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Young People's Center for Creative Arts is putting on a production of *High School Musical* in East Hampton April 30-May 3. Pictured from left are cast members Dan White (who is playing Chad in the show), Sarah Jackson (who is playing Taylor), Nate Abraham (Troy), Megan Spaulding (Gabriella), Martha Henzy (Sharpay) and Jarred Kyser (Ryan).

High School Musical Coming to East Hampton

by Michael McCoy

Like *Old Home Days* and boating on Lake Pocotopaug, the Young People's Center for Creative Arts (YPCCA) is a summertime fixture in East Hampton. But this year, you don't have to wait until July for their next musical.

From April 30-May 3, YPCCA will present *High School Musical* at East Hampton High School, 15 North Maple St.

YPCCA is a nonprofit organization designed to provide students with a creative outlet. Every year the group runs a summer camp that includes workshops on improvisation, set design, audition techniques and monologues. It culminates with a production of a Broadway musical. Past productions have included *Fiddler on the Roof*, *West Side Story*, *Chicago*, and, most recently, *Grease*. Last summer, when mounting that production, YPCCA director Chris Briggs called it "the original *High School Musical*." So, it was only fitting that the troupe tackle its contemporary counterpart next.

For the uninitiated, *High School Musical* is a Disney Channel phenomenon turned Broadway show that has spawned two sequels. It buoyantly tells a *Romeo and Juliet*-like tale of popular basketball player Troy and the shy bookish Gabriella trying out for the two leads in their high school production. It includes numbers like "Get'cha Head in the Game," the finale

"We're All in This Together," and the musical's biggest radio hit, "Breaking Free."

Rachel Mansfield, whose father Mike started YPCCA in 1982, is directing the production. Mansfield began directing the shows in 1997. Last summer's production was the rare occasion that Mansfield did not direct the show over the last decade, the reason being a brand new baby. (Briggs, who normally serves as technical director, filled in.) Mansfield is an East Hampton native HARTT School graduate who, though now a stay-at-home mom, worked for years at RHAM Middle School as a social studies teacher.

Each year, YPCCA grants a scholarship to an East Hampton student who is going on to study theatre or education. This scholarship, usually around \$250, is funded by the summer camp. (Last year's scholarship went to YPCCA regular Spencer Bazzano, who is studying theatre at PACE University.) Mansfield said she realized last fall that the funds were getting low and something would need to be done to build the scholarship fund, since she also wanted to make the scholarship \$1,000, instead of \$250.

That's when the idea of a spring musical hit her. During the 1990s this was not that uncommon for YPCCA, when they put on spring shows like *The Wizard of Oz*

and *The Sound of Music*. Mansfield said YPCCA plans to produce a spring show every other year from here on in.

Originally, YPCCA had hoped to do the *Sweeney Todd*, but Mansfield decided a benefit production for a student should be more "high school friendly."

And, she figured, "it doesn't get more friendly than *High School Musical*."

In January auditions were held, and rehearsals began in February, two nights a week. They have gradually increased in frequency, leading up to a wild week before the performances.

Next week, rehearsals begin at the high school; up until now, they have been held at the Joseph N. Goff House. "The Goff House has been fantastic with letting us be here," Mansfield said, adding the owners of the building charged YPCCA a reduced fee to rehearse there, based on its nonprofit status (YPCCA achieved full nonprofit status last October.)

One interesting casting note is that Mansfield has cast two girls for each of the two female leads, a result of an excess of talent. On Thursday and Saturday, Arielle Mayo of Southington will play Gabriella, while Megan Spaulding of East Hampton will assume the role on Friday and Sunday. Likewise, Jessica Wolf of Southington will play Sharpay on Thurs-

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day and Saturday, while Martha Henzy of East Hampton will take over Friday and Sunday.

Portland's Jarred Kyser will play Ryan all four nights of the show. Nate Abraham of East Hampton will be Troy, the other male lead.

The cast is composed of 55 students and one adult, and the crew adds another 10 students. The production draws from a talent pool reaching such towns as East Hampton, Portland, Southington and East Haddam. Of participating students, Mansfield celebrated that about half have never been involved with the summer camp so far.

In addition to Mansfield, the other YPCCA staff involved behind the scenes includes music director Matt Campisi and choreographer Jen Friday.

When asked if putting together this production differed from the annual July event, Mansfield laughed, "We haven't been sweating our butts off" during rehearsal. She did, however, remark that the kids being in school had made it more difficult.

Mansfield said the production may defy the expectations one may have from an adaptation of a TV-movie. "The dancing's super-challeng-

ing," she said. "It's challenging, technical dancing." (Though much of the footwork is taken directly from the film, Friday has incorporated a healthy dose of original choreography.)

Early registration for the summer camp ends May 1, but students may register up until the first day of camp, July 6. Auditions for the musical, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, will be held the prior week.

Also, Mansfield said, YPCCA is looking to expand to a second camp in Durham come 2010. Yet another development is a new junior camp, for kids in grades K-5, that will run parallel to the older one this summer. (The YPCCA summer camp is traditionally for kids in grades six through those who have just graduated high school.)

High School Musical runs Thursday, April 30, through Sunday, May 3. Shows Thursday, Friday and Saturday are at 7 p.m., while the Sunday show is at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$12 for adults and \$10 for seniors and students aged 18 and under. They are available at the door, at Paul's and Sandy's Too (located at 93 East High St., East Hampton), by calling 267-2911 or by visiting www.ypcca.com.

School Board Sends \$23.90 Million Budget to Referendum

by Sarah McCoy

With little discussion, the RHAM Board of Education this week moved a \$23.90 million budget forth for voter consideration. The budget represents a 1.45 percent increase in spending and will go to referendum in the three RHAM towns – Andover, Hebron and Marlborough – on Tuesday, May 5.

RHAM Board of Education Chair Susan Griffiths said she believes the board members did a good job balancing the needs of the school with the current economic climate. "The last few weeks were very useful," Griffiths said of the budget process. "We got people in the audience asking questions. That input is so valuable as we make decisions."

The vote to move the budget number to referendum came after a public hearing Monday, April 6.

The driving forces of the 2009-10 RHAM schools budget include a 2 percent salary raise to union employees as well as compensating for a projected increase of 68 students at the high school. Board members did support a \$90,000 reduction to instructional supplies, \$32,000 from the library books account and \$56,000 from textbooks.

Siminski reported that the schools would not be purchasing any new sets of textbooks for next year only replacing worn or lost volumes. The libraries will not be purchasing any new books next year.

Over 50 residents were present in the high school auditorium to hear the budget presentation by Superintendent of Schools Robert Siminski. Few spoke and most of those who did expressed concern that the 1.45 percent increase in spending might not be enough. Linda Fisher of Marlborough said she would prefer to see a 3 percent increase to spending to allow for the continuation of the current year's budget.

Despite her husband being out of work, Fisher urged the board not to reduce the budget further. "I understand why it's prudent not

to increase programming but I urge you not to make any cuts," she said.

Dan King questioned whether the Board of Education had requested a salary concession on the part of the teachers' union. Griffiths reported that those requests have been made though the BOE has not heard back from union officials.

Susan Zarbo, the RHAM teachers' union representative, spoke out during the public hearing in response to King's comments. She said the school district is in the bottom 20 percent for pay in the entire state and that only one other district is paying higher contributions towards employee benefits. Zarbo questioned how the district was going to be able to recruit teachers when there is a significant discrepancy between what RHAM pays and what neighboring districts offer.

Also, as part of the binding arbitration handed down at the end of February, there will be no step increases for employees. Zarbo reported that this freeze yields a \$160-\$170,000 savings to the board.

After the public hearing Zarbo said that, she believed, the timing of the arbitration award in late February couldn't have been worse for the union. "In many areas the [arbitration panel] ruled in favor of the Board of Ed[ucation] due to the economic climate," she said.

Zarbo added that the teachers' union would be formally responding to the board's request for salary concessions in the near future.

After the public hearing the school board met to vote on putting a number forth to the May 5 referendum. There was no discussion among board members, just a call to vote on the \$23.90 million budget. The budget moved forward by a vote of 8-2 with board members Thomas Tremont of Hebron and Kenneth Lee of Andover voting against the proposal.

Lee said after the meeting that he believed the board could have made more reductions to get to flat budget for the upcoming year.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

I had a simply amazin' night Monday.

Don't tell anyone (okay, I'm kind of writing this in a newspaper column, so I guess the cat's out of the bag), but I left work a few hours early Monday afternoon and headed down to New York to meet the Mets. And specifically, to meet them in their new stadium, Citi Field.

Some of you may recall I wrote about the demise of Shea Stadium last September. While I was very sad to see it go, I was also excited to see its replacement, the new Citi Field. As the off-season wore on, my excitement only built. When I learned the Mets' home opener was going to be played at night instead of during the afternoon, which meant I wouldn't have to miss a full day's work to see it, only a few hours, I decided...let's go for it. After all, seeing the very first game at a brand-new ballpark....that's something to tell your grandkids about. ("Yes, kids," the me of the future will say, in between bites of oatmeal, "I was at the Mets' first game in a new stadium, named after a long-dead bank.")

