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TALE OF THE TRAIL

TIM JEAN/Staff photos

A Salem DPW worker keeps the trail trimmed.

It takes a village to keep it humming

The Salem Rail Trail has become the focus of community activity involving a variety of volunteers and stakeholders.

The Salem Police Department Community Services Team hosts a one-mile community walk every Tuesday morning at 9:30 a.m. (weather permitting) on the trail.

Participants meet in the parking lot of the Old Tuscan Market and Kitchen on Main Street. The Community Services Team is joined each week by a surprise Salem police officer to walk and converse with the public.

The department also runs a similar, longer program called “Walk With Us Wednesdays,” which features rotating 1.5- to 2.5-mile routes across different parts of the town.

A scenic overlook has been built by members of the Friends of the Salem Bike-Ped Corridor with the help of family members and friends. A 2025 Eagle Scout Project donated by Justin Baldridge of Troop 267 created the Turtle Pond Lookout.

Southern New Hampshire Chamber of Commerce has an office inside the old Salem Depot Train Stop. And a growing Community Rock Garden has captured public sentiment on a variety of topics.

According to data from the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advocacy of New Hampshire (BWANH), New Hampshire rail trails contribute $18,736,000 annually to the state economy.

This scenic overlook along on the Salem Rail Trail was built by members of the Friends of the Salem Bike-Ped Corridor with the help of family members and friends. The materials were generously provided by Michelle and David Olsen. The Salem DPW and Cyr Lumber assisted.

A growing Community Rock Garden near the intersection of Old Rockingham Road and the Salem Rail Trail.

TIM JEAN/Staff photo

The Southern New Hampshire Chamber of Commerce has an office located inside the old Salem Depot Train Stop along Main Street and the Salem Rail Trail.

SUNUNU CENTER

AG finds no recent systemic abuse

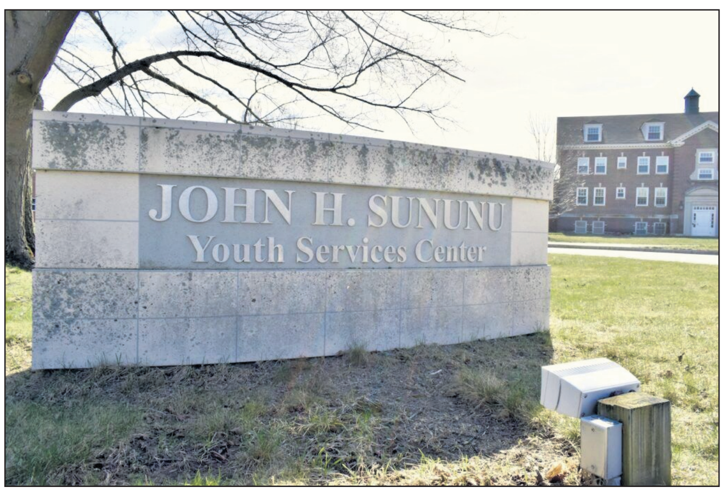
New Hampshire Bulletin

The New Hampshire Attorney General’s Office says a multimonth review found no evidence of recent systemic abuse at the Sununu Youth Services Center in Manchester and concluded that the facility is “operating within legal boundaries” — contradicting concerns by a state watchdog.

In a 56-page report released earlier this week, the Attorney General’s Office said that while it did find staffing problems and general leadership failures at the juvenile detention and treatment facility, it did not find evidence of physical abuse of youth by staff.

The report attempts to refute findings by the Office of the Child Advocate, the state’s watchdog for children’s services, and the Disability Rights Center-New Hampshire.

In March, the child advocate released its own report containing a complaint that a child at the facility had broken a bone after being held by staff in a restraint in an “illegal prone position” for 3½ minutes. At the time, the watchdog said it had reviewed video footage of the restraint and had filed an abuse and neglect report



DAVE CUMMINGS/New Hampshire Bulletin

A state report found no current cases of abuse at the Sununu Center. It did find that staffing levels are dangerously low, leading to unsafe conditions, forced overtime, and burnout. It recommended wage increases and additional legislative funding for the facility.

on behalf of the child with the Division for Children, Youth and Families.

