

SunSentinel LOCAL

Today's Money stories can be found inside this section

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Seniors' vaccine hopes crushed

Hundreds of thousands pack Publix website for 24K appointments

By Lisa J. Huriash
South Florida Sun Sentinel

The grand opening of the Publix website to sign up for the COVID-19 vaccine led to another day of mounting frustration for scores of Florida seniors who couldn't get a place in line.

A quarter of a million people jammed the supermarket chain's website all at once Wednesday, but only 24,402 appointment slots were up for grabs — and they were gone in less than two hours statewide. Seniors say trying to get the

vaccine has been a nightmare: It's been a test of their stamina as they get repeatedly shut out of appointments through various sign-up sites. They can expect more of the same for many weeks, experts say.

"The supply is limited. These sites can only give out appointments for vaccines they actually have," said Dr. Mary Jo Trepka, chairwoman of the Department of Epidemiology at Florida International University.

"Because the vaccine supply has been erratic, we don't know week to week how many doses they are going to have. That makes planning very difficult and frustrating for people," she said.

The rising infection rate and death toll and a new variant of

INSIDE

Here is a list of places where seniors can sign up for a vaccine, even though it could take months to get one. Spots are opening up only as vaccine doses become available.

Page 2

the virus are contributing to the angst. "They will get a spot in line," Trepka said of seniors. "I just don't know when that's going to happen."

It's 'just not right'

Barbara Simon, 74, of Boca Raton, is among those eager for the

Turn to Vaccines, Page 2



More than a quarter-of-a-million people tried to access the Publix website Wednesday morning on the first day six new counties were added to the roster to get the coveted COVID-19 vaccine. COURTESY



AMY BETH BENNETT/SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL

WAITING FOR TRUMP

Robin Johnson, of West Palm Beach, tries to get an early glance of President Donald J. Trump's motorcade as it travels down Southern Boulevard in West Palm Beach on Wednesday.

Lawyers permitted to question Sheriff Tony

Judge rules past alleged crimes can be broached in civil case

By Rafael Olmeda
South Florida Sun Sentinel

Broward Sheriff Gregory Tony will be required to answer questions about whether he has ever been a defendant in a criminal case, a Broward judge said Wednesday.

Broward Circuit Judge Michele Towbin Singer said the questions

are a fair and routine aspect of a civil case filed by three former high-ranking deputies who left office under the previous sheriff, Scott Israel, but were denied a typical payout for accumulated sick leave by Tony.

"I would agree that the question and possible follow-up questions could be asked," said Towbin Singer.

Defendants in civil cases are routinely asked questions to provide information that jurors may later use to determine whether the witness is credible.

Tony has admitted that he was tried as a juvenile for killing a man in his native Philadelphia, but has maintained that he acted in self-defense.

Towbin Singer's decision puts Tony in the position of being required to respond, under oath, to questions his political opponents have been posing since shortly before the November election.

In a lawsuit filed in late October, Republican sheriff candidate H. Wayne Clark and other plaintiffs alleged that Tony has

been hiding a felony conviction in Pennsylvania that would disqualify him from serving as a law enforcement officer.

No evidence of any such criminal record has surfaced, but the lawsuit remains pending before Broward Circuit Judge William Haury.

Tonja Haddad Coleman, who represents former deputies John Dale, Stephen Kinsey and James Polan, said she was surprised last year when she deposed Tony

Turn to Sheriff, Page 3

Trump's pardons include Floridians

Last-minute clemency dump benefits some notable local cases

By Marc Freeman,
Brett Clarkson and
Wayne K. Rouston
South Florida Sun Sentinel

Among those who benefited from Donald Trump's last-minute clemency dump were these: A rising rapper from Broward County. A prominent eye doctor convicted of Medicare fraud in South Florida. And a snake trafficker.

Here's a look at the notable local cases:

Rapper Kodak Black

Kodak, from Broward County, got a commuted sentence after serving half of a three-year federal prison term for falsifying information on a document used to buy guns from a Miami gun shop.

The 23-year-old, whose legal name is Bill K. Kapri, "is a prominent artist and community leader," the White House wrote in a statement. It said the commutation was supported by numerous religious leaders, "including Pastor Darrell Scott and Rabbi Schneur Kaplan."

Black, who grew up in Pompano Beach's Golden Acres public housing complex, has faced numerous legal problems over the past few years, including allegations of sexual assault in South Carolina. Black's lawyer, Bradford Cohen, was a contestant on Trump's reality TV show "Celebrity Apprentice" in 2009.

Rapper Lil Wayne

The rapper, who is originally from New Orleans but has main-

Turn to Trump, Page 3

Designer shop with non-designer prices pops up in Mizner Park

By Rod Stafford Hagwood
South Florida Sun Sentinel

Attention all glamazons: There's a pop-up shop heading to Mizner Park in Boca Raton with high-end labels such as Brunello Cucinelli, Gucci, Louboutin, Isaia and Loro Piana, but at bargain basement prices.