I took the train from New Haven into New York (for my money, this is the only way to go to New York City; I'd never drive there), and then the subway out to the ballpark. I timed my arrival perfectly; there were pre-game ceremonies to be seen, and I got there just as they were starting. The ceremonies included introductions of all the players and coaches on both the Mets and the San Diego Padres (their opponents Monday night), as well as of New York City Major Michael Bloomberg, New York Governor David Paterson and a few other New York government officials; all but Bloomberg were booed by the fans in the stands. Also booed, upon his pre-game introduction, was Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig, also in attendance for the game.

But, onto more cheerful parts of the opening ceremonies. The National Anthem was performed by the cast of *West Side Story*, which is currently enjoying a revival on Broadway. They did a fantastic job with the song, but then, they're members of a Broadway musical; I expected they'd be good. Many members of the military were on the field, and unveiled an absolutely giant American flag, which took up a large chunk of the outfield. And at one point during the ceremony, U.S. fighter jets flew overhead.

For me as a Mets fan, though, the highlight was the ceremonial first pitch. Arguably the two most popular players in Mets' history, Tom Seaver and Mike Piazza, formed the perfect battery: Seaver stood on the pitcher's mound and threw a pitch to Piazza, who crouched behind home plate and caught it. It was a duplicate of the last game at Shea last September, when Seaver threw to Piazza for a ceremonial "final pitch." Only this time, Seaver didn't bounce the ball; he threw a perfect strike, right over the plate. It was so good I was tempted to call out, "Sign him up!" (Hey, the Mets could use what starting pitching they could get.)

And from there it was, "Play ball!" The first pitch of the game from Mike Pelfrey, the Mets' starter Monday night, was a strike; a good start for Citi. Unfortunately, his third pitch of the evening was promptly deposited over the right field wall for a home run. In an odd way, though, the event was kind of fitting. Citi Field is actually the third stadium the Mets have played in since their inception. In 1962 and '63, they played in the old Polo Grounds, while Shea Stadium was being constructed. The first home run hit at the Polo Grounds in 1962 wasn't a Met home run, but instead was hit by their opponents (that game, the Pittsburgh Pirates). The first home run hit at Shea in 1964 was also hit by a member of the opposing team (which was again the Pirates). So at least there's some consistency.

After I watched the game for a bit, I decided to grab some dinner from one of the

concession stands. There was a tasty-sounding burger stand (with four different kinds of burgers), and the idea of a burger, fries and a soda in a souvenir Citi Field cup seemed very appealing, so I got in line and waited. And waited. And waited some more. One of the more talked-about aspects of the new Citi Field this past off-season was the upgrade to the concessions. Not only would fans be given a wider variety of food than they had been used to at Shea, but it would be tastier too. One of the upgrades came in the way the burgers were prepared; instead of just assembling a pile of hamburgers and cheeseburgers, wrapping them in foil and shoving them under a heat lamp, each burger was made-to-order, like at Wendy's. Unfortunately, the average Wendy's, even at its busiest time of day, serves about a fraction of the number of people who were lined up at the burger stand at the ballpark Monday night. So the wait was fairly lengthy.

Now, regular readers of this column have no doubt figured out I value food quite strongly, so I didn't mind the wait; I had a feeling my reward would be a delicious, fresh burger. But other people in the line evidently weren't quite so passionate about their eating, so there was a decent amount of yelling and frustration going on. If that happens at too many more games, I wouldn't be surprised if the Mets' food staff decided to forego the made-to-order route and instead go back to the old pre-assembled, heat-lamp burgers of the Shea days. I hope not, because my suspicions about the burger were correct; it was darn tasty.

And there were so many other food choices at Citi Field too than at Shea, including fried fish and a stand that sold French fries with a variety of sauces. Even the concessions that had been at Shea received upgrades: for example, I noticed the Subway now offered both hot and cold subs, whereas in past years they'd only featured cold grinders. That wasn't enough to make me want to eat there, though; opting for Subway when surrounded by all those other lovely food options is sort of like vacationing in France and opting to dine at McDonald's. It just seems like you're cheating your taste buds.

After I got my food, I sat down and watched the game. And that too was such a different experience from Shea. Shea was often criticized over the years as being a "cookie-cutter" ballpark, and if you ever were there, you know why. It was very circular, and very symmetrical, with none of the quirks in the outfield that you'll find in newer ballparks (like that mound in center field at Minute Maid Park in Houston). In a way, that was part of Shea's charm; ironically, it made the stadium stand out from the newer parks. Symmetrical stadiums were the order of the day in the '60s, when Shea was constructed, and over the years, most of them were torn down and replaced. And Shea, instead of being just one of the crowd, became fairly unique, because of those "cookie-cutter" qualities.

There's nothing cookie-cutter about the outfield at Citi Field. It's just as spacious as Shea's, but it also has some twists, with the most interesting being in right field: some of the seats actually extend *over* the field of play.

As for the game itself on Monday, the Mets lost (although I did get to see David Wright hit a three-run homer; how fitting it was that Wright, who has really kind of been the face of the team the past few years, had the first Mets home run at their new ballpark). But, it was probably the only time that I didn't really mind so much that they lost. Obviously, a win would be nice, but I got to see the grand opening of a brand-new ballpark. How awesome is that?

* * *

See you next week.

Portland Education Trust Hands Out Nearly \$75,000

by Michael McCoy

The Gildersleeve Wheeler Education Trust has been an asset to Portland schools for over 100 years, and members of the trust recently handed out their largest grants yet, totaling nearly \$75,000.

In 1866 prominent Portland shipbuilder Sylvester Gildersleeve included an educational trust in his will. It was designed to offset costs for children who had trouble affording school. (In 1866, education was not guaranteed for all, as even public school came with fees.)

That trust became effective when Gildersleeve died in 1899. Sisters Elizabeth and Laura Wheeler did something similar, and that started paying out in 1911. In the 1990s, the two trusts were combined. However, shortly after the merger, the state shut down the trust, after a scandal involving trustees using the money to fund their own children's college education.

In 2004, new trustees were appointed (three by the probate judge, two by the Board of Education). They were Glenn Ballinger, Diane Bascom, Steve Kinsella, Terri Larson and Trust Chairman Howard Rosenbaum. (In 2007, Kinsella won a bid for probate judge and resigned from the trust. Andy Bauer replaced him.)

After composing by-laws, forming a mission statement and making sure everything was aligned with state regulations, the trust began granting money to the schools again in 2006.

The \$25,000 kernel that Gildersleeve left has grown to about \$1.1 million over the last century, through interest and various investments. Since 2006, the trust has given \$234,000 to various educational programs. The money must fund Portland Public School programs only, and

cannot go toward college scholarships. Also, these programs must not be ones that would fall under the Board of Education budget. For example, the Gildersleeve Wheeler Trust cannot fund teachers' salaries or instructional supplies.

The trust usually approves grants in March and October, though Rosenbaum said this is not written in stone. Typically, what happens is teachers propose a grant proposal. Then it makes its way through the school principal, the superintendent of schools and then the Board of Education. After the proposal clears all those tiers, the trust votes on it.

Rosenbaum said that more often than not, the teacher or staff member that proposed the idea in the first place attends the board of trustees' corresponding meeting, despite being on their own time. Originally, teachers didn't do this, and Rosenbaum said people showing up to speak about their proposal has "been a big benefit" in terms of helping trustees make a decision on the funding.

Over the past three years, the trust has funded such programs as the startup of Future Problem Solvers, as well as various field trips, like the one the fourth-graders took to Ellis Island last October. Last summer, the trust paid for a summer reading program that started out as an Honors English initiative and ended up being expanded to all high school students.

However, most recently, on March 29, trustees approved \$74,783 in funding, their largest one-time approval ever. Two grants were actually awarded: \$20,654 for a program called Destiny Library Automation, an upgrade to the former library cataloging system. The program is a network that all five school libraries in town

are linked to. Students may search for information by subject and find out which school library contains which source. Furthermore, the system points them to relevant online resources as well. Doyen said library media specialists Karen Radziewicz (Gildersleeve) and Jannie DesRosier (Brownstone) proposed the grant.

The rest of the money, \$54,129, went to an English curriculum augmentation. This change affects Brownstone Intermediate School, the middle school and the high school.

"The feeling of the English Department... is there's a big lack of reading of nonfiction," Rosenbaum said. To address this, grades 5-12 will each receive a full English unit on nonfiction, incorporating the curriculum *Dr. Janet Allen's Plugged in to Nonfiction*.

"It's a different way of reading and comprehending," Rosenbaum said of the program, figuring adults tend to do a lot of nonfiction reading during their day-to-day lives.

Furthermore, each book comes with an audio CD, to help students with reading problems grasp the material.

Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen said students "need to be able to read high-level nonfiction." She continued, "Most people read nonfiction in their jobs and careers."

Doyen said the new unit will be implemented in the fall.

Last October, the trust's grant award paid for "Clickers Cloze," a tool for all second-grade classes, which was implemented shortly after Christmas vacation. Each student received a hand-held device, which allowed them to silently respond to their teachers, whether it's to answer a specific question or just to make sure they are grasping the material. Doyen referred

to it as an "interactive real-time assessment tool." During instruction, the teacher can view responses private on their computer monitor. Rosenbaum figured, because of this, "[the teacher] knows who to call on," saving embarrassment for those who don't.

