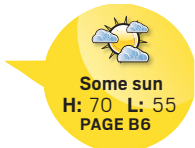




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WHAT'S NEXT?

Obstacles to Ukraine peace remain

Talks continue over Russia's war in Ukraine, but key roadblocks to peace persist

By Barry Hatton and Katie Marie Davies
The Associated Press

The second Oval Office meeting in six months between U.S. President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelen-

skyy went off smoothly Monday, in sharp contrast to their disastrous encounter in February.

European leaders joined the discussions in a show of transatlantic unity, and both they and Zelenskyy repeatedly thanked Trump for his efforts to end Russia's three-year war on Ukraine.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said his expectations for the meeting "were not just met, they were exceeded," while Zelenskyy on Tuesday called the sit-down "an important step toward

ending this war."

But despite the guarded optimism and friendly banter among the leaders, there was little concrete progress on the main obstacles to peace — and that deadlock likely favors Russian President Vladimir Putin, whose forces continue to make steady, if slow, progress on the ground in Ukraine.

"Putin cannot get enough champagne or whatever he's

MEETINGS » PAGE 3



In this photo provided by Ukraine's 65th Mechanized Brigade press service, recruits practice military skills on a training ground on a sunflower field in the Zaporizhzhia region, Ukraine, Monday.

ANDRIY ANDRIYENKO — UKRAINE'S 65TH MECHANIZED BRIGADE VIA AP

TEXAS

Democrat protests police in redistricting fight



TEXAS REP. GENE WU VIA AP

Democratic Texas state Rep. Nicole Collier speaks on the House floor Monday in Austin.

By Jim Vertuno and Trân Nguyen
The Associated Press

AUSTIN, TEXAS » A Texas Democrat opted to stay in the state House chamber overnight and into Tuesday rather than allow a law enforcement officer to shadow her while Republicans try to prevent further delays to

redrawing congressional maps that President Donald Trump wants.

The Republican-controlled Texas House scheduled a vote for Wednesday on the new maps while California Democrats are retaliating by advancing their own new U.S. House boundaries ahead of the 2026 midterm elections.

In Texas, Democrats staged a two-week walkout to prevent a vote on the new maps, and the Republican House speaker said those who returned Monday would have around-the-clock surveillance by state Department of Public Safety officers to ensure they would return to the Capitol. Democrats had to sign what they called "permis-

sion slips" agreeing to the surveillance to leave the floor.

State Rep. Nicole Collier stayed overnight in the House rather than signing her "permission slip."

A message seeking comment was sent Tuesday to the Department of Public Safety.

PROTESTS » PAGE 4

PACIFIC GROVE

Council to consider pay raise

By Kyarra Harris
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The Pacific Grove City Council will decide Wednesday whether to repeal a recently approved pay raise for its members or place the issue before voters in an election.

The move follows certification of a referendum petition against the new ordinance, which raised councilmember stipends from \$420 to \$966 per month and the mayor's from \$700 to \$1,610. The ordinance was adopted in May but was automatically suspended once the petition was filed.

According to the Monterey County Registrar of Voters, the petition gathered 1,178 valid signatures, exceeding the 10 percent threshold of registered voters required to qualify. Former council member Luke Coletti submitted the petition July 1.

The council has three options: repeal the ordinance outright, call for an election on the referendum, or repeal the ordinance and later pursue a separate ballot measure on council pay. If the council chooses to send the matter to voters, potential election

COUNCIL » PAGE 3



MONTEREY HERALD FILE

Pacific Grove City Hall.

ALLIGATOR ALCATRAZ

Judge dismisses part of lawsuit

A judge in Miami dismissed part of a lawsuit over the legal rights of detainees at the immigration center. **PAGE A4**



TAX TIPS

Reviewing the rules for home office deduction

Columnist Barry Dolowich notes home office expenses are deductible if they meet IRS requirements. **PAGE B1**

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ON NUTRITION

Those kids eat the darndest things

Columnist Barbara Intermill writes the additional challenge for many is how to encourage their kids to eat well. **PAGE B1**

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The Blues Are Back

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Meetings

FROM PAGE 1

drinking,” Gabrielius Landsbergis, a former foreign minister of Lithuania, said of Monday’s meeting. As NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte told The Ingraham Angle on Fox News: “All the details have to be hammered out.” Here is a look at the issues that must be resolved:

Security guarantees for Ukraine

To agree to a peace deal with Russia, Ukraine wants assurances that it can deter any future attacks by the Kremlin’s forces. That means, Zelenskyy says, a strong Ukrainian army that is provided with weapons and training by Western partners. It could potentially also mean securing a guarantee resembling NATO’s collective defense mandate, which sees an attack on one member of the alliance as an attack on all. How that would work is not clear. Additionally, Kyiv’s European allies are looking to set up a force that could backstop any peace agreement in Ukraine. A coalition of 30 countries, including European nations, Japan and Australia, have signed up to support the initiative, although the role that the U.S. might play in such a force is unclear. European leaders, fearing Moscow’s territorial ambitions won’t stop in Ukraine, are keen to lock America’s military might into the plan. On Tuesday, Trump told Fox News Channel’s “Fox & Friends” that U.S. troops would not be sent to help defend Ukraine against Russia. Russia has repeatedly said that it would not accept NATO troops in Ukraine. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron co-chaired an online

meeting Tuesday of the coalition countries.

