

RIVEREAST

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O Christmas Tree... East Hampton volunteer firefighters were hard at work on a cold but sunny morning the Sunday after Thanksgiving decorating the tree in the center of town in front of the Congregational Church. This is the second year that the fire department has decorated the tree with lights and ornaments. Besides adding to the holiday spirit, working off the ladder truck provides a valuable training experience in setting up the truck and teamwork. Pictured at the tip of East Hampton Ladder 1-12 is Safety and Information Officer Marty Swan. *Photo by Jeff Rich, East Hampton Volunteer Fire Department.*

Marlborough Residents File Sewer Suits

by Katy Nally

"Unreasonable," "harmful," "incorrect," "improper" and "illegal" were all words used to describe the sewer benefit assessment in seven separate lawsuits that were filed against the Marlborough Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) early this month.

The seven suits come from five residences and two businesses, located on North Main Street, East Hampton Road and Independence Drive.

Of the five homes, four are owned by residents – Pasquale Amodeo of 92 Lake Ridge Dr., Stacey Froncolone of 51 Denler Dr., David Durel of 15 Washington Rd., and Louise Fortier of 16 Washington Rd. The fifth, 86 East Hampton Rd., is owned by High Hills Farm, LLC of Cranford, NJ. Each home has been charged \$12,054 for the sewer benefit assessment, to be paid over 20 years, which comes to \$603 per year. Each building was assessed at one Equivalent Dwelling Unit (EDU).

All five of the residential suits are appealing the benefit assessment and two, Durel's and High Hill Farm's, are also appealing the connection order.

The businesses, Country Barn Properties, LLC, which owns 43-61 North Main St., and NRBZ LLC, which owns 8A Independence Dr., are both contesting the benefit assessment, and NRBZ LLC is also appealing the connection order.

According to the suits, on file at Town Hall, Country Barn Properties, LLC was assessed at 32.4 EDUs, which totals \$390,549.60, to be paid over 20 years. According to the WPCA, NRBZ LLC was assessed at 7.5 EDUs, coming to \$90,405.

In total, the seven parties suing the WPCA are slated to pay more than half a million dollars over 20 years for the benefit assessment – \$541,224.60.

All residents and businesses within the sewer district, which includes the streets around Lake Terramuggus, School Drive and parts of Route 66 and North Main Street, were sent connection orders last month.

The entire \$12.02 million sewer project was approved by residents in 2002, but since then, the size of the proposal has shrunk, leaving fewer businesses and residents to foot the bill.

Following the approval, construction was stalled from 2002-07 because the Clean Water Grant, which partially funded the project, was canceled.

All seven suits seek to appeal the benefit assessment, which was set at \$603 per year by the WPCA on Aug. 17 this year, and cite Connecticut General Statute 7-249.

The benefit assessment "exceeds the special benefit which accrues to such Property from the installation of the sewer system," Durel's

See Sewer Suits Page 2

Hebron Residents Rankled by Subdivision Proposal

by Lindsay Fetzner

Residents packed the Hebron Town Office Building Tuesday evening to express concerns over a proposed 32-lot subdivision being considered by the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC).

Traffic and safety were some of the issues that residents brought before the commission.

After just over two hours, the public hearing was closed, and the commission decided not to vote on the proposal, opting to discuss it further at the next PZC meeting on Jan. 11. The hearing was continued from the commission's last meeting on Nov. 9.

The subdivision is proposed for a total of 123.8 acres, with frontage on the west side of Hillcrest Drive, the south side of Lake Road and the east side of Route 85 (Church Street.) The 32 units are all single-family homes.

The application, by James Grossman of Westport, was approved by the Conservation Commission on Sept. 16. Following the approval, nine residents from the Amston Lake area filed a lawsuit in Rockville Superior Court, appealing the decision.

In the complaint, which is dated Oct. 12, the

nine residents, who were self-represented, said they were "aggrieved" by the decision. They claimed that the Conservation Commission and Hebron town staff participated in ex-parte discussions on the application, in which the public was not involved. Additionally, the complaint said the commission and the staff showed predisposition to the application both during and outside the public hearing, and also did not consider "feasible alternatives" in their deliberations.

The decision of the commission, the claim stated, is "contrary to evidence submitted during the public hearing record."

According to the state judicial website, the case was dismissed on Dec. 13. One of the plaintiffs, Luana Stanulonis of Hillcrest Drive, said the reason for the judgment on Monday was a "technicality in how the papers were handled." She explained that there are deadlines on each stage of the appeal, and one of the deadlines was missed.

"It wasn't because the items listed were incorrect or improper," she said Tuesday. "It was a technicality in missing the deadline."

When asked if she was surprised that the case was dismissed, Stanulonis said she "didn't know what to expect."

"We figured if we did nothing, we knew that nothing would happen," she said.

Nearly 30 residents attended the public hearing, where traffic, safety and access points were addressed.

Meliss Swanson of Hillcrest Drive told the commission she is in opposition to the subdivision, citing the road narrowness and high traffic speeds as concerns. In addition to numerous blind spots on Hillcrest Drive, Swanson said, "speed is a problem." She suggested installing speed bumps along both Hillcrest and Deepwood drives and to hire an additional police officer to manage "speeders" in the Amston Lake area.

Commission member Judy Podell explained the PZC has no control over the "speeders" on Hillcrest Drive.

"We are not traffic control, we are not the Board of Selectmen, we can do nothing about that," Podell said. "To say that is a concern is

certainly understandable, but to ask us to do something about it, we can't."

It is not that the PZC is not sympathetic, she said, but "there is only so much we can do. We hear you but [the issues] are not ours to fix."

Tony Stankelis, also of Hillcrest Drive, brought up a traffic study discussed at the Nov. 9 meeting. At that meeting, David Spear, of DLS Traffic Engineering in Windsor, said the calculations were completed for Lake Road/Ames Road at North Pond Road/Hillcrest Drive, Hillcrest Drive at Deepwood Drive and Hillcrest Drive at the proposed Spring Hill Lane (the road that would be introduced with the subdivision). Spear indicated that sight lines were good, that there is low background volume and that the traffic would be easily accommodated by area roadways, according to minutes from the November meeting.

In response, on Tuesday evening, Stankelis said it is not true that the sight lines are good. He added the entire road should be considered, rather than just specific points on the road.

"You have to consider the whole road and

See Proposal Page 2

Sewer Suits cont. from Front Page

suit reads.

According to the suit filed by NRBZ LLC “the sewer benefit assessment is unreasonable, harmful, an abuse of discretion and incorrect” because the “EDU calculation is unreasonable and excessive” and the assessment “exceeds the value of the benefit to the property.”

The WPCA used figures from the Connecticut Public Health Code to assess gallons of water used at different businesses. For example, a restaurant with public toilets is assessed at 30 gallons per day, and that figure increases by 50 percent if the restaurant serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. Sadler’s Restaurant, at 61 North Main St., was assessed at using 3,850 gallons per day.

Other establishments not outlined in the public health code are assessed by multiplying the square footage by a constant of 0.1 or 0.2. Marlborough Family Practice, at 8 Independence Dr., was assessed at 1,802 gallons per day.