"It's very, very engaging for kids," Doyen, who said the tool was "in heavy use." Doyen credited second-grade teacher Amy Raines for that grant. "We are one of the few districts [in the state] who has them at all," Doyen said.

Rosenbaum said he and the other Gildersleeve Wheeler trustees typically "try to reach as many kids as we can." However, he added, "We're not restricted to that," saying that feasibly the trust could fund a program that only applied to two or three students.

The trust is "very unique for Portland," Rosenbaum said. "There isn't another town in the state with the kind of funding available for these purposes."

"It's been a truly remarkable benefit," Doyen said of the Gildersleeve Trust, and added that, through its grant donations over the years, the school system has "been able to stay out front in technology."

Doyen said teachers often hear or read about new software, curricula, or other tools and think, "Oh, that's really neat. I'd love to do that with my class." Thanks to the Gildersleeve Trust, Doyen says Portland's teachers have "a realistic avenue for following up."

Though the Gildersleeve Wheeler Trust has not proactively raised money, instead relying on interest and investments, they are a 501(c)(3). Anyone interested in donating may do so by sending a check to P.O. Box 425, Portland, CT 06480.

Staff Shocked by Hebron Camp Vandalism

by Sarah McCoy

In her 11 years as executive director of Camp Hi Hoti, Lynn Ford said the most damage she'd ever seen on the property has been an occasional broken window. That all changed last Thursday when thousands of dollars in damages was discovered at the children's summer camp.

Ron and Joyce Wenzel, who live adjacent to the 300 acre camp on East Road, were walking the property last week when they noticed things slightly out of place. Ron Wenzel said he first noticed that the doors were open at the boat house down by the water. "But that's not a big thing because it was only held closed by a 2 by 4," he said.

The Wenzels continued their walk and noticed the garage door open. "That wasn't a big thing either," he said. "It's been open before."

As the Wenzels continued through the property they found more than open doors. Every window on the lodge and arts and crafts center had been broken. The doors for the nursing station and dining hall were broken open. Fire extinguishers had been sprayed. Walls were damaged. A rider mower was even driven into a swimming pool.

"It's just senseless," Ron Wenzel said. "My wife and I've lived here since 1972 and even since then we've enjoyed hearing the kids play and have fun at the camp. For someone to put that in jeopardy just doesn't make sense."

Wenzel has served on the Board of Directors at Camp Hi Hoti since 1994. In February

and March he has permission to use the grounds to tap the trees for syrup. When he and Joyce were on the property last week it was to clean the equipment used for tapping.

Camp Hi Hoti is used to host a six-week summer camp primarily for inner city kids to be able to experience the country. About 75 children attend the camp each summer. It is scheduled to open on July 6 and Ford is doing all she can to ensure that the opening is still feasible.

Today, April 17, an insurance adjuster, a contractor and Ford are scheduled to walk the grounds to assess the damage. Ford said she hopes to have a clearer idea at that point of the costs to fix the property and what will and will not be covered by insurance.

"I felt bad that individuals would take it upon themselves to damage a camp for kids. They just don't care or think it's a joke," she said. "I've just got to do what I can to correct it, get it open and get things back in place."

Ford said she's received calls as far away as Meriden and New Haven from people wanting to help get the camp restored. She said she is grateful for all the contractors that have called to offer help. "They want to pitch in and see it open," Ford said. "That makes my job a lot easier."

Hebron Resident State Trooper Kelly Krainak is overseeing the investigation on the vandalism. Anyone with any information is asked to call the State Police barracks at 537-7500.

Hebron Town Hall Getting Elevator

by Sarah McCoy

Renovations to make the Hebron Town Office Building handicapped accessible are underway, and when all is said and done, there will be an elevator at the rear of the building.

In 2007, the town was awarded a \$400,000 grant to make the Town Office Building compliant with the standards set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Last month, the town's Public Works Department began the project with some excavation and underpinning work in preparation for the elevator shaft foundation.

Scope Construction, out of New Britain, has been hired for the bulk of the work.

In addition to an elevator, the Town Office Building will have the bathroom downstairs renovated and expanded to meet ADA requirements. Upstairs, near the Town Manager's office, an additional room will be added. This space, according to Denise Cooper, grant administrator for the project, will provide, "much needed storage space for town files."

In order to qualify for the state-funded ADA grant the town of Hebron needed to provide a 10 percent match in funds. Cooper reported that this \$40,000 match includes both cash from the town as well as in-kind services, or time contributed to the project from town employees.

Cooper estimates that \$21,000 of the \$40,000 has been contributed through town employee time. This includes the work put in by the Public Works Department as well as the Finance Department who have overseen

the project.

Included in the plans for the Town Office Building is a small amount of asbestos abatement on the bottom floor. Interim Town Manager Andy Tierney said the Board of Selectmen is currently deciding on how they want to handle the issue.

The asbestos, according to Tierney, is in either the floor tiles or the mastic used to adhere the tiles to the floor. If left alone it presents no problems or hazards to town employees. "We have the option to not disturb it and just go over it," Tierney explained.

The other option would be to have Scope Construction come in on a weekend, when the building is vacant, to handle the abatement. Strict guidelines must be followed in terms of air quality testing and containment of any asbestos particles.

In order to cover the costs associated with finishing the project the town has requested a transfer of nearly \$30,000 from the Small Cities Program Income account for the ADA renovation project. Cooper said the state does allow for such a reallocation but a public hearing must be held on the matter.

That public hearing was scheduled to be held Thursday after press time, just prior to the regularly scheduled Board of Selectmen meeting.

Construction is expected to continue through the end of June, Tierney said. Until then the parking lot on the north side of the building will be closed.

\$37.43 Million Budget Sent to Referendum in East Hampton

by Michael McCoy

The Town Council Tuesday voted unanimously to send a proposed \$37.43 million 2009-10 budget – the same amount referred to the body by the Board of Finance last week – to referendum.

But, though the vote was unanimous, it was obvious not every council member was happy with the spending package.

The \$37.43 million budget includes \$25.26 million for Board of Education, \$10.2 million for town operations and transfers and \$1.97 million in debt service. It represents an increase of \$486,590, or 1.32 percent, over current year spending. It also features a 0.38 mill increase, bringing the projected mill rate up to 24.19. That translates to a tax hike of 1.6 percent.

Last week, the Board of Finance (BOF) referred the budget to Town Council, after cutting \$100,000 from Town Manager Jeff O’Keefe’s initial budget proposal, which he presented to the town in March. That reduction came solely from the Board of Education (BOE) budget. (School board members initially sent a \$25.48 million school budget to O’Keefe in January; O’Keefe had already cut \$120,000 from that number before presenting his budget last month.)

BOF Chairman Ted Hintz and finance board members Sharon Kjellquist, Barbara Moore and George Pfaffenbach were at Tuesday’s meeting. Town Council member Scott Minnick asked Hintz why they cut the BOE budget by \$100,000. Hintz explained that, during last year’s process, the BOF cut \$150,000 from the school budget, as finance board members anticipating more in Education Cost Sharing (ECS) money than the BOE was. The school board actually ended up with all that and more; the BOE received \$250,000 more in ECS than it had anticipated.

Hintz added that the BOF “made sure there would be no teacher impact” before making the cut to the school budget.

Hintz also said O’Keefe asked the BOF “not to micro-manage the budget” and to refrain from making line by line cuts. “We honored that request,” he said.

Council member Sue Weintraub referenced a 77-page document she received after asking for a list of town vendors. By her count, 276 of those vendors were paid \$5,000 or over, and she figured that, if all those contracts were negotiated down by 10 percent, the town could save \$1.46 million.

Weintraub said she recently saved thousands in her own business after renegotiating things like security and printing costs. However, finance director Jeff Jylkka, who paged through this list during the discussion, said it contained fixed costs like health care and other line items that could not simply be reduced. “I think we’ve accounted for everything we could have accounted for in the budget,” he commented. Later

in the meeting, after perusing the document further, he said he found \$9 million the town was already “actively pursuing.”

Minnick was on board with Weintraub’s proposal, and said the request to negotiate these line items was not to undermine Jylkka but instead, “the idea is doing what you do and extend it to every department.”

Council member Tom Cordeiro said Jylkka was already doing what he could, and said the budget was not just lean this year, but was last year as well.

BOE member Joanne Barmasse led public comments, saying, “This year we budgeted very close to what we thought we were going to get.” She also said needs of new students were unpredictable, and two kids could potentially run the town \$100,000. “We might be \$200,000 in the hole,” she said. Since suffering \$220,000 to their proposed budget, the BOE has not met to discuss what they will do, she said. “We don’t know what we’re going to cut,” Barmasse said. “We might cut staff; we might cut programs.” Barmasse later said that the BOE asked the teachers’ union to reopen contract negotiations. “They said ‘no,’” she reported. “There’s nothing more that I would like to see,” she continued, “than everyone take a zero percent increase. I’m a little upset that they did say ‘no.’”

