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First Selectwoman's Corner

Dear Chester,

As you are well aware, this is a unique and unprecedented year. Since March, we have been in a state of local, state and national emergency due to the coronavirus. We have shut everything down – businesses, municipal buildings, movie theaters, hairdressers, and banks – and are now slowly and carefully trying to reopen while maintaining the safety of our residents as our Number One priority. Meetings, birthday parties and baby showers are held over video, residents are wearing masks and staying socially distant. Families are hiking, gardening, baking and playing together. Some are unemployed, food is flying off pantry shelves, and some are feeling isolated and alone. Through a townwide survey responded to by more than 620 Chester households, you have spoken and let us know how you are feeling and what you believe is needed to get yourselves and Chester back on our feet.

Under the auspices of the Department of Emergency Services and Homeland Security, and through the hard work of many local volunteers, a task force is hard at work using the results of the survey, your responses in several virtual Town Meetings, Chester's Plan of Conservation and Development, and creative problem solving to develop actionable plans for short and long term recovery for our beautiful town. Hopefully by the time you are reading this we will be seeing some of those results. We are dedicated to your health and safety and are working continuously

on your behalf. Please know that all of us at Town Hall are here for all of you, and please do not hesitate to let us know if there is anything you need.



Lauren Gister,
First Selectwoman

BUDGET

On May 27th, under the auspices of the Governor's Executive Order, the Board of Finance passed a budget for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Due to the uncertainty of state funding and the economy related to the coronavirus epidemic, the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance worked very hard to make this year's operational budget as lean as possible with a goal of not increasing taxes. The end result was a slight lowering of the mill rate for the next fiscal year.

MAIN STREET PROJECT

Phase 3 of the Main Street Project is well on its way. At the moment the drainage is installed, the north side sidewalk is in, the Belgian block is being filled in several strips at a time, and the contractor is working six days a week to meet our schedule. Although no one expected the project to start in the middle of a pandemic shutdown, they are now working in tandem to keep from interfering with the reopening of businesses. Most of the major construction will be complete in early August, although there will be sections of work continuing into the fall. These

continued on page 5



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First Selectwoman... continued from page 3

will include the rebuilding of the Chester wall stairs, the installation of the sidewalk furnishings, and the planting of the street trees and plantings at the top of the wall. Please check the landing page of the Chester website and the weekly townwide emails for regular construction updates. As messy as it is right now, our village center will be beautiful when it is done!

WHO WE ARE - From the Board of Selectmen:

We as a community vehemently condemn racism, bigotry and hate in any form, and stand together with the people of Minneapolis, Louisville, Aurora and our nation in mourning the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Elijah McClain, and all of the other tragic and unnecessary deaths, wherever they occur. We stand for

love and care for all community members, people of all races and for all our neighbors. We hope that our citizenry will be able to tap the emotional energy triggered by this anguish to re-dedicate our efforts to building an ever more just society. We embrace and support the rights of all Americans to peacefully protest and express their indignation at the biases, inequities and injustices that continue to persist in our nation.

Change is long overdue. It is incumbent upon all of us to educate ourselves about and seek to rid ourselves of our unconscious biases. We must learn to call out unfairness when we see it. In Chester, our police fully support all peaceful protest and are dedicated to ensuring the safety of all participants. We recognize and are grateful

for the professionalism of our Resident State Trooper and our constables, and for their continued commitment to treating our community with courtesy, integrity and respect.

We resolve to stand against racism, bigotry, prejudice and violence, to commit to working with all residents to address racism that occurs here in our Town and welcome all residents to voice concerns and then come together to create positive change in Chester. We stand committed to peace, justice and freedom for our citizens, here in Chester and in solidarity with all Americans.

Be well,
Lauren

Chester Hose Company

To our fellow Residents, Friends and Neighbors:

We would like to say simply and sincerely, thank you. Thank you for helping to stop the spread of COVID-19 by staying home. Thank you for practicing social distancing, but most importantly thank you for helping to protect our community.

Our officers and members work tirelessly to keep Chester safe. They took on jobs that they did not sign up for. Thank you for your kind words of encouragement as we responded to residents in need. Thank you for accepting our new PPE requirements (even though we appeared intimidating in our gear). Thank you for checking on your neighbors. We are so proud to serve you. We also thank you for supporting our efforts to keep the town safe. Your donations to our department has been so deeply appreciated.

We applaud your efforts. We enjoy the creativity we witness as we see small groups safely gathering and how our local merchants have found ways to serve us safely. All of these are prime examples of what makes our community unique.

