

LOCAL

Driver issues lead list against bus firm

Paterson district now does daily checks

Joe Malinconico
Paterson Press

PATERSON — The company targeted in the state’s recent school bus safety investigation received 15 violations between last July and December from the city school district for allegedly using drivers without requisite credentials. The firm, American Star Transporta-

tion, has received more driver credential violations during the current school year than all the other bus companies hired by Paterson Public Schools combined, according to district records made public this week.

The Paterson district issued its first wave of seven violations to American Star last July 25 for allegedly having unqualified drivers on all bus routes bring-

ing students to Joseph A. Taub School for a summer program, the records show.

City education officials issued eight additional driver credential violations to American Star between Oct. 18 and Dec. 1 for bus routes for students from Rosa Parks high school and five elementary schools — Dale Avenue, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Nos. 18, 21 and 27.

The bus operators in those cases lacked commercial driver’s licenses or certificates needed to drive buses or

passengers, the penalty letters said.

American Star’s owner, Jwel Khalique, and his brother, Shelim Khalique, were arrested by the New Jersey State Police on Dec. 20 and accused of conspiring to get contracts from public school districts even though the company didn’t have enough qualified drivers to handle the work.

In addition to Paterson, the state Attorney General’s Office has said, the al-

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Barnes & Noble in Paramus is closing its doors to make way for adult day program center



A rendering of New Concepts for Living’s planned welcome area for its new Paramus location, which is aiming for a fall opening. COURTESY OF NEW CONCEPTS FOR LIVING

NEXT CHAPTER

Stephanie Noda NorthJersey.com | USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

The Barnes & Noble store on Route 17 in Paramus will be shutting its doors after almost three decades, with the site slated to become the home of a “state-of-the-art” adult day program center for people with disabilities. ● The nonprofit New Concepts for Living currently operates a similar facility in Rochelle Park. The new Paramus location, expected to open in fall, will be “significantly larger” and a “state-of-the-art achievement center” that will eventually serve 200 clients, according to the group’s website. ● “There are hundreds if not thousands of adults that don’t have a place to go,” said Deena King, New Concepts’ marketing and program support manager. See **CHANGE**, Page 4L



Barnes & Noble in Paramus will close Feb. 11, the store said.
JEREMY SMITH/SPECIAL TO NORTHJERSEY.COM

Change

Continued from Page 1L

In a Facebook post, Barnes & Noble, which has been in Paramus for 28 years, said the landlord was not renewing the company’s lease at the site. The store will close on Feb. 11, according to the post.

But the company added that it wants to serve the Paramus community for “many, many more years.” Barnes & Noble is “doing everything” it can to find a replacement site with hopes to “return close to here with a new bookstore before long.”

The post asked the community to submit suggestions for a location to MyBarnesandNoble@bn.com, with “Paramus” in the subject line.

The post didn’t say how many people

currently work at the store. But it added, “We thank our wonderful Paramus booksellers for all their hard work and dedication and know that they look forward to welcoming you back to their new store just as soon as this has been found.”

Barnes & Noble still operates a store at The Shops at Riverside in Hackensack, as well as in Clifton, Woodland Park, West Nyack and Nanuet, the company said.

New Concepts’ new adult day programs

New Concepts for Living was originally founded in 1981 by a group of parents whose children have intellectual and developmental disabilities, according to the group’s website. As their children aged, the parents noticed a lack of programs in the area for adults with dis-

abilities.

The organization received approval for the facility in September from the borough’s Planning Board. The group plans to close its 10,000-square-foot Rochelle Park center and move the program and administrative offices into the Paramus building’s 80,000 square feet of space.

New Concepts currently serves 60 people at the Rochelle Park location, which has been open since the early 2000s.

Moving the program to Paramus with the expanded space will allow it to serve 120 people during its first year of operation, with plans to increase that to 200 the following year, King said.

The program will also continue to focus on the inclusion of clients in the community, with trips taking them to visit everywhere from the local dollar store to a Rockettes show at Radio City

Wayne weighs full-time mayor

Council to decide on salary of \$140,000

Philip DeVenticis

NorthJersey.com
USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

WAYNE — The mayor is in line to receive a six-figure salary and health care benefits under a historic and controversial change to the municipal code that the Township Council will vote on this month.

The amended ordinance, introduced by the council at its reorganization meeting on Wednesday, would effectively turn the mayor into a full-time employee with a salary of \$140,000 per year.

It is a considerable adjustment.

Mayor Christopher Vergano, 63, now serves in the position on a part-time basis and makes an annual wage of \$18,750, without benefits.

But Vergano, a Republican who just entered the second year of his fourth

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WHAT’S NEW

Coffee shop brewing up business, learning

Citlalli Godinez

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Happy New Year! May 2023 be a successful year for all businesses.

NorthJersey.com is invested in keeping you up to date on all the newest shops, restaurants and service providers moving into your towns. Below is a list of some of these businesses that recently opened or are coming soon to your community.

See **NEW**, Page 3L

Music Hall.

The additional space will allow the organization to better serve people with disabilities by offering new services. The Paramus site will include physical and occupational therapy on the building’s upper floor, King said. Plans to create a mock laundry room, bedroom and kitchen as a way to teach life skills are also in the works.

“It’s really going to be a state-of-the-art program that the state of New Jersey and Paramus will be proud of,” King said.

There will be no changes to the footprint of the building, and “the only changes to the exterior will be architectural,” according to minutes from the September Planning Board meeting. The project will also restripe and repair the parking lot.

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