

# The Weekly Press

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## Mayor Sharon Weston Broome endorses Troy Carter for Louisiana's 2nd Congressional district



Mayor Sharon Weston Broome

Senator Troy Carter (D - New Orleans)

BATON ROUGE, La. - East Baton Rouge Mayor-President Sharon Weston-Broome publicly endorsed state Senator Troy Carter (D - New Orleans) for Louisiana's 2nd Congressional district Monday, March 22.

Carter is seeking to fill the congressional seat vacated by Cedric Richmond who left the seat in January to become a senior adviser in President Joe Biden's administration.

"As Mayor-President I have always valued the strength of relationships to help deliver and ensure success for the city of Baton Rouge and the parish of East Baton Rouge. I have worked with Troy for decades and I know that he will continue the strong relationship that Congressman Richmond had with our city and parish," Broome said.

"Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome will be a blessing for our team as we go into the April 24th runoff. I want to make sure Baton Rouge's voice is heard in the chorus of the 2nd Congressional District so I'm glad she can help relay their needs.

See CARTER, on page 5

## Attempt to recall Louisiana governor falls far short, fails

BATON ROUGE, La. - Efforts to remove Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards from office because of complaints about his coronavirus restrictions and mask mandate have failed.

The Louisiana Secretary of State's Office says all parishes but one have completed counting signatures on a petition seeking to recall the Democratic governor, and the numbers have fallen far below what is needed to force a recall election.

The Secretary of State's office says nearly 27,000 signatures have been submitted. That's less than 1% of registered voters. The petition was filed on Aug. 29.

To be successful, supporters needed to get signatures from 20% of voters within 180 days. That's nearly 600,000 signatures.

NATIONAL PG 3

VICE PRESIDENT HARRIS TO OVERSEE EFFORTS ON BORDER CRISIS

RELIGION PG 4

PASTOR SHEARD ELECTED AS NATIONAL HEAD OF COGIC

# All Louisiana adults eligible for COVID-19 vaccine



The health department last week launched a broad outreach campaign aimed at getting vaccines to people in underserved areas and persuading those who are skeptical.

*"Based on the doses that we will have available in the coming week, now is absolutely the time to expand vaccine eligibility"*

BATON ROUGE, La. -- All Louisianans 16 years old or older will be eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine beginning Monday, March 29, following news from the federal government that Louisiana's allocation of vaccine doses will significantly increase next week, Gov. John Bel Edwards announced today.

Since the start of the vaccination process, Louisiana's weekly allocations of vaccine from the

federal government have more than doubled, with Louisiana now slated to get more than 148,000 first doses directly next week, in addition to vaccine doses provided to



Gov. John Bel Edwards

partner pharmacies in a federal pharmacy program as well as the Federally Qualified Health Care Center program. More than one million Louisianans have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. With the B.1.1.7., or U.K. variant, continuing to increase in Louisiana and neighboring states, it is essential to get Louisiana vaccinated as quickly and equitably

See VACCINE, on page 3

## Louisiana secretary of state withdraws request for new voting machines

BATON ROUGE, La. - Louisiana Secretary of State Kyle Ardoin has announced he's no longer requesting the replacement of the state's more than 30-year-old voting machines.



Louisiana Secretary of State Kyle Ardoin

Ardoin cited questions surrounding the applicability of Direct Recording Electronic voting machine technology and how it impact the level of competition as the reasons for withdrawal of his request.

"While our current election-day voting machines has served Louisiana well, it is imperative that we seek the prompt engagement of the Louisiana Legislature to help our office to clarify these matters of law and to ensure that our citizens receive the highest level of competition in this important procurement. We cannot let election administration become just another political football for politicians or voting machine vendors to kick around, without any understanding or concern for the consequences. Simply put, no other agency in Louisiana has a higher requirement for precision than the Secretary of State in conducting our elections," said Ardoin. "Because of this, I am withdrawing the RFP to spend the next few months seeking to undo the damage to voter confidence done by those who willfully spread misinformation

See VOTING, on page 3

# Full jury seated in trial of former police officer Derek Chauvin

A full jury has been seated in the murder trial of Derek Chauvin, the white former Minneapolis police officer charged in the death of 46-year-old Black man George Floyd during a May 2020 arrest that ignited protests nationwide.

The panel of 12 jurors and three alternates was finalized on Tuesday morning after defense attorneys, prosecutors and the judge presiding over the case in Minneapolis spent 11 days questioning a pool of potential jurors on everything from their thoughts about racial inequalities of the

justice system, the Black Lives Matter movement and whether they had formed any preconceived opinion about Chauvin's guilt or innocence.

Hennepin County District Court Judge Peter Cahill decided last Friday not to move the trial's location nor delay the proceedings.

"I think the pre-trial publicity will continue no matter how long we continue it," he said, adding, "I don't think there is any place in the state of Minnesota that has not been subjected to an ex-

treme amount of publicity in this case."

Cahill said one of the jurors will likely be dismissed on Monday because there is only room in the courtroom for 14 members of the panel.

"The whole point of this 15th juror was to make sure that we have 14 people



Former police officer Derek Chauvin

show up on Monday," Cahill said.

The latest juror picked is a married accountant in his 20s who self-identified as a white man.

