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USPS opts to close
its Benton Twp.
post office – for good

Community meeting
to aid discontinuation
feasibility study

By LAUREN RICE
HP Staff Writer

BENTON TOWNSHIP — The U.S. Postal Service intends to permanently close The Orchards Mall post office location in Benton Township.

Operations at the location were first suspended in September of 2023 due to “irreparable safety and health concerns for employees and customers,” according to a notice from USPS.

Township Supervisor Cathy Yates said only having access to the Benton Harbor post office could be an inconvenience and raise accessibility issue for some township residents.

“We have elderly and sick people, and even though they have handicapped parking down there, it’s a walk for people at that post office,” she said. “In the winter time, the wind is horrible trying to get to that door. ... So I just want people to be able to share their concerns.”

According to a previous Herald-Palladium article, a USPS spokesperson had stated they were seeking to relocate the office.

A space at 1958 Mall Place in Benton Township was identified. The Michigan Secretary of State Office is also at that address, along with several other businesses.

Yates said the postmaster is expected to provide more information, including the reason their relocation plans have been canceled.

“They were the ones that told us it was going to work, so if it didn’t work, they should tell us why,” she said. “We deserve answers.”

For the past three years, services had been routed to the Benton Harbor main office at 525 Riverview Drive.

USPS also announced it will conduct a discontinuance feasibility study on The Orchards Mall location.

“A discontinuance feasibility study is a review of retail and delivery operations of a postal facility,” the notice reads. “The study includes evaluating customer needs and postal productivity and efficiency.”

It takes into account that customer needs have changed over time: bills are primarily paid online and people communicate via email and texting.

Several critical services still function through the

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Don Campbell / HP file photo

The United States Postal Service previously operating at The Orchards Mall is permanently closing, rather than relocating within Benton Township.

Board agrees to sell
land to Three Oaks

Berrien County
land to be used
for park expansion

By JULIE SWIDWA
HP Correspondent

ST. JOSEPH — The Berrien County Board of Commissioners has agreed to a land transfer of about 21 acres of land to the village of Three Oaks.

The board voted Thursday to sell the land to the village for \$105. Board Chairman Mac Elliott said after the meeting the land is of no value to the county, but it will allow Three Oaks to expand a park.

Elliott said the 21-acre parcel is unbuildable because it is swampland.

Meanwhile, the county is in the process of selling 15

acres of adjacent land to a private developer. The developer plans to build single-family houses on the land at 6974 U.S. 12.

“Three Oaks needs housing, and I’m looking forward to seeing those houses go up,” Elliott said in an interview after Thursday’s meeting. The land transfer was approved as part of the consent calendar voted on Thursday. Those typically come with no comment from board members, who had reviewed them earlier from parent committee meetings.

Elliott said the land is of no use to the county but, being adjacent to a park, will allow the village of Three Oaks to expand recreational space.

Further, he said this land transfer will allow the county

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Photos by Don Campbell / HP staff

Larry Schanker is retiring as executive director of Brookview Montessori School, but will stay on as a teacher. Schanker started teaching music part time at Brookview Montessori 28 years ago and has been there ever since

‘It’s really become my home’

Schanker not fully
stepping away at
Brookview Montessori

By LOUISE WREGE
HP Staff Writer

BENTON HARBOR — Larry Schanker may have retired from the executive director position at Brookview Montessori, but he isn’t going away.

“I’m so glad I don’t have to say goodbye. I’ll be doing what I’ve been doing all along in music,” said Schanker, 66, who stepped down from the executive director position earlier this month.

Schanker started teaching music part time at Brookview Montessori 28 years ago and has been there ever since.

“My wife thought the Montessori education would be a good fit for our daughter – I started when she started, when she was 2-and-one-half years old. And then it just gradually built from there into a more substantial music program,” Schanker said. “(My daughter)



Executive Director Larry Schanker works with tone bars and musical scales with Luca Bonucchi in 2022 at Brookview Montessori School in Benton Harbor. Schanker is stepping down as executive director, but will still teach at the school.

ter) moved on and I stayed at Brookview. It’s really become my home.”

He said he fell in love with the Montessori way of teaching.

“As do many of us. We get bitten by the Montessori bug,” he said. “We’re raising

global citizens to make a better world for the future.”

During his time before becoming the executive director in 2015, Schanker said he even taught middle school for three years.

However, even as executive director, he continued to

teach music.

“I’ve always believed in treating the teachers like gold,” he said. “They’re the lifeblood of an institution and it’s been a joy to support them for 11 years.”

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Michigan houses are old and getting older

Lack of home building
has become a ‘huge
problem’ for state

By JORDYN HERMAN
Bridge Michigan

When the typical Michigan home was built, Richard Nixon was president, U.S. forces were withdrawing from Vietnam and “The Exorcist” would become the year’s highest-grossing film.

While pop culture has changed dramatically since 1973, much of the state’s housing stock has stayed the same.

Roughly 60 percent of occupied Michigan homes – about 2.5 million units,



Don Campbell / HP file photo

Construction on the Corner at Wall Street project in downtown Benton Harbor is shown in December of 2025, which will feature 46 apartments and commercial space.

owned or rented – were built in or before the 1970s, and the median home in the state is significantly older than the

nation as a whole. Much of the aging housing stock is clustered around major cities like Detroit and Grand Rap-

ids, though older homes exist in pockets all across the state.

As officials try to address an ongoing housing crisis, the age of existing Michigan homes will be “a huge problem” to contend with in the coming years, said Dawn Crandall of the Home Builders Association of Michigan.

With age comes issues, she noted.

“Do people want to walk in and then invest that kind of money to remodel a home?” Crandall said. “To buy an older home is not necessarily cheap.”

Aging water heaters, disintegrating shingles and cracking foundations – to say nothing of even older homes with

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Sunday Weather

High 85 Low 72

