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Long Beach casino clears big obstacle with court ruling

By Andy Kanengiser

A proposed Long Beach casino could open its doors in two years, officials say, following a recent Harrison County Chancery Court ruling to pave the way for the major economic development project.

Casino supporters say it's a little early to celebrate as 2021 begins. There is still much work ahead before a proposed \$180 million casino of at least 40,000 square feet, and a 300-room hotel can become a reality on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

After all, a Long Beach casino has been in the discussion stages for four years. And there are more steps to come, says City Alderman-at-Large Donald Frazer.

Long Beach Mayor George Bass and other City leaders have long



Special to Long Beach Breeze

An artists' rendering shows the proposed location of what would be the city's first casino.

said they support a casino being built across from the harbor as a way to enhance the economy plus boost local tax revenues.

There are more things to happen in a lengthy process. In 2021, the Mississippi Gaming Commission would need to give its final approval to the casino project. That could take eight months to a year. Once all the green lights occur, construction would take an estimated eighteen months, Frazer said.

Giving a shot in the arm to those officials optimistic a Long Beach casino will happen is the new Harrison County Chancery Court ruling. In December, the court decided in favor of the Long Beach Harbor Resort, LLC. The judges ruled the casino developers are not required to enter into a sepa-

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COVID cancels Gulf Coast Mardi Gras parades for 2021

By Andy Kanengiser

Long Beach Mardi Gras parade fans will need to wait until 2022 to enjoy the season's revelry. The big event downtown won't happen in 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leaders of the Carnival Association of Long Beach made the decision in a January 5 announcement, but, Long Beach Mardi Gras supporters won't be alone in their disappointment.

In late December, Biloxi Mayor Andrew "FoFo" Gilich announced his city had canceled all Mardi Gras parades for February 2021 because of the winter's spike in COVID-19 cases around the U.S. and across the Magnolia State, in-

cluding significantly rising numbers in Harrison County.

Gilich doubted the rapid spread of people getting infected with the coronavirus would be much better by the time Mardi Gras activities rolled around in a few weeks. Usually, about 80,000 people crowd Biloxi streets on parade day. Gulf Coast Carnival Association officials supported the mayor's decision.

So keeping these bleak COVID-19 trends in mind, leaders of the Carnival Association of Long Beach announced their decision to pull the plug on a Mardi Gras Parade in the Friendly City.

Asked about other events on the calendar for 2021 for the Carnival

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Photo from Long Beach's 2020 Mardi Gras parade

Lindy Sholes

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Construction continues on new gas station



Dom Firmino

Keith's Supercenter is currently under construction on the northwest corner of 28th Street and Klondyke Road. Officials expect the gas station and convenience store to be completed and open in the first quarter of this year.

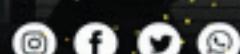
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Publisher/Owner

Clay Mansell

ClayMansell@LongBeachBreeze.com

Editor-in-Chief

Stephanie Tracy

Office Manager

Doris Bynum

Designer

Brad Henderson

Photographer

Dom Fimiano

Writers

Andy Kanengiser

Taylor McKay Hathorn

Lindy Sholes

Dom Fimiano

Shaun Szkolnik

Sales

Keith Clark

Keith@LongBeachBreeze.com

Fred Weller

Fred@LongBeachBreeze.com

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Long Beach casino clears big obstacle with court ruling

rate Tidelands lease with the Mississippi Secretary of State's Office. The State office had claimed the premises belonged in the State under the Public Trust Tidelands Law.

The developers presently have a lease on the proposed site with the City of Long Beach with the intention of building a casino on property just north of U.S. 90.

Long Beach leaders this winter are again trumpeting the project's positives from an economic standpoint. Pumping up revenues for Long Beach public schools and the city would be a big plus, Frazer said.

He estimates an extra \$2.5 million per-year will be poured into Long Beach public schools.

"That is huge," said Frazer.

Construction of a Long Beach casino and hotel would occur during a brighter time for the troubled American economy in a post-COVID-19 era.

"The pandemic would be over," Frazer said in an interview weeks after coronavirus vaccines arrived for U.S. healthcare workers, the elderly, and first responders. Millions of other vaccines will go to the nation's general population in 2021.

The project is more than a casino and hotel, with space for convention meetings. The development will include three restaurants.

Frazer predicts the project will generate \$70 million to \$80 million a year for the City. While there are plenty of casinos along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, he says "you don't have many" on the west side, referring to West

Harrison County and neighboring Hancock County. Just down U.S. 90 sits the Island View casino and hotel in Gulfport. The Hollywood Casino in Bay St. Louis and Silver Slipper Casino Hotel in Hancock County are other nearby beachfront properties.

Jason D. Green, president of the Carnival Association of Long Beach, is among the local leaders giving his endorsement to the proposed casino. The project, he said, would strengthen Long Beach businesses and the tax base.

"Any new commercial development is welcome, especially in small towns," Green said. "Bringing in additional people is good for everyone involved," he said. A new casino and hotel "will bring attention to your community."

There are now twelve Mississippi Gulf Coast casinos. In January 2019, the Mississippi Gaming Commission gave its initial approval to the proposed site of the thirteenth - in Long Beach. Local developer James Parrish of Long Beach Harbor Resorts has spent the past few years pressing for the casino and hotel.

There are several Long Beach homeowners who say the Gulf Coast is already saturated with casinos and fear the development will spark an increase in crime. Critics say there are more pressing issues, like addressing drainage problems and roads.

But Green points out he's glad to see people willing to invest in the community. And the proposed casino and hotel, he noted, will be of modest size.