With the complete jury selected, there are nine jurors who self-identify as white and six who self-identify as people of color, including four who self-identify as Black. They include a nurse, a route driver, a social worker, a client advocate in a commercial insurance business, an internet technology specialist, a retired grandmother with an undergraduate degree in childhood psychol-

ogy and a woman who said she is "super excited" to be on the case.

Civil rights attorneys Ben Crump and Antonio Romanucci, who are representing Floyd's family, released a following statement following the jury announcement, saying, "We are pleased that the jury has been seated and the Chauvin trial can proceed. After hearing the facts, we hope and expect the jury to deliver a just verdict."

They cited the prosecution's

See JURY, on page 3

### WEATHER

	MON. 03/29 Showers High 69°.
	TUE. 03/30 Thunderstorms High 77°.
	WED. 03/31 Thunderstorms High 81°.
	THUR. 04/01 Showers High 61°.

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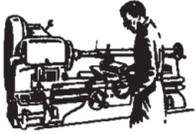
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VOTERS GUIDE 04/24/2021



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Phone: (225) 775-2002  
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 Office Hours: Monday-Friday  
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# STATE & LOCAL

## Shreveport council members pass marijuana decriminalization proposal

SHREVEPORT, La. - Shreveport City Council members met on Tuesday, March 23, to make their final vote on the marijuana decriminalization proposal. The proposal was passed during the meeting, with only two council members voting against it.

During a virtual town hall held on Monday, March 22, Shreveport District A Councilwoman Tabatha Taylor and District C Councilman John Nickelson answered questions and broke down details about their proposal to decriminalize small amounts of marijuana within city limits.

Both council members said they have received a lot of support for the proposal thus far.

"I did send [Caddo District



Attorney James Stewart] this particular legislation to see if there were any objections as to what we were doing, and I received none," Taylor said.

The proposal states that

people age 18 or older in possession of 14 grams or less of marijuana will be fined \$50 or tasked with community service.

See **PROPOSAL**, on page 3

## NAACP calls for BR Union of Police contract to end; Union representative and Mayor respond

BATON ROUGE, La. - A new billboard you may have seen while driving around Baton Rouge recently, is causing a billboard war of words.

If you drive along I-10 near College Drive, one of the many digital billboards popping up across the city says, 'Fix police union leadership. The time is now,' clearly calling out the Baton Rouge Union of Police. Click here.

"This union (of police) has defended bad cops. And it's time we (NAACP) spoke up about it," said Eugene Collins, President of the Baton Rouge branch of the NAACP.

The website <https://www.endthecontract.com/> on the billboard calls on city officials to end the contract with the Baton Rouge



Union of Police.

Collins tells reporters, they're just responding to billboards that the Baton Rouge Union of Police has been putting up for almost a year now.

Some criticizing Chief Murphy Paul, the homicide rate in the city, officer pay, and defending

Siya Creel.

"This (NAACP billboards) type of effort supports the good men and women that were not sitting at the desk playing with computers. This effort supports the good men and women that were actually out there fighting crime, while these guys were designing billboards," said Collins.

The Baton Rouge Union of Police has put up billboards like this one below, directly across from BRPD headquarters. It calls on Chief Paul to "Defend the badge, not the criminal."

After the chief fired Union Vice President Siya Creel, for doing an interview on YouTube about the billboards last summer of 2020.

"We believe that Chief Murphy Paul is doing a great job in his role. But the union continually stands up and promotes this old form of policing, that is no longer viable in our communities," said Collins.

Chris Stewart is the executive director of the Louisiana International Union of Police and helps represent the Baton Rouge Union of Police.

He released a statement to WAFB saying, "We welcome all input and look forward to meeting personally with Mr. Collins on his concerns. No good cop wants a bad cop next to them. That has been the position of our organization since it's organization over 35 years ago. And we welcome open dialogue with any group."

This is just another part in what feels like a never-ending saga between the Union of Police and Chief Murphy Paul, who said this last June of 2020, about the pair's relationship.

"Do I wish that we could work more closely together, absolutely. Because does that stop the progress that we're going to continue moving forward in this department. No, no, it's not. It's not. But yes, I would like a better relationship

See **NAACP**, on page 3

## La. state lawmaker proposes decriminalizing prostitution

*Rep. Mandie Landry says it's time the 'world's oldest profession' goes legit in Louisiana*

Critics of full decriminalization of prostitution have raised fears that it will allow pimps and purveyors to go unpunished. Landry said cases against sex traffickers would be more successful if her proposal becomes law because victims would no longer be treated as criminals themselves and be more willing to assist prosecutors.



Rep. Mandie Landry

Sexual acts between consenting adults should remain just that, state Rep. Mandie Landry said, regardless of whether they involve a financial transaction. She said she will author a bill in the Louisiana Legislature that would do away with the state's existing laws that outlaw prostitution.

"The younger generation, people my age and younger, don't understand at all how the government could ever enter your bedroom and tell you what to do," said Landry, a Democrat from New Orleans. "If two people engage in a relationship in their own home, whether they exchange money or not, it's between them."

Existing laws against human trafficking, rape and sexual assault are not impacted in the proposal, Landry said. Prostitution involving minors will remain illegal because minors cannot give consent, she added.

Orleans Parish District Attorney Jason Williams said he was familiar with Landry's proposal but did not take a specific stance on it. He said he supports a criminal justice approach that targets the individuals behind forced sexual labor, rather than its victims.

