Maine: Bill would grant overtime pay to 30,000 salaried workers, Page A3

The Times Record

Bath businesses report little

pushback over mask mandate

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Bath synagogue reflects on Maine's Jewish history before 100-year celebration

BY KATHLEEN O'BRIEN Times Record staff

As Bath's Beth Israel synagogue prepares to celebrate its centennial, the congregation is reflecting on how far the Jewish community in Maine has come in the past 100 years.

On Sunday, the Beth Israel community will reenact its opening by marching with the Torahs from the inter-section of Centre and David Freidenreich, Washington streets to the synagogue. The cel-ebration is open to the public.

Jews have been living in Maine for 200 years, according to the Maine Jewish History Museum in Portland. The first Jewish family arrived in Bath in 1886. By the early 1900s, the city's Jewish population grow Jewish population grew to include a wave of set-tlers, many of whom came to work as ped-

Jan. 29, 1922, by eastern European immigrants, most of whom had fled persecution. "They were so proud Please see **HISTORY** on A10

to be Americans — they carried an American flag in their parade," said Marilyn Weinberg, a member of the Beth Israel congregation. "There was anti-Semi-tism out there, but they were welcomed by the

by the community, life for Jews in Maine and across the nation was chairperson of the Jewish studies department at Colby College and associate director of the Center for Small Town Jewish Life.

About 100 years ago, the U.S. restricted immi-gration, which " transformed the American-Jewish landscape," said

"The Jews who founded Beth Israel were all immigrants, and sudcame to work as ped-dlers. The Beth Israel syna-gogue was founded on the minigrants, and sud denly, there were no immigrants joining them," Freidenreich said. "Those immigrants proceeded to Americanize and integrate into the community and benefit

Bowdoinham rallies to help residents

Bath community." Though Jews in Bath were generally accepted

12 / 12

Freidenreich.

Most customers have been compliant since city's rule went into effect Monday Van Kamben said she re-evaluate the rule and reminds unmasked customers they can order products online or over

Bath business owners say most of their customers are complying with the city's indoor masking mandate that went into effect Monday to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. sible.'

Ruth Van Kamben, manager at Loyal Bis-cuit Co., said most cus-tomers at the pet supply store are "enthusiastic" about the mask requirement, but not everyone has been compliant.

BY KATHLEEN O'BRIEN

Times Record staff

the phone, but if they're already in line to check out, "we just try to get them out as soon as pos-

Van Kamben said she's glad the mandate is in place because it takes the responsibility out of her hands, but "it caused some anxiety knowing it was coming and we'd have to enforce it."

Bath city councilors "This morning we had voted unanimously to

how the pandemic has progressed after 30 days. Bath's mandate, like policies from Portland, Brunswick, Freeport and South Portland, requires everyone age 2 and older wear a face covering over their nose and mouth in public spaces, regardless

of vaccination status. Examples of public spaces include stores, public transportation and restaurants except when people are actively eating and drinking in an "isolated location such as a table or booth" away wear one and just pulled their scarf up over their nose," said Van Kamben. "It's a tough line to walk to wear one and we pro-to wear one and we pro-tide market the entergency as a table of booth away mandate during a spe-cial meeting on Jan. 19 of vaccination status. The rule to help quell the spread of COVID-19. The rule went into effect on Jan. 24 and will last 60 days, to help quell the spread to market of the during a spe-cial meeting on Jan. 19 of vaccination status. People need to put their mask on when they're to market of the during a spe-trom others, regardless to help quell the spread to wear one and we pro-tide market of the during a spe-trom others, regardless to help quell the spread to during a spe-trom others, regardless to help quell the spread to during a spe-trom others, regardless to help quell the spread to during a spe-trom their to be the during a spe-trom their to be a beat the during a spe-trom their to be the during a spe-trom their to be a beat to be the specified to be the specific

Rowan Wagner, who co-owns J.R. Maxwell with Edwin Rogers, said he feels "indifferent" about the mandate because "it's what has to be done.'

Wager's customers, on the other hand, have had mixed feelings. Most customers have worn one without issue, he said, though some have been confused about when they need to wear one and when they can remove it.

In the restaurant's downstairs bar, however, some customers haven't been pleased about the indoor mask rule, though it hasn't escalated to any sort of altercation. "In the downstairs bar, people have been a little

KATHLEEN O'BRIEN / THE TIMES RECORD

Two shoppers walk down Front Street in Bath while wearing masks on Wednesday, Jan. 26. Bath's mask mandate for indoor public spaces went into effect on Monday, Jan. 24.

displaced by blaze

Clothing and other goods collected; cause of fire still under investigation

BY PAYAL GANGISHETTI Times Record staff

Members of the Bowdoinham community and beyond are helping tenants who lost everything in a fire that destroyed their apart-

ment building Tuesday. At least 10 people have been displaced after fire ripped through the six-unit building at 15 Main St. in the heart of Bowdoinham.

