forward like they did in May when they broke quorum.

Texas is among several states with GOP-controlled statehouses where Republicans have rushed to enact strict voting laws in response to former President Donald Trump's false claims that the 2020 election was stolen from him. A second walkout by Texas Democrats — which some are describing as their best, if not only option — would mark a high-stakes escalation of their efforts to deny Republicans a major priority, and in turn, put more pressure on President Joe Biden to act on voting at the federal level.

Beto O'Rourke, the Democratic former Texas congressman who is considering challenging Republican Gov. Greg Abbott in 2022, said he has already offered help, saying he was ready to raise money "literally to feed and house the legislators" if they go that route.

"Should we stick around? Hell no. For what?" Democratic state Rep. Jarvis Johnson said. "There's nothing being done in earnest. There's nothing be done with the utmost respect for one another."

For weeks, Democratic leaders in the Texas House have said they are not ruling out another revolt, but have also expressed hope of weakening the bill during the 30-day special session. Johnson, however, believes a large number of his colleagues are ready to deny Republicans a quorum for a second time, though most continue speaking cautiously.

"You may know my next move, but you can't stop it. You never knew when Mike Tyson was going to throw the uppercut, but you knew he was going to throw it," he said.

Another walkout may merely buy more time: Abbott could keep calling more 30-day special sessions until voting measures are passed. Paychecks for nearly 2,000 Capitol staffers could also be on the line, because Abbott vetoed funding for the legislative branch following Democrats' late-night walkout. He has signaled he will restore that funding this summer — if lawmakers are around to put a bill on his desk.

Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo, the elected head of the governing body for the county where Houston is located, said Abbott was "extorting" lawmakers to get the legislation passed. Hidalgo said she would support Democratic legislators breaking quorum again to block the bill's passage.

"It is very important to me to recognize voting rights should be above politics," Hidalgo said. "We can do that with all manner of issues, but not voting, not democracy."

Nacal Tate, who volunteers with the NAACP chapter in Collin County in the Dallas area, said she woke up at 4 a.m. Saturday to drive several hours to Austin to testify against the proposed voting restrictions.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 43 of 55

Tate said that meant missing her grand niece's birthday party, but that it was worth the sacrifice. Some of the provisions, if they become law, would affect senior citizens, like herself, and others who receive help at the polls due to proposed penalties for voting volunteers who make a mistake.

"It is a suppression of our constitutional rights," Tate said.

The last time Texas Democrats left the state to deny a quorum was 2003, when they decamped to Oklahoma and New Mexico to try to block new GOP-drawn voting maps. They were gone more a month, but ultimately, Republicans passed a new redistricting plan.

The versions of the revived voting changes passed Sunday by a House panel — at 7:30 a.m., almost 24 hours after debate began — and by a Senate committee later that afternoon no longer include two of the most contentious provisions: prohibiting Sunday morning voting, when many Black churchgoers go to the polls, and language that would have made it easier for a judge to overturn elections.

Hundreds of opponents packed overflow rooms at the Capitol and waited for hours to testify. It was the biggest turnout against a bill this year in Texas, where COVID-19 concerns have dampened crowds.

Billionaire Richard Branson reaches space in his own ship

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN and MARCIA DUNN Associated Press

TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES, N.M. (AP) — Swashbuckling billionaire Richard Branson hurtled into space aboard his own winged rocket ship Sunday, bringing astro-tourism a step closer to reality and beating out his exceedingly richer rival Jeff Bezos.

The nearly 71-year-old Branson and five crewmates from his Virgin Galactic space-tourism company reached an altitude of 53.5 miles (86 kilometers) over the New Mexico desert — enough to experience three to four minutes of weightlessness and witness the curvature of the Earth — and then glided back home to a runway landing.

"The whole thing, it was just magical," a jubilant Branson said on his return aboard the gleaming white space plane, named Unity.

The brief, up-and-down flight — the space plane's portion took only about 15 minutes, or about as long as Alan Shepard's first U.S. spaceflight in 1961 — was a splashy and unabashedly commercial plug for Virgin Galactic, which plans to start taking paying customers on joyrides next year.

Branson became the first person to blast off in his own spaceship, beating Bezos, the richest person on the planet, by nine days. He also became the second septuagenarian to go into space. Astronaut John Glenn flew on the shuttle at age 77 in 1998.

Bezos sent his congratulations, adding: "Can't wait to join the club!" — though he also took to Twitter a couple of days earlier to enumerate the ways in which he believes his company's tourist rides will be better.

With about 500 people watching, including Branson's family, Unity was carried aloft underneath a twin-fuselage aircraft. Then, at an altitude of about 8 1/2 miles (13 kilometers), Unity detached from the mother ship and fired its engine, reaching more than Mach 3, or three times the speed of sound, as it pierced the edge of space.

Spectators cheered, jumped into the air and embraced as the rocket plane touched down on Earth. Branson pumped his fists as he stepped out onto the runway and ran toward his family, bear-hugging his wife and children and scooping up his grandchildren in his arms.

Mike Moses, a top executive at Virgin Galactic, said that apart from some problems with the transmission of video images from inside the cabin, the flight was perfect, and the ship looked pristine.