"If this piece of legislation can allow us to be more targeted about human trafficking, about sexual assault, about homicides, then it has a very real value," Williams said.

The New Orleans chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America issued a statement Wednesday in support of Landry's proposal.

"We all consume the work of sex workers, and these workers deserve fair compensation and freedom from fear of criminalization," the statement said, in part.

The organization Women with a Vision marked International Sex Workers Rights Day on March 3 with a statement calling for the decriminalization of prostitution.

"We stand with sex workers in their right to labor without harm, their right to economic access, their right to a healthy working environment, and their right to engage in consensual sexual labor," Deon Haywood, the group's executive director, said in the statement.

Landry introduced a similar version of her proposal in 2020 but then sidelined it once the COVID-19 pandemic forced state lawmakers to prioritize other matters. The 2021 legislative session begins April 12.

## Pay raise proposed for Louisiana's prison guards next year

BATON ROUGE, La. - Gov. John Bel Edwards is proposing more than \$21 million in guard pay raises for Louisiana's prison system next year as the state struggles with recruiting and retaining people for correctional officer jobs.

The Department of Corrections has more 400 unfilled guard positions - a vacancy rate of more than 36%. The positions that are filled face a constant churn, with a year-over-year turnover rate of 73%, according to Thomas Bickham, chief financial officer at the agency.

The Advocate reports the proposal involves a 10% pay raise for entry-level correctional officers that would bump the starting wage from \$13.97 to \$15.37 per hour. That would increase the starting salary for cadets to around \$32,000 annually.

In addition, prison guards could be in line for a retention pay incentive that would add 50 cents to an officer's hourly wages during the first full year on the job, followed by a 70-cent, 90-

cent and \$1 raise in subsequent years.

"The retention pay is to stop the bleeding and the (10% raise) is to get more fresh blood into the system," Bickham said. "It's hard to attract them and when we do get them, it's hard to keep them."

Louisiana's lawmakers last approved a raise for corrections officers in 2018, but the Edwards administration said the short-term gains won by that increase have since worn away.

Staffing shortages have caused overtime costs at the agency to balloon, and are blamed for unsafe working environments for guards. A female correctional officer was raped at knife-point last summer while stationed alone on a cell block at the Elayn Hunt Correctional Center in St. Gabriel.

The pay raise money is included in the Democratic governor's budget proposal for the year that begins July 1. Lawmakers will decide whether to fund it in their legislative session that begins April 12.



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## Republic Services Suspending Recyclable Collections to further Assist with Debris Cleanup

BATON ROUGE, La. — March 15, 2021 — Republic Services is suspending recyclable collections for one week beginning Tuesday, March 16 through Monday, March 22 to further assist with debris cleanup from the recent winter storm. The pause in recyclable collections will allow Republic Services to add additional trucks to collecting storm debris along the normal service routes. Recycling will be serviced on the next service day.

This week marks the fourth week of winter storm debris cleanup, which is about 65% complete. An estimated 80,000 cubic yards of debris will be collected during the cleanup, which is about 50% more debris compared to Hurricane Delta cleanup. The City-Parish estimates cleanup will be complete by the end of March.

## City-Parish announces launch of EBR Emergency Solutions Portal in preparation of rental assistance program

BATON ROUGE, LA — East Baton Rouge Parish is requesting residents in need of housing assistance to submit needs assessment surveys about their household and impacts due to COVID-19 on a new digital website, [www.EBRemergencysolutions.com](http://www.EBRemergencysolutions.com).

The EBR Emergency Solutions portal is designed to rapidly and efficiently prioritize how City-Parish allocates resources currently received from the U.S. Treasury and anticipated resources connected to American Rescue Act.

The City of Baton Rouge received a direct initial allocation of \$6.5 million from the U.S. Treasury to provide rental assistance needs in response to the coronavirus pandemic, and is set to receive another \$22.5 million to accommodate the level of need on the Louisiana Emergency Rental Assistance Program waitlist in the parish.

"As federal resources continue to roll down to our community, it is important we determine the true needs so we can develop and expand partnerships and programs coordinated across multiple agencies to help residents get current on rent and ultimately keep people in their homes, as well as addressing other needs that contribute to basic quality of life," said Mayor-President Sharon Westin Broome. "Like many communities around the country, East Baton Rouge Parish is experiencing a public health

See JUMP, on page 5

## NATIONAL

# Vice President Harris to oversee efforts on border crisis

President Joe Biden has reportedly selected Vice President Kamala Harris to spearhead efforts on the crisis at the southern border. Since his presidency began, a record number of migrants, particularly children, have crossed the US-Mexico border.

This role marks one of the first significant issues Vice President Harris is overseeing since taking office.

According to a report by ABC News, senior administration officials said Wednesday (March 24) Harris will work on two things: "stemming the flow of irregular migrants to the US" and creating a "strategic partnership" with several countries including Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala that is "based on respect and shared values, to enhance prosperity, combat current corruption, and strengthen the rule of law."



President Joe Biden is tasking Vice President Kamala Harris with overseeing efforts with Central American countries to stem the flow of migrants to the US southern border, the first major issue Biden has assigned directly to his No. 2.

