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The future USS Billings launches Saturday into the Menominee River on the border of Marinette, Wis., and Menominee, Mich., at the Fincantieri Marinette Marine Shipyard. The littoral combat ship is about 80 percent complete and will eventually be home-ported at Mayport Naval Station. (Lockheed Martin)

USS BILLINGS LAUNCHED

FOR ADDITIONAL COVERAGE

- See a 360-degree view of the future USS Billings prior to launch at Jacksonville.com/Billings360
- Learn how crews at a Wisconsin shipyard turned piles of raw steel into the future USS Billings at Jacksonville.com/BuildingLittoralCombatShips
- Watch the launch of the future USS Billings beginning around noon Saturday at Facebook.com/FLTimesUnion
- Get behind-the-scenes access alongside Times-Union reporter Joe Daraskevich on Twitter at @JoeD_TU



Sharla D. Tester christens the future USS Billings on Saturday moments before the ship launched into the Menominee River on the border of Marinette, Wis., and Menominee, Mich., at the Fincantieri Marinette Marine Shipyard. Cmdr. Nathan Rowan (left) is the ship's prospective captain once it is delivered to the Navy.

Ceremony for littoral ship that is part of a group touted as Mayport's future

By Joe Daraskevich
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MARINETTE, WIS. | Cmdr. Nathan Rowan stood on an elevated platform Saturday, just below the bow of the future USS Billings, as the littoral combat ship slid from the dock into water for the first time.

He will be the commanding officer of the ship once it's delivered to the Navy and becomes part of a group of vessels touted as the future of Mayport Naval Station.

But although the ship floated just fine after it rocked back and forth, creating a wave across the Menominee River,

it still has a long way to go before it's operating in Northeast Florida.

"It's a patriotic feeling to know you are christening a ship that will one day be placed in the Navy's inventory," Rowan said. "This is a rare opportunity and I wish more people could get the chance to witness a ship being launched into the water."

The christening and launch give the ship its identity — before Saturday it was simply LCS 15 — but it doesn't mean the ship is finished.

The littoral ships built by

BILLINGS continues on A-7

Northside Jacksonville council members find power in numbers

Combined voting bloc hopes to help solve district issues such as crime

By Christopher Hong
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Four City Council members who represent Northside Jacksonville have formed a voting bloc that has given them considerable influence to help solve long-standing issues in their hard-scrabble districts, like crime, poverty and a lack of infrastructure.

After helping swing the recent race for the council president, Katrina Brown, Reginald Brown, Garrett Dennis and Reginald Gaff-

ney will each sit on the council's finance committee, a seven-member group that helps build the city's budget and reviews all other city spending.

Their districts together form Jacksonville's north-west quadrant, home to some of the city's most underprivileged neighborhoods. Many residents and activists in those districts, which are majority African-American, believe City Hall has neglected them while helping other parts of the city flourish.

"You're talking about areas in the heart of the city that have basically received the least attention since consolidation," said Reginald Brown, referring to the 1967 vote to form Jacksonville's consolidated government. "If you look at the social ills that plague this city, we're high on the list for everything."

Brown's sentiment is hardly new. Former council members of those districts have cooperated in the past, but the group's recent decision to unify as a loose voting bloc has helped create the first African-American majority on the finance committee.

A majority on the com-

mittee doesn't guarantee anything, as the budget and other legislation must still be approved by a majority of the 19-member council. Still, the council members are hopeful that their presence will help bring attention — and funding — to their district's most pressing needs.

"I don't think it's going to be this drastic shift, but a different perspective," Dennis said. "That one little thing, that one perspective, that one adjustment is the difference between making our city from a good city to a great city."

Violent crime, poverty

COUNCIL continues on A-7



District 7 representative Reggie Gaffney (from right) stands with District 10 Councilmen Reginald Brown, Greg Anderson, At-Large Group 4, and Al Ferrero, District 2, for the Pledge of Allegiance at the start of last week's City Council meeting. (Bob Mack/Florida Times-Union)

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Police gather outside Bronx Lebanon Hospital in New York after a gunman opened fire, then took his own life there Friday. The gunman, identified as Henry Bello, who used to work at the hospital, returned with a rifle hidden under his white lab coat, law enforcement officials said. (AP Photo)

Doctor warned he would return to kill

Hospital rampage directed toward colleague he blamed for his dismissal

Colleen Long & Julie Watson
Associated Press

NEW YORK | A doctor angry his career was derailed at a New York City hospital toted an assault rifle past security in search of a colleague he was going to hold responsible. When that person wasn't there, he opened fire anyway, killing a doctor who was only there covering a shift as a favor, authorities said Saturday.

