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INSIDE

BON APPETIT!



On the menu today: Peach milkshakes, roasted okra and a seasonal pasta sauce.

Page A5

SPORTS



Bridgeport's boys soccer team beat Notre Dame for its first win of the season.

Page B1

ON THE WEB

ONLINE POLL

With the Neal Brown era of WVU football set to kick off this week with a home game vs. James Madison, what is your prediction for the upcoming season?

- a) Eight wins or more, plus a midlevel bowl game. What can I say? I bleed Blue & Gold. **8.2%**
- b) Seven wins, plus a bowl game. WVU will upset a top-ranked Big 12 team but lose to somebody we are easily favored to beat. **13.1%**
- c) Six wins and bowl eligible. Win some, lose some, struggle at times on offense, and depth hurts as season wears on. **47.5%**
- d) Five wins or less. New coaching staff, new offense and defense, too many players lost to NFL, graduation and transfers. **31.1%**

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AP photo

Workers break ground on new border wall construction about 20 miles west of Santa Teresa, New Mexico, last week. The wall visible on the left was built in 2018 with money allocated by Congress, while the new construction is funded by money reallocated from Department of Defense funding.

Trump fast-tracks barrier at border

Push on to get hundreds of miles built

by Nick Miroff and Josh Dawsey THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is so eager to complete hundreds of miles of border fence ahead of the 2020 presidential election that he has directed aides to fast-track billions of dollars' worth of construction contracts, aggressively seize private land and disregard environmental rules, according to current and former officials involved with the project.

He also has told worried subordinates that he will pardon them of any potential wrongdoing should they have

to break laws to get the barriers built quickly, those officials said.

Trump has repeatedly promised to complete 500 miles of fencing by the time voters go to the polls in November 2020, stirring chants of "Finish the Wall!" at his political rallies as he pushes for tighter border controls. But the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has completed just about 60 miles of "replacement" barrier during the first 2½ years of Trump's presidency, all of it in areas that previously had border infrastructure.

The president has told senior aides that a failure to de-

liver on the signature promise of his 2016 campaign would be a letdown to his supporters and an embarrassing defeat. With the election 14 months away and hundreds of miles of fencing plans still in blueprint form, Trump has held regular meetings at the White House to receive progress updates and hasten the pace, according to several people involved in the discussions.

When aides have suggested that some of his orders are illegal or unworkable, Trump has suggested he would pardon the officials if they would just go ahead, aides said.

See BORDER, A7

Report shows Water Board in good financial condition

Officials expect no need for rate hike anytime soon

by Charles Young SENIOR STAFF WRITER

CLARKSBURG — The Clarksburg Water Board received a clean bill of financial health Tuesday.

During the Water Board's regular meeting, Finance Director Jason Farrell provided an overview of the public utility's financial statements for fiscal year 2018-19, which

showed increased assets and increased revenues.

The positive report indicates there will be no need for a customer rate increase, according to General Manager Dick Welch.

The utility has not had to raise its customer rates in more than six years, Welch said.

Board member Paul Howe said Ferrell's report con-

tained nothing but good news.

"I'm excited. I think we're one of the most financially stable utilities right now, and I look forward to bigger things coming," he said.

Board President Al Cox said the positive report is the result of an efficiently managed operation.

See WATER, A10

Harrison school board discusses personnel shortages

Long-term substitutes will fill nine positions

by Kailee E. Gallahan STAFF WRITER

CLARKSBURG — Harrison County Board of Education members discussed personnel matters during a special meeting Tuesday evening.

The school system will be utilizing long-term substitutes for nine profes-

sional positions that have yet to be filled after multiple rounds of job postings, according to Dora Stutler, supervisor of personnel for Harrison County Schools.

"We have a job posting that will close on September 3 which will fill a number of positions in various schools with certified teachers," she said. "We will have nine positions remaining without a permanent instructor for which we will be utilizing long-term substitutes."

The long-term substitute positions

will be filled with retired teachers, she said.

While a number of steps are taken to ensure that professional positions are filled with teachers who are certified in the specific area of instruction, Stutler said that is not always possible.

"With a lack of special education sub-

stitutes and applicants, one severe and profound special education position at Robert C. Byrd High School will not have a special education-certified instructor," she said. "We do not typically see many special education substitutes, even when considering retired professionals."

The county has a substitute teacher list that is provided to principals each year, Stutler said.

See BOE, A10



Stutler

Answers hard to come by as VA hospital murder probe continues

No information released about person of interest in homicide

by Matt Harvey MANAGING EDITOR

CLARKSBURG — Answers about how long a person of interest in a homicide worked at the Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center, or whether that person is still a Veterans Affairs employee, weren't forthcoming Tuesday from the federal agency.

The VA also didn't answer a question about the number of sentinel events reported at the medical center since 2000. Sentinel events are incidents or conditions that result "in patient death, permanent harm, severe temporary harm or intervention required to sustain life," according to a VA Office of Inspector General report from 2018.

That report found staff at the Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center hasn't consistently applied criteria that would identify sentinel events.

Wesley Walls, chief of public affairs and community relations service at the medical center, issued this statement

by email Tuesday in response to *The Exponent Telegram's* questions: "VA is cooperating fully with the inspector general's ongoing investigation, and for additional questions we refer you to them."

Later in the day, the Office of Inspector General issued this statement from VA Inspector General Michael J. Missal by email: "The Department of Veterans Affairs ... Office of Inspector General ... has been working with our federal law enforcement partners to investigate the allegations of potential wrongdoing resulting in patient deaths at the Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center in Clarksburg, West Virginia.

"At this time, we cannot comment further on those activities. As is always the case, the VA OIG works with the Department to identify and urgently address allegations related to patient safety. The care and safety of our veterans and their families remain our top priority."

See VA, A7

Treasurer picks credit union to do banking for medical marijuana

by Jake Jarvis STAFF WRITER

CHARLESTON — State Treasurer John Perdue announced this week that his office has selected a winning bidder to handle banking services for West Virginia's medical marijuana program.

Perdue announced in a news release that Element Federal Credit Union is the apparent winner of a request for proposals that was issued earlier this year.

Other bidders will have until Sept. 3 to challenge the results.

"My staff has worked tirelessly to make this program viable," Perdue said. "I look forward to awarding this contract and moving forward with a banking process. My main priority is to help people

in our state who want this medical option for either themselves or a family member."

Even if the credit union is officially awarded the contract in September, the state's medical marijuana program probably won't be up and running until 2021.

Allison Adler, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Health and Human Resources, said many of the factors that could delay the program's implementation are out of the department's hands.

See BANKING, A10



Perdue

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