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VIRTUAL WALKAROUND

Hazleton Area School Board tours district from a conference



Kevin Markell, standing, of Barry Isett and Associates, gives an update to Hazleton Area School board members and school officials during a meeting on Wednesday at the district offices. PHOTOS BY JOHN HAEGER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

ELECTION 2026

Luzerne County getting high-tech drop box

No charge to county for updated model

By Michael P. Buffer MBUFFER@CITIZENVOICE.COM

WILKES-BARRE — Luzerne County will get a new high-tech drop box at no charge to collect mail ballots for the upcoming May 19 primary election.

The new drop box will replace the drop box purchased to the May 2025 primary election for \$12,000 from Arizona-based Runbeck Election Services, Luzerne County Election Director Emily Cook said at Wednesday's election board meeting.

County officials have not been able to access photos from the high-tech drop box to see if Nov. 4 election voters were inserting mail ballots from other voters into the box placed in the lobby of the county Penn Place building in Wilkes-Barre.

The drop box purchased last year was from a pilot program model and will be replaced with an updated model, Cook said. A drop box is an option for voters who don't want to go to the polls on election day and don't want to mail a ballot through the U.S. Postal Service.

Voters can drop off mail ballots

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Iran intensifies attacks on Gulf energy sites

Israel says it will stop striking Iran's gas field

By Jon Gambrell, David Rising, Mike Corder and Natalie Melzer ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran intensified its attacks on oil and natural gas facilities around the Gulf on Thursday, raising the stakes in a war that is rattling energy markets and the global economy.

The strikes, in retaliation for an Israeli attack on a key Iranian gas

See IRAN on Page A5

By Kent Jackson KJACKSON@STANDARDSPEAKER.COM

HAZLE TWP. — From a school so new that it only exists in AI to an old school that they plan to demolish, members of Hazleton Area School Board reviewed construction and renovation projects underway across the district.

They toured 16 schools, sports facilities and bus garages for two hours on March 18 without leaving a conference room. Experts from engineering and architectural firms explained upcoming work using photos, maps, drawings and renderings created with artificial intelligence.

Michael Kelly of KCBA Architects led the discussions in an elementary school planned behind Hazleton Area High School that his firm is designing for 1,200 students in grades one to five and 88 students in special education.

He showed drawings of the building shaped like the letter E on its side that rises to three stories at one end and has courtyards between the wings. Kelly used AI to create a video that allowed board members to visualize a walk through the school



Markell gives an update on the new roadway to Hazleton Area School Board members and school officials during the meeting.

as he pointed out details.

Tiles rise as high on walls as youngsters can reach so they're easier to clean, and every classroom will have a sink.

The library has "lots of spaces for students to sit and read." Sound-absorbing materials will pad the cafeteria, and spaces at the end of hallways invite small group work.

Architects will continue tweaking the design this year while consulting with teachers and principals and seeking permits. A schedule calls for advertising for bids in December, starting construction in

March 2027 and opening for classes in August 2029.

A work plan has to be phased in to allow for tree cutting in the winter when endangered bats that might be in the area hibernate and for relocating rare plants found in wetlands where a new road and bridge will link the high school, new school and Hazle Twp. Boulevard.

Kevin Markell of Barry Isett and Associates engineering firms said the site "pretty much hit" habitats for every endangered species "you could find."

The schedule will help spread out construction so

workers driving to the job flow with buses, students and parents driving to the schools.

"This is going to be very congested during construction," board member Ed Shemansky said.

Even where to put dirt takes consideration. The team, for now, decided to store soil on the parking lot of Hazleton Career Center along Lincoln Street so players can still use the field hockey field next to the lot.

A school that the board plans to demolish is the former St. John's Greek Catholic School. It's 94 years old, in poor condition, experts said at the meeting, and the board bought it for \$305,000 to tear down and use as parking for Harman-Geist Stadium. Business Manager Robert Krizansky said the district is seeking a grant to help pay for razing the school.

After demolishing St. Johns, including the existing parking lot, will need a new basecoat and paving to create a lot for 80 to 100 vehicles.

The board also might demolish its bus garage at Peace and West 24th streets after moving vehicle lifts and equipment to the former Franzosa Trucking Co.

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SUNDAY MORNINGS 10:30 AM



MEUSER TALKS IRAN CONFLICT; ANOTHER DEMOCRATIC SHUTDOWN

By midweek, the U.S. and Israel's conflict with Iran showed no signs of slowing down. In fact, Israel is now fighting a war on two fronts. In neighboring Lebanon, a million people - 20 percent of the population - had been displaced by Israeli rocket and mortar attacks in its attempt to push the militant group Hezbollah, a proxy of and funded by Iran, back from the border. Of course, this was after Hezbollah had initiated the conflict by launching rockets into Isreal, killing civilians.

So far, there have been 13 U.S. casualties during the conflict that began on February 28th, with a joint U.S. and Israeli air assault on Iran to once and for all stop Iran's nuclear program. With so much happening in the oil rich Mideast, things were changing not hour by hour, but by minute to minute. Congressman Dan Meuser (R-9) told Newsmax last week that higher prices tied to the war with Iran were a concern, but likely temporary, arguing the United States was well positioned to withstand energy market volatility without lasting economic damage.

Congressman Meuser returns to the Volpe Report Sunday at 10:30 a.m. on FOX 56 with his perspective on the conflict.

Also up for discussion, the Save America Act, along with another government shutdown brought about by the Democratic party in Congress.



Dan Meuser US Congressman

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