

Time to Leave the Plantation?

Traditionally, *Motif* takes what are often confoundingly worded ballot questions and plainly explains them for voters before they enter the ballot box. This year, there's one ballot question from the state, and it's a pretty simple one: Is it time to drop "Providence Plantations" from our state name through an amendment to the state constitution?

This question was on the ballot in 2010 and nearly 78% of voters rejected the name change. But this year has seen a cultural reckoning and perhaps a greater understanding that despite the history of the word "Plantations" in the state name, its symbolism causes pain, and it's hurtful to many Rhode Islanders to have a word so closely associated with slavery appear in the state's official name.

Drawing the Line: Ensuring proper representation in city councils

Last month, Woonsocket's Racist Policies Review Advisory Board, a deliberative body intended to identify discriminatory practices in city policy, voted to recommend the city council's seven at-large seats switch instead to seven warded seats. Municipal legislature races rarely get much notice during election cycles in the Ocean State, a fact that can mask crucial issues. Woonsocket is rapidly becoming a majority-minority community; estimates from the last census put its person of color population around 40%. Its governing body doesn't reflect this, with six white male members and only one woman on the city council.

"It's been that way for a couple of decades," says Alex Kithes, running for re-election to city council with a progressive slate. "I'm not sure when they were removed but it was almost definitely the wards were removed to avoid too much representation from working-class and racially diverse [communities]." Woonsocket Democrats, the slate Kithes is running with, has recently taken up warding Woonsocket as a campaign issue. People are talking about it at the door when they canvass. While they don't have a specific plan whether to go full ward or with a hybrid model, Kithes says they are interested in talking more with the community to find out what the people want, but stressed the need for an independent third party to draw lines and avoid classic, Rhode Island-style corruption.

"At large elections have significant problems," says John Marion, executive director of Common Cause

RI. “In fact, they have been outlawed by Congress for federal elections. The most significant problem is they can be used to deny representation to candidates of color.” Woonsocket is an especially egregious example. Five of the members live within a half-mile radius of each other, less than a 10-minute walk away. Woonsocket is small, but not that small.

Across Rhode Island, at-large seats are pretty common. Out of the 237 city/town council races, only 74 of them represent clearly defined wards. Even then, the only municipalities with no at-large or citywide elections for a council seat are Providence, Warwick, Coventry and Lincoln. Cities like Cranston and Newport have a large fraction coming from citywide votes. In most Rhode Island towns, especially out in the sticks, there isn't a significant minority population for this to be a problem (note that the small numbers of POC populations out in the suburbs and historical segregation/redlining is a whole other problem outside the scope of this article). A common trend in communities with substantial minority populations and racially polarized voting is a lack of substantial or even symbolic representation for these communities. Drawing fresh wards in a city like Woonsocket, however, could have its own issues when it comes to representation.

The possibility of gerrymandering, that proud corrupt American pastime, cannot be ignored. It's front line news again this year, with President Trump ending the census early, a key way that determines how districts are drawn. Gerrymandering's ultimate goal is to dilute the votes of some persons, to empower others. Organizations like Common Cause oppose all racial and partisan gerrymandering; they were the chief plaintiff in last year's Supreme Court case *Rucho v. Common Cause*. The Supremes ruled 5-4 that the court did not have authority to review such political issues. You're allowed to pause for laughter here.

Common Cause supports the use of independent districting commissions by cities and towns to ensure fair districting. Membership is typically appointed by a non-partisan third party or by lottery. Their recommendations will be non-binding unless municipalities write it into their governing city charters. If written into the charter, a city will always be under possible threat of a lawsuit.

“Redistricting is about tradeoffs,” says Maron. “When establishing criteria, whether by ordinance or charter, policymakers must prioritize what values they want to emphasize. For some it might be political competitiveness, and for others compactness.” All districts are bound to comply with the “One Person, One Vote” decisions handed down by the Supreme Court during the '60s. See why we said pause for laughter?

Some towns are facing districting questions on the ballot this year. Question 8 in Cranston, if passed, adds to the city charter that drawing districts should result in compact contiguous districts that are bounded by local geographic boundaries (such as roads or other natural features) that respect local neighborhoods. Each district would also need to have similar populations to each other, to avoid vote dilution. The Ocean State's own local leaders will be redrawing district lines in the next few years.

Marion says the pandemic delayed the census, which will cause new district lines to be rushed.

