

GREATER NEW YORK

Gateway Struggles to Fill CEO Job

By PAUL BERGER

Wanted: Chief executive for one of the nation's largest infrastructure programs. Must be willing to work for two governors and alongside three public agencies. Just 10% of \$30 billion in necessary funding secured. Pay cut may be required.

The Gateway Program Development Corp., whose mission is nothing less than to improve and expand transportation for hundreds of thousands of daily passengers on Amtrak and NJ Transit between Newark and New York City, is struggling to find a leader.

The corporation's trustees had hoped to appoint a chief executive by the end of this summer. But they are still searching, and now say they aim to name a new leader by the end of the year, according to those involved in the search.

If a decision can't be reached soon on a permanent CEO, a person familiar with the hiring process said an interim leader may be hired to replace the current interim chief, who has held the job since July 2016.

\$400K

Approximate minimum salary for the CEO of the Gateway Program

"The project is not suffering for this," said the person familiar with the process, noting that environmental and financial planning for key stages of the work continue to advance.

Gateway's interim executive director, John Porcari, divides his time between Gateway and WSP USA, the engineering and consulting firm where he is

president of U.S. advisory services. He said he had expected to step down from Gateway by now.

"The trustees have interviewed a broad slate of candidates for CEO and we hope to make an appointment before the end of the year," Gateway's Chairman, Richard Bagger, said in a statement.

Gateway encompasses a series of multibillion-dollar projects to upgrade the rail network between Newark and New York City, while doubling capacity from two tracks to four. It includes digging a new tunnel under the Hudson River so the current century-old tunnel, which was damaged in 2012 by superstorm Sandy, can be repaired.

Replacing a temperamental swing bridge over the Hackensack River that single-handedly stalls train traffic on Amtrak's

Northeast Corridor connecting Washington and Boston, also is part of

the program.

Eventually, the Gateway program will require the expansion of New York Penn Station—plagued by delays, in part because it has been operating over capacity for years—to cover an additional block on Midtown Manhattan's west side.

The Gateway project is expected to take more than a decade to complete.

Given the size and scope of the program, and some of the unique institutional issues, the pool of executives capable of overseeing such an enterprise is small. The ideal candidate must have the diplomatic skills to liaise between state and federal agencies, and the project-management skills to steer multibillion-dollar projects.

The salary range, said to be upward of \$400,000 by the person familiar with hiring, is high for the public sector, but low for private-sector management of a program this size.



Ben Walsh, who isn't registered with any political party, spoke to supporters last week after being elected mayor of Syracuse.

Independent's Win In Syracuse Spurs Hopes of Others

By MIKE VILENSKY

The outcome of last week's mayoral race in Syracuse is being hailed by independents as a possible precursor to more candidates carving paths outside of the traditional political parties.

Ben Walsh, a 38-year-old independent who has never held public office, handily defeated his Republican and Democratic rivals, a victory that has earned comparisons to figures such as Emmanuel Macron, a political neophyte who won the French presidency earlier this year by creating his own party.

"What happened to Macron in France happened in Syracuse on a local level," said Ryan Clancy, an independent and strategist for No Labels, a national group that advocates for political consensus. "We would like to think this is indicative of a trend and it will be reinforcing," he added.

Syracuse's new mayor-elect isn't registered with a party but appeared on ballots on the Reform, Independence, and Upstate Jobs lines. He will become the only mayor of a large city in New York not elected as a Democrat or Republican.

Mr. Walsh, who served as an aide to Democratic Mayor Stephanie Miner and had backed Gary Johnson on the Independence line in the 2016 presidential election, initially had discussions with both major parties, but wouldn't agree to register with either. Ms. Miner will leave office in January after reaching her term limit.

During his campaign, Mr. Walsh vowed to put together a diverse coalition focused on improving quality of life as part of his mayoral platform, which ranged from weighty issues such as combating opioid addiction and HIV/AIDS to quirkier ideas like repealing a ban against sledding on Syracuse city property.

"I've never been affiliated with a political party, so I thought to enroll in one for the sake of running for mayor, I wouldn't be staying true to myself," he said.

