

Hossu lawyer blasts pronouncements

By Shawn Cohen and Alex Weisler
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The new lawyer for rape suspect Alexandru Hossu said Friday that his client's rights have been damaged by "public pronouncements," an apparent shot at Putnam County Sheriff Donald Smith's handling of the case.

"My client's right to a fair trial has already been fundamentally affected by the public discourse," said Robert Altchiler, a former New York City prosecutor who recently replaced defense attorney Stacey Richman.

Smith, in announcing the arrest last month, alleged that Hossu raped a 12-year-old girl twice, was in the country illegally and worked as District Attorney Adam Levy's live-in personal trainer. It

triggered a war of words between the district attorney and sheriff, who charged that Levy tried to use his office to influence the investigation.



Alexandru Hossu

"The only reason that I am even commenting whatsoever in connection with this matter is because, to date, in my view, my client's constitutional rights have been significantly and adversely and prejudicially affected by the public pronouncements that have appeared in the media," Altchiler said.

Altchiler, an adjunct professor at Pace Law School in White Plains, didn't mention the sheriff by name, but Smith was the only official to release state-

ments concerning the charges.

Hossu, a 35-year-old Romanian immigrant, is charged with two felony counts of first-degree rape in the Oct. 24, 2010, incident in Southeast. He is being held pending a May 7 appearance in Southeast court.

The allegations have sparked not just a criminal case, but also a battle between Levy and the sheriff. Smith has charged that Levy tried to use his office to influence the investigation. Levy, in turn, has accused the sheriff of targeting him.

Levy, the son of TV's Judge Judy Sheindlin, said his actions were lawful and ethical. He handed the case over to the Westchester District Attorney's Office. The sheriff's office declined to respond to Altchiler.

Until recently, Hossu had been repre-

sented by Stacey Richman, who works with her father, Murray Richman, a veteran defense lawyer from Rockland County.

Meanwhile, the Town of Southeast has filed a zoning code violation against Clock Tower Associates, the office space where Hossu was living at the time of his March 20 arrest. The violation cites the 221 Clock Tower Commons office suite for being "occupied as a residence without approval for this use..."

According to the citation, Southeast Building Inspector Michael Levine will inspect the premises on or about Monday to determine if the property is adhering to its approved use.

Staff writer Barbara Livingston Nackman contributed to this report.

Garage fire extinguished in Mt. Kisco



Mount Kisco firefighters quickly doused a garage fire at 56 Woodland St. on Friday, keeping flames from spreading to the attached house. The fire was reported about 2:15 p.m. No injuries were reported. More photos at lohud.com. FRANK BECERRA JR./THE JOURNAL NEWS

Hearing set on budget for Pelham

By Ken Valenti
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PELHAM — Residents will have a chance to discuss the 2013-14 village budget, originally proposed to be \$13.6 million, at a hearing Tuesday.

As first presented, the budget would raise the tax bill for the owner of an average home by about \$300 for the next fiscal year.

But Mayor Tim Cassidy, who took office April 1, leading a new four-member Republican majority on the village board, said the trustees have been cutting the plan.

The tentative budget would increase the amount collected in taxes by 6.6 percent. But Cassidy said the trustees want to cut that back to the 2.7 percent increase allowed under the state tax cap.

"At this point, we're very close," he said.

At the same time, he said, he expects the board to pass a measure at Tuesday's meeting, allowing the board to break the cap if necessary. The meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. in Village Hall, 195 Sparks Ave.

As proposed, the 2013-14 spending plan would raise the residential property tax rate by 10.1 percent. But the average bill would increase about 6.1 percent to \$5,257 because property values have declined, Village Administrator Robert Yamuder said.

Yamuder said budget pressures include increasing state-mandated health and workers-compensation insurance, and overall increases in the cost of employee benefits. He also projected that the village would reap \$87,100 more in revenues other than property taxes, partly with an expected increase in mortgage taxes.

Cassidy said board members have been working since April 1, tweaking many areas of the budget to find the savings and added revenue.

"It's little bits here and there, but that's what makes a difference," he said. "We are happy with the progress. I really do think, realistically, we're going to come in under the cap."

A final budget must be adopted by May 1.

YoHo arts co-op adds studios, gallery

By Colin Gustafson
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YONKERS — An artist co-op is hailing its long-awaited expansion inside a downtown former carpet factory.

YoHo Artist Studios is opening its new wing this month, featuring 25 studios and a gallery and community space on the renovated fourth floor of the old Alexander Smith carpet mills on Nepperhan Avenue.

The \$500,000 project took more than three years to complete. Now tenants are beginning to set up shop there, adding to a community of artists already occupying some 50 older studios on the fifth floor.

A ribbon cutting is scheduled for April 17.

Property manager George Huang said the expansion cements YoHo's role as the "largest artist community in a single location within southern Westchester."

His firm, The Heights Real Estate Co., bought the former carpet mill in 2005 and has since invested at least \$1 million in the building.

Visitors will be able to tour the new



Members of the YOHO Artist Studios in Yonkers at the arts co-op Wednesday. They are, from left, standing, artists Lee Romero, Mary Hardiman, Marco Gosar and Alexa Grace, property manager George Huang and building manager Zuki Pjetrovic; sitting, artists Adam Shultz, Megan Orbek and John Wujcik. COLIN GUSTAFSON/THE JOURNAL NEWS

ONLINE

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wing during YoHo's 10th annual free open-studios event April 20-21, when artists will open their workspaces to the public and display their work, which ranges from watercolor paintings to bamboo sculptures to mixed-media col-

lages.

Huang said the fourth-floor wing was designed, like the fifth floor, to have private studios connected by long hallways to a communal area where artists can gather to bounce ideas off one another or display their work for wine-and-cheese events.

"We wanted to make sure it was somewhat social, so there would be that creative synergy," Huang said.

Rye seeks to close property sale for \$5.6M

Tappan Zee Constructors moves 200 into Tarrytown space

By Theresa Juva-Brown
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TARRYTOWN — Tappan Zee Constructors is getting its sizable workforce settled into the area as it prepares to start construction on the new Tappan Zee Bridge.

Tappan Zee Constructors has leased space at 555 White Plains Road in Tarrytown, spokeswoman Carla Julian told The Journal News. About 200