"That was an amazing accomplishment," former Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield, a one-time commander of the International Space Station, said from the sidelines. "I'm just so delighted at what this open door is going to lead to now. It's a great moment."

Virgin Galactic conducted three previous test flights into space with crews of just two or three.

The flamboyant, London-born founder of Virgin Atlantic Airways wasn't supposed to fly until later this summer. But he assigned himself to an earlier flight after Bezos announced plans to ride his own rocket

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 44 of 55

into space from Texas on July 20, the 52nd anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing. Branson denied he was trying to outdo Bezos.

Branson's other chief rival in the space-tourism race among the world's richest men, SpaceX's Elon Musk, came to New Mexico to watch and congratulated Branson for a "beautiful flight."

Bezos' Blue Origin company intends to send tourists past the so-called Karman line 62 miles (100 kilometers) above Earth, which is recognized by international aviation and aerospace federations as the threshold of space.

But NASA, the Air Force, the Federal Aviation Administration and some astrophysicists consider the boundary between the atmosphere and space to begin 50 miles (80 kilometers) up.

The risks to Branson and his crew were underscored in 2007, when a rocket motor test in California's Mojave Desert left three workers dead, and in 2014, when a Virgin Galactic rocket plane broke apart during a test flight, killing one pilot and seriously injuring the other.

Ever the showman, Branson insisted on a global livestream of the Sunday morning flight and invited celebrities and former space station astronauts to the company's Spaceport America base in New Mexico. R&B singer Khalid performed his new single "New Normal" — a nod to the dawning of space tourism — while CBS "Late Show" host Stephen Colbert served as master of ceremonies.

Before climbing aboard, Branson, who has kite-surfed the English Channel and attempted to circle the world in a hot-air balloon, signed the astronaut log book and wisecracked: "The name's Branson. Sir Richard Branson. Astronaut Double-oh-one. License to thrill."

But asked afterward whether he is planning any more adventures, Branson said he will "definitely give it a rest for the time being" because "I'm not sure it would be fair to put my family through another one." He said he thinks he holds the record for being pulled out of the sea five times by helicopter.

Virgin Galactic already has more than 600 reservations from would-be space tourists, with tickets initially costing \$250,000 apiece. And upon his return to Earth, Branson announced a sweepstakes drawing for two seats on a Virgin Galactic jaunt. Blue Origin is waiting for Bezos' flight before announcing its ticket prices.

Kerianne Flynn, who signed up in 2011 to fly with Virgin Galactic, had butterflies ahead of the launch Sunday.

"I think there's going to be nothing like going up there and looking back down on the Earth, which is what I think I'm most excited about," she said. She added: "Hopefully the next generations will be able to explore what's up there."

Blue Origin and Musk's SpaceX both fly Apollo-style, using capsules atop rockets, instead of an air-launched, reusable space plane.

SpaceX, which is already launching astronauts to the space station for NASA and building moon and Mars ships, plans to take tourists on more than just brief, up-and-down trips. Customers will instead go into orbit around the Earth for days, with seats costing well into the millions. The company's first private flight is set for September.

Musk himself has not committed to going into space anytime soon.

Search at collapse site revives memories of past tragedies

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

SURFSIDE, Fla. (AP) — The mangled concrete and twisted rebar from the collapsed high-rise near Miami triggered flashbacks for retired Oklahoma City Fire Chief Greg Marrs, who spent weeks with his crew digging through the rubble of the Alfred P. Murrah federal building in 1995.

From afar, Marrs empathized with the Florida teams searching the debris that was once the 12-story Champlain Tower South condominium complex. The scenes in Surfside brought back memories of the urgent search for survivors after the Oklahoma City bombing, followed by the heartbreak of pulling out nothing but bodies, he said.

It was the same for other rescuers who responded to past tragedies. They say the crews in Surfside will carry on with the same commitment and care, even though authorities this past week officially gave

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 45 of 55

up on finding any survivors.

Joseph Pfeifer, former counterterrorism and emergency preparedness chief for the New York Fire Department, was one of the first commanders on the scene after the World Trade Center towers came down in 2001. He said the Florida crews will preserve any human remains and separate any building pieces that provide clues to the cause of the collapse.

"They are literally going to peel off every layer. They will clean the site right to the very last piece," said Pfeifer, who teaches crisis leadership at Harvard and Columbia universities and has a 9/11 memoir, "Ordinary Heroes," set for publication Sept. 7.

When Marrs first saw photos of the Florida collapse, he said, the images were reminiscent of the destruction at the federal building after a truck filled with explosives was detonated outside. The blast killed 168 people.

In the aftermath, the shells of both buildings were still standing, or teetering, above mounds of broken concrete and twisted metal, with the interiors exposed.

The confirmed death toll from the tragedy in South Florida stood Saturday at 86, with another 43 people still missing. Authorities concluded that there was "no chance of life" in the remaining rubble, but the pressure has not waned for the crews to find victims so families can lay their loved ones to rest.

Recalling his own experience, Marrs was sure the Florida crews would be just as respectful in searching for the dead as they had been in looking for the living.

"They're certainly not going in there with bulldozers and moving that stuff out, you know, not caring about whether they run across a body or not — that's not something that's even considered," Marrs said.