Mr. Walsh appeared to be a long shot in the seat of Onondaga County—which Hillary Clinton won by more than 10 points in the 2016 presidential election—until he won a write-in campaign in the Independence Party primary, defeating the party's preferred candidate and securing the party's line for the general election.

'What happened to Macron in France happened in Syracuse on a local level.'

Mr. Walsh then worked to win endorsements from Democrats and framed himself as a break from political brawling in a polarized era and city with the slogan "Rise Above." "People here, like a lot of people around the country, are a little fed up with constant fighting," said Ed Riley, a 62-year-old Syracuse developer and registered Republican who backed Mr. Walsh.

The city also is grappling with a poverty crisis, a focus of Mr. Walsh's campaign that helped him win over Democrats.

"I believe wholeheartedly Ben is committed to the economic growth of the city," said Sharon Owens, a Democratic activist in Syracuse who broke with her party and endorsed Mr. Walsh.

It helped that Mr. Walsh had local name recognition as the son of James Walsh, who represented the Syracuse area as a Republican congressman for 20 years.

Ben Walsh's success Tuesday. Please see RACE page A10B



Maureen Rover with a group of kindergartners. She founded a literacy program in New York City for poor children at high risk of failure.

Program Gives Children a Leg Up on Literacy

By LESLIE BRODY

Maureen Rover was having her usual coffee and muffin for breakfast one morning in the late 1990s when a newspaper story about New York City state test scores caught her attention. She was dismayed to see that a third of the city's public-school children were far behind in reading at the crucial gateway of third grade.

Out went her plan to relax in retirement after a career in banking and educational publishing. Instead, Ms. Rover, now 74 years old, founded the Reading Team, a nonprofit that brings free literacy lessons and books to poor children at high risk of failure.

Launched in 2001, it has grown to reach more than 800 children in Harlem, from preschool through eighth grade, at P.S. 36 and a separate site nearby. An independent study in 2009 found the program

Reading Team Gets Results, Study Finds

Sheldon Shuch, a former city Department of Education administrator in charge of literacy in Harlem, found in his 2009 study that the Reading Team had positive effects, with students who joined its preschool program going on to read on grade level in third grade and outperforming the city overall on state tests.

He cautioned, however, that

had a significant impact.

Ms. Rover, a New Yorker who volunteers as president of the nonprofit, recently received an award from World of Children, a California group that honors five people around the globe each year who make a difference in children's lives. The \$50,000 prize will go to

the sample size was small and many children left the group he was tracking for a variety of reasons. Of the 302 students assessed in preschool, 79 remained in the study 4½ years later.

"One could argue the kids who dropped out were the worst readers, or the best readers, who knows?" Mr. Shuch said. "But Maureen [Rover] is very sincere, she is really doing important stuff, and she stuck with the program, which is very unusual. What she was doing is very commendable."

support the Reading Team, whose \$1 million annual budget is funded by a range of foundations and donors.

What is key, Ms. Rover said, is that the Reading Team starts working with children early, through partnerships with a range of Harlem child-care centers. "When they're 3

and 4, they still believe they can do anything," she said. In the nonprofit's after-school program for later elementary grades, the work is more difficult: "By the time they're referred to us, they're already feeling they're not very smart or they're not good kids because

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio has dispatched literacy coaches to high-need districts in an effort to get all second-graders to read on level by 2026, but skeptics say students won't make real strides until city public-school class sizes are smaller.

—Leslie Brody

Please see TEACH page A10B



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GREATER NEW YORK

N.J. Project Scraps Mall in Reboot

By KEIKO MORRIS

Plans for one of New Jersey's largest mixed-use developments once called for a massive "fortress mall," a 2.2 million-square-foot building clad with giant digital screens rivaling Las Vegas and Times Square, according to a 2012 marketing video.

Fast-forward five years: The venture behind the \$2.5 billion Sayreville development has brought in a new partner, slashed the amount of retail space and jettisoned the mall concept in favor of a downtown-like retail village that mixes shops, restaurants, offices and apartments.

