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Portsmouth Herald

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Complementary restaurants



Evan Hennessey is opening Topolino restaurant in Dover's Waterfront District on March 31.
DEB CRAM/FOSTER'S DAILY DEMOCRAT

Evan Hennessey says new Topolino restaurant is different than Stages

Sarah Donovan Foster's Daily Democrat | USA TODAY NETWORK

DOVER — Renowned chef Evan Hennessey has a new vision for Topolino, his Mediterranean restaurant set to open March 31 in the city's emerging Waterfront District. • Hennessey said the restaurant is a "totally different idea" than his Dover restaurant Stages, where he serves small groups of six seated at a counter multiple courses, cooking and interacting with diners. • Topolino will be more casual, with a bar, open seating and no reservations, located at 9 River St. on the ground floor of a five-story building with apartments on upper floors.

See **TOPOLINO**, Page 2A

Hampton Falls refuses transfer for bullied Seabrook 7th-grader

Max Sullivan
Portsmouth Herald
USA TODAY NETWORK

SEABROOK — After years of reported bullying that left a Seabrook student afraid to be in class, the state Board of Education is pressing the Hampton Falls School Board to explain why it has not complied with an order allowing the boy to transfer to Lincoln Akerman School.

For several years, Janet Dow has urged Seabrook school officials to address what she describes as persistent bullying of her son, currently in seventh grade. She told the Seabrook School Board in April 2025 he was so anxious about returning to class that he often sought refuge in the nurse's office.

"He's constantly being hit, being pushed, being kicked," Dow said at that meeting. "I'm done with it."

In July, Dow asked the district to allow her son to attend Lincoln Akerman School in neighboring Hampton Falls, which is close to their home. The Seabrook School Board denied the request, but Dow appealed and won a manifest hardship ruling from the state Board of Education — an order requiring Hampton Falls to accept the transfer.

That is not what happened, according to Dow's attorney, Patrick O'Day. Speaking at a March 12 hearing before the state board, O'Day said the Hampton Falls School Board voted in February to deny the placement. He said the board offered no explanation other than advice from its attorney that it was not bound by the state's order.

"She was simply trying to move forward under the state board's decision," O'Day said.

SAU 21 Superintendent Merideth Nadeau attended the March 12 hearing, along with attorney Bob Cassa, who represented the Seabrook School Board. No one from the Hampton Falls School Board appeared, leaving state Board of Education members without answers about why their order had not been enforced.

O'Day told the board the student has not been in school since February, as Dow has chosen to keep him home while the district provides homework. Several state board members said the situation suggested the student's best interests were not being prioritized by those responsible for his education.

See **TRANSFER**, Page 2A

Exeter board denies proposal to open downtown park

Brandon Ng
Portsmouth Herald
USA TODAY NETWORK

EXETER — When Exeter accepted a donated parcel in 2023 for a future public park downtown, town leaders agreed it wouldn't jump the long list of capital projects already in the pipeline.

That December, three town boards met in quick succession to approve the gift — a small vacant lot at 23 Water St., between The Chocolatier and Il Cornicello — after donors Elliot Berkowitz and Nancy Phillips said the town needed to formally accept it before year's end for tax purposes.

Now, despite calls to open the land sooner, the Select Board has opted to stay the course. This week, members rejected a resident's request to make the site accessible to the public while the Pairpoint Park Stakeholders Advisory Committee continues fundraising for engineering and design work.

The resident, Keith Whitehouse — a member of both the Conservation Commission and the advisory committee — had proposed filling a hole on the property, mowing a short walking path, and eventually moving the fence from the street to the riverbank.

He had offered to pay for the work himself so that it would not come at any cost to taxpayers. If approved, the plan would allow the public to enjoy the land while the committee works to secure funding for the complete makeover.

Whitehouse's advocacy has extended to dressing in a beaver costume to drum up excitement for the park. He stood outside the polls during Exeter's town election, at one point holding a sign that read, "Eager for Pairpoint Park."

"This is a fairly easy thing to do," Whitehouse told the Select Board at a meeting on March 16, referring to his proposal.

See **PARK**, Page 3A



Keith Whitehouse dresses as a beaver to draw voter attention to the proposed Pairpoint Park project at the entrance to the Exeter polling station on March 10. DEB CRAM/FOSTER'S DAILY DEMOCRAT

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