The shift from a rescue mission to a recovery effort does not ease the urgency, Marrs said.

"They're just doing it in a way that is more cautious" and safer because there is no longer a race against time, he said. Crews are likely being encouraged to take fewer risks.

Pfeifer agreed: "It's a difficult task. First responders know this is something very important to the families. They want to do the job even though it's a difficult job."

Sometimes no identifiable remains are found. About 40% of the more than 2,600 people killed at the World Trade Center on 9/11 still have not been physically identified, Pfeifer said.

Crews in Florida, using their hands with help from heavy machinery, have removed 13 million pounds of concrete and debris from the site.

Heavier equipment has rolled in, making it easier to remove layers of debris, Miami-Dade Fire Chief Alan Cominsky said.

"We are expecting the progress to move at a faster pace with our recovery efforts," Cominsky said. He has said that recovering all the victims could take weeks.

Retired Miami-Dade County Fire Chief Dave Downey was part of a crew from South Florida that was dispatched to help in Oklahoma City — perhaps crossing paths with Marrs. He also rushed to the World Trade Center after terrorists attacked.

"Every disaster is different. Every disaster has its unique wrinkle," Downey said.

For the past two weeks, Downey has been in Surfside to help coordinate the rescue mission and now the recovery operation.

"What happens now is that you change your mindset," Downey said, describing the transition from seeking survivors to "knowing that we're going to bring closure to these families, but not in a positive way that we had all hoped."

"That doesn't mean we're not going to work as hard as we can," he said.

Fans storm into Wembley Stadium for Euro 2020 final

LONDON (AP) — Fans without tickets stormed past security and gained access to the European Championship final between England and Italy on Sunday.

Fans could be seen standing in the Wembley Stadium bowl unable to access their seats.

"There was a breach of security and a small group of people got into the stadium," Wembley Stadium

said in a statement.

Wembley said officials are working with stewards and security to remove the ticketless fans.

"Anyone inside the stadium without a ticket will be instantly ejected," Wembley said.

An earlier Wembley statement said that fans tried to get into the stadium through a low barrier, but that stewards and police were able to hold them back as they pushed through.

The first statement said "safety measures were quickly activated in the relevant areas and there were no security breaches of people without tickets getting inside the stadium."

The 90,000-seat Wembley has a pandemic-restricted capacity of about 67,000.

Advocates decry homeless sweeps ahead of MLB's All-Star game

By COLLEEN SLEVIN and PATTY NIEBERG Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Ahead of Major League Baseball's All-Star Game in Denver this week, city officials are facing scrutiny from advocates who accuse them of accelerating the clearing of homeless encampments near Coors Field as the sports world turns its attention to Colorado's capital city.

Mayor Michael Hancock has emphatically denied that the All-Star Game influenced any clearing decisions, saying the city is just getting caught up after suspending cleanups at the beginning of the pandemic. It resumed regular cleanups last summer.

Officials knew before the city was chosen as the All-Star host that it faced a big cleanup effort, with more encampments than ever, Hancock said.

In cleanups, also called homeless "sweeps," encampments are fenced off and the people living in tents there are told to pack up and leave so the area can be cleaned.

In March, just before Denver was chosen as a substitute host — Major League Baseball pulled it from Atlanta in April over objections to Georgia's voting law that critics condemned as being too restrictive — data shows sweeps increased, with cleanups taking place over nine days. The previous peak over the past year was eight days, in October.

But the sweeps picked up even more in May and June with 17 scheduled cleanups taking 22 days, 11 days each month with two or three days of cleanups a week, according to public records obtained by The Associated Press, which were first reported by Denverite, an online news outlet that covers the city.

The city conducted sweeps for 17 weeks straight from early March to late June, a streak that was unmatched during any other period, according to cleanup notices provided to city councilors since December 2019.

The city used to conduct two or three cleanups a week before the pandemic began and has returned to that pace, said Evan Dreyer, Hancock's deputy chief of staff.

The city's position is misleading, said Ana Cornelius, an organizer for Denver Homeless Out Loud, who thinks the city has targeted its cleanups to push homeless people out before the All-Star Game. While the city used to clean up one encampment at a time, it has turned to multiday operations — targeting four or five encampments in a bigger area, dramatically increasing the number of people pushed out, she said.

People forced to leave an encampment near the stadium last week were told they could go to another one about 1.5 miles (2.4 kilometers) away and would be safe there until August, she said.

Patrick Shields, an Army veteran who served in Afghanistan, was among the people forced to pick up and leave during a recent sweep on a grass strip outside an office building about 2.5 miles (4 kilometers) from Coors Field. Shields, who has been on the street for eight months after being released from jail, was upset that he and residents he considered to be like family were being forced to move, when it would be cheaper to help them stay in one place.

"We have no hope, no direction because of situations like this," he said.

The number of people without homes in the United States increased for the fourth straight year in 2020 based on a count conducted before the pandemic began, according to a U.S. Department Housing and Urban Development annual report. And the housing crisis was only exacerbated by the pandemic when many lost jobs.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 47 of 55

Downtown Denver looks vastly different compared to the middle of the pandemic in 2020. Tents used by homeless people that lined streets near closed restaurants and shops are now gone, with businesses reopened and pedestrians roaming the streets.

