



Find Out What Your Home Is Worth

Call Today for an Expert Valuation and Make Your Next Move

888-438-0750
Mon-Sun: 8:00 AM - 5:30 PM



Discover more at addressUSA.com

Portsmouth Herald

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2026 | SEACOASTONLINE.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Cheese Louise pays MIT living wage



Ella Chandler works in marketing at Cheese Louise and began with the company when she was a teenager.
DEB CRAM/SEACOASTONLINE

Eatery's managers say pay and profits can coexist

Ian Lenahan
Portsmouth Herald
USA TODAY NETWORK

PORTSMOUTH — The minds behind Cheese Louise are urging fellow Seacoast restaurant owners to pay their workers a living wage at a rate recommended by Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

All part- and full-time employees at Cheese Louise's downtown Portsmouth location earn at least \$27.48 per hour, including tips, almost four times the state's minimum wage requirement, in accordance with MIT's living wage index, according to the eatery's leadership team.

Shift leads, food truck leads and assistant general managers make between \$3 and \$5 more per hour at Cheese Louise than newly hired employees, adding to that base pay.

Tips are pooled among all staff at Cheese Louise to bring beginning pay up to MIT's recommended living wage for the Seacoast region.

"Maybe the main problem facing most people in this country is that inflation is outpacing wages by such a dramatic magnitude," said Jasmine Schmidt, director of operations for Cheese Louise. "That's why we made this

See **WAGES**, Page 2A

"To keep people who are qualified, passionate and enjoy what they're doing, there's a monetary responsibility behind that."

Joanna Kelley
Owner of Cup of Joe Cafe and Bar and Portsmouth's assistant mayor

Portsmouth takes aim at school food insecurity

Jeff McMenemy
Portsmouth Herald
USA TODAY NETWORK

PORTSMOUTH — The City Council recently took an important step to combat food insecurity in Portsmouth schools.

The council voted unanimously to pass a motion made by City Councilor Michelle Flynn to have city staff "coordinate with the Portsmouth School Board and staff to jointly establish a School Food Insecurity Task Force."

Flynn pointed out task force's formation was named as one of the council's 2026-27 strategic goals.

"I'm bringing this motion forward because it reflects a goal ... the council set at our January retreat, exploring how we can ensure no child in Portsmouth public schools goes without food due to cost," Flynn said.

The motion also called for the yet-to-be assembled task force to "report back or offer preliminary findings by the end of the calendar year," Flynn said.

17% of students receive free or reduced meals

The first-time city councilor maintained "food insecurity in Portsmouth is not theoretical."

"In the 2022-23 school year, one in six students, about 360 kids total, qualified for free or reduced meals," she said during a recent council meeting. "That represented about 17% of students."

She acknowledged more recent data does show "a decline in enrollment in free and reduced-price lunches, but that drop does not necessarily reflect a drop in need."

"It may be that working families in Portsmouth fall just under that eligibility threshold, yet everyone is facing these rising costs," Flynn said.

See **SCHOOL FOOD**, Page 2A

Somersworth Plaza eyes revival as new businesses move in

Karen Dandurant
Foster's Daily Democrat
USA TODAY NETWORK

SOMERSWORTH — Somersworth Plaza appears to be on the brink of a new era. Don Berrios, whose Toys from the Attic shop has been there for 24 years, is excited. He's hoping a couple of new tenants are the start of a revitalization.

City Manager David Moore said Somersworth leaders, too, are also hopeful the 85 Main St. plaza can thrive. He pointed to Nostos MMA and Conditioning Facility, which is moving into the facility later this month, and LivWell, a Greek market formerly located on Market Street in Somersworth, that's coming to the plaza soon.

"The plaza's history reflects the broader evolution of Somersworth itself," Moore said. "Once supported by the spending power generated by down-

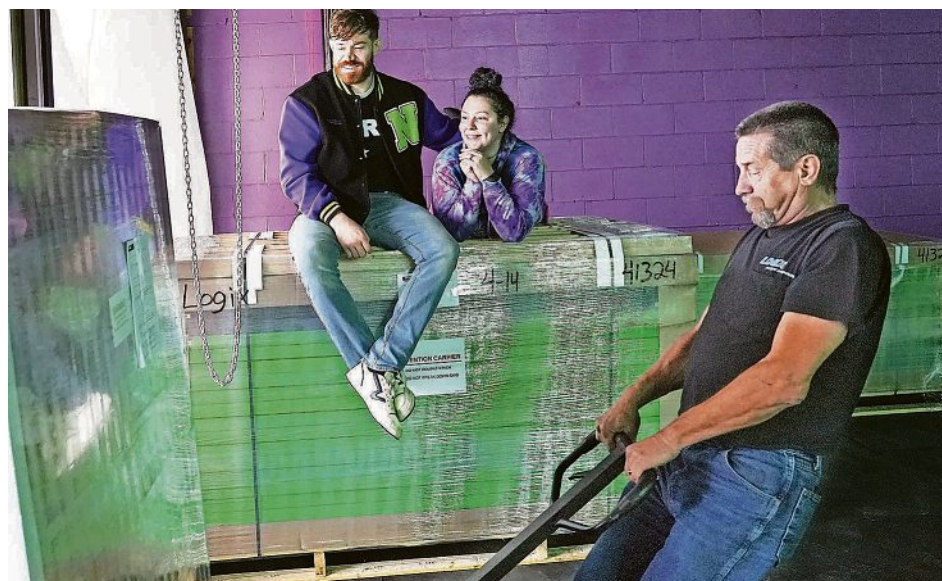
town mills and industrial employers, the area later became home to grocery stores, restaurants and even brewing operations as owners searched for new ways to revitalize older retail space."

Somersworth Plaza ownership is part city, part private

The Somersworth Plaza operates under unusual circumstances. The city owns the facade of the plaza, the parking lot and a small road behind it. Each occupied unit in the plaza is individually owned, and vacant units are owned and marketed through the current property owners.

Moore said the city is working to do its part to support the plaza's revitalization through physical improvements to the portion of the plaza it owns, as well

See **PLAZA**, Page 6A



Devin and Carol-Linn Powell, owners of Nostos MMA and Conditioning Facility, watch as heavy mats are delivered in their new Somersworth Plaza space.
DEB CRAM/FOSTER'S DAILY DEMOCRAT

Subscriber-only eNewspaper

The eNewspaper is an electronic copy of your print newspaper. Enjoy every page by going to seacoastonline.com/enewspaper or scan this code on your mobile device. You will also find late news and sports in the bonus sections. Check it out today!



Volume 142 | No. 230
Subscribe 888-736-4061
©2026 \$2.99



7 06701 00002 7