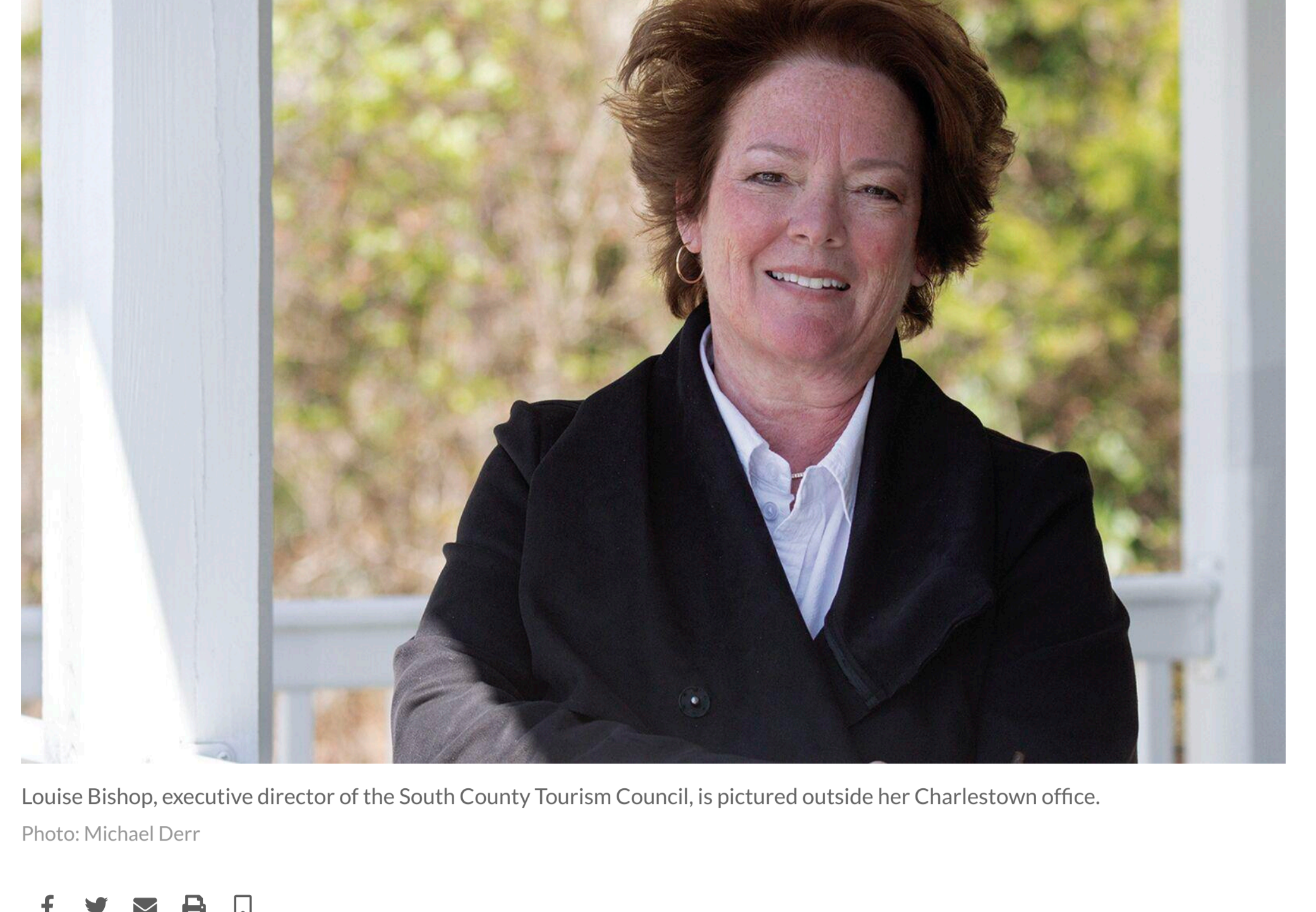


Our owners are our customers. Navigant

FEATURED

South County Tourism Council steps up efforts to promote area

By Bill Seymour Special to the Independent May 22, 2021



Louise Bishop, executive director of the South County Tourism Council, is pictured outside her Charlestown office.

CHARLESTOWN, R.I. — The South County Tourism Council, which promotes 11 towns up and down the state's southern coast, is pushing the area as a summer return-to-destination spot as pandemic fears dissipate with the winter chills.