Maine House District 55 Rep. Seth Berry said the state has resources available to help these families.

"I posted a list of resources and certain nonprofit and community programs that are available on the town's Facebook page," said Berry. "The state and the community itself stand ready to help, and many have reached out with offers of assistance."

Berry said the gift

shop at the former recycling barn, a community-led resource with donated items such as clothing, dishes, cookware and household goods, has been made available. He also started a fundraising campaign online through GoFundMe, which, as of Thursday afternoon, had raised \$1,175 out of a \$12,000 goal.

A member of the Red Cross said they are working with six adults to offer assistance.

The fire broke out sometime before 1 p.m. Tuesday, drawing crews from Bowdoinham, Bowdoin, Topsham, Brunswick, Dresden, Gardiner and Lisbon. No injuries were reported. The cause is unknown and under investigation.

Bowdoinham Historical Society Treasurer Betsy Steen said on

Please see **FIRE** on A7

Crossword......A5, B5

Maine.....A3

Inside Sections

vide masks at the door."

one customer refuse to enact the emergency but councilors agreed to from their table or booth.

Please see MASKS on A7

COVID-19 hospitalizations continue to decline, led by drop in ICU patients

BY JOE LAWLOR

Portland Press Herald

The number of people hospitalized with COVID-19 across the state declined for the fourth straight day, dropping from 427 on Monday to 400 on Thursday as the omicron wave appears to be ebbing in Maine.

But at least some Maine hospitals are still struggling to care for the high numbers of patients and staffing shortages caused by the highly contagious variant. The Mills administration announced Thursday that a federal COVID-19 Surge Response Team will assist at Central Maine Medical Center in Lewiston.

decreased from 88 on Wednesday to 84 on Thursday. The number of COVID-19 ICU patients has declined 37% from a peak of 133 patients on Dec. 19, with a marked drop-off in the last week. The number of ICU patients hovered around 105 to 110 patients from early January through last week.

Overall hospitaliza-tions have declined 8% statewide since the peak of 436 patients hospital-ized for COVID-19 on Jan. 13. The experience is different at individual hospitals, however, with some seeing bigger patients needing care. declines while others And there's still bottle-

Intensive care patients have not seen any easing. At Maine Medical Center in Portland, COVID-19 patients dropped from 97 on Jan. 21 to 65 on Thursday. It's a hopeful sign, but many challenges remain, said Dr. Joel Botler, chief medical officer at Maine Med. "The trends are all

pointing in the right direc-tion," Botler said. "We are definitely in a better place than we were.'

However, Botler said with 2,000 people waiting for elective surgery, such as knee and hip replacements, it is going to take awhile, even after omicron recedes, to get through the backlog of patients needing care.

necks in discharging patients to nursing homes and rehabilitation facilities, leading patients to stay longer at the hospital. The average length-ofstay for a patient at Maine Med is currently 8.2 days, much higher than 5.5 days before the pandemic started in March 2020.

"The length-of-stay is messing up our opera-tions and our ability to get new patients into the hospital to get the care they need," Botler said.

At CMMC in Lewiston, COVID-19 patients declined from 32 on Jan. 20 to 24 on Wednesday. At Northern Light Health, which includes Eastern

Please see COVID-19 on A10



Tomorrow's weather Scattered snow. High 17. See Page A10.



Opinion.....A4-5 **Tri-state Lotteries** Wednesday

Powerball: 4-11-38-49-69 (16) Megabucks: 5-15-27-36-39 (6) Lotto America: 1-8-22-23-29 (2) Lucky For Life: 10-11-15-18-22 (3) Evening Pick 3: 3-2-4 Evening Pick 4: 9-6-4-1

Gimme 5: 1-6-23-27-31

Thursday

Day Pick 3: 9-6-7 Day Pick 4: 1-7-7-7 For evening Pick 3, Pick 4 and Gimme 5 results. visit mainelottery.com.

