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WEDNESDAY, February 3, 2021

\$2.00

## FIRE CHIEF ACCUSED OF NEGLIGENCE OF DUTY

Rockport officials also accused Doyle of mismanagement of payments for fire inspections

By MICHAEL CRONIN  
Staff Writer



James Doyle

ROCKPORT — The town is seeking to remove fire Chief James Doyle based on allegations of financial mismanagement and neglect of duty, according to a termination letter served to Doyle on Dec. 7.

Farrell Smith O'Connell, Doyle's lawyer, disputed the town's claims Tuesday, one day before Doyle is scheduled to meet with

selectmen to discuss the future of his employment by the town.

The termination letter, signed by Town Administrator Mitch Vieira, was given to Doyle nearly a month after he was put on administrative leave on Nov. 10. At the top, it states it is "personal and confidential

— not a public document."

It is unclear if the allegations will be brought up during Doyle's hearing with selectmen, which is scheduled to take place online on Wednesday, Feb. 3, at 6 p.m.

### Fire inspection money

In the letter, the town accuses Doyle of not properly recording and filing fire inspections. A third-party auditor was brought in on Oct. 7, a month before Rockport

volunteer firefighters submitted a letter demanding Emergency Service Director Mark Schmink and Assistant Fire Chief Steven Abell Jr. be removed from their leadership roles. Through this audit, the town reportedly discovered "there are no formal procedures relative to administration of Fire Department inspections; there are no processes in place where monthly or periodic reports of all inspections are available; and, you (Doyle) do not conduct

### TO JOIN HEARING

**Who, what and why:** Selectmen will host a hearing via Zoom on the employment status of Fire Chief James Doyle.  
**When:** Wednesday, Feb. 3, at 6 p.m.  
**How to join:** Via Zoom at <https://rockportma-gov.zoom.us/j/87545779044> or by calling 1-929-205-6099. Meeting ID is 875 4577 9044.

any internal tracking of inspections done and funds collected by (Doyle), See **ROCKPORT**, Page 2

## FEBRUARY COMES STORMING IN



PAUL BILODEAU/Staff photo

Headlights can be seen as a car makes its way around the Back Shore in Gloucester on Tuesday as waves from a nor'easter crash along the shore. For more on the storm, please see Page 8.

## Mayor appoints new CAO

Interim top aide resigns

By TAYLOR ANN BRADFORD  
Staff Writer

Gloucester has a new chief administrative officer and the woman who has done the job for last seven months has resigned.

Nicole Kieser started as CAO on Monday. She was appointed by Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken on Jan. 26 and is in the process of having her appointment confirmed by the City Council, which will take place in March.

"I know this position holds great responsibility and my goal is to provide honest and dedicated work to the mayor, the City Council and the city," Kieser wrote in an email to the Times. "I look forward to a partnership with the City Council and all departments that serve this community."

Interim CAO Vanessa Krawczyk resigned from her position on Jan. 25. She took on the role in June 2020 when James Destino officially retired from the position.

Krawczyk and Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken did not return the Times' request for comment.

Kieser most recently worked as director of communications for Andover Public Schools. She announced in October that she would be seeking other opportunities but stayed on until January 2020.

At the time, she told the Times' sister paper, the Andover Townsman, "This was an opportunity that I had been looking at for a while. Someone had approached me asking me to consider it and the more I

See **CAO**, Page 2

## Advocates push ban on plastic bags

By CHRISTIAN M. WADE  
Statehouse Reporter

BOSTON — Nearly 140 cities and towns have restricted single-use plastic bags, creating a patchwork of local laws, that lawmakers and environmental

groups want to replace with a blanket, statewide prohibition.

A number of proposals to phase out single-use plastic bags in convenience stores and supermarkets are expected to be considered in the upcoming two-year legislative session.

They include one filed by Rep. Lori Ehrlich, D-Marblehead, that would allow retailers to charge a 10-cent fee for reusable and recycled paper bags.

Supporters of a statewide ban say single-use plastic bags clog the waste stream

and litter oceans, parks and beaches.

