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THE NEWS-HERALD

Wednesday, April 10, 2024 \$2.50 FACEBOOK.COM/NEWSHERALDINH TWITTER.COM/NEWSHERALDINH news-herald.com

PAINESVILLE

City adopts strategic plan

Plan goals include stable economic growth, improved quality of life

By Bryson Durst
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Painesville City Council recently wrapped up an approximately year-long strategic planning process, adopting a plan for 2024-27 that sets goals for the city's economy, infrastructure, operations and quality of life.

Council unanimously approved the new plan at its April 1 meeting. A copy can be viewed in that meeting's "Proposed Legislation" document, which is available at painesville.com/council/2024.

The plan was described by multiple council members as a "living document," and Council President Jim Fodor said in March that

it would "take a life of its own" as city officials worked to implement it. Council will also be able to modify the document.

Fodor added that the document could help new officials understand council's priorities.

"The strategic plan is really that 10,000-foot view," he said at a later meeting.

One goal for the plan is to promote economic prosperity, with the objective of providing city departments with the finances that they need to implement improvement plans.

The plan calls for funding to come from stable economic growth from new and existing businesses. It also calls for utilities to develop plans that will avoid deficits.

"We weren't looking to increase taxes, but what we were looking for is providing adequate financial resources to implement each department's three-to-five-year plan," Fodor said.

The second goal is to evaluate and improve the city's roads and sidewalks, as well as its water, electric, stormwater and water pollution control departments.

CITY » PAGE 5

WILLOUGHBY HILLS

LONG TIME COMING



ROBERT GANDEE

Johnson's Fire Equipment, located in Wellston, is currently working on fabricating shelves and trays to mount the majority of the equipment that will be housed on Willoughby Hills Fire Department's new engine.

Fire department soon to take delivery of new fire engine

By Marah Morrison
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Willoughby Hills Fire Chief Robert Gandee recently traveled to Johnson's Fire Equipment to check on the status of the fire department's new engine.

Located in Wellston, Johnson's is currently working on

fabricating shelves and trays to mount the majority of the equipment that will be housed on the new engine, a time-consuming process due to the brainstorming and assessment of where to stow everything in a safe, logical format.

"This is something that's been a long time coming," Gan-

dee said. "It's been an extensive amount of time, research, development and evaluating other fire engines throughout the area to find the best ideas, and layouts that would ultimately fit the needs of the community and the department."

According to Gandee, the department's current frontline en-

gine has been getting its work-out and has had a number of mechanical issues that have been being worked on, and repaired continually. However, once a number of repairs are completed on it, it'll be a solid reserve engine, Gandee said.

"When the new engine has scheduled maintenance or any repairs, we'll still have a reliable backup," he said. "The tim-

ENGINE » PAGE 5

CRIME

Woman sentenced for booster funds theft

By Bryson Durst
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A former Painesville City Schools administrative assistant faces jail time and community control sanctions after pleading guilty to theft from the district's Maple Boosters organization, according to documents from Lake County Common Pleas Court.

Judge Patrick Condon sentenced Kristen Sanders on April 4 to 14 days in jail and a year of community control sanctions related to one count of fifth-degree felony theft. She will receive two days of credit for time already served in jail and will begin the rest of the two-week term in June.

Violation of the probation terms can result in increased restrictions, a longer community control sentence or a prison term of six to 12 months, stated the sentencing document.

The original indictment stated that the theft occurred on or between May 4 and Dec. 19, 2022. The value of the property was listed as being equal to or greater than \$1,000 and less than \$7,500.

Sanders initially entered a not guilty plea for the theft count and five other counts on Nov. 27, according to an arraignment document. She accepted a bond recommendation of own recognizance.

She later changed to a guilty plea for the first count on Feb. 22. The state moved to dismiss the other five counts, which included two more fifth-degree felony theft charges and three fourth-degree felony charges of theft in office.

A later sentencing memorandum... THEFT » PAGE 5

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EPA: Chemical plants must reduce emissions

More than 200 chemical plants nationwide must reduce toxic emissions likely to cause cancer. PAGE B2



MARKETS

Another uneventful day on Wall Street

Traders made their final moves ahead of some potentially market-moving reports. PAGE A6

POINT-COUNTERPOINT

Is the game of golf really a sport?

As players get ready to tee off at Augusta National, columnists weigh in on the merits of the game. PAGE A4

TRAVEL

Fiji offers lush foliage, beaches, traditions

For most travelers, nothing rivals Fiji's sandy beaches, palm-shaded gardens and starchy nights. PAGE B1

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In Loving Memory

Obituary & Remembrance Tribute Feature

During a family's time of sorrow, we want to reflect on the lives of those who have recently passed. On April 14, 2024 The News-Herald will publish a special feature to commemorate and honor those we have lost in January, February and March of 2024.

Though you are no longer with us, you will never be forgotten. May your memory be forever held in the pages of this book.

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TRAVEL

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SOUTH PACIFIC

Island escape

Lush foliage, dazzling beaches, deep traditions put Fiji on the map

By Anne Z. Cooke
Tribune News Service

NADI, FIJI ISLANDS "That's Tom Hanks' island, in 'Cast Away' the movie," said the passenger sitting nearby, on the rear deck.

We'd seen him standing in line, a college kid in a red shirt, packing and repacking a knapsack while we waited to board the early morning ferry out of Viti Levu, largest of Fiji's 330 islands. Leaning over the railing, he pointed at the horizon and a faint grey-green shape.