The new role is in response to the thousands of unaccompanied minors who've arrived at the border, which has created a crisis especially amid the coronavirus pandemic. According to estimates by CNN, 2021 is on track to surpass the number of immigrants who came in 2019. Just last month, a little over 100,000 people were encountered at the border, marking 24,000 more people than in February of 2019.

Officials repurposed a convention center in Dallas to hold over 2,000 male migrant teenagers earlier this month in response to the influx.

Travel plans for Harris are still unconfirmed, though ABC reported the VP responded to a reporter on Monday (March 22) if she was traveling to the border: "Not today," she said. "But I have before and I'm sure I will again."

## Supreme Court: More police excessive force suits can go forward

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court is siding with a New Mexico woman who was shot by police as she drove away from them, in a case that will allow more excessive force lawsuits against police to go forward.

The justices ruled 5-3 on Thursday that Roxanne Torres' suit could continue because she had been "seized" by police when she was shot, even though she fled. The five justices in the majority included the court's three liber-

als and two of its conservative members.

"The question in this case is whether a seizure occurs when an officer shoots someone who temporarily eludes capture after the shooting. The answer is yes: The application of physical force to the body of a person with intent to restrain is a seizure, even if the force does not succeed in subduing the person," Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in an 18-page opinion for himself, conservative

Brett Kavanaugh and liberals Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan.

The decision does not end the case. Roberts wrote that the "Fourth Amendment does not forbid all or even most seizures — only unreasonable ones." Lower courts will have to weigh in on the "reasonableness of the seizure, the damages caused by the seizure, and the officers' entitlement to qualified immunity," which could also end the case in the officers' favor.

When the case was argued in October, the Trump administration had urged the justices to side with Torres and send the case back to lower courts.

Torres was shot in 2014 when four members of the New Mexico State Police arrived at her Albuquerque apartment with an arrest warrant for someone else. Torres was in her car with the engine running when officers attempted to speak with her. But Torres, who

was experiencing a methamphetamine withdrawal, did not notice them until she said one tried to open her car door. Thinking the officers were carjackers, Torres hit the gas. Two of the officers fired their weapons 13 times as she drove off. She was hit twice in the back.

READ MORE of this story ONLINE at [www.brweeklypress.com](http://www.brweeklypress.com)

## VACCINE from page 1

as possible.

"Based on the doses that we will have available in the coming week, now is absolutely the time to expand vaccine eligibility as broadly as we possibly can, which is to everyone age 16 or older in Louisiana. This is an exciting development, but the hard work of making sure our family members, friends, coworkers and neighbors all have access to the vaccine will continue for months," Gov. Edwards said. "Our goal has been to get vaccine doses we receive into someone's arm within seven days of the doses arriving, because a shot sitting on a shelf doesn't help us end this pandemic. All three available vaccines are safe and

effective for every community and they represent our best hope of being able to Bring Louisiana Back."

Currently, all people in Louisiana who are 65 and older, all health care workers, people ages 16 to 64 with certain health conditions and people 16 or older in certain essential jobs are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine in Louisiana. Starting Monday, March 29, all of the eligibility guidelines will be dropped in Louisiana and anyone who is 16 or older will be eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

Appointments will still be required and providers may need time to update their scheduling systems, which means that people may have to wait a few days to schedule their appointments for next week. There are three autho-

rized COVID-19 vaccines used in the United States: two-dose vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna and a one-dose shot from Johnson & Johnson. People ages 16 and 17 are only eligible to receive the Pfizer vaccine, and they should consult their primary care doctor or vaccine provider to ensure the proper vaccine is administered.

"I am deeply grateful for Louisiana's health care workers and vaccine providers who have worked tirelessly not only to treat sick patients, but now to vaccinate our people. This has been an absolutely unprecedented effort and Louisiana's nurses, doctors and other health care workers have risen to the occasion each and every time they've been called upon. I hope people will be patient

See VACCINE, on page 5

## VOTING from page 1

and disinformation. While we respect calls for more discussion of the process, it must be noted that Louisiana began preparing for this acquisition following the 2016 federal election cycle. It was never rushed or inconsistent with accepted budgetary or procurement laws. A glaring omission from the calls for more discussion is any credible criticism of our current election process."

Ardoin says he came to this decision after consulting with Louisiana Speaker of the House Clay Schexnayder and Senate President Page Cortez.

## JURY from page 1

key piece of evidence -- a bystander video showing Chauvin with his knee on the back of Floyd's neck for a prolonged amount of time as three other officers held the handcuffed 46-year-old Floyd prone on the ground as he cried out, "I can't breathe."

"This is not a hard case. George Floyd had more witnesses to his death than any other person ever -- white or Black," their statement said. "We all saw the same thing, the indisputable and unjustified torture and murder by a police officer of a Black man who was handcuffed, restrained and posed no harm. If George Floyd had been white, the facts would be undisputed and justice would be swift. We expect the same

"I believe Secretary of State Ardoin has made the right call to pull back on the procurement process for new voting machines. Louisiana elections are some of the most safe and secure elections in the United States and giving more oversight to the process will only strengthen that," Schexnayder said.

"I am in complete support of Secretary of State Ardoin's decision to withdraw the current procurement process for new voting machines in Louisiana. I believe this will bring an opportunity for full transparency on the purchasing process and election systems for all levels of government," said Cortez.

for George." During the jury selection, two jurors that had been chosen for the panel were removed from the case after inadvertently seeing or hearing about news reports that the city of Minneapolis had reached a \$27 million settlement with Floyd's family. The two dismissed jurors said the announcement affected their ability to remain impartial and decide the case based solely on the trial evidence.