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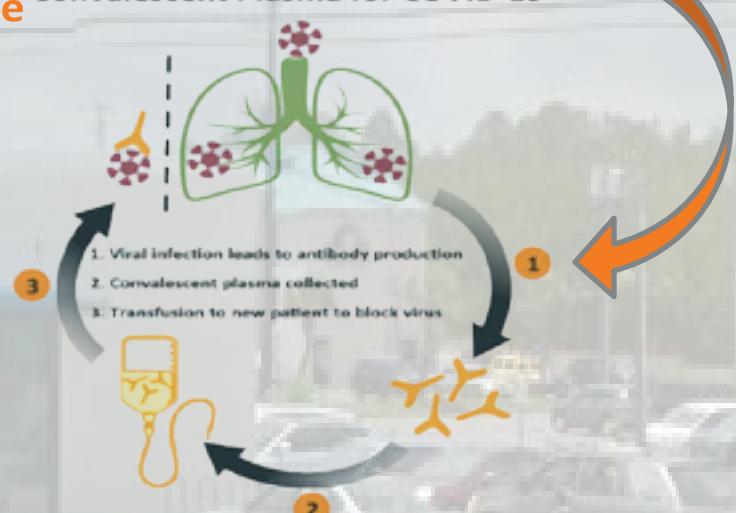


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COVID Recovered



J'arius Warren of Long Beach anchors Navy defense



Warren plays as #94 for Navy.

Special to Long Beach Breeze

By Andy Kanengiser

J'arius Warren turned in a phenomenal performance of fourteen tackles for Navy in a road game with their No. 1 football rival, Army.

As millions of viewers watched the nationally-televisioned game amid a dense fog in West Point, New York, the former Long Beach Bearcats standout shined as a Navy defensive end. The swift Midshipman is a dynamo on the field, but a good student as well in Annapolis, Maryland.

The Long Beach High graduate impressed United States Naval Academy (USNA) coaches and fans again this season. Warren saved his best game for the December 12, 2020, finale versus Army before CBS cameras.

The 22-year-old Mississippian "played lights out football" against Army, said Navy assistant coach Jerrick Hall.

A USNA junior, No. 94 entered the fall as the starter at defensive end after starting ten games at defensive tackle in 2019. The explosive Navy player recorded 44 tackles a year ago.

"From where he started two seasons ago until now, it's night and day," says Hall, Warren's Navy position coach. "He puts in the work to make himself productive and play hard. He keeps getting better and better."

Hall says he is excited to see what's in store for the incoming Navy senior in 2021.

"Seniors are supposed to play their best football. I'm excited to

see what J'arius can do. Mentally, he's in a good place. At 6'2", 260 pounds, he can run."

While Navy lost 15 to 0 (the score stood at 3-0 to start the 4th quarter), the 121st annual contest provided memorable moments.

"The Army-Navy game is like the Super Bowl around here," Warren said. The game was played at West Point's Miche Stadium for the first time since 1941 when America entered World War II. Playing in the service academies' rivalry game, he said, "was an awesome experience."

After finishing the 2019 season with an 11-2 record, including a Liberty Bowl triumph over Kansas State, Navy slipped to a disappointing 3-7 mark in 2020. Navy expects to bounce back under Coach Ken Niumatalolo in 2021 against teams like Air Force, Notre Dame, Memphis, Cincinnati and Army. Navy will battle the Army Black Knights at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey on December 11, 2021.

Navy's 2020 football campaign was a difficult year marked by COVID-19 heartache for so many

people.

"COVID was a huge problem worldwide," Warren said. "I personally had family members affected by this virus, as well." Navy football officials installed health protocols "to maximize our fight against it."

Warren cherishes his time in Annapolis as a Navy student-athlete.

"I love that we are a program that is truly built upon love for one another," he said. "The brotherhood is what I love most. Whatever you go through, no matter how big or small, you aren't going through it alone."

His message to potential recruits? Navy welcomes men and

women seeking challenges "you never thought possible," he said. "Everyone that I know who has done time at USNA is thriving."

Warren is pondering his career plans. He's interested in marine ground or surface warfare.

Originally from Gulfport, Warren credits former Long Beach Bearcats head coach Forrest Williams along with assistants Jed Mooney and Bob Reeves for preparing him for NCAA Division 1

football.

"They helped me develop a passion for football and develop as a man," said Warren. "Teachers also played a role in my academics."

The Long Beach Bearcats star linebacker turned down offers from schools like Tulane and Louisiana-Monroe to sign with Navy. Warren spent his first year at the Naval Academy Prep School in Newport, Rhode Island, to get ready for the rigors of life at USNA.

His family played a major role every step of the journey. His mom, Vertilla Rogers, a healthcare worker, "prepared me for the real world by making me understand the power of respecting authority."

His dad, the late Claude Gorden, Sr., passed away while Warren was a Long Beach High student.

J'arius Warren is not the family's only athlete. The Mississippi high school shot put champ his senior year, Warren beat his brother's previous record. Away from football and his studies, Warren enjoys playing tennis, going hunting and cheering for the New Orleans Saints.

Navy football recruiters found the right spot down South as they encouraged the Long Beach senior to become a Midshipman in 2017. Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas and Louisiana are always loaded with talented student-athletes, Coach Hall said.

"The Long Beach community is fantastic," said Warren. He says when he returns to the Harrison County community, everyone "treats you as if you were family."



J'arius Warren

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Long Beach firemen graduate from training



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Three Long Beach firemen recently completed the Basic Fire Fighter Class. Pictured (l to r) are Devin Berden, Tyler Hill and Jacob Welch.