Louis Bishop, council president, told The Independent last week that the council is using over \$360,000 in state-allocated funds from hotel-tax revenue to support its mission to advertise South County from New England to Washington, D.C.

"My goal is to bring people in as the go-to drive market," said Bishop about the emphasis that South County is only a few hours car ride away from anywhere in the Northeast — and well worth the trip.

It's been a tough year for tourism-related businesses throughout the county. Early spring signs, say executives of tourism councils and chambers of commerce, indicate a strong rebound.

Many bellwether businesses such as rental agencies, boat sellers and retail businesses echo the same sentiments.

Bishop pointed out that some of tourism council's data on private home rental shows an increase over 2019 and 2020 already. "I am anticipating good solid numbers in that category as the season develops," she said.

Her findings mirror the national data collected by Pocuswright, a firm that studies trends in the travel industry.

Consumers, when asked late last year whether they were more or less confident that travel would be safe in the new year — compared to how they felt during the height of the pandemic — expressed confidence.

Nearly 50% of U.S. respondents said they felt more confident it would be safe to travel, the firm reported.

That number is expected to grow as more people became vaccinated against COVID-19 and had the itch to plan a summer vacation.

Raising the flag

To help put South County in front of those making summer plans, the council — established by state law to promote tourism — has contracted for seven digital billboards from New York to Washington, D.C.

It also has teamed up for an advertising effort with WGBH in Boston to tap into the Massachusetts market of day-trippers, people wanting weekend getaways and traditional summer vacationers.

In addition, the council has also placed online digital ads on national magazine websites and dipped into some radio advertising as well, she said.

Bishop said the council is also using gift baskets with various advertisements and discount cards to lure people to the region. They are given to chambers of commerce to use for promotion and one special effort focused on fundraising for the Chorus of Westerly.

As one of the 11 towns in the council's region, Westerly and its attractions, such as the chorus, can be a drawing card for visitors who buy a gift basket, she said, adding that this effort brought about \$4,000 to the group.

The chorus includes in its membership one-third children ages 8 – 16 and two-thirds adults of all ages. Adults rehearse once a week for two hours. Children rehearse twice a week for one hour and attend an eight-day music camp directed each August.

Outlook on the summer

"From all we hear, people are feeling safe and want to come back. Hotels put safety first and people will come back. This is without question. We are another drive-to-market," Bishop said.

This is a marked contrast to her assessment last July, when South County saw a resurgence in hotel and other lodging numbers in mid-summer after a fall in early spring when the pandemic and accompanying restrictions were flattening the tourist industry.

At that time, South County, like Cape Cod experienced, an unexpected influx of people — after massive cancellations of accommodations bookings in March and early April.

Vacationers just want to spend time here, perhaps a short drive from their homes elsewhere, and enjoy a traditional summer vacation, Bishop said last July with some caution that "it is still a mixed bag of issues."

This year that is not her view or that of others who promote the local tourist economy.

Kristin Urbach, executive director of the North Kingstown Chamber of Commerce, said, "Our local economy will experience a burst after May 28 as regulations become less restrictive for social gatherings, events, dining, and more!"

"At the NK Chamber of Commerce, that also serves as an official tourism center, we're experiencing an increase of tourism related inquiries," she said.

CBNC recently reported that COVID vaccines, flexible cancellation policies and people yearning to break free from home are creating expectations for a booming summer travel season already appearing through reservations in the national travel industry.

A survey from research company Toluna indicates Americans are gaining confidence to travel with each passing month, with 27% comfortable to travel in April and 42% by July.

Joseph Viele, executive director of the Southern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce, reported that his members feel good about a strong season ahead. They are buoyant by a coronavirus vaccine helping to ease fears, he added.