"Retail used to stand alone, but now in many cases, it's not able to stand alone," said Mark Toro, a managing partner at North American Properties, which recently joined the development venture. "Here you will have, as on a city street, storefronts one after another and a pedestrian experience that has much more appeal than the sidewalk of a shopping center or the interior of a mall."

The new plans and new partner reflect the upheaval in the retail industry.

The new plans and new partner of this 418-acre project in central New Jersey, now called "Riverton," reflect the upheaval in the retail industry across the country, as both merchants and landlords adjust to changing shopping habits and growing e-commerce.

As many large traditional mall chains cut store locations, mall owners have been adding dining and entertainment venues, fitness centers, medical offices and in some cases supermarkets to boost customer visits. Owners also have incor-



Rendering of a Sayreville, N.J., development that was reworked to create a downtown-like retail village.

porated apartments and office space near or on their properties as a way to build in regular customer traffic.

"The enclosed mall is still viable, however the United States has been over-stored and over-malled for years with almost four times the [retail] density of other developed countries," said Michael Brown, a partner in the retail practice of A.T. Kearney, a strategy and management consulting firm. "We don't need more of them."

Nationally, new retail construction has fallen over the years, dropping to 92 million square feet of stores and shopping-center construction starts expected this year from 118 million square feet in 2014, according to Dodge Data & Analytics, a construction industry research and software firm.

The updated Sayreville project calls for about 1 million square feet of retail space, roughly half the amount of retail space anticipated in a prior version. The development also will include 1 million square feet of office space and about

2,000 residential units of both apartment and single-family homes—the same amount included in prior plans.

The site, located on the Raritan River and along several highways, will include a marina and two hotels.

While apartments, single-family housing and office space have made up a significant portion of the development's plans since its early stages, these elements had been separate, surrounding a traditional mall and big-box stores and accompanied by a sea of parking.

PGIM Real Estate, the real-estate business of Prudential Financial Inc., has been an investor in the site since 2008 and had formed the previous joint venture with O'Neill Properties Group.

It won support from local and state officials and invested millions of dollars to clean up the site, once owned by a paint manufacturer.

In March, PGIM reached an agreement to acquire O'Neill Properties' stake in the development for an undisclosed

amount. North American Properties was tapped as a new partner because of its record developing suburban mixed-use communities with an urban vibe and pedestrian-friendly streetscape, Mr. Toro said.

The Sayreville development's previous plan received approvals, as well as a \$223 million Environmental Redevelopment & Growth Grant from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority. The new venture, due to be completed in 2021, will have to get approvals from local and state agencies for the amended plan and, afterward, will begin the process of securing financing. It already has the support of Sayreville Mayor Kennedy O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien, now in his fifth term, began working toward redeveloping the former industrial property almost two decades ago with county officials.

"All things go in a circle," Mr. O'Brien said. "For me, Main Street is something that is very comfortable and familiar to me, but for some of my kids it's going to be a new experience."



Literacy mentor Vanessa Maldonado from the Reading Team helped student Sindou Diomande with his homework.

TEACH

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cause they feel lost or limited in their abilities."

By its tally, the Reading Team said 79% of its students in grades three through five passed state tests in English last spring, almost double the rate for the city as a whole.

By another measure, the Test of Early Reading Ability, its preschoolers jumped from a mean score in the 22nd percentile nationwide in fall 2016 to the 88th percentile by June. That test looks at knowledge of the alphabet and the ability to construct meaning from print.

The Reading Team uses a combination of small group lessons, songs, puppets, storytelling and computer-based lessons from Waterford Early Learning, a software program that adapts to each student's skills and pace. Students get one-on-one help if they need it.

On a recent morning at P.S. 36, 11 prekindergartners sat in three different circles, determined by their needs. Their playful exercises were steeped in the traditional approach of phonics, or decoding words by sounding them out. In one cluster, literacy mentor Mary Escalante held up a picture of a yo-yo. "Can you make the sound of a Y for me?" she asked, prompting a chorus of "ya ya ya" from her young charges.

Their homeroom teacher,

Betty Kouassi, said the small group lessons helped build confidence. "They're not fearful of using the tools," she said, "and have a sense of 'I can do it.'"