For Woonsocket, the next step would be for the city council to take the issue up. They would have to convene a charter change committee to review any changes to the city charter, most likely after the completion of the 2020 census. Voters would then have their say in the following election. Woonsocket's charter has a provision that requires it to be revisited at least once every decade, so the time may come soon when the city council is required to convene such a committee. With 14 candidates running for one of the seven council seats this fall, it's anyone's guess as to what the final outcome on warding the city will be in the coming years.

Union Glue: Time to stick the country back together

Okee dokee folks... I remember seeing a political cartoon from the 1860s showing Abraham Lincoln patching up the United States with Union Glue — a perfect visual analogy for what the country needed at the time. Joe Biden and Kamala Harris have their own brand of Union Glue and are currently the ONLY hope for this country. Drumpf will just pour paint thinner all over the place, light a match and say, "I fixed things." If you haven't voted yet, please do. Every vote counts. But I do hope that you will use your vote wisely and vote for progress, decency and reconciliation, not hate, regression and division. These days your politics speak volumes about your humanity. No matter what, we are headed into dangerous and uncharted waters for the next three months. I truly hope we can ride out the coming storm and will fare better on the other side. Read on...

A few months back (okay, maybe longer...time has become a totally abstract concept for me), Common Fence Music had a songwriter contest and the winner of said contest was John McDaid from Portsmouth. One of the songs he performed caught my attention — "Lost In Translation." The song refers to "The Mango Mussolini" currently squatting in the White House and is included on his debut CD, *Trail of Mars*. Other notable tracks from the disc are, "Down To The River," "Sigmund Freud's 115th Dream" and he saved the best for last with "Walking Off The Earth," which features guest performers Craig Akin, Jim Henry, Tracy Grammer and Abbie Gardner. If you are a lover of clever lyrics, then this should satiate your word lust. McDaid delivers his material with a Randy Newman/Leonard Cohen/Dire Straits feel. For more "Buy The Ticket, Take The Ride" at: JohnMcDaid.bandcamp.com

Another new compilation recording that is a free download has been released by 75 Or Less Records and is titled Smash Hits Volume 1 (there are two more volumes). The recording was called to my

attention by musician David Tessier. His song "Wire" is part of the compilation and is a prog-rock masterpiece. While the entire collection of songs is a bit uneven, there are quite a few stand-out tracks. The Sorry Boys, which is a Mark Cutler project, contributed "Way Out Now." Though Cutler does have another cut in the mix, "Queen of the Dive," which is a good track, I preferred the Sorry Boys' song. Besides Tessier's mini-opus, Minky Starshine really delivers with "Andrea's Fault." It's a very clever, very well done and slickly produced ditty with lines like: "my heartache is like an earthquake, it's Andrea's fault." Other songs that caught my attention were, Bob Kendall's Nerve Pill with "Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is" — a perfect message for today's political climate, Matt Frazza's catchy and upbeat "Without Saying" and Gladhouse's "Mine, All Mine." The collection is a potpourri of musical styles and artists, and it's a FREE download. For more, get "Rhode Trippin'" to: 75orLessRecords.com/75orless-presents-smash-hits-vol-1-3.

Though I have not yet seen it, a new film about the legendary Bluebird Cafe in Nashville has just been released. If you are not familiar with this venue you should be. It is a Mecca for songwriters. I have been to the Bluebird a couple of times. One of the nights that I was there, Walter Egan popped in to play a few tunes with the band that was booked that night. Of course he played "Magnet and Steel" and one or two others. It's common for the Bluebird to have "pop-in" performers. From the outside you would never know the importance of this venue, it is very nondescript and located in a little strip mall, but its influence reaches far and wide. For more about the Bluebird film, flutter on over to: BluebirdTheMovie.com

The Narrows in Fall River opened for live shows a couple of weeks ago under strict COVID guidelines, but due to Massachusetts' uptick in cases has been forced to go virtual once again. Check NarrowsCenter.org for updates.

Common Fence Music will present Joel Mabus, a Mid-Western songwriter and multi-instrumentalist, in an online concert on Sunday, November 8 at 7pm. He has been a long time sideman to Tom Paxton and has played on stage with Doc Watson, Dave Van Ronk, Norman Blake and Peggy Seeger. A link to the online concert will be provided at CommonFenceMusic.org prior to show time. Part concert, part workshop, part visit, Aubrey Atwater and Elwood Donnelly will present selections from their repertoire online Thursday, November 12, 7. You can also chat with Aubrey and Elwood during the presentation. Atwater-Donnelly.com

That's it for now. My band, Forever Young is playing a live show at the Greenwich Odeum on November 14. Only 100 tickets will be sold. Hope you will practice COVID safety and see the show! Thanks for reading. www.JohnFuzek.com #DumpTrump2020!