Long Beach Bearcats baseball players swing for the fences in 2021

By Andy Kanengiser

Exiting MGM Park in Biloxi with a 3-2 win over Mountain Brook of Alabama provided exciting memories for the Long Beach High baseball team.

The Bearcats' 10-inning triumph at the home of the Biloxi Shuckers proved to be memorable for several reasons. Long Beach's victory over the Spartans from metro Birmingham marked the final game of their 2020 season. The COVID-19 pandemic abruptly halted the baseball season at schools nationwide.

People are hopeful because a new year is here - and that includes Garrett LaRosa, who begins his first season as head baseball coach of the Bearcats at his alma mater. He's aware of COVID-19 challenges, but is eager to see what the 2021 season brings on the diamond.

"We are making adjustments," LaRosa said. But so is everybody else. "I'm hopeful that everyone can navigate through this and we get a full season in. All of the players deserve it."

Certainly, the new skipper is famil-

iar with the Friendly City. The former Long Beach baseball player (a member of the Class of 2012) served as the team's assistant coach last season. The former McNeese State University baseball standout believes the outlook is bright.

Long Beach's first few games of the season are set for February 13 against Hancock and Pass Christian on the road, followed by an away contest with Harrison Central February 15. The first home games for the Long Beach JV and varsity teams will see the Bearcats hosting West Harrison on February 19. The first pitch will be at 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. that Friday. On February 20, Long Beach faces Coast rival West Harrison in Gulfport (games begin at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.). Playoffs begin April 29, with the state championships starting May 25.

"I expect us to compete every time we have the opportunity to step on the field," LaRosa said. "Our guys have put in a lot of work under some pretty trying circumstances since last



Special to Long Beach Breeze
New LB Bearcats baseball coach Garrett LaRosa



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Long Beach High baseball players Brent Garner at shortstop and Colin Dedeaux at second base are pictured in a game last season.

season, and they are itching to play. We are all excited about the upcoming season."

A 2017 Mississippi State University economics graduate, LaRosa is pumped about landing his dream job as a Long Beach High head coach and teacher.

"It is an honor to be able to coach at the same place I graduated from and to follow such a lineage of great coaches before me."

In April, LaRosa was named to succeed head coach Conner Douglas, who led the Bearcats to a 9-3 season. Douglas resigned to join Northwest Rankin in Brandon as an assistant baseball coach and assistant athletic

director.

The Bearcats' 2021 roster includes two seniors: Brent Garner, a shortstop and pitcher, as well as Adam Krol, a first baseman and pitcher. Freshmen include: Charlie Cook, Gavin Wood, Landon Vancourt, Colin Lyons, Jason Marshall, Noah Williams and Kyle Huey.

Sophomores are Hunter Blackwell, Luke Thomas, Jake Thomas, Wesley Watson, Ashton Schepens, Nathan Kenworthy and Ashton Johnson, as well as Eli Hodges, WP Bermudez, Brady Watts and Landon Ahrens.

Juniors are Charlie Starita, Harrison Bull, Collin Dedeaux, Brendon Tillman and Zack Wright, as well as Amiri Williams, Aaron D'Aquila, Dawson Sutherlin, Gage Williams, Kevin Sherwood and Cameron Fenell.

A star catcher for the Bearcats, LaRosa led his alma mater to the state 5A state championship as a sophomore in 2010. He was the cleanup batter, and later played at Meridian Community College prior to McNeese State in Louisiana. Before joining the Long Beach staff, LaRosa served as an assistant coach at Hancock High on the Gulf Coast.



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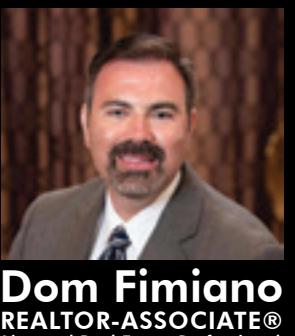
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COVID cancels Gulf Coast Mardi Gras parades for 2021

Association of Long Beach, CALB President Jason D. Green isn't very optimistic. It all depends on what the future weeks and months bring in the new year.

"At the moment, there are no scheduled events," Green said. "We are like everyone else – wait and see what happens with the vaccine" as well as state and federal guidelines.

Meanwhile, the St. Paul's Carnival Association and City of Pass Christian officials canceled the 2021 Mardi Gras parade in their Gulf Coast hometown. And again, COVID-19's rising statistics were to blame. The same thing with Mardi Gras parades in New Orleans – those events won't happen. Mardi Gras 2021 falls on Tuesday, February 16.

As of January 1, more than 346,000 Americans had died from the coronavirus. That includes

more than 4,787 fatalities in Mississippi.

Mardi Gras festivities, including parades, attracted huge crowds in New Orleans in February 2020. With few health protocols in place, the party scene in the Crescent City contributed to the rapid rise in COVID-19 cases before the worldwide pandemic was declared in March.

So, due to concerns about the health of citizens, New Orleans will no longer go full blast with Mardi Gras in 2021. While Mardi Gras always revs up the region's economy, Big Easy leaders banned parades because of the COVID crisis.

"Parades of any kind will not be permitted," the City's website said. Parades will not be possible, "because large gatherings have proven to be super spreader events."

