

COLD AND DAMP
Windy with occasional showers. High about 49.
Forecast, D8

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Local politics takes a nasty turn for Narragansett council

The police have investigated three incidents involving Town Council members in the last six months.

BY RANDAL EDGAR
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

In the colorful annals of Rhode Island politics, Narragansett is one of those places where the bumps and brawls of elected office are more often settled with a private conversation, or maybe a dissenting vote.

Even when there is a flare-up — a shouting match at a Town Council meeting, a clash be-

tween a leading Democrat and a leading Republican — the verbal slings and arrows tend to quickly fade.

CAMPAIGN 2008

this normally placid seaside town has seen three incidents involving council members result in po-

lice investigations. It has seen arguments at council meetings spill over to the walkway outside Town Hall. It has seen vandalism outside a council meeting, and most recently, a scuffle between a councilman and the son of a councilman.

"All this fighting and arguing and fisticuffs, I've never seen an election like this in my life," said David J. Crook Sr., 80, a former councilman and a council candidate this year. "I guess there's some bad blood there."



GARRETT

LENIHAN

The trouble surfaced in May. Following what had been 18 months of easy sailing for the sitting council, word broke that the police were citing Councilman

George F. Lenihan Jr. for allowing after-hours drinking at his restaurant, Pancho O'Malley's, on Point Judith Road.

According to the police, officers shined their flashlights into Lenihan's restaurant at 2:24 a.m. on May 9 and saw three people, including Lenihan, at the bar. It was the fourth time this year officers had seen activity after the 2 a.m. cutoff, when employees are supposed to be out of rooms where drinks are served.

If that wasn't enough, Lenihan

and the others tried to hide when the officers shined their flashlights through a window, according to the police.

A month later, Lenihan publicly apologized, and the council voted to suspend his liquor license for three days.

"The law is the law," Lenihan said at the time. "Two o'clock. I'll just have to abide by it."

Other unusual election-year events quickly followed.

SEE **POLITICS, A7**

Palin ruling could affect ethics code

State Ethics Commission members want to tighten standards to include personal cause as a violation of the code.

BY BRUCE LANDIS
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — Alaska governor and vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin's controversial past may contribute to tightening Rhode Island's ethics standards.

Ethics Commission members said yesterday that they suspect that if a Rhode Island official (Governor Carcieri, for example) did what an investigation in Alaska found that Palin did — used her office to advance a personal, although not financial, cause — it would probably not violate the Rhode Island Code of Ethics.

Nonfinancial conflicts of interest have been a sore point with the commission for some time, and members said yesterday that they want to look into adding a provision like Alaska's to the Rhode Island rules. Chairwoman Barbara Binder said she'll ask that the question go on the agenda of a future meeting.

The Alaska investigation report, dated Oct. 10, said Palin abused her power by firing Alaska's commissioner of public safety, Walt Monegan, in part because Monegan refused to fire a state trooper who was involved in a bitter divorce and custody battle with the governor's sister.

If the governor of Rhode Island did what Palin did, Ethics Commission member Ross E. Cheit said, "I don't think it would be a violation of the [Rhode Island] code as written."

SEE **ETHICS, A6**

Poll: Negative ads don't change a viewer's mind

For the most part, undecided voters who participated in an ad-watching experiment came away unmoved.

BY JIM KUHNHENN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — If John McCain and Barack Obama think their ads blasting each other are persuading undecided voters, they're probably wrong. But negative ads do have an impact, an AP-Knowledge Networks poll suggests, even if it's just to neutralize the other candidate's attacks.

They can also solidify support — or simply turn voters off to both candidates.

In a new survey, voters were asked to watch two of the presidential candidates' negative ads, an Obama spot that says McCain ad that claims Obama wants "massive government." The campaigns have spent millions of dollars on such ads with millions more committed for the last two weeks before Election Day.

