



York County Spring Games to bring 300 special Olympians to Noble High

NEWS, 4A

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Creating a community hub



Amelia Hermonat, owner of Bonfire Coffee Bar, left, and Mairi Patridge, owner The Blended Batch, can't wait to open their businesses at Gonic Mill in Rochester. DEB CRAM/FOSTER'S DAILY DEMOCRAT

Bonfire Coffee Bar partners with gluten-free bakery at Gonic Mill

Karen Dandurant Foster's Daily Democrat | USA TODAY NETWORK

ROCHESTER — Bonfire Coffee Bar received such a strong welcome when it opened in Somersworth last May, the husband-wife team running it now plan to open a second location in the Gonic Mill. And they are partnering with The Blended Batch, a local bakery business. • Bonfire Coffee Bar will remain open at the former Cafe Anatolia in Somersworth, where it started the business in May 2025. This May, Amelia and William Hermonat hope to open at 73 Pickering Road, inside the Gonic Mill building. The Blended Batch will offer baked goods with gluten free, dairy free, and vegan choices.

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Dover chef Evan Hennessey named James Beard Award finalist for 2026

Sarah Donovan Foster's Daily Democrat USA TODAY NETWORK

DOVER — Renowned Dover chef Evan Hennessey has been named a James Beard Award finalist for 2026 in the category of Best Chef Northeast less than an hour after opening a new restaurant.

The awards are often referred to as the "Oscars of the food world."

The finalists were announced March 31 shortly after 10:30 a.m., after his new Mediterranean restaurant in Dover, Topolino opened at 10. Hennessey is also the owner of Stages at One Washington, a high-end restaurant downtown in Dover's Washington Street Mills, where he serves six customers at a time, cooking in front of them.

The other four Best Chef Northeast finalists are David Distasi, Materia Ristorante, Bantam, CT; Thomas Takashi Cooke, Izakaya Minato, Portland, ME; Paul Trombly, Fancy's, Burlington, VT; and Derek Wagner, Nicks on Broadway, Providence, RI.

Hennessey said he was "incredibly proud and honored" to be named a finalist in a statement.

"When I first saw the announcement, I almost couldn't believe it," he said. "I just opened the doors to Topolino, and then that happened minutes later. Absolutely incredible, just incredible."

The 2026 James Beard Restaurant and Chef Award winners will be announced during a ceremony June 15 in Chicago.

'Rewrite the book': Hennessey reflects on awards and career

Hennessey commented on the impact of awards and chiefs in his career, giving thanks to those who support him.

"I can recall a long time ago, seeing the lists being published and always being inspired by the chefs who were brave enough to step outside the box and stand up for what they believed in," he said. "That was true motivation for me to push my limits and see what I was capable of. I realize how much of an important and transformative platform a restaurant is, and what opportunities it can create for so many people, the

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Union Bluff expansion wins early approval over objections

Max Sullivan Portsmouth Herald USA TODAY NETWORK

YORK, Maine — A plan to more than double the size of the Union Bluff Hotel has won preliminary approval, raising alarm among residents worried about traffic, trash and months of construction.

The expansion would increase the number of rooms at 8 Beach St. from 40 to 81, enlarge the restaurant and add a two-story parking garage with 122 spaces. The new structure would rise beside the existing hotel on a lawn now used for weddings and other events.

Neighbors say the project's size will strain an already congested stretch of Short Sands. Eighteen residents submitted letters ahead of the Planning Board's March 26 meeting, warning the larger hotel would worsen traffic backups, intensify parking pressures and add to trash problems.

"This would be a huge mistake," wrote Carol Cav-

icchioli, who urged the board to reconsider the scale of the proposal. "Don't let this happen and ruin the dynamics of this beautiful beach that I've been going to for 70 years."

Planning Board members advanced the proposal with a unanimous vote for preliminary approval. Planner Brendan Summerville stressed the decision reflects only a broad review of the concept, saying the project still must meet detailed design standards for that stretch of the beach.

"There is plenty to go," Summerville said.

Board member Peter Smith said after the meeting that he is optimistic the hotel's owners will clear the remaining hurdles. He noted they have already responded to several board concerns, including shifting the load-in zone so that large trucks no longer park along Beach Street.

"I think it's an absolutely clear road (to approval),"

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The Union Bluff Hotel in York Beach, seen Aug. 21, 2025, is planning an expansion, which has some residents upset. DEB CRAM/SEACOASTONLINE

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