The new details of Henry Bello's rampage emerged along with an email rant against colleagues he blamed for forcing him to resign from Bronx Lebanon Hospital amid sexual harassment allegations two years earlier. The email was sent to the New York Daily News just two hours before the shooting Friday afternoon that left six other people wounded and Bello dead from a self-inflicted shot.

"This hospital terminated my road to a licensure to practice medi-

cine," the email said. "First, I was told it was because I always kept to myself. Then it was because of an altercation with a nurse."

He also blamed a doctor for blocking his chances at practicing medicine.

Bello had warned his former colleagues when he was forced out in 2015 that he would return someday to kill them.

A law enforcement official told The Associated Press Bello arrived at the hospital with the assault rifle hidden under his lab coat and asked for a specific doctor whom he blamed for his having to resign, but the physician wasn't there at the time. The official spoke on anonymity.

It was not clear if Bello knew Tracy Sin-Yee Tam, 32, who was killed in the shooting on the 16th and 17th floors of the hospital and was, like him, a family medicine doctor. Hospital officials said Tam normally worked in one

of the hospital's satellite clinics and was covering a shift in the main hospital as a favor to someone else.

The six others who were injured — a patient, two medical students and three physicians — largely suffered gunshot wounds to the head, chest and abdomen. One physician remained in critical condition and the rest were stable, officials said Saturday.

Hospital vice president Errol C. Schneer said his staff responded heroically. "Many of our staff risked their own lives to save patients," Schneer told reporters at the hospital where the 16th and 17th floors remained closed, and staffers were still recovering from the rampage that sent people diving for cover and huddling in patients' rooms while the gunman was on the loose.

Adding to the chaos was a fire alarm that went off when Bello attempted to set himself ablaze, the flames extinguished by sprinklers, shortly before he shot himself, authorities said.

Detectives searched the Bronx home where Bello was most recently living and found the box where the gun came from. Investigators were checking serial numbers and trying to determine where it was purchased.

His former co-workers described a man who was aggressive, loud and threatening.

"All the time he was a problem," said David Lazala, who trained Bello as a family medicine doctor. When Bello was forced out in 2015, he sent Lazala an email blaming him for the dismissal.

In 2004, the doctor pleaded guilty to unlawful imprisonment, a misdemeanor, after a 23-year-old woman told police Bello grabbed her. He was arrested again in 2009 on a charge of unlawful surveillance, after two different women reported he was trying to look up their skirts with a mirror. That case was eventually sealed.

Schneer told the New York Times the hospital did not know about Bello's criminal history when he was hired.

BILLINGS

Continued from A-1

Lockheed Martin at Fincantieri Marinette Marine Shipyard are launched when they are about 80 percent complete, said Capt. Tom Anderson, the Navy's LCS program manager. He said they need water to run a lot of the systems, so workers finish the process while they are floating dockside.

Anderson spent a lot of time in Mayport last summer doing tests on the USS Milwaukee and USS Detroit — the first two littoral ships home-ported at the base. He said he's confident these small, versatile ships will translate to a thriving military community far into the future.

He said the people who work in maintenance and operations at the base are really getting to learn a lot about the program by interacting with the Milwaukee and Detroit, which is good because a lot more of the ships will soon be joining the first two.

"The ships are going to be coming pretty fast and furious to Mayport," Anderson said. "So, it's good we had time to do a little bit of that in advance before we opened the flood gates and had the ships going down there. But I think there's for sure a long relationship that's going to be established with LCS and the port of Mayport."

Rowan knows all about that relationship.

He's been in the Navy for about 20 years and most recently spent his time in the LCS pipeline down at Mayport. He said he's served on frigates, cruisers and destroyers in the past, but he pointed to the littoral ships as the future of the Navy.

