

School bus drivers, monitors may strike

Workers in Cromwell, Middletown set Oct. 1 deadline in contract talks

By Paul Schott
STAFF WRITER

School bus drivers and monitors in the Cromwell and Middletown school districts plan to go on strike on Oct. 1 if they do not reach an agreement on a new contract with their employer by then, their union announced Monday.

The potential strike was unanimously approved Monday by the more than 100 school bus

drivers and bus monitors across the Cromwell and Middletown districts who are represented by Teamsters Local 671, according to a news release from the union. The decision follows months of negotiations with the workers' employer, the New Britain-based Dattco, whose proposals "fail to reflect the essential services Teamsters provide to get students to and from school safely every day," Teamsters officials said in the an-

nouncement.

"Dattco school bus Teamsters work hard to get our students to and from school safely every day. They have a special bond with our students and parents, and many Teamsters are parents themselves with children who rely on consistent school bus services," said Anthony Lepore, principal officer of Teamsters Local 671, in a written statement. "Drivers' working

Strike continues on A4



Hearst Conn. Media file photo

School bus drivers and monitors in the Cromwell and Middletown school districts plan to go on strike on Oct. 1 if they do not reach an agreement on a new contract with their employer, their union announced Monday.



Photos by Dave Zajac/Hearst Connecticut Media

Fairfield National players sign autographs for fans as their coach, Brian Palazzolo, top right, speaks during a celebration on the Sherman Green in Fairfield on Monday.

Conn., other states could go alone on vaccines

By Jordan Nathaniel Fenster
STAFF WRITER

Amid reports that President Donald Trump and health secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. could ban COVID-19 vaccines, Connecticut and other New England states could be considering whether it makes sense to branch out from federal health oversight of vaccines and make their own recommendations and guidance.

Connecticut public health Commissioner Manisha Juthani was part of an eight-state meeting last week in Rhode Island to discuss regional approaches to vaccine administration, the Department of Public Health confirmed. While a decision is not necessarily imminent, there are ongoing concerns in many states about the direction of the Trump administration's direction when it comes to public health policy.

"Public health challenges extend beyond state lines, making collaboration essential for effective response and prevention efforts," said DPH spokesperson Brittany Schaeffer. "Last week's meeting allowed our states to share numerous public health best strategies to meet the needs of our states at a time of federal health restructuring and cuts."

Though Schaeffer said this is "nothing new," she also noted that DPH earlier this month issued guidance for health care workers that have been exposed to COVID-19, intended to "supersede" interim guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC altered its guidance to allow asymptomatic health care providers to return to work. Connecticut's superseding guidance suggests three days isolation after exposure.

"I can tell you that the New England states worked together very closely during COVID and

Alone continues on A4

'THEY'VE HIT LEGENDARY STATUS'

Fairfield fans celebrate team's Little League World Series run

By Jessica Bravo and Tyler Fedor
STAFF WRITERS

FAIRFIELD — A team from Connecticut that nearly became the fifth from the state to win the Little League World Series was welcomed home to Fairfield with a firetruck escort Monday.

Fairfield National won the consolation game in the tournament, becoming the first team from Connecticut to finish in third place since Bridgeport's North End Little League in 1957.

On Monday, the firetrucks took the Fairfield National team from the Dairy Queen through downtown Fairfield to Sherman Town Green, where a crowd of people followed and packed the green so tight the crowd spilled out onto the side-



Hundreds of fans cheer on Fairfield National Little League baseball team members Monday as they arrive for a celebration at the Sherman Green in Fairfield.

walks.

Though the team lost the U.S. championship game to Summerlin South of Las Vegas, on Saturday, the team did place third after defeating Santa Cruz, Aruba, 4-2 on Sunday.

The games took place at South Williamsport, Pennsylvania's Lamade Stadium. Gov. Ned Lamont, U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., and U.S. Rep. Jim Himes, D-4, were a part of the welcoming party, among other local officials.

"This team has been unstoppable and has inspired all of us with their sportsmanship and teamwork," Fairfield acting First Selectman Christine Vitale said in a statement. "We are so proud of these athletes and can't wait to celebrate their accomplishment with the entire town."

If the team didn't know how many people supported them during the tournament, they do now, said Joe Sorrentino, father of left-fielder Joe Sorrentino.

Fans continues on A6

Homeless numbers see rise during summer, especially among elderly

By Cassandra Day
STAFF WRITER

MIDDLETOWN — It's not uncommon for the number of unhoused people to rise during the summer time, when housing advocates said they traditionally see a spike in cases.

"In the wintertime, people are

more prone to find alternative spots (to stay) — whether it's cold weather shelters, things like that, and even doubling up with friends and family," New Opportunities CEO/President Bill Rybczyk said.

That includes around the holidays, he added.

According to the most recent figures, the United Way 211 line received

1,347 calls from people seeking shelter in Middletown, 2,154 originated from Meriden residents and 270 from Wallingford for a combined 4,269 calls, said Kelly Craft, director of the Meriden Middletown and Wallingford Coordinated Access Network.

Once a 24/7 operation, 211 stopped

Summer continues on A6

Two more charged in East Hampton boat fire, police say

By Josh LaBella
STAFF WRITER

EAST HAMPTON — Two more men have been charged in connection with a boat fire on Lake Pocotopaug caused by

fireworks over the Fourth of July weekend, police say.

Patrick White, a 50-year-old town resident, and Evan Craven, a 25-year-old from Griswold,

Fire continues on A4

