

Explaining – and fixing – political gridlock

The Summit Neighborhood Association’s annual meeting this year will feature a forum led by Marc J. Dunkelman, author of *The Vanishing Neighbor: The Transformation of American Community*.

The presentation, one in a series sponsored by SNA, will focus on the consequences for public policy of an epochal shift in the structure of American life.

The gathering will begin at 7 pm Monday, May 1, at The Highlands on the East Side, 101 Highland Ave., – which has ample parking available – and open with a social time sharing pizza, beer, wine and soft drinks. There will be a review of SNA’s activities over the past year presented by President Dean Weinberg, followed by voting on a prepared slate of candidates for a new board of directors. Nominations also will be accepted from the floor.

Then the main event will begin.



Dunkelman, a Taubman Fellow at Brown University’s Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, will present the findings of his research on how the evolving American community has affected government, the economy and the resilience of the social safety net.

During more than a dozen years in Washington, D.C., Dunkelman was on the staff of the Senate Judiciary Committee and the vice president for strategy and communications at the Democratic Leadership Council. He was also a senior fellow at the Bill, Hillary, and Chelsea Clinton Foundation, a visiting fellow at the Bipartisan Policy Center and a fellow at the Johns Hopkins University Center for Advanced Governmental Studies. Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, and raised in Buffalo, N.Y., Dunkelman is a magna cum laude graduate of Columbia University, where he worked to found the Columbia Political Union.

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Summit News

SPRING 2017

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Jackson recall vote set for May 2

On May 2, the voters of Providence’s Ward Three, which includes the Summit neighborhood, will decide whether or not to recall embattled City Councilman Kevin Jackson.

His colleagues on the City Council voted 9 to 0 in an emergency meeting on March 13 to set the date and avoid state action to meet a legal deadline after the city Board of Canvassers certified 2,383 signatures on petitions to recall Jackson, who has been indicted on multiple charges, including embezzlement involving his leadership of the Providence Cobras track team and misuse of donations to his campaign.

The City Charter specifically states that each ballot at the recall election shall have printed thereon the following question: “Shall (name of person) be removed from the office of (name of office)?” Immediately following such question, there shall be printed on the ballot the following two (2) propositions in this order: “Yes,” “No.” If Jackson is recalled, a separate special election will be scheduled for the council seat.



Mark Santow, a liberal Democrat who has served on the Providence School Board since 2015, has already filed organizational paperwork with the state Board of Elections allowing him to begin raising funds to campaign for the position.

Action to remove Jackson, a Democrat who has represented the neigh-



borhood since 1995, began shortly after he was arrested by State Police last May and indicted by a statewide grand jury in July. He has pleaded not guilty. Prosecutors allege he embezzled \$127,153 from the Providence Cobras youth track-and-field team, an organization that received more than \$67,000 in taxpayer-funded city donations between 2005 and 2015. He is also accused of using \$12,000 in campaign funds on personal expenses.

Patricia Kammerer, one of the organizers of Recall Kevin Jackson, the group behind the recall effort, told *The Providence Journal* the members were pleased. “In overwhelming numbers, voters are ready to vote ‘yes’ to the recall question on Tuesday, May 2nd, which would pave the way for new, honest leadership for our ward,” she said.

Providence Mayor Jorge O. Elorza also told the *Journal*, “I think that what he’s done – what he’s been accused of – is something we’ve been trying to root out from the city for a very long time. There’s no place for corruption ... and anyone who’s mixed up in this does not deserve to be in public service.”

Jackson’s lawyer, Artin Coloian, declined at the time to comment on the vote being set. He said he would continue to press challenges to the signatures on the petitions that led to the council’s vote.

In order for a recall to be held, the City Charter requires signatures from 20 percent of the voters in a ward, or 2,107

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Two East Side business icons turn new faces to the future

The Sandwich Hut, at the corner of North Main and Eighth Streets, used to look like a dark, uninviting private club – but now it doesn't.

In its place is a refurbished Sandwich Hut which third-generation owner/operator Peter Kammerer says is more interactive with the street and “displays our hospitality on the outside.”

He said his grandfather opened the shop in 1963 in a tiny room – “that’s why they called it the Hut” – and the façade of concrete and faux brick was primarily protective. The shop was expanded in the 1970s to add dining and kitchen space, Kammerer said, but the building deteriorated over time.

When they decided to renovate to expand seating and bring the structure up to modern code requirements, he said he saw an “opportunity to expand the windows” to help “people know what kind of business it is.”