Coors Field is set to host the All-Star Game on Tuesday.

David Corsun, director of the Fritz Knoebel School of Hospitality Management at the University of Denver, doesn't know what role the game has played in Denver's ongoing work on homelessness but said it's common for cities to want to clean up and ensure visitors have positive experiences.

"Any time there's a mass influx of people ... it's an opportunity to build brand and to create an impression: Denver is an amazing place to live and to visit," Corsun said.

Protests erupt in Georgia after beaten journalist dies

TBILISI, Georgia (AP) — Several thousand people protested in front of the Georgian parliament on Sunday evening, demanding that the ex-Soviet nation's prime minister resign over the death of a journalist who was attacked and beaten by anti-LGBT protesters.

Cameraman Alexander Lashkarava was found dead in his home by his mother earlier Sunday, according to the TV Pirveli channel he worked for. Lashkarava was one of several dozen journalists attacked last Monday by opponents of an LGBT march that had been scheduled to take place that day in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi.

Organizers of the Tbilisi March For Dignity cancelled the event, saying authorities had not provided adequate security guarantees. Opponents of the march blocked off the capital's main avenue, denounced journalists covering the protest as pro-LGBT propagandists and threw sticks and bottles at them.

Lashkarava, according to his colleague Miranda Baghaturia, was beaten by a mob of 20 people. Local TV channels later showed him with bruises on his face and blood on the floor around him. Media reports say he sustained multiple injuries and had to undergo surgery but was discharged from a hospital on Thursday.

The cause of his death was not immediately clear.

Police launched an investigation into Lashkarava's death, which Georgia's Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili and President Salome Zurbashvili both described as "a tragedy."

Animosity against sexual minorities is strong in the conservative Black Sea nation of Georgia.

The Tbilisi Pride group said Monday that opponents of the planned march were supported by the government and by the Georgian Orthodox Church. The Open Caucasus Media group published a photo of a man it said was a local TV journalist being pulled away from the scene in a headlock by an Orthodox priest.

Zurbashvili condemned the violence, but Garibashvili alleged the march was organized by "radical opposition" forces that he claimed were led by exiled former President Mikheil Saakashvili.

A large crowd of protesters that gathered in Tbilisi on Sunday demanded that authorities punish those responsible for the attack on journalists and urged Garibashvili to step down. Some protesters blamed the prime minister for enabling the violence by publicly denouncing the LGBT march.

'Black Widow' soars to pandemic box office record

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Even with an option to watch "Black Widow" at home, audiences went to the movie theater in pandemic record numbers this weekend to catch the first Marvel movie released in two years.

The Walt Disney Co. said Sunday the superhero pic generated an estimated \$80 million in ticket sales in North America. Combined with \$78 million from international theaters and at least \$60 million in Disney+ Premier Access rentals, "Black Widow" grossed over \$215 million in its first weekend. The studio said it's the largest domestic opening weekend since "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker" debuted in 2019, pre-pandemic.

It's a massive win for coronavirus-era moviegoing. In North America, the previous pandemic recordholder was Universal's "F9," which debuted to \$70 million a few weeks ago. But unlike "Black Widow," which is playing on 4,100 screens, the ninth "Fast & Furious" movie was exclusively in theaters.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 48 of 55

"This was a pretty monumental weekend for the industry," said Paul Dergarabedian, Comscore's senior media analyst. "Black Widow" played well on big screens and small screens. And it actually strengthens the case for movie theaters."

Dergarabedian noted that the vast majority of profits, \$158.8 million, came from theaters. Around \$12 million of that came from IMAX screens too.

"Hollywood blockbusters continue to gain ground at the box office with each successive release, and that bodes very well for the many films lined up for exclusive worldwide theatrical release this fall and beyond," said Rich Gelfond the CEO of IMAX.

"Black Widow," starring Scarlett Johansson, has had a long journey to theaters. Originally slated to come out in May of 2020, the blockbuster was delayed because of the pandemic. Disney ultimately decided to release it "day and date," meaning it came out on more than one platform at the same time. "Black Widow," in theaters and for a \$30 rental on its subscription streaming service Disney+. Although not unprecedented for pandemic movie releases, or even for Disney, which did the same for "Cruella," it's the first Marvel movie to attempt the hybrid strategy. And it's by far the biggest earner to date.

It is unusual for studios to release grosses from streaming profits in real time. Many never do so, and some release figures weeks after the fact.

"Black Widow's" strong performance this weekend affirms our flexible distribution strategy of making franchise films available in theaters for a true cinematic experience and, as COVID concerns continue globally, providing choice to consumers who prefer to watch at home on Disney+," said Kareem Daniel, the chairman of Disney Media and Entertainment Distribution, in a statement.

The film was liked by audiences, who gave it an A-minus CinemaScore, and critics. "Black Widow" currently boasts an 80% positive rating on Rotten Tomatoes. Men made up some 58% of the opening weekend crowd.