"The LCS program is very new to the Navy, so it's a great opportunity to be a part of something new and innovative," Rowan said.

The Navy has two types

of littoral ships in the fleet. The Freedom variant are built by Lockheed Martin in Marinette, Wis., and the Independence variant are built by Austal USA in Mobile, Ala. They both use jet propulsion instead of traditional propellers so they can operate in shallow water and complete a variety of missions.

They can reach about 50 miles per hour, making them the fastest ships in the Navy, according to Lockheed Martin.

The littoral combat ships are relatively small compared to most other ships in the Navy, but they can be used for surface warfare, mine countermeasures and anti-submarine warfare depending on the mission package, Anderson said.

The Freedom class resemble traditional Navy ships with steel hulls and aluminum superstructures, while the Independence-class ships have trimaran hulls made entirely of aluminum. Mayport is set to get all the Freedom ships and San Diego will get the Independence variant.

Rowan and several members of his crew spent a lot of time in Marinette this week touring the ship and talking to representatives from Billings, Mont. — the ship's namesake.

"If you name a ship after a city, I think when people tour the ship, they need to understand the namesake, so memorabilia is very important," Rowan said. "I think it should be like a miniature museum when they walk through and get kind of the history of the city."

The Detroit features memorabilia from the city's four major sports teams — the Tigers, Red Wings, Pistons and Lions.

Tom Hanel is the mayor of Billings and when he learned that, he decided they need to start figuring out what kinds of things they'll send to the crew of the Billings to decorate

the passageways.

Hanel participated in the mast stepping ceremony Friday where coins and keepsakes are placed in a canister that is welded into the ship's mast. He contributed a patch from the City of Billings Police Department as well as his personal business card.

Other items included dog tags from the ship's crew, surface warfare pins and the ship's coin, featuring an image of the ship on one side with a grizzly bear and mountains on the other.

The ship's sponsor, Sharla D. Tester, contributed some dirt from her farm in Montana, along with seeds from some of her favorite crops.

"The ships are out protecting our waters and our country around it, so they are protecting our soil for us to be able to farm," Tester said. "So a little bit of Montana dirt is going to be on that ship."

Tester is the wife of Sen. Jon Tester, who was instrumental in getting former Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus to name one of the littoral ships after a city in his home state of Montana.

As the ship's sponsor, she was given the honor of breaking a bottle of champagne over the bow just seconds before it splashed into the river. Sharla Tester said she wanted to make sure she did it right, so she practiced with a wine bottle filled with water, smashing it against a tractor on her farm.

Sharla Tester and Rowan stood on the platform for the christening with Joe North, vice president of littoral ships and systems for Lockheed Martin. North gave tours of the shipyard and the future USS Billings Friday afternoon.

"The crews that put these ships together have put their blood and soul into this, and when we get to this stage, it's just a great day," North said.

Alaska boy shoots bear charging fishing party

Associated Press

HOONAH, ALASKA | An 11-year-old boy's quick action saved a fishing party from a charging brown bear, Alaska state troopers said.

Elliot Clark was walking through woods near Game Creek last week with his three family members and three dogs when the bear came out and charged them, The Juneau Empire reported.

The bear ran through two of the men, pushing them to the side of the trail, leaving Elliot and his cousin in its path, Elliot's father, Lucas, said.

"There was four of them in a line. My son was third,"

Elliot's father said. "The bear came down the trail at them — fella in the front, who was his uncle, the bear was on him so quickly that he didn't have time to take his rifle off his shoulder."

The boy then raised his pump-action shotgun and shot the bear with birdshot.

His father said the first shot did nothing, but two more downed the bear and finishing shots by the boy and his uncle killed it.

Elliot's father said not getting around to putting a sling on his son's gun might have saved their lives, as he was able to quickly ready himself.

"He was carrying it in his hands rather than on his shoulder," he said.

COUNCIL

Continued from A-1

and stagnating economic development are the most obvious problems in their districts that fall under City Hall's purview. A lack of infrastructure, like well-maintained roads and sewer lines, also needs to be addressed, Reginald Brown said.