As the state and town slowly begin to open up, we too are moving forward with returning to a sense of normalcy. As of now our Annual Fall Arts & Crafts is scheduled to be held, Saturday, October 24th from 10-2 at our firehouse. What another great way to get out and support the local crafters!

The department is working on a program to assist residents in ensuring that their houses are numbered in compliance with the town ordinance. Having your residence numbered helps responders and firefighters find you and provide you with the assistance you need more quickly. Be on the lookout for more

information on how to obtain and have your address numbers installed by members of the department.

This year we are honoring three members with milestone years of service:

- Steve Seferlis with 40 years of service. Steve has been a member of the department since November 4th 1979. He has served as a Lieutenant with our fire police.
- Dan Roschko with 45 years of service. Dan has been a member of the department since July 1st 1975. Over the years he has held positions of jr advisor, Lieutenant, Captain of fire police, and Trustee. Dan is currently an engineer for the department.
- John Divis with 50 years of service. John joined the department on June 1st 1970. Over the years John has held most positions in the Chester Hose Company including Chief of the department. In his later years he held the position of head engineer until this past year where he stepped down to engineer. The department is grateful to have such dedicated members such as these three who have given of their time voluntarily to their community. The experience and knowledge they have achieved is an invaluable asset that they have shared with our younger members.

As always please stay safe and know that when you are in need we will be there for you. Please check out our website www.chesterhoseco.org and "like" us on facebook for updates and future events.

James Grzybowski
Chief
Chester Hose Company Inc.

Visiting Nurses of the Lower Valley Announces 2020 Scholarship Award Recipients

In honor of the late Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Murtha of Essex, Visiting Nurses of the Lower Valley (VNLV) awarded their annual scholarship to five local high school seniors. This year's scholarship recipients are: Madison Avery, Caroline Baldwin, Ava Duval, Taylor Milano and Alexander Pralea.

The scholarship was awarded on the basis of academic achievement and extracurricular activities. Emphasis is placed on nursing in the selection process.

Susan Maxwell, Executive Director, stated, "This year's five deserving recipients stood out to us as being exceptional candidates. They are all bright, accomplished, and clearly, hard-working. We were delighted to honor them as this year's scholarship winners and wish them the best in their continued studies."

Healthcare is growing and talented individuals such as these students will bring healthcare into the future. VNLV is proud to recognize the achievements

of these fine young individuals!

Visiting Nurses of the Lower Valley is a not-for-profit, Medicare and Medicaid certified home health care organization serving the Lower Connecticut River Valley and eastern shoreline region.

For more information, please visit their website (www.visitingnurses.org) or call (860) 767-0186.

Middlesex Health: Continuing to Provide the Care You Need

You have been told to stay at home - and to wear a mask - but what happens when you have a doctor's appointment scheduled or if you experience a possible medical emergency such as chest pain? Even during a pandemic, it is important to keep up with your medical care, including routine physicals, and you should absolutely seek emergency care if you need it.

Nationwide, there has been a significant increase in mortality rates - more deaths than can be attributed to COVID-19. The worry is that people are not seeking emergency care when they feel very sick.

Middlesex Health knows the idea of leaving home to go to a medical facility can be anxiety provoking, but it is doing everything it can to ensure that you get the care you need safely. This includes offering virtual (telehealth) visits when appropriate.

Please know that visiting a Middlesex Health Emergency Department location is safe. Patients in a Middlesex Health Emergency Department are separated: one area for possible COVID-19 patients; another for patients who may have other problems. All patients, regardless of why they are visiting, are expected to wear masks.

Middlesex Health is also taking extraordinary measures to ensure your safety in its primary care and specialist offices. From extra cleaning and screening staff and patients, to making sure everyone is properly masked and limiting the number of patients in its waiting rooms, Middlesex's goal is not only to keep you safe, but to make you feel comfortable. If you have put off getting the care you need, now is the time to make an appointment.

Putting off annual exams and important tests and procedures can have unintended long-term consequences. It could mean that you miss identifying a problem early, allowing it to become a much bigger problem. The goal is to stay healthy - not to make things more challenging.

For more information about Middlesex Health during this pandemic, visit MiddlesexHealth.org/safe.

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Chester Land Trust Updates

Despite the COVID-19 virus affecting all of our lives, the Chester Land Trust (CLT) continues to move forward with updates and improvements to our properties to make our local public open space more enjoyable and user friendly for Chester Residents and our visitors.