Resident Russell Oakes said that during a recent trip to Florida, he found that communities were cutting items like junior varsity and middle school sports and the glee club. “If the kids want it, the mothers and fathers have to pay for it,” he said. Town Council Chair Melissa Engel noted that a “pay-to-play” type setup is already taking place in Colchester.

As a cost-saving measure, resident Kyle Dostaler suggested regionalizing services, declaring, “The State of Connecticut needs to stop acting like it’s 169 fiefdoms.” O’Keefe said he’s actually meeting with the heads of the Connecticut River Valley municipalities next week, to discuss regionalization. However, he said, while some towns have expressed in this issue, “there’s a lot of disinterest too.”

Resident Laurie Wasilewski said she was a proponent of “a zero increase budget. I think the condition of the economy warrants that we hold tight.”

“Every year taxes go up; they don’t ever go down,” she said. She referred to the oft-heard plea of “don’t cut education,” and said, “They haven’t been cut,” noting that the BOE budget has not actually been decreased from the previous year, but simply decreased from what school board members requested. (Even with the \$100,000 cut, the proposed BOE budget for the 2009-10 year is a 2.09 percent increase over the current year.)

Paul Peszynski said he was told that some town employees have voted to forfeit raises this

year. When O’Keefe said this was not true, Peszynski responded, “It seems strange to me that so many towns are doing this and we’re not doing it.” He especially admonished the education union’s unwillingness to budge and said, “We haven’t seen raises in our store for the last couple years.” (Peszynski and his son own Paul’s and Sandy’s Too.)

“There seems to be quite a division between the town government and the Board of Education,” said Patience Anderson. (She later made clear that this comment was reference to the dichotomy in residents’ opinion on the validity of the two major budget components.) So, she proposed a split budget for the future.

Engel said of this oft-mentioned splitting of the budgets that the town tried this years back, but the state Supreme Court at that time had ruled it “unfair.”

O’Keefe’s agenda report recommended that the council approve the budget, and they did just that, albeit after a fairly lengthy discussion.

Minnick said the two sentiments that stuck with him from last week’s BOF hearing were that if there was ever a time to be fiscally responsible, it was now. The other were the parents who noted financial hardship but supported budget without further education cuts nevertheless. Minnick said the meaning of responsibility was “sacrifice, making hard decisions and being assertive.”

He continued, “We also have a very profound responsibility to our children when it comes to education.” Instead of cutting education, he suggested executing Weintraub’s aforementioned notion. He figured a good plan would be, “Shoot for 10 percent [in reductions] hope for five, and if you get two, great.”

Minnick suggested postponing the budget vote to come up with a vendor contract negotiations policy. Addressing the council Democrats and Republicans, he said, “You guys are in charge; you can accept it or not.”

Engel said Weintraub’s proposal should have come weeks ago, and commented, “Tonight is not a great night to halt this budget.”

Cordeiro called Weintraub’s request a tactic to say of the rest of the council, “Look how irresponsible they’re being.” He added, “I think it’s a terrible stance to take.”

Noting his school-aged children and retired parents, all in town, Cordeiro continued, “I see it from both sides.” However, he figured that while going with a zero percent increase was enticing, it would move the town backward. “I’m not prepared to go backward,” he said.

He also briefly touched on the teachers’ refusal to reopen negotiations, saying, “I hope they understand that really backs us unto a corner.”

Council member John Tuttle made it clear that he did not care for Minnick’s suggestion

to postpone the budget vote. He said three things in East Hampton were certain: “death, taxes, and Scott will play the delay card like he did here tonight.”

Bill Devine said he would approve the budget Tuesday night, and added, “I’d prefer a 0.25 [mill increase], but I know it’s not going to come.”

Engel said she too preferred a 0.25 mill increase version, and singled out the teachers as the reason the BOE budget isn’t higher. After admitting that Connecticut teachers were once underpaid, she asserted, “Those days are not here anymore. We should be paying our teachers base don merit, not on longevity.”

Engel, who said she was once a teacher herself, said she was not questioning the quality of East Hampton teachers, but seemed to have problems with the contract negotiations process. She explained that everyone fears binding arbitration, because the town often ends up paying more when this is resorted to.

“Shame on us for being held hostage too,” she said. She later added, “Binding arbitration has no reason to exist.”

Engel also said that while she was voting in favor of sending the budget to referendum, she would vote against it once she gets in the actual voting booth. “I think it’s too high,” she said.

“The teachers’ salaries need to be addressed,” she said figuring any increase over three percent was too much.

Addressing earlier criticisms of his last-minute call for a delayed vote, Minnick said, “I respect the process,” explaining his hesitance to meddle while the budget is in the hands of the other boards of town heads. “Now it’s our turn,” he said, figuring that that evening was the appropriate time for council members to propose changes.

Minnick proposed that the \$30,000 budgetted for economic development consultant Connected To Connecticut be cut, given the recent hiring of a town planner. “This is double duty,” he said, and called the consultant “no longer needed.”

However, council member Christopher Goff said of the two separate entities, “I think that’s just what we need.”

Connected to Connecticut has “been here for two years; what have we seen?” Minnick asked. “I think this will be an easy cut to make.” Weintraub concurred with Minnick, commenting, “These times are really indescribable.”

The unanimous vote not only adopted the town council budget, but also effectively set the date for the town meeting on Monday, April 27, at 7 p.m., at the high school, 15 North Maple St. The budget referendum will be held Tuesday, May 5 from 6 a.m.-8 p.m., also at the high school.

Colchester Looking to Close Budget Gap

by Adam Benson

With little more than two months left in the fiscal year and a \$535,000 budget shortfall to close, Colchester town leaders this week took significant steps to close the gap as much as they could.

Two part-time clerks were to be let go today (Friday, April 17), and First Selectman Linda Hodge said officials are closely monitoring nearly every dollar that’s spent across departments.

“Since October, we’ve been very cautiously spending,” she said.

Though the town has been working under a budget freeze since January, Hodge – along with the Board of Finance – has limited spending even more, recently carving out another \$35,000 in savings by making cuts to the municipality’s fleet and maintenance funds.

That’s on top of a major budget streamlining in March that included the launch of a risk assessment program aimed at exploring insurance costs and the establishment of employee wellness programs.

Also in that time, Hodge put the town on a volume pricing plan to decrease purchasing costs of office supplies and equipment.

And, Hodge added, an army of volunteers – about 12 in all – have offered to examine other areas where savings can be found, which should help draw the number down even more.

“We are constrained in many areas by laws and contracts, but where we’re not constrained, the community is volunteering their services, and we’re utilizing them,” Hodge said.

The boards of finance and selectmen will

present its proposed 2009-10 budget at public hearings slated for next Monday and Tuesday, April 20 and 21, at 7 p.m. both nights, at Town Hall, 127 Norwich Ave. A town meeting will follow Tuesday, May 5, also at 7 p.m. at Town Hall, and a budget referendum is slated for Tuesday, May 12, from 6 a.m.-8 p.m., also at Town Hall.

The total proposed 2009-10 budget, including Board of Education spending, is \$49.16 million. Right now, the local government portion of that amount sits at \$13.67 million – \$186,000 more than last year’s and an overall 1.39 percent increase, Hodge said.

If approved by voters, Colchester’s proposed budget would be a .64 mil increase over the current year – a figure that Board of Finance Chairman Bruce Hayn acknowledged might meet with dissent during the May 5 town meeting.

“The more we can do about bringing it down, the better I think we’re all going to be,” Hayn said. “The Board of Finance moved it forward with the hope that our selectmen would be able to come up with more cuts.”

In her weekly First Selectman notes posted on Colchester’s website, Hodge has made the town’s precarious financial situation a regular talking point.

“Colchester’s challenge is not an expenditure issue – it’s one of revenues,” Hodge wrote in her March 26 letter to residents.

Particularly to blame, Hodge said, was a heavy winter that drove Colchester’s snow budget \$169,000 above its allocation and an aging

vehicle fleet that has cost the municipality \$64,000 more than anticipated in maintenance and fuel costs.

Colchester has further been hampered by a major slow-down in construction – Hodge said she anticipates bringing in \$116,000 less in building fees and taxes received from homes that are sold.

“Little did I imagine two years ago when I agreed to run for this job the challenges that would be faced by towns, cities and states across the country during the past many months,” Hodge wrote in her April 9 letter to residents. “Challenges that are as difficult for those who have years, even decades, of experience as they are for those of us who are recent arrivals to municipal government.”

The latest casualties – at least until the new fiscal year begins July 1 – are two part-time clerks in the social services and planning and zoning departments.

Removing the positions – which totaled about 25 hours a week combined – is expected to save the town \$2,300, Hodge said.

“These are temporary layoffs,” she said. “Because of the increase we had in the snow budget and vehicle maintenance, we’re having to do some real severe cuts to bring this year’s budget in at a good number.”

Hodge was quick to praise the work the clerks performed and said their temporary departures will result in an impact to services for customers.

“We’re at a point now where any cuts are going to make a difference in services,” Hodge

said. “People might not get an appointment when they want an appointment.”

Hayn said that, while necessary, he would preferred the positions been cut earlier in the year to save even more.

