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PHILADELPHIA WATER DEPARTMENT'S NEW SPOKESDOG

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ALWAYS ASKING. ALWAYS PHILLY.



The Highmark Mann Center on Monday with the new Satell Centennial Wall East. Jessica Griffin / Staff Photographer

Could Parker be tested in 2027?

Progressives are eyeing the mayor's office after State Rep. Chris Rabb's win in the 3rd Congressional District.

By Anna Orso
Staff Writer

Through much of Mayor Cherelle L. Parker's first two years in office, most political insiders in Philadelphia assumed she would cruise to reelection.

After all, no mayor in the last eight decades in the deep-blue city has lost a bid for a second term. And Parker is backed by the city's long-powerful Democratic establishment, contributing to the foregone conclusion that their allied mayor would win again.

Even some of Parker's staunchest critics on the left admitted privately that they were resigned to her serving eight years in office.

Then last month, conventional wisdom started to crack.

State Rep. Chris Rabb — a democratic socialist and an anti-establishment firebrand — won a tightly contested battle for an open seat in Congress, prevailing over Parker's endorsed candidate and even carrying the 50th Ward in Northwest Philadelphia, where Parker is ward leader.

Now some of the activists who lead the city's largest left-leaning organizations think that race showed that Philadelphians are ready to pick a progressive over the Democratic establishment. And they are looking at next year's mayor's race again, asking the question: Is Parker vulnerable?

"We would love to have a progressive challenger in this race," said Sergio Cea, political director of the progressive group Reclaim Philadelphia. "The establishment was really defeated on all fronts this election cycle."

→ SEE PARKER ON A10

Renovated Highmark Mann reopens with polish and substantial changes

A 195-foot-long digital arts center's new star.

By Peter Dobrin
Culture Writer

Greener and roomier with a chic naturalistic look, the Highmark Mann Center officially reopened Monday after the final phase of a yearlong renovation.

Construction at Philadelphia's outdoor arts center in Fairmount Park went not just down to the wire, but a few weeks beyond it, delayed by this past winter's stretch of snow, ice and subfreezing temperatures.

In early June, dance fans arriving for BalletX performances found the main entrance and other parts of the campus still under construction.

But on Monday, amid speeches and the cutting of a long golden ribbon, the Highmark Mann emerged polished and substantially changed from its appearance after closing for the season last October.

Stevie Wonder said it best, said Highmark Mann president and CEO Catherine M. Cahill to a crowd of dignitaries gathered at the center's entrance Monday.

"Music is a world within itself with a language we all understand," she said, quoting the lyrics to Wonder's "Sir Duke" from 1976, the year

the center opened. "Music offers a release from the ordinary, and today we celebrate exactly that. This new space was designed to transport us from our everyday lives into a magical, musical, immersive experience that begins with the moment you arrive."

Monday's relaunch came 50 years and one day after the center's opening concert.

The Highmark Mann has raised \$68.6 million toward its \$70 million goal in this campaign — a sum going toward operations, endowment and cash reserves, artistic and 50th anniversary projects, as well as paying for the last several years of construction projects.

The renovations unveiled Monday, designed by architecture

firm EwingCole, include a redesigned plaza three times the size of the previous one, and a substantial new gateway entrance structure.

A "Hollywood"-style "Highmark Mann" sign now stands planted in the lawn, ready to serve as backdrop for selfies. A new sound system promises a truer musical experience tailored to each performance.

"If there's a country artist, you're going to want a slightly different response than if you are hearing R&B or classical," said Highmark Mann vice president and general manager Evan Rogers.

Promising young plantings and a new welcome center and other structures faced in wood and stone might echo the surrounding park

→ SEE MANN ON A9

California's Newsom says Trump's DOJ is investigating him

The governor says that the probe, which also targets his wife, is another example of the weaponization of the department.

By Laurel Rosenhall,
Devin Barrett,
and Maggie Haberman
New York Times

Federal agents have questioned friends and associates of Gov. Gavin Newsom of California and his wife, Newsom said Monday in a video in which he accused President Donald Trump of using the Justice Department to punish a political enemy.

The full scope of any investigation remains unclear. But Newsom's aides say part of the federal investigation appears to focus on his wife, Jennifer Siebel Newsom. Former employees of the governor and people affiliated with his wife's nonprofit groups are among those who have been questioned by agents, according to the governor's office.

A person familiar with the matter confirmed that multiple federal investigations were underway

related to the governor, including one looking at his wife's finances. But the person disputed Newsom's assertion that the investigations were politically motivated and said they had been initiated by federal law enforcement officials in California, not launched by officials in Washington. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss it publicly.

Newsom, a Democrat, described the investigation as a fishing expedition in which federal agents had started sifting through "years and years of random documents" and knocking on the doors of family friends and associates of the Newsoms to try to find evidence of an unspecified crime.

"Donald Trump isn't just coming after me because of my mean tweets," Newsom said in the video. "He's coming after me because I am considering running for president." He added, "To get me, he's coming after my wife."

Several people associated with the Newsoms have been contacted by federal agents in the past week, according to the governor's office. Newsom's aides believe the agents have also subpoenaed banking records but said they had seen no

→ SEE NEWSOM ON A5

Haunted by Halloween 2022 killing, family finally gets some answers

A teen shooter's guilty plea brought justice and more sorrow.

By Ellie Rushing
Staff Writer

Tanya Clark's knees bounced as she sat in the courtroom, her eyes darting toward the doors. For nearly four years, she'd waited for this moment — for the person who killed the nephew she'd raised like a son to admit to what he'd done.

But as Aaron Coles, 21, took a seat next to his lawyer and prepared to plead guilty to killing Jabarr Richards, 20, in Southwest Philadelphia in 2022, Clark had to leave the room.

How, she said she thought, could this be the person that ruined my life?

"I went in with anger and hatred," she said. "And then you see this child."

Coles on Monday pleaded guilty to third-degree murder, conspiracy, and gun crimes, admitting that when he was 17, he and two others



Tanya Clark (center) gathers with family members to celebrate and mourn on what would have been Jabarr Richards' 21st birthday in July 2023. Jessica Griffin / Staff Photographer

shot Richards nine times at 53rd Street and Greenway Avenue on Halloween night.

For nearly 18 months, Richards' killing — one of more than 500 homicides in 2022 amid an unprecedented spike in violence — went unsolved. Clark and her family

agonized over the possibility of becoming one of the hundreds of families in the city who might never get to face their loved one's killer in court.

But Assistant District Attorney Anthony Voci said Homicide

→ SEE PLEA ON A10

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