"Its real name is Motikri, and it's small, just 100 acres," he said. "But the beach is awesome. Tourists can't wait to go."

No surprise there. For most South Pacific travelers, nothing rivals Fiji's sandy beaches, palm-shaded gardens, starry nights and Melanesian hospitality. We'd island-hopped over the years, tried a dozen different beach resorts, and liked most of them. Until 2019, when we joined a hiking group for a long look at the island's mountains.

Finally last fall, with COVID in decline and Fiji open for tourists, we hopped a plane and headed back, this time for another look at what makes the country tick. Finding hotels wasn't easy; Fiji is to Australians what Hawaii is to Americans. But we crossed our fingers, found five with rooms and struck gold at three places begging for a repeat visit.

The Fiji Orchid, a stately manor house near Viti Levu's northwest shore and the former home of Hollywood actor Raymond Burr, star of the detective series "Perry Mason," felt nothing like a hotel and everything like a home away from home. With an inviting living room and framed memorabilia, it beckoned at the end of a very long day.

Hotel Manager Deepika Dimlesh arranged an authentic Fijian dinner, and co-owner Gordon Leewie told tales of Fiji life in the early days. Though Nadi (NAN-dee) International Airport was 20 minutes away, our bure (BOO-ray, room, house), one of six in the lush tropical garden, was as quiet as a cemetery.

Curious about Lautoka, Viti Levu's second-largest town on the northwest shore, we hired our guide and driver Kesho Goundar, who (like many Fijians) speaks Fijian, English and Hindi. Stopping at the town's huge covered market, he bought a couple of kava "sticks," the gifts we would need — for the chief — if we visited a village.

Then it was on to the Sabeto Mountains and the

Garden of the Sleeping Giant. A popular park, it was founded by Burr, a worldwide orchid collector. Hundreds of orchids, planted along the trail to the summit, a huge head-like rock, are the highlight of a visit. And the adjacent forest — a tower of vines, shadowy branches and strange flowers — was a set waiting for a movie.

The next day we headed upcountry to Navala Village, the country's last thatched village, driving past barnyards, gardens, sugar cane fields, villages, the occasional manufacturing plant and Methodist, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu and Catholic-oriented primary schools.

At first glance Navala looked empty, until guide Mark Navaroka came out to collect our \$25 entrance fee and a kava stick for the chief. "This is how we used to build houses," he said, leading us inside the chief's official structure, where a couple of village leaders sat cross-legged, talking. "They built it in 1954 when five dying Catholic villages joined together," he continued, leading the way to the school and church.

Turning onto the Navaroka Highway — not another car in sight — we lurched uphill over a rocky, pot-holed track for more than an hour, each hill steeper than the one before, until we rounded the top, a photographer's delight. Finally, around the corner, we passed two hunters on horseback with rifles and dogs.

Moving to Viti Levu's southwest corner, we checked into the Intercontinental Fiji Golf Resort Spa, a 35-acre landscaped property on Natadola Bay. And instead of salesmen in suits, the hotel was as busy as a country club on a holiday weekend. Dads and kids played volleyball; moms worked out at a fitness center. We spotted kids racing hermit crabs, and others learning Fijian words and Polynesian dances. Menus at the hotel's several restaurants listed continental and some Fijian dishes, and our favorite, the lively Toba Bar Grill, took our order in five minutes and served the food in 10.

Coaxed into trying the Jet Ski "experience," we flew over the waves, riding tandem behind two water-sports guides. But the skies were trumped by the hotel's Coral Planting project, headed by marine scientists Lawaci Koroyawa and Lake Romatanababa. Joining them in the water, we learned how to plant healthy corals onto damaged reefs.



Folklore says that ancient spirits left the world from Uluvunatu Mountain, on Viti Levu's northeast shore, Viti Levu, Fiji. PHOTOS BY STEVE HAGGERTY



Natadola Bay's public beach, beside the Intercontinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, is one of Viti Levu's best.



Fiji's farming families grow vegetables year around to sell at Nadi's Outdoor Market.



Navala Village, Fiji's last traditionally thatched village, is an hour from the Fiji Orchid Hotel and welcomes visitors.

Most memorable was the river cruise with Sintergata River Safari. Wide and long, the river winds through an endless valley, weaving past rocky hills, farms and meadows. Children splashed in it and men scrubbed their horses, warring as we passed. Pastoral and peaceful, it was a nod to an older century. The 35-mile-long trip ended at a village, with a tour, lunch at the community center and a kava ceremony with the chief and some Fijian fathers. Kava is calming, some say. Just more weak tea, say others.

"The government makes Fiji's laws, but the villages rule themselves. That's why they're important." As our last week approached, we took the ferry to Lomani Island Resort — yes, an adults-only beach resort — on Malolo Lailai island, a single hour's ferry ride to the mainland and Nadi International Airport. You can stay overnight and still make it to the airport on time. But it wasn't the beach that earned the gold star.

It was the charming cottages, each with a private yard and plunge pool. The smiling waiters and creative, chef-designed meals, served at candle-lit tables. The "double-X" swimming pool and the water sports center. "It's peaceful here," said Shelley White, the general manager, when we met at the cocktail hour. "And quiet. But with Nadi next

door, we stay busy with weddings and anniversaries, and lately, even business retreats. We can order everything we need and get it delivered the next day," she said. "Still, we love to have visitors like you, people who know this place and like it," she added, with a puckish smile. "Let me know the next time you travel. I might decide to come along."



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