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WILDFIRE SEASON IS HERE, FORESTRY OFFICIALS WARN

Metro, B-1



SEARS

SEARS FUTURE IS IN DOUBT

Money, D-1

GOP BRACING FOR PAYBACK

Nation, A-5

Amazon has fourth area center in works

Application filed for sorting warehouse in Northwest Jacksonville

By Roger Bull
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Amazon is planning its fourth facility in Jacksonville.

The e-commerce giant filed an building permit application this week to build out a one-story, 237,052-square-foot warehouse at 4948 Bulls Bay Highway, in the Westside Industrial Park.

The application is for a project only identified as Amazon Phase 2, with a cost of \$500,000. Although not affiliated with Amazon, MWPVL, a supply chain and logistics consulting firm, identifies this warehouse as a sortation center, which sorts packages by ZIP code to pallets that are then delivered to the appropriate post office for delivery. Sortation centers also ship to Amazon delivery stations.

The Seattle-based company has been continual part of Jacksonville business discussion since early last year when signs pointed to Amazon being the company behind what was only known then as Project Rex. The figures were big: \$200 million investment and 1,500 jobs.

By July, the company confirmed that it was building an 800,000-square-foot fulfillment center on Pecan Park Road in North Jacksonville. It's expected to open late this year.

Next came the second distribution center, this one at 13333 103rd St. in the Cecil Commerce Center on the Westside. It's expected to open in 2019, employing 325 people to start and 1,200 eventually. It will handle larger packages, with Jacksonville employees picking, packing and shipping items including household decor, sporting equipment and gardening tools. The Pecan Park facility will handle smaller packages.

Then a permit was is-

AMAZON continues on A-4

Trump campaign chief linked to Putin

White House says no suggestion Manafort did anything improper

By Jeff Horwitz & Chad Day
Associated Press

WASHINGTON | President Donald Trump's former campaign chairman, Paul Manafort, secretly worked for a Russian billionaire to advance the interests of Vladimir Putin a decade

ago and proposed an ambitious political strategy to undermine anti-Russian opposition across former Soviet republics, The Associated Press has learned.

The White House on Wednesday acknowledged the AP's revelations had "started to catch



Paul Manafort worked for a Russian billionaire, The Associated Press learned.

a lot of buzz" but brushed them aside, though some members of Congress expressed alarm. Manafort's activities appeared to contradict previous assertions by the Trump administration and Manafort that he

never worked for Russian interests.

Manafort proposed in confidential strategy plans as early as June 2005 that he would influence politics, business dealings and news coverage inside the United States, Europe and the former Soviet republics to benefit the Putin government, even as U.S.-Russia relations under Republican President George W. Bush grew worse.

Manafort pitched the plans to Russian aluminum magnate Oleg Deripaska, a close Putin ally with whom he eventually signed a \$10 million annual contract beginning in 2006, according to interviews with several people familiar with payments to Manafort and business records obtained by the AP.

Manafort and Deripaska

MANAFORT continues on A-4

4 killed in car, knife attack near Parliament in London



A policeman points a gun at a man on the ground as emergency services attend the scene of an attack outside the Palace of Westminster in London on Wednesday. London police say they are treating a gun and knife incident at Britain's Parliament "as a terrorist incident until we know otherwise." (Photos by Stefan Rousseau/PA via AP)

British leader calls it 'sick, depraved terrorist' attack

Associated Press

LONDON | A knife-wielding man went on a deadly rampage at the heart of Britain's seat of power Wednesday, mowing down pedestrians on London's Westminster Bridge before stabbing an armed police officer to death inside the gates of Parliament. Five people were killed, including the assailant, and 40 others were injured in what Prime Minister Theresa May condemned as a "sick and depraved terrorist attack."

Lawmakers, lords, staff and visitors were locked down as the man was shot by police within the perimeter of Parliament and just yards from entrances to the

building itself. He died, as did two pedestrians on the bridge, and the police officer.

A doctor who treated the wounded said some had "catastrophic" injuries.

In the House of Commons, deputy Speaker Lindsay Hoyle announced that the sitting was being suspended and told lawmakers not to leave.