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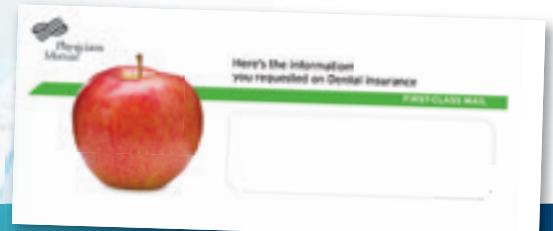
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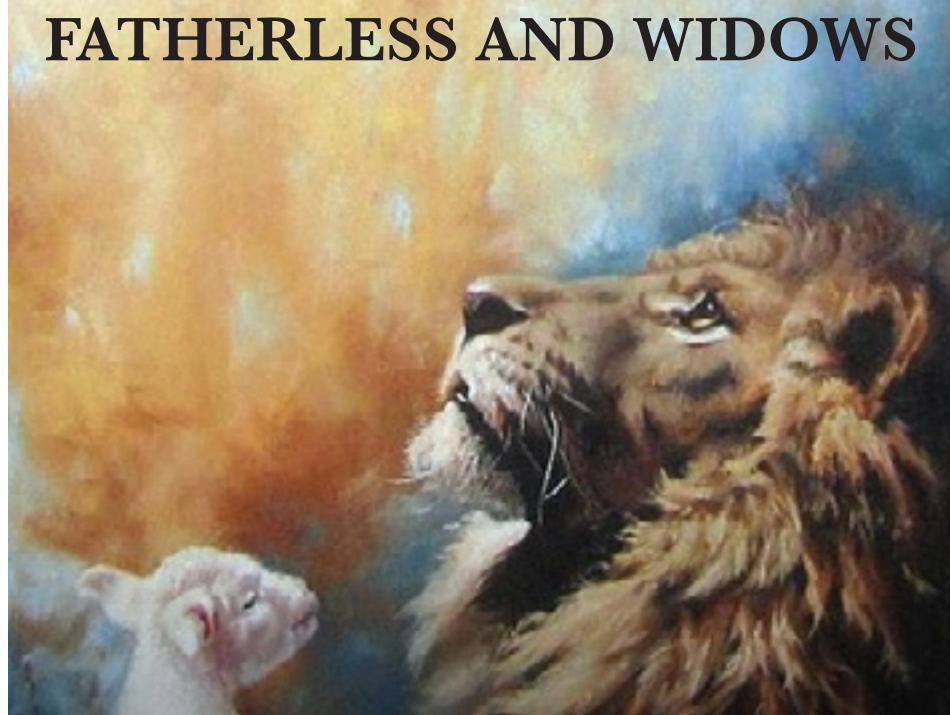
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Bennett signs with USM for soccer



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Lauren Bennett, senior defender for the Long Beach High School soccer team, recently accepted a D1 athletic soccer scholarship to the University of Southern Mississippi. Long Beach High soccer coach Greg Lamier said Bennett is a true leader on the field and in the classroom. Bennett serves as Student Body President and as Team Captain. Pictured (l to r) are sister Grace Bennett, Robby Barker, Lauren Bennett and mother Leslie Barker.



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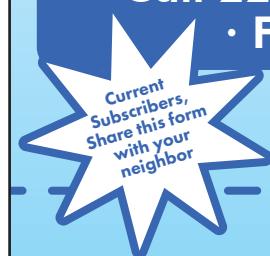
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Chamber announces Barnes, Kinsey in leadership roles for 2021

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The Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce, Inc. recently announced Ron Barnes, President and CEO of Coast Electric Power Association, as the 2021 President of the Board of Directors, and Michelle Kinsey, Building Services Supervisor at Mississippi Power (MPC), as 2021 Chair of the Long Beach Chamber of Commerce.

Barnes is a graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi with a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration. Barnes started his career in the Electric Power industry in December 1995 with Coast Electric Power Association. Before coming to work for Coast Electric, he spent seven years working in fundraising and public relations for the Boy Scouts of America.

Before assuming the role of President and CEO of Coast Electric, his areas of responsibility included residential and commercial marketing, public relations, internal and external communications, legislative affairs and member services.

Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce, Inc.



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Ron Barnes



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Michelle Kinsey

Barnes is a past president of the MS Beach chapter of the Public Relations Association of Mississippi, past president of Leadership Gulf Coast, past president of the United Way of South Mississippi, and past president of the Gulf Coast Community Foundation. *The Sun Herald* named Barnes one of the "Top 10 Business Leaders Under 40,"

and he is a member of the Roland Weeks Community Leaders Hall of Fame.

Barnes is currently on the board of directors of the Electric Cooperatives of MS, Gulf Coast Business Council, MS Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce, Gulf Coast Community Foundation, The People's Bank and Cooperative Energy. He is mar-

ried to the former Angel Parker of Pensacola, Florida, and they have four children.

Kinsey earned a bachelor's degree in Business Administration with an emphasis in Management Information Systems and graduated with honors from The University of Southern Mississippi. She currently manages all conference services operations, and she also directs the general services facility specialists who help maintain MPC's corporate facilities. She is responsible for the planning and execution of corporate events. By redesigning and centralizing the company's waste and recycling service contracts, she was able to decrease Waste Management, Inc. costs by approximately 30% per invoice. She is responsible for managing budget activities to fund operations and increase efficiency for Conference Services and has oversight and ownership for waste and catering services contracts for MPC.

For more information regarding the 2021 Board of Directors of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce, visit mscoastchamber.com.

Long Beach School Board selects Lock as new superintendent

Special to Long Beach Breeze

At the end of last year, the Long Beach School District (LBSD) Board of Trustees agreed to release LBSD Superintendent Dr. Jay Smith from his contract effective June 30, 2021, and Dr. Smith will begin serving as Superintendent of the North Pike School District on July 1, 2021, where he once served as assistant superintendent. But the LBSD Board of Trustees did not have to search long or far for its next Superintendent.

At the first of this month, the LBSD Board of Trustees voted 5-0 to approve Dr. Talia Lock to serve as the LBSD Superintendent effective July 1, 2021.