Carini Preserve... A brand new 8 foot picnic table has been installed for the public use and enjoyment. The table was donated by Robert Muldoon, a former Chester resident. A new stepping stone was added to our existing gazebo at the site. We have a new steward for this preserve, Grant Russell-Walsh from Chester, who is a certified Master Gardener. Grant has implemented a master plan for the improvement of the property, and over 60 new native plantings have been recently planted at Carini. Eradication and control measures of the extremely invasive Japanese Knotweed continues with regular cuttings. Several new Preserve signs have been installed at the entrance. A new roof has been constructed and installed at the existing Carini board, and a brand new permanent display poster board is coming soon.

Constance Baker Motley Preserve... Over the late winter and spring, the CLT president Bill Myers took on the task of planning,



creating, and building a hiking trail at this preserve at 100 Cedar Lake Road. Investing over 60 hours at the site, the hiking trail is now done and open for the public to hike and enjoy. The name of the trail is “The Little Rock Nine Loop Trail” named in honor of one of Constance Baker Motley’s most important and influential civil right landmark cases, which occurred in Little Rock Arkansas in 1957. This loop trail is 1/2 mile in length, and is considered a “natural terrain trail” which follows the natural geographic layout and landscape of this 7 acre preserve. This trail has several steep inclines and declines, and has a moderate to difficult trail level rating. There is a wonderful informational storyboard kiosk at this preserve, along with a picnic table for public enjoyment. Please come and visit, hike, and enjoy a picnic at this preserve !



Brazil in the Time of the Coronavirus

My name is Rafael Guerra. I live in Rio de Janeiro and have been Assistant BRAYCE Program Coordinator in Brazil for the past ten years. I participated in the BRAYCE Cultural Exchange in 2007, an experience that changed my life. I went on to attend college and today own my own Tourist Agency.


I fear for my country at this time of the pandemic. I fear for my people. I fear for BRAYCE families. Early in March,

our President Jair Bolsonaro dismissed the coronavirus as a media “fantasy” and four weeks later he described it as a “gripezinha,” the Portuguese word for a mild flu. **Today, Brazil has over 54, 000 deaths and over 1.2M cases!**

I think of the kids who should be in the BRAYCE Program at Camp Hazen. I cannot imagine their disappointment. They are all from favelas (slums). Here the population is dense. Some favelas have no access to proper sewage system; often several families are living in the same

house; they have no access to running water; they have no soap to wash their hands. They have no way to fight the virus that comes like a tsunami to sweep through their communities. Who will help them? The bottom line, who cares?

Meanwhile, Bolsonaro continues to disregard the severity of the coronavirus. The government has imposed a fine of \$400 a day on the president for every day he is not wearing a mask. Incredible! All we can do is wait, and pray.



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ACCOUNTS CLERK Sharon Echtman	216	
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HUMAN SERVICES Rosie Bininger	213	HumanServices@chesterct.org
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WPCA		wpc@chesterct.org

www.chesterct.org

Chester Public Library

The COVID-19 outbreak had libraries canceling programs and closing its doors along with many other businesses. As we navigate into the uncertainty of fall, below is a tentative list of adult programs. Our Summer Reading program is on. However, we have yet to plan any other children's events. Please check our website for updates <http://chesterct.org/library/library-programs/>.

ADULT PROGRAMS

Sep. 23 – "Lessons from Lucy: the simple lessons from an old, happy dog by Dave Barry." Facilitator and discussion leader Marsha Bansavage will lead our fall book discussion. This program will take place at the library from 6:30 to 8:00 pm and is free, but registration is encouraged. Books will be available at the library on a first-come, first-served basis.

Oct. 21 – "Furious Hours by Casey Cep & In Cold Blood by Truman Capote." Due to COVID-19 and the cancelation of our spring book chats, discussion leader Marsha Bansavage will combine the two as we compare and contrast the subject matter portrayed in both books. This program will take place at the library from 6:30 to 8:00 pm and is free, but registration is encouraged. Books will be available at the library on a first-come, first-served basis.



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Nov. 23 – “The Library Book by Susan Orlean.” Facilitator and discussion leader Marsha Bansavage will complete our fall book discussion. This program will take place at the library from 6:30 to 8:00 pm and is free, but registration is encouraged. Books will be available at the library on a first-come, first-served basis.

KIDS/TEEN PROGRAMS

Imagine Your Story – Our summer reading program will be a little different this year but it's still on! This summer we want you to relax and read at the same time. Miss Stephanie has created a Scavenger Hunt that you can fill out at your leisure. Download the form from our website or call the library for a printed version. Everyone who participates will receive a prize at the end of summer. Challenge yourself by checking off all the boxes! Stay safe and have fun.

