

FROM THE BUSINESS FRONT

COAL

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mined by private companies from leases on federal land, primarily in Western states.

Coal lease sales were temporarily shut down under President Barack Obama because of climate concerns, then revived under President Donald Trump as he sought to bolster the declining industry.

Among President Joe Biden's first actions in his first week in office was to suspend oil and gas lease sales — a move later blocked by a federal judge — and he faced pressure from environmental groups to take similar action against coal.

Few leases have been sold in recent years as coal demand shrank drastically, but the industry's opponents want to ensure it can't make a comeback as wildfires, drought, rising sea levels and other effects of climate change worsen, according to a report last week from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The U.S. Interior Department review will consider the effects of coal mining on air quality and the local environment, whether leasing decisions should consider if the fuel will be exported, and how coal supports the nation's energy needs.

The agency said it will take 30 days of public comment and plans to announce its next steps by

November.

The coal program brought in \$387 million for federal and state coffers through royalties and other payments last year, according to government data. It supports thousands of jobs and has been fiercely defended by industry representatives, Republicans in Congress and officials in coal-producing states.

"Our public lands are intended for multiple uses, including the production of affordable, reliable energy for all Americans, and we look forward to providing comment throughout the government's review," said Ashley Burke with the National Mining Association, an industry lobbying group.

JOBLESS CLAIMS

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now despite the worries surrounding the spread of the delta variant.

"As life normalizes and the service sector continues to gain momentum (delta variant permitting), we expect initial jobless claims to remain in a downtrend," Joshua Shapiro, chief U.S. economist at the consulting firm Maria Fiorini Ramirez, said in a research note.

Shapiro added that "this report points to a continued rapid pace of job gains since the July employment data were collected."

Some employers ascribe their labor shortages to supplemental unemployment benefits from the



A Now Hiring sign at a business in Richmond, Virginia, on June 2.

federal government — including \$300 a week on top of regular state aid — for discouraging some of the jobless from seeking work. In response, many states have withdrawn from the federal programs, which expire nationwide next month anyway.

Economists point to other factors, too, that have

kept some people on the sidelines of the job market. They include difficulty finding or affording child care, fear about becoming infected by the virus at work and the desire of some people to seek better jobs than they had before the pandemic triggered widespread layoffs.



JENNIFER REYNOLDS/The Daily News

Coco Crepes, Waffles & Coffee in League City reopened after expanding into a larger space at Pinnacle Park.

BIZ BUZZ

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and Flores had been good to him as he worked in the kitchen Thursday.

Look for a 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sept. 18 official grand opening featuring Ronald McDonald himself, Carrie Perez said.

Through the crepevine:

Fans of Coco Crepes, Waffles & Coffee in League City have more to love. The popular franchise, 2471 I-45 in Pinnacle Park, has expanded to take over the space of Little Bella Mia, with which it shared a building.

Owner Manish Maheshwari, who celebrated the expansion with a ribbon-cutting this week, said he envisions the larger Coco Crepes to be a dining and community gathering place where patrons enjoy meals or dessert — or both — along with wine, beer, coffee and espresso drinks. The eatery serves breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Running two restaurants under one roof is complicated. Running any restaurant during a pandemic is doubly complicated, Maheshwari said.

"We had to pick one," he said. "The one concept that fits our thought process and mentality — one that would build a community that comes together — was CoCo Crepes," he said. "There were already many Italian restaurants."

The 2,800-square-foot CoCo Crepes serves savory and sweet crêpes, waffles, paninis, gelatos and more. To promote a gathering place and café vibe, the expanded space is furnished with lounging couches.

For the uninitiated, a crêpe is a type of very thin pancake and there are two types: sweet crêpes and savory galettes with a variety of fillings.

**Booze you can use:** Raise a toast to the latest island business transac-



STUART VILLANUEVA/The Daily News

Cheeseburgers are assembled in the kitchen at the newly remodeled McDonald's restaurant on Interstate 45 in La Marque.



JENNIFER REYNOLDS/The Daily News

Manish Maheshwari, owner of Coco Crepes, Waffles & Coffee in League City, brews an espresso shot for a customer's latte Thursday.

tion. T.J. Bath and Dan Hawkins have sold their two Economy Liquor stores — 13655 FM 3005 and 1911 23rd St. in Galveston — to two different owners. Travis Massey has acquired the FM 3005 store on the island's West End and Troy Napatalung has acquired the 23rd Street location.

When Bath and Hawkins acquired the Economy Liquor stores in 2013 from Bob and Evelyn McCurry, they had goals in mind and knew where they wanted to take the business, they said.

"We achieved those goals," Bath said. The partners wanted to spend

more time with family and friends, they said.

The new owners intend to keep staff and retain wholesale and retail clients, Bath said.

"They saw this as a chance to buy an established business," he said. "While we had a lot of different opportunities to sell, we went for the right opportunities for Galveston. The two buyers really wanted to be a part of the Galveston community as much as possible."

Bath and Hawkins, who plan to continue being contributing members to the island community, wanted to thank longtime customers.

"We want to express our gratitude to all of our customers," Hawkins said. "They've been great. We've made great friends."

The Economy Liquor on 23rd St. was established more than 30 years ago.

**Next week:** Leases are brisk at the 12-story United States National Bank Building, 2201 Market St. in the island's downtown, reports Tom Schwenk, owner and broker of Tom's Galveston Real Estate, the sole leasing agent for the building. Read about occupancy in that building and much more in next week's Biz Buzz.

Laura Elder: 409-683-5248; laura.elder@galvnews.com.

CITY OF GALVESTON NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON FISCAL YEAR 2022 BUDGET

The City Council of the City of Galveston, Texas, will hold a public hearing during the City Council meeting on September 9, 2021, which begins at 5:00 p.m. to receive comments regarding the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget. Said hearing will be held at City Hall, located at 823 Rosenberg, Galveston, Texas 77553.

Persons wishing to make an in-person comment to the City Council may do so by attending the public hearing mentioned above. Persons wishing to make a comment via Zoom may do so by registering in advance of the meeting using the link: [https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/WN\\_JuXK9eckQTmRjH8ws1z9sQ](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/WN_JuXK9eckQTmRjH8ws1z9sQ)

The proposed budget is available for inspection online at [www.galvestontx.gov](http://www.galvestontx.gov).

"This budget will raise more total property taxes than last year's budget by \$2,435,700 which is a 6.29 percent increase, and of that amount \$707,000 is tax revenue to be raised from new property added to the tax roll this year."

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