Lock is no stranger to Long Beach, having grown up in the city, graduating from Long Beach High School in 1995. Lock currently serves as principal of Long Beach High School. She has also served as a teacher, lead teacher, and assistant principal within the school district.

"The board was solidly unanimous in its decision," said LBSD Board President Tim Pierce said. Pierce continued by indicating how impressed the Board has been with

Lock since she took the helm at LBHS. The Board praised her leadership over the past three years, especially during the very difficult last eleven months. Her experience as principal at the high school level ultimately tipped the scales in her favor during board discussions.

In announcing Smith's departure, Pierce said that Smith has more than met the Board's lofty expectations over the past five years and praised Smith's leadership in helping Long



Special to Long Beach Breeze/Courtesy LBSD
Dr. Talia Lock

Beach maintain an "A" rating for five consecutive years. He also lauded Smith's part in the passage of the school bond issue, building of the new high school and building of the new tennis court facility, as well as improving the safety of all campuses with the hiring of two School Resource Officers and installing new safety doors, windows and lighting at each campus. Pierce also gave Smith high marks for ensuring the district remained within budget each year and praised Smith for his solid leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Board has directed Smith and Lock to immediately begin a transition phase with the district administration to ensure a smooth change in leadership.



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Bearcats bowling team rolls out new season

By Andy Kanengiser

The Long Beach High bowling team excelled at the state championships in Jackson in February 2020. That high-stakes event on the lanes happened a month before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leading the way for the Bearcats last season was first-team all-state bowler Matthew Norra. The Long Beach senior lived up to expectations by bowling 696 in the Class 2 state tournament, knocking down the second highest number of pins. Norra averaged an amazing 232 pins per game. In Class 2 boys, Lafayette repeated as state champ by defeating Long Beach 3-2 in the finals in Mississippi's capital city.

One of five student-athletes named to the *Clarion-Ledger* Boys All-State Bowling First Team in May 2020, Norra graduated from Long Beach High. No doubt, it's impossible to fill the shoes of the superb Friendly City bowler in 2021. During the past season, the 19-year-old son of Kerri and Ron Norra knocked down an average of 185 pins per game.

But Bearcats coach Melanie Hymel is giving it her best shot. She guides a squad returning with another experienced group of teens. Hymel says she can't wait to see what the new year brings



Special to Long Beach Breeze

Pictured (l to r) are members of last year's LBHS bowling team, front row: Joshua Norra, Chelsey Reed, Megan Allen, Emma Fisher and Paige Myers; middle row: Leah Banks-Whitmore, Ayden Mulvaney, Christopher Whitmore, Abby Dubuisson and Alyssa Tinsley (manager); and back row: Matthew Norra, Amin Whitmore, Dakota Gardner, Matthew Mulvaney, Nathan Blythe, Katelyn Schroeder and Laurel "Toot" Ladner.

on the lanes. She's got her sights set on the regionals on the Gulf Coast in late January, with the state

championships happening in Jackson in early February.

Upcoming dates on the sched-

ule will be January 21 (at 4 p.m.), with Long Beach to face teams like Hancock, D'Iberville, West Harrison, St. Martin, Gulfport and Harrison Central. The matches are set for Park Ten Lanes in Diamondhead.

The regionals will be held on January 26 for girls' teams in Gautier. Boys' teams will compete on January 27. State high school bowling championships for 2021 are set for Jackson the week of February 3.

The 2020-21 Long Beach bowling boys' squad consists of Gavin Whited, Ayden Mulvaney, Matthew Mulvaney, Christopher Whitmore, Joshua Norra, Jacob Badeaux, Thomas Gately and Jacob Lassable. Girls' team members are: Addyson Seal, Laurel "Toot" Ladner, Emily Norra, Lilly Sprinkle, Katelyn Schroeder, Reagan Kolenda and Abby Krol.

Practices were due to start in late October, with a number of matches scheduled. But, lately, COVID-19 has interfered with coronavirus cases spiking across the state and nation. Long Beach High "was just quarantined for two weeks," Hymel said in late December. "We resume after Christmas break."

Whether the Bearcats will make a return trip to championship competition in the new year depends, to some extent, on how America responds to COVID.

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8:30 a.m. Sanctuary Worship In-Person in the sanctuary (reservation is required @ 228-863-9619).
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11:00 a.m. The Well service In-Person in the Christian Life Center (reservation is required @ 228-863-9619).
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Masks are required at all services. We will have masks available for you if you don't have one

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Coast Episcopal School celebrates Epiphany



Special to Long Beach Breeze

Coast Episcopal School celebrated Epiphany with king cakes and blessings. The Royalty for the Day, Queen Annie and Queen Charlotte, delivered king cakes to every class and Mother Clelie and the fifth graders led a special Eucharist chapel, which included the school's annual tradition of "chalking" the school entrance and chapel doors to celebrate God's blessings over CES for the new 2021 year.



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McArthur reflects on years dispatching help for tragic moments



Special to Long Beach Breeze

Donna McArthur recently retired after seventeen years of service as a police and fire dispatcher at Central Fire Station.

By Taylor McKay Hathorn

For the past seventeen years, Donna McArthur has answered 911 calls at Central Fire Station in Long Beach.

"It was interesting," she says of her nearly two decades behind the desk. "You could go from being totally bored to flat-out busy."

The busy times, though, were what made McArthur's time as a dispatcher so meaningful.

"You get medical emergencies, burglaries, accidents," McArthur recalls. "It was rewarding to know that I got people the help they needed when they needed it the most."

Ensuring that help came when needed came at a cost for the Pass Christian High School graduate, though, as she acknowledged that she bore witness to "the worst moments of people's lives." These tragedies sometimes included the firemen and police officers responding to the scenes of crimes and accidents, who McArthur affectionately called "her" firemen and police officers.