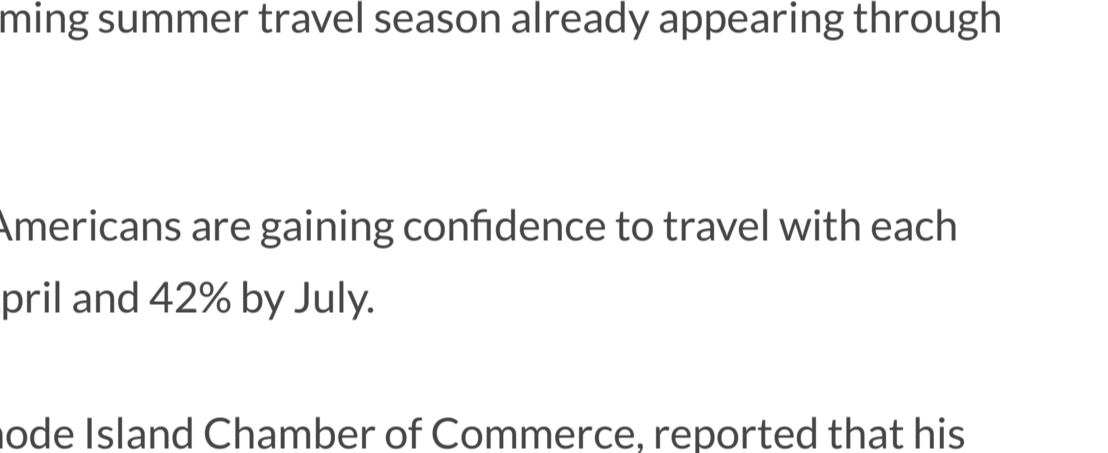
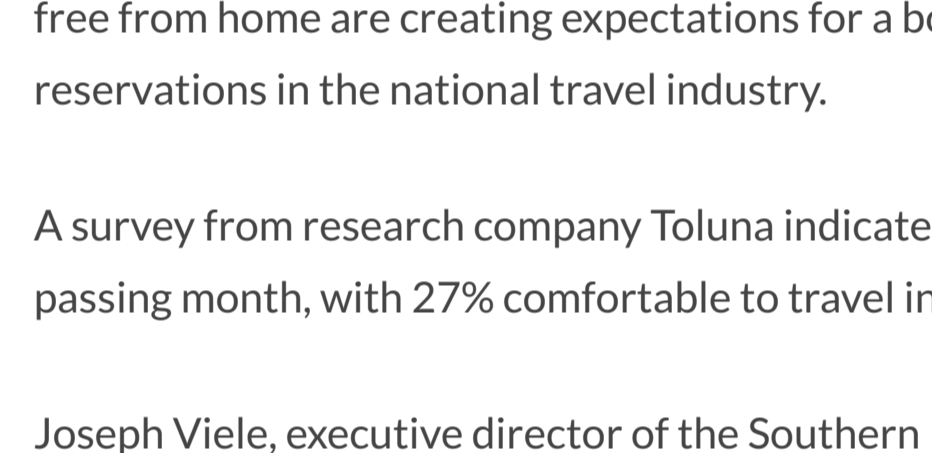
"We already are seeing signs of life in businesses. There are more people in restaurants and some of the state's restrictions have eased and that is making for a better business climate," he said this week.

Write to Bill Seymour, freelance writer covering news and feature stories, at independent.southcountylife@gmail.com.

