



WYNONNA SHINES

THE ST. GEORGE THEATRE CELEBRATES ITS NONPROFIT MISSION WITH A GALA AND BENEFIT CONCERT STARRING COUNTRY ICON WYNONNA JUDD. ENJOY, C1

PORT RICHMOND

Alleged knife attack at pizzeria sparks bail reform debate



Borough President Vito Fossella and District Attorney Michael McMahon stand with the Giove family, owners of Brother's Pizzeria, advocating for stronger protections for local residents and businesses. Jan Somma-Hammel, Staten Island Advance photos

No injuries were reported, but the incident has renewed calls from borough leaders to strengthen bail and criminal justice laws to better protect local businesses and residents.

Luke Peteley lpeteley@siadvance.com

The Giove family of Staten Island is renowned for serving up some great slices to hungry customers, but on March 22, their beloved Brother's Pizzeria in Port Richmond faced an alleged knife attack.

Around 6:55 p.m., John Esiquio, 21, allegedly displayed a large knife and swung it multiple times at one of the owners of the Port Richmond Avenue establishment, according to court documents.

A law enforcement source told the Advance/SILive.com that Esiquio entered the business, allegedly began acting belligerently and was asked to leave. After being physically escorted out of the pizzeria, the



Mario Buonviaggio of the Port Richmond North Shore Alliance calls for changes to bail reform laws at the press conference.

defendant allegedly unsheathed a knife and began swinging it at workers in the vestibule, the law enforcement source said.

The employees were able to keep a firm grip on the secondary doors into the pizzeria itself and prevented Esiquio from reentering the business, the source added.

Police responded and arrested Esiquio, a resident of the 1500 block of Castleton Avenue in Port Richmond, according to the

NYPD. No injuries were reported as a result of the incident. The Richmond County District Attorney's Office was unable to request bail due to the current bail reform laws in place, the source said. As such, the defendant is out on supervised release. He faces charges of attempted assault, menacing, criminal possession of a weapon, harassment and possession of a knife.

An attorney for Esiquio did not respond to a request for comment by the time of publication.

CALLING FOR EFFORTS IN ALBANY

In shedding light on the case and calling for changes to the law, Borough President Vito Fossella and District Attorney Michael E. McMahon spoke out and stood with the Giove family outside the pizzeria Wednesday afternoon.

"If he was able to get into the store with that knife, what would have happened? And then to know that within 24 hours, he's back on the street," Fossella said.

Fossella said he hopes to send a signal to criminals that crime will not be tolerated on Staten Island and he expressed a belief that the laws "still aren't strong enough to keep people like that off the streets."

SEE BAIL REFORM, A2

GRYMES HILL

Wagner emerges as potential buyer for closed St. John's campus

School officials confirmed interest in the historic educational facility, which shuttered in 2024 after a 63% enrollment decline.

Jessica Jones-Gorman jjgorman@siadvance.com

After St. John's University officially closed its Staten Island campus in May 2024, the college made it clear that it was working diligently to find a fitting buyer for the educational facility. And while the college says there is still no deal to report, Wagner College has admitted its interest in the property.

"President Doggett has been very open about his interest in pursuing that opportunity but there really are no details to discuss," noted Jim Chiavelli, vice president for communications and marketing at Wagner College, speaking of the institution's leader, Jeffrey A. Doggett. "We do not own it yet, but if we would be fortunate enough to acquire the property, the president will be shouting the news from the rooftops of Grymes Hill."

No other details were given about a possible acquisition, but a source with knowledge of prior discussions said it's no secret that Wagner has shown interest in purchasing the campus to use as classroom and administrative space.

When asked if a deal with Wagner was imminent, Brian Browne, a spokesperson for St. John's, reiterated a statement he had issued in December:

"St. John's University is having encouraging conversations with educational institutions that can best continue the rich tradition of teaching and learning at the site. The University remains committed to finding a suitable partner for the campus."

St. John's first announced it would close the Grymes Hill campus in 2022, citing a 63% decline in enrollment, exacerbated by the pandemic. School representatives have hosted several public meetings and expressed an intent to maintain a healthy relationship with the community.

Opened in 1934 as Notre Dame SEE ST. JOHN'S CAMPUS, A3



The campus closed in 2024. File photo

NORTH SHORE

Tenants invited to mayor's 'Rental Ripoff' hearing

Next week, renters can share concerns about hidden fees, unsafe conditions, and housing challenges directly with city officials.

Nicolette Cavallaro ncavallaro@siadvance.com

Mayor Zohran Mamdani's "Rental Ripoff Hearings" will come to Staten Island next week, providing a space where tenants can share their experiences with city officials about housing conditions and rental prac-

tices. Established by Mamdani's Executive Order 08, the hearings, which have started to take place across the boroughs, allow tenants to speak directly with the city about issues including unsafe living conditions, hidden fees and unexpected charges. Participants have also had the opportunity to meet with senior officials from housing and consumer protection agencies, including the New York City Housing Authority, Housing Preservation and Development, and the Department of Buildings.

In an interview with the Advance/SILive.com, Cea Weaver, the executive director of the Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants, shared that the events feature three components: a resource fair with city agencies, a community vision discussion session and

an opportunity to give testimony to city leaders.

"The goal of the listening sessions, as well as the Rental Ripoff Hearing generally, is to better understand what New Yorkers are going through, so that we can shape public policy to both improve the process of getting violations recorded and ultimately corrected in your housing, as well as to uncover deceptive renting practices such as non-rent fees that may not show up on the lease that you signed," Weaver said.

These hidden fees are a topic of concern for Weaver, who joined the Mamdani administration after years of advocating for renters' rights. With 32% of Staten Islanders renting and the cost of living SEE RENTAL RIPOFF HEARING, A3

WASHINGTON NATO fallout

President Trump lashes out at NATO allies over the war in the Middle East. A6

CAPE CANAVERAL, FLA. Moon mission

NASA is shooting for the moon. A guide to the Artemis II mission. A7