Cahill also said Friday he did not believe pretrial publicity in the case will cease and upped the number of juror alternates from two to three.

Cahill noted that of the 326 people selected to be part of the prospective jury pool, more than 60 were individually interviewed in person during the process.

## PROPOSAL from page 2

"I don't believe people should be threatened with arrest or incarceration for possessing small quantities of marijuana," Nickelson said.

The council members said they hope this creates a ripple effect leading to changes at the state and federal levels.

"We're able to pass this law because we have authority under state law to criminalize any misdemeanor offense," Nickelson explained. "We cannot make a felony under state law a misdemeanor. But because marijuana is a misdemeanor offense, we can make it an offense under the city code and pose penalties that we think are appropriate."

Therefore, the city does not have the authority to change the situations of people already serving jail time.

However, this does not allow or encourage people to use marijuana in public.

"In laymen's terms, this is not a free-for-all," Taylor pointed out.

## NAACP from page 2

with them," said Chief Murphy Paul on June 9, 2020.

"They (Union) take their billboards down, we'll take our billboards down. Because at the end of the day, their billboards degrade our city. They shed a poor light on our city, and you can't tell me that that's good for anybody in our city," said Collins.

Mayor Broome gave a statement on this story, saying:

"We continue to prioritize transforming our Baton Rouge Police Department by focusing on and implementing 21st Century Policing Standards. Just earlier today, the Metro Council unanimously passed our second 3 percent pay increase for the department this year, which will be funded through efficiencies.

In order to continue making progress, we will need our community, our leadership, the men and women in blue, and the police union to work together in the best interest of Baton Rouge." — Mayor Broome

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# RELIGION

## Pastor J. Drew Sheard elected as national head of COGIC denomination, Dearborn pastor elected to board

A Detroit pastor, J. Drew Sheard, has been elected to lead Church of God in Christ (COGIC), a growing denomination with millions of members, the latest example of clergy from Michigan becoming national leaders of faith groups.

Sheard, 62, who leads Greater Emmanuel Institutional Church in Detroit, was elected Saturday by delegates with COGIC at their national assembly, which was held online, to be COGIC's presiding bishop, its highest ranking leader.

"To be elected to serve as the Presiding Bishop for the Church in which I was born, raised, and have learned and served all my life, is a dream and desire that can only be fulfilled by God's loving grace and guidance," Sheard said in a news release. "The opportunity to serve such an extraordinary organization at our highest recognized level of priesthood is beyond humbling."

Another local pastor, Bishop Michael Hill of Kingdom International in Dearborn, was elected to be one of 12 members of COGIC's board, which includes Sheard. COGIC is reportedly the 5th largest Christian denomination in the U.S. as of 2012, according to the National Council of Churches.

Sheard's election was celebrated by faith and political leaders in Michigan, where COGIC, a predominantly Black and Pentecostal denomination, has a strong presence. Bishop P.A. Brooks, an influential faith leader in Detroit who died last year at 88, was a member of COGIC's national board.



Bishop J. Drew Sheard was elected Saturday by delegates with COGIC at their national assembly, which was held online, to be COGIC's presiding bishop, its highest ranking leader.

"I am absolutely ecstatic," Bishop Edgar Vann of Second Ebenezer Church in Detroit, who has been a friend of Sheard for decades since they were teenage

preachers, told the Free Press on Monday. "He represents in his denomination a whole new refreshing generation of leadership. ... It's a very crucial post in Christendom

right now. It is one of the highest denominational posts in the African American community. And he will lead that denomination with distinction ... with innovation and creativity."

Sheard becoming leader of COGIC is "a great distinction for Detroit and it makes Detroit really the epicenter for this particular denomination," Vann said.

COGIC's national leaders are generally older, and so having Sheard become presiding bishop at a younger age means "he's going to, by the grace of God, be there a long time to give a whole new, fresh look at that denomination, to enhance the faith community internationally."

Sheard's father is also a COGIC pastor, Bishop John Sheard, who leads Greater Mitchell Temple Church of God in Christ in Detroit. His mother, Willie Mae Sheard, died last year of COVID-19 at 84. Sheard's wife, Karen Clark-Sheard, is known nationally for her gospel music along with her sisters.

BET (Black Entertainment Television) once had a reality TV show, The Sheards, about their family.

Detroit City Council President Brenda Jones also praised Sheard becoming presiding bishop, writing on Twitter: "You have worked hard, helped many & deserve this honor."

The Rev. Charles Williams, pastor of Historic King Solomon Baptist Church of Detroit and Chair of the Michigan chapter

of the National Action Network, the civil rights group led by the Rev. Al Sharpton, said on Twitter: "Congrats to Bishop J. Drew Sheard! Keep standing with the people! Looking forward to seeing the future of COGIC."

Sheard is the latest Detroit pastor to become a national faith leader. In 2010, Bishop Charles Ellis III of Greater Grace Temple in Detroit became the national head of Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, a position he served in for several years.

Sheard has previously served on the general board and led its Michigan branch.

