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Prepare to e-file: Tax season begins Jan. 29

The New York State Department of Taxation and Finance announced that the income tax filing season officially kicks off on Monday, Jan. 29. If you haven't already joined the 9.5 million New York taxpayers who e-filed in 2017, consider the many benefits of e-filing before deciding to file on paper.

E-filing is safe, easy, and fast—and free for eligible taxpayers.

"All returns undergo the same systematic review, and e-filers typically receive any refunds due two weeks sooner than paper filers," said New York State Acting Commissioner of Taxation and Finance Nonie Manion. "The tax preparation software used also helps filers avoid careless errors that can cause significant delays."

Tips to follow:

1. File and pay electronically. E-filed returns are more accurate than paper-filed returns. Most e-filers receive their refunds two weeks sooner than paper filers.

2. File for free. Taxpayers with incomes of \$66,000 or less are eligible to electronically prepare and file both their federal and NYS returns under the Free File program. To prevent any unexpected charges for filing the state return, taxpayers should only access free options directly from the Tax Department's website at www.tax.ny.gov.

3. Use direct deposit. Receive your refund up to a week faster by having it directly deposited into your bank account. Be sure to double check the routing and account numbers for your account.

4. Use free tax assistance sites. Taxpayers with household incomes of \$66,000 or less in 2017 can also e-file

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Bennett breakthrough may be at hand in Millbrook



Dilapidated buildings on the old Bennett College campus in Millbrook are covered with snow after last week's storm. A pending agreement between the Bennett Commons homeowners and the Tribute Garden Foundation has given new hope for the property. Photo by Curtis Schmidt

by Mary Keelan

For the last few months, the bare spindles of leafless winter tree branches have framed Halycon Hall, the prominent stone building in the middle of the old Bennett College Campus in Millbrook facing south across Route 343, shouting its desolation - 40 years in the making from the College bankruptcy in 1978.

When a blanketing snowfall like last week's spreads across caving roofs and mottled lawns, sticking to the still-standing grey stone foundation, not thwarted by ubiquitous barbed wire barriers, tranquility seems possible, a new hopefulness promised by owners about to celebrate four years when the Bennett deeds became theirs.

For the first time since April 2014, upbeat news of progress on rehabilitating the site is trickling out in the Village of Millbrook. That date is when the Tribute

Garden Foundation, a decades-long Thorne family philanthropy in Millbrook, settled a \$550,000 defaulted tax bill accumulated by the previous campus owners, Bennett Acquisitions LLC, and negotiated a foreclosure-pending sale price.

The fear that the critical players were being lulled into inaction when no signs of positive development were evident since the new ownership four years ago is now abated. Both Oakleigh Thorne, spokesperson for TGBennett LLC — the working title of the enterprise under the auspices of the Tribute Garden Foundation — and Norman Coles, current president of the Bennett Condominium Association, are willing to share their updated news of the resolution of one of the most vexatious impediments to moving ahead: a land swap and recreation facilities rebuilding.

One part of the official Bennett Condominium Prospectus filed with New

York State is shared ownership of an outdoor pool, pool house and tennis courts on approximately two acres of land. Because a previous developer in the 1980s, James O'Dea, anticipated a more large scale condominium campus development, the recreational facilities were positioned near Route 343 and Carroll Boulevard, anticipating easy access to all potential condo owners. But further development did not happen.

Meantime, the preliminary vision for the Bennett property by the Tribute Garden Foundation when they purchased the property in 2014 included creating a park and recreational trails and facilities for the general public. The placement of the Bennett Condo's current recreational facilities would impede that proposal.

When the discussions between the new owners and the Condo Board began about two years ago, they quickly stalled. It was

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Local colleges take part in Warhol exhibition series

by Kate Goldsmith

Rarely seen works by Andy Warhol will be on view at Vassar College's Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center starting this Friday; in April, the CCS Bard Hessel Museum will feature additional works by the artist whose cultural influence was widespread and still evident today.

"People Are Beautiful: Prints, Photographs and Films by Andy Warhol" opens at The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center on Friday, Jan. 26, and runs through April 15. "Warhol: Unidentified," opening April 8 in the Hessel Museum's Collection Teaching Gallery, includes photographs of unidentified subjects.

Both exhibitions are part of "Warhol x 5," a series of exhibitions organized by five college and university art museums in the

region and drawing upon each other's collections. Each museum focuses on a different theme, and all five exhibitions feature works donated by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

Also participating are the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art at SUNY New Paltz, the University Art Museum at the University at Albany and the Neuberger Museum of Art at Purchase College. Each museum will produce a publication to accompany the exhibitions.

In conjunction with the "Warhol x 5" exhibition series, a symposium will be held April 12-13 at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie as well as SUNY New Paltz.