The OCA raised broader concerns in its March report, too. During a March 13 surprise site visit prompted by a call of concern from a child, the watchdog said it had heard complaints of a recent crackdown carried out at the facility. Staff had imposed a six-week lockdown, denying children fresh air, temporarily ending education services, limiting exercise time, and requiring permission for water or bathroom use, the OCA alleged.

Those conclusions came after a six-hour site visit in which the OCA interviewed staff members and some children at the facility one-on-one, the OCA said.

Tuesday’s report from the Attorney General’s Office comes to opposite conclusions. After interviewing 40 people and reviewing thousands of documents and 300 hours of video footage, the state concluded that the injured child had broken his own hand by punching a window and that the prone restraints used on that child “were appropriately limited to short periods.”

The state’s report also disputed the alleged six-week lockdown. Instead, the report concluded that the facility has put in place an “initial restriction period” of one week, followed by a “modified schedule” period to respond to severe safety threats, including youth assaults on staff.

The report said the one-week period had been implemented after one resident broke a staff member’s jaw in January and another armed himself with debris near a dangerous, empty swimming pool. It found the week of restrictions was meant as a “reset” after escalations of violence and meant that all residents had to eat and conduct all activities within one of four units and

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Board to review Old River Road project

A 426-unit mixed-use development

By Angelina Berube
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ANDOVER — A proposed 426-unit mixed-use development at 100 Old River Road will have its order of conditions reviewed July 14.

The Planning Board is expected to discuss the proposed conditions for the site plan and special permit for the proposed mixed-use structure at 100 Old River Road during its meeting next week.

The project, known as The Commons at River Road, was proposed by developer JMC/SVP Old River Road who owns the property. It includes no more than 426 housing units and 6,550 square feet of retail space.

The development would have 638 parking spaces combined from an open-air parking garage and surface parking. Some of the spots would be shared parking “with varying parking demand throughout the day by commercial and residential users,” according to the project’s application.

A five-story, 497,500 square-foot residential building with retail space is proposed to take the place of an existing structure on site.

The developer considers the mixed-use development as “the most beneficial use of the site,” according to the supplemental special permit narrative in the project’s application.

The project initially had 2,950 square feet of commercial space and 432 housing units by special permit. The Planning Board had a peer review done to analyze the feasibility of commercial and retail space on the development’s ground floor. The peer review concluded the ground floor could accommodate up to 6,000 square feet for a mix of retail, a restaurant or cafe and medical spaces.

Project consultant Ann Ehrhart of Pittsfield-based Everstreet LLC worked in collaboration with the town’s consultant, Eric Halvorsen of RKG Associates, and subsequently altered the retail plan to increase

SEE COMMONS, PAGE 3

Biz groups rip retirement plan mandate

By Christian M. Wade
» Statehouse Reporter

BOSTON — Business groups are blasting House lawmakers for approving a controversial proposal mandating retirement plans for workers at certain private sector companies that was previously vetoed by Gov. Maura Healey.

Tucked into a $561 million economic development bill approved by the state House of Representatives on Wednesday is a proposal that would require employers with 25 or more workers that do not offer privately managed retirement plans to enroll them in a state-run retirement program.

> House Democrats OK’d a plan requiring businesses with 25 or more employees to offer retirement plans. A similar plan was vetoed by Gov. Maura Healey last year.

The proposed Secure Choice Savings Program, based on similar plans in 17 other states, would expand the state’s Defined Contribution Plan, a tax-deferred and post-tax 401(k) savings plan for employees of nonprofits with 20 or fewer employees.

Lawmakers who backed the measure say it would provide retirement savings options for hundreds of thousands of Massachusetts workers who don’t have access to IRAs and 401(k) plans through their private employers.

An estimated 1.3 million Massachusetts private sector workers — 43% of the state’s workforce — don’t have access to an employer-sponsored retirement plan, according to a recent study by Georgetown University.

But business groups are ripping the move, saying it would mean higher costs and more

SEE RETIREMENT, PAGE 3