"F9" came in second place with an estimated \$10.8 million, bringing its domestic total to \$140.8 million in its third weekend out in North America. Globally, it's grossed \$541.8 million. Universal also held the third and fourth place spots with the animated sequel "The Boss Baby: Family Business," which added \$8.7 million, and the horror "The Forever Purge," with \$6.7 million. "A Quiet Place Part II" rounded out the top five with \$3 million.

Currently, 81% of North American theaters are open, and most are operating at full capacity. Overall the films this weekend grossed a total of \$117 million. It's the first time since the beginning of the pandemic that a moviegoing weekend has surpassed \$100 million.

And while it's promising for the industry as a whole, Marvel films have always been in a box office category of their own. Overall, they've grossed nearly \$23 billion.

"Marvel films are a unique monster," Dergarabedian said. "I don't know that you'll see this for every release."

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. "Black Widow," \$80 million.
2. "F9," \$10.9 million.
3. "The Boss Baby: Family Business," \$8.7 million.
4. "The Forever Purge," \$6.7 million.
5. "A Quiet Place Part II," \$3 million.
6. "Cruella," \$2.2 million.
7. "The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard," \$1.6 million.
8. "Peter Rabbit 2: The Runaway," \$1.3 million.
9. "In the Heights," \$630,000.
10. "Zola," \$620,000.

South Africa faces rioting over jailing of ex-leader Zuma

By ANDREW MELDRUM Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Violent rioting has erupted in two South African provinces against the imprisonment of former President Jacob Zuma, with supporters blocking roads and looting shops. At least 62 people were arrested, South Africa police said Sunday.

Zuma started serving a 15-month sentence for contempt of court last week. Zuma has been imprisoned for defying a court order to testify before a state-backed inquiry probing allegations of corruption during his term as president from 2009 to 2018.

His bid to be released from the Estcourt Correctional Center was rejected by a regional court on Friday. He is set to make another attempt Monday with the Constitutional Court, the country's highest court.

The rioting by Zuma's supporters began in his home region of KwaZulu-Natal province last week and over the weekend spread to Gauteng province, which includes Johannesburg, South Africa's largest city.

Several hundred people looted and burned stores in the Alexandra and Bramley neighborhoods of Johannesburg, according to a statement by police Maj. Gen. Mathapelo Peters.

The body of a 40-year-old man was recovered from a shop that had been burned and police are investigating the circumstances, he said. In addition, at least three police officers were injured when trying to arrest looters and one was hospitalized, according to the statement.

Police said they are increasing capacity in both provinces and warned Zuma's supporters against inciting violence on social media, saying they could become liable for criminal charges.

Musk under fire again: CEO to testify over Tesla acquisition

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

In the runup to Tesla Inc.'s 2016 acquisition of a company called SolarCity, Elon Musk hailed the deal as a "no brainer" — a purchase that would combine the leading maker of electric vehicles with a manufacturer of solar panels that can recharge EVs.

It didn't exactly work out that way.

On Monday in the Delaware Court of Chancery, the Tesla CEO will testify about the \$2.5 billion deal in a shareholder lawsuit that alleges that Tesla's acquisition was rife with conflicts of interest, overlooked SolarCity's fundamental weaknesses and unsurprisingly failed to produce the profits Musk had promised.

Questioned under oath, Musk plans to defend the purchase as a justifiable acquisition.

At the time of the all-stock purchase, Musk was SolarCity's largest stakeholder and its chairman. Seven shareholder lawsuits, consolidated into one, alleged that Tesla directors breached their fiduciary duties in bowing to Musk's wishes and agreeing to buy the struggling company. In what the plaintiffs call a clear conflict of interest, SolarCity had been founded by Musk and two of his cousins, Lyndon and Peter Rive.

Last August, a judge approved a \$60 million settlement that resolved claims made against all the directors on Tesla's board except Musk without any admission of fault. That left Musk, who refused to settle, as the sole remaining defendant. The trial that begins Monday had been scheduled for March of last year but was postponed because of the viral pandemic.

Daniel Ives, an analyst at Wedbush Securities, called the acquisition a "clear black eye" for Musk and Tesla, in large part because SolarCity has failed to turn a profit.

"It basically was putting good money after bad," Ives said. "For all the successes and all of the unimaginable heights Musk has achieved, this is one of the lowlights."

Most investors, Ives said, place no value on the company's solar business.

"I just think Musk and Tesla underestimated the challenges and the hurdles that the business brings," he said.

That said, Ives said he thought Tesla's energy business could still become "modestly successful."

Tesla, which has disbanded its media relations department, did not answer a message Friday seeking comment about the lawsuit. In its 2020 annual report, the company argued that the lawsuit was without merit and that Tesla would vigorously defend itself.

"We are unable to estimate the possible loss or range of loss, if any, associated with these claims," the

company report said.

Tesla's energy generation and storage business generated \$1.9 billion in revenue last year — 24% more than it did the previous year. Much of that revenue came from selling battery storage units. Tesla doesn't specify whether the business made a profit, and it also has debt and expenses.

The lawsuit filed by the plaintiffs contends that Musk drove the decision to acquire SolarCity despite his clear-cut conflict of interest.