"You'd go from wanting to wring their necks for asking questions you'd already answered or can't possibly answer to wanting to hug their necks when they came back safely," McArthur says of her relationship with Long Beach's first responders. The risk to the first responders was always at the forefront of McArthur's mind when she was on duty.

"It sounds dramatic, but some-

times their lives depend on you doing your job," she observes.

This sense of duty was also born out of the closeness that she and her fellow dispatchers shared with Long Beach's first responders. This was particularly true with the city's firemen, as they shared a common space on Klondyke Road. McArthur also shared shifts with another dispatcher, and the two would communicate with the four to five patrolmen cruising the coastal town's highways and the dozen firemen on duty.

"You become a family," she reflects.

This sense of familiarity did not dissipate with McArthur's recent retirement, as she says that she already misses her co-workers, although she's enjoying her time off.

"I'm doing some things I've put off around the house," she says. "But I've only been home a week, and I'm already getting antsy."

Her sudden shock at having free time is unsurprising, given that McArthur has spent forty years in the workforce, working as a dispatcher in Gulfport prior to joining the Long Beach office. Ultimately, though, she is glad for the additional time with her nieces and nephews that this next chapter will afford her, and she cherishes the memories of her time at Central Fire Station.

"I thank Long Beach for everything they did for me," McArthur concludes. "They were good to me."



Lishen leaving Board after more than sixteen years of service

Special to Long Beach Breeze

After over sixteen years of service to Long Beach, Ward 5 Alderman Mark Lishen announced in an open letter to residents that he has decided to not run for re-election.

"I have been honored and humbled to serve Long Beach and Ward 5 as Alderman for over sixteen years and Mayor Pro Tempore for almost eight years," wrote Lishen. "From helping constituents in Ward 5 with issues, no matter how big or small, to larger issues affecting the overall good of Long Beach, I am proud of the work I have accomplished over the years."

"However, it is now time to take a new step forward," Lishen continued. "After careful consideration and thoughtful prayer, and with the support of my wife, Donna, it is with some regret, yet anticipation, that I have decided I will not seek re-election in 2021 as Alderman of Ward 5."

Lishen explained how he returned to Long Beach, his hometown, in 2000, then ran for Alderman in 2004.

"Looking back, I'm not sure I really expected to win, considering my opponent's importance and reputation in our community, but ultimately prevailed by only two votes over a very, very dear friend - Ginger Worth," said Lishen.

Lishen said he was "blessed and fortunate" to be reelected in 2005, recalling that, following Hurricane Katrina,

he "was able to work alongside Mayor Billy Skellie and Fire Chief George Bass to help our beloved community attempt to recover and move forward. We made a lot of progress over the next decade with a new City Hall, new Fire Station 2, new Senior Citizen/Recreation Center, new Harper McCaughan Town Green, Jeff Davis Avenue Improvements, new infrastructure improvements south of the CSX Railroad, new Pineville Road sidewalk project, not to mention major drainage improvement projects I was able to champion in Ward 5, along with many, many other positive changes."

Lishen said he is proud to have been a part of not-yet-completed projects that will greatly benefit Long Beach, including the casino project, Highway 90/Gateway project, Quarles House renovation, Beatline Road expansion, harbor improvement, Commission Road/Klondyke Road Intersection, 28th Street/Klondyke Road intersection, Pineville Road sidewalk expansion, and many federally funded drainage improvement projects.

"I trust that Long Beach is and will continue to be in the hands of our most humble of servants," wrote Lishen. "I wish you all the very best and hope that the light for the future of Long Beach shines bright. Again, it has been an honor and privilege to serve Long Beach as Ward 5 Alderman for the past 16+ years. Good luck, and may God bless our future."



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FIRST GRADERS ELECT DUCK OVER FARMER BROWN

Special to Long Beach Breeze

In the weeks leading up to the 2020 election, Mrs. Westbrook's first grade class at W. J. Quarles Elementary School learned all about the process of an election. To introduce the concept, the class read the book, *Duck for President*, by Doreen Cronin.

After reading *Duck for President* and discussing the voting process, the kids were excited to participate in a mock election activity. The activity consisted of the students casting their votes at the "voting polls" to vote for either Duck or Farmer Brown.

After the votes were tallied, it was determined that Duck would be president.

Students discussed the importance of voting and the election that was taking place in the country this year. Once the voting was complete, Carson Baker said "Wow! I didn't realize that voting was a real thing!"



Special to Long Beach Breeze/Courtesy LBSD

Pictured (l to r) are Andrew Walls, Kam Dal and Brayleigh Young



Special to Long Beach Breeze/Courtesy LBSD

Pictured (l to r) are William Evans, Peyton Rosner, Ryker Collins and Brooklyn Smith.



Special to Long Beach Breeze/Courtesy LBSD

Pictured (l to r) are Jennifer McWethy and Liam Thibodaux.

Sparklight® extends COVID-19 relief efforts

Special to Long Beach Breeze

Sparklight has announced it will extend relief measures to help those in need stay connected to the internet while working and learning from home, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the communities it serves.

The company will extend the availability of its 15 Mbps residential internet plan for \$10 per month for the first three months of service to help low-income families and those most impacted from coronavirus challenges, such as seniors and college students, through December 31, 2021.

Sparklight will also continue its partnership with ACA Connects and EducationSuperHighway for the "K-12 Bridge to Broadband" program to help school districts and states provide internet access for students in low-income households. Under this program, broadband service providers help school districts and states identify students that lack broadband at home and then supply these connections. As a partner in the program, Sparklight has committed to support students in need within its footprint by creating a "sponsored service" offering that schools can purchase

on behalf of students, working with schools to identify unserved student homes, standardizing eligibility, facilitating enrollment; and abiding by privacy protections.