Facebook, Twitter, Email, Print, Share icons

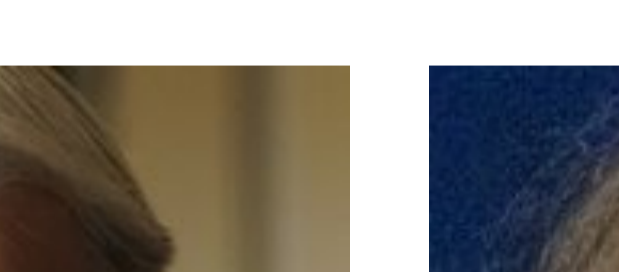
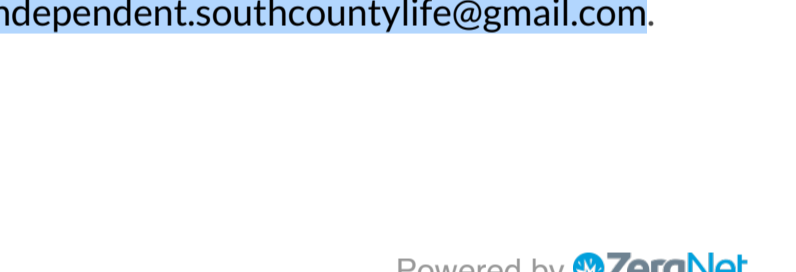
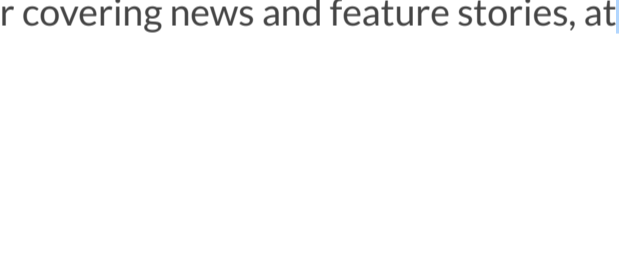
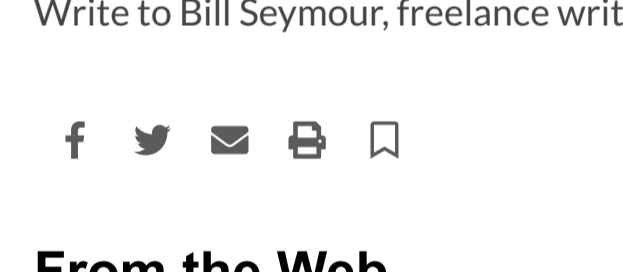
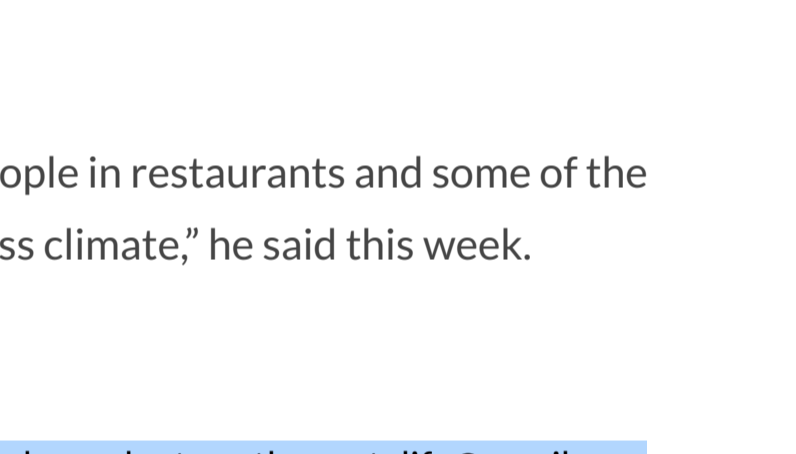
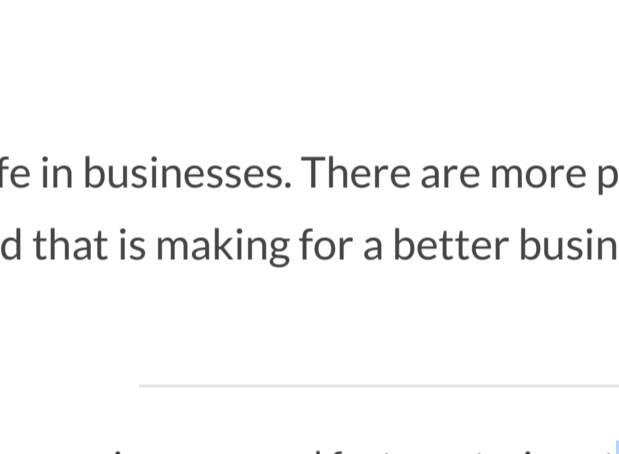
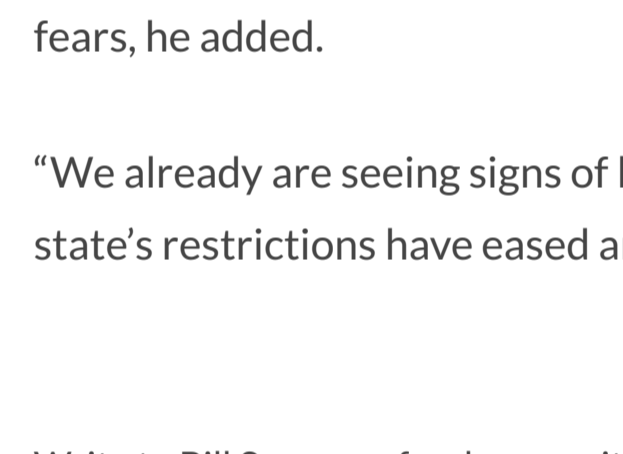
From the Web

