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SPORTS, 1B

The Journal News

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Paul Kutzy, manager at Westchester Joint Water Works, talks on Oct. 3 about the new 30-million-gallons-per-day water filtration plant that will be built. TANIA SAVAYAN/THE JOURNAL NEWS

Filtration plant to serve safer tap water

Ratepayers to see an estimated 70% increase in bills

Helu Wang Rockland/Westchester Journal News | USA TODAY NETWORK

WEST HARRISON – Tens of thousands of residents and businesses in Westchester will soon have access to safer drinking water as a long-awaited water filtration plant is finally set to be built. ● The 80,000-square-foot facility, located at 4441 Purchase St. in West Harrison, will treat millions of gallons of water drawn daily from Rye Lake. The system will remove pathogens and organic matter that contribute to the formation of disinfection by-products that can increase the risk of cancer.

Expected to be completed in 2029, the plant will serve up to 100,000 residents and commercial consumers across roughly 10 Westchester municipalities, including Mamaroneck, Harrison, Rye and New Rochelle. Ratepayers within the system will see an estimated 70% increase in their water bills over the next five years under the plan to fund the project's \$205 million price tag.

The project has been in the works for two decades but faced delays due to litigation and permitting issues.

Paul Kutzy, manager of Westchester Joint Water Works, a nonprofit that maintains the water system and proposed the filtration project, said the new facility is a proactive step to

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Rendering of a new Westchester Joint Water Works water filtration plant to be built along Purchase Street in West Harrison. PROVIDED BY WESTCHESTER JOINT WATER WORKS

Murder trial jury selection begins

If convicted, man faces 25 years to life in prison

Jonathan Bandler

Rockland/Westchester Journal News
USA TODAY NETWORK

Jury selection has begun in the murder trial of Haseem Jenkins, accused of beating and kicking a Westchester County case worker when she knocked on the wrong apartment door in Peekskill last year.

Jenkins was high on PCP at the time of the attack on Maria Coto on May 14, 2024. But his lawyer, Angelo MacDonald, is expected to present a defense of involuntary intoxication, that Jenkins was unaware that a cigarette he was given was laced with the drug so could not have formed the required intent to commit the charged crimes.

The 56-year-old Coto, a senior case-worker for the Westchester Department of Social Services, was making a site visit at 900 South Street that afternoon. She mistakenly went to the apartment of Jenkins' uncle, where Jenkins confronted Coto and began attacking her.

She managed to call 911 and ran into another apartment, where Jenkins chased her and continued the attack, stomping on her head multiple times with a heavy boot. Responding Peekskill police officers found them both there, Coto lying in a pool of blood and Jenkins with blood on his clothing and boots. He had two cell phones in his pocket, including Coto's.

She sustained a severe brain bleed, brain swelling and multiple facial fractures and was placed on a ventilator at Westchester Medical Center. She never regained consciousness and died just over a month later on June 19.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorneys Nadine Nagler and Kevin Jones.

Much of the beating was heard by police as the 911 call never disconnected. It will be a key part of the prosecution's evidence along with the officers' body-worn camera footage. There was also a lengthy recorded interrogation of Jenkins at police headquarters. In it he initially questioned what had happened and saying he didn't remember the incident but later acknowledged some of the details of what had happened.

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Bear in Pleasantville tranquilized, to be relocated

Michael P. McKinney

Rockland/Westchester Journal News
USA TODAY NETWORK

A bear seen in areas of Pleasantville has been safely tranquilized and secured and is being relocated to a more suitable habitat, the village's website said.

Pleasantville said on the web and Facebook on Oct. 5, that its police had worked with Westchester County and New York State officials to track the bear, which had been seen near Saw Mill Parkway, as well as around Cooley and Hobby

streets.

The village said the bear had not been aggressive.

Tips to keep your family and home safe from bears

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation advises ways to reduce chances of bears coming to homes:

- Never feed or approach a bear
- Secure food, garbage and recycling
- Remove bird feeders when bears are

active

- Never leave pet food outdoors
- Clean and store grills and smokers
- Alert neighbors to bear activity

What to do if you see a bear in your yard:

- If someone sees a bear in their backyard or near their home, the DEC said:
- From a safe distance, make loud noises, shout, or bang pots and pans together to scare away the bear.
- When the bear leaves, remove potential attractants such as garbage, bird seed, or pet food.

- Ask neighbors to remove attractants.

- Check your yard for bears before letting out your dog.

The DEC also advises:

- If a bear presents an immediate risk to public safety, call 911.
- If a bear is damaging property or reluctant to leave the area, but the situation is not an emergency, call the regional wildlife office during business hours, or the DEC Law Enforcement Dispatch Center at 1-844-DEC-ECOs (1-844-332-3267).

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Water

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ensure local tap water continues to meet drinking water standards and address potential public health risks.

“The drinking water always has been and continues to be safe,” Kutzy said. “This plant adds protective measure to ensure the continued health and safety of drinking water for generations to come.”