Shop EFG will offer deep discounts on designer-level fashion, shoes, bags, jewelry and other accessories. The pop-up will be from Jan. 21-Feb. 21. Featured designers will be updated weekly.

"These prices would range from \$5,000 to \$35,000 in designer shops," explains Hillel Simon, one of the partners behind the New York-based Shop EFG. "Generally our prices range up to 80% off and not less than 50% off. But most of the prices are much closer to 70 to 80% off."

Turn to Mizner, Page 3



Shop EFG's pop-up in Boca Raton's Mizner Park will carry women and men's clothing, as well as accessories. SHOP EFG

School principal faces discipline for alleged sexual advances

By Scott Travis
South Florida Sun Sentinel

A Broward principal could be suspended or demoted after an employee at his school accused him of making unwanted sexual advances.

Steven Williams, principal of Driftwood Middle in Hollywood, was investigated after a campus security monitor at the school said he made inappropriate comments or body contact at least four times between December 2018 and August 2020.

The alleged comments included "your mother should have told you about playing with a grown man" and "no man can do it like me," according to a letter the district's Special Investigative Unit sent to Williams in August announcing the investi-

gation.

The woman, who is not identified in the letter, also alleged that in March 2019, Williams came up "behind her and pressed your penis against her butt," the letter says.

Williams, who has been reassigned to a district administrative job since August, could not be reached for comment. He denies the allegations, said his lawyer, Chris Whitlock.

However, a Professional Standards Committee of district administrators unanimously agreed there was just cause to substantiate at least some of the allegations and unanimously voted that he be demoted. Superintendent Robert Runcie's chief of staff, Jeff Moquin, overruled

Turn to Principal, Page 3

Mizner

from Page 1

He says that, in lieu of a traditional brick and mortar location, the company has done pop-ups in the Hamptons and Long Island. The South Florida pop-up will be their first outside of New York state.

“The clientele that likes these kinds of projects is in Boca Raton,” adds Simon. “It’s the best location coming out of New York. Boca is known for its attraction to fashion and for their enjoyment for life. That’s what it’s really known for.”

Previously, the parent company — Exclusive Fashion Group — was in the wholesale business, selling apparel and accessories to luxury off-price retailers such as Century21 and



Shop EFG will feature designers — such as Gucci, Louboutin and Isala — and will update weekly with discounts up to 80% off retail prices. **SHOPEFG**

Neiman Marcus Last Call since 2010.

“This is something

we’ve been trying to do for some time, to go direct to consumer,” says

If you go info

Previously in a Mizner Park space that housed a LF Store, the pop-up Shop EFG will be located at 417 Plaza Real, Boca Raton. Call 561-709-2334 or go to ShopEFG.com for more information.

Store hours, so far, are:

- 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 21, Monday, Jan. 25, Tuesday, Jan. 26 and Wednesday, Jan. 27.
- 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Friday, Jan. 22.
- 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 24.
- Closed Saturday, Jan. 23.

Simon.

And as for a more permanent presence in Boca Raton, Simon will only say that it is “most definitely on the radar, is the best way to answer.”

Sheriff

from Page 1

for their lawsuit seeking a payout for sick time.

Law enforcement officers don’t often hesitate when answering questions about past crimes they were alleged to have committed.

“Members of law enforcement are required to undergo stringent scrutiny regarding any past criminal activity before they are even hired,” Haddad said. “Tony is the chief law enforce-

ment of this County and espouses ‘transparency and accountability’ as his platform. His refusal to answer this rudimentary question says more than the answer itself.”

Last year the the sheriff admitted that, as a teenager, he killed a man in Philadelphia. He was not convicted and he maintains he acted in self-defense.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement is investigating whether Tony lied about his history on an application to conceal the killing from police employ-

ers, among other undisclosed issues.

In the sick time lawsuit, Tony’s lawyers say the plaintiffs are political allies of former Sheriff Scott Israel, Tony’s opponent in the August 2020 primary, and called the questions about his alleged criminal past improper.

Towbin Singer disagreed, finding that the questions were proper but that Haddad would have a limited ability to refer to them at trial unless there was evidence of convictions.



Gregory Tony is sworn in as Broward County Sheriff on Jan. 5. **BROWARD SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

Trump

from Page 1

tained a residence in Miami Beach, received a pardon.

Wayne, whose real name is Dwayne Michael Carter Jr., pleaded guilty in December to illegally possessing a firearm as a previously convicted felon after a gold-plated handgun was found in a bag he had on board a chartered flight to Miami, the Miami Herald reported.

“Mr. Carter has exhibited generosity through commit-

ment to a variety of charities, including donations to research hospitals and a host of food banks,” the White House said.

An eye doctor

Salomon Melgen, a once-prominent South Florida eye doctor who was serving a 17-year sentence for a \$73 million Medicare fraud conviction, also got a pardon.

Melgen, 65, of North Palm Beach, was found guilty in 2017 of crimes including health care fraud, submit-

ting false claims and falsifying records in patients’ files. Prosecutors showed that between 2008 and 2013, he became the nation’s highest-paid Medicare doctor, building his practice by giving elderly patients unnecessary eye injections and laser blasts on their retinas that some compared to torture.