Several business owners protested the figures when they were discussed by the WPCA in February, saying metering water usage would be much more accurate than a set figure.

Besides the benefit assessment, three of the seven suits also appeal the connection notice, saying the existing septic system is “code-com-

pliant,” Durel’s and High Hill Farm’s suits said.

However, according to a map passed out at a Sept. 29 Board of Finance public hearing, Durel’s septic system has failed or been repaired at some point. Town Planner Peter Hughes explained the map used town records that dated back to the ‘70s or ‘80s, and the system has most likely been repaired since then.

Durel said he was surprised to hear his septic system was marked as “failed/repaired” because the entire system was replaced in 1998 when his home was built. Durel said he purchased the property in 2006 and six months ago had the system checked and it “passed with flying colors.”

The suit from NRBZ LLC continues, “The connection of the property to the public sewer system would be harmful to the property, because the public system is inadequate for the needs of the property.”

NRBZ LLC’s property on Independence Drive, and 86 East Hampton Rd., were not marked as having a failed/repaired septic system.

Six of the suits have a return date of Dec. 28, and Country Barn Properties’ has a return date of Jan. 4.

WPCA Chairman Jack Murray was unable to be reached for comment for this story.

Proposal cont. from Front Page

not what the consultant said are the ‘points of interest,’” he said.

In response, Spear said the sight lines were limited to the intersection with the proposed Spring Hill Lane.

Spear was hired by the project developer, but Podell said the town hired its own engineer to conduct a traffic report and confirm Spear’s findings. Podell said the two reports were “basically the same.”

Margaret Cone, also of Hillcrest Drive, said the traffic in the area is not just the people who live on Hillcrest, but also people from Colchester who use the road as a shortcut. She also brought up the safety of Hillcrest Drive.

“You have to realize that Hillcrest is actually a very dangerous road,” she said. “More traffic [will make it] more dangerous.”

Matthias Nolte, a resident of Lake Road, brought up the issue of Hillcrest being the access road to the development. He pointed out that the road is “very narrow” and “unfit to handle additional traffic.”

Mike Tarbell, speaking on behalf of the applicant, from Tarbell, Heintz and Associates in East Hartford, addressed the access point off Hillcrest Drive. Coming off of Route 85, he said, as opposed to Hillcrest Drive, would be

more costly. He added that the grade of the road, the amount of clearance, the embankments and the limits of clearing necessary to be able to construct a road were all looked at. Coming from Route 85 would equate to more road and more excavation.

Paula Verrier, a Hillcrest Drive resident, suggested that the commission request the “professional opinions” of safety personnel in town regarding the addition of approximately 290 additional cars to Hillcrest Drive, resulting from the subdivision.

Stanulonis, who was also in attendance at the hearing, addressed the addition of vehicles on the road in a letter to the editor that appeared in the Nov. 19 edition of the *Rivereast*.

“The traffic study estimates an additional 280 vehicle trips per day from this subdivision,” she wrote. “How do you feel about an additional 280 vehicles (cars, buses, service trucks, etc.) up and down these narrow roads every day... An additional 280 vehicle trips a day will create problems with existing traffic and most certainly impact pedestrian traffic.”

The next meeting of the PZC will take place on Jan. 11 at 7 p.m. in the Town Office Building, where the subdivision will be addressed.

East Hampton Council Votes – Again – to Fill Vacancy

by Claire Michalewicz

The Town Council has voted once again to appoint Chatham Carillo to fill the vacant council seat, after receiving clearance from the town attorney.

And this time, it looks like the vote will stick. Carillo was appointed at the council’s last meeting on Nov. 23, but the council immediately rescinded its vote, after concerns were raised about Carillo’s job with the state legislature.

Carillo was one of three candidates council members considered to fill the seat left vacant when Republican Bill Devine resigned last month. Republican Kimberley Fontaine and Chatham Party Chairman Kyle Dostaler were also nominated at Tuesday night’s council meeting, and the votes for the three candidates were handled in three separate motions.

Carillo received the most votes, with four of the six council members supporting her. John Tuttle, Chris Goff and Barbara Moore immediately voted for Carillo, and Chairwoman Melissa Engel, seeing the three other votes, also raised her hand, explaining, “I will vote ‘aye’ as well.”

Fontaine also received three votes, from Thom Cordeiro, Sue Weintraub and Engel, while only Weintraub voted for Dostaler.

Weintraub previously spoke out in favor of Dostaler, explaining that of the seven people who submitted applications for the vacancy last week, he had been the next-highest vote-getter in the 2009 municipal election.

“We are doing a disservice to our voters because they voted for who they wanted as Town Council members,” she said.

Moreover, Weintraub said, she had never met Carillo or heard her speak at a meeting, and she would have liked council members to interview the candidates.

After appointing Carillo last month, the council quickly rescinded its decision after Weintraub and several residents raised concerns about Carillo’s eligibility under the federal Hatch Act, which restricts government employees’ ability to run for office. Carillo works as the legislative aide to East Hampton’s state senator, Eileen Daily.

In response to the council members’ concerns, Town Attorney Jean D’Aquila issued a legal opinion explaining that Carillo is qualified to serve on the council, since the Hatch Act only covers federal employees and state employees who receive their salary from federal funds. In her letter, dated Dec. 8, D’Aquila explained that Carillo does not receive federal dollars.

Furthermore, D’Aquila wrote, while Connecticut has a “little Hatch Act,” legislative employees are exempt. Therefore, there is no legal obstacle to Carillo’s appointment to the council, she said.

“We specifically do not opine on whether Ms. Carillo’s proposed Town Council activities will or might constitute a conflict of interest with her role as a state employee,” D’Aquila said in the letter. “We have not been asked to do so.”

Before the last meeting, council member Goff had consulted the state’s assistant general counsel, who ruled there was no ethical problem with Carillo’s appointment.

Carillo said after the meeting that while she’s never served on a town board before, she’s familiar with the budget process from her work at the legislature. Like in every other town in the state, she said, the council would have to work hard to create a budget to help them manage in difficult financial times. She said she hadn’t been expecting concerns over her appointment, but was glad that she had been approved.

“It’s just a way to give back to my community,” Carillo said, explaining that she grew up in East Hampton and was looking forward to serving on the council. “I was just hoping I could bring some new perspective.”

Many residents brought up the council vacancy during the two public comment portions of the meeting, with Dostaler, a former council member, reading his letter of interest in the position “so the public knows who I am.”

“I’m not being appointed for political reasons,” Dostaler said. “I accept that.”

Resident Angela Sarahina raised concerns about D’Aquila’s opinion on Carillo’s eligibility, which she said was based on what Carillo told D’Aquila. Bill Choma echoed her comments, explaining: “I would like to see something more definitive than an assumption before a vote is taken.”

* * *

Carillo’s appointment was just one of several items the council tackled in a busy two-and-a-half hour meeting. In another major discussion, the council unanimously approved a new three-year contract for school administrators.

Superintendent of Schools Judith Golden outlined the contract, which includes no pay increases for administrators in the 2011-12 fiscal year, and a 1.8 percent increase in the following year. In exchange for their willingness to delay their pay increase, Golden said, administrators will receive a one-time annuity payment of \$2,000. In addition, she said, administrators would pay more in health insurance costs. The cost of the contract to the Board of Education would be \$11,580 next year, and \$15,486 in the 2012-13 year.