Police said they were treating the attacks as a terrorist incident and had launched a full counterterrorism investigation. There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

Metropolitan Police counterterrorism chief Mark Rowley said



Conservative Member of Parliament Tobias Ellwood (center), whose brother was killed in the Bali terror attack in 2002, helps emergency services personnel attend to the police officer who was stabbed and later died outside the Palace of Westminster. Five people were killed in Wednesday's attack, including the assailant.

ATTACK continues on A-4

Vitti recommends replacements if he takes Detroit job



Duval County School Board Chairman Paula Wright talks to the media after a meeting she called to discuss Superintendent Nikolai Vitti's possible move. (Will Dickey/Florida Times-Union)

Top staff, plus Clay superintendent, suggested if he takes leaves district

By Denise Smith Amos
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Duval Superintendent Nikolai Vitti urged the School Board in a letter not to look outside the district but to look inside or even in Clay County for his replacement if he leaves the district

for Detroit.

Vitti is one of three final candidates for the Detroit superintendent's job.

Duval Board Chairwoman Paula Wright said Vitti expects to be interviewed for that job April 3 and that the Detroit board may make a decision April 5 or soon after.

It's last candidate interview is schedule for all day April 5.

Wright, during a special meeting of Duval's board Wednesday, set a tentative date for Duval's board to meet again April 7 to discuss the next steps for the district if it must search for a new superintendent. Vitti is on vacation this week and was not invited to Wednesday's meeting.

VITTI continues on A-4

Weather
Chilly gusts
Forecast on A-2

67 Today's high

54 Friday morning's low

Follow us on Facebook
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Classified	D-3	Legals	C-7
Comics	E-3	Life	E
Crosswords	D-5, E-3	Money	D
Editorials	A-6	Obituaries	B-4

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NO. 82
152ND YEAR
5 SECTIONS
34 PAGES

6 5486 00100 4

ATTACK

Continued from A-1

believed there was only one attacker, “but it would be foolish to be overconfident early on.” He said an unarmed policeman, three civilians and the attacker died. Forty others, including three police officers, were injured.

Islamic extremism was suspected in the attack, Rowley said, adding that authorities believe they know the assailant’s identity but would not reveal it while the investigation was ongoing.

The threat level for international terrorism in the U.K. was already listed at severe, meaning an attack is “highly likely.”

Speaking outside 10 Downing St. after chairing a meeting of government’s emergency committee, COBRA, May said that level would not change. She said attempts to defeat British values of democracy and freedom through terrorism would fail.

“Tomorrow morning, Parliament will meet as normal,” she said. Londoners and visitors “will all move forward together, never giving in to terror and never allowing the voices of hate and evil to drive us apart.”

U.S. President Donald Trump was among world leaders offering condolences, and in Paris, the lights of the Eiffel Tower were to be dimmed in solidarity with London.

Wednesday was the anniversary of suicide bombings in the Brussels airport and subway that killed 32 people, and the latest events echoed recent vehicle attacks in Berlin and Nice, France.

As lawmakers were voting inside Parliament, many reported hearing the sound of gunshots. Parliament was locked down for two hours, and adjoining Westminster subway station was shuttered.

Conservative parliamentarian Tobias Ellwood, whose brother was killed in the Bali terror attack in 2002, performed mouth-to-mouth resuscitation on the police officer who was stabbed and later died. About 10 yards away



In this image taken from video police officers gather around a car adjacent to Houses of Parliament in London on Wednesday after the House of Commons sitting was suspended as witnesses reported sounds like gunfire outside. (ITN via AP)

from the police officer was the attacker who was shot dead by police after scaling the security wall toward the Parliament’s grounds.

Ellwood, who served in the British military and served in Bosnia, Northern Ireland, Kuwait and Cyprus, applied pressure to the police officer’s multiple lacerations.

Photographs showed Ellwood’s bloodied hands and face from the police officer’s wounds while the alleged attacker was seen nearby.

Ellwood has been an undersecretary at the Foreign Office since 2014, covering the Middle East and Africa.

After leaving a trail of destruction on the bridge in a gray SUV, the attacker managed to get through tall iron gates and into Parliament’s New Palace Yard, a cobbled courtyard in the shadow of the Big Ben clock tower.

