### Putting Tosca on the couch. Magazine, C-1

# Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

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TUESDAY MARCH 21, 2006

Pittsburgh Task Force moved aside

### O'Connor grabs lead role in Fifth-Forbes development

Pittsburgh Mayor Bob O'Connor will take charge of redeveloping publicly owned properties on Fifth and Forbes avenues Downtown, replacing the private group that has been leading the effort for more than a year.

a year.
Mr. O'Connor has told the

Pittsburgh Task Force that he would take the lead role in finding developers for nearly 20 Urban Redevelopment Authority-owned properties in the rundown retail corridor.

Over the last year, the task force has been instrumental in recruiting Milleraft Industries Inc. of Washington County to buy the Lazarus-Macy's store and in generating a \$50 million to

\$60 million proposal from Washington, D.C., developer Madison Marquette to redevelop other buildings in the carridot. Mr. D'Connor stressed yesterday that he doesn't intend to go it alone. He said he wants all good Downtown stakeholders to be involved in revitalization of the retail district.
To that end, Mr. O'Connor and the URA plan to seek a planner

and designer to help develop standards for buildings, streets, sidewalks and other aspects of the corridor, with input from the task force, the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership, the Cultural Trust, property owners and others.

and others.

Mr. O'Connor said one of his main goals will be to ensure

SEE MAYOR, PAGE A-6

#### **CHAOS IN GAZA**



Palestinian police officers, one injured, take cover during a gunbattle with Palestinian gunmen on the road leading to the Erez crossing between the Gaza Strip and Israel near the village of Beit Hanoun yesterday. The battle was one of five confrontations between militants and police that left 23 people injured. The clashes highlighted the Gaza Strip's raging chaos, which will prese a daunting challenge to the incoming Hamas government. Story, Page A-4

### Bush defends optimism on Iraq

City he cited, however, may not remain peaceful long

■ President Bush

By Peter Baker

'ine Washington Post

CLEVELAND — As President
Bush tells the tale, the battle for
Tal Afar offers a case study in
how U.S. and Iraqi forces working together can root out insurgents and restore stability. "The
example of Tal Afar," he told an
audience here yesterday, "gives
me confidence in our strategy."
Reports from the streets of Tal
Afar, half a world away, offer a

more complex story. U.S. forces last fall did drive out radicals who had brutalized the mid-size city near the Syrian border. But lately, residents say, the city has taken another dark turn. "The armed men are fewer," Nassir Sebti, 42, an air-conditioning mechanic, tolda Washington Post interviewer yesterday, "but the assassinations between Sunni and Shiftes have in week and the same than th

has had in reassuring a doubtful American public that progress is being made in Irea, The president and his aides say that the positive developments in Iraq are overwhelmed by the grim pictures of mayhem and massacre that dominate the evening news. If Americans knew about the success stories, the White House maintains, they would understand Mr. Bush's confidence.

SEE BUSH, PAGE A-3

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Women represent more than half the region's work force but less than 10 percent of board members and senior executives at the region's 55 largest public companies, according to a Post-Gazette analysis. But heavy representation in the arts and university sector helps lift women overall to 28 percent of board seats and 26 percent of staff positions at 185 of the region's biggest companies and nonprofits. For more on the study as well as a rundown of the region's biggest, most profitable and fastestgrowing public companies, see this year's **Top 50 in Business**, **Section E** 



### Tagliabue steps down from NFI

By Gerry Dulac

russough Post-Cazette
Having made a living handling fractious negotiations and brokering labor agreebrokering labor agreegoing to be talked into changing his mind.
When he called Steelers Chairman Dan Rooney yesterday morning, there was no compromising on his course of action.

the first person Mr. Tagliabue elected to call shortly after 9 a.m. And it was Mr. Kooney who informed each of the league's other 31 teams, via e-mail, that Mr. Tagliabue, 65, is retiring after 16 years as NFL commissioner, effective July 31.

He leaves a legacy of having expanded the league by four teams, realigned the divisions, revamped the scheduling formula and twice negotiated labor agreements with the players union.

SEE NEL PAGE A-2

#### Top church official dismissed in controversy over finances

Pittsongh rockscarete

Confronted by allegations of financial misconduct, the head of the Orthodox Church in America has dismissed a priest from a top administrative post and hired a major law firm to investigate.

A prominent critic of the church's financial practices praised the moves, while an praised the moves, while an other control of the church's the country of the countr

dratick, the ousted chancellor, said his client is a scapegoat. Mark Stokoe, whose Orthodox Christians for Accountability

Web site has detailed the accu-sations, was encouraged that Metropolitan Herman retained as composite misideseds, encouraged corporate misideseds, encouraged and corporate misideseds, encouraged and above board and disclose things so that everyone knows what happened and we can move forward, that would be excellent; said Mr. Stoke of Dayton, Ohio, a former member of the church's Metropolitan Council.