At P.S. 36, every K-2 class comes to the Reading Team's room twice a week. Older students are referred by teachers for after-school enrichment.

The project's other venue is located in a former hotel on Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard in Harlem. Children from some nearby child-care centers go twice a week for 90 minutes. Its after-school program also attracts students who need extra help from 18 local elementary schools for more than three hours every week-day. Middle schoolers come on Saturdays.

David McNeal said his son started attending the Reading Team daily in kindergarten when he was behind in skill level, and now he is on target in third grade, despite his challenges with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. "Not only are the children relaxed but they're engaged," Mr. McNeal said.

The Reading Team's literacy mentors often are graduate students in education. They get 50 hours of training before starting, according to the program.

Ms. Rover didn't expect to be working so hard at the non-profit at this point. "I accepted it would take a while to raise money," she said, "but I'm a little bit surprised that I'm still doing heavy lifting, 17 years in."



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GREATER NEW YORK WATCH

CONNECTICUT

Budget Details Lure Legislators to Capitol

Connecticut lawmakers aren't done yet with the state budget.

There are tentative plans for members of the Senate and House to return to Hartford, the state capital, this week—the Senate on Tuesday and the House on Wednesday—to make several changes to the recently passed, two-year, \$41.3 billion bipartisan budget.

Lawmakers are expected to weigh compromise language being crafted by Democratic Gov. Dannel Malloy and the Connecticut Hospital Association that is supposed to ensure the state receives as much as \$1 billion in federal revenue. The money is tied to a tax on hospitals as part of a federal reimbursement formula.

Legislators also are expected to fix language that held up \$26.4 million in elderly rental assistance, as well as some other changes described as minor.

—Associated Press

NEW YORK

Medical Marijuana Approved for PTSD

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed legislation Saturday to add post-traumatic stress disorder to the list of ailments that legally can be treated with medical marijuana.

The PTSD bill was part of a package of legislation Mr. Cuomo signed to mark Veterans Day.

"Our veterans risked their lives in order to defend the ideals and principles that this nation was founded upon and it is our duty to do everything we can to support them when they return home," Mr. Cuomo said.

The Democratic governor said 19,000 New Yorkers with PTSD could be helped by medical marijuana. The potential beneficiaries include veterans, as well as police officers and survivors of domestic violence, crimes and accidents, Mr. Cuomo said.

New York's medical-marijuana law allows patients with illnesses including cancer, AIDS and Parkinson's disease to use non-smokable forms of the drug.

—Associated Press

RACE

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day stands in contrast to other independents around New York.

In the New York City mayoral election, no candidate outside of the two parties scored more than 3% of the vote. Bo Dietl, an independent who appeared in two televised debates, scored just 1%.

Former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg ran his first race as a Republican and then became unaffiliated, but he maintained the GOP ballot line in his elections.

Rachel Honig, who lost a New York City Council race while running without a major party, said Mr. Walsh's win is "absolutely hopeful, but...just the start," adding that candidates without a party still often lack endorsements and donations.

State University of New

York political scientist Gerald Benjamin said New York villages and school boards often elect nonpartisan leaders, but there is little precedent for an unaffiliated mayor in a major jurisdiction.

Located between Albany and Rochester, Syracuse is one of upstate New York's largest cities, with some 150,000 people. In the early 1900s, the city elected a mayor on the Progressive line, which was affiliated with President Theodore Roosevelt.

Nick Troiano, an independent and director of the Centrist Project, a group that backs independent candidates, was in contact with Mr. Walsh and cheered the outcome. Mr. Troiano said the environment is "primed" for independents to succeed because both parties poll poorly.

"But it takes a credible individual to be competitive because voters want to know they're not wasting their votes," he said.

Jets Lose in Tampa, Fall to 4-6



TAKEN DOWN: Jets linebacker Demario Davis stopped Buccaneers running back Doug Martin on a play Sunday, but New York still lost the away game 15-10. Next week is a bye week for the Jets.

STEVE NESIUS/ASSOCIATED PRESS