



Boys basketball: Gordon leads Plainfield past Piscataway

SPORTS, 5B

Home News Tribune

THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2026 | MYCENTRALJERSEY.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Judge blocks property seizure

Suzanne Russell
MyCentralJersey.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

PERTH AMBOY - A Middlesex County Superior Court judge has ruled that Perth Amboy's blight designation for two adjacent Smith Street properties must be vacated and cannot be included in the city's Gateway redevelopment project or acquired through eminent domain.

In a ruling announced March 2, Judge Benjamin Bucca Jr. vacated the city's blight designation for properties

owned by Honey Meerzon and Luis Romero. Blight designations are often used to label properties as deteriorated and subject to seizure for redevelopment.

The property owners worked with the Institute for Justice to challenge the designation.

Meerzon, who owns a four-family apartment building on Smith Street next to a longtime tire and auto repair shop owned by Romero, said the ruling shows the government cannot take

See **BLOCKED**, Page 3A



A judge ruled that a four-family home and a tire and auto repair business next door on Smith Street in Perth Amboy are not blighted and cannot be condemned for a redevelopment project.

PROVIDED BY HONEY MEERZON

INTEREST LEVELS DROP

Change in mortgage rates might get home buyers off the sidelines

Michael L. Diamond
Asbury Park Press | USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

Mortgage rates fell below 6% last week for the first time since 2022, breaking through a psychological barrier that could prompt buyers who have been on the sidelines to go house hunting.

The average 30-year, fixed rate mortgage of 5.98% on Feb. 26 could lower the monthly cost of a \$500,000 home by some \$260 compared with last spring, when the average rate was 6.89%.

"What we have this year is a conversation that says, 'Hey, rates really aren't as bad, at least not as bad as they have been,'" said Keith Gumbinger, vice president of HSH.com, which tracks mortgage

See **MORTGAGES**, Page 2A

Woodbridge police promote 3 detectives to sergeant

Suzanne Russell
MyCentralJersey.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

Three veteran Woodbridge police officers have been promoted to the rank of sergeant, Mayor John E. McCormac announced.

Promoted were Detectives Andrew Kondracki, Perry Penna and Brian Vella.

"The public safety mission of the Woodbridge Police Department is our most important priority," McCormac said. "As a result of our commitment to public safety, combined with the increased assignment of uniformed officers to street patrol, the department continues to maintain police ranks at a maximum staffing level, effectively protecting public safety."

McCormac was joined at the promotion announcement by Police Director Joseph Nisky, other township officials, police officers and the officers' families.

Kondracki joined the Woodbridge Police Department in 2008 and served as a patrol officer in the radio patrol division before being promoted to detective in 2013 and assigned to the Criminal Investigations Division. His responsibilities included assignment to a Department of

See **SERGEANT**, Page 2A



Newly promoted Woodbridge Police Sgts. Andrew Kondracki, Perry Penna and Brian Vella.

PROVIDED BY WOODBRIDGE TOWNSHIP

NJ Democrats raise alarm over Iran strikes

Katie Sobko
NorthJersey.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

After the Trump administration moved to topple Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and take him into custody while taking control of his country - without any congressional approval or oversight - some began a call to keep President Donald Trump in check.

That call, led in part by Democratic leaders in Washington, grew louder on

Feb. 28, when the administration again ignored Congress, which has the sole power to declare war, and partnered with Israel to carry out military strikes in Iran that left Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dead.

Congress has not voted on a declaration or passed a new authorization related to Iran. New Jersey's lawmakers - including prominent Democrats like Sen. Andy Kim and Rep. Frank Pallone - are among those speaking out.

Ashley Koning, an assistant research

professor and director of the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, explained that the United States government is designed with an intentional separation of powers among the three branches as a way to "ensure that critical decisions such as the use of military force would not rest in the hands of a single individual, as they would under a monarch or dictator."

See **NJ DEMOCRATS**, Page 2A

Subscriber-only eNewspaper

The eNewspaper is an electronic copy of your print newspaper. Enjoy every page by going to mycentraljersey.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 148 | No. 24
Subscribe 800-777-3455
©2026 \$3.49



0 3056
40901 11721 6