“This is a very favorable contract, in my view,” Golden said. “The administrators are satisfied that they’ve done what they need to do in the upcoming years.”

She explained that council members could approve the contract, or they could vote it down; if they did the latter, the contract would be sent to arbitration, which could cost up to \$40,000, Golden said. If the council chose to do nothing, the contract would automatically be approved in 30 days.

Engel pointed out that the administrators’ pay is a contentious issue for residents each year, since most residents would rather have more teachers in town, rather than administrators they thought were overpaid.

“It’s because of them that we have great teachers,” Moore countered, adding “I’m surprised we’re having this conversation, frankly.”

In another major agenda item, the council issued an acknowledgement that it had violated state Freedom of Information (FOI) regulations by discussing hiring an attorney in a series of e-mails. The decision should have been made in a duly noticed public meeting, Engel said, and the council members should sign an acknowledgement of this to be sent to the FOI commission.

Resident Mary Ann Dostaler brought the complaint against the town regarding the council members’ e-mail discussion on Aug. 26 and 27, and said she would drop her complaint if the council submitted a formal acknowledgement of the violation to the FOI Commission. At the end of the meeting, Dostaler thanked council members for the acknowledgement, and said she was glad they were considering adopting an e-mail policy for town officials. She suggested the town provide an official e-mail address to each official, to keep business and personal e-mails separate.

Also, the Arts and Cultural Commission was officially formed at the meeting – a formality, since it had been established this summer. But last month, resident Scott Minnick pointed out that the ordinance about the commission had never gone to a public hearing, as required by the town’s charter. The commission will consist of nine members, and will “foster, promote, encourage and celebrate the excellence, enjoyment, and abundance of arts in East Hampton.”

The council heard comments from the public in a brief public hearing before the meeting, and voted unanimously to create the commission.

At Tuesday’s meeting, the council also adopted the town’s employee handbook, following months of discussion. Weintraub suggested allowing employees to go to a Town Council member if they have any concerns about the town manager’s behavior, which the council agreed to include in the handbook. Cordeiro said the handbook “will never be finished,” and that the town should continually update it as new issues and concerns arise.

* * *

Also Tuesday, Interim Town Manager Bob Drewry told the council the Town Annex offices would definitely move into Jeffrey Palmer’s building on Middletown Avenue by Feb. 1, though he was hoping it would happen sooner. Drewry said the construction work on Palmer’s building was about 20 percent finished, and that he would contact Connecticut Light & Power as soon as he and Palmer signed the formal lease. The council voted unanimously to let Drewry sign the lease.

Engel announced the formation of a subcommittee to review proposals from four law firms interested in providing labor attorney services to the town, to replace the firm of Sullivan, Schoen, Campana and Connon. (Mark Sommaruga, a member of the firm, is the current town labor attorney.) The subcommittee, she said, would consist of herself, Weintraub and Moore.

Sommaruga said his firm was one of the four that submitted a proposal. “It’s been a pleasure to represent” East Hampton, he said. Sommaruga represented the town earlier this year during the recent controversy regarding then-Town Manager Jeffery O’Keefe. He added, “I know it’s been a very difficult time for them,” but said he has respect for the council.

In addition, Engel said, she wanted to form a committee to work with a search firm to find a new town manager. Engel said she was hoping to start interviewing candidates at the next meeting, so committee members could choose three finalists by June, and the council could choose a town manager by the July 1 start of the 2011-12 fiscal year. The committee should include five members, Engel said, none of whom are currently on the Town Council.

Council members also discussed regionalizing the dog pound with East Haddam and possibly Hebron. Goff said the East Haddam dog pound was willing to take in dogs from East Hampton, and that their facility was larger and cleaner. The savings for East Hampton would be about \$4,000, Goff said, and he agreed to bring more information about a lease agreement to the next council meeting.

In other business, the council also approved a \$1 a year lease for the cranberry bog owned by the Kiely family, which the town uses as a public skating rink. Drewry explained that the lease was only a formality, and the town already had an insurance policy for the bog.

The next regular Town Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Jan. 11, at 6:30 p.m. In addition, Engel said, the council is meeting in executive session on Tuesday, Jan. 4, at 6 p.m., to review pending legislation against the town.

Cruz Proposes \$11.88 Million Hebron School Budget

by Lindsay Fetzner

Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz has proposed an operating budget of \$11.88 million for the 2011-12 fiscal year, which is a 1.42 percent increase, or \$166,240, over last year's budget.

"We think that we can run a good program and a good school system with only an additional \$166,000," Cruz told the Board of Education at its meeting last Thursday, Dec. 9. "We think that we can manage with just that amount."

Cruz explained Thursday evening that one of the factors taken into account when preparing the budget that was "extremely critical" was feedback from the public. The Board of Education held three community forums earlier this year as well as provided the opportunity to take an online survey, which the board looked to for feedback after a difficult budget season this past year.

The budget took three tries to pass and ended up being a zero percent increase over the previous year's budget, at a total of \$11.716 million.

Cruz's recommended budget increase of \$166,240 includes \$147,185 for maintenance and a decision package. The package includes the purchase of a student database, PowerSchool, at a cost of \$31,200 plus professional development to run the system, at \$3,500.

"We wouldn't be able to meet our needs without a new student database," Cruz said, adding that the state Department of Education would like to see some unification statewide with student databases.

In addition, Cruz said the library technology system needs to be replaced. Annual maintenance fees need to be budgeted for, at a cost of \$3,700, Cruz said.

The last portion of the decision package is the overall reduction of .5 staff. Due to declin-

ing enrollment and student population shifts, Cruz said there needs to be a re-allocation of staff. The 2010-11 school year has a total enrollment of 1,140, which is an enrollment drop of 41 students over last year. Next year, Cruz estimated a total population of 1,106 students, which is a decrease of 34 students spread out across all grade levels.

The net impact for the decision package, Cruz said, is \$19,055.

Overall, the 1.42 percent increase includes a .53 percent increase in salaries (\$41,739), a 7.03 percent increase in benefits (\$137,475), a 3.77 percent increase in purchased property services (\$15,813), a 100 percent increase in capital costs (\$34,900) and a 1.61 percent increase in other items such as dues and fees (\$323).

Decreases include a 2.94 percent drop in purchased professional services (\$11,186), a decrease of 6.51 percent in other purchased services (\$40,784) and a dip of 2.52 percent in supplies (\$12,033).

In addition to Cruz's recommended \$11.88 million budget, she also presented three other budgets, based on requests from the boards of finance and selectmen. They included a 1.3 percent increase at \$11.86 million, a 1.04 percent increase at \$11.84 million and a flat budget at \$11.716 million.

The spending plan featuring the 1.3 percent increase, Cruz said, is a "maintenance budget" and is the cost of moving everything forward and maintaining all of the staffing as they exist now.

The budget with the 1.04 percent increase would be \$44,285 less than Cruz's recommended \$11.88 million budget. Among the largest cuts would be to summer curriculum (\$6,000), pro-

fessional development substitutes (\$9,000), software (\$4,123), non-union salary reductions (applied to various positions totaling \$5,662) and advertising (\$3,000).

