

STATE: VARIAN MUST STEP UP TESTING

By PAUL LEIGHTON
Staff Writer

BEVERLY — A state report on the former Varian site said the company must conduct more extensive testing of nearby homes, businesses and streams to ensure that toxic chemicals are not getting inside buildings and into the surrounding neighborhoods.

The report, released Monday by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, said there is no evidence “at the present time” that residents or workers in commercial buildings are being exposed to significant levels of contaminants, but also called for a “multiple lines-of-evidence investigation” to make sure.

The report called on Varian

MORE ON THE WEB AT
SalemNews.com
See the report

to test at least 22 homes in the area, as well as four businesses on Tozer Road and two streams that run from the Varian property and into surrounding neighborhoods. The DEP also said the company must try other methods

of cleaning up the property and install more wells to determine how far the plume of underground chemicals has spread.

“After almost 20 years of employing a limited set of technologies, with only limited success, it would be prudent to evaluate other tools in the remedial toolbox,” the report said.

Eric Worrall, the Northeast

Region director for DEP, said in an email that Varian has agreed to implement what he called “these required actions.”

The comprehensive 68-page report came in response to concerns raised by residents about increasing levels of contaminants in the groundwater in and around the former Varian site at 150 Sohier Road, despite an

environmental cleanup that has been going on for 28 years.

The report said Varian has installed more than 250 groundwater monitoring wells over the years, but also failed to put in wells at some locations and stopped testing altogether at others. The company has not tested the indoor air quality of homes
See **VARIAN**, Page 2

Vaccination super site set to open Feb. 3

Danvers hosts COVID-19 vaccine clinic

By ERIN NOLAN
Staff Writer

DANVERS — The first mass vaccination site on the North Shore opens on Feb. 3 at the Hilton DoubleTree Hotel in Danvers.

North Shore officials, including Peabody Mayor Ted Bettencourt and Danvers Town Manager Steve Bartha, previously said that under the state’s current

WHO TO CALL

To register for the vaccine, eligible residents can visit www.mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine. Eligible locals who do not have access to a computer or need help registering can call the following numbers in their city or town:

- Beverly: 978-969-4456
- Boxford: 978-887-3591
- Danvers: 978-777-0001 ext. 1 Leave a voice message with your name and phone number
- Hamilton: 978-626-5297 and leave your name and phone number
- Ipswich: Vaccination hotline at 978-356-6670 or the Council on Aging at 978-356-6650
- Middleton: 978-777-4067
- Peabody: 978-531-2254
- Salem: 978-744-0924, ext. 43015
- Swampscott: 781-596-8866
- Topsfield: 978-887-1524
- Wenham: 978-468-5520
- Veterans: 978-281-9740

plan, the majority of people in Massachusetts will be vaccinated at mass vaccination sites like the DoubleTree, as well as at primary care providers and pharmacies.

The hotel is located at 50 Ferncroft Road, and Bartha said his current understanding is that the vaccinations will take place inside the hotel ballroom, but he added that he has not seen the setup.

Bartha said the Danvers and state health departments are in constant contact with one another, and are working together to ensure Danvers residents have easy access to

the vaccine.

“It seems the rollout — knock on wood — is going well,” he said, referencing how an elderly resident informed him they were able to register online and choose from dozens of time slots available at the DoubleTree site. “We understand the state’s strategy to try and vaccinate as many people as possible at these
See **VACCINE**, Page 2

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 p.m.); Mass. Department of Public Health; N.H. Department of Health and Human Services

ICING IN DANVERS



JAIME CAMPOS/Staff photo

An Endicott Park groundskeeper in Danvers spreads out ice on an ice skating rink after a nor'easter surged along the East Coast dumping slushy wet snow on the North Shore. For the complete weather forecast for the North Shore and meteorologist Arthur Francis' recap of January's weather, see page 16.

Advocates push statewide ban on plastic bags



Lori Ehrlich

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 Massachusetts Public Interest Research Group. “The pandemic has only made the situation worse so we need to take action now.”

The food industry supports
See **PLASTIC**, Page 2

Highland Avenue housing complex plans fizzle

By DUSTIN LUCA
Staff Writer

SALEM — Plans to build 280 housing units on 16 acres off Highland Avenue have fallen through.

It remains unclear why developers for Overlook Acres

withdrew their plans after securing permits to build, or what that could mean for the multiple properties that together made up the site.

Ward 3 Councilor Patti Morisillo, who represents the area, announced Overlook Acres' withdrawal earlier this week,

releasing a statement from the company in her newsletter to Salem residents and in a Facebook post.

“This withdrawal was not a simple decision, nor our intention given the significant investments of our own time, capital, and, in particular, the enormous

efforts of our consultant team and all of the stakeholders along the way,” the statement read.

Overlook Acres was one of two large housing developments proposed near what became known as the cineplex site — land from 355 to 373 Highland Ave. targeted
See **HOUSING**, Page 2

Thomas Muxie is suing a travel company after he arrived at a Cancun resort to find his room was not handicapped-accessible, despite reassurances otherwise from an agency sales representative before the trip.

Courtesy photo



Travel company says it's not responsible for Peabody man's botched vacation

By PAUL LEIGHTON
Staff Writer

PEABODY — A judge is considering whether an online travel agency should be liable for a botched vacation trip for a Peabody man who uses a wheelchair.

Thomas Muxie was forced to return home early from his trip to Cancun in 2017 because the hotel was not handicapped-accessible, despite assurances from the CheapCaribbean travel agency that it could accommodate wheelchairs, according to a lawsuit filed in Peabody District Court.

The company is not disputing those facts. But in an online hearing last week, a lawyer for the company asked

Judge James Barretto to dismiss the case on a number of other grounds, including that CheapCaribbean cannot be sued in Massachusetts because the online company does not have a physical location in the state.

“It is an internet travel company,” attorney Tracy Waugh said. “The law does not require that anyone who provides a service such as CheapCaribbean be subject to jurisdiction in any state where it does business.”

Waugh said any legal action against the company should be filed in Pennsylvania, where the company is based. She said those terms were laid out in the Terms and Conditions section of the company’s website, and
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AGWAY
www.danversagway.com

WEATHER
Today: Cloudy, flurries; breezy.
Details, Page 16.

Weather art by:
Jacob Siepka, grade 5
Burke School, Peabody

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