"There is too much waste — in our neighborhoods, our parks, our playgrounds and our environment," said Janet Domenitz, executive director of the

See **PLASTIC BAGS**, Page 2

## Manchester Essex High student floats school six touchless water fountains

By MICHAEL CRONIN  
Staff Writer

MANCHESTER — Thanks junior Olivia Gado, Manchester Essex Regional High and Middle School students will be able to fill their reusable water bottles hands-free.

Eight touchless water fountains have been installed at the school— three in the sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade wings; one per each of the three floors in the high school building; one in the cafeteria; and one in the gymnasium.

Gado is enrolled in the high school's Green Team Scholars. Each student is

required to design and complete an eco-friendly initiative in order to pass the class.

Funding for the \$5,000 project came from the The Hooper Fund of Manchester, a frequent Green Team Scholars collaborator.

"I am looking to reduce the reliance on plastic water bottles, and promote the reduction of the school carbon footprint," Gado wrote in her grant application. "By getting more water fountains, we are trying to get the school to be environmentally friendly, reduce plastic, and make the school a greener place, trying to provide access of water for all students."

Jason Waldron of the regional school district's Facilities Department assisted in getting the fountains up and running over winter break. Each station is compliant with current Americans with Disabilities Act regulations.

"The project was meant to reduce plastic waste in the school by reducing the reliance on plastic water bottles," said Keith Gray, who leads the Green Team Scholars. The pandemic added another dimension to Gado's project since it makes water available to students throughout the school, curtailing the manual spread of germs.



Eight touchless water fountains have been installed at Manchester Essex Regional High and Middle School, an initiative designed by junior Olivia Gado.

Courtesy photo

### COVID-19 CASE COUNT

▶ WORLDWIDE	
Cases confirmed.....	103,830,367
Deaths.....	2,251,345
UNITED STATES	
Cases confirmed.....	26,422,593
Deaths.....	446,689
MASSACHUSETTS	
Cases confirmed.....	502,378
Deaths.....	14,362
NEW HAMPSHIRE	
Cases confirmed.....	66,384
Deaths.....	1,066

Statistics source: Johns Hopkins University Tracking COVID 19 Dashboard (Tuesday, Feb. 2, 7:00 p.m.); Mass. Department of Public Health; N.H. Department of Health and Human Services

## Lawmakers refile 'sanctuary state' proposal

By CHRISTIAN M. WADE  
Statehouse Reporter

BOSTON — A perennial push to make Massachusetts a "sanctuary state" that bars police from detaining people living in the country illegally has been revived on Beacon Hill, but the fate of the controversial plan is uncertain.

The Safe Communities Act, which has been refiled under the new title of "An Act to Protect the Civil Rights and Safety of

all Massachusetts Residents," would forbid state police, sheriffs and local law enforcement from honoring contacts to detain people on behalf of federal immigration agencies.

It would also prohibit U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement from questioning a suspected illegal immigrant already in police custody unless the person "gives informed consent by signing a written consent form provided by the law

enforcement agency."

Immigrant rights groups and Democratic lawmakers backing the changes say giving police authority to cooperate with immigration agents makes communities less safe because it dissuades people from reporting crime for fear of deportation.

Sen. Jamie Eldridge, D-Acton, the bill's primary sponsor, said the need for protections has grown amid the pandemic, with many immigrants fearful of

getting tested for COVID-19, participating in contact tracing or seeking medical treatment because of deportation concerns.

"State action is urgently needed to restore trust in our public institutions, ensure that everyone can seek medical care and emergency assistance and protection without the fear of deportation," Eldridge said during a briefing Tuesday.

Critics say "sanctuary" communities hinder

criminal and terrorist investigations, and local police should be working with federal authorities to enforce the law.

"Local knowledge is key to all enforcement whether on theft, violence or illegal immigration," said Steve Kropper, co-chairman of the Massachusetts Coalition for Immigration Reform, a bipartisan advocacy group that wants to impose limits on immigration. "Without

See **SANCTUARY**, Page 2

### ▶ Tides

Today	
High.....	3:01 a.m. .... 3:25 p.m.
Low.....	9:12 a.m. .... 9:36 p.m.
Tomorrow	
High.....	3:53 a.m. .... 4:23 p.m.
Low.....	10:10 a.m. .... 10:31 p.m.

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