Just yards to the right is the entrance to 1,000-year-old Westminster Hall, the oldest part of the parliamentary complex, busy with visitors and school groups. Beyond that, a corridor leads to the building’s Central Lobby, flanked by House of Commons and House of Lords chambers.

Prime Minister Theresa May was among lawmakers near the Commons at the time of the attack, and was quickly ushered away by security officers and driven back to Downing St.

To get that far, the at-

tacker would have had to evade the armed officers who patrol the Parliament complex in pairs, as well as Parliament’s own security staff, who don’t carry guns.

The attack unfolded within sight of some of the city’s most famous tourist sites, including the London Eye, a large Ferris wheel with pods that overlook the capital. It stopped rotating and footage showed the pods full as viewers watched police and medical crews on the bridge, which has at its north end Big Ben and Parliament, two iconic symbols.

“The whole length of the bridge there were people on the ground,” witness Richard Tice told Sky News. The London Ambulance Service said it had treated at least 10 people on the bridge, and British port officials said a woman was pulled from the River Thames, injured but alive.

Dr. Colleen Anderson of St. Thomas’ Hospital said a female pedestrian died and around a dozen people were hurt.

“There were some with minor injuries, some catastrophic. Some had injuries they could walk away from or who have life-changing injuries,” she said.

The French Foreign Ministry said that three students on a school trip from Saint-Joseph in the Brittany town of Concarneau were among the injured.

French Prime Minister Bernard Cazeneuve of-

fered support to the British and to “the French students wounded, their families and their schoolmates.” London is a common destination for French school trips.

Witness Rick Longley told the Press Association that he heard a bang and saw a car plow into pedestrians and come to a crashing stop. Images from the scene showed pedestrians sprawled on the ground, with blood streaming from a woman surrounded by a scattering of postcards.

“They were just laying there and then the whole crowd just surged around the corner by the gates just opposite Big Ben,” he said. “A guy came past my right shoulder with a big knife and just started plunging it into the policeman. I have never seen anything like that. I just can’t believe what I just saw.”

At Parliament, a body was seen lying in the yard. It wasn’t clear if it was the attacker.

Dennis Burns, who was just entering Parliament for a meeting, told the Press Association he heard a radio message saying an officer had been stabbed. Police and security rushed outside as he was going in.

“When I got inside I was wondering what the hell was going on and I saw dozens of panicked people running down the street,” he said. “The first stream was around 30 people and the second stream was 70 people. It looked like they were running for their lives.”

MANAFORT

Continued from A-1

maintained a business relationship until at least 2009, according to one person familiar with the work.

“We are now of the belief that this model can greatly benefit the Putin Government if employed at the correct levels with the appropriate commitment to success,” Manafort wrote in the 2005 memo to Deripaska. The effort, Manafort wrote, “will be offering a great service that can re-focus, both internally and externally, the policies of the Putin government.”

White House spokesman Sean Spicer indicated Wednesday that President Trump had not been aware of Manafort’s work on behalf of Deripaska. “To suggest that the president knew who his clients were from 10 years ago is a bit insane,” Spicer said. He noted the AP’s reporting “has started to catch a lot of buzz” but said Manafort’s work occurred long before he became Trump’s campaign chairman.

“I don’t know what he got paid to do,” Spicer said, adding, “There’s no suggestion he did anything improper.”

Manafort’s plans were laid out in documents obtained by the AP that included strategy memoranda and records showing international wire transfers for millions of dollars.



Then-Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort stands between the Donald Trump and his daughter Ivanka during a walk-through at the Republican National Convention on July 21. Manafort proposed an ambitious political strategy to undermine anti-Russian opposition across former Soviet republics, The Associated Press has learned. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

How much work Manafort performed under the contract was unclear.

The disclosures come as Trump campaign advisers are the subject of an FBI investigation and two congressional inquiries. Investigators are reviewing whether the Trump campaign and its associates coordinated with Moscow to meddle in the 2016 campaign, an allegation that Manafort has dismissed as politically motivated.

Manafort confirmed in a statement to the AP he worked for Deripaska in various countries but said the work was being unfairly cast as “inappropriate or nefarious” as part of a “smear campaign.”

“I worked with Oleg Deripaska almost a decade ago representing him on business and personal matters in countries where he had investments,” Manafort said. “My work

for Mr. Deripaska did not involve representing Russia’s political interests.”