Today's Headlines Classified......B7 Sports.....B1-2 Sports Maine Graphic novel about Comics.....C4 Ticket.....C1-6 Holocaust banned in With Foligno out, Report suggests TV Listings.....C4 forward Hall returns police should Tenn. school district Local......A2-3 World/Nation..... plan for mentalA8-9, B3, B6, B8 to top power-play Α9 Obituaries.....A7 Worship......A6 for Bruins health crises Witness: 3 officers at Β1 AЗ Floyd killing had a Nation Local duty to intervene Maine Forest Service Biden: Ready B3 for 'long overdue' launches Browntail Ticket pick of Black Moth Awareness Get out and play with female justice Month these winter activities A8 A2



San Francisco

Washington, DC

Seattle

Tampa

Regional Forecast

5-Day Forecast for Mid-coast Region

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History

From Page A1

from previous generations of Jewish immigrants, but there were no later generations of immigrants coming to carry on that tradition. American-Jewish life, including that in Maine, was shaped by that absence."

Jews in Maine faced anti-Semitism locally for decades, Freidenreich viduals that hold anti-Semitic ideals and Jews still experience discrimination, but they don't experience it in the way they did 50 or 100 years said Freidenreich. ago.' "Part of that is because Jews have Americanized. They're now part of the mainstream rather than seen as outsiders.

When Weinberg moved to Bath in the 1970s and joined the Beth Israel congregation, she said the community had about 50 members and no rabbi. Though small, she said the congregation was "an older, cohesive group." Weinberg helped start a Hebrew school at the synagogue in the 1980s, which helped attract young families and boost the synagogue's membership. Today, Weinberg said, the congregation has about 100 members individuals and families Midcoast from Yarmouth as the recent hostage

to Damariscotta.

Freidenreich said he believes the Jewish community in Maine is continuing to grow, though precise numbers are unknown.

'They're not moving because they're Jewish, but because they find Maine attractive like many people find Maine attractive," said Fre-idenreich. "Jewish life in Maine today is vibrant, and we see that in Bath. The Beth Israel syna-

standoff at a Houston synagogue — could happen here.

"The challenge now, more than ever, is we're now part of a wider information sharing that didn't exist even 10 years ago,' said Weinberg. "We now have to deal with the fact that there's information out there on the web that's inflammatory and inaccurate, but some people believe it."

Weinberg said this fear surfaced after a man

also hires security for larger holiday events that are open to the public, Weinberg said.

Unfortunately, hate crimes committed against Jews elsewhere have hindered Beth Israel's willingness to welcome strangers to its services, Weinberg said.

'One of the tenants of Judaism is to welcome the stranger, but now we're wondering how to do this," said Weinberg. "We could have someone doesn't keep people away from services, but we have to be more aware of people and visitors.'

Still, Freidenreich said the Jewish community in Maine should celebrate how far the state has come in accepting Jews, and their successful integration into the larger Maine population. This is exemplified by the children of mixed families within Beth Israel's Hebrew school.

'One hundred years

Boston: Cloudy skies tonight with a 55% chance of scattered snow, lows in the mid-10s. Southeast wind 5 to 17 mph. Montreal: Partly cloudy skies tonight with lows in the single digits below zero. North wind 6 mph. White Mountains: Mostly cloudy skies tonight with lows in the single			Bath Lisbon Freeport Harpswell.							80°F 81°F 81°F		
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Friday's highs

Brunswick.....

26/13 sn National Weather Map

62/45 pc

49/41

53/33

Forecast map for Jan. 29, 2022

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National Weather Summary

The Northeast will see partly to mostly cloudy skies with isolated snow, highest temperature of 36 in Nantucket, Mass. The Southeast will experience mostly clear skies with the highest temperature of 65 in Key West, Fla. The central United States will see mostly clear skies with the highest temperature of 65 in Laredo, Texas. In the Northwest there will be partly cloudy skies with the highest temperature of 56 in Oakridge. Ore. The Southwest will see mostly clear to partly cloudy skies with the highest temperature of 74 in Yuma, Ariz.

said. Hotels and country clubs openly stated they would not serve Jews, among other groups, until a 1969 bill introduce by then-state Sen. Peter Mills to deny liquor licenses to private organizations that discriminated on the basis of race or religion passed the Legislature.

By the 1970s, Freidenreich said, anti-Semitism was still present but no longer "advertised."

There are still indi-

gogue is thriving in ways that it often wasn't during it's 100-year history.'

Beth Israel is now one of 15 synagogues in the state, though the state used to have double that, according to the Jewish History Museum.

Though the congregation is larger and accept-ed by the Bath community, Weinberg said the new challenge the congregation is facing is the fear of scattered around the anti-Semitic acts — such

shouting anti-Semitic slurs opened fire inside the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburg in 2018. Eleven people were killed and four police officers were wounded.

Though the Bath synagogue has never received threats, security cameras were installed inside. The synagogue also has a security committee that has considered conducting training similar to active shooter drills in school. The synagogue

come in that's dangerous to us. It's a feeling of fear that's so real because it has happened. There's tension we have to deal with that we never had to deal with before."