Musk has a history of fighting government agencies and lawsuits. He was forced to pay a \$20 million fine to the Securities and Exchange Commission for making statements on Twitter about having the money to take the company private when he didn't. But he won a defamation lawsuit that was filed by a British diver involved in the rescue of a Thai soccer team that was trapped in a flooded cave. Musk had called the man "pedo guy" on Twitter.

Even if the trial ends with Musk having to pay personally for the whole SolarCity deal, \$2.5 billion won't much hurt the world's third-wealthiest person. Forbes magazine has estimated that Musk is worth roughly \$163 billion.

Ives suggested that while any such payment wouldn't seriously affect Musk's wealth, it would damage his reputation for choosing acquisitions.

Musk is fighting the lawsuit after others have settled "because that's what Musk does," Ives said. "I think Elon believes this was the right deal and still does."

Israeli court annuls parts of surrogacy law excluding gays

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's Supreme Court on Sunday cleared the way for same-sex couples to have children through surrogate mothers, a move hailed by lawmakers and activists as a victory for LGBTQ rights.

The court ruled in 2020 that a surrogacy law, which had expanded access to single women but excluded gay couples, "disproportionately harmed the right to equality and the right to parenthood" and was unlawful.

It gave the government a year to draw up a new law, but parliament failed to meet the deadline.

The court said Sunday that "since for more than a year the state has done nothing to advance an appropriate amendment to the law, the court ruled that it cannot abide the continued serious damage to human rights caused by the existing surrogacy arrangement."

The change in the law is to take effect in six months to allow the formation of professional guidelines, it said.

The Aguda, an Israeli LGBTQ activist group, applauded the decision as a "historic landmark in our struggle for equality."

Ultra-Orthodox lawmaker Aryeh Deri, formerly the country's interior minister, wrote on Twitter that the court's decision was another serious blow to Israel's Jewish identity and that "most of the nation desires safeguarding the tradition of Israel, preserving Jewish family values."

Deputy Foreign Minister Idan Roll, an openly gay member of the Knesset, retorted: "I am sure that most of the nation loves and respects my Jewish family that was created through surrogacy."

Etai and Yoav Pinkas Arad, the gay couple who appealed to the court against the surrogacy law in 2010, said the ruling "is a big step for equality not just for LGBTQ in Israel, but for equality in Israel in general."

Under the existing regulations, Israeli same-sex couples looking to become parents cannot engage a surrogate, and are often deterred by the additional costs of finding one abroad.

The state had argued that the law was intended to protect surrogate mothers but the court ruled that it would be possible to strike a balance that would not discriminate.

In contrast with much of the conservative Middle East, Israel is generally tolerant toward its LGBTQ community. Gays serve openly in Israel's military and parliament, and many popular artists and entertainers, as well as the country's current health minister, are openly gay. Nonetheless, obstacles — including the absence of civil marriage that would allow same-sex marriage — remain.

Buffalo mayoral candidate says hardship prepared her for job

By CAROLYN THOMPSON Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — If a majority of voters, along with the four-term incumbent, mostly ignored political newcomer India Walton's campaign for mayor during the Democratic primary, they're paying attention now. After upsetting Byron Brown in the June race, a victory in November would put a self-described democratic socialist and, for the first time, a woman, at the helm of New York's second-largest city.

Walton's vault to the doorstep of City Hall may have seemed unlikely while growing up on Buffalo's impoverished East side and becoming a mother at age 14.

There has been turmoil for the registered nurse and community activist, including financial challenges that she says are all too familiar to many would-be constituents in the Rust Belt city. All, she says, have helped prepare her for this moment.

"I believe that the people closest to the problem are also those closest to the solution," she said.

Once home to a thriving manufacturing base that over time evaporated, along with nearly half the population, Buffalo's story in more recent years has been about revival. The waterfront was transformed and old industrial buildings given new life as offices, restaurants and living spaces that appeal to young, educated newcomers.

But there remain residents and neighborhoods that feel passed by, and Walton says that while she is eager to work with long-time community and elected leaders, her success shows there is room to challenge the establishment.

"I think it's important to note that the people of Buffalo are ready for progressive change," she said. "We must work together to do what is best for our city. And also we are saying no more to the status quo."

Bhaskar Sunkara, founding editor of socialist magazine Jacobin, said enthusiasm for Walton could suggest openings in similar cities nationwide.

"There's some irony that you're seeing a resurgence of socialism now when these cities are facing a lot of challenges," Sunkara said, "and ordinary working-class residents are looking for answers and they're looking for something different."

Since shocking Brown in a low-key primary that about 80% of registered Democrats skipped, Walton has confronted questions about her past, revealing she was in an abusive marriage and is a survivor of domestic abuse. Her premature twins inspired her to get her GED and become a registered nurse in the same hospital where they were born.

While in her early 20s, she was accused by the Department of Social Services of food stamp fraud and made to repay a \$295 overpayment. She and her ex-husband also were the subject of a \$749 state tax lien, which included \$562 in back taxes plus penalties, WKBW reported.

"We call it the 'poor tax,' right?" Walton told the station. "Late fees and fines that occur because of things that you are really unable to do because of your financial situation."

She was arrested at the hospital where she worked in 2014 after missing a court appearance related to a coworker's order of protection, The Buffalo News reported. Walton said the notice to appear had been mailed to her ex-husband's home and that the violation eventually was dismissed.