Harry Kutner, an attorney

SEE CHURCH, PAGE A-6

#### County will help out on assess appeals

By Jerome L. Sherman

If you're still wondering whether you should file an assessment appeal this year, Allegheny County may have an answer for you. Chief Executive Dan Onorato yesterday said his office would file appeals for a class of about 9,000 property owners who

bought properties after the 2002 reassessment and subsequently saw their school districts or municipalities win assessment increases based on sales prices. The county is no longer using current market value, or the amount your home would fetch today on the open market, or assess property. Instead, it is a season to a savess property in the amount of the amount your home would fetch today on the open market, or assessment should reflect what it was worth four years ago. Last week, a judge said that system is legal, and county officials are hoping to adjust values for recently purchased properties with assessed values above their 2002 numbers. Properties from 100 of the county's 130 municipalities fit.

SEE ASSESS, PAGE A-6

#### Prostitution ring traded in girls as young as 12

By Robin Erb and Roberta de Boer Block News Alliance

Block News Alliance
HARRISBURG — For a truck stop that became one focus of "Innocence Lost," a major federal inquiry into develope prostitution, The Gables is surprisingly small and homely, "You could sit and watch girls run down the rows, run under the trucks, all didnesses and the state of the country of the property of the proper

On a stretch of roadway just off 1-81 and surrounded by other, larger, better-lit truck stops. The Gables' patch of asphalt ends at the edge of a woods — convenient for hookers hiding from police.

The truck stop was often jammed by late afternoon, according to investigators, especially "party row," the dark far end of the parking lot notorious for "lot lizards."

If she was able to duck the cops and enticed enough cli-

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Weather Cold with a brush of snow. High 34, low 23. Page B-8

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### Mayor takes lead role

MAYOR, FROM PAGE A-1

MATOR, FROM PACE A:
that all development blends together and works in in works and works and works are all to the pack of the

that the UNA has amassed over the last decade as the corration has fallen on hard "We have a lot of money invested in those properties and we want to make sure that we've moving forward." Mr. O'Connor said.

While the mayor intends to take the lead, he added the task force will continue to the way're as well of the way're will the said that interest in the future of Downtown.

an interest in the future of Downtown.

"We will have a collaborative effort. Everyone will be involved. We're going to work with all the organizations of the organization of t

the developer was seeking for the project.
Mr. O'Connor is scheduled to meet with Madison Mar-quette this month.

Mark Belko can be reached mbelko@post-gazette.com 412-263-1262.



Tucked away in the back of Gables of Harrisburg truck stop, which is located off I-81 at Exit 27 in Harrisburg, is "party row," seen in a genryley mirror, where many truckers park to solicit prostitutes. Toledo pinns and prostitutes worked this location

## Truck-stop prostitution

TOLEDO, FROM PAGE A-1

in closets. I'm 'finesseful,' you know what I'm saying?''
Mr. Maes has been accused at least three times of breaking women's noses. But he insisted that he forced no one to do anything. 'These girls, her love the game. They love the game. They love the game, trust me. It's the glumour, it's the pimped-out ride. .. It's Shoop, it's all of that?

I'm girls, it's the great of the state of the control of the con

little kids. It wasn't like that at all — person," he said.

If the girls were forced or scarer, Mr. Scott asked, why didn't they call home? And when they were arrested, Mr. Scott added, why didn't they ask police for help?

In a nondescript strip mall office, West Hanover Township Magistrate Roy Bridges handles everything from wedding vows to murder charges.

His three clerks set out candy on the front counter, and they and Judge Bridges, an avuncular man with a friendly smile, chatted

80

April McSwain was just 14 when she climbed on a bus in 1995 to work in 1995 to work as a prostitute in Harrisburg. She was on her first "date" within hours: "I don't really remember being scared." She was arrested five days later. And she said she long ago left "the game."

with the girls they'd see again and again and

with the girls they'd see again and again and again.

Byen in some of the coldest weather, the judge said. "You should have seen how some of them were dressed. Sometimes troopers would wrap them up in one of those yellow blankets used to cover dead bodies."

Of the more than 100 prostitutes identified in the Harrisburg investigation, about two dozen were underage, officials said. The youngest was 13.

That's not surprising. Researchers and police alike say that 14 is the average age when minors enter the sex trade. But law enforcement said it would be naive to believe that the young teens were willing participants, even though some of the girls may have offered aliases and false Social Security numbers.

In the second of the second of

off the highway with a sock in her mouth."
At least two died. One barely survived, he
said.
"It's not like they're just getting slapped.
These girls are getting violently abused,"
said David Johnson, chief of the FBI's Crimes
Against Children unit.
Beyond that, maintaining control is a matter of psychological conditioning, especially
for girls already fleeting homes of incest, bat
tering, or even simple neglect, said Chip Burrus, the FBI's acting assistant director of the
criminal investigative division. "Normal," he
said, is a relative term.
"A lot of these girls, you wouldn't know
they're victims. They love to brag. You
wouldn't know they were in it against their
will," he said.
Mr. Burrus takes it one step further: "You
can't consent to be a prostitute at age 14. That's
just an impossibility."
But Mr. Sott and other co-defendants
argue that no one is forced into the business.