The Church of God in Christ is a Pentecostal denomination that its leaders say has 6.5 million members. Although headquartered in Memphis, Tennessee, its reach is global.

The position of the presiding bishop became open after the previous presiding bishop, Charles Blake Sr., announced he would not seek reelection and requested emeritus status.

Here are the other 11 members elected to COGIC's general board, its highest executive board:

- Bishop Prince Bryant Sr., pastor of The Island of Hope Church of God in Christ and Buck Street Memorial Church of God in Christ in Houston. He is the jurisdictional prelate of The Texas South Central Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction.
- Bishop Malcolm Coby,

pastor of Victory Temple Church of God in Christ, World Ministry Center, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and jurisdictional bishop for the Oklahoma Southeast Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction

- Bishop Sedgwick Daniels, pastor of Holy Redeemer Church Of God In Christ in Milwaukee, and jurisdictional bishop of the Wisconsin First Jurisdiction. He previously served on the general board.

- Bishop David Hall Sr., pastor of historic Temple Church Of God In Christ in Memphis, and prelate of Tennessee Headquarters Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction.

- Bishop Michael Hill Sr., senior pastor of Kingdom International in Dearborn, Michigan, and jurisdictional bishop of Great Lakes First Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction.

- Bishop Darrell Hines Sr., pastor of Christian Faith Fellowship Church of God in Christ in Wisconsin and jurisdictional bishop of the Illinois Midwest Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction. He previously served on the general board.

- Bishop Jerry Macklin, founder of Glad Tidings International Church of God in Christ and founder of the NorCal Metropolitan Jurisdiction. Macklin was elected to the general board in 2004 and became the second assistant presiding bishop in 2008.
- Bishop Loran Mann,

See SHEARD, on page 5

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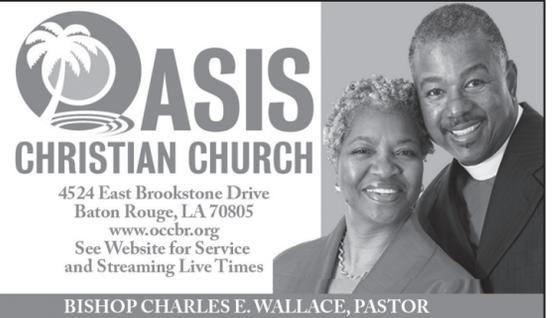


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## EBR Metro Council approves rezoning for Cortana Mall



The East Baton Rouge Metro-Council gave the green light for the old Cortana Mall be rezoned to make way for Amazon's distribution center.

BATON ROUGE, La. - The world's largest online retailer is responsible for redevelopment efforts at the Cortana Mall in Baton Rouge, said a former metro councilwoman.

The EBR Metro Council approved rezoning for Cortana Mall on March 10.

Former East Baton Rouge District 6 Councilwoman Donna Collins-Lewis tells reporters that Amazon is the driving force behind repurposing the once-bustling mall at the intersection of Florida Boulevard and Airline Highway.

In January, Dillard's, the last store still open at the Cortana Mall told Austin Kemker it would be closing in April.

Wilson LaFoe, the owner of the Virginia College property at the Cortana mall, said the deal for Seefried to purchase the property

has been closed March 4.

CAFA will ultimately take ownership of the property, essentially leasing it to Seefried. Seefried will build the facility for Amazon.

According to the East Baton Rouge Parish Planning Commission, Seefried Industrial Properties has plans to develop the Cortana Mall property into a new warehouse.

Wilson said it was a challenge to get to this point but was happy to see the deal finalized as it will lead to a generational change for the area.

Seefried has built several warehouses and distribution centers for Amazon in the past, including a distribution center in Baton Rouge near Bethany Church on Siegen Lane

Carter earned enough votes to advance to a run-off with state Senator Karen Carter Peterson (D-New Orleans).

The run-off election will be held on Saturday, April 24.

Peterson has earned an endorsement from state Representative C. Denise Marcelle (D-Baton Rouge).

the Bring Back Louisiana grassroots campaign, which will bring COVID-19 vaccines to communities of concern through community events and targeted outreach. To sign up to volunteer for this effort, click here.

For information about where to get the COVID-19 vaccine in Louisiana and for more information, visit [COVIDVaccine.la.gov](http://COVIDVaccine.la.gov).

the coming weeks with details about how qualified individuals can apply once the program launches on March 15th.

Mayor-President Broome will host a webinar for landlords on March 10th at 10:00am to provide information about the program. Landlords can register for the webinar at [www.brla.gov/communitydevelopment](http://www.brla.gov/communitydevelopment).

### CARTER from page 1

I'll be prepared on Day 1 to fight for equitable vaccine distribution, job opportunities, criminal justice reform, infrastructure investments, and a minimum wage increase for working families," Carter said.

On Saturday, March 20,

### VACCINE from page 3

over the next few days as providers begin accepting appointments. Please know that there will be enough doses for everyone who wants a shot to get one eventually," Gov. Edwards said.

Last week, the Louisiana Department of Health launched

### JUMP from page 3

emergency that continues to bring unexpected and difficult economic circumstances for many of our residents, through no fault of their own."

Residents who submit a needs assessment will receive updates and announcements in

# BUSINESS

## Ochsner announces further expansion in Greater Baton Rouge

BATON ROUGE - On the heels of announcing the groundbreaking of Ochsner Health Center - Gonzales, Ochsner Baton Rouge announces additional expansion efforts in the Capital Area.