Agreeing on a ceasefire

Ukraine and its European supporters have repeatedly called for a ceasefire while peace talks are held. Putin has balked at that prospect. With his forces inching forward in Ukraine, he has little incentive to freeze their movement. Ahead of his meeting with the Russian leader last week, Trump threatened Russia with “severe consequences” if it didn’t accept a ceasefire. Afterward, he dropped that demand and said it was best to focus on a comprehensive peace deal — an approach that Putin has pushed for. Trump said in Monday’s Oval Office meeting with Zelenskyy that a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine was “unnecessary.” But after his closed-door meeting with European leaders and Zelenskyy, Trump told reporters that “all of us would obviously prefer the immediate ceasefire while we work on a lasting peace.” Where Trump ultimately falls on that issue is important because it could affect how much Ukrainian land Russia has seized by the time the two sides get around to hammering out how much it could keep.

Occupied Ukrainian territory

Zelenskyy and European leaders said that Putin has demanded that Ukraine give up the Donbas, the country’s industrial heartland made up of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. It has seen some of the most intense fighting of the war although Russian forces have failed to capture it completely. Moscow also illegally annexed Crimea and its forces hold parts of four other regions outside the Donbas. In all, they hold about one-fifth of Ukraine. Zelenskyy has long

noted the Ukrainian Constitution prohibits breaking up his country. He has also suggested the demand for territory would serve as a springboard for a future Russian invasion. Rutte said the possibility of Ukraine ceding occupied territory to Russia in return for peace wasn’t discussed in Monday’s talks. That is an issue for Zelenskyy and Putin to consider, he said to Fox News. A Putin-Zelenskyy meeting

Zelenskyy has repeatedly suggested sitting down with Putin, even challenging the Russian leader to meet him as part of direct peace talks between the two sides in Turkey in May. Putin snubbed that offer, saying that significant progress on an agreement would have to be made before the pair met in person. On Monday, Trump appeared to back Zelenskyy’s plan. “I called President Putin, and began the arrangements for a meeting, at a location to be determined, between President Putin and President Zelenskyy,” Trump said in a social media post. He said he would join the two leaders afterward. But when discussing a phone call held after the meeting between Trump and the Russian leader, Putin’s foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov gave no indication that either a bilateral or a trilateral meeting with Ukraine had been agreed. European leaders know that Putin doesn’t want to meet Zelenskyy and that he won’t allow Western troops in Ukraine — but they’re expressing optimism that these things could happen in the hopes of forcing Putin to be the one to say no to Trump, according to Janis Kluge of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. “Europeans hype up expectations to create a reality in which Putin disappoints,” he wrote on X.

NEW YORK

Trump weaponization czar urged AG James to resign over mortgage probe

By Michael R. Sisak
The Associated Press

NEW YORK » President Donald Trump’s political weaponization czar sent a letter urging New York Attorney General Letitia James to resign from office “as an act of good faith” four days after starting his mortgage fraud investigation of her. Then he showed up outside her house. Ed Martin, director of the Justice Department’s Weaponization Working Group, told James’ lawyer Aug. 12 the Democrat would best serve the “good of the state and nation” by resigning and ending his probe into alleged paperwork discrepancies on her Brooklyn townhouse and a Virginia home. “Her resignation from office would give the people of New York and America more peace than proceeding,” Martin wrote. “I would take this as an act of good faith.” Then Friday, Martin turned up outside James’ Brooklyn townhouse in a “Columbo”-esque trench coat, accompanied by an aide and New York Post journalists. He didn’t meet



BEBETO MATTHEWS — THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE
New York Attorney General Letitia James speaks Feb. 16, 2024, in New York.

with James or go inside the building. A Post writer saw him tell a neighbor: “I’m just looking at houses, interesting houses. It’s an important house.” James’ lawyer Abbe Lowell shot back Monday, telling Martin in a letter his blunt request for James’ resignation defied Justice Department standards and codes of professional responsibility and legal ethics. The Justice Department “has firm policies against using investigations and against using prosecutorial power for achieving political ends,” Lowell wrote. “This is ever more the case

when that demand is made to seek political revenge against a public official in the opposite party.” “Let me be clear: that will not happen here,” Lowell added. Lowell also blasted Martin’s visit to James’ home as a “truly bizarre, made-for-media stunt” and said it was “outside the bounds” of Justice Department rules. He included an image from security camera footage showing Martin, in his trench coat, posing for a photo in front of James’ townhouse. He said Martin looked as if he were on a “visit to a tourist attraction.”

Council

FROM PAGE 1

petition circulation and said that not all collected signatures were verified once the referendum surpassed the threshold for qualification. Coletti, who now leads the advocacy group Transparent Pacific Grove, has argued the council should have submitted the pay raise to voters from the start. He cites the city’s financial outlook as a reason for voter input, pointing to a report presented to the council earlier this year that showed a \$55 million unfunded pension liability, rising insurance costs and projected budget deficits. The council’s decision in May marked the first

dates include June, November, or a standalone April special election in 2026. The city’s agenda report estimates a cost of \$74,000 to \$106,000 to consolidate the measure with a county-run election, and up to \$254,000 for a standalone special election. Coletti disputes those figures, arguing the cost to add a measure to a regular municipal ballot would be far lower. In an email to the city and Registrar of Voters, he also claimed a clerical error was made in the agenda report regarding the timeline for

pay adjustment for council members in more than 25 years. Under state law, cities under 35,000 in population may increase council pay by up to 5 percent annually since the last raise, but Pacific Grove used its authority to bypass the limitation and make the higher increase effective immediately. If the council opts to repeal the ordinance, the pay raise will be nullified. If it instead calls for an election, voters will ultimately decide the matter in 2026. The Pacific Grove City Council will meet at 6 p.m. Wednesday at City Hall, 300 Forest Ave.

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