

LOCAL

+ BUSINESS

Rinks cut the ice



A rendering shows the planned Palm Beach Gardens Ice Center, a sports facility with two ice rinks, that its City Council greenlighted on Thursday. It will be built at Plant Drive Park in Palm Beach Gardens.

RENDERINGS PROVIDED BY PALM BEACH NORTH ATHLETIC FOUNDATION

Indoor facility, medical offices, sports bar OK'd to replace Gardens skate park, courts, softball field

Maya Washburn
Palm Beach Post
USA TODAY NETWORK

PALM BEACH GARDENS — An indoor ice rink is set for construction at Plant Drive Park, replacing its skate park and basketball and pickleball courts and most notably, a softball field that honors a Palm Beach Gardens High School standout murdered in 2007.

The City Council unanimously gave the greenlight on Thursday for the Palm Beach North Athletic Foundation to build a 100,000-square-foot building with two full-sized ice rinks, a restaurant, a sports bar and medical space at the park nestled between Palm Beach Gardens High and Interstate 95.

The facility is expected to cost \$40 million — for which the nonprofit is entirely responsible — and take two years to build, with the goal of opening in summer 2026. Its lease would last for 40 years and charge the foundation \$10 a year.

It also includes a revenue sharing program, with

the foundation paying \$75,000 per year to the city two to five years after the facility's start, then increasing: \$100,000 per year between six and 12 years, \$125,000 per year between 13 and 18 years, \$150,000 per year between 19 and 30 years and \$200,000 from year 31 and beyond.

The agreement comes after a former plan by the foundation failed when the project did not meet budget benchmarks in 2022.

Michael Winter, its founder, said he had difficulty garnering support during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

The original plan was for a 230,000-square-foot facility for hockey, rock climbing, volleyball and basketball at Gardens North County District Park, something that Winter said proved to be "too ambitious."

City records list that Plant Drive Park "has been a marginal recreational facility for the city and has attracted malcontents who engage in illegal

See RINKS, Page 2C



The facility is expected to cost \$40 million — for which the nonprofit Palm Beach North Athletic Foundation is entirely responsible — and take two years to build, with the goal of opening in summer 2026.

Penalties for trying to beat crossing trains will be higher

First time to be \$500 fine or community service

James Coleman
Palm Beach Post
USA TODAY NETWORK

A new Florida law has updated penalties for disregarding warning signals and attempting to illegally cross active railroad tracks. For a first violation, the fine is \$500 or 25 hours of community service. The violator will also have six points assessed against his/her driver's license.

Gov. Ron DeSantis signed HB 1301 on April 3 and the law will go into effect July 1. The penalties apply to both drivers and pedestrians.

The law was widely supported by the Florida Rail Alliance, which includes Brightline and Florida East Coast Railway, two prominent rails in Palm Beach County.

"We applaud the Florida Legislature and Governor DeSantis for taking action to keep Floridians safe by passing HB1301, which includes updated penalties for infractions around active railroad tracks," a statement by the Alliance read. "These legislative changes combined with continued education, engineering and enforcement, are meant to encourage people to think

See TRAINS, Page 3C

Jupiter's Arce moves to next round on 'The Voice'

Teen advances thanks to dramatic Rihanna cover

Holly Baltz
Palm Beach Post
USA TODAY NETWORK

A Jupiter teen "punched above her weight," as mentor Keith Urban put it, with a dramatic version of Rihanna's "Unfaithful" and moved to the next stage of the competition on "The Voice" this week.

Serenity Arce, 17, is one of two in the final 24 whom Palm Beach County can claim. Nadège, who grew up in Wellington, got a "playoff pass" and was allowed to skin the round Arce competed in

Both have the same judge, Chance the Rapper.

In the next round, the judges — John Legend, Reba McEntire, Dan + Shea and Chance — will cut the number of singers in half, leaving three artists on each team. ("The Voice" airs only on Mondays through April then resumes to two days a week on May 6.)

Teen first appeared on show at 14

When she practiced the song, Arce explained to Urban and her coach, Chance the Rapper, during Monday's show that it is about a love triangle and morals.

"It's not easy to let someone down. But you have to do for self-respect," the 17-year-old said. However, "I know my stan-

dards and my worth."