Meanwhile, Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., called the disclosures “serious stuff” and more evidence that an independent congressional committee should investigate the Trump administration. “Other shoes will drop,” McCain said. His Republican colleague, Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, another frequent Trump critic, called the disclosures “something that needs to be looked at.”

“I don’t know if he violated the Foreign Agent Registration Act, but it’s something I think we all need to know more about,” said Graham, referring to a U.S. law that requires people who lobby on behalf of foreign political leaders or parties to provide detailed reports about their actions to the government.

Deripaska became one

of Russia’s wealthiest men under Putin, buying assets abroad in ways widely perceived to benefit the Kremlin’s interests. U.S. diplomatic notes from 2006 described Deripaska as “among the 2-3 oligarchs Putin turns to on a regular basis” and “a more-or-less permanent fixture on Putin’s trips abroad.”

Democrats on the House intelligence committee said the new revelations will feature in their investigations. Rep. Eric Swalwell, D-Calif., said on MSNBC that Manafort should appear before that committee, and he raised the specter of a subpoena should Manafort not come on his own.

Another committee member, Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., said the disclosure is “not a drip, drip, drip. This is now dam-breaking with water flushing out with all kinds of entanglements.”

In response to questions about Manafort’s consulting firm, a spokesman for Deripaska in 2008 — at least three years after they began working together — said Deripaska had never hired the firm.

In the U.S., Manafort worked as Trump’s unpaid campaign chairman last year from March until August when Trump asked him to leave after the AP revealed that he had orchestrated a covert Washington lobbying operation until 2014 on behalf of Ukraine’s ruling pro-Russian political party.

VITTI

Continued from A-1

Nevertheless, Vitti had made his desires known about possible succession candidates in an email to board members Monday.

He urged the board to consider for interim and permanent superintendent several members of his current cabinet or even Addison Davis, a former cabinet member who recently was elected Clay County’s superintendent. Vitti’s recommendations are “in no particular order” Dana Kriznar, chief of staff; Iranetta Wright, chief of schools; Mason Davis, chief academic officer; Kelly Coker-Daniels, assistant superintendent of accountability and assessment, and Davis.

“I highly recommend that the board consider an internal candidate as the interim with the possibility that this individual be offered the opportunity to become the next superintendent without a search,” Vitti wrote.

“This will allow the work to continue into the following school year without lapses of implementation. ... We have a strong cabinet that is committed to the district. These individuals drive our work. To select an interim or a candidate outside will disrupt our work flow through the implementation of strong systems and processes that have been developed.”

Also, picking an outside leader could “likely cause senior level personnel to consider other opportunities outside of the district,” he said.

“Anyone outside of those I named will inevitably force the district to go back two to three years in reform,” Vitti said. “Mrs. Wright, Mr. Davis, and Mrs. Coker-Daniels drive the majority of the district’s work. Losing any of those individuals would cause significant harm to the district.”

“I would strongly discourage the board from considering candidates who left the organization when this administration started or who initially started with this administration and left,” he said.

Addison Davis could not be reached for comment Wednesday, but Clay County Board Chairwoman Janice Kerekes said she asked him Monday if he could be enticed to leave Clay County for Duval and he told her he is committed to Clay schools.

“I don’t see that happening,” she said. “I think Mr. Davis is comfortable right where he is.”

Vitti said he believes Detroit officials will want their new superintendent to start work in May or June. Should he get and accept an offer from Detroit, Vitti said he is committed to helping the Duval Board as it builds its budget for the coming school year.

Board member Scott Shine wrote in an email: “I think it’s helpful for him to provide ideas like this — shows the community there are strong alternatives for leadership — interim or long-term. It shows we will not end up in a leadership vacuum if Vitti leaves.”

Shine added that the board needs to carefully consider what Vitti said about internal versus external candidates, but “it’s too early to be making a commitment one way or the other.”

Similarly, Board member Lori Hershey was not ready to make such a commitment.

“I appreciate Dr. Vitti’s insight,” she wrote in an email. “Nonetheless the board has not had any discussion along this line because to date Dr. Vitti remains the Duval County Superintendent and he has not yet been offered or accepted the position in Detroit. I am confident that the board will make the right decision concerning future leadership when the time is right. However, now is not the time to speculate on what that decision will look like.”

