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Cuomo ratchets up tax cap pressure

Gov. will be calling you to sell his plan

By Joseph Spector
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ALBANY — Gov. Andrew Cuomo is continuing to put pressure on lawmakers to adopt a property tax

cap as the sides work toward an agreement. Cuomo is starting an automated phone message to New Yorkers next week urging them to contact their lawmakers to back

the tax cap — a top priority for the first-year Democratic governor. The call is being sponsored by the state Democratic Committee. “Many politicians are against the cap because it limits their power, and they are fiercely lobbying the Albany legislature against it,” Cuomo urges in the message, the text of which was obtained Friday by Gannett’s Albany Bureau.

“You can help get the tax cap passed by speaking out.” Cuomo on Friday indicated that legislative leaders are aiming for a compromise on a tax cap, saying he’s hopeful an agreement can be reached before the legislative session ends June 20.



Cuomo

“We now have parties who are open to discussion, and I believe we are going to get there,” Cuomo said on Talk 1300-AM in Albany. Cuomo has sought a strict 2 percent cap on the growth in property taxes, saying New York can no longer sustain having among the highest

taxes in the nation. In recent days, Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos, R-Nassau County, said he’s willing to reach a compromise with Cuomo and the Assembly. He had previously said he wouldn’t negotiate after Senate Republicans in January passed Cuomo’s tax cap bill.

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THE DACHA PROJECT

A place to live and learn



Four members of the Dacha Project, Marina Gershon, Danila Apasov, Lea Elleseff and Lily Gershon, talk about building their communal homestead in the unfinished part of the common house. AARON MUNZER / CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Homestead’s focus on sustainable, communal living

By Aaron Munzer
Correspondent

FREEVILLE — In front of a video camera, Joe Fisher and Danila Apasov are stomping on and leaping against a bale of straw they’re trying to wedge into the wall of the first structure built on their land. “Straw bale (construction) is good for aggression,” Fisher says, as he punches a bale into place. It’s tough, dusty work. But with the video camera around, it seems more like fun, as their friend Lea Elleseff narrates and the other two take viewers on a whimsical tour of the building process, from the sweaty work of digging the drainage ditch to walloping bales to compress them into the walls of the sustainable, low-impact building.

When it’s all done, Elleseff congratulates them. “Purdy as pie,” she says. In other early videos, the six members of the Dacha Project — a sustainable, educational homestead started by six young adults three years ago — explore gravel tamping, explain how to plant fall garlic and discuss the best way to convert a car to run on biodiesel. The other three members are Lily Gershon, Marina Gershon and Sharon Zetter.

Learn as you go
Two years later, four members of the Dacha Project sit around their communal kitchen table, drinking hot herbal tea as the winter sunlight streams through their large, passive solar windows and heats their earth-bermed liv-

ON THE WEB
For more information on the Dacha Project, visit www.dachaproject.com or www.dachaproject.com/blog

ing space. Although it’s cold and raining outside, it’s room temperature inside, and the wood stove hasn’t been on for days. It’s their second building, their first home, and a monumental achievement for them, considering that all but one of them had no building experience three years ago. “At first it was hard for anyone, even us, to imagine that we could do this,” Apasov says, smiling. “Now, two and a half years later, we’ve had some successes, and we’ve proven that we can build a house.”

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New Roots spreads to State Theatre

School to add senior class

By Rachel Stern
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New Roots Charter School is expanding — both in grade levels and space. The school announced Friday that the board of trustees approved a lease agreement to rent space in the State Theatre in Ithaca. A senior year program will be housed in the new space. In addition, the school will use the theater for practices, performances and programming during the school day. “We are absolutely thrilled because the location and synergy of the building are ideal,” said New Roots Principal Tina Nilsen-Hodges. “We also look forward to supporting the historic State Theatre, so it is a great win-win situation for both organizations.”

On the second floor of

the theater there is unused office space that the school will convert into classrooms, she said. The old box office on the first floor also will be used as classroom space. The charter school started two years ago with grades 9 and 10. At the beginning of this school year an 11th grade was added. The school had reached capacity at the Clinton House, which is on North Cayuga Street a block away from the State Theatre, and was looking for space for the new senior class at the beginning of this year, Nilsen-Hodges said. The school’s new senior year program will be a transitional one, she said, and feature about 35 students. The program will emphasize college coursework, internships, year-long projects focusing on community sustainability and development of an online digital portfolio for college application purposes.

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New Roots Charter School 11th-grade students Ezra Davis, foreground, and Jonathan Seaman, back left, show third-grade students the worms in their composting system recently. SIMON WHEELER / STAFF PHOTO

Toxic flame retardants found in 80% of baby products

By Liz Szabo
Gannett

Eighty percent of baby products contain toxic or untested chemical flame retardants, according to a new study of products such as car seats, changing pads and portable cribs.

One-third of products, which also included nursing pillows, contained a chemical called chlorinated tris, which was removed from children’s pajamas in the 1970s because of cancer concerns, though the chemical was never banned, says a study released Wednesday

in Environmental Science & Technology. The Environmental Protection Agency has said there is a “moderate level of concern” about links between tris and cancer, developmental problems, reproductive problems and other health concerns. The Consumer Product

Safety Commission also has found that tris “may pose a significant health risk,” spokesman Scott Wolfson says. Another flame retardant, called TCEP, was found in 10 of the nursing pillows tested. California lists TCEP as a carcinogen.

Toddlers have levels of flame retardants in their bodies three times higher than adults, says Sonya Lunder, a scientist with the Environmental Working Group. That’s partly because kids spend so much time on the floor, where chemicals can accumulate in household

dust, and because they frequently put their fingers in their mouths, the study says. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has found flame retardants in the bodies of 90 percent of Americans.

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A quick and easy vegetable garden
How to plan and plant the most basic vegetable garden with little time and effort.
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