The shift from a 1.04 percent increase to a zero percent increase includes reductions from Cruz's recommended budget in library books (\$3,000), curriculum supplies (\$20,760), Social Security (\$918), insurance (\$29,991), two non-certified staff positions (\$32,000) and one certified staff position (\$63,286), but an increase in unemployment (\$28,000). The difference between the two budgets is \$121,955.

Cruz identified some of the cost-saving measures that played a role in the budget. She listed, among other items, the re-alignment of staff, the hiring of student interns, the creation of a behavior support program, consortium purchasing of fuel, diesel and electricity, as well as the recently-arbitrated teacher contract. The contract, which calls for teachers to receive no increase in pay during the 2011-12 year, "saved [the board] a significant amount of money," Cruz said.

Conversely, Cruz also highlighted unexpected considerations that could pop up in the future. Among the considerations are special education costs, due to the fact that it is unknown if any special needs children will move into town. Cruz also listed health insurance rates, staff retirements or turnover, an increase in pre-K referrals in the fall, open enrollment in insurance until Jan. 10 and the number of students who many apply for magnet schools.

A chart of the increases to the budget over the past nine years was also discussed. Over the course of those years, the largest increase occurred in 2003-04, with an increase of 8.18

percent. The lowest increase was the current 2010-11 year, at zero percent. In 2009-10, the board received a 1.96 percent increase, and in 2008-09, there was a 4.39 percent increase.

"I'm not sure how long we can be a Blue Ribbon school and enjoy high achievement," Cruz said. "I am concerned about the trends [in the increases] we've been awarded in the last two years."

Cruz also highlighted the 2009-10 per pupil expenditure in the District Reference Group C. Out of 25 schools, Hebron ranked No. 20, with a per-pupil expenditure (PPE) of \$11,442.75. Cornwall came in first, with a PPE of \$20,830.23 and Ellington came in last, with a PPE of \$10,544.96.

"We don't spend a lot of money per pupil," Cruz pointed out.

The Board of Education also held the election of officers. Mark Allaben was elected chair of the board, replacing Jane Dube, with only Kathy Shea opposed. When reached by phone this week, Shea said she felt that since Allaben had already been the chair of the Board of Education in the past, it was time for someone new to assume the role. In addition, Shea said she did not like the way Allaben treated her during the last budget cycle, and "behaved very poorly."

"I just feel the board could use new leadership," she said.

Brian O'Reilly was unanimously elected vice chair, replacing Shea. And Tina Marie Blinn was unanimously elected secretary again.

The next meeting of the Board of Education is Thursday, Jan. 6, at 7 p.m. at Gilead Hill School.

East Hampton School Board Nearing FOI Resolution

by Claire Michalewicz

The Board of Education is close to resolving a Freedom of Information (FOI) complaint filed against the board earlier this year.

The case, concerning a vision-planning meeting in February, is scheduled to be dismissed in January, providing the school system meets the requirements of the FOI Act.

Resident Mary Ann Dostaler filed a complaint in February about a committee Superintendent of Schools Judith Golden established to work on a long-term vision statement for the school system. The committee met twice, in January and February of this year. Dostaler's FOI complaint alleged that the Feb. 4 meeting had not been properly noticed and open to the public.

"I want to make sure there is a full understanding of what the requirements of FOI are," Dostaler told the board on Monday.

A report from FOI hearing officer Kathleen Ross, dated Nov. 16, includes a preliminary ruling, which is scheduled to be issued on Jan. 12. Ross wrote that the meetings were not administrative or staff meetings, and that Golden violated the open meetings provision of the FOI Act. Ross asked that Golden comply with these requirements in the future, and create and file minutes for the Feb. 4 meeting.

If Golden met these requirements, Ross

wrote, the complaint would be dismissed. Town Clerk Sandra Wieleba confirmed Wednesday that she had received the meeting minutes, and would post them to the town website if Golden wanted. Wieleba said the town does not usually handle the Board of Education's meeting minutes and agendas, which are posted to the board's own website.

But, Dostaler pointed out at the meeting, the minutes and agendas on the board's website will not load, even when she tries on multiple computers and multiple web browsers.

Golden said she felt the vision statement committee counted as a staff meeting, which superintendents are allowed to have about administrative matters, but Ross ruled differently.

"They [the FOI Commission] still need to finalize it, but this is the final decision," Golden said, explaining that she would not be appealing it.

Dostaler said that at the FOI Commission hearing held in June, the board's labor attorney, Roseann Padula, misrepresented the town in her testimony, but Golden strongly disagreed. Dostaler requested that the district put out a request for proposals for a new labor attorney, as the town is doing. Padula works for the firm of Sullivan, Schoen, Campana and Connon, the same firm as the town's labor attorney Mark

Sommaruga.

"I don't believe that the board is being well-served by that firm," Dostaler said.

At Monday's meeting, Golden explained that Transit Resource Center, a third-party inspector hired to inspect Nichols Bus Service's buses, had conducted an inspection the previous week-end. They found no serious violations which would require the bus to be taken out of service, she said.

Golden said *The Hartford Courant* recently calculated that Nichols' violations had decreased by 45 percent since March. Taking into account the fire that damaged Nichols' garage this spring, the number of violations was down by over 60 percent, she added.

Also at the meeting, BOE member Don Coolican announced that no teachers had come forward for the three early retirement packages the board voted to offer last month, using money from the federal Education Jobs Fund. Coolican said the personnel committee would look at other ways to use the grant money, which is aimed at creating jobs in the education field.

"We don't know what we'll do, but we have time to make that decision," Coolican said. In October, the board offered packages for 10

teachers, all of which were accepted.

Also Monday, Golden presented the administration's strategies for reviewing instruction in the town's four schools. She explained that the walk-through evaluations, in which administrators sit in on classes to see how teachers work with students, are designed to collect data about instruction, and determine which areas to focus on.

Golden stressed that administrators were not evaluating individual teachers in the classroom visits, but instead focusing on collective trends. In the three previous years, administrators visited classrooms for only three to five minutes, but this year the visits were extended to 15-20 minutes, and the scoring rubric was changed.

Golden also discussed the school board's two recent goal-setting workshops, at which members outlined three-year goals for the district. She said she had received a preliminary report from the consultants the board worked with, and she would have board members adopt a final version at their next meeting.

The Board of Education's next meeting is scheduled for Monday, Jan. 10, at 7 p.m. in the high school library, 15 North Maple St.

Three Pets Saved From Burning Home in Marlborough

by Katy Nally

Firefighters responded to a residential fire that broke out last Thursday, Dec. 9, around 1:30 p.m.

Fire Marshal Joe Asklar said a neighbor spotted smoke coming from 54 Phelps Rd. and called the Marlborough Volunteer Fire Department.

Firefighters responded within minutes, Asklar said, and were able to suppress the flames after about 15 to 20 minutes. The fire was coming from the wall in between the first-floor ceiling and second-floor floor, and flames had engulfed the second-floor window by the time firefighters arrived.