It is unclear how most other Duval School Board members reacted to Vitti’s email. Wright did not specifically address the recommendations during the special meeting, and the other board members didn’t mention them.

Wright said she called the meeting to consider steps forward if Vitti gets the job. She reiterated how important it is for the board to be unified throughout this process and she expressed confidence in the district’s cabinet-level leaders and its teachers and staff.

“We must understand that the power is in us; not in one of us, but in all of us,” she said of the board. “We’re going to go forward and do what we’re charged to do, if we need to choose another superintendent.”

She proposed the board reconvene April 7 if the Detroit board makes its superintendent selection known, or the following Monday if its decision is delayed. She asked the board to be flexible with schedules.

The board has a regular monthly public meeting scheduled for the evening of April 4.

Board member Scott Shine said he believes Vitti may get an offer because his background looks “pretty competitive” compared to the other two candidates — a superintendent from a small district in Michigan’s River Rouge community and a regional superintendent in Milwaukee.

“I’m concerned the superintendent may be leaving, but we’ve got a really strong cabinet team in place that can carry on,” he said. “I think Dr. Vitti may be getting an offer.”

He said, the board should try to ensure a period of transition if he gets the job. But he also said the board should not rush things.

“We need to be patient and analytical. We’ll take this as it comes,” Shine said.

Wright said she does not want to get too far ahead of the circumstances. “We need to send the strongest signal possible to all 14,000 plus employees in Duval County,” she said. “We’re going to continue moving forward, though right now we’re in a challenging space, because we don’t know which way he’s going.”

Board member Cheryl Grimes said she is bothered that Vitti was not invited to Wednesday’s meeting. “Nothing has changed,” she said. “The superintendent is still the superintendent. He is still leading the district and still doing the work. So even though there’s this thing out there ... I want to make sure we proceed as a team.”

She also said she wants the Duval board to acknowledge the great things Vitti has done while superintendent here. “I want to be sure that we give those accolades and appreciation ... if he decides to take this other job,” she said.

Wright said she did not invite Vitti to the meeting because she thought his interview in Detroit was this week, and she wanted to respect his time off.

“He is on leave and he’s trying to create a possibly new opportunity,” she said. “We respect that and support that.”

Board member Rebecca Couch said she supports Wright calling the meeting and not inviting Vitti. “When you have the conversation about the next person, I don’t know if ... you need the current person here to talk about it. He’s with his family,” she said.

Ashley Smith Juarez, the board vice chairwoman, said via telephone that even if Vitti gets the Detroit job she hopes board members will still attend the “master board training,” which had already been scheduled for early April. The training consists of team-building exercises to help the board work together.

In September Smith Juarez suggested Vitti look elsewhere for opportunities if he could not raise his stated goals for academic improvement for the district. Those goals were to be compared to actual district progress for his and other administrators’ annual evaluations. Eventually the board and Vitti agreed on new academic goals for the district.



AMAZON

Continued from A-1

sued last month for a 63,000-square-foot space at 11084 Cabot Commerce Circle in the Alta Lakes Commerce Center. That’s off Faye Road and Interstate 295 near Oceanway in North Jacksonville. The company has not confirmed or commented on that facility yet.

As for the company itself, it simply continues to

grow. One study concluded that Amazon had 39.6 percent of all online shopping during the November-December holidays. In January, Credit Suisse analysts said Amazon was now worth more than the country’s eight next largest retailers combined.

Amazon’s stock price has risen more than 50 percent in the past year.

With its upcoming centers, Jacksonville is among the list of U.S. cities/counties that have multiple

Amazon warehouse operations. The company currently has 95 fulfillment centers in the U.S. and has been aggressive about announcing plans for more, according to Business Insider.

One of the largest centers in operation is the fulfillment center in Ruskin in Hillsborough County; The Tampa Bay Times reports that it is so big (1.1 million square feet) that it could hold 28 football fields. The Cecil Com-

merce Center will be just about as big, at 1 million square feet.

The fulfillment centers are basically warehouses. Amazon also has sortation centers, where prepped packages are sorted before being shipped to individual post offices.

Various publications have noted that Amazon does not publish comprehensive information about its fulfillment centers.

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