Celebrate Community: A public ofrenda honors those lost to COVID-19



In Mexico, on the first two days of November, **Día de Los Muertos**, or Day of the Dead, is celebrated. On this holiday, the veil between the world of the living and the world of the dead is lifted, and the two can come together once more. Or, as **Marta V. Martinez**, director of **Rhode Island Latino Arts (RILA)** says, “This is a time when the loved ones who have passed-on return symbolically to appreciate life’s pleasures, such as eating, drinking and reuniting with their families here on earth.”

For the past four years, RILA has held a community ofrenda or altar, one of the staples of this holiday. These ofrenda are made in remembrance of the deceased and often contain photos of the deceased and trinkets they owned. This year, RILA, the **Providence Public Library (PPL)**, and **Trinity Rep** are uniting to hold the ofrenda in honor of those who have lost their lives to COVID-19.

Christina Bevilacqua, program and exhibitions director of Providence Public Library, explained that she, Marta and Michelle Cruz, director of community engagement at Trinity Rep, have met weekly for some time, but during the pandemic their conversations shifted. “We’ve talked a lot at our meetings about the losses that this year has brought, and the sense of uncertainty ahead. The pandemic has taken such a toll on lives and livelihoods, and while each of our organizations has been affected in a different way, we’re all experiencing our own losses along with the larger sense of communal loss.”



Marta V. Martinez

Rhode Island has lost more than 1,100 lives to the virus. Marta said, “The Latino community has been disproportionately hit by the virus; they tend to have a higher prevalence of pre-existing conditions, such as diabetes and heart problems, that can make people more vulnerable to the coronavirus. We also are less likely to have health insurance than the general population.” According to the CDC, members of the Latinx community are 2.8 times more likely to catch the virus, 4.6 times more likely to require hospitalization and 1.1 times more likely to die. Marta has lost two people to COVID-19.

Having seen the community torn apart by the virus, Marta says, “It makes me angry to hear government officials [the President] dismiss the virus as ‘no big deal’ because after contracting the coronavirus, he was able to recover quickly, but only because he has access to daily testing and the best medical care.

It's shameful that he travels around the country seeking votes, holding rallies where there is no social distancing or mask-wearing and spreading false information."

This year's ofrenda is not limited to one race or culture. Anyone who has lost someone to COVID-19 is welcome to participate by bringing a digital photo of their lost loved one, another memory or image of the person, such as a piece of their favorite food, and a short written memory about the person to the steps of the Providence Public Library on November 1 or 2 at 5pm. Participants will come together, talk about their experiences, remember their loved ones and celebrate the lives that were lost. Marta paints a picture of the event: "A sea of candles outlining the library steps and stone wall, soft drumming, stories by Valerie Tutson of Black Storytellers and Sussy Santana of RILA on Monday, and hopefully, many small altars set up by the community."

Cruz explains the impetus behind this event by speaking about the beginning of the pandemic "...there were no gatherings, no way to truly come together to mourn or celebrate the lives of those lost. Oftentimes, funerals tend to be where families see each other the most and there was a huge sense of loss of connection on so many levels."

This ofrenda will celebrate the lives that have been lost, but also bring together a community that's still grieving, not only for their loved ones, but because of the new reality this deadly virus makes us face.

The ofrenda will be held November 1 and 2, and information can be found at [RILA.org/DiaDeLosMuertosRI.html](https://www.rila.org/DiaDeLosMuertosRI.html). All are welcome — mourners and non-mourners alike, with social distancing and masks required.

Eat Your Veggies!

Providence has a long history with veganism and vegetarianism. In the 1970s and 1980s, it was home for the North American Vegetarian Society's annual summer fest; it birthed Like No Udder, the world's first vegan ice cream truck and now it has Plant City, one of the first vegan food courts in the world.

This rich vegan and vegetarian culture is the perfect environment for Providence Vegan Restaurant week, which starts October 30 and runs through November 8. Chris Belanger, who owns Like No Udder vegan ice cream with his wife, Karen, runs the event and spoke to us about its second iteration.

