

IN MEMORIAM

Denbowski remembered for dedication

Spent more than 20 years working in various city departments, capacities

By Michelle Lynch
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Finding a more dedicated public servant than Frank Denbowski would have been difficult, City Council members and administrators agreed.

Denbowski, the former interim city managing director, died Sunday in his Reading home after a lengthy illness.

He was remembered Monday night at a City Council meeting.

"I don't think you'd find a person more knowledgeable about

the city of Reading," said William Heim, current managing director and a former Reading police chief. "In Reading's government, he was certainly the go-to person for the answer to a lot of questions."

Denbowski was thoroughly dedicated to the city, Heim said.

The 46-year-old Denbowski spent more than 20 years of his professional career working in various city departments and capacities.

He also worked several years for the state government and

spent a year as legislative assistant for former state Rep. Thomas R. Caltagirone, a Democrat, who represented the 127th District.

Denbowski was appointed chief of staff to Mayor Eddie Moran in 2020. He stepped in as interim city managing director in February 2022, after the resignation of Abraham Amoros.

Councilman O. Christopher Miller also called Denbowski the go-to person in City Hall.

Before being appointed to council in August, Miller said,

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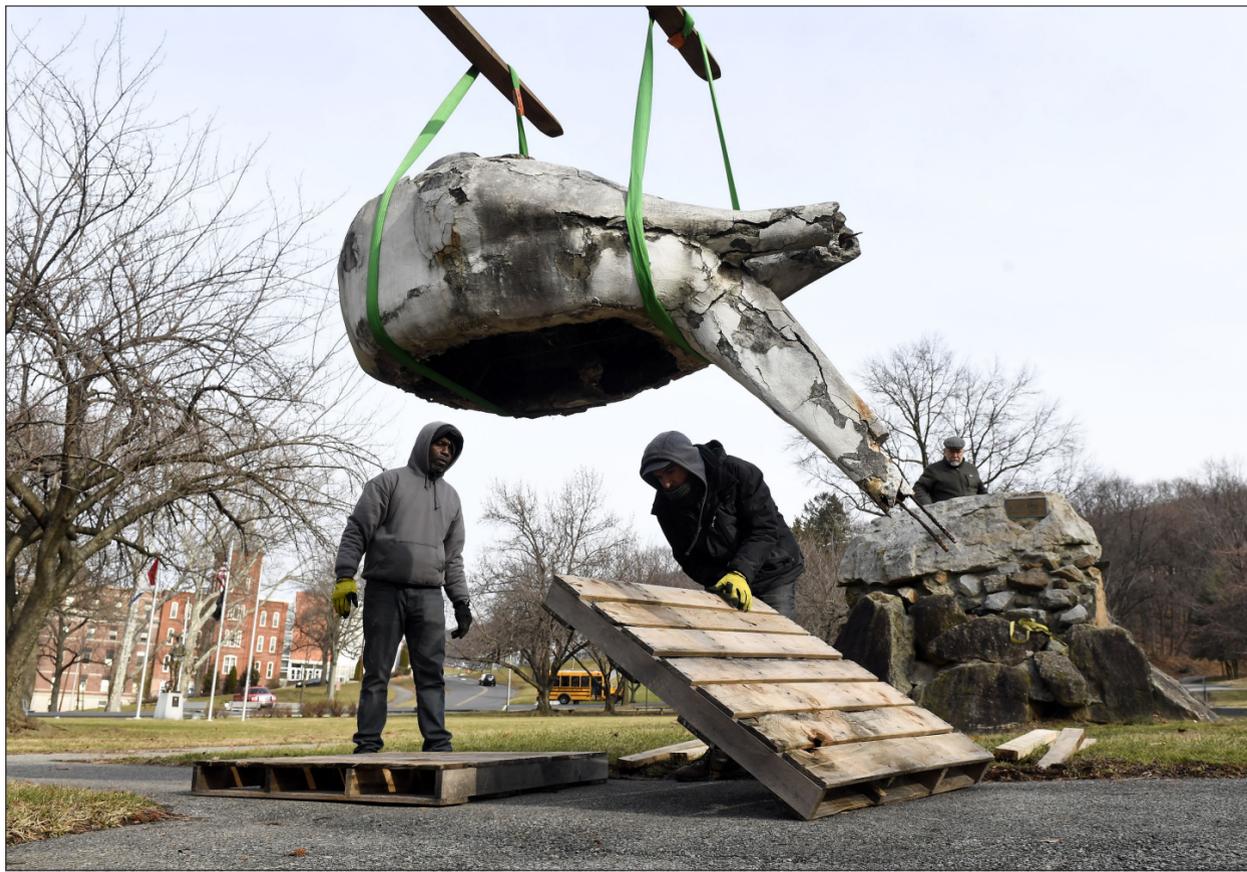


Reading officials say Frank Denbowski, who died Sunday, was the go-to person for the answers to a lot of questions about city government.

READING EAGLE

READING

RECASTING AN ICON



BILL UHRICH - READING EAGLE

Troy Williams, left, Gabriel Harrison and T. Scott Kreilick, all of Kreilick Conservation of Springfield Township, Delaware County, remove the Dove sculpture from its pedestal in City Park for transport to their facility where it will be recast in a more durable material.

Removing Dove sculpture first step in process

By Michelle Lynch
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Reading's iconic Dove sculpture took flight Wednesday as a crew removed the artwork from its perch in City Park.