Powered by ZergNet



You May Like

Promoted Links by Taboola



You May Like

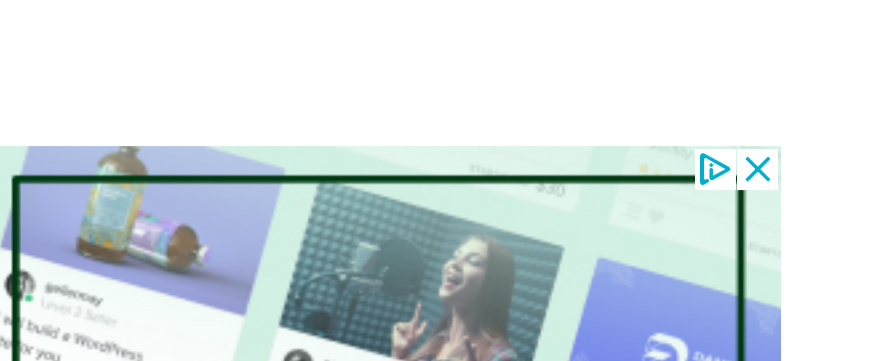
Promoted Links by Taboola

- The Gerber Life Grow-Up® Plan - Get A Free Quote
Remember Connie Stevens? This Is Her At 82
Iconic Vintage Images Not Published In History Books

- Battle over coastal access sparks strife between private beach owners, RI residents
Developer hints Lighthouse Inn plans may change
The Windmill Building on Clarke Road has a long and storied history in Narragansett

(0) COMMENTS

Welcome to the discussion. Log In



ONLINE POLL

Do you plan to continue wearing a mask while in public this summer?

As the state of Rhode Island continues to see positive trends in all COVID-19 metrics, Gov. Dan McKee this week rescinded the state's mask mandate for residents who are fully vaccinated.

Yes No

Vote View Results

LATEST NEWS

- The View From Swampston: Joshua Vaughn Himes' impact on religion still lives on today
Living to 100 is rare but, for Dorothy Verrecchia and Sylvester Cafoni, this year is more than a birthday
NK Chamber says first wind turbine challenge a success

MOST POPULAR

Articles

- Zarnetske resigns as SK Town Manager after Council loses confidence
Calamari Festival moved to new date following backlash
Pair of statues in rough shape following vandalism, rain damage

OTHER PUBLICATIONS



PROMOTE YOUR EVENT

Log In / Sign Up

MORE EVENTS

powered by event



The Independent newspaper 9,911 likes

As the state of Rhode Island continues to see positive trends in all COVID-19 metrics, Gov. Dan McKee this week rescinded the state's mask mandate for residents who are fully vaccinated.

That means, for the first time in over a year, Rhode Islanders who are two weeks past their final dose of either the Moderna, Pfizer of Johnson and Johnson vaccines are no longer required to cover their faces or socially distance in all but a few public places.

Still, some residents do not feel fully comfortable shedding the masks that have become commonplace outside of their homes. Do you plan to continue wearing a mask while in public this summer? Let us

Tweets by @IndependentRI

IndependentNewspaper @IndependentRI

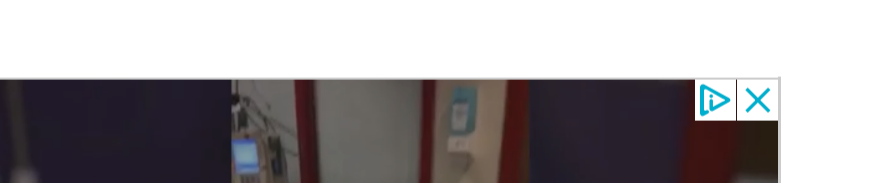
South Kingstown Town Manager Robert Zarnetske announced this morning that, following a falling out with a majority of the town council, he will resign his post.

Reporter Bill Seymour has the exclusive story here: independentri.com/news/article_3...



May 18, 2021

Embed View on Twitter



powered by INSTICATOR

Laurel Lane Country Club 18-Hole Public Golf Course Best Value Public Golf in Rhode Island