“The goal is to bring more vegan options to the community,” he said, explaining why so many local restaurants that are not traditionally vegan or vegetarian are participating. He said that the chefs of non-vegetarian restaurants are excited to flex their creative muscle and work with new ingredients.

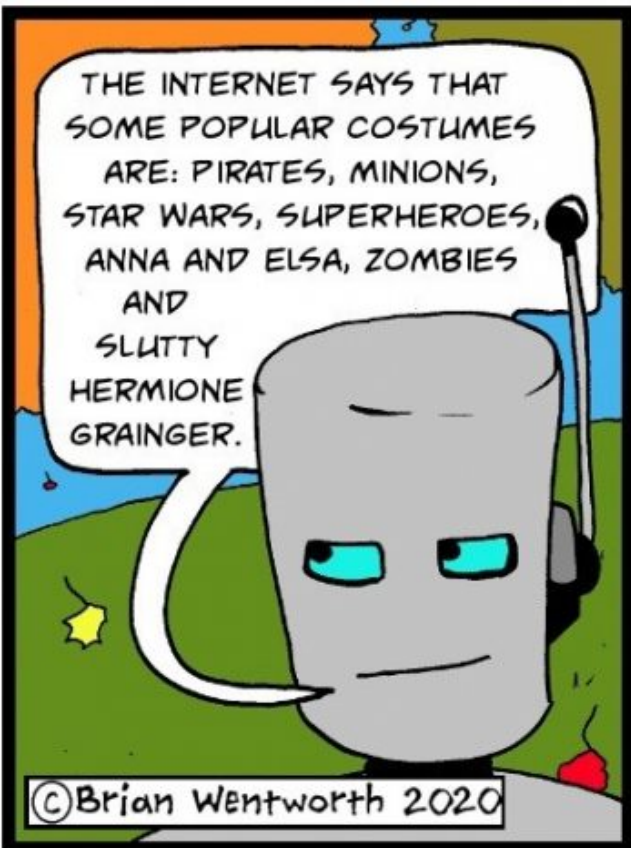
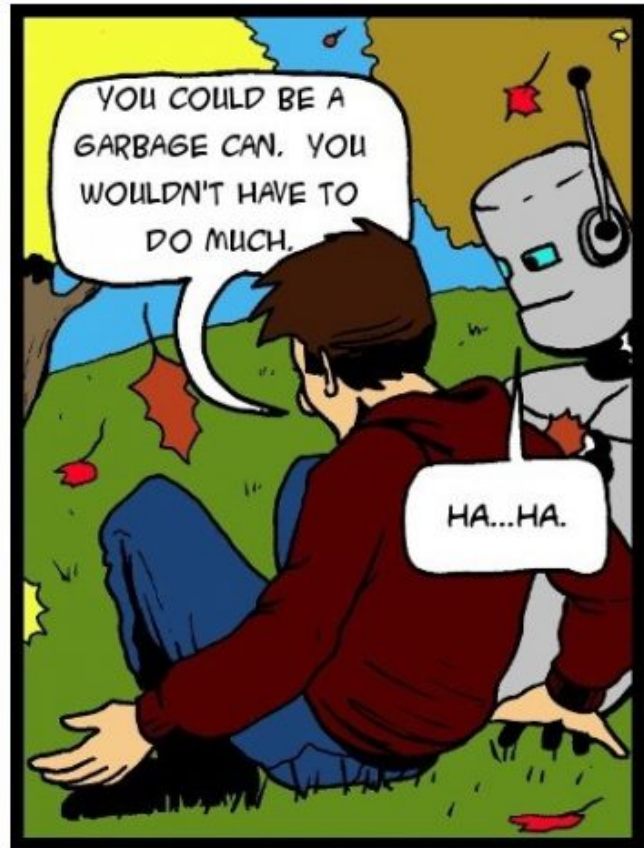
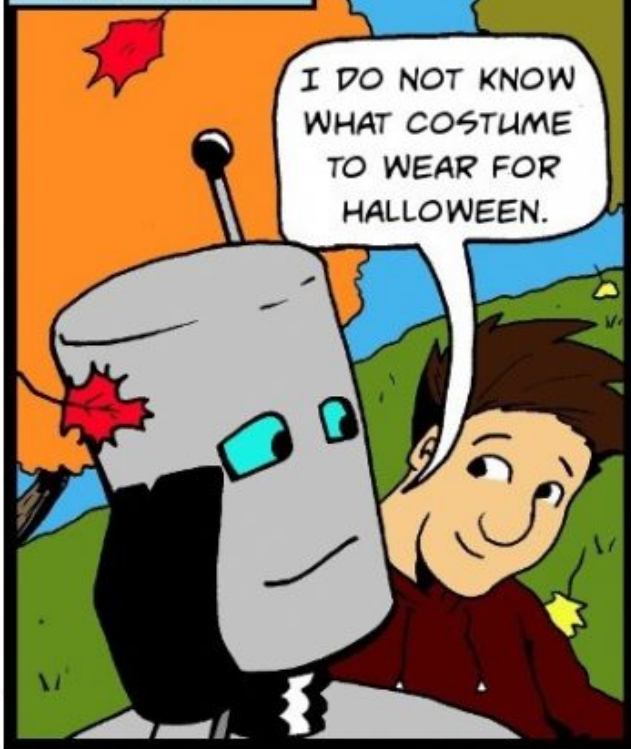
The rules around the event are loose for restaurants. Some offer daily vegan specials, others offer discounts on vegan options and others are offering three-course prix fixe meals. The goal is to make the event feel special for attendees, but also, “we want to show restaurants that there’s demand for vegan options,” Belanger said.