The Harvard-trained, Dominican-born ophthalmologist, who operated eye clinics from Delray Beach to Port St. Lucie, was ordered to pay more than \$42 million in restitution to

Medicare.

In a separate federal case, Melgen was accused of bribing U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez. Melgen’s trial ended in a hung jury and prosecutors decided against retrying the case. Melgen was facing more than 600 years in prison at one point.

A snake trafficker

Robert Bowker, who in 1993 was convicted of wildlife trafficking in Florida, received a pardon.

Bowker, of New York, had been sentenced to two

Principal

from Page 1

the committee and recommended a 10-day suspension instead, since he had no prior discipline on his record, district officials told the School Board on Wednesday.

Several School Board members said they weren’t comfortable with that and delayed any action until next month so district officials can review the case further. The School Board has vowed to crack down on sexual harassment after a series of incidents in recent years.

“There are areas which progressive discipline does not apply because the action is more egregious than one we as a board are willing to tolerate,” board member Donna Korn said.

Board members also said the brief case review they received showed possible inconsistencies, as to how strong the evidence is.

Whitelock said surveillance video of an August incident, which contains no sound, raises doubts about the woman’s allegations.

“It shows a friendly, congenial atmosphere,” he said. “She’s slapping her leg, smiling, laughing.”

The discussion that day in August centered around an incident that became water cooler fodder in the district. A campus monitor at another school was caught that month with her video camera on performing what looked like oral sex during an

online meeting.

The Driftwood campus monitor told investigators that Williams referred to the video and asked her to do that to him. Williams acknowledge discussing the video with her but not making sexual advances, Whitelock said. The lawyer said Williams’ comments were along the lines of, “Hey, did you see that? Oh my God. How ridiculous. Why was the camera pointed that way?”

The woman said that when Williams learned a few days later she had reported him to the district, “you grabbed her wrist and blocked her path to stop her from leaving,” an allegation Whitelock said is not supported by surveillance video.

Williams also has about 30 witness statements from employees who said they’ve never witnessed inappropriate behavior.

Whitelock said that while Williams denies sexual harassment, he acknowledges that discussing the video with his employees was inappropriate for an administrator and agreed to the 10-day suspension. That agreement becomes void if the School Board changes the discipline. He would then have the right to appeal to the state.

Williams, who makes \$128,447 a year, has worked for the district for 28 years and has been a principal for 19. He’s the son of retired educator Benjamin Williams, who served on the Broward School Board from 2000 to 2012.

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CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

RESOLUTION NO. 21-07

RESOLUTION NO. 21-07 OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA, SETTING A PUBLIC HEARING ON **TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2021 AT 6:00 PM**, PURSUANT TO CITY CHARTER SECTION 8.02, TO CONSIDER AN AWARD AND SALE OF CITY-OWNED PROPERTY LOCATED AT 4270 SW 11TH STREET, PLANTATION, FLORIDA, 33317 TO THE CITY OF PLANTATION FOR PUBLIC PURPOSES; AND DELEGATING AUTHORITY TO THE CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL INSTRUMENTS RELATED TO THIS TRANSACTION AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, on March 3, 2020 the City Commission of the City of Fort Lauderdale adopted Resolution No. 20-86 declaring its intent to convey real property under Section 8.02 of the City Charter, located at 4270 SW 11 Street, Plantation, Florida 33317 to the City of Plantation for public purposes. Such property being described as:

Township 50 South, Range 41 East, Section 12, the west 250 feet of the SW ¼ of the SE ¼ of the SE ¼ lying south of Tract “F” as shown on Plat Book 15, page 2 of the Broward County records less the south 275 feet of same, Broward County, FL. (The “Property”)

Property Identification # 5041 12 00 0220; and

WHEREAS, On July 7, 2020, and August 18, 2020, this item was deferred to provide the City of Plantation time for its City Commission to approve the purchase; and

WHEREAS Section 8.02 of the City Charter requires that consideration of an Award and Sale occur during a publicly noticed meeting. Such notice shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA:

SECTION 1. In accordance with Section 8.02 of the City Charter, the City Commission will consider a bid from the City of Plantation in the amount of Two Hundred Sixty-Five Thousand and 00/100 Dollars (\$265,000.00) on **Tuesday, February 2, 2021 at 6:00 pm**, or as soon thereafter as same may be heard, at City Hall, 100 North Andrews Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, FL.

SECTION 2. Pursuant to City Charter Section 8.02, this Resolution shall be published in full by the City Clerk in two (2) issues of the official newspaper of the City not less than 10 days before the public hearing and the second publication one (1) week after the first publication.

SECTION 3. That this Resolution shall be in full force and effect immediately upon and after its passage.

ADOPTED this the 5th day of January, 2021.

Mayor, DEAN J. TRANTALIS, ATTEST: City Clerk, JEFFREY A. MODARELLI