Ochsner Cancer Center - Baton Rouge is currently undergoing a first-floor renovation with the aid of Kent Design+Build Inc., and Grace Hebert Curtis Architects. The project, covering 1,668 square feet, is renovating existing space to incorporate upgraded equipment for positron emission tomography scans, also known as a PET scan or PET-CT.

Construction costs are approximately \$1.36 million, while the new PET-CT machine exceeds an additional \$1 million. For many types of cancer, a PET scan can help find the location of the cancer and determine its stage and if it has spread. Doctors can also learn how the cancer is affecting different body functions and serves as a guide in choosing the most appropriate treatment plan.

The new space at Ochsner Cancer Center - Baton Rouge is designed to improve the patient experience while enhancing medical imaging needs for cancer patients.

"We are grateful to continue growing and expanding our services to meet the needs of our patients," stated Eric McMillen, CEO, Ochsner Baton Rouge. "Our complete care approach involves a fully integrated electronic medical record

### SHEARD from page 4

founder of Pentecostal Temple Church of God in Christ in Pitts-burgh and bishop of the state of Vermont.

■ Bishop C. H. McClelland, pastor of Holy Cathedral Church of God in Christ in Milwaukee, and bishop of the Wisconsin Northwest Jurisdiction. He was born in Covington, Tennessee.

■ Bishop Brandon Porter, pastor of Greater Community Temple COGIC in North Memphis and jurisdictional prelate of the Tennessee Central Jurisdiction. Greater Community Temple has a membership of more than 5,000 and includes a campus in East Memphis. He was first elected to the general board in 2012.

■ Bishop Lawrence Wooten Sr., pastor of Williams Temple Church of God in Christ and bishop of the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of Eastern Missouri Western Illinois. He previously served on the general board.



Ochsner Cancer Center - Baton Rouge

that results in seamless care."

At 11200 Industriplex Blvd., in Baton Rouge, Ochsner is currently working with contractor Stuart & Company and Grace Hebert Curtis Architects on a new specialty pharmacy. Staff at a specialty pharmacy work as part of the patient's care team to assist in obtaining difficult to acquire medications, as well as helping to navigate insurance, obtain financial assistance and support

each patient's education and care.

The 13,185-square foot space offers a second specialty pharmacy location to further support Ochsner's growing patient population across the state. The original Ochsner Specialty Pharmacy is located at 1405 Jefferson Hwy., in New Orleans.

The \$4.3 million project will create a robust pharmacy operation of packaging and shipping specialty

medications that are conveniently delivered to the front door of patients. The building will also allow for limited onsite pickup.

Timeline for completion of both projects is August 2021.

For appointments across the Baton Rouge region, call (225) 761-5200 or visit [Ochsner.org/info](http://Ochsner.org/info). In-person appointments and video visits are available online and through the MyOchsner patient portal.

## Alcohol sales fall for first time since start of pandemic

For the first time in a year, retail alcohol sales have declined. Last March, when bars and restaurants across the country were forced to close due to the coronavirus pandemic, retail alcohol sales surged by 55% as people rushed to stockpile beer, wine, and liquor.

According to CNN, new data from Nielsen shows that total sales were down by 1.9% for the week ending March 13. Despite the first week-to-week decline in sales in over a year, alcohol sales are still up by 20% to 30% this month compared to March 2019.

The company said that wine sales were down by 8%, and spirit sales were flat. While beer sales saw a slight increase, they were boosted by spiked seltzers. If spiked seltzers were not counted in beer sales, they

would have seen a decline last week as well.

One reason for the decline is that bars and restaurants are beginning to reopen as strict lockdown measures are relaxed. While Nielsen doesn't track on-premise sales, the research firm expects to see retail alcohol sales continue to decline as more establishments open their doors again.

"We have officially surpassed one year of drastic shifts in consumer and shopper behaviors resulting from the pandemic in the United States. At this time last year, alcohol volume experienced massive shifts from the on-premise to off-premise," Danelle Kosmal, vice president of beverage alcohol at NielsenIQ, said in a statement.

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# SPORTS

## Tickets almost gone for Bayou Classic under current COVID restrictions

SHREVEPORT, La. -- One month before kickoff, the city council huddled in a special meeting to swiftly advance Mayor Adrian Perkins' resolution. It would allow the city to enter into a cooperative agreement with NOCCI, Inc. That's the group that operates the Bayou Classic football game between Grambling State and Southern University.

Part of that agreement means a financial contribution from the city. But Perkins does not yet know the amount.

"Right now I can just tell you a lot of public entities have contributed to the pot. And we're finalizing that budget to make sure we're spending these dollars responsibly so that we have the best weekend possible," Perkins said.