Kammerer said they worked with From In Form, a design/build architectural studio in Providence, to “double down” on the neighborhood and demonstrate the family’s “promise to stay.” He said the architect came up with the idea of a bench outside that is lit at night to “make an opening to the street,” part of the effort to make North Main more pedestrian friendly. He said it’s essential “to be the change you want to see.”

Since small businesses “give the city its personality,” Kammerer said he’s “excited to see if people interact in the spring” with the new look. He says it’s “creating an advertisement to new people” and “making it attractive to people who don’t know us.”



Sandwich Hut owner/operator Peter Kammerer alongside the new bench and expanded windows at his North Main Street shop.



East Side Wine & Spirits owner Rich Backer underneath the new signs at his store on Hope Street.

The East Side Pharmacy, at the corner of Hope and Elgin Streets, used to look like a drug store that had been in the same place for decades – but now it doesn't.

In its place is East Side Wine & Spirits, which owner Rick Backer says is what the changing community needs. He said the current regulatory environment made the small pharmacy he had run for 40 years unprofitable, but he didn't want to leave. “When you lose the neighborhood pharmacy, you lose part of the neighborhood,” he said.

Instead, Backer said, they decided to build up what had been a small department in their store where they sold wine, beer and liquor. He said he wants to “offer a bigger variety” and focus on “a good value.” He added that it requires a bit of “trial and error,” but “I know what I like,” and that is “a good wine at a decent price.”

Also, “craft beers are exploding,” Backer said, so now they have “room so we can expand” where they had just “dabbled” before. He said they would take advantage of the great number of “independent breweries” in Rhode Island.

As part of his conversion to a different type of enterprise, Backer said, he sold his pharmacy business to CVS and is now charting a new course. He added that he is depending “on the feedback of his customers” to allow him to adjust his sails.

Caroling for a cause

Temperatures in the 20s didn't stop a hardy band from Caroling For A Cause the evening of Dec. 11 in Summit.

About 30 people, including one almost newborn in a front pack, assembled at Miriam Hospital. As they proceeded

along the neighborhood streets, residents came out on their porches to enjoy the music and donate \$165 and more than 25 jars of peanut butter for the St. Raymond's church food pantry. Plans are afoot to do it again this year.





Earth Day cleanup at Summit Ave. garden

An Earth Day cleanup is planned for the Summit Avenue “tot lot” park in conjunction with the preparation of the community garden beds for planting.

All neighbors are invited to the spring cleaning, which is scheduled for 9 a.m. until noon on Saturday, April 22. The city Parks Department will provide trash and leaf bags, as well as snacks and participant buttons. Members of the Summit Neighborhood Community Garden committee will bring tools such as pruning shears, rakes, shovels and a wheelbarrow, but other tools will be welcome. Be sure to wear gloves.

In addition, members of The Miriam Hospital’s administration and staff have been invited to join in. The hospital has been a major funding source for improvements to the park and the development of the garden.

As part of the overall cleanup, the gardeners will spread mulch around the raised beds that are being built. Seeds have already been acquired from the University of Rhode Island and the Parks Department will deliver the mulch. The garden governance committee has instituted its own web site, <http://www.SummitCommunityGarden.org>, that shows the garden’s location in the park, scheduled meetings and plot allocations as well as forms for contracts and the wait list.

This is a family-friendly event and children of all ages are encouraged to take part in this community activity.

Jackson recall

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in Ward Three’s case. If enough signatures were invalidated, city officials and Coloian said the election could be called off.

“If my neighbors in Ward Three decide to recall Jackson, I do intend to run for the seat,” Santow told WPRI-TV. “I’ve lived in the neighborhood for 14 years, and I believe we need to be represented by a transparent, accessible, honest and progressive City Council person, focused on improving our public schools (the buildings, and what happens inside them), on criminal justice reform, on affordable housing, and on making Providence a more just and sustainable place.”

Santow is the first candidate to publicly state his intention to run for the council seat. A graduate of Vanderbilt University, he earned a master’s degree in American history from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and a Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania. He works as a professor at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth.

As a member of the mayoral-appointed school board, Santow has been a vocal critic of the proposed expansion of the Achievement First Mayoral Academy. He has also supported the efforts of the Providence Student Union to add ethnic studies to the curriculum in Providence.

Polling places for the May 2 recall election will be Summit Commons and Church of the Redeemer only. Find out where you vote at <https://vote.sos.ri.gov/>



Seeds ordered from URI for the community garden have already arrived and are awaiting planting.

Annual Meeting

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There is ample parking at The Highlands on the East Side for the SNA annual meeting.