“I think that the selectmen could have responded sooner,” he said. “We’ve got a lot of things to do to make up for that [budget] shortfall.”

One way officials hope that could happen is through filling a part-time position in Tax Collector Tricia Coblentz’s office.

The 20-hour a week position would pay \$2,600 and runs through June 30, and officials are confident the extra help will enable the town to bring in more revenue through delinquent and current taxes.

Currently, Colchester has a 98 percent tax collection rate, though Hodge and Chief Finance Officer N. Maggie Cosgrove are hoping to inch that figure up by a half percent, bringing in as much as \$145,000.

“We put some extra help in the tax collector’s office for several months last year, and it made a huge difference, because it allows her to do the very intensive work,” Hodge said. Tax revenue collected by the town goes into its general fund and can be used to cover deficits either this fiscal year or in the upcoming one.

“It’s \$2,600 well spent,” Hayn said. “Bringing in the clerk allows our tax collector to do collections and not just counter service, and that’s a big deal.”

Jessica's Garden Celebrating Five Years in Marlborough

by Adam Benson

While on her honeymoon five years ago, Jessica Carroll had a dream.

Already the operator of a successful Marlborough-based landscaping company, she wanted to combine her love of nature with her desire to help property owners find the perfect plant or tree for their needs.

"I wanted to open a place where people could see plants in their full glory, doing their thing," Jessica said.

Today, Jessica's Garden does just that, offering customers organic lawn care services, landscape design and installation and a complete garden center. The family-run business located at 198 East Hampton Rd. began its fifth season just a few weeks ago, and sales are already blossoming.

"The last three years have really come together," co-owner Matt Carroll, Jessica's husband, said. "Every year has been better than the previous and this spring we're having a better season than ever before."

In addition to its full array of lawn care products, Jessica's Garden offers an inventory that includes annuals, perennials, exotic tree and shrub species and ground cover materials like mulch, composts, grass seed and straw.

Both Jessica and Matt are accredited by the Northeastern Organic Farming Association, and Jessica's expertise in the field stretches back more than a decade. Before opening the landscaping business with her brother Judson, Jessica worked as landscaping foreman at the Tournament Players Club (TPC) River Highlands golf course in Cromwell, which hosts the PGA tour every summer.

In 2000, Jessica and her staff won Landscape of the Year for all TPC's courses nationally. She's also an accredited nursery professional with the Connecticut Landscape and Nursery Association and has been licensed by the state's Agricultural Station as a certified landscape and garden design consultant.

A graduate of the University of Massachusetts' Green School, Jessica has also studied arboriculture with the Connecticut Tree Protective Association.

But it was Matt's introduction of organic lawn care products to the company's inventory a few years ago that the couple says allowed them to bring their business to the next level.

"A lot of people want to go with alternatives for lawn replacement," Matt said. "We really found a niche with our organic lawn care."

Jessica's Garden also offers a full range of limestone, soils and other natural bases to help augment nearly any yard.

Every year, Matt said he and Jessica try to build on the services they offer through revenues brought in during the season.

"All our growth has been self-funded. Each year as we get better we're able to offer better services and better equipment," he said.

Despite the nation's economic downturn, Matt said the business has been able to thrive on the strength of the relationships employees there have with customers. Additionally, the Carrolls have reduced margins on their nursery stock to help keep prices in check.

"We're not just banking on being local and knowing people. We provide an excellent product," Matt said. "Everyone's watching every



Matt and Jessica Carroll, co-owners of Jessica's Garden in Marlborough, are celebrating their fifth season in business now through July 4.

penny so we need to stay competitive."

The Carrolls – who live in Portland – said doing business in Marlborough has been exactly what they envisioned it to be when they opened in 2004.

"It's a great area to have a business. It's large

enough that we have a good population base and small enough that people are still friendly," Matt said.

Jessica's Garden is open daily through July 4, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. each day. For more information, call 295-1685.

East Hampton Gets Improved Bond Rating

by Michael McCoy

Financially speaking, good news is hard to come by these days. But, that's just what East Hampton got, right in the heat of the budget season.

Following a meeting with credit rating agency Standard & Poor's earlier this month, Town Manager Jeff O'Keefe, Finance Director Jeff Jylkka and financial advisor Janette Marcoux were notified that the town's bond rating jumped two steps: from A+ to AA, skipping the AA- step.

A day after the meeting, Standard & Poor's issued its report, saying the rating was a result of "the town's historical trend of financial stability and continued maintenance of a favorable debt profile."

The agency further acknowledged the town's "very strong wealth and income factors, stable local economy with access to larger employment centers within the Hartford metropolitan statistical area, financial stability with strong reserves, and low debt burden."

In its report, Standard & Poor's also said "homes along Lake Pocotopaug can sell for

between \$400,000 and \$1.5 million. In our opinion, wealth and income factors are very strong."

The report said the town's financial position "is favorable due to its positive operating result, conservative budgeting, and established fiscal policies."

Standard & Poor's noted that local property tax accounts for about 71 percent of the town's revenue, and that the town, "conservatively budgets its property tax revenue collections at 98 percent, when actual current-year collections have recently been above 99 percent."

The report concluded, "The town's formal reserve policy calls for the maintenance of fund balance at a minimum of 6 percent to 8 percent of budget annually."

Jylkka broke the bonding process down last week. When the town looks to take on a major project, he said, it weighs out three financing sources: cash, grants, and issuing debt (or bonding).

During the bonding process, various agencies bid on the debt, and the town sells its debt to the highest bidder. However, before doing

this, the town must secure a bond rating from one of the three major credit ratings agencies: Moody's, Fitch and Standard & Poor's. The rating received this month was in preparation for funding the sidewalk, Flanders Road and Main Street Bridge projects that are nearing completion.

The better the bond rating, the less the town will have to pay in interest. "It'll make our debt more marketable and attractive to investors," Jylkka said. Once the bond is secured, the town makes annual debt payments.

As for maintaining that fund balance, Jylkka noted that "over the past few years, the council and the Board of Finance have made an effort not to dip into the fund balance." (However, he did report that the town did end up applying \$210,000 to the budget in 2007.) All in all, the town has built its fund balance up from \$1.6 million in 1999 (5.9 percent of the budget) to \$4.6 million in 2009 (12.5 percent of the budget). As for what the magic percentage should be, Jylkka said, "It all depends on the circum-

stance," figuring that it should be on the high side at a time like this when the town is looking to bond some major projects.

"I was actually hopeful we were going to get bumped up one notch," said Jylkka, who said he was "pleasantly surprised" at the two-step hop.

O'Keefe chalked the victory up to the town's "philosophy and financial prudence," giving the credit to the Board of Finance, Town Council and Jylkka. He credited the trio for "establishing a healthy fund balance and capital programs ... on an incremental fashion."

"I was actually tickled pink," O'Keefe said of receiving word of the rating. He commented, "I was optimistic when I left the meeting" with Standard & Poor's, though, like Jylkka, he said he was hoping for a bump to AA-, but not certain of even that much, as a result of the recession.

O'Keefe said a jump of this nature doesn't happen much. "Oh my God, it was great news!" he said.

Marlborough School Board Trims Budget, Still Short of BOF Goal

by Adam Benson

The tug-of-war between the Board of Finance (BOF) and Board of Education (BOE) over proposed budget cuts for the upcoming year took another turn Wednesday night.

The BOE signed off on a \$7.02 million spending plan for fiscal year 2009-10, after slicing another \$8,300 off the budget's bottom line by redirecting funds earmarked for a special education paraprofessional who Superintendent of Schools Sal Menzo said was no longer needed by the district.

Still, the school board's unanimous decision likely will set up even more talks with the BOF because the \$208,000 is still \$47,700 short of where town finance officials want the budget to be.

"I would prefer to vote with what I'm comfortable with, not with what the town is making us do," BOE member Ruth Kelly said. "I really think we need to preserve the educational offerings we have in the school. That's on us."

Despite the vote, board members spent about 40 minutes identifying other possible cuts that could be made if the BOF isn't satisfied with Wednesday's decision.

"We're being respectful of the Board of Finance's decision, we're maintaining the educational integrity of the services of the school and what we offer and we're keeping the moral compass as close to north as we can," BOE

Chairwoman Maria Grove said, before adding that "we might be faced with this discussion again next month."

The BOF will hold its public hearing on next year's budget at 7 p.m. Monday, April 27, at Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School, 25 School Dr., and finance board chairwoman Catherine Gaudinski has repeatedly said input gathered there by voters will play a major role in determining the final figures to be presented at Town Meeting Monday, May 11, also at 7 p.m. at the elementary school.

Should further trimming be necessary, it likely will come in the form of summer programming and changes to fees charged to groups that use the building on weekends and after hours.

Menzo said officials are exploring the idea of scaling back the district's summer literacy program or charging a fee for participation in it after enrollment numbers were much smaller than anticipated last year.

Menzo said the district hired two teachers for the program based on the number of students signed up, but ended up only needing to use one.

"We think that sometimes when you charge for an activity, there's more ownership by parents," Menzo said.