Her most recent work has been to help establish and run a land trust to protect affordable housing in a neighborhood threatened with gentrification by the city's expanding medical campus.

Sochie Nnaemeka, state director of the Working Families Party, said Walton ran a campaign "rooted in her lived experience" that appealed to poor and working-class voters who felt slighted by the incumbent's strategy of refusing to debate or seriously acknowledge his challengers.

Walton had 500 volunteers for a primary effort that was capped by nearly 19,000 phone calls the night before the June 22 vote.

Although she had considered running for state Assembly, Walton said she saw an opening to challenge Brown during Black Lives Matter protests that followed the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Specifically, when cameras captured a young Black man throwing a burning basket through a Buffalo City Hall window, Brown, who like Walton is Black, publicly called him an "idiot."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 52 of 55

"Our mayor should have said, 'This is a young person who was expressing their frustration. Let's call them in and do some problem-solving together,'" Walton said, "and not disparage, dismiss and write off a young person who had some very valid concerns."

Backed by the Buffalo Teachers Federation and Democratic Socialists of America, she favors removing police officers from most mental health and routine traffic calls and reallocating funding, but shies away from using the term defunding police.

After her primary showing, Walton fielded praise from other progressive lawmakers, including Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who represents parts of New York City.

Brown is pursuing a rematch in November. In announcing his write-in campaign, he said city residents oppose having a "radical socialist" lead the city he has governed for 15 years.

But "we have enjoyed many things that could be considered socialism during the pandemic that helped us get through," countered Walton, "the economic stimulus, free health care, SNAP benefits for families with children."

"These are things that we all enjoy and appreciate and we've proven that it can happen," she said. "We just need to scale up."

Associated Press writer Marina Villeneuve contributed from Albany.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, July 12, the 193rd day of 2021. There are 172 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 12, 1984, Democratic presidential candidate Walter F. Mondale announced his choice of U.S. Rep. Geraldine A. Ferraro of New York to be his running-mate; Ferraro was the first woman to run for vice president on a major-party ticket.

On this date:

In 1812, United States forces led by Gen. William Hull entered Canada during the War of 1812 against Britain. (However, Hull retreated shortly thereafter to Detroit.)

In 1862, during the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill authorizing the Army Medal of Honor.

In 1909, the House of Representatives joined the Senate in passing the 16th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, allowing for a federal income tax, and submitted it to the states. (It was declared ratified in February 1913.)

In 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower was flown by helicopter from the White House to a secret mountaintop location as part of a drill involving a mock nuclear attack on Washington.

In 1960, the Etch A Sketch Magic Screen drawing toy, invented by French electrician Andre Cassagnes, was first produced by the Ohio Art Co.

In 1962, The Rolling Stones played their first-ever gig at The Marquee in London.

In 1965, the Beach Boys single "California Girls" was released by Capitol Records.

In 1967, rioting erupted in Newark, New Jersey, over the police beating of a Black taxi driver; 26 people were killed in the five days of violence that followed.

In 1974, President Richard Nixon signed a measure creating the Congressional Budget Office. Former White House aide John Ehrlichman and three others were convicted of conspiring to violate the civil rights of Daniel Ellsberg's former psychiatrist.

In 1991, a Japanese professor (Hitoshi Igarashi) who had translated Salman Rushdie's "The Satanic Verses" was found stabbed to death, nine days after the novel's Italian translator was attacked in Milan.

In 1994, President Bill Clinton, visiting Germany, went to the eastern sector of Berlin, the first U.S. president to do so since Harry Truman.

In 2003, the USS Ronald Reagan, the first carrier named for a living president, was commissioned in

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 53 of 55

Norfolk, Va.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama awarded the Medal of Honor to Sgt. 1st Class Leroy Arthur Petry, who'd lost his right hand grabbing a live grenade to save his comrades in Afghanistan. A memorial service for former first lady Betty Ford in Palm Desert, California, was attended by Michelle Obama, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Rosalynn Carter and former President George W. Bush.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama visited Dallas, where five police officers were killed the previous week by a Black man seeking vengeance for police killings; Obama said a week of deeply troubling violence seemed to expose "the deepest fault lines of our democracy," but insisted the nation was not as divided as it seemed. With hugs and handshakes, Bernie Sanders endorsed Hillary Clinton for president during an appearance in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

One year ago: Florida set a national record with more than 15,500 confirmed COVID-19 cases reported in a day. Twenty-one people suffered minor injuries in an explosion and fire aboard a Navy amphibious assault vessel, the USS Bonhomme Richard, at Naval Base San Diego; the fire would burn for more than four days. Actor Kelly Preston, whose films included "Jerry Maguire" and "Twins," died at 57 after a two-year battle with breast cancer; word of her death came from husband John Travolta.