Mary-Kay Lombino curates "People Are Beautiful," which explores shifting notions of beauty in the artist's portraits from 1964

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Vassar College and Bard College will host Andy Warhol exhibitions this year. Pictured: "Marilyn," 1967, Andy Warhol, screenprint on paper; gift from the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Alexander E. Racolin, 1995.13.49



Bennett breakthrough may be at hand

continued from cover

reported that the new owners offered land on wetlands that was unacceptable and \$150,000 towards rebuilding the pool, pool house, and tennis courts was estimated then at costing \$500,000.

In a recent e-mail, Oakleigh Thorne explained the pending agreement: "The Bennett Commons homeowners have approved a land swap whereby they will give Tribute Garden the lot where their tennis courts and pool are now located, in exchange for a similarly-sized parcel of land next to their condominium complex. Tribute Garden will also help Bennett Commons finance construction of a new pool and tennis court on the new lot."

Though all of this is positive, none of it is yet officially finalized and signed into contractual approvals. As the Bennett Condo Board president, Norm Coles, explained, the parties have "a verbal agreement" and the lawyers are working on the contract. The land swap component equals the same size the Condo now owns, 2.33 acres, but will be created out of the demolition of the former chapel and artist studio closer to the Condo dwellings and behind Halcyon Hall, on the north side of the road facing south. The pool and tennis courts will be newly built on that land without adding to the assessment of the Condo owners and the "sizes of everything will be the same."

What the Condo owners have approved

unanimously is for the Board to go forward with having lawyers draw up the necessary agreements. In the course of granting that, the owners were, according to the Board president, very positive with what they understood to be the new offer. But it was a "preliminary agreement."

Oakleigh Thorne further explained that, "We are in the process of reducing our agreement into a formal legal document."

Though neither spokesperson could offer a timeline for these processes, both were optimistic that the lawyers, and as Coles mentioned, with engineers, would get to the acceptable contract, which would be reviewed and signed for a final note. Since all condominium offers in New York State have to be approved by the Secretary of State, even such a relative equivalent exchange, Coles did say that filing would take place.

Now that this thorniest problem, claimed to have inhibited progress in developing the Bennett College Campus, is on the way to a solution, will the TG Bennett LLC under the auspices of the Tribute Garden Foundation accelerate solutions to other named issues? These include gerrymandered underground water and sewer pipes; how to proceed with necessary building demolitions when asbestos, lead paint and vermin dispersal dominate the owners' decision-making; and, what to save if salvageable from still-standing buildings.

Tribute Garden Foundation attempts to revive long-neglected properties

by Mary Keelan

Synchronizing the renovations, restorations and re-imagining necessary to get both the long-neglected Bennett College Campus and the deteriorating historic Thorne Memorial Building returned to viable Millbrook community use properties is now in the hands of the Tribute Garden Foundation under the leadership of Oakleigh Thorne. Or soon will be.

The Foundation, through TGBennett LLC, has owned the designated Bennett properties since April 2014. Via its newly created 501.c3, the Thorne Building Community Center, it is expected to take over the deed to the Thorne Building and land at the top of Franklin Avenue, intersecting with Maple, in the Village, when the Village of Millbrook mayor and trustees approve a transfer of ownership. That decision is expected in the next two months.

Before the transfer of the Thorne Building ownership actually happens, three things need to be in place: the Village lawyer, Rebecca Valk, will have reported on any impediments and their resolution to transferring ownership of the Thorne building from Village ownership to the newly created 501.c3; the Mayor and trustees will have advertised and held an official Public Hearing on the transfer, confirming the public approval of ownership transfer; the

two parties, Village of Millbrook and the Thorne Building Community Center (a 501.c3) officers will have to agree on a sale price for the purchase/transfer and any other relevant contractual considerations. A sum of \$1, maximum \$2, was mentioned at the last of three Thorne Building Planning Committee meetings on Dec. 9 at the Millbrook Fire House.

In preparation, the Thorne Building Planning Committee, under the leadership of Charles Pierce Jr. PhD, with grants from the Tribute Garden Foundation, convened committee meetings and public events throughout the spring, summer and fall of 2017 in order to solicit ideas and expectations for the Thorne Building as a Community Center.

What do local people want to see happen there? The answers are being compiled by the committee consultant, Carole Martin, who is expected to have them ready for discussion at the first committee meeting scheduled for 2018, planned for April 9 at the offices of Oakleigh Thorne.