Other actions being taken by the company include extending access to free public WiFi hotspots across its footprint through the end of 2021 in order to keep individuals and communities connected during the crisis, as well as partnering with communities, hospitals, medical centers and other essential institutions in addressing their unique broadband connection needs and challenges.

Sparklight officials say they will also continue to evaluate and assess additional relief measures based on the evolving nature of the virus.

"We recognize that broadband service is critical - now more than ever," said Julie Laulis, President and CEO of Sparklight. "We remain steadfast in our commitment to closing the digital divide and ensuring our customers and communities have access to the fastest and most reliable internet service, so they can continue working, learning and connecting virtually to family, friends and entertainment during these difficult times."





Gulf Coast rock project has Long Beach roots

By Taylor McKay Hathorn

When Cheryl Sablich visited her family in Jacksonville, Florida, for Easter in 2016, she and her family found more than Easter eggs.

"We were hiding Easter eggs for my nieces and nephews at a park," Sablich recalled. "We found painted rocks."

Upon returning to Long Beach, Sablich and a group of friends – all of whom worked for the Harrison County court system at the time – got together to create the MS Gulf Coast Rocks group, which is now approaching 2,000 members on its Facebook counterpart.

To jump-start the group, Sablich and her friends put out four hundred rocks during July 4 weekend in 2017, a little more than a year after the Woolmarket resident's first encounter with the hiding and finding of painted rocks.

"We mapped out every park we could find from Moss Point to Bay St. Louis, and we put rocks in every park for the kids to find," Sablich said of the group's efforts.

The original four hundred rocks were placed in individual Ziploc bags, with notes asking the lucky locators to either keep or rehide the rock and requesting that they post a photo of their find on the group's Facebook page.

The format has changed slightly, as the group no longer puts the rocks into



bags, with Sablich noting that they didn't want their artistic creations to be mistaken for trash and tossed away. The only other rule the group has is that no adornments for the rocks can be political in nature.

"We don't do anything political," Sablich asserted. "We won't let anything political come on the page. [A rock] can be patriotic, but not political."

Even with political messages ruled out, rock-makers still have plenty of creative license, as Sablich remarked that several people involved in the project are "awesome artists." The rock-hunters, too, have creative license, as Sablich recalled that one man took his rock on adventures across the United States after finding it on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

For Sablich, this proves that the group's original goal – to bring enjoyment to the residents of Long Beach and the greater Gulf Coast area – has been met.

"I think it brings a smile to people's faces in this tumultuous world that we live in," Sablich said.

This simple enjoyment has been especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic, as it has given an escape to hiders and seekers alike.

"You don't have to be an artist," Sablich concluded. "We just ask that you post a picture."



Qualifying period for municipal election 2021 begins

By Andy Kanengiser

The qualifying period for 2021 Long Beach municipal elections has begun and will run through Friday, February 5, 2021, at 5 p.m.

The City of Long Beach is governed by the Mayor and seven elected Aldermen. City elections are held every four years for the Mayor, one Alderman-at-Large and six Ward-designated Aldermen to represent each respective ward.

The winning candidates in the primary elections will participate in the June General Election as the political party's nominee(s) for specific offices. An independent candidate participates only in the June General Election and, for the purposes of the ballot, has no designated political party affiliation.

Parties interested in running in the 2021 municipal election cycle who choose to participate in a primary election to seek the nomination of a particular political party must submit to the Municipal Clerk's Office a "Qualifying Statement of Intent for a Candidate for Party Nomination," together with a qualifying fee of ten dollars, no later than 5 p.m. on February 5, 2021, which is sixty days prior to the date of the first primary election.

The Municipal Clerk will forward the Statement of Intent and the filing fee to the Secretary of the proper political party's Municipal Executive Committee. Qualifying forms are available from the Municipal Clerk's Office and online from the Secretary of State's website.

An individual who chooses to participate in the general election only, without any political party affiliation, must submit to the Municipal Clerk's Office a "Qualifying Statement of Intent for an Independent Candidate," together with a Qualifying Petition, no later than 5 p.m. on February 5, 2021. Independent candidates do not pay a qualifying fee, but their Qualifying Petition must be



signed by at least fifty qualified (registered) voters of the municipality or ward from which the candidate seeks office. The Municipal Clerk's Office must certify the signatures on the Qualifying Petition are those of registered voters of the municipality and/or ward. Qualifying forms, including Petitions, are available from the Municipal Clerk's Office and on-line from the Secretary of State's website.

In order to qualify for office, all candidates must be a qualified elector (registered voter) of the State of Mississippi and in the municipality/ward of the office for which the candidate seeks election; be a resident of the municipality, county or county district office that he or she seeks to represent for two years immediately preceding the day of the election; along with meet requirements for not having been convicted of specific crimes, as explained on the Mississippi Secretary of State's website.

Additionally, there are other duties a candidate running for office will need to do, such as filing a Statement of Economic Interest with the Mississippi State Ethics Commission within fifteen days of qualifying. They will also be required to file Campaign Finance Reporting Statements.

The calendar for the 2021 election cycle is as follows:

February 5, 2021:
Last day to qualify. Candidates must file their qualifying papers by 5 p.m.

April 6, 2021:
Primary election.

April 27, 2021:
Runoff election (if necessary).

June 8, 2021:
General election.

For more information, visit sos.ms.gov/elections-voting/Pages/default.aspx.