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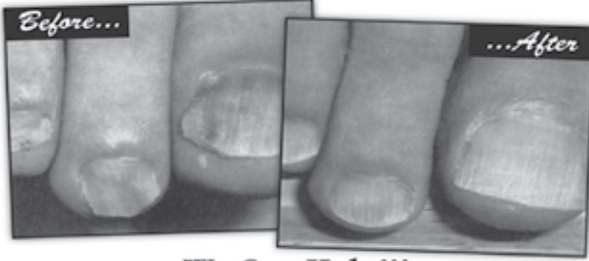


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The challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic have brought are not always obvious. We have seen the many Executive Orders Gov. Lamont has issued addressing the effects of the virus on our lives, and finally the steps that will be required as we begin to re-open our lives and businesses. Local officials have been called on to take on tasks that have not been needed in the past: inspections of businesses before they can re-open; documentation to meet the requirements of other government agencies; ensuring the day-to-day operations under these new guidelines are being followed. The steps restaurants and others have had to follow have included Planning & Zoning, working in tandem with other officials. Forms to be completed, paperwork to be submitted, approvals to be secured. This oversight will continue as more businesses begin to re-open and resume operations.

These past few months have been a crash course of learning new regulations, new tasks, and new responsibilities. Chester businesses and residents have responded well: cooperative, pro-active, and committed to positive outcomes. The officials who have been involved did all this while still taking care of their regular duties. For Planning & Zoning that has included accepting applications for new ventures, reviewing plans for changes in uses, both business-related and residential, and

Chester - Community Listings

CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

- Chester Land Trust..... info@chesterlandtrust.org
- Chester Fair (860) 526-5947
- Chester Democratic Town Committee lacylmas@gmail.com
- Chester Republican Town Committee (860) 398-0690
- Chester Garden Club (860) 526-2998
- Chester Historical Society..... (860) 526-5781
- Chester Merchants Association..... www.visitchester.com
- Lions Club..... deepriverchesterct.lionwap.org
- Deep River and Chester VFW..... (860) 526-3521
- Tri Town Youth Services Bureau (860) 526-3600
- Chester Meeting House..... (860) 526-0013

USEFUL NUMBERS

- Consumer Protection (860) 566-2294
- Community Foundation of Middlesex County (860) 347-0025

LIBRARY

- Chester Public Library (860) 526-0018

POST OFFICE

- Chester Post Office (860) 526-2780

SCHOOLS

- Superintendent of Schools District 4 (860) 526-2417
- Chester Elementary School (860) 526-5797
- John Winthrop Middle School..... (860) 526-9546
- Valley Regional High School (860) 526-5328

WORSHIP SERVICES

- St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church (860) 526-5495
- Congregation Beth Shalom - Temple (860) 526-8920
- United Church of Chester (860) 526-2697

answering questions. In these ways, Chester remains the same, while continuing to grow, improve, and change.

Some of the steps in a growing, improving and changing Chester have been the transition of Main Street during the construction of the current phase of the Main Street Project. It can be anticipated that as the project is completed there will be changes. The P&Z Commission will be diligent in ensuring that the character and personality of Chester continue to thrive.

Meetings have been conducted via ZOOM, the virtual venue to maintain social distancing. This, too, has been a learning experience. However, Chester is a small town and we are accustomed to doing things with people. In the weeks ahead, watch for meetings to resume. Become a part of Chester's future in a changed world. Help us, all of us, make Chester an even better town for the years to come.

Today is Tomorrow's History

News from the Chester Historical Society

In spite of having to postpone or cancel all programs and events this spring, we've been busy outside our Chester Museum at The Mill building. The museum now has a new roof and gutters, but even more excitingly – thanks to the talented and creative Art Christianson – it has a beautiful new spire and finial to replicate the original one on our cupola. The original had deteriorated and fallen off about 15 years ago. Art worked from the pieces of the old one to design a new one that should last many lifetimes! This project was partially funded by a grant from the 1772 Foundation in cooperation with Preservation Connecticut.

Second, thanks to the dedicated hard work of Bill Myers, we now have a brightly painted International Harvester plow (date currently unknown) from the Chalany Farm on Cedar Lake Road on display outside the museum. It will become the centerpiece of an area showing some farm equipment along with ice harvesting equipment – all a vital part of Chester's history. We welcome you to stop and see these for yourself. Unfortunately, we cannot welcome you indoors yet. We are uncomfortable about creating a virus-free environment at this time, while the virus is not fully under control. But we're planning on bringing the museum to you...

