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The Journal News

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Rockland’s new human rights commissioner comes from Westchester

Nancy Cutler
Rockland/Westchester Journal News
USA TODAY NETWORK

Michelle Walker has been named Rockland County’s new Human Rights Commissioner, county officials announced.

Walker has long held various roles in Westchester County, including a former role as director of that county’s Family Justice Center, which provides legal, housing, and social services for vulnerable residents.

Walker’s appointment was announced Aug. 13 by Rockland County Executive Ed Day. The Rockland County Legislature, which must approve commissioner appointments, cleared the way for Walker at its Aug. 4 meeting.

The last human rights commissioner for Rockland, Spencer Chiimbwe, left the post in July 2025.

Rockland County Community Relations Director Myrnia Bass-Hargrove had been acting human rights commissioner; she now continues in her community relations role. Bass-Hargrove has also served as acting human rights commissioner in 2016-2017.

The commissioner of human rights position pays \$126,310 annually.

What does the human rights commission do?

The Rockland County Commission on Human Rights can investigate discriminatory practices related to housing, employment, race, creed, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender/sex, and/or disability.

An advisory board assists the commission.

See **HUMAN RIGHTS**, Page 3A



Michelle Walker is Rockland County’s human rights commissioner. Her appointment was announced Aug. 13. PROVIDED BY ROCKLAND COUNTY GOVERNMENT



Drone images of the Grassy Point Bend Project along East Railroad Avenue and Beach Road in West Haverstraw on Aug. 15. JOHN MEORE/THE JOURNAL NEWS

Rocklanders blast plan for warehouse

West Haverstraw landfill site is proposed location

Nancy Cutler
Rockland/Westchester Journal News
USA TODAY NETWORK

WEST HAVERSTRAW – More than 200 people showed up to an Aug. 12 joint village planning and zoning board public hearing on a giant warehouse facility with 76 truck bays that would be built on a former landfill. Speaker after speaker blasted the plan, many earning cheers and applause.

Called Grassy Point Bend, the 34-acre site is bounded by East Railroad Avenue, Beach Road and Ecology Lane. A residential neighborhood to the west has three streets that abut the site.

The property was among the sites in the Haverstraw area mined for clay to be shaped into brick that was used in New York City building and beyond. The clay-to-brick business ended in the first half of the 20th century. Between 1984 and 1986, the site accepted construction and demolition debris. The landfill was officially closed in 1996.

The big concern for residents of this tiny village and nearby municipalities: traffic.

When it was announced that the applicants’ study found minimal impact on traffic, the audience burst into laughter.

Speakers pointed out that local roads, primarily one lane in each direction, are already clogged. Add to



Homes around northern Rockland, including this one seen Aug. 12 on Samsondale Avenue in West Haverstraw display lawn signs protesting Grassy Point Bend, a proposed warehouse that would be built along East Railroad Avenue in West Haverstraw. NANCY CUTLER/THE JOURNAL NEWS

that, speakers pointed out, a slew of housing projects planned within the area could add thousands more

See **WAREHOUSE**, Page 3A

Gillibrand backs new research bill as spotted lanternflies spread

Beyonce Thomas-Reynoso
New York Connect Team
USA TODAY NETWORK

As spotted lanternflies continue to spread across New York, U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand is backing bipartisan legislation aimed at limiting the invasive pest’s damage to the state’s agricultural industry.

Gillibrand, D-N.Y., joined Sens. John Fetterman, D-Pa., Dave McCormick, R-Pa., and Ron Wyden, D-Ore., in introducing the Spotted Lanternfly Research and Development Act.

The bill would designate the invasive insect as a

high-priority research initiative for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

The designation would direct additional federal research toward developing new methods to detect, manage and control spotted lanternflies as they continue to spread across the United States.

“The spotted lanternfly has proven to be a destructive pest that threatens New York state’s specialty crops, especially vineyards throughout Western New York, the Finger Lakes, Long Island and the Hudson Valley,” Gillibrand said in a statement.

“If not contained, this pest will have devastating

economic consequences at a time when New York farmers are already having their profits destroyed by rising diesel and fertilizer costs. Congress must immediately prioritize spotted lanternfly research to prevent further spread.”

The legislation comes as spotted lanternflies remain active across New York, with confirmed infestations now stretching across much of the state.

Cornell Integrated Pest Management lists confirmed infestations in counties across New York City, Long Island, the Hudson Valley, the Capital Region,

See **LANTERNFLIES**, Page 3A