Our Lady Academy celebrates the birth of Christ

All photos Special to Long Beach Breeze



Cast of seniors

Special to Long Beach Breeze

Last month, Our Lady Academy (OLA) students highlighted the meaning of Christmas by performing the story of the Nativity of Jesus on the altar of Our Lady of the Gulf Church. The play was narrated by seniors Olivia Breisacher and Kate Funk. Kaylee Hardenstein and Camille Cottone portrayed the roles of the Blessed Mother and Joseph, respectively. The cast of angels, shepherds, and wise men were represented by the entire senior class.

The production was directed by religion teachers Audrey Mayer and Claire Massery. Music was orchestrated by chorus teacher Jan Jarrell and performed by the OLA Choir, consisting of Kirsten Arnsdorff, Amelie Clark, Karlie Dunn, Callie Fletcher, Lilia Monsalve, Ashlyn Necaise and Sofie Talazac.



The three Wise Men, played by Grace Koons, Chloe Cornell and Sofia Schuyler



Kaylee Hardenstein as Mary and Camille Cottone as Joseph



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Library makes plans to celebrate “National” days

By Guest Columnist Renee Rayburn, LBPL Youth and Technology Services

Hello, Long Beach! Welcome to 2021!

As your librarians, we have you covered with fantastic new works of fiction to read. One of these items that has been added is All That Glitters by Danielle Steel. Something of a different genre? Try If It Bleeds by Stephen King. Other patron favorites might include the new books Daylight by David Baldacci or Return to Virgin River by Robyn Carr.

If you stop by, and the item is currently checked out, we can put it on reserve for you. You can even add reserves to your account from home by logging into your account online, searching the catalog, and clicking “Reserve This Item.” Give us a call at the library, and we will be happy to walk you through it.

Also, don’t forget, the fiction collection includes a large selection of titles in large print and books on CD, as well.

On January 27, we want our patrons to celebrate Library Shelfie Day with us. How do you celebrate Library Shelfie Day? If you have a small library of your own at home, arrange your collection on the shelf in a fun, creative way and take a picture. You can also



come by the library and take a picture among your favorite titles here. Fun fact: Library Shelfie Day was created by the New York Public Library to celebrate the love of bound books (books in print form).

On January 29, it’s National Puzzle Day. So, for all of you puzzle lovers out there, we will have puzzle-themed books available for checkout for all ages.

February is Black History Month, and we want to honor the wonderful authors and illustrators that are among our collection. There will be displays in each department of the library where you can find these treasured works.

On February 11, we celebrate National Inventor’s Day. Fun fact: In 1983, Ronald Reagan officially declared February 11 as National Inventor’s Day. This particular date was chosen to honor Thomas Edison (who held over 1,000 patents), as it was also his birthday.

Also be on the lookout for romance novels in a heart-shaped display or books with red stickers on the spine labels in the children’s wing. That’s a sure sign that they have a Valentine’s day theme!

The Long Beach Library Book Club will hold a meeting at the Long Beach Senior Citizens Center at 9 a.m. on Thursday, February 18, to begin discussing American Dirt by Jeanine Cummins. Also, the Book Club has a new contact person. You may reach Sue by email at dcal-darelli@hotmail.com.

There are no meetings in February for the Friends of the Long Beach Public Library or the Long Beach Board of Trustees. We will keep you posted on when these groups will next meet.

Due to the rise in cases in our area, the library is still not able to schedule Preschool Story time, Parent’s Coffee, or any type of group meetings at the library due to social distancing restrictions. Our meeting rooms are being used for quarantine purposes.

The library will be closed Monday, February 15, for Presidents’ Day. We will reopen at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, February 16. Stay safe!



Long Beach Comics leaves lasting impression

By Taylor McKay Hathorn

William Carpenter, Jr., spent the last five years of his life bringing joy to Long Beach residents through his comic shop, Long Beach Comics, which was housed in a 200-square-foot storefront behind his mother's barbershop.

He keenly understood the joy that comic books could give to readers, as he discovered his own love for the medium while recovering from the twenty surgeries he endured throughout his life as a result of his battle with multiple pterygium syndrome, Escobar type.

"His dad gave [the comic books] to him," says his mother, Lori Carpenter. After reading them, William would browse the Internet for more information on his collection and what could be done with it.

"He knew what was hot and when it was hot, and he knew when to sell

and when not to sell," Lori recalls.

Eventually, William parlayed his hobby into a successful business, but Lori remembers its humble beginnings.

"We started out with just a couple of boxes," she says.

Eventually, though, William spotted the opportunity of a lifetime when an avid comic book collector in Alabama passed away. Lori, her 80-year-old father and her brother accompanied William, with a U-Haul in tow, to purchase the man's 30,000 book collection, and they brought the bevy of books back to Long Beach.

"We set up card tables in the living room to sort through the books and price them. Our house was destroyed, but it was okay," Lori quips.

This acquisition helped boost William's inventory, and Lori watched proudly as her son made a series of



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ing away comics to those he believed needed the enjoyment of a good book more than he needed the money.

Even as his business grew, William's health declined, and his shop's proximity to Lori's barbershop helped her care for him and keep an eye on him throughout the day, though she says his commitment never wavered.

"He went to work every day," she remembers. "He was a hard worker."

Five days before his death on December 7, 2020, William closed his shop for the last time; but, even now that he is gone, he lives on through the many kindnesses he paid his customers.

"I've had a lot of support at the barbershop," Lori says of her son's legacy. "I think about other mothers who have lost their children, and some people don't have the support I've had. [His customers] will come in and give me their condolences or share a memory and then go on about their day, but it's nice for someone to acknowledge it."

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