Today's Birthdays: Singer-musician Christine McVie is 78. Actor Denise Nicholas is 77. Singer-songwriter Butch Hancock is 76. Fitness guru Richard Simmons is 73. Singer Walter Egan is 73. Writer-producer Brian Grazer is 70. Actor Cheryl Ladd is 70. Gospel singer Ricky McKinnie is 69. Country singer Julie Miller is 65. Gospel singer Sandi Patty is 65. Actor Mel Harris is 65. Actor Buddy Foster is 64. Rock guitarist Dan Murphy (Soul Asylum) is 59. Actor Judi Evans is 57. Rock singer Robin Wilson (Gin Blossoms) is 56. Actor Lisa Nicole Carson is 52. Olympic gold medal figure skater Kristi Yamaguchi is 50. Country singer Shannon Lawson is 48. CBS newsman Jeff Glor is 46. Actor Anna Friel is 45. R&B singer Tracie Spencer is 45. Actor Alison Wright is 45. Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., is 45. Actor Steve Howey is 44. Actor Topher Grace is 43. Actor Michelle Rodriguez is 43. Actor Kristen Connolly is 41. Country singer-musician Kimberly Perry (The Band Perry) is 38. Actor Matt Cook (TV: "Man With a Plan") is 37. Actor Natalie Martinez is 37. Actor Bernard David Jones is 36. Actor Ta'Rhonda Jones is 33. Golfer Inbee Park is 33. Actor Melissa O'Neil is 33. Actor Rachel Brosnahan is 31. Actor Erik Per Sullivan is 30. Olympic gold medal gymnast Jordyn Wieber is 26. Nobel Peace laureate Malala Yousafzai is 24.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 54 of 55

GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting

July 15, 2021 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

7:00 PM – DISTRICT BUDGET HEARING – Revenue & Expenditures – Line Items

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of June 14, 2021 and June 28, 2021 school board meetings as drafted or amended.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Approval of June 2021 Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments.
3. Approval of June 2021 School Lunch Report.
4. Approval of June 2021 School Transportation Report.
5. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

ADJOURN

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ANNUAL REORGANIZATION BUSINESS:

1. Call to Order with members present.
2. Installation of incumbent board members, Martin Weismantel and Kara Pharis, followed by election of president and vice president as well as appointments to the various "ad hoc" committees.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approve June 2021 District bills for payment.
2. Designate legal counsel/school attorney...Rodney Freeman of Churchill, Manolis, and Freeman of Huron.
3. Designate Groton Independent as official legal newspaper for FY22.
4. Designate Business Manager as custodian of all district accounts.
5. Approve engagement letter for Eide Bailly to conduct FY2021 school district audit.
6. Authorize Business Manager to continue existing funds and establish new accounts and to invest and reinvest funds in local institutions which serve the greatest advantage to the District and set business manager bond.
7. Authorize Business Manager to publish staff salaries.
8. Designate official bank depository... Dacotah Bank.
9. Adopt Groton Area School District Policy Manual with such revisions as previously approved.
10. Adopt Special Education Comprehensive Plan.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, July 12, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 005 ~ 55 of 55

11. Authorize office personnel to administer Agency Funds & NSLP (school lunch) funds, with oversight by business office management.
12. Authorize superintendent to administer or direct federal programs, with Consolidated Application (Title programs) and related ESSA compliance issues assigned to building principals.
13. Appoint superintendent to act as Asbestos Compliance Officer.
14. Authorize superintendent or designee to close school in emergency situations or inclement weather.
15. Authorize superintendent or designee to institute NSLP & School Breakfast Agreement.
16. Adopt Food Safety Plan, HACCP-Based Standard Operating Procedures.
17. Authorize superintendent or designee to institute ASBSD school bus mutual assistance pact.
18. Authorize business manager to transfer petty cash and incident payment funds (SDCL 13-18-16/17).
19. Approve peripheral sports and other volunteer school workers such as chain gang, line judges, Booster Club/PAC workers, assistant coaches, volunteer coaches, volunteer drivers, school board members etc. to be included in the school's worker's compensation insurance coverage.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Set dates and time for regular school board meetings.
2. Appoint board member to serve as voting member of the North Central Special Education Cooperative Governing Board for 2021-2022 school year.
3. Review list of surplus items and declare surplus.
4. Set salaries for board members...**presently at \$50/meeting; \$75/meeting for chairman; mileage as applicable.**
5. Set rate for substitute teachers for 2021-2022 school year...recommend \$125/day [Currently \$125/day].
6. Set rate for substitute bus drivers for 2021-2022 school year...recommend \$65/day [Currently \$65/day].
7. Establish activity admission & school lunch prices for 2020-2021.

		<u>Recommendations</u>
Admission:	Adult - \$5; Doubleheader - \$6	No Change
	Adult 10-punch ticket - \$45	No Change
	Adult All-Activities Pass - \$75	No Change
	1 st -12 th grade - \$4	No Change
	1 st -5 th grade activity ticket - \$25	No Change
	6 th -12 th grade activity ticket - \$30	No Change
Breakfast	JrK-5 - \$2.50; 6-12 - \$3.00; Adult - \$3.25	No Change
Lunch	JrK-5 - \$3.25; 6-12 - \$3.75; Adult \$4.50	No Change
8. Set rate for OST services for 2021-2022 school year [Recommend No Change].
9. Approve work agreements for Loren Bahr.
10. Approve lane change for Scott Thorson from BS+15 to BS+45.

ADJOURN