In 2014, he published his book, in which he shows that routines that once put doctors and lawyers in touch with grocers and plumbers—interactions that encouraged debate and cultivated compromise—have changed dramatically since the postwar era. He says that both technology and the new routines of life connect tight-knit circles and expand the breadth of our social landscapes, but they’ve sapped the commonplace, incidental interactions that for centuries have built local communities and fostered healthy debate.

Dunkelman asserts that the disappearance of these once-central relationships—between people who are familiar but not close, or friendly but not intimate—lies at the root of America’s economic woes and political gridlock.

However, his book argues persuasively that to win the future we need to adapt yesterday’s institutions to the realities of the 21st-century American community.

After his presentation, Dunkelman will answer questions from the floor and sign copies of his book.

Block Party May 20

The Hope Street Merchants Association is going to hold its annual spring block party on Saturday, May 20, with about 5,000 guests expected. The street will be closed from Rochambeau to Fourth and attractions will include a live music stage, fashion show, beer garden, children’s activities, food trucks and approximately 50 art/craft/nonprofit street vendors. There is an on-line application for spots at: <http://www.rhodycraft.com/bull-hsma-vendor-application.html>. The deadline for submission is April 15.



New “red light”

The State Traffic Commission has approved “the installation of a traffic signal on North Main St at Hillside Ave.”

Acting Dec. 7 on a request by Rep. Aaron Regunberg, the commission said in a letter to him that “based on the traffic volumes collected July 19, 2016” plus “crash data for the last three years,” the necessary requirements set out by the Federal Highway Administration were satisfied that “a traffic signal is warranted at this location.”

It stated that there were 15 crashes at the intersection and 10 of these were angle crashes with a majority “pertaining to vehicles attempting to turn out of Hillside Ave. onto North Main St.”

The letter to Regunberg continued, saying that the improvements “have been added to an ongoing STC design contract, with the intent on being constructed within the next few years, pending available funding.”

It points out that there is already a traffic signal at North Main and Ann Mary Street but which is under the jurisdiction of “the City of Pawtucket.” The letter states that the Rhode Island Department of Transportation will coordinate with the city “to determine the most efficient design between these two intersections.”

Summit Avenue tot lot toys removed for safety reasons

The plastic toys in the Summit Avenue “tot lot” - as well as the Gladys Potter and Morris Street parks - were culled by the city Parks Department for safety reasons, according to Superintendent Wendy Nilsson.

In a statement to SNA, she said, “We look at [the toys] in the context of national Playground and Safety Standards for public parks. Many of the toys have sharp edges, small parts that are choking hazards, or are damaged in such a way that they could trap little fingers.”

In addition, Nilsson said, “We don’t have the staff to repeatedly visit each park to check toys for hazards, and the reality is that, even if we did, very few of them would meet safety standards. As a compromise, our staff are instructed to periodically remove toys if there are safety issues or their numbers overtake the park. We have been thinning the toys this way for years.”

However, she pointed out, “my own children grew up playing with the tot lot plastic toys, so their removal is not something I take lightly. No one wants to disappoint a 3-year-old!”

More neighbor involvement welcome

In that context, Nilsson said the Parks Department “would welcome more neighbor involvement in our local parks more generally.”

“We would be happy to meet with representatives of local parks to discuss the future of plastic toys at the tot lots. This might start a valuable relationship



between park neighbors and the Parks Department. There is an entire organization, the Partnership for Providence Parks, www.providenceparke.org, that works with us to establish and support Friends Groups so that we can have partners for all of our parks,” her statement said.

New play features coming

Nilsson added that “At Summit, we work with the Summit Neighborhood Association, but would love for many of you to get involved as we will soon be adding some additional play features and making some much needed repairs to the existing structures.”

Her statement further said, “We are also trying to create more fun things for the children to do in the parks so they might not miss all the plastic toys. Instead of adding plastic play equipment, we are working to create parks that connect children to nature and open and free play. At many of our parks we are building berms, log retaining walls, rain gardens, and adding rocks for children to play on and explore.”

Yes, I’m joining Summit Neighborhood Association today!

Enclosed is my member contribution of: \$15 \$25 \$35 \$50 Other: \$_____

Name: (please print clearly) _____

Street Address: (required) _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: (_____) _____ - _____ (day) (_____) _____ - _____ (evening)

Email: _____ Yes, I can distribute newsletters

Family Membership - list information about other adults in your household who wish to be members:

Name: _____ Email: _____

Name: _____ Email: _____

Please enclose a check made out to: **Summit Neighborhood Association**

MAIL TO: **SNA, P.O. Box 41092, Providence, RI 02940**

TODAY’S DATE ___ / ___ / _____