Films of Chester History

Working with Jon Claude Haines of Sea Robin Tech, we are creating short 10-minute videos about Chester history this summer. These films, presented by Chester historians - Rob Miceli and Donald Perreault, and others - will explore such topics as Chester's connections with African American history, the impact of the Wangunk Native Americans on Chester, and the role played by the Silliman factory on the country's knowledge of the Civil War.

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Chester Historical Society... continued from page 11

As they are completed, the films will be uploaded to our YouTube channel accessible through our website, ChesterHistoricalSociety.org.

Plans for the Fall

Like most organizations in this COVID year, we are not certain about our fall plans yet. We HOPE to be able to offer the following (but we're superstitious about getting too wordy here in case these can't happen). So please just pencil these dates into your calendar for now and watch for word from us, either by email or on social media, as we get through the summer.

Our 9th Creative Challenge – this year, the Farm Finds Challenge – on Saturday, Sept. 26 at Chester Meetinghouse, from 5 to 7 pm.

Our Annual Meeting and picnic at the Meetinghouse and Green on Sunday, Sept. 20 at 5 pm. Sometime in September or October, we hope to be able to open our Chester Museum on weekends.

“These Few Lines,” a dramatization of a Chester family’s Civil War correspondence, written by Tom Miceli and directed by Lol Fearon. This would be at the Chester Meetinghouse. Several times on the weekend of Nov. 6-7, at the Meetinghouse, we’ll present this dramatization with Civil War music.

Our collaboration with Deep River and Essex Historical Societies on a program about notable women of our three towns since women got the vote in 1920. It’s planned for Sunday, Nov. 15 at 3 pm in the Deep River Town Hall Auditorium. We will be asking you for scanned photos of the notable Chester women in your family!

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New Questions; Some Silver Linings

by Morgan McMinn

The COVID-19 pandemic has turned our lives inside out. We went from the normalcy of work and school, attending events, going to gyms, restaurants and bars to a state of emergency, social distancing and new protocols. As we continue to grapple with the struggles that have come with the pandemic, it is important to reflect upon what we have learned to date. Uncertainty remains, but perhaps we are better prepared for what may lie ahead.

THE HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY RESPONDS TO CHALLENGING TIMES



We have been living amid constantly evolving information about just what COVID-19 is? Is there immunity from the virus? Will the virus mutate? How is the virus transmitted? “We are always

learning new information” notes Amanda Falcone, Public Relations Director for Middlesex Health. “As of today, there is still much that is unknown. There’s no clinical playbook - no established standards of care for this virus. Knowledge changes rapidly.”

COVID-19 has altered what “normal” health care entails. Insurance has, at least for an interim period, approved telehealth visits. Telehealth is an important option especially for those who may lack mobility, access to transportation or the time for typical health care appointments. Middlesex Health stresses the importance of keeping up with your medical care. “Putting off annual exams and important tests and procedures can have unintended long-term consequences,” states Falcone.

Organizations like Middlesex Health are working to find out more about COVID-19. Middlesex Health is a part of a national initiative, led by the Mayo Clinic, that is investigating the use of convalescent plasma. Middlesex Health is also part of a study on Remdesivir, which, according to Falcone is the only medicine so far to show even a moderate benefit with respect to treating COVID-19.

Early on the healthcare industry faced worldwide supply shortages with respect to items such as personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies. Middlesex Health quickly made adjustments in how care is provided (additional cleaning, masks, care areas segregated based on COVID-19 status, additional safety equipment, etc.)

“We are actually using our pandemic plan as we work,” states Falcone. “When things get better, we will take a close look at our emergency and pandemic plan and adjust accordingly so that we are even more prepared should we ever need to use them again. Over the past several months we’ve learned a lot. We are now more knowledgeable and more prepared as we move forward, and we recognize that we will be dealing with this virus for a long time to come. It will likely be a moving target for a while yet to come.”

A RETURN TO NATURE?

With families and individuals confined to their homes across the globe, our planet was able to take its own breath and get slightly healthier. Startling images show clear waters in the Venice canals and the India Gate War Memorial in New Delhi became more visible as air pollution decreased (above right).



Some studies indicate that, while pre-pandemic levels of daily emissions were rising steadily every year, COVID-19 restrictions brought numbers comparable to 2006, mainly due to a reduction in surface transportation, power and industry (cars, electricity, fossil fuel, etc).