On the whole, ad watchers who went into the experiment undecided were unmoved. About 60 percent of so-called "persuadable" voters said the ads made them no more or less likely to vote for McCain or Obama. And about a third appeared to throw up their hands, saying they were less likely to

SEE **CAMPAIGN, A4**

R.I. has top jobless rate



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BOB THAYER

Paul Lee, one of those picked to work at the Hampton Inn & Suites that is slated to open in December in downtown Providence, trains on a computer yesterday. About 5,000 people had applied for 50 to 55 positions at the new hotel. **Story, Business C1**

Your voice is your ID if you're looking to collect

BY NEIL DOWNING
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

CRANSTON — If you phone the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training to obtain unemployment benefits, don't be surprised if you're asked to repeat a certain phrase, such as "Good morning, Rhode Island" or "Good afternoon, my voice is my password."

Fed takes new steps to boost money-market funds. **C1**

Billionaire Kirk Kerkorian sells off part of his stake in Ford. **C1**

The phrases are part of a new voice authentication program that the agency began using yesterday to help combat fraud and protect people's identity.

The automated phone program will ask you to repeat a certain phrase a few times. As you speak, the

SEE **VOICE ID, A6**

The latest figures from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics place the Ocean State's unemployment rate at 8.8 percent, a tenth of a point worse than Michigan's.

BY LYNN ARDITI
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Rhode Island's unemployment rate of 8.8 percent in September ranked highest in the country, nudging ahead of Michigan's, according to a federal report released yesterday.

Rhode Island has often recorded jobless levels near the top, but this marks the first time that it has ranked highest in the country since comparable data started being compiled 32 years ago, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Michigan's unemployment rate last month was 8.7 percent. The national unemployment rate re-

mained unchanged at 6.1 percent.

"Michigan is the poster child for recessionary conditions in the job market," said Jared Bernstein, labor economist at the Economic Policy Institute, in Washington. "It's amazing and disheartening that Rhode Island just took its place."

The housing market's collapse here followed years of sluggish job

SEE **JOBLESS, A6**

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Your turn: How worried are you about your financial situation? Respond, and read the Bureau of Labor Statistics report, at projo.com



'The Tent' will always be alive at URI

Larry Bonoff, the former manager of the Warwick Musical Theatre, has donated 10,000 items of memorabilia and decades of memories to the university.

BY RICK MASSIMO
JOURNAL POP MUSIC WRITER

PROVIDENCE — The Warwick Musical Theatre closed in 1999, but yesterday two projects were announced that will keep alive 45 years of memories of "the Tent."

At a nostalgia-laden news

conference at the Providence Performing Arts Center, Larry Bonoff, the former general manager of the Warwick Musical Theatre, announced a partnership with the University of Rhode Island that will see his collection of more than 10,000 pieces of memorabilia

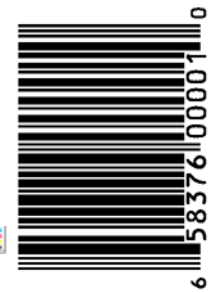
and artifacts — from tickets to photos to financial records and more — housed at the University Library.

"This is a dream come true," Bonoff said of the collection, which spans four generations of his family's involvement in show business, including the Tent and a theater in Arizona that they also owned.

Bonoff also announced the

SEE **TENT, A7**

An autograph by Liberace — the pianist was a frequent performer at the Warwick Musical Theatre — is among the memorabilia that will be housed at the University of Rhode Island.



INSIDE TODAY

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LAWYER GOES TO PRISON

John M. Cicilline, brother of Providence Mayor David N. Cicilline, reports to a federal prison in Massachusetts to serve an 18-month sentence for taking part in a shakedown scheme. **D1**

SAN FRANCISCO WEIGHS PROSTITUTION QUESTION

It would become the first major U.S. city to decriminalize prostitution if voters approve a measure that forbids local authorities from investigating, arresting or prosecuting anyone for selling sex. **A2**

TUCKAHOE TURF FARM PRESERVED

The state has acquired the development rights to 486 acres of the Tuckahoe Turf Farm in Richmond, creating a conservation area of 3,000 contiguous acres. **D1**



STUDENT JOURNALIST'S DEATH SENTENCE OVERTURNED

Sayed Parwiz Kambakhsh, who is now sentenced to 20 years in jail in Afghanistan, is accused of distributing an Internet article about Islam and women's rights and adding comments about the Prophet Muhammad's failings on that topic. **A3**