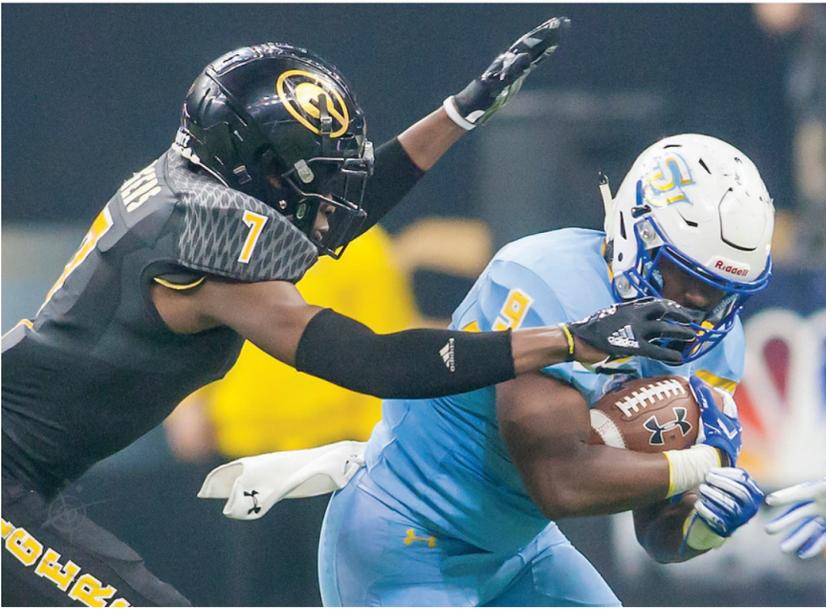
Perkins believes funding would come from money already budgeted for economic development. The city council will vote on the resolution at its regular meeting on Tuesday, March 23.

For its part, the Caddo Parish Commission is considering supporting the event with \$50,000.

The football game and events surrounding it are expected to pass \$2 million into the Shreveport-Bossier economy. Tourism officials have said area hotel rooms are getting booked up.

That's even though that under Phase 3 of reopening from COVID-19 in Louisiana, Independence stadium can only be half full for the game. That means about 25,000 tickets can be sold.

A check of Ticketmaster on Wednesday showed that just



The Bayou Classic is still on, but it won't be in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome. Here are three possible locations.

about 750 tickets are left. They start at about \$40.

Phase 3 goes until the end of this month. Perkins hopes Governor John Bel Edwards will then reopen Louisiana further to allow more fans.

"If things continue to go well, if we social distance, if we wear a mask, then maybe we can even get a larger bump and get even more fans in. But our priority now is to make sure we keep people safe while giving them a fun weekend," Perkins says.

The Bayou Classic is not only the biggest rivalry game in the Southwestern Athletic Conference. It's also normally a showcase for the great marching

bands from each school. But the SWAC has banned bands from traveling to games this spring because of coronavirus concerns.

Perkins says you still may be able to enjoy the bands in Shreveport.

"We're trying to see if we can do some other things to get them involved for the weekend. But we're working on that. And we'll be putting that information out," Perkins hinted.

Shreveport is also hosting Port City Fest beginning on Thursday, April 15, leading up to the game on Saturday. It includes a downtown festival, Party On The Red, all three days.

Classic Expo, a black-owned business and education

expo, will also run all three days at the convention center. Perkins hosts a benefit golf tournament at Querbes Golf Course on Friday morning. And there's also a Fan Fest at the stadium before the game Saturday.

The Bayou Classic came to Shreveport because of on-going coronavirus concerns in New Orleans, where the game is normally played in the Superdome. SWAC delayed its fall 2020 football season until this spring. It recently kicked off.

The Bayou Classic returns to its traditional spot in the Superdome in November for the fall football season.

## NBA will loosen COVID-19 restrictions for fully vaccinated players

The NBA and the National Basketball Players Association have agreed on changes to fully vaccinated players' health and safety protocols.

The information was released in a memo sent to teams on Wednesday, ESPN reports.

The changes to the protocols apply to any player who is "two weeks past their final dose and any team where 85% of players and 85% of staff are fully vaccinated."

Those who are fully vaccinated will no longer need to quarantine following exposure to COVID-19. Those individuals can also have friends, family and other visitors at home or on the road without a COVID-19 test or registration requirements.

Teams that are fully vaccinated will not have to wear masks at the practice facility, will be offered flexibility to leave the hotel while

traveling on the road and they can dine at restaurants.

It is unclear how many players in the league have been vaccinated.

Some top players expressed hesitancy about accepting invitations to participate in league-sponsored events and public service announcements about the COVID-19 vaccines.

After NBA All-Star Weekend, LeBron James said it was a "private family decision" when asked if he would get vaccinated.

Some players and staff members with the New Orleans Pelicans received their first dose after eligibility requirements changed in Louisiana.

According to the Associated Press, they are the first NBA team to report vaccinations for many players.

## HBCU Legacy Bowl launches February 2022

The HBCU Legacy Bowl will be held in New Orleans next February, a week after the Super Bowl during Black History Month.

According to a press release from ESPN, the Legacy Bowl was established to allow NFL draft-eligible athletes to showcase their abilities to recruiters giving HBCU students a better chance at being seen.

"The HBCU Legacy Bowl means opportunity and exposure for HBCU players and coaches," BCF Hall of Fame inductee Doug Williams said in an interview with

ESPN. "We're excited to have this in New Orleans, especially during Black History Month."

HBCU football legends Doug Williams and James "Shack" Harris co-founded the Black College Football Hall of Fame to bridge equality.

"HBCUs are a bridge to equality," said Harris. "We thank the NFL for their support and in sharing our commitment to lifting up others."

The game will take place in Yulman Stadium at Tulane University. NFL Network will broadcast the game.



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