One of the ideas explored in the brainstorming was solving a parking problem at the Thorne Building Community Center by moving the existing bandshell on that property over to the Bennett College Campus and reclaiming that land. The symmetry expected with the primarily local philanthropic ownership is viewed as a plus for future planning.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR ... page 7

Rhinebeck Democratic Party endorses two village trustees

The Rhinebeck Democratic Committee endorsed incumbent Village Trustees Brant Neuneker and John Rossi Jr. at its monthly meeting for election in advance of their nominating caucus scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 27.

Both Neuneker and Rossi were appointed by Mayor Gary Bassett to fill vacancies on the Village Board. The mayor noted at the meeting that both Neuneker and Rossi

had contributed much already, and praised their collaborative work on behalf of the Village.

The committee also voted to endorse Rhinebeck resident Antonio Delgado for the 19th Congressional District race against John Faso.

Delgado is leading a crowded field of Democrats vying to challenge Faso, and will compete in a primary election in June.

Renovations begin at DCFS in Poughkeepsie

Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro announced that renovations recently began at the Department of Community and Family Services' (DCFS) offices, at 60 Market St. in the City of Poughkeepsie. Molinaro said enhancements to the building, which are expected to be completed by early summer, will result in a more efficient and secure experience for clients.

Residents will notice a decrease in the size of the reception area at 60 Market St., though the impact on the public is expected to be minimal. Residents are encouraged to utilize www.MyBenefits.ny.gov to perform many transactions, such as applying for Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP).

They can also use the site to track their applications and view their case details. Those applying for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) can apply for benefits online but must come to a DCFS office in person for a face-to-face interview.

Molinaro said, "Our DCFS staff works tirelessly to best serve Dutchess County's most vulnerable residents. The improvements will enhance the quality and speed of service for those who come to our main office at 60 Market St., Poughkeepsie. We appreciate the public's understanding and patience as we work to provide a better customer experience and more efficient service."

Among the various enhancements that are planned:

- the reception area will be upgraded and include self-service kiosks for document drop-off and accessing www.MyBenefits.ny.gov;

- the building's original steps and historic YMCA facade will become the new main entrance into the reception area;

- the current screening room will be relocated, providing more privacy and security for clients;

- a new fair hearing room and waiting area will be constructed for clients and their representatives.

DCFS Commissioner Sabrina Jaar Marzouka said, "The enhancements to our Market Street offices will allow our staff to more efficiently engage with the clients we serve. We thank the public in advance for their cooperation, as we work to offer an exceptional experience when visiting DCFS."

Other DCFS locations, which remain open as usual and can accept applications and documents regarding clients' cases, are:

- the Eastern Dutchess County Government Center, at 131 County House Road in Millbrook; residents can call (845) 677-5532 to make an appointment; and

- HEAP and SNAP applications are accepted at the Beacon Center, located at 233 Main St. in Beacon, between the hours of 9 a.m. and 2 p.m.; more information is available by calling (845) 838-4800.

www.sdutchessnews.com

DC Legislature makes committee assignments

Committee assignments were handed out by Dutchess County Legislature Chairman Gregg Pulver at the first Committee Day of the year, Jan. 18.

Chairing the Budget, Finance and Personnel Committee will be Donna Bolner of LaGrange. Vice Chairman is Will Truitt of Hyde Park.

Environment: Chair, Dale Borchert, LaGrange; Vice Chair, Alan Surman, Dover.

Family and Human Services: Chair,

John Thomes, Pawling; Vice Chair, Deirdre Houston, Millbrook.

Government Services and Administration: Chair, Will Truitt, Hyde Park; Vice Chair, John Metzger, East Fishkill.

Public Safety: Chair, Marge Horton, East Fishkill; Vice Chair, Donna Bolner, LaGrange.

Public Works and Capital Projects: Chair, John Metzger, East Fishkill; Vice Chair, Joe Inoronato, Wappinger.

An Evening to Remember....

Clove Creek Dinner Theater



Cooking With Gus

Presented by special arrangement with Playscripts
Showtimes in February

Gussie Richardson is a famous food columnist & cookbook author. Her agent has just told her that she's been offered her own network television show. Her husband Walter is dead set against it... and Gussie discovers she has stage fright! Everybody tries to help her get over it... Walter through hypnotism, Bernie her agent by threats; and even wacky Gypsy Carmen from next door casts spells. Just when she thinks she's cured, the taping turns into a comic nightmare concluding in an all out food fight that almost ends the show and her marriage.

Upcoming Productions:

Vesuvio & Filomena's Anniversary Party – Jan. 27th (Murder Mystery)
Boeing Boeing - March 1 - March 18, 2018
Getting Sara Married - April 5 - April 22, 2018



845-202-7778

Hudson Valley Towne Center
18 Westage Business Ctr Dr. - Fishkill
For tickets and information:
www.CloveCreekDinnerTheater.com