Additional savings could be realized by re-

ducing purchasing costs for library books and supplies by \$4,300, though Menzo said the district is well positioned to survive such a cut-back because of inventory upgrades in each of the past three years.

Other possibilities include handing over scheduling and custodial costs for after-hours use of the school to the town. Currently, the district handles scheduling to the tune of nearly \$4,000 a year, Menzo said.

Some board members worried what passing those responsibilities on to the town could mean for residents - the two largest organizations that use the facility are the Marlborough Youth Athletic League and the local chapter of the Amateur Athletics Union.

Both programs offer services to hundreds of Marlborough youths that some board members said were important enough to be tied into the district's operating costs.

Another possible cut - and one that didn't sit well with Menzo and several board members - could be from the district's participation in AHM Youth Services.

District officials lean on the tri-town organization to provide substance abuse and prevention classes to students and for its Juvenile Review Board that works closely with adolescents arrested for misdemeanors and diverted from the juvenile court system.

"This was one of the areas where when we were looking at difficult decisions to be made, it was outside the scope of 8:15 to 3:30," Menzo said, referring to the district's determination to keep any reductions from impacting classroom services.

School board member Kathy McKinney said she was reluctant to vote during Wednesday night's meeting on any reductions beyond the special education paraprofessional until organizations that have traditionally relied on school district funding are notified of the possible cuts.

"I don't want any of these cuts, but I'm going to have to vote for them, and the only way I can do that with a clear conscience is letting everyone know what's coming down the pipe," she said.

With just \$6,000 in its contingency fund, some on the board worried that reaching into that pool to help cover costs would set the district back severely should unexpected costs arise throughout the year.

"We have a \$7 million budget and we think we're learned going into a year with a \$6,000 contingency fund when so many things can happen," school board member, and budget subcommittee chairman, John O'Toole said. "I for one will speak out and I don't think it's prudent to cut so close that when that unforeseen thing happens, they're going to come to you."

Menzo to Help Look for His Replacement in Marlborough

by Adam Benson

Before he departs to take over the Wallingford School District, there's at least one more major project in the pipeline for Superintendent of Schools Sal Menzo: finding his successor.

On Wednesday night, Menzo offered to head up the search for his replacement rather than leave the task to an outside consultant retained by the Board of Education at a cost well into the thousands.

Though he begins his new job July 1, Menzo said he wants to stay in Marlborough long enough to guide the transition for whoever is chosen as the district's new educational leader – and it's a process that could be complete as early as mid-May.

“This is a very aggressive time line, but I feel it's our responsibility to move forward as quickly as possible,” Menzo said. State law mandates the district have a superintendent in place by July 1, but board members said Wednesday they want to examine all possibilities before acting.

A special meeting is set for 6:30 p.m. Thursday, April 30, at Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School, 25 School Dr., to discuss the topic at length – and whether another full-time superintendent is the way to go.

With major budget cuts looming and a \$15,840 salary reduction for the new superintendent already in place for next year, board members could opt for a part-time schools chief, to help the district realize even more savings.

For his part, Menzo said in unusually stark terms that regardless of which direction Marlborough goes, bringing in somebody to serve on an interim basis would hamstring the transition.

“No matter if you do part-time or full-time or quarter-time, you want somebody on board by July 1, because I think the biggest disservice we can do to the community would be to hire somebody just to sit in an office,” Menzo said. “You're going to get something for your money over the summer” by having a permanent superintendent in place.

On the heels of a Board of Finance mandate to cut \$256,000 from its proposed 2009-10 budget, school board members voted last month to trim \$15,840 off the starting salary of a new superintendent. In the current 2008-09 fiscal year, Menzo is earning \$131,104 a year, to head up the district's 641-student elementary school, though he also worked closely with RHAM and town officials to coordinate curriculum, building use and other duties. (Menzo's salary in

Wallingford will be \$165,000.)

Menzo – who became a fixture at school-wide and community events – said the district could take a public relations hit by not hiring somebody who's able to keep a public presence.

“The challenge for me is the level of commitment, and that concerns me because I still do very much care about everyone in this community,” he said.

Board of Education Chairwoman Maria Grove said that, though Menzo will play a major role in seating his replacement, board members will have oversight throughout the process.

“I think for appearance and practice, it should be guided by our organization and our board,” she said.

Still, Wednesday's comments set the stage for what's sure to be an interesting dialogue about the direction educational leadership in Marlborough should go.

“My concern is not part-time versus full-time, it's about getting the right person,” board member Kathy McKinney said.

But one of her colleagues expressed reluctance in scaling back the duties of the district's superintendent.

“We'd really be taking it on the chin as a

board. It would be hard to sell the community if there is a reduction in the administration of the school,” said board member Ruth Kelly.

Menzo suggested that board members make an effort to bring in somebody who is committed to staying in town for at least four years.

“I think that four-year commitment is really what you'd want to have some sustainability,” he said. “The teachers would go nuts if every two years, you had a new superintendent coming in.”

While news of Menzo's departure wasn't a surprise to any, Wednesday provided board members with their first chance to respond as a group to his decision.

Board member John O'Toole joked he was happy to see Menzo – a devoted New York Yankees fan – leave the district, for at least one reason.

“Everyone says all these nice things about him ... and it would be good to send him over to the other side of the river where there are more Yankees fans,” he said.

And, to Menzo, O'Toole added, “You are really a transformational leader and I think you get the whole process and you moved things in a way that was exciting but not exhausting.”

East Hampton Police News

3/31 — Joseph Pistilli, 51, of 19 Sunset Dr., was issued a ticket for riding a moped without a license, East Hampton Police said.

3/31 — Ashley R. Royce, 24, of 36D Goodwin Pl., East Hartford, was arrested pursuant to a court-ordered warrant for violation of probation, police said.

4/1 — Harold Bradshaw, 40, of 134 Coleman Rd., Wethersfield, was involved in a one-vehicle accident on West High Street, 150 feet east of Keighley Pond Road, police said, adding that Bradshaw was arrested for operating under the influence of alcohol and failure to drive right.

4/1 — Justin Stockburger, 21, of 35 Ola Ave., and Isabel M. DeMartino, 44, of 58 Childs Rd., were involved in a two-vehicle accident on Main Street, five-tenths of a mile south of Route 66. Stockburger was issued a ticket for following too closely, police said.

4/1 — Rebecca Bellhorn, 39, of 14 Sherwood Ln., Marlborough, Matthew Warner, 24, of 10 Ridge Rd., Cromwell, and Nichole Thomson, 35 of 175 Mill Hill Rd., Colchester, were involved in a three-vehicle accident at the intersection of Rt. 66 and CVS Plaza. Bellhorn was issued a ticket for left-turn restricted, police said.

Portland Police News

4/7 — Samuel Clymar, 43, of 65 Church St., Middletown, was charged with criminal violation of protective order third-degree assault and third-degree criminal mischief, Portland Police said.

4/7 — Thomas Foley, 18, of 47 Copper Beech, Darold Etheridge, 19, of 36 Lyman Rd., and Austin Dukett, 19, of 63 Indian Hill Ave., were each charged with simple trespass, police said.

4/9 — Steven Ellam, 18, of 126 Middlesex Ave. Ext., was charged with disorderly conduct, second-degree criminal mischief and possession of alcohol by an underage person, police said.

4/3 — Denyse C. Chatcauge-Hoyt, 40, of 53 Maple St., Seymour, was arrested for misuse of plates, operating an unregistered motor vehicle and improper tail light, police said.

4/3 — David Grenon, 41, of 130 East High St., was arrested for permitting usage of a motor vehicle without insurance, police said. Grenon was also arrested on two warrants for violation of probation, police said.

4/4 — Arthur Latronica, 59, of 112 Bow Ln., Middletown, was arrested pursuant to a warrant on charges of fifth-degree larceny and conspiracy to commit larceny, police said.

4/5 — Tyler J. Brush, 28, of 136 Lake Dr., was arrested for failure to obey a stop sign and failure to carry insurance, police said.

4/5 — Ashley R. Royce, 24, of 26D Goodwin Pl., East Hartford, was arrested for operating under the influence of alcohol and failure to drive right, police said.

4/5 — Nicholas Gosselin, 19, of 15 Peach Tree Farm Rd., was arrested for failure to obey a stop sign and possession of alcohol by a minor, police said.

4/6 — Thomas Herlihy, 78, of 85 North Main St., was issued a ticket for simple trespass, police said.

Obituaries

East Hampton

Elizabeth Waldorf Tague

Elizabeth Waldorf Tague, 100, of Depot Hill Road, Cobalt, died Tuesday, April 14, at Middlesex Hospital. She was the wife of the late Dr. Glenn C. Tague.

Born in Wolcott, NY, June 13, 1908, a daughter of the late Frank N. and Harriet Holmes Hopkins Waldorf, she was a resident of New Paltz, NY for many years before moving to Cobalt 15 years ago. She was a member of the second class to graduate from Strong Memorial School of Nursing, now affiliated with the University of Rochester, and had loved her work as a surgical nurse. She was a member of Trinity Episcopal Church in Portland and active in the Women of Trinity. During her years in New Paltz, she was a PEO Sister, and had been very active with the SUNY-New Paltz Faculty Wives, St. Andrew's Church and Campus Youth Ministry.