Providence Vegan Restaurant Week runs Oct 30 - Nov 8. For a full list of participating restaurants, go to vegrestaurantweek.com or follow them on Instagram @pvdveganrestaurantweek

Hugh the Robot: November 2020

HUGH

BY WENTWORTH



What Did We Miss?: While we've been watching the big stories, the little stories still have legs

The pandemic and the election have completely taken over our minds, so many of the stories of yesteryear have been forgotten by most people (and news outlets) at large. We here at *Motif* thought we'd give a quick update on stories we've covered over the last few years and where they are today.

Hope Point Tower: Dominating news for months pre-pandemic, the Hope Point Tower was the centerpiece of our Future issue in 2018. With a dramatic flourish, we put it on the cover, with the Superman building being literally erased from the Providence skyline. It's been nearly two years, so what's going on?

Well, the pandemic. Developer of the Hope Point Tower, Jason Fane of the Fane organization, has cited financial troubles and COVID-19 as the reason for missing several key deadlines. Fane received a tax break worth over \$54 million, and the I95 commission approved the (controversial with locals) design in September 2019. Back in March, mere weeks after the pandemic began, Fane asked for extensions on several deadlines, anticipating an inability to meet them from extraordinary world-historical circumstances. Originally, the Fane Organization was supposed to apply for any and all permits needed to construct and operate the building by this month.

Progress on construction remains somewhere in Purgatory. Also ongoing is the litigation from Providence alleging the city council illegally zoned the land for the tower.

Utility Justice: What now seems like decades ago, we reported on the efforts of utility justice activists from Providence DSA and George Wiley Center to combat the profit-hungry energy giant we know as National Grid. Those activists are still pushing for a percentage-income plan, with not a ton of victories since then. National Grid has filed a request for the same wintertime increases it asks for every winter. Last month, the Public Utilities Commission approved the Grid's request for electricity hikes for the fall and winter. With an economy sluggish for most working folks, the average family using 500 kilowatts will see their bill rise \$10.78 per month. The rate per kilowatt hour rose from 8.3 cents to 10.4 cents. These increased rates are set to expire at the end of March.

Just last week, National Grid filed requests with the PUC for natural gas hikes. The cumulative increase would start in November and go until next October with charges rising 7.3%, or just over \$90 a year for the average family. PUC members indicated they might be open to a deferral for the rate increase, something not done for six years. With complete inaction from the federal government for public assistance for months, many Rhode Islanders could sink deeper into poverty this winter.

Changes to SNAP: Back in January, *Motif* reported pending federal changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). President Trump announced three major changes to the various rules governing who gets public dollars for food assistance every month. At the time, at least 38,000 households across the state were facing cuts to their benefits or being kicked off the rolls entirely.

“Basically nothing went through,” says Kathleen Gorman, director of the URI Feinstein Center for a Hunger Free America. “It all coincided with COVID.” All the proposed changes from the federal government — changes to income guidelines, work requirements, and the state utility allowance — have been postponed until 2021. However, the economic implosion from the coronavirus has still put Rhode Islanders in a precarious survival situation.