No one was home at the time of the incident; however, two cats and one dog were rescued, Asklar said. The home belonged to a

family of five, but only three people were living there at the time, according to Asklar.

"At this time, [the cause of the fire] appears to have been electrical wires, but it's still under investigation," Asklar added.

There was heavy smoke damage on the second floor as well as structural damage, and the home was later condemned by the town's building inspector, according to Asklar. He said he believes the home's three occupants were staying with relatives.

Helping on the scene were firefighters from Hebron, East Hampton, Colchester and Glastonbury.

After about two hours the scene was cleared.

"We took care of business," Asklar said.

Police Investigate Water Tower Graffiti in Hebron

by Lindsay Fetzner

State Police are investigating vandalism on property owned by the Connecticut Water Company, which occurred at the end of November.

The vandalism occurred sometime between the evening of Friday, Nov. 19 and the morning of Monday, Nov. 22. State Police said there was "numerous amounts" of graffiti on the water tower, the pump house as well as on electrical casing.

The property is located between Veterans Park on Wall Street and the Hebron Car Wash on Liberty Drive.

Anyone with more information regarding the vandalism is asked to contact Resident State Trooper Jim Nolting at Troop K at 860-537-7500.

Woman Hospitalized After Hitting Deer in Hebron

by Lindsay Fetzner

An Amston resident was sent to the hospital during the evening of Saturday, Dec. 11, after hitting a tree while trying to avoid a deer in the road, State Police said.

At approximately 7:59 p.m., Donna Burke, 49, was traveling westbound on Old Colchester Road. Despite her attempt to avoid the deer that ran into the roadway, Burke ended up hitting it.

State Police said Burke then veered onto the right shoulder of the road and hit a tree.

Burke was transported by the Vernon Fire Department to Windham Hospital with a "minor injury" to her right knee, State Police said. On Tuesday, hospital staff said Burke was not listed as a patient.

The 1998 Pontiac Grand Prix Burke was driving had front-end damage, State Police said.

Power Shutoffs, 'Virtualization' Discussed by Colchester School Board

by Katy Nally

The Board of Education had a packed agenda Tuesday, including such items as welcoming a new school resource officer, awarding a bid for "virtualization" and discussing enrollment figures.

One item not on the agenda, shutting off power at three of the four schools to save money, came up during financial reports.

Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein explained the school district is enrolled in a credit program with ISO-New England that requires the schools to shut off electricity and run on a generator when asked. He said the power company usually asks the schools to power down over the summer, when demand is the highest, and this month was the first time schools switched to a generator during winter weather.

Bacon Academy Principal Jeffrey Mathieu said the shutoff happened during lunch recently and lasted for about an hour. He said running on the generator hindered cooking food in the cafeteria and students were given cold sandwiches. He said he finally asked First Selectman Gregg Schuster for permission to turn the power back on, before the power company gave the go ahead, as the school wasn't able to prepare for an after-school function that required food.

"If it happens during lunch it's just a nightmare," Goldstein said.

Being enrolled in the credit program provides savings for the school on a monthly basis, and last fiscal year, savings totaled about \$40,000, Goldstein said.

However, he said a few questions were raised since the power down occurred while students were at school, so the contract will be reviewed.

Goldstein said the board wants to know why the shutoff happened during the winter, and how much did it "hinder our operations."

"We have to see whether it's worth it," he said.

The shutoffs also recently occurred at Jack Jackter Intermediate School and Colchester Elementary School. William J. Johnston Middle School was not ordered to power down because it doesn't have a generator.

* * *

The board members also awarded a bid for a virtualization project that will consolidate the number of computer servers at the four schools from 28 to three, saving approximately \$74,000 during its first year.

The bid went to Presidio Networked Solutions of Woburn, MA for \$113,913.65. The Board of Education budgeted about \$49,000 for this type of technology upgrade by postponing purchasing support software, Microsoft exchange programs and other items. The remaining \$65,000 is slated to come from the town's general fund. The Board of Finance unanimously voted to transfer this amount from the general fund into the Board of Education's capital reserves Wednesday night, Goldstein said.

By shrinking the number of servers to three, the schools will save money through electricity and air conditioning costs, Goldstein said.

"It makes a huge difference in those expenses," he added.

The project will also require less maintenance than the current servers and provide for technology advancements "down the road," Goldstein said.

Eventually, the board will look to replacing the 1,700 computers with "thin clients" that

don't have a pc tower or a hard drive. For each replacement, instead of spending \$650, the schools would spend about \$220, netting a total savings of approximately \$731,000.

An added bonus is the thin clients would also allow remote access to the desktop profile for students and staff.

Goldstein said the project would first be piloted on a "small scale," and then probably be implemented within a year.

"They're working on this at lightning speed," he said.

* * *

Board members also welcomed Colchester Police Officer Tim Edwards as the new school resource officer and said their "thank you's" to Colchester Police Sergeant Suchecki, who recently vacated the position after being promoted.

"You really set the bar and paved the way," Superintendent of Schools Karen Loisel said Suchecki.

"We couldn't imagine a better role model," Goldstein added. "We're a better community for what you've done."

Suchecki introduced Edwards, who has already visited the four schools and made the rounds.

"He would be my first pick for the position," Suchecki said. "You guys are in excellent hands with Officer Edwards."

As the new school resource officer, Edwards said he was ready to "put my best foot forward."

"I think it's going to be a great experience," he said.

"We're very excited to have you," Loisel told Edwards.

* * *

Lastly, Loisel gave an overview of this school year's enrollment figures.

On Oct. 1 of this year, the total enrollment at all four schools was 3,081, which is 123 fewer students than last year and 106 fewer than predicted.

Loisel explained, through using the matriculation method, the number of students was overestimated by 106 students, whereas New England School Development Council (NESDEC), a non-profit that provides enrollment projections, overestimated by 77 students.

In the past, Loisel said matriculation and NESDEC numbers were more closely aligned, but the board might want to look into using NESDEC's numbers from now on, as the company uses more data to base its estimates on.

She also shared a few interesting statistics with the board, noting there would be more to follow at the next meeting.

Loisel said this year's kindergarten class has 35 fewer students than last year's and 55 fewer than last year's graduating seniors, which was 257.

She said birth rates in Colchester have been declining since at least 2004, which is also a statewide trend.

As student enrollment has dropped, Loisel noted the number of teachers and staff has been reduced "accordingly." On average, the schools lose one teacher for every 18 students who leave.

* * *

The next regularly scheduled Board of Education meeting will be held Tuesday, Jan. 11, at 7 p.m., at the William J. Johnston Middle School media center.

Colchester Police Commission Applicant Speaks Out

by Katy Nally

Selectmen were slated to make a decision on filling two vacancies on the Police Commission Thursday night, after press time.

However, one applicant alleges the Board of Selectmen only wants to fill that commission with "yes-men" and "puppets" who can be controlled.

Robert Kanaitis, who touts his 30-plus years of experience as a police officer, said he would be "an asset to the town," as well as to Colchester's police officers, if appointed to the Police Commission.

Kanaitis worked as a patrolman and a detective in the Hartford Police Department from 1971-92 and most recently worked as a field training officer in the New London Police Department. He now works as a private detective.