Elizabeth gave of herself at every point in her life. She was treasured by family and friends as a source of wisdom, love and common sense. We are all richer for having her with us and will miss her forever.

She is survived by her daughter, Barbara T. Colegrove and her husband Robert G. Colegrove of Cobalt, with whom she resided; her grandchildren, Lisa Colegrove Asiamah and her husband Emmanuel, Jeffrey G. Colegrove and his wife Tanya, and Gregory T. Colegrove and his fiancée Nicole Asacker; her great-grandchildren, Ashley Elizabeth Colegrove and Alicia Christine Colegrove.

She was predeceased by her brother Ned Waldorf.

Her family will receive relatives and friends at Trinity Church, 345 Main St., Portland, Friday, April 17, from 10 a.m. until the time of the funeral service, which will begin at 11 a.m. Interment will be Saturday, April 18, at 10 a.m. at the family plot in the Huron Cemetery in Huron, NY. Arrangements are under the direction of the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland.

In lieu of flowers, gifts in her memory may be sent to the Tague-Crouse-Fowler Community Education Fund that was created at the death of her husband by the Crouse and Fowler families to continue his love of education. Donations may be sent c/o Phyllis Weber, 6050 Leavenworth St., Wolcott, NY 14590. Or, gifts may be made to the Trinity Church Book of Remembrance, 345 Main St., Portland, CT 06480.

For directions, or to leave an online expression of sympathy, visit www.portlandmemorialfh.net.

Colchester

Annette Marie Malits

Annette Marie Malits, 51, beloved wife of Erich Malits of Colchester, passed away Thursday evening, April 9, at her residence. She was born on Dec. 19, 1957 in New London, daughter of William and Sally Lentine Botchis of Niantic.

Annette was employed as a waitress for Two Brothers of Salem. She brought joy and laughter to all that knew her. Her smile would brighten any room that she walked into. Annette's unconditional love, selflessness and pure dedication to her family will never be forgotten. Her favorite spot was to be anywhere in the sun. She was best known for her unbelievable cooking.

She was an enthusiastic New York Yankees fan and had an undying passion for the game of baseball itself. It is without a single doubt that all who ever came in contact with her, even if it was for a short while, will forever have her footprint on their heart. May we all promise to keep her spirit alive.

Besides her parents and her husband Erich, she leaves her son Kevin and daughter Kristina; two sisters, Kathy and her husband Roger Kenyon of Waterford, Vicky and her husband Michael Derry of Niantic.

Visitation was held Monday, April 13, at the Belmont Funeral Home, 144 South Main St., Colchester, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial at St. Andrew's Church, Norwich Avenue, Colchester. Interment will be private.

Memorial donations may be made to Hospice of SECT, Dunham St., Norwich, CT 06360 or to the American Cancer Society, c/o your local chapter.

East Hampton

L. Roland Desjardins

L. Roland Desjardins, 81, of East Hampton, husband of Sylvia "Vicky" (Harwood) Desjardins, died Sunday, April 5, at Cobalt Lodge. Born Jan. 27, 1928 in Fall River, MA, he was a son of the late Ludgar and Albertine (Larrivee) Desjardins.

Roland was a three-year Navy veteran. He was stationed in England in 1948 where he met his wife to be. They were married in 1949 and would have celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in November. Roland worked for United Technologies for 35 years before retiring as foreman of the plumbing department at the research center in East Hartford.

He was an active parishioner and communicant at St. Patrick Church in East Hampton. He was an avid Red Sox fan and his dream came true in 2004 when they won the World Series. Roland loved playing cards whether it was with friends or the Setback Club at the VFW. He and Vicky were known as the Early Birds as they usually finished first. Roland was a great walker and when he was able, he would walk every day.

Besides his wife Vicky, Roland leaves two sons, Richard of East Hartford and Michael of La Mesa, CA; one daughter and son-in-law, Sandra A. and Gerry Cloutier of East Hampton; two brothers and sisters-in-law, Leo and Lucille of Tiverton, RI, and Richard and Claire of Canyon Country, CA; a sister and brother-in-law, Claire and Robert Bedard of Accushnet, MA; a sister-in-law, Lorraine Desjardins of Swansea, MA; five grandchildren, Christopher, Kevin, Steven, Samantha and Alison; four great-grandchildren, Steffan, Macey, Alex and Ian and several nieces and nephews.

Roland was predeceased by his brother, Donald Desjardins.

Roland's family would like to thank the staff at Cobalt Lodge for their wonderful care and kindness.

A memorial Mass for Roland will be held Saturday, April 18, at 10 a.m. at St. Patrick Church, 47 W. High St., East Hampton. Burial will follow in St. Patrick Cemetery. There are no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Alzheimer's Association, 279 New Britain Rd., Suite 5, Kensington, CT 06037 or to the East Hampton Ambulance Association, P.O. Box 144, East Hampton, CT 06424.

Friends and family may leave a condolence message by visiting www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

East Hampton

Daniel Wyatt

Daniel Eric Wyatt, 73, formerly of East Hampton and Rutherford, NJ, passed away peacefully March 26 at Valley Hospital in Fairlawn, NJ, following a prolonged illness.

Born May 4, 1935, he was a son of the late Halsey and Eleanor Wyatt. Daniel was a graduate of Columbia University where he received his bachelor's degree in physics and a master's degree in business administration.

He is survived by his brother Halsey; his sister Betty; his sister-in-law Ann Wyatt; three nephews, Dr. H. Alan Wyatt, Christopher Wyatt and Paul Pessoni; a niece, Sawn Leonard Noca and her husband Joe and a grandniece, Sharon Leonard.

A graveside service and interment will be held Saturday, April 18, at 11 a.m. at Rock Landing Cemetery in Haddam Neck. Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, is in charge of the arrangements.

Friends and family may leave a condolence message by visiting www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Hebron

Richard Turshen

Richard "Dick" Turshen died suddenly April 4. He was the son of Sadie and Ira Turshen of Hebron.

He graduated from Windham High School in 1944 and from the University of Connecticut when he returned from serving in the Navy. He retired as Professor of the Business School at Pace University.

He leaves his wife, Nadya, at their home in Ossining, NY, his three sons, Jeffrey, Douglas and Andrew and their wives and six grandchildren. He also leaves two sisters, Lotti Morris of Bennington, VT and Marsha DuBeau of Wellfleet, MA.

Colchester

Jack R. Chagnon

Major Jack R. Chagnon, US Army (Ret.), 78, died peacefully at his home on Easter Sunday, April 12, with his family by his side. Jack leaves behind his beloved wife, Lorraine, "Lorri," of 52 years. The son of the late Leo and Arlene (Fife) Chagnon, he was born in South Berwick, ME on Dec. 7, 1930 and grew up in West Suffield.



Jack joined the Army in 1949 and served honorably for 21 years. He served with the 2nd Infantry Division in Korea. Jack was captured by the Chinese in 1951 and held in a communist Prisoner of War camp for 32 months. Jack was released by the Chinese in 1953 and received a glorious hero's welcome home when the town of West Suffield held a parade in his honor. To honor Jack's courageous service to our country, his many decorations include the Purple Heart and the Army Legion of Merit with Oak Leaf Cluster.

Jack went on to marry, have four children, and continue with a long-term and honorable service to the United States Army. He received his Bachelor of Science degree from Sophia University in Tokyo, Japan, while serving in the Army. Jack's family followed him around the world from Germany to Africa to Japan to Hawaii and finally to Massachusetts where he retired from the military in 1969. His military service remained a great source of pride to him. Up until his dying day, he thought of himself as a soldier.

In 1969, Jack accepted a position with Mobil Oil Corporation, where he held several leadership positions and emerged as an expert in the heating oil industry. After a successful career with Mobil, he joined the Atlas Oil Company in East Hartford in 1988 as Vice President, where he remained dedicated until his death. Jack found great pride, enjoyment and sense of purpose through his final career with Atlas Oil.

A man of great honor, courage and moral integrity, Jack embraced freedom with vivacity and came to value human life with humility. He loved passionately and was deeply loved in turn. His deepest source of joy was exploring the world and life with his wife by his side, being with his family, relishing in the accomplishments of his children, watching his grandchildren blossom and visiting with old friends. He will remain deeply loved, respected and cherished.

In addition to his wife, Lorri, Jack is survived by his children and their families. He leaves his daughter Michelle Reina, son-in-law Dennis and grandsons Patrick and William of Stowe, VT; daughter Lorraine Rauhen, son-in-law Stephen and grandchildren Timothy and Julia of Alexandria, VA; son John Chagnon and granddaughter Kelila of Hyannis, MA; and son Paul Chagnon of Colchester. Jack is also survived by his sister Norma Phillips and brother-in-law Mickey, of West Suffield. He leaves behind many loving nieces, nephews and dear friends.

He was predeceased by a sister, Rolene L'Heureux.