New filtration plant to ensure drinking water safety

The \$205 million water filtration plant will be built on 13.4 acres of land adjacent to Westchester County Airport. Designed to blend with the character of the Purchase Street neighborhoods, the facility will feature granite, stone veneer and stone pier that match the stone walls lining the road. It will also be set back behind a buffer of trees and landscaping.

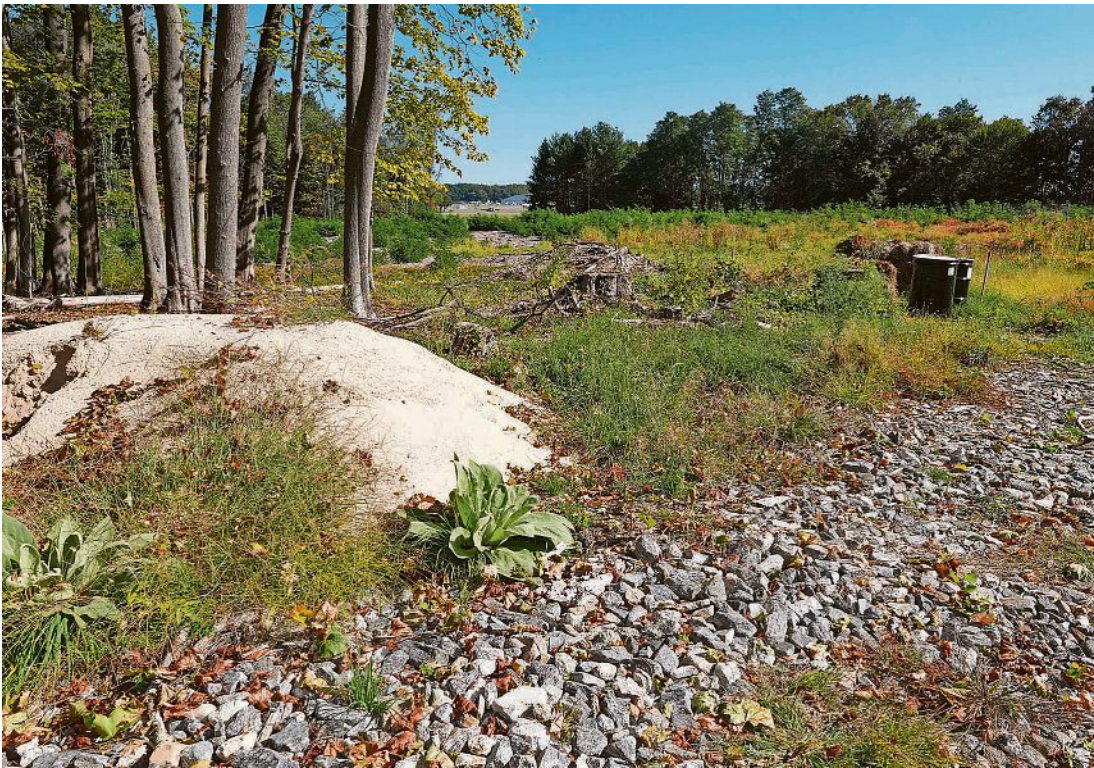
The system aims to reduce turbidity and remove pathogens found in Rye Lake, as well as naturally occurring organic matter that reacts with chlorine used for disinfection, a process that can create potentially harmful by-products, including haloacetic acids (HAA5).

High concentrations of haloacetic acids were detected in 2019 in drinking water drawn from the Rye Lake portion of the Kensico Reservoir, where Westchester Joint Water Works draws its water. While not posing an immediate health risk, these compounds can increase the risk of cancer, liver and kidney disease.

Kutzy said the findings brought attention to the importance of building a filtration plant and accelerating the project.

Long-awaited project delayed by litigation and permitting issues

The need for a filtration plant was first identified in the early 1990s. In 2004, a New York State court ordered the Westchester Joint Water Works to construct one. Although plans were developed in 2006, the project stalled due to litigation and local permitting challenges. The delays, combined with the 2019 water



The site where a new 30-million-gallons-per-day water filtration plant will be built by Westchester Joint Water Works, seen Oct. 3.

TANIA SAVAYAN/
THE JOURNAL
NEWS

quality violations, resulted in roughly \$9 million in fines.

The cost of the filtration plant has since ballooned to \$205 million. It will be funded through a combination of bonds, grants, subsidized loans and ratepayer contributions.

Formed in 1927 by its members municipalities – the village of Mamaroneck, town of Mamaroneck and

town and village of Harrison – the Westchester Joint Water Works supplies water to its members as well as to consumers in Rye, New Rochelle, Larchmont, North Castle, Rye, Rye Brook and Port Chester.

Helu Wang covers economic growth, real estate and education for The Journal News/lohud and USA TODAY Network. Reach her at hwang@gannett.com.

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