“People are really struggling,” says Gorman. “They don’t have jobs or they can’t go to work. “ Some emergency legislation was passed earlier in the year that helped families scrape by. Families on SNAP saw a boost in their benefits once schools started shutting down. Added benefits were determined by the number of children in the family. Struggling Rhode Islanders found it to be a big help. Families that were not in the SNAP program but still had a child receiving free or reduced lunch had debit cards mailed directly to their homes.

It wasn’t all easy going. Gorman says a lot of states struggled with the implementation of added benefits. SNAP data and Department of Education data tend not to be warehoused by the same people. Cross referencing information, even in Rhode Island, resulted in a lot of administrative mistakes. The bad news for Rhode Island is they only did the match once, anyone who applied to SNAP after did not receive a boost.

There were 91,000 households on benefits in Rhode Island, before that rate slowly dropped in subsequent months. Gorman guesses a drop during the summer may reflect folks getting unemployment benefits. A cumbersome administrative data system means any SNAP data is delayed by a few months, and the state doesn’t keep track of why someone ends SNAP benefits.

Food banks and pantries were slammed for the first few months during the pandemic. The crowds slowed by June, as pandemic EBT, government stimulus checks and UI boosts reached entire populations. But ultimately, data on food insecurity during the pandemic is scarce. But according to

Gorman, federal data from April says 18% of white, non-Hispanic households nationwide were food insecure. For Black families it was 29%, for Hispanic families it was 34%. The information was only a snapshot from the spring, and we may not know the full extent of hunger caused by the pandemic for some time to come.

Voting Nation

When Tammy Brown of The Womxn Project approached Alicia Wilder of Metamorphosis Dance Company suggesting they organize a flash mob to promote voting, Wilder was instantly on board. The song they chose to dance to is Janet Jackson's "Rhythm Nation."

"If you really take the time to listen to the lyrics, it is so relevant to the world we live in right now, and emphasizes the importance of coming together and using our voices to create change," Wilder said of the song choice.

With support from Metamorphosis company members Lea Marie D'Arminio, Allie Smith and Simon Oloaye, the duo created an instructional video. They're asking participants to learn the dance, then upload a video of them performing it with a little freestyle at the end.

Why did Wilder feel called to encourage others to vote? "There is a lot about 2020 that has left me feeling helpless, or as though I have a lack of control," she said. "I've spent a lot of my free time reflecting on how I can be more active in my community, and as a white ally. I feel it is my responsibility to do all that I can to encourage those around me to participate in this coming election, and to come together to fight for the rights of people who have been oppressed for far too long.

"After talking in depth with Tammy about where the project could go, how we could do it safely and follow COVID guidelines, and how to get the younger voting generation involved, we decided that a social media campaign was the right choice. The idea of making this a fun, easy to learn dance, brings a sense of joy to the idea of voting and voting awareness. It allows us to get the message across, while inviting people to have some fun! Dancing or jamming to a great song like this, is always a good way, in my opinion, to let go of something, and feel a sense of freedom, and happiness."

Wilder said about the role of art in politics, "I think art, in general, allows people to work out what they

are feeling and how they respond to things, without having to use words. ... Though we don't all have the same experiences, we all can experience the same feelings. This is an important tool for communication in all aspects of life, but can act as a facilitator for conversation in relation to politics."

Learn the dance at vimeo.com/471366893, then upload it with #ourvoteisourvoice and #votingnation, and tag @thewomxnprojecthq and @metamorphosisdanceco. For more information, go to fb.com/metamorphosisdanceco

The One Thing We All Share: ecoRI News October roundup

Shell Game

A local landmark climate lawsuit against a fossil-fuel behemoth has been given approval to proceed.

U.S. District Court Judge William E. Smith recently denied a request for dismissal by Shell Oil Products U.S. in a case brought by the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF).

The Boston-based environmental advocacy group alleges Shell failed to safeguard Providence and Narragansett Bay from flooding and other climate-crisis threats at its petroleum storage terminal on Providence Harbor.

The 75-acre property and ethanol railcar terminal on Allens Avenue with 25 petroleum storage tanks sits in a flood zone and discharges petroleum and toxic chemicals into the Providence River via stormwater runoff.

CLF accuses Shell of violating the federal Clean Water Act and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act by withholding information about pollutants the oil storage terminal releases.

The Rhode Island case will now proceed to the discovery phase of the trial, a step that no other climate-crisis case against a fossil-fuel company has achieved.

Downtown Drive-Thru Disrupts Bike Plans

Old-school, car-focused retail is clashing with new-age transit and a 21st-century economy at a proposed development along the Woonasquatucket River in Providence.