Brown said he hopes to work during the next year to find solutions to those specific issues. But he also wants to look at how the city decides where to spend its money to ensure that all neighborhoods are on an equal playing field.

"When you're in the few, you need to make sure there's a fair process," Brown said.

The group hasn't always been on the same page since Katrina Brown, Dennis and Gaffney joined Reginald Brown on the council in 2015.

It took a few years for the first-termers to find their footing and the four have squabbled with each other at times. Meanwhile, Gaffney and Katrina Brown have been distracted by personal controversies since taking office.

Katrina Brown has spent months avoiding questions from the press about the financial troubles of a barbecue sauce business that she co-owns. The company has defaulted on a \$2.65 million loan through the U.S. Small Business Administration and a \$210,000 loan from the city. FBI agents, assisted by the IRS and Small Business Administration, raided the business last December. Brown hasn't been charged with a crime.

Gaffney's name surfaced in the high-profile corruption trial of former Rep. Corrine Brown, a longtime friend of his. Gaffney wasn't accused of a crime and didn't testify in the trial. However, prosecutors, in part, relied on evidence showing Gaffney's network of businesses and nonprofit groups acted as a cash cow that Brown used to help fund a high-priced and luxurious lifestyle.

Katrina Brown and Gaffney didn't respond to interview requests for this story.

With two years of this term passed, the four now have found influential voices on the council. Co-operating together seemed to play an important role.

"We've all kind of been at odds (in the past), but it just made me think of that quote by Henry Kissinger. There's no friends or enemies in politics, just common interests," Dennis said.

Earlier this year, Reginald Brown held a meeting and pitched an idea: the four should vote together in the council president's race for the candidate they believed would help them improve their districts. All four eventually decided that candidate was Anna Lopez Brosche and they delivered her crucial swing votes she needed to defeat her competitor, John Crescimbeni.

They plan to continue working together.

"If you stick together, you can get more. Even if you don't get everything you're seeking, at least it shows you're moving in the right direction," Reginald Brown said.

Dennis, who will chair the finance committee, said the coalition isn't about race or party affili-

ation. Instead, it's a partnership born out of similar interests shared by their districts.

"I think we all have common needs in our district. I think we all have had our constituents say, 'Hey, this isn't getting done, this isn't getting done. Why isn't it happening?'" Dennis said. "I'm not going to support them on everything. Our ideologies are totally different. But there is some value to supporting the district council person for something in their district."

The new committee structures only recently took effect and the committee won't meet until the council reconvenes later this month. Since the council president vote last month, the group has continued in recent weeks working together — and aggressively — to secure money for initiatives important to their district.

A recent debate over swim lessons and the recent spike in opioid-overdose deaths could provide a glimpse at the group's effectiveness and limitations in the future.

Several weeks ago, Dennis introduced an emergency bill to spend \$200,000 to provide free swim lessons. The initiative was designed to prevent accidental drownings, which he said was a problem in both his district and around the city.

However, the mayor's office opposed the idea, saying the money was needed for next year's budget. Instead of fighting the mayor's office, Dennis agreed to withdraw his legislation.

The next week, Dennis mounted a last-minute opposition to a plan to spend \$1.5 million to kickstart an experimental opioid addiction treatment program. Among his arguments: drowning deaths were an epidemic that should be taken just as seriously as drug overdoses.

The money for the treatment plan eventually passed, but not without a long debate and pointed questioning from others in the four-person bloc. There was a clear message sent to the treatment plan's sponsor, Bill Gulliford: Support goes both ways.

It was a battle Dennis hinted at in an interview weeks before.

"The bills are moving down the same track," Dennis said of Gulliford's and his legislation. "We'll see if everyone jumps on board."

Former Councilman Warren Jones, who represented parts of the city's Northwest quadrant for a combined 28 years between 1979 and 2015, said the four northern districts have long worked in "lock-step" on various issues. He said he couldn't recall there ever being an outright agreement to vote together.

Jones said he believes the group can be effective as long as they stay focused on "issues and not personality," although he noted their ability to swing votes on a 19-member council is mostly limited to issues where the vote is split.

"I think it's commendable," Jones said. "Will it be any more effective than what we did when were on council? You have to work with everybody. Four votes can make a difference, but they don't really approve or deny an item."