Friends and relatives called Wednesday, April 15, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral liturgy was celebrated Thursday, April 16, directly at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave., Colchester. Rendering of full military honors will follow Mass. Committal services will be at Arlington National Cemetery at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), 2107 Wilson Blvd., Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22201, Attn: Debbie; via the web at www.NAMI.org; or via phone at 888-999-7942.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Hebron

Larry George Powell

Larry George Powell, 57, of Amston, beloved husband of Kathie, passed away Sunday evening (April 12, 2009) after a courageous battle with cancer. Born Dec. 5, 1951, in Claremont, NH, he was the son of the late Lawrence and Marie (Carrigan) Powell.

On Sept. 4, 1982, he wed the former Kathryn Jaglowski at Grayville Falls in Hebron. Mr. Powell was a sales representative for Standard Electric in Putnam for many years. In his spare time, he loved music and playing his guitar and was an avid fan of the Boston Red Sox and the NY Giants. He also enjoyed playing golf, pool and softball; but will be remembered most for his devotion to his family and friends.

In addition to his loving wife of 26 years, he is survived by two children and their partners, Nova Dunnack and Scott Shields of Cocoa Beach, FL and Chad Dunnack and Roxanne Pandolfi of Willimantic; his sister and brother-in-law, Becki and Michael Grass of Ramona, CA; his mother-in-law, Ada Jaglowski of Marlborough; his beloved dogs, Lilly and Kasey; and numerous extended family members and friends.

His family would like to thank all of those people who were so supportive during Larry's illness, especially, Billy Bunnell, Michael Gagnon, Kenny Bullard, Carol Lucious and Jim Kaldy.

Friends called Thursday, April 16, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A memorial service was held that evening. Burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to the Protectors of Animals, P.O. Box 24, So. Glastonbury, CT 06073.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Hebron

Frederik de Jong

Frederik "Ferry" Jan Franciscus de Jong, 53, of Hebron, beloved son of Freek and Rie; and brother of Jan and his wife Erna, uncle of Maarten and Fieke, died peacefully of cancer on Wednesday, April 8.

He was born too early and died too soon. He was predeceased by his mother Rie, two years ago, who also died of cancer. Ferry finally couldn't cope with the cancer he had for almost two years. He fought the cancer in a way that most agreed they probably could not, but in the end he lost. Ferry was a kind and gentle person and had a humorous story for every occasion – and really loved to tell them. He was friendly to everyone and was reluctant to ask for help even when he needed it most. May the roaring sound of an airplane engine bid him farewell.

Ferry grew up in Holland and emigrated to the U.S. over 31 years ago and later became a U.S. citizen. He obtained a Ph.D. in Aerospace Engineering from Cornell University in 1985 and went on to work as a Research Scientist for Scientific Research Associates (SRA) in Glastonbury. After leaving SRA 10 years ago, he has been employed by Pratt & Whitney as a Senior Engineer. He enjoyed photography, outdoor activities (especially hiking) and music. But his greatest passion was science and working with the many wonderful people at Pratt.

We would like to thank Ferry's many friends and colleagues for spending time with him when he was so ill. And our special thanks to Steve and Denise for their great help, caring and friendship to Ferry during his illness. They were a superb help for us abroad too.

His family received friends Monday, April 13, at the Carmon Windsor Funeral Home, 807 Bloomfield Ave., Windsor.

Thanks Ferry, the last eight glasses will sound for you too, just like for your Mom. Farewell my boy.

Memorial donations may be made to the American Cancer Society, Memorial Dept., P.O. Box 1004 Meriden, CT 06450-1004.

Visit www.carmonfuneralhome.com for online condolences.

Portland

Jean Carol Gallacher

Jean Carol (Grillo) Gallacher, 50, of Portland, passed away peacefully in the arms of her family, Saturday, April 11, after a long and hard-fought battle with kidney cancer. She was the wife and best friend of Michael R. Gallacher and the mother of Casey Vincent, Stephanie Elizabeth and Kellie Rose Gallacher. She was born in New Haven on Feb. 22, 1959, to the late Vincent and Rosalie (Colatosti) Grillo.

Jeannie had most recently been employed as a paraprofessional at Portland's Gildersleeve and middle schools, a job that she loved each and every day. While ill she completed her studies and received her BA in fine arts from Charter Oak College with the dream of becoming an elementary school art teacher.

She is also survived by two sisters and their husbands, Linda and James Dolph of Loudonville, NY, Mary and Charles Baltayan of Hamden. Daughter in law to George and Betty Gallacher of Branford. Sister in law to Rich and Linda Gallacher of Westbrook and Steve Gallacher of Branford she also leaves a very special niece and five nephews Caitlyn and Alex Dolph, Charlie and Adam Baltayan, Ryan and Dylan Gallacher.

Jeannie's family would like to express special thanks to all the friends Pat, Susie, Sue, Michelle, Michel, Marlene who helped with the many treks to NYC over the last few years.

Her family received relatives and friends in the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, on Wednesday, April 15. Funeral services were held Thursday, April 16, from the Portland Memorial Funeral Home and then in the Church of Saint Mary for a Mass of Christian Burial. Interment will be private.

Donations may be made to the Kidney Cancer Association P.O. Box 3516 Oak Brook, IL 60522-3516 or to the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center 1275 York Ave, New York, NY 10065.

For directions or to leave an online expression of sympathy, kindly visit www.portlandmemorialfh.net.

Portland

Jeanne Audrey Hill

Jeanne Audrey Hill, 79, of Swantown Road, North Stonington, formerly of Portland, died Thursday, April 9, at the Pendleton Health and Rehabilitation Center in Mystic. Born in Portland March 4, 1930, a daughter of the late Samuel T. Hill, Sr. and the late Gladys M. Way Hill, she had been a Portland resident for 74 years before moving to North Stonington five years ago.

She was a graduate of Portland High School, class of 1948, and was a member of Trinity Episcopal Church. She had been employed by WCNX radio station in Middletown, where she was known as "The Weather Girl" until her retirement in 1993.

She is survived by her sister June Hill Guglielmi of North Scituate, RI; her nieces and nephews and their spouses, Susan and Peter Grufstedt and family of North Stonington with whom she resided, Judith and Richard Frechette and family of Moosup, Anthony F. Guglielmi, Jr., and family of East Providence, RI, Leonard T. and Donna Guglielmi and family of North Scituate, RI, John and Donnalyn Guglielmi and family of Douglasville, PA, Lisa and Stephen Sargent and family of North Scituate, RI, and Paula and Don Sagarino and family of Orlando, FL; 18 grandnieces and grandnephews, two great-grandnephews, many cousins, devoted friends and co-workers.

She was predeceased by her brother Samuel T. Hill Jr.

Her family will receive relatives and friends in the Portland Memorial Funeral Home 231 Main St., Portland, Monday from 5-8 p.m. Funeral services will be held Tuesday at 11 a.m. at Trinity Episcopal Church. Interment will follow in Pine Grove Cemetery in Middletown.

For directions, or to leave an online expression of sympathy, visit www.portlandmemorialfh.net.

Hebron

Chester L. Sklodosky

Chester L. Sklodosky, 71, beloved husband of 47 years to Emily D. (Rochette) Sklodosky and loving father, passed away Saturday, April 11. He succumbed to pancreatic cancer after fighting the illness courageously for several years. He was born in Rockville on Sept. 30, 1937. He was the son of the late Mary (Wallison) Tracy and Chester M. Sklodosky. He was raised in West Suffield by his Aunt Julie and Uncle William Kuras.



Chester was a graduate of Central Connecticut State University and a veteran of the United States Marine Corps, having served in Korea. He lived in Hebron, where he was a substitute teacher and coached three high school sports. Chester eventually settled in East Lyme, where he retired from the State Police Department after 30 years of service, and also served as the Zoning Officer for the town of Old Saybrook for 10 years before retiring. He had since resided in Waterford, and Minneola, FL.

Chester will always be remembered for his dedication to civil service, his great sense of humor, and his unconditional love for family. Chester could often be found fishing or playing cards with his family. He will be missed dearly by those who knew him.

In addition to his loving wife, Emily, who he cherished, he is survived by nine children, daughter Emily and husband Arthur Thomas of East Hampton, son Chester Jr. and wife Jamie of FL, daughter Sheryl Constant of East Hampton, son Todd and wife Kidist of Florida, daughter Debra and husband Michael Kelliher of Florida, son Gregory and wife Tina of East Hampton, son Kenneth and wife Brandie of Andover, daughter Renee and husband Michael Ramsey of Hawaii and son Chad and wife Jennifer of North Stonington. He also leaves three sisters, Diane Augar of West Hartford, Maryjane Tracy of Florida, Charlene Dusza of Enfield, 17 grandchildren and one great-grandchild, along with many nieces and nephews.

Chester was predeceased by his son Glen.

His family will receive relatives and friends from 7-9 p.m. tonight Friday, April 17, at the Thomas L. Neilan & Sons East Lyme Funeral Home, 48 Grand St., Niantic.

The funeral service will be held on Saturday, April 18, at Christ Lutheran Church, Society Road, East Lyme, at 10 a.m. Burial will be in Elm Grove Cemetery, Mystic.

Donations in his memory may be made to Christ Lutheran Church, Memorial Garden Fund 24 Society Rd., Niantic, CT 06357

For directions or online condolences, visit www.neilanfuneralhome.com.