A 3.8-acre lot at the corner of Kinsley Avenue and Dean Street is the site of a proposed 5-story self-storage building, a Wendy's restaurant with drive-thru and an eight-pump gas station coupled with a large convenience store. The self-storage facility would have 805 units along with 89 parking spaces.

This project is smack in the middle of a neighborhood revitalization effort to open upriver habitat and advance bicycle- and pedestrian-focused infrastructure. It's all part of a larger citywide initiative to reduce traffic and encourage walking between neighborhoods such as Federal Hill and Smith Hill.

Plans are advancing to connect downtown with the Smith Hill, Valley and Olneyville neighborhoods. The plans are key pieces of Mayor Jorge Elorza's Great Streets Initiative and Urban Trail Network and the long-established Woonasquatucket River Greenway Improvement Project.

The proposed project conflicts with plans to change the section of Kinsley Avenue to a one-way street and make room for a two-way bike lane, as proposed by city redevelopment plans.

Instead of denying the project, the City Plan Commission agreed to give the project developer time to answer criticisms of the proposal. The application hearing was continued until November 17.

The Rats Were Always There

During the height of the pandemic, people in Greater Providence reported seeing rats in large numbers, even in broad daylight.

"Our city, like many cities across the country, has seen an increase in rodents amidst the pandemic," said Emily Koo, sustainability strategy manager for the city of Providence.

But the truth is, the rats were always there; we just didn't notice them.

“One reason a lot of people are seeing rats more is because we’re home more now,” said Tony DeJesus, technical director for Providence-based Big Blue Bug Solutions.

“The pandemic has caused disruptions to rat populations on a global scale,” noted rodentologist Robert “Bobby” Corrigan said. “I hear from every city that we see rats during the day, we see them in areas we never used to see them. And it all makes sense. These rat populations depend on us.”

When restaurants shuttered during the height of the pandemic, rats were stripped of a major food source, forcing them to adjust their feeding times to see if they would have better luck at different times of the day.

Hence the idea that there are more rats than ever when, in fact, they’re just another animal trying to survive a challenging time by adapting their lifestyle.

(Water)body Issues

Rhode Island has 890 waterbodies that state agencies and their partners monitor for quality. Of these, 39% are stressed by pollution and unwanted guests.

The federal Clean Water Act requires states to assess the overall quality of waters in their state. Historically, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management has summarized the overall water quality of the state in a biennial (every even year) report titled “State of the State’s Waters.”

Among the new waters added to the 2018-2020 impaired list are Buckeye Brook, the tributaries to Warwick Pond, and the nine reservoirs that make up the Newport Water System: North and South Easton ponds, Gardiner Pond, Paradise Pond, Sisson Pond, Lawton Valley Reservoir, Nonquit Pond, Watson Reservoir and Sisson Pond.

The Newport Water System has been under stress for the past several years. The water coming out of customers’ taps is safe to drink.

*For detail on these stories, and to get more of the latest environmental news, visit www.ecoRI.org.
Subscribe to ecoRI News’ free weekly e-newsletter at www.ecoRI.org/subscribe.*

Sealed with a Kiss

Rhode Island the rest of the nation tried something new this autumn: A concentrated effort to use mail ballots and early voting to keep crowds down at polling places on election day. According to the US Elections Project, a website run by early voting expert and academic Michael McDonald, as of October 23, 52 million Americans voted early, 36 million of whom voted by mail. Compare that to the total of 138 million Americans who voted in the 2016 election.

The Ocean State has seen its own wave of people voting early and through the mail. Lines at Providence City Hall have had wait times as long as 40 minutes on some days. As we went to press, 61,402 Rhode Islanders had voted early in person, and The Board of Elections has scanned in around 84,889 mail ballots. But these reported numbers may not be accurate. The Board of Elections reports backlogs are common, and according to reporting from WPRI, they're receiving at least 20,000 to 25,000 new mail-in ballots every day. After it's received, a ballot has to go through two more steps, including a signature verification. While Board of Elections staff are working around the clock to scan them, they're anticipating a huge influx from voters who wait mail them in until closer to election day.

Rhode Islanders can vote early through November 2. If you still haven't sent your ballot in, get moving because state officials recommend allowing at least three days for the post office to deliver it. Voters also have the option of delivering their ballot to the Board of Elections office in Cranston directly or putting it in a drop box located at town halls across the state.