Sculptor Ramon Lago's original creation, made of chicken wire overlaid with fiberglass and coated in concrete, will be recast in a more durable material.

In the park since 1972, the piece is crumbling from exposure to the elements.

Previous efforts to repair cracks and conserve the brittle artwork failed.

"Once you got a small crack in that external facade, there was no telling how deep the cancer would go," David Anspach, city capital project manager, said in November.

Instead of attempting another temporary patch job, the



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T. Scott Kreilick, left, and Troy Williams of Philadelphia, both of Kreilick Conservation of Springfield Township, Delaware County, work to remove the Dove sculpture from City Park on Wednesday so it can be recast.

city contracted with Kreilick Conservation of Springfield Township, Delaware County, for \$81,048 to recast the dove in a product known as cast stone.

The material is a form of pre-

cast concrete intended to simulate natural-cut stone.

"Of all of the options for a long-term sustainable project, that was actually the least expensive," Anspach said.

Repairing the damaged work or recreating it in the same materials would be the most historically accurate method, said Amy Woldt Johnson, city historic preservation specialist. However, she added, neither option is being considered since the materials would likely fail again.

The symbol of peace has become significant to locals involved in recent antiviolence initiatives, Councilwoman Marcia Goodman-Hinnershitz said.

The park is within District 2, which she represents.

Lago, a Cuban refugee who lived nearly 20 years in Berks County before moving to Miami, died in May 2018 at the age of 71.

Lago created other local sculptures, including Tully, a turtle sculpture on the banks of the Tulpehocken Creek at Gring's Mill Recreation Area, and Distelfink, a colorful Pennsylvania Dutch symbol of good luck, at the Berks Heritage Center in Bern Township.

The artist's ashes were scattered by his family around Tully.

READING

Shooting suspect arrested

By Steven Henshaw
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The suspect in the Jan. 2 shooting of a man during an altercation inside a Penn Street business has been arrested, Reading police said Wednesday.

Angel R. Burgos-Ortiz, 44, of Reading was taken into custody Tuesday by members of the city police department and the Berks County Emergency Response Team, a tactical unit, police said.

Further arrest details were unavailable.

Burgos-Ortiz was committed to Berks County Prison in lieu of \$200,000 bail to await a hearing following arraignment Tuesday night before District Judge Alvin B. Robinson in Reading Central Court.

The city police criminal investigations unit obtained an arrest warrant for Burgos-Ortiz on Friday on charges that include aggravated assault, reckless endangerment and discharge of a firearm in an occupied structure.

According to the criminal complaint:

Police were called to Reading Hospital on Jan. 2 about 9:40 p.m. after the victim arrived for treatment of a gunshot wound to the leg.

The patient told police that he had been shot a short time earlier in a store at 914 Penn St.

They also spoke to a witness who drove Burgos-Ortiz to the hospital.

The victim and witness told police that Burgos-Ortiz, who lives in the same block as the store, arrived at the store and an argument ensued between him and the victim over employment arrangements of a third person, who was identified in the affidavit as the witness.

The argument turned physical. During the fight, Burgos-Ortiz took possession of a gun and fired at the victim, wounding him in the leg, before leaving the store.

Officers responded to the location of the shooting and found blood, two spent 9 mm cartridges and a bullet fragment embedded in the floor.

The victim and witness told police that the man who fired the gun goes by the name "Angelo."

Through an investigation, police identified the man as Burgos-Ortiz.

SHILLINGTON

Owner accused of keeping \$45,000 in workers' withheld taxes

By Steven Henshaw
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The owner of a Shillington demolition company faces criminal charges that he failed to pay \$45,000 in income taxes withheld from employees over several years, costing school districts and municipalities tens of thousands of dollars, according to a criminal complaint.

Jonathan Wise, 37, of Alsace Township was to have his initial court appearance on the charges

this week before District Judge Eric J. Taylor in West Reading, but the hearing was rescheduled for February. Wise remains free pending the hearing on six counts of theft by failure to make required disposition of funds and 20 counts of willful failure by an employer to collect income tax.

Attorney Jason Confair has been appointed by Berks County District Attorney John T. Adams as a temporary assistant district attorney to prosecute the private criminal complaint filed by the

Berks Earned Income Tax Bureau against Wise and his company, J. Wise & Co. LLC, under the Local Tax Enabling Act.

The Wyoming-based tax agency collects income and certain other taxes for school districts and municipalities in Berks.

In the probable cause affidavit, Confair alleged the company has failed to pay more than \$45,000 in taxes that was reported in quarterly and annual reporting to the bureau as having been withheld and paid.

"It is clear that J. Wise and its agency were fully aware of their obligations to withhold taxes from employees, file corresponding tax returns and pay taxes, as evidenced by the fact that J. Wise did in fact file tax returns for certain quarters and years," Confair wrote in the affidavit.

As company president and CEO, Jonathan Wise had primary responsibility for making sure the company filed tax returns and paid taxes withheld from employees to the bureau, Confair stated.

During each of six separate calendar quarters in 2014, 2016 and 2017, the complaint alleges, J. Wise withheld more than \$2,000 in taxes. The tax returns filed by the company were rendered false because they stated the withheld taxes were paid when they were misappropriated, prosecutors said.

Wise received dozens of notices about the tax delinquencies over the years, officials said.

According to the affidavit, Wise has operated the company since 2010.