This is the second season Arce has appeared on The Voice. In 2021, at age 14, she didn't make it past the blind auditions but got some advice from judges Blake Shelton and Ariana Grande, who is from Boca Raton.

Both told Arce to keep working and to come back. When she did, every judge vied to get her on their team, including Legend, who didn't turn his chair for her in 2021.

Nadège led worship at the Bible College at Oceans Church in Orange County, California, where she moved in 2020 and now lives.

She has graduated and is ready to move on to her musical career, according to her "Voice" bio.



Former Wellington resident Nadège had a "playoff pass" that let her skip competition on Monday's edition of "The Voice." PROVIDED BY NBC

Florida's GOP director apologizes after going missing

James Call
Tallahassee Democrat
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

While family, friends, and law enforcement searched last week for George Riley Jr., the missing executive director of the Republican Party of Florida, Riley had checked himself into a Lake Buena Vista spa.

According to an Osceola County Sheriff's report, released to the USA TODAY Network-Florida this week, Riley was found last Friday at the B Resort and Spa, three days after he was reported missing. He was in good health but under the influence of alcohol, the report said.

Earlier in the week, Riley had been evicted from the Kissimmee Hamp-

ton Inn after a four-day stay for "excessive drinking" and damage to the room. Riley didn't object when told he would be charged extra because the room needing a deep cleaning.

The day before, Riley's family had filed a missing person report with law enforcement. Deputies were advised that Riley had a medical condition and had never gone so long without communication. The medical condition and medication Riley takes were redacted in the released report.

Deputies used cell tower pings to triangulate Riley's phone location, according to the report. When found at the B Resort and Spa, deputies said although Riley was under the influence of alcohol, he was not er-

atic, posed no threat to harm himself or others, and answered questions.

They then informed his family he was no longer a missing person and closed the case.

Recently reappointed executive director of the state party

The 43-year-old Riley was appointed executive director of the Republican Party in February, a position he previously held 2016-19.

In the 2018 election cycle, Riley put into place a voter registration initiative called "Project Majority Red" that flipped ten counties from Democratic to Republican majorities, news reports show. He also di-

rected the spending of more than \$85 million on statewide campaigns.

In a phone call with the Tampa Bay Times, Riley apologized for going missing and trashing the hired room: "I'm deeply sorry. I have been dealing with alcoholism and mental health issues," he said, according to the Times.

Riley specifically apologized to the Hampton Inn staff for his behavior, promised to pay any damages, and pledged to seek help so he "can be a better father, a better person and a better all-around employee."

James Call is a member of the USA TODAY Network - Florida Capital Bureau. He can be reached at jcall@tallahassee.com and is on X as @CallTallahassee.

Rinks

Continued from Page 1C

activities," including vandalism.

Council member Bert Premuroso said he has fond memories of walking over to Plant Drive Park to play baseball when he was young in the 1970s. He added that he met his wife at the park 40 years ago.

"It's not an easy decision to move this forward for me, but I am supportive," Premuroso said. "It's a beautiful area, but people will go to this center. If it's built right, I think it will be very successful."

Plant Drive Park's softball field serves as a memorial to Amanda Buckley, a Palm Beach Gardens High standout player who was found murdered near Juno Beach in 2007.

The park features a sign over the scoreboard that says "Amanda Buckley Memorial Field of Dreams," a plaque and bricks engraved in her honor.

Charlotte Presensky, the city's leisure services administrator, acknowledged the importance of honoring the memorial. She said the city's staff "is already thinking about what we do to make these things whole."

"We have spoken to (the high school athletic director and the Palm Beach Gardens Youth Athletic Association)

about the ability to honor the memorial, but we're not there yet," said Presensky during the meeting. "This is just the first step."

Presensky said she knew Buckley and will be respectful of the memorial to do it the "right way."

Premuroso agreed.

"We will be supportive of anything that needs to be done to relocate anything related to the Buckley memorial," he said.

While the council was unanimous in its support for the project, residents had questions about it.

Mike Evans, whose daughter, a Palm Beach Gardens High sophomore, plays softball at Plant Drive Park, said during the meeting that "selling the park to a developer is a bad idea."

He said the park is used by many and its basketball courts are often filled with players.

Evans noted that the area around the high school is among the poorest communities in the city.

