



OF KEEN INTEREST

THE FED LEAVES ITS KEY SHORT-TERM INTEREST RATE UNCHANGED, RESISTING PRESSURE FROM PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP ON CHAIRMAN JEROME POWELL, LEFT, AND INTERNAL DISSENT. **C8**

MERCER COUNTY

Medical facility planned for former AMC Theatre



AMC Theatres permanently closed its Hamilton location in November 2020. Township officials said Tuesday the property was sold to Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. *Times of Trenton file*

Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia is coming to Hamilton Township.

Jackie Roman *For Times of Trenton*

The old AMC Theatres in Hamilton Township, which has been vacant since closing in 2020, could soon have a new life as a medical center.

Township officials announced Tuesday the sale of the vacant cinema located at 325 Sloan Ave., right off Exit 65A on Route 295, to the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia as the first step in a redevelopment process, according to a press release.

While it’s unclear exactly what’s planned for the theater’s second act, Mayor Jeff Martin told NJ Advance Media on Wednesday that it’s “100%” safe to assume the property will be transformed into a medical facility of some kind.

The announcement comes two weeks after the Town Council approved a resolution authorizing the planning board to conduct a preliminary investigation into whether the vacant property should be considered “a non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment.”

Martin said he expects the Planning Board to deliver its recommendation on the redevelopment proposal “some time probably in the

third quarter of this year, maybe September.

“Then it’s up to us to accept or reject that recommendation,” said Martin. “Assuming they recommend it for redevelopment and we approve it, then we can work with CHOP (Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia) on a redevelopment plan for the site.”

It’s unclear how much Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia paid for the property the movie theater sits on, which spans nearly 42 acres, according to property records.

A spokesperson for Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia said Tuesday’s joint press release contained all the information that’s currently available.

Martin said he doesn’t know what the hospital paid for the site, but stated the deal was finalized last Friday, July 25.

The property owner’s name is redacted on property records, though the address is registered to a commercial real estate agency located in Kansas City, Missouri. Tax records show the property’s current net value is \$11.95 million and taxes on it last year totaled nearly \$395,000.

Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, which bills itself as the oldest pediatric hospital in the United States, has more than 50 locations across Pennsylvania and New Jersey, according to its website.

The hospital also provides care in New Jersey through its partnerships with many hospitals, including Virtua Voorhees Hospital, Virtua Mount Holly, Penn Medicine

Princeton Medical Center in Plainsboro, AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center in Pomona, and more.

Now, Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia is looking to expand its footprint further into the Garden State, according to CEO Madeline Bell.

“The health of New Jersey’s children is a key component of our overall mission, and we’re looking forward to the future of bringing high-quality care, expanded services and improved convenience to the families of Central New Jersey and the broader region,” Bell said in a press release.

“This step underscores our commitment to ensure healthier futures for all children,” she said.

The deal also promises to bring jobs to the state at a time when the New Jersey workforce is hurting.

The Garden State lost an estimated 9,700 jobs in June, mostly in the private sector, and the state’s unemployment rate has increased from 4.8% to 4.9%, according to the New Jersey Business and Industry Association.

“I was proud to work closely with Mayor Martin and with CHOP to turn an idea into reality and breathe new life into the old AMC site, while bringing good-paying jobs to our community and improving the health of our region’s children,” County Executive Dan Benson said in a press release.

RUTGERS

Zinn as in ‘Win’: RU’s new athletic director sets bar high

“Today is a new day for Rutgers University,” says hire from LSU on taking reins of long-thwarted sports program.

Brian Fonseca *For Times of Trenton*

Keli Zinn came out swinging in her first day in the big seat.

An hour after officially being approved as the next athletic director at Rutgers on Wednesday morning, the former LSU deputy AD made clear that she brings the same level of ambition from her previous program to Piscataway.

“My vision for Rutgers athletics is quite simple,” she said in her introductory press conference. “We didn’t come here to just compete. We came here to win — to win conference and national championships.”

The man who brought her from Baton



Rutgers President William Tate IV poses with Keli Zinn at a news conference Wednesday morning in Piscataway introducing Zinn as the Scarlet Knights’ new athletic director. Both previously held roles at LSU. *Andrew Mills, for Times of Trenton*

Rouge echoed her sentiments from the podium they shared at the Gary and Barbara Rodkin Academic Success Center.

For President William Tate, who hired

Zinn at LSU in 2022 and played an integral part in her coming to Rutgers, the Scarlet Knights now have “one of the most talented athletic administrators in the United States.”

Tate believes Zinn, who signed a five-year deal that made her the highest-paid AD in school history, is the right person to lead a department with a simple vision: “Win.”

“It’s not very complicated,” Tate said. “I fundamentally believe that we can create a winning culture across the board in athletics, where the student athletes are winning in life, and collectively, they’re winning in their competitions. So it’s just about winning. It’s just real simple for me. I don’t make it complicated.”

It has not seemed simple for Rutgers in the 155 years since it invented college football. Outside of the rare year where the stars aligned — 1976, 2006 — the Scarlet Knights have struggled mightily to compete in multiple sports across multiple conferences.

SEE RUTGERS, A8

EDISON

Seven-year theft case against cops fizzles out

None of three officers charged with stealing gets prison, but local taxpayers get bill.

Riley Yates *For Times of Trenton*

The charges against the Edison police officers were meant to send a message.

Cops accused of falsifying off-duty work to add tens of thousands of dollars to their paychecks would face serious consequences, Middlesex County prosecutors announced in 2018.

Theft charges. Racketeering allegations. Years of scandal inside the township’s long-embattled police department would finally come to an end in the kind of corruption case that puts police behind bars.

Then the charges languished for seven years.

Until last week, when authorities cut a deal with their three final defendants, concluding a costly prosecution that began with fanfare and ended with none of the three former cops spending a day in prison.

Two of the accused officers — Gregory Makras and James Panagoulakos — saw their charges dismissed on July 23 in exchange for their resignations from the police force, where they haven’t worked since they were charged.

Another former officer, Sgt. Ioannis (John) Mpletsakis, pleaded guilty on the same day to a tax charge for failing to report income.

Authorities had also accused Mpletsakis of stealing from the Police Benevolent Association by making unauthorized purchases with the union’s debit card. He was accepted into pretrial intervention, a first-offender program that will allow him to avoid a criminal record if he stays out of trouble.

The Middlesex County Prosecutor’s Office and Police Chief Thomas Bryan declined to comment about the case, which the officers’ defense attorneys insisted was riddled with “half-truths and non-truths” from the beginning.

“This outcome affirms what I’ve maintained all along — that the allegations were unfounded,” Makras said in a statement released by his lawyer, Jason Orlando.

“This is not just a conclusion,” said Makras, 40, of Cranford. “It’s a vindication.”

SEE EDISON, A6

NATION & WORLD



Missing for 50 years

Fifty years ago Wednesday, ex-Teamsters leader Jimmy Hoffa, above, went to meet alleged Detroit and New Jersey mob figures at a Michigan restaurant but never returned and is still missing, despite searches and tips. **C4**

NATION & WORLD

World wave of worry

One of the strongest earthquakes ever recorded struck off a sparsely populated Russian peninsula, prompting a Pacific tsunami alert, though fears receded. **C3**