Besides, Mr. Scott said, he's not even a pimp.
Besides, Mr. Scott said, he's not even a pimp.
If anything, he's in a partnership — and partners are always free to change allegiance.
"She's choosing the best investment for her more," Scott said. "It's like going to Smith Barney or any other firm that invests your

money," Scott said. "It's like going to Smith Barney or any other firm that invests your money."

Certainly there were sporadic turf wars, robberies, and a fight or two at area morels. But for the most part, business stoyed within but for the most part, business stoyed within parager Mike Rimer.

Still, there are surprising ways to measure whether business is booming.

After Pennsylvania State Police began cracking down on the problem in 2004, money from court fines poured in to the West Hanover Township coffers.

In 2003, the township collected \$3,319 in "ordinance fines," which included fines for prostitution or vandalism or trespassing. With undercover police working The Gables the following year, fines jumped almost tenfold, to \$32,450, Mr. Rimer said.

These dorp, The Gables pairing lot is newly. These dorp, The Gables the following year, fines jumped almost tenfold, to \$32,450, Mr. Rimer said.

These dorp, The Gables pairing lot is newly. These dorp, and the control of the proper of the pr

The Block News Alliance consists of the Post-Gazette and The Blade of Toledo, Ohio, which are both ourned by Block Communica tions Inc. Robin Erb and roberta de Boer are staff urriters for The Blade.

### lets go a top official CHURCH, FROM PAGE A-1

Church

from Mineola, N.Y., said Father Kondratick did nothing wrong and questioned the authority of Metropolitan Herman to fire him without Herman to fire him without "Initially these rumors and accusations were begun by a small group of individuals who are personally vindictive against Father Kondratick because of measures he took on behalf of the church. And later it was compounded by the refusal of Metropolitan Herman to space of the church and later it was compounded by the refusal of Metropolitan Herman to space of the church and later it was compounded by the refusal of Metropolitan Herman to space of the church and the compounded by the refusal of the compounded by the sorter to Father Kondratick, and by his order to Father Kondratick and the compounded by the sorter of Eather Kondratick and the compounded by the refusal of the church of the c

wrote.
Mr. Kutner said his client
had cooperated fully with the

auditors.

"Father Kondratick was meeting with [the auditor] on a daily basis... He gave him all the records; he said.

"Since Father Kondratick did not have the final say on church financial matters, the only conclusion I could reach is that he is being made a control financial matters, the only conclusion I could reach is that he is being made as of the said of

Ann Rodgers can be reached at arodgers@post-gazette.com or 412-263-1416.

#### Mayor ends work on plan to rebuild New Orleans

By Cain Burdeau

NEW ORLEANS -MEW ORLEANS —
Mayor Ray Nagin finished
work yesiserday on a plan
to rebuild New Orlean
work of the Mey of the

rebuilding low-lying areas But that suggestion was greeted with jeers and out-

rage at public meetings.

Mr. Nagin, who is running for re-election April 22, distanced himself from that plan, which included a proposed moratorium on building permits in some neighborhoods. Yesterday, he offered to let residents rebuild anywhere but warned this consequence of the second of the

page 1. It has been controversial in some respects, but I am pleased by the results."

#### County to file some appeals itself

ASSESS, FROM PAGE A-1

into that category, Mr. Onorato said yesterday.

"We're going to try to bring closure now to this whole issue," he said. The historical the county manager and the county solicitor of the an appeal on behalf of all of the an appeal on behalf of all of the an appeal on behalf of all of the an appeal on the anti-part of the an appeal on the anti-part of the the county over the next several weeks.

If you've already filed, then the county over the next several weeks.

If you've already filed, then the county will consolidate your appeal with its own.

Still, if there are any doubts, officials encourage property owners to file appeals. All property owners and taxing bodies have a right to challenge 2006 assessment values. About 17,000 aspeals have been filed so far.

The deadline is March 31.

At that point, the county's seven member appeals bed will always to consider each property individually before granting reductions. It cannot legally approve a mass appeal for multiple homeowners, said Isobel Storch, board solicitor.

Mr. Oncrato said county officials would attend the heartings to argue for 2002 values. Homeowners can attend, but they won't be required to do so, he said.

Appeals board members also have been trying to devise ways of easing the process, such as allowing some property owners to mail in evidence.

"We're going to look at the current laws and make a decision as to how this will be handled," said Jerry Y. Speer, appeals board chairman.

Property owners and taxing bodies will have to present information of the control of the con

their own."

But Mr. Weiss, who repre-

sented a group of homeowners in a lawsuit against the base year, said he likely wouldn't challenge Mr. Onorato's proposal for his school district clients. "We'll just deal with these appeals as they come up," he said.

ua. Dominick Gambino, property

assessment manager under former Chief Executive Jim Roddey and a frequent critic of Mr. Onorato's handing of the assessment process, said the county should put its resources into performing equitable, accurate reassessments.

performing equitable, accurate reassessments. "Don't spend everyone's money to give some people lower assessments," he said.
But Mr. Onorwossen brings that But Mr. Onorwossen brings Allegheny County into line with many other counties in the state, including some that haven't reassessed for decades.
"If the state wants to deal with this issue, do it for all 67 counties," he said. "Allegheny County is no longer going to be held to a different standard."

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