"(Hockey) is not affordable for the kids in that area," Evans said. "Where are they going to go? This needs to be done in a respectful way."

After the meeting, Evans said he wasn't surprised by the vote of approval and he isn't completely against the project.

However, he wants the Amanda Buckley memorial to move to Palm

Beach Gardens High and for the school's softball facilities to be upgraded, saying their field is "a mess."

Evans said he noticed that baseball facilities in the city are well-equipped, while softball is often neglected.

"It's frustrating that they look at girls' sports and don't care," Evans said.

Wayne Gretzky, perhaps the greatest player in National Hockey League history and a northern Palm Beach County homeowner, plans to use the new rinks to host the Gretzky Hockey School, founded in 2014 by him and his son, Ty.

The sports complex will support a variety of ice sports, from youth hockey, figure skating, public skating and adult leagues to curling and sled hockey. The foundation said in a prepared statement that it hopes to add a third NHL-sized ice rink at some point.

The project also comes with corporate and private partners, including Palm Beach Gardens-based Carrier; Larry Robbins and the Robbins Family Foundation; the Florida Panthers NHL team; the Hospital for Special Surgery in West Palm Beach; and NFP insurance brokerage.

In terms of financing, the group has the backing of Ziegler, a privately held investment bank, according to Winter.

Winter skated for the first time at 2 years old, thanks to his parents, who opened up a rink in the suburbs of St. Louis through a nonprofit they started

called "Afton Athletic Association." It now runs three rinks in the St. Louis area.

Now he has four young boys of his own who all play hockey. He wants to pay the gift of a nearby ice rink forward.

"This endeavor has been a passion project since inception," said Winter, who launched the foundation in 2017. "What personally drives me is knowing that thousands of kids are going to benefit."

Winter, who lives in unincorporated northern Palm Beach County, plans to offer discounted public skating rates to Palm Beach Gardens residents. He expects to hire 70 to 100 people to work at the facility, whether the positions are part or full-time.

The ice rink will be the only facility of its kind in northern Palm Beach County, said Winter, who noted that interest in playing hockey has soared since the Florida Panthers played in the Stanley Cup Final in 2023.

The only other ice rinks in Palm Beach County are Palm Beach Skate Zone at 8125 Lake Worth Road in suburban Lake Worth Beach, and Palm Beach Ice Works at 1590 North Florida Mango Road near West Palm Beach.

"The only constraint we have is we need ice rinks," Winter said. "As a young dad, I can attest that there is a dearth of places to take kids to (play sports) in an indoor, safe setting."

naked WINES

DRINK BETTER WINE FOR LESS

Get 12 wines from the world's best independent winemakers — yours for only \$79.99

USA TODAY 100 READERS' CHOICE 2023
5 time winner, Best Wine Club

Get \$100 off 12 world-class wines — that's less than \$7 a bottle!

Go independent. Get this deal at: NAKEDWINES.COM/WINE23FL

CODE: **WINE23FL**

PASSWORD: **ASP32XYN**

chat@nakedwines.com
561-363-3611

Stephen Millier
Naked Winemaker

Minimum \$160 purchase required to use \$100 voucher. First time customers and 21+ only. Void in AK, AL, AR, DE, HI, IN, MI, MS, MO, NJ, RI, SD, TX, UT and where prohibited. By redeeming this offer, you agree to make a \$40 monthly contribution to your Naked Wines account (charged until you cancel) that you can use to buy wine. Unused contributions are fully refundable. Additional restrictions apply and vary by state, see complete details at nakedwines.com/terms.

collette

The Leader in Guided Travel Since 1918.

Hello Spring Savings

UP TO **20% OFF*** TOURS WORLDWIDE

Sale valid April 8-15

Explore the world with North America's longest running tour operator. Journey to the edge of the world in Patagonia. Stay in an igloo and search for the northern lights in Finland. And venture out in search of wildlife on the African plains.

Book now & save up to 20%* on your next adventure. Use the code **HELLOSPRING24** Visit collette.com for details.

For reservations, see your travel professional and ask for Collette, or call us at **561-823-0751**

*Restrictions apply. CST No. 2006766-20, UBI No. 601-220-855, Fla. Seller of Travel Reg. No. ST35613