Each time an anti-Semitic crime happens "feels like a wound opening up again" for the peo-ple of Beth Israel," Weinberg said.

"The hard part is it happens often enough that some people grow numb to it," said Weinberg. "It

ago, that would not have happened," he said. "That is a reflection of how Jews are integrated into society. The fact that Jews and non-Jews feel comfortable having a family together and treating one another as equal partners — that's a huge

and very positive shift." The 100th-anniversary celebration will take place at Beth Israel Sunday, Jan. 30, from 1-2 p.m. Visit bethisraelbath.org for more information.

COVID-19

From Page A1

Maine Medical Center in Bangor and Mercy Hospital in Portland, there were nearly the same number of CÓVID-19 patients on Wednesday (116), as the previous week (114). MaineGeneral Medical Center in Augusta on Thursday reported 27 COVID-19 patients, compared with 27 a week ago.

Steven Michaud, presi-dent of the Maine Hospital Association, said conditions are improving, but hospitals still have a long way to go to get back to operations close to prepandemic times. He said despite a lot of effort to discharge patients in a timely manner, bottle-necks caused by a lack of available beds for patients at long-term care facilities will persist for some time.

"But every day those COVID numbers go down is a better day than it was before," Michaud said.

The trends coincide with what other states and countries have experienced as omicron has spread around the globe. The latest variant tends to be less severe than the delta and earlier variants, requiring less ICU

transmissibility of omicron leads to skyrocketing hospitalizations before the wave crests and starts to recede.

Even with the recent decline, overall hospitalizations are still far higher than during previous pandemic surges and, com-bined with staff shortages because of infections and exposures, hospitals continue to rely on the support of federal medical teams and Maine Army National Guard members.

An additional 20-person U.S. Department of Defense military medical personnel crew — which will include doctors, nurses and respiratory technicians — will come to Maine to help staff at CMMC care for COVID-19 patients, the governor announced. The crew follows a team of four clinicians from the Federal Emergency Management Agency who had been helping to administer vaccines but are leaving on Thursday.

The new 20-person crew, approved for the Lewiston hospital by FEMA, will be there from Tuesday to March 2. FEMA on Thurs-

day also approved Gov. Janet Mills' request for a 30-day extension of federal ambulance crews, ing the daily case counts utilization, but the high and an additional ambu- an unreliable metric to has overwhelmed the

lance crew to be stationed at Cary Medical Center in Caribou that also will assist other hospitals in Aroostook County.

The ambulance crews that were extended for 30 days were scheduled to leave on Thursday, and include crews at Maine Medical Center in Portland, Southern Maine Health Care in Biddeford, Franklin Memorial Hospital in Farmington, Mid Coast Hospital in Brunswick, CMMC in Lewiston, MaineGeneral Medical Center in Augusta, East-ern Maine Medical Center in Bangor and St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor.

The ambulance teams "are assisting Maine emergency medical services crews with nonemergency transportation of patients among facilities to match patients with open beds and ensure they are treated in the facility that best meets their health care needs," Mills adminis-tration said in a news release.

Meanwhile, Maine reported 12 additional deaths from COVID-19 on Thursday and 1,526 new cases as the state deals with a massive backlog of positive tests that have yet to be processed, mak-

track current pandemic conditions.

Since the pandemic began, Maine has reported 171,524 cases of COVID-19 and 1,728 deaths.

Maine has a backlog of 56,000 positive tests that have yet to be processed, which means checked for duplicates, vaccination and hospitalization sta-tus and other tasks. The state is moving to an automated system to relieve the backlog, although Dr. Nirav Shah, director of the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said on Wednesday that it will take some time to switch to the system. He didn't have an estimate of how long it would take.

People who test positive will continue to be notified about the test in the same way they have always been. That has not been affected by the backlog.

Shah said that because omicron is so easily transmissible — often before investigations can begin - the case investigations have become far less useful, leading the Maine CDC and many other states to conclude that a more automated system would be more suitable. The sheer volume of cases still left to process

state's current capacity to process the tests in the same way they had during most of the last two years, he said.

The Mills administration also announced on Wednesday that they will be expanding wastewater testing for COVID-19 to 23 sites across the state, as Shah said wastewater testing is currently a superior way to assess current pandemic conditions than case counts.

"It's designed to show what's going on in my community, how is that changing and what does that mean going forward," Shah said.

Portland and Yarmouth are two communities in Maine that currently test for COVID-19 in their wastewater, and they have been tracking sharp declines in virus prevalence in their wastewater systems compared to early January.



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