Mr. Robert Klee, Lecturer at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, notes that “clean air is important and this is a link to the pandemic being a respiratory pandemic - those who suffer from dirtier air and depressed or compromised health from dirty air are more susceptible to the likes of COVID-19. There are correlations with bad air quality and higher incidents.”



People are taking walks, running, hiking, biking, kayaking, etc. The pandemic “reconnected people in interesting ways,” observes Klee. “People locked in the house go on walks, hike on a trail, want to go out and experience nature.”

Cities like Bogota, New York, Paris and Berlin, along with local communities, have made new street spaces for safer individual mobility (walking, cycling etc.). Will this lead to more permanent change? “Part of the question as we restart our economy is what are we restarting it for and to? What is our goal?” And don’t forget climate change is still an existential threat and a huge crisis and we can’t forget about it for one moment.”

MENTAL HEALTH - RESILIENCE AMID UNCERTAINTY

COVID-19 has taken an emotional toll. “There is so much uncertainty. It’s unprecedented,” observes Nancy Randall, a psychologist at East Lyme Psychological Associates. “People are more isolated than they have been. People are stressed about going back to work. They are anxious about the reopening and not sure what it will look like. The anxiety is really the biggest thing. Not knowing what’s coming next.”

Is there a silver lining? “We adapt pretty well to things,” she says. Many are enjoying nature, adopting pets, finding time for relationships and hobbies. People connect via facebook groups or Zoom. They have found ways to make a difference, whether sewing face-masks or checking in on others. “People are resilient,” notes Randall. “We’ve found ways to adapt and try to find the positive in things. Things we learned we can take with us. That doesn’t have to go away.”

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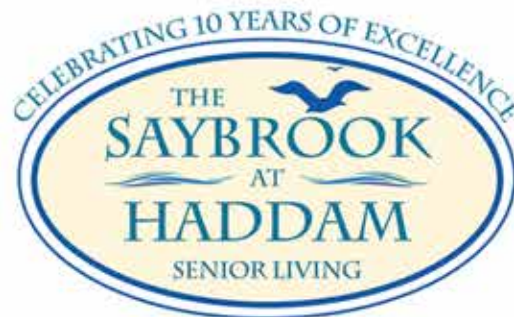
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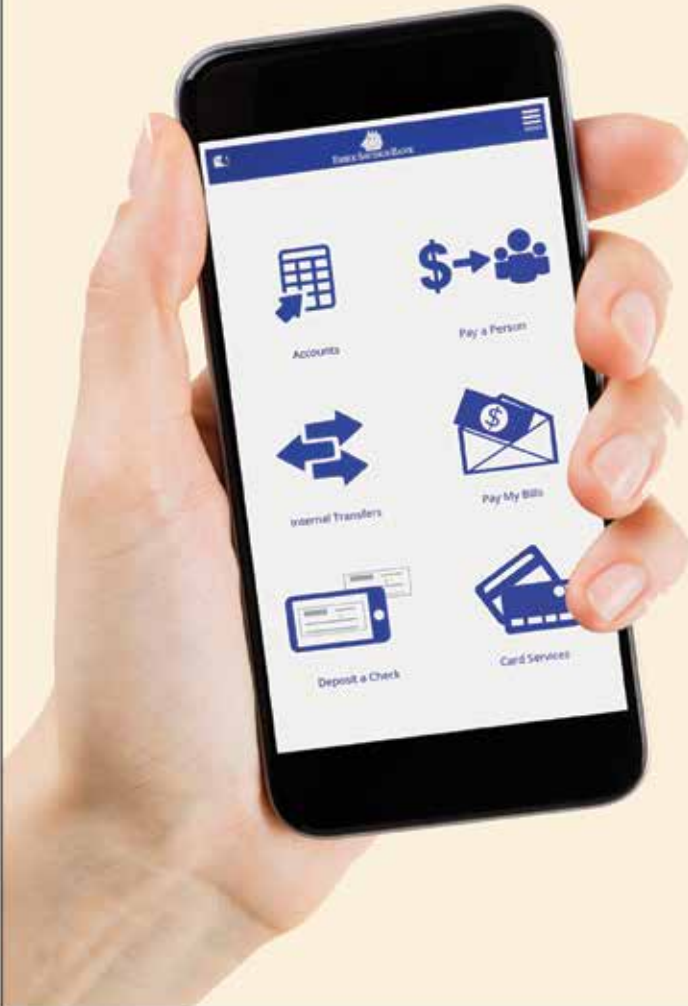


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