On Oct. 26, selectmen interviewed five of six applicants interested in serving on the Police Commission, including Kanaitis, Stanley Nolan, Ed Fusco, Frank Jackter and John Carroll IV.

Of the five, Kanaitis and Carroll are the only ones with law enforcement experience, but Jackter has previously served on the Police Commission, according to their applications.

On Nov. 18, after selectmen voted 2-2 to not re-appoint former Police Commission chair Glenn Morron, they unanimously appointed Nolan and Fusco to the commission.

Nolan said his time in the U.S. Navy "has made me aware of police policy," and Fusco mentioned his family members had experience in law enforcement, their applications said.

First Selectman Gregg Schuster explained Wednesday he voted to appoint Nolan and Fusco because "they both have a good mix of experience and have a good temperament to serve on that board." He added he couldn't comment on behalf of the entire Board of Selectmen.

"Having police experience is a good thing to have, but it's not necessarily a requirement," he said. "I want to make sure we have people on the board who can work [together]."

Still, Kanaitis said he thought he didn't receive the appointment because "they want people they can control like puppets."

"They want people that'll say 'yes, yes, yes' to the state police sergeant," Kanaitis said.

With the appointment of Nolan and Fusco, the Police Commission still has two vacancies on the five-member board since two members left this year and another did not seek reappointment.

Currently, Rob Parlee, the most-senior commissioner, is the only one with experience as a police officer. But, according to Morron, Parlee

worked for about a year as a constable in Colchester as a secondary job.

"He'll be the first to tell you he doesn't have a thorough background in law enforcement," Morron said.

There are still two applicants to be interviewed, which is why, Schuster said, selectmen haven't voted on another commissioner yet.

"I want to fill the commission," Schuster said. "However, I believe it's critically important to appoint the right people, and if that takes more time, then it takes more time."

Patrick Mickens Sr. and Stephen Petty were slated to be interviewed by selectmen Thursday after press time. Mickens has been a part of the Norwich Police Department for 16 and a half years and currently works as a detective. Petty has previously served on the Police Commission and said he has over 20 years' experience with the Colchester Hayward Volunteer Fire Department, based on his application.

Until this week, Schuster said he viewed Kanaitis as "a strong possibility," but since "learning that he's already attacking the Board of Selectmen, before even getting appointed on the commission, his 40 years of experience is rendered moot."

"What good is experience if you can't get

along with others?" Schuster asked. "The most important thing is having the Police Commission, the first selectman, the Board of Selectmen and the State Police all working together."

Kanaitis called Schuster's remarks a "copout."

"That's something you should be smart enough to realize as his way out," he said.

Kanaitis stressed how his experience as a police officer would help Colchester's own force.

"I've been in their shoes," he said. "I know what it's like; I know what kind of pressures these guys have."

However Schuster said there are experienced people available for Colchester Police, including the first-ever Colchester police sergeant, Rob Suchecki, who has been on the force for 20 years, and Resident Trooper Supervisor Sergeant John Thompson who has 15-plus years of experience.

"We have people with police experience," he said. "They're not sitting on the board, but they still contribute."

An article about Thursday's meeting of the Board of Selectmen will appear in next week's issue of the *Rivereast*.

Three Injured When Car Strikes Telephone Pole

by Katy Nally

Three Colchester men in their 20s were hospitalized after veering off Norwich Avenue and hitting a telephone pole around 1:13 a.m. Monday, State Police said.

Jared Pratt, 23, was traveling westbound on Norwich Avenue two-tenths of a mile past the intersection of Halls Hill Road when he went off the right shoulder, struck an SNET pole and cracked it, State Police said.

His vehicle hit the telephone pole with the right-rear panel, State Police said, but sustained damage to all four sides.

Pratt and his two passengers, Darren Troncalli, 28, and Kyle Josephs, 20, were all listed as having "possible injury" and were transported by ambulances from Colchester, Bozrah and Hebron to Backus

Hospital for "complaints of pain," State Police said.

Pratt was no longer listed at the hospital Thursday, but Troncalli and Josephs still were. The hospital would not comment on their statuses.

Colchester Hayward Volunteer Fire Department Lieutenant Don Lee said SNET worked to fix the telephone pole Monday morning and both Connecticut Light & Power and SNET put all their wiring back together.

Lee said one lane on Norwich Avenue was closed for about six to eight hours as the two companies worked to fix the pole. However, fire officials left the scene at 2:20 a.m.

The accident is under investigation by the State Police.

Roll-Over Car Crash on Lake Road in Andover

by Lindsay Fetzner

A one-car accident on Wednesday, Dec. 8 sent an Andover resident to Hartford Hospital, State Police said.

Around 4:12 p.m., Edward Daly, 80, was traveling eastbound on Lake Road. State Police said Daly left the roadway and veered onto the right shoulder of the road, where he struck a tree and his vehicle rolled over.

Daly was transported by the Andover Fire Department to Hartford Hospital "for precaution," State Police said.

On Tuesday, hospital staff said Daly was no longer listed as a patient.

The 2008 Chevrolet Sebring Daly was driving was totaled, State Police said.

Food Bank Demand on the Rise in Portland

by Claire Michalewicz

Demand at the town's food bank has grown this holiday season, Food Bank Director Ruth Maio told the Board of Selectmen at its Wednesday meeting.

"We're growing by leaps and bounds," Maio said. "That's not good, but we're able to help a lot of people."

The food bank served 240 families during November, she said, and added three new families last week. Maio said she hoped the food bank, which operates out of the basement of the senior center on Monday and Thursday mornings, was covering most of the families in Portland who need help. She said volunteers were getting ready to start filling Christmas baskets full of food and toys next week.

Maio said Portland residents had been generous with their donations, and schools, churches and local businesses had been giving food during the holiday season. But despite all the donations, she said, many people in town don't realize how many families the food bank serves, or that they offer clothing, furniture and other items along with food.

"I don't know how many people in town know what the food bank is all about," Maio said. "We feel we've got to get the word out about what we do down there."

"I just think what you're doing is remarkable and more than commendable," selectman Mark Finkelstein told Maio.

In the other major discussion of the evening,

the selectmen voted to let the town sell a vacant commercial property at 170 Marlborough St., which the town acquired in October. The Planning and Zoning Commission recommended at its Dec. 2 meeting that the proceeds from the sale go to "planning and zoning purposes," including the possible hiring of a town zoning enforcement officer.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said the property had not yet been appraised, but selectman John Anderson said it was probably worth between \$50,000 and \$100,000, since the lot is about one-eighth of an acre in size.

Bransfield said she understood the need for a zoning enforcement officer, and had been speaking with neighboring towns about hiring

their officers as needed to issue permits in Portland. She said the demand for permits in Portland wasn't high, and the town did not necessarily need to hire its own enforcement officer.

Finkelstein pointed out that if the town uses the proceeds from the sale to create a new position, that money would run out within a few years and paying the zoning enforcement officer would become an extra expense for the town.

"If we can afford it next year, we can do it," Anderson agreed.

The next meeting of the Board of Selectmen is scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 5, at 7:30 p.m., at Portland Library, 20 Freestone Ave.

October Chase in Portland Leads to Two Arrests

by Claire Michalewicz

Two local men are facing multiple charges after an ongoing dispute led to a high-speed chase through a rural part of town.

David Etheridge, 40, of 1 Larson Dr., and William Hanna, 29, of 49 Middle Haddam Rd., Middle Haddam, were charged last week in connection with an altercation that happened Oct. 17.

Police Officer Daniel Knapp said he was called to the scene in October after Etheridge reported a motor vehicle accident, and said the other party had fled. Upon interviewing him, Knapp found the two men had been involved in an ongoing argument over a mutual female friend, he said.

"It's a rolling dispute between two guys who've been disputing back and forth for six months," Knapp explained.

Knapp said Hanna had arrived at Etheridge's house that evening and then left, provoking Etheridge to follow him. Etheridge caught up to Hanna at the intersection of Bartlett Street and Route 17, Knapp said.

At that point, Knapp said, one car sideswiped the other, though Hanna and Etheridge had "conflicting stories as to who struck who." From that point, Etheridge pursued Hanna north on Route 17, and the pair turned right onto Cox Road. They continued onto Rose Hill Road, both failing to stop at a stop sign, Knapp said.

Knapp described the roads in that part of town as "rolling, hilly and windy," and said

both men were driving too fast as they raced around the curves. On a sharp turn on Collins Hill Road, Etheridge tried to overtake Hanna on the left side, with both cars traveling south in the northbound lane, Knapp said.

Knapp said Etheridge clipped the left rear side of Hanna's pick-up truck, causing Hanna to lose control and spin out on a sharp left turn. Afterward, Hanna drove away from the scene, Knapp said.

"These are two people who don't like each other," Knapp said.

Knapp said it took a few weeks to complete the investigation and obtain warrants for both men's arrests. Police arrested Etheridge on Monday, Dec. 6, and Hanna on Thursday, Dec. 9.

Etheridge was charged with first-degree reckless endangerment, traveling too fast for conditions, reckless driving, failure to drive in proper lane, following too closely with intent to intimidate and failure to obey a stop sign. He was released on a \$25,000 bond and is due to be arraigned on Jan. 14.

Hanna was charged with first-degree reckless endangerment, traveling too fast for conditions, reckless driving, failure to drive in proper lane, failure to obey a stop sign, operating an unregistered motor vehicle and having insufficient insurance. He was released on a promise to appear and is scheduled to enter a plea at Middletown Superior Court on Jan. 5.

Hartford Man Charged After Burglary in Colchester

by Katy Nally

Colchester Police arrested a Hartford man Dec. 3 in connection with a residential burglary that occurred in September, in which more than \$30,000 worth of personal items were reportedly stolen.

Alan Crabbe, 44, of 30 Mountford St., Hartford, was charged with three felonies – first-degree larceny, first-degree criminal mischief and third-degree burglary, Colchester Police said.

According to an arrest warrant affidavit on file at Norwich Superior Court, a Norwich Avenue residence was burglarized during the morning of Sept. 27. Upon investigation, items totaling \$32,050 were reported missing, including an antique safe, collectible liquor decanters, three fishing reels and poles and approximately 300 boxes of silver and gold coin sets. Copper piping from the basement was also stolen, police said, and as a result, the basement had about a foot of water that had leaked from piping in the ceiling.

The affidavit states a witness saw Crabbe's car leaving the residence around 7:15 that morning, and Crabbe admitted to parking at the home, but said he was looking for tools he had left there, days earlier.

Crabbe first told Colchester Police he didn't remember what else he had done that day, until officers Rob Suchecki and Rob Labonte presented Crabbe with copies of a transaction he made to a recycling plant in Hartford to sell copper piping.

Crabbe said he had sold piping he retrieved from his own home.

On the day of the incident, Colchester Police spoke with Crabbe's girlfriend, who, according to the affidavit, said Crabbe was soaking wet when he returned to Hartford on Sept. 27. She also said he "used to have a drug problem and that he has been arrested in the past for stealing copper piping out of a house," the affidavit said.

Police asked Crabbe during his interview

why he was wet and he said it could have been from working in the bushes around his garage. He "denied that he was wet due to cutting pressurized copper piping" from the burglarized home, the affidavit said.

Crabbe also refused a polygraph test, because, he said, the last one he took, he passed, according to the affidavit. He did not make himself available for a second interview, the affidavit said.

Colchester Police also had a "facility manager" compare photos of the sold copper piping to the missing pieces in the burglarized home, and found the photos were "consistent." Besides the copper piping, Colchester Police was able to trace pawn shop transactions made in Crabbe's name. According to the affidavit, 98 envelopes and 42 boxes containing U.S. Mint proof collectible coins were recovered, several of which still contained shipping and handling receipts with the Norwich Avenue homeowner's name and address.

Also, an employee at Reliable Auto in Colchester remembered Crabbe had attempted to pay for service repairs on Sept. 20 with gold coins, after his credit cards were denied, the affidavit said.

Crabbe confirmed that he was towed to Reliable Auto on Sept. 20 because of a flat tire, but he did not mention whether he tried to pay with gold coins in his statement.

A Colchester resident related to the homeowner also visited a Hartford pawnshop and identified several items that were from the burglarized home, the affidavit said, including liquor decanters, clocks and fishing poles.

Based on the investigation, the Colchester Police had "probable cause to believe" Crabbe "did commit the offenses," the affidavit said.

Crabbe is held on a \$5,000 bond and has not been released from custody, according to the judicial website. His next court date is listed as Dec. 27, and the Norwich Superior Court is currently "awaiting plea."

Colchester | Marlborough | Colchester | Marlborough | Colchester

Route 2 Accidents Send Three to Hospitals

by Katy Nally

Three car accidents that occurred on Route 2 on Dec. 7 and over the weekend sent a woman in her 20s, a 17-year-old and a 41-year-old to separate hospitals, State Police said.

The first, which happened on Tuesday, Dec. 7, around 1 p.m., was a two-car accident and involved the Jaws of Life, Colchester Hayward Volunteer Fire Chief Don Lee said. A woman in her 20s had apparently stopped her car near exit 17 in Colchester and was rear-ended by a Ford van, Lee said.

She was extricated from her Honda Accord after fire personnel cut off the passenger side door, and she was transported to Hartford Hospital.

Lee said the scene was cleared about 50 minutes after arrival, and one lane of traffic remained open while the accident was being investigated.

The second accident, which happened Sat-

urday, Dec. 11, at about 9:30 a.m., involved a 17-year-old man from Colchester. According to State Police, he was traveling eastbound just past exit 21 in Colchester, veered off the road and struck the metal guy wire and then a tree. His 2003 Ford Ranger was totaled.

He was transported via Colchester to Backus Hospital, State Police said.

And lastly, the third accident happened a day later on Sunday, Dec. 12, at 5 a.m., State Police said.

Audrey Sharpe-Scott, of Waterbury, was traveling eastbound just past exit 13 in Marlborough when she hit a patch of ice and lost control of her 1995 BMW 5251, State Police said. Sharpe-Scott then crashed into an embankment on the right shoulder and was transported to Marlborough Clinic for complaints of neck pain, State Police said.

The BMW sustained damage to the front and rear ends, State Police said.

Portland Police News

12/12: Olivia Breece, 18, of 30 Stephen Rd., was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia and possession of alcohol by a minor, Portland Police said.

Colchester Police News

12/6: Susan Bennett, 26, of 10 Brooke Hill Rd., East Haddam, was charged with fifth-degree larceny and second-degree forgery, Colchester Police said.

12/7: Ian Bochain, 28, of 90 Ranch Rd., UT, was charged with three counts of failure to appear, State Police said.

12/7: Brian Grabber, 45, of 1976 Exeter Rd., Lebanon, was charged with operating an unregistered motor vehicle, DUI and making a restricted turn, State Police said.

12/9: Anthony Dominguez, 60, of 2 Hazelwood Dr., Baltic, was charged with DUI and speeding, State Police said.

12/9: Alison Coleman, 21, of 161 East St., Middletown, was charged with sixth-degree larceny, State Police said.

Marlborough Police News

12/8: There was a residential burglary on Portland Road, State Police said. Entry was made through the rear kitchen window. An inventory of missing items is pending, but anyone with more information about the incident is asked to contact Trooper Randy Ransom at Troop K in Colchester at 860-537-7500.

Andover Police News

12/7: Roger Harbec, 62, of 16A Greystone St., Willimantic, was charged with DWI and failure to drive right, State Police said.

East Hampton Police News

11/23: Eric J. Sauger, 19, of Portland and Kimball Sawyer, 22, of Higganum, were involved in a two-vehicle accident at 367 West High St. Sauger was issued a ticket for unsafe backing, East Hampton Police said.

11/30: A 16-year-old of East Hampton was issued a summons for third-degree larceny and conspiracy to commit third-degree larceny, police said.

12/4: Mallory B. Reynolds, 24, of 64 Barton Hill Rd., was arrested for failure to drive right and DUI, police said.

12/5: Jeanne M. Urban, 43, of 180 Tartia Rd., was arrested for DUI, police said.

12/6: A 15-year-old juvenile of East Hampton was issued a summons for second-degree criminal mischief and second-degree breach of peace, police said.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

As I hinted at in my column last week, it's that time of year where Christmas music is all over the radio. Christmas specials are also all over the television, as are Christmas-related movies. The plethora of yuletide sights and sounds filling my brain spurred me to thinking: what are my favorites?

For music, there are two different kinds of Christmas songs: the secular and the non-secular. Among the secular songs, I have a bunch I like, but my favorite, or at least my favorite the past few years, has been "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas." I mentioned the song in a column last year, and as I said at the time, I prefer the original version, with the line "Until then we'll have to muddle through somehow," to the later (and more popular) version, which features the decidedly cheerier "Hang a shining star upon the highest bough."

The original version has a great balance of sadness and sweetness, and – particularly the original recording by Judy Garland, done for the movie *Meet Me in St. Louis* – really sticks with you.

For non-secular Christmas tunes, well, that's gotta be "O Holy Night." It truly captures the religious element of the season, and features beautiful lyrics and music. I prefer a simple rendition of it; a solo, with nothing more than a piano playing in the background.

And, while it may not be exactly in the spirit of the season, I do have a least-favorite Christmas song: "It's a Marshmallow World." The words have squat to do with Christmas, but because of its snow-loving theme, it's played incessantly around the holidays. But overplaying isn't why I hate it. It's just stupid. The title is stupid. The lyrics are stupid. (Here's a sample: "The world is your snowball, see how it grows/That's how it goes, whenever it snows." Really?) When it comes on the radio, that's when I change the channel.

Among the Christmas specials that always get repeated – you know, those ones that were originally made for kids but also wind up getting watched by the adults who grew up with them – my favorite is *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, the original stop-motion special from the '60s. Lots of people like *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, and believe me that's a good one too, but, in my mind, *Rudolph* has it all: a great story (it's not easy to take a simple song and build a well-crafted story around it), memorable songs and a great message for kids, that they don't need to worry about being different. Even the stop-motion

animation, technologically-savvy at the time, has a simple charm nearly 50 years later that makes the special even more memorable.

As an adult, of course, you can see things you didn't necessarily see as a kid, namely that Santa is a bit of a dink, joining with the others to ostracize Rudolph due to his "abnormality" (he also slams those poor little musical elves for no good reason), although to be fair he eventually comes around and realizing he was wrong.

As far as movies go, nothing to me endures like *It's a Wonderful Life*. Now, there are more laughs to be had in other Christmas films, and I'm sure more tears too, but as a total package, it's tough to beat *It's a Wonderful Life*. Strong performances, a compelling story and a message that, really, most of us need to hear every now and again. (Who among us, after all, hasn't felt a little like George Bailey on occasion?)

I try to pop my DVD in of the movie every December. I realize NBC shows it every year too, but watching it on TV ruins it a little. In addition to the commercials, there's also something not quite right about seeing George Bailey contemplating ending it all while, at the bottom of the screen, a little notice reminds you of an all-new *Minute to Win It* next Wednesday at 8/7 central.

* * *

In his *New York Times* column last Saturday, political columnist Ross Ramsey wrote that "Texas Democrats have become the Baltimore Orioles of politics. Somewhere in heaven, Earl Weaver and [former Texas governor] Ann Richards are comparing notes on what went wrong with the teams they left behind."

Not a bad sentence; just not true. On Monday, the *Baltimore Sun* contacted the very-much-alive Weaver, at his home in Florida. "I'll be damned," the 80-year-old said, when told of the *Times* piece. "All I can do is say, that's false."

* * *

Before I go, I should let you know next week's issue, the Dec. 24 edition, is the last *Rivereast* of 2010. So if you have a special final thought for the year, or a New Year's Eve message you want to send out, well, you'd best do it next week, because there will be no paper for Dec. 31. Don't worry, though; we'll be back with a brand-new *Rivereast* on Jan. 6.

* * *

See you next week.

Obituaries

Colchester/Griswold

Dillon T.J. Clifford

Dillon T.J. Clifford, 16, of Griswold, passed away unexpectedly on Dec. 7, along with his dear friends John Clapper III, Sativa Cornell and Steven Szklarz. Born Dec. 10, 1993, beloved only son to Robert and Suzanne I. (Daigle) Clifford of Griswold, formerly of Colchester.



Dillon was a junior at Griswold High School where he participated in baseball, football, basketball, and wrestling. He enjoyed motocross and riding his dirt bike. He leaves many memories with his wonderful friends and classmates who will miss him.

Besides his parents he is survived by his grandparents Joseph R. Daigle and Violet Williams of Florida, Robert Lambert of Florida, and several aunts, uncles and cousins who will miss him dearly. He also leaves behind his four legged companions Bear, Lilly, Dora and Marley, who will no doubt look for him daily.

He was predeceased by grandparents Bernadette D. Daigle, Patrica Lambert and Thomas Clifford.

Family, friends and classmates called on Friday, Dec. 10, and Saturday, Dec. 11 at the Gagne-Piechowski Funeral Home in Jewett City. Burial will be private.

Portland

Patricia Ann Swanson

Patricia Ann Swanson of Portland passed away Sunday, Dec. 12, after a brief illness, surