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Classes were in session at RHAM High School this summer, as the summer school program returned after a six-year break, thanks to a \$10,000 grant secured by Superintendent of Schools Robert Siminski and state Sen. Edith Prague. *Photo courtesy <http://rhamhs.reg8.k12.ct.us>*

Relaunched RHAM Summer School Program Labeled Success

by Sarah McCoy

After a six-year hiatus, summer school returned this year to RHAM High School and, according to Superintendent of Schools Robert Siminski, the program "was a great success."

RHAM, which serves students in Andover, Hebron and Marlborough, was able to reinstate the program due in large part to a grant secured by Siminski and state Sen. Edith Prague (D-Columbia).

The \$10,000 grant, provided by the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), enabled RHAM to offer a wide array of summer school options, including both remedial and enrichment subjects. In total, over 120 students participated, with another 45 at the middle school level.

"Overall it was a great success," Siminski said of the program. "That's not to say we won't make changes in the future, but I think, on the whole, we made a pretty good start."

Classes, which ran for two hours each day, began the end of June and carried through until the first week of August. Students had the option of retaking classes such as English, General Science, U.S. History, or Physical Education and Health. Or, they could opt to take classes not of-

fered during the regular school year for enrichment.

This summer, eighth-grader Kyle Chorspecken, 13, of Hebron, signed up for aerospace engineering because "it sounded fun and interesting." The class didn't disappoint. Chorspecken and his fellow classmates built rockets and hot air balloons as they learned how things flew. "It's not like regular school," he said. "You got to learn, a lot, by doing."

RHAM High School dropped its summer school program in 2001 due to budget constraints (the middle school never dropped the program). For the next six years parents had to shuttle their children to other area high schools for summer school. "This presented a logistical nightmare for some parents," school counselor and High School Summer School Director Loree Connors said.

With that in mind the district applied for a grant from OPM to reinstate the program. Parents were still responsible for tuition for their child but the \$10,000 grant gave RHAM enough "money in the kitty to make summer school self-supporting," said Siminski. He said school officials plan on offering summer school again at

RHAM, building on what they started this year.

One key to the summer school program, Connors said, was the teaching. RHAM teachers handled each class providing "a familiar face in a familiar place for students to learn," Connors said. Also, since these teachers were already familiar with the RHAM curriculum, this also aided in the students' transitions.

At the middle school level, summer school continued this year like it has in the past. Over 45 students attended, half for classes and half for Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) support. The CMT Academies, offered for reading, writing and math, targeted students on the cusp of passing the tests. "The idea is to keep their scholastic brains going to aid in retention," Dawn Mallory, Middle School Summer School Coordinator, said.

Like at the high school, an emphasis was placed on hands-on learning and getting more in-depth with subjects. "Students were, in general, very enthusiastic," Mallory said. "In fact, we ended with more students than we started with because the kids would tell their friends and they'd want to come too."

Construction Projects Moving Right Along in Marlborough

by Sarah McCoy

It's been a summer of roadway construction in Marlborough. This week First Selectman Bill Black gave an update on the three large projects currently in the works on the town's roads.

After a busy season, the reconstruction at exit 15 off of Route 2 is nearly complete. Thanks to a federally funded grant received by the Connecticut Department of Transportation, the jug handle exit in the south end of town is no more. It has been replaced by a single stop sign at the end of the ramp.

"The majority of heavy reconstruction has been completed as have the under drains in both the east and west directions," Black said this past Tuesday, Sept. 4.

At the present time the contractor, Manafort Brothers out of Plainville, is in the process of relocating their equipment from the Marlborough Commons, where it has been stored for the last three months. Black said he expects this to be complete by the end of the week.

In other roadway news, Marlborough will be getting not one but two new stoplights. These lights will be installed at both the east and west-bound ramps off of exit 13 in the center of town.

The town initially requested these lights two years ago. In May, Black was notified that the town would receive one light at the end of the westbound ramp. However, the state Department of Transportation has since altered its plans and will instead install two lights.

"There are times when cars are backed up to

the highway," Black said. "This will be a tremendous help to the safety of Route 2."

Black added that the traffic lights will be intelligent, meaning that their timing will change depending on the number of cars waiting.

"In order to be recognized, cars must stop before the stop bar," Black said. "Otherwise, the light will assume you've already passed through the intersection."

The lights will be installed at no cost to the town and construction is expected to begin in late spring of 2008. The town will have the option of purchasing an emergency preemption system for the two traffic lights, at a reduced cost. This would enable emergency personnel to control the signals when necessary.

If the town opts for this system, the federal government will pick up 90 percent of the bill, leaving the town responsible for about \$1,000. Black said he is in conversation with Fire Chief Bill Lord as to whether the town could benefit from this piece of equipment.

Meanwhile, on the other side of town, a section of Jones Hollow Road has been replaced. On Monday the town's Public Works department, in conjunction with Lisbon-based Pasteryak Inc., laid a new roadway from West Road to the intersection with Standish Road. In the coming weeks, the town and contractor will begin laying the curbs and driveway aprons. Black said he expected this construction to wrap up at the end of the month.

Vote on East Hampton Water System Set for November

by Michael McCoy

After tabling action at its Aug. 20 meeting, the Board of Finance voted this week to approve the first phase of a townwide water system.

A referendum on the \$28.5 million project will be held Tuesday, Nov. 6.

The Clean Water Task Force (CWTF) and the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) have been focusing their energy on this project ever since the state issued a consent order in August 2006. The state's action was a result of contamination and insufficient water capacity.

On April 25, Director of Finance Jeff Jylkka presented seven different scenarios for a potential water system, with price tags ranging from \$15 million to \$51 million.

On July 24, the Town Council voted 6-1 to approve a \$25.9 million proposal, which would serve 490 people in the village center and Route 66 area. Since July, the scope of the project has extended to the Food Bag on Route 16, leading the cost to climb to \$28.5 million.

After the Board of Finance tabled acceptance of the project last month, there seemed to be concern that the project would not be able to be included on the ballot in November. But the board had a special meeting Tuesday, Sept. 4, and voted 4-1 to move it forward.

Five of the seven finance board members were present, and Jill Simko made the motion to accept the plan. "At some point we have to put forward a vote to the town and say, 'Are we doing this or are we not doing this?'" Katherine Avery said.

The dissenting vote came from Board of Fi-

nance Chairman Ted Hintz, who said, "I know that it's not going to be perfect, but two-year-old information, in my opinion, is not good enough."

Concerned that the data the town engineers, The Maguire Group, assembled was out of date, Hintz said, "My biggest fear is that we're going to have to come back to the town saying, 'We need more money.' ... This could cost the town \$29 million."

According to Jylkka and Public Utilities Administrator Vincent Susco, the water project's most recent figures were submitted by The Maguire Group in July 2006.

Jylkka admitted that with a project of this magnitude, figures can often change. "There's a lot of things that can happen in five or six years," he said, mentioning construction inflation, grant reimbursement and just how much money the state will kick in.

Hintz expressed another fear about the project. "Eminent domain has been discussed, and it is buried in the bonding," he said.

The plan is for the main filtering site to be installed at St. Clements Marina on Oakum Dock road. According to Hintz, the plan contains language that could make it possible for the town to seize the necessary land, should East Hampton and the marina not come to an agreement.

After the meeting, Hintz said he is "absolutely in favor of getting a water system for the town." He added, "Let the taxpayers cast their vote."

Mass. Woman Puts \$40,000 on Boyfriend's Credit Cards

by Michael McCoy

Massachusetts resident Anne Wescott turned herself into East Hampton Police on Aug. 30, on charges she racked up more than \$40,000 worth of charges on her boyfriend's credit cards.

Police would not release the boyfriend's name but, according to Chief Matthew Reimondo, he began noticing suspicious transactions on his credit cards last September. The East Hampton resident had started a relationship with Wescott the previous spring.

Reimondo said that, when the boyfriend asked Wescott about the charges, she said, "Oh, that was a mistake." But the resident's suspicions grew, and in December he reported the matter to police, Reimondo said.

Officer Bryan Mulligan led the investigation, and an arrest warrant was issued last month, Reimondo said. Wescott, who lives in Millbury,

MA, turned herself in last week, Reimondo said.

Wescott was charged with first-degree identity theft, first-degree larceny, credit card theft, illegal use of a credit card and criminal impersonation.

Between September 2006 and February 2007, Reimondo said, Wescott had racked up a balance of around \$40,000. This included the opening of six credit card accounts as well as a cell phone account with Cingular. In addition, Reimondo said, Wescott made several trips to Florida, which also included extensive purchases.

Reimondo said he guess that the credit card companies would not hold the victim responsible for the \$40,000.

Wescott was released on a \$25,000 bond. She is scheduled to appear in Middletown Superior Court Monday, Sept. 10.

Selectmen OK Tax Relief Plan for Elderly in Portland

by Michael McCoy

The Board of Selectmen voted unanimously this week to adopt an ordinance designed to provide tax relief for the town's seniors.

The selectmen Wednesday adopted the Property Tax Relief for Elderly Homeowners Ordinance. The program "essentially freezes [the] taxes" of those who qualify, according to First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield.

Participants would see the amount paid in property taxes each year remain at the same level they were the year they enrolled in the program. If, while enrolled in the program, a person's property taxes actually fall below what they were when the person initially enrolled, that would become the new "frozen" figure.

State law provides the vast majority of the parameters for a municipality looking to incorporate such an ordinance. To be eligible for the relief plan, residents must be either 70 years old or older or the spouse of someone 70 or older, provided the two live together. Also, someone 62 or older is eligible, provided that their spouse had met all requirements and was taking advantage of the program at the time of their death.

Also, an applicant must have lived in Connecticut for one year before filing, and must meet certain income specifications. Those are set by the state and usually change around the first of each year. For example, currently, a single person applying for the program must

not have an income exceeding \$28,000. For a married couple, the total must not exceed \$35,300.

The tax relief only applies to the value of real property that functions as the applicant's home. Also, applicants must not own more than \$150,000 worth of assets other than the property to which the relief applies.

Those interested may apply between Feb. 8 and May 15, 2008.

The selectmen agreed Wednesday to add a clause that requires the town to be named as an additional insured on the applicant's insurance policy. This, as well as the total asset cap, are the only opportunities for variation from the basic state law.

Should an applicant qualify, the town will establish a lien on the property in the total amount of the tax relief, in addition to a 3 percent interest rate. That sum will be owed to the town either when that property is sold or at the event of the settlement of said estate.

Last fall, a committee composed of selectmen Sharon Peters Gibala, John Anderson, and Mark Finkelstein began meeting to draw up the ordinance. The trio used state statutes to guide them through the language. The ordinance went to a public hearing last month.

The ordinance is "a way for people on a fixed income to budget their money," Bransfield said. "I hope some people are able to take advantage of this to meet their needs."

Packed House for Republican Debate in Colchester

by Jim Salemi

It was standing room only at Cragin Library Tuesday night, as the two Republican candidates for First Selectman squared off on the issues.

Over 100 residents – including several Democrats – were on hand to see the Sept. 4 debate between Greg Morgan and Diana Norton Giles.

Giles was endorsed by the Republican Town Committee at a July caucus, but Morgan petitioned, successfully, to secure a spot on the ballot for the upcoming Republican primary, which will be held next Tuesday, Sept. 11, at Town Hall, 127 Norwich Ave.

The debate was sponsored by the Greater Middletown League of Women Voters and moderated by member Bobbie Shorthouse, from the Moodus section of East Haddam. Shorthouse, who said she has no interests in Colchester, outlined the format and rules of the debate, with the questions coming entirely from residents who filled out index cards before and during the debate.

The overwhelming majority of questions had to do with taxation and spending.

“How would you encourage more economic development?” was the first question read by Shorthouse. (Giles responded first, since, as was determined by a coin toss before the debate, Morgan was first to give an opening statement.)

“We need it,” Giles said, in response to the question. “We need to rezone certain land from

residential to commercial. We need to extend sewer and water. It’s an investment we have to make. It says we’re serious about bringing in business.”

Giles added that the town needs to be more inviting to prospective new businesses, and leaders need to start serving as salesmen for the town.

Morgan agreed that the town needed to do more to attract business, and said he would do so by working with organizations such as the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA) as well as state agencies.

Morgan spoke to the kinds of businesses the town should focus on.

“Fifty-three-percent of businesses in Connecticut are made up of four people or [fewer]. Connecticut is a state of small business. We need to stop looking for the home run,” he said, meaning the town should focus on the small-sized businesses in the pool of those looking to relocate or open shop, rather than looking for a large company that would be a revenue wind-fall for the town.

“We also need to keep business in Colchester,” he said. “The problem is the tax burden.”

During his opening statement, Morgan told the audience he was there “to learn” from residents.

“I came here for the same reason you did, to learn, to hear your positions,” he said. “That’s why I’m running, to see what we can do two,

10 years down the road.”

Giles said she is running for the simple fact that she “loves this town.”

“I have the skills, the management experience and leadership ability,” she said. “In the immediate future, taxes and spending need to be brought back under control. While taxes are out of control and we need to attract more business, it’s important that we don’t outgrow the traditions of the town, such as the town meeting.”

Another question posed at the debate queried the candidates on their positions on tax breaks for the elderly.

“Yes, I do” favor such tax breaks, Morgan responded. “Other communities are doing it and seniors use fewer services. Not only is it the moral thing to do, it’s good for the bottom line.”

Giles said the Board of Selectman is in the process of setting up a task force to look into available state programs.

Another question asked of the candidates was, “Why do you think the budget keeps getting defeated?”

“I think because people can’t afford it,” Giles said. “My insurance, electricity and water bill has gone up. The next budget, I will support. Government has to move forward. These are difficult times. They will get better, they always do. When we do, we can spend on the items we want.”

Morgan said he would not support the next budget when it goes to referendum.

“I spoke against the first two because of the understated revenue,” he said. “I don’t agree with this budget. I think there’s fat and we can find it.”

He said he would do so by holding department heads accountable for line items. “I’m not afraid to stand in front of department heads and cut budgets,” he said.

In another question, a resident asked if either candidate would run as an Independent if defeated in the primary. Both candidates said they were Republicans, and had no intention of leaving the party, even to run for office.

The audience of citizens at the debate was scattered with some Democrats, presumably out of curiosity since they are ineligible to vote in a Republican Primary.

One such spectator was Democratic first selectman candidate Linda Hodge. She said it was a “good debate” and was informative, but, she said, she wished she heard a greater sampling of questions.

“They were all the same questions, just worded differently,” she said. “I’d like to have heard their positions on other areas, like public safety, roads, senior services.”

Asked if she would agree to a debate if invited after the Republicans select their candidate next Tuesday, she said “Absolutely.”

“I love debating,” she said. “I think it’s a good thing for democracy. The more the better. I would like to see more debates sponsored by more organizations.”

Approvals Might Mean New Business in Portland

by Sarah McCoy

The Portland Planning and Zoning Commission approved two items at a meeting Thursday, Aug. 23, that could bring new businesses to town.

At the meeting, motions proposing change in the usage text of the restricted industrial zoning regulation and a site plan approval for a tentative hardware store passed unanimously.

Concord Equity Group LLC requested that the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) consider adding outdoor recreation facilities to the list of possible uses in the restricted industrial zone. Prior to the Aug. 23 meeting only indoor recreational facilities, assembly warehouses, office buildings, health facilities, and research facilities were allowed on the property.

According to Planning and Land Use Administrator Deanna Rhodes anybody can come to the PZC to request a change but commissioners must make their decision without specifically considering a potential applicant.

“This is a careful decision,” Rhodes said at the meeting. “It has to be global and not on a case-by-case basis.”

The category of restricted industrial zone was implemented to protect the town’s aquifer. Currently only one parcel of land, located behind the town garage on Glastonbury Turnpike, is classified as restricted industrial.

While no formal application has been filed yet, Dana Barnes of Concord Equity was present at last week’s meeting representing Oakwood Sports Center. Concord Equity hopes to turn the parcel into a three-field soccer complex with accessory uses for food ser-

vice and retail.

Currently, Oakwood operates an indoor center in Glastonbury and leases field time from neighboring towns for their outdoor teams and summer camps. Oakwood has over 300 members and their summer camps draw 1,200. It has also been recognized as one of the top 64 clubs in the nation.

At last week’s meeting, PZC members seemed particularly concerned with turf management at the parcel. They urged potential applicants to be mindful of the site’s close proximity to the town’s well and avoid harmful pesticides.

Also approved by PZC last Thursday was a site plan to turn an abandoned boat storage facility at 724 Portland-Cobalt Rd. into a retail location, most likely a hardware store. The Commission unanimously approved the plans, allowing the applicant, Benjamin Srb, to begin seeking building permits.

Before speaking in front of the commission, engineer Frank Magnotta and Srb sought five variances from the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). These variances, which were all unanimously approved, are eliminating a buffer requirement, reconstructing a building within 100 feet of a watercourse, locating a sign within 10 feet from the edge of the road, reconstructing a building within front and rear setbacks, and reducing the required parking from 43 spots to 19.

With the PZC and ZBA approvals, Srb is now prepared to continue the building process and file an application with the town’s building department. The site plan approval is good for five years from the date it was granted.

Obituaries

Bradley Peter Rogers

Bradley Peter "Pete" Rogers, Sr., 72, died Wednesday, Aug. 29, at the Cottage Hospital in Woodsville, NH. He was born in East Hampton Feb. 1, 1935, the son of Bradley Raymond and Agnes Frances (McGuire) Rogers. Pete graduated from East Hampton High School in 1953. He served in the U.S. Army from 1953 to 1956. After discharge from the Army, he married Gayle (Clark) Rogers on Oct. 28, 1956. Pete was a plumber and pipe fitter having worked for various companies in Connecticut before retiring from Pratt & Whitney after 29 years.

He was an active member of the East Hampton Volunteer Fire Department, serving from February 1965 to April 1977, achieving the rank of Captain. He had belonged to the Amateur Radio Operators Club for many years. Pete and Gayle moved to Vermont in 1997 following retirement. He loved hunting, fly fishing and was a member of National Rifle Association.

Survivors include his wife of 50 years, Gayle Rogers of Newbury, VT; two daughters, Alison Linebaugh and husband Gary of Chester, and Elizabeth Basso and husband John of East Hampton; two sons, Bradley P. Rogers, Jr. and wife Gloria of Buffalo, NY, and Lee C. Rogers of Portland; eight grandchildren and one great-grandson. At Mr. Rogers' request there will be no public services. A private family memorial will be held at a later date. In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to a charity of one's choice. Ricker Funeral Home, Woodsville, NH is in charge of arrangements.

Priscilla Jane Garrison

Priscilla Jane Garrison, 84, of Hebron and formerly of East Hartford, passed away Sunday, Sept. 2, at home with her family by her side after a long battle with COPD. Born Sept. 17, 1922, in Windsor, she was a daughter of the late Frederick and Jennie May (Preston) Spellman. She married Ronald William Garrison, Sr. on Feb. 15, 1941, and they shared 39 wonderful years before he predeceased her on Dec. 6, 1981.

Priscilla retired several years ago after having worked as a caterer. More importantly, she gave generously of herself in her work as a volunteer. She was a member for over 50 years of the Order of the Eastern Star, Wethersfield Chapter No. 97, which merged with Good Intent Chapter. Also, she was past Queen of the Daughters of the Nile; member of the American Legion Auxiliary, Post 95 Hebron; a volunteer for over 30 years at the Masonic Home and Hospital in Wallingford; a volunteer for Hospice and past president of the PTA for the Town of East Hartford. Priscilla was a former member of the Burnside United Methodist Church in East Hartford and more recently was a member of the Westchester Congregational Church in Colchester. She will be remembered most by those who knew her well for her caring devotion to others and her wonderful sense of humor.

She is survived by four children, R. William Garrison, Jr. and his wife Phyllis of Marlborough, Barbara J. Henderson of Asheville, NC, Kent E. Garrison and his wife Sybil of North Grosvenordale and Carol Aldrich and her husband William of Mystic; two sisters, Olive Burkhardt of Redlands, CA and Carolyn Schaefer of Hebron; eight grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; and numerous extended family and friends. In addition to her beloved husband and parents, she was predeceased by nine siblings.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, Sept. 22, at 11 a.m. at the Westchester Congregational Church at the corner of Rte. 149 and Cemetery Road, Colchester. Donations in her memory may be made to VNA East - Hospice of Eastern CT, 34 Ledgebrook Drive, Mansfield Center 06250, the Hebron Vol. Fire Dept., 44 Main St., Hebron 06248, the American Lung Association, 45 Ash St. East Hartford 06108-3272 or the American Cancer Society, 106 Franklin Commons, Rte. 32, Franklin 06254-1800. Care of arrangements has been entrusted to the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester.

Marjorie Bell Roberts

Marjorie Bell Roberts, 93 of East Hampton, formerly of Marlborough and Rhode Island, died Friday Aug. 31 at Harrington Court in Colchester. Born June 27, 1914 in Ellington the daughter of the late Lewis and Hazel (Bell) Edwards she had lived in Pawtucket, RI before moving to Marlborough in 1990. Marjorie was the widow of Miles F. Roberts who passed away in 1968. She was a Charter member of St. Paul's Women's Guild, Past President of Pawtucket Emblem Club No. 23, and member of Limerock Eastern Star No. 26.

Marjorie is survived by her daughter Donna-Lee Kay of East Hampton, five grandchildren and seven great grandchildren. She was predeceased by her two sons Bruce Roberts and David Roberts. A graveside service was held Wednesday Sept. 5 in Moshassuck Cemetery in Central Falls, RI with the Rev. Mary Alice Sullivan officiating. There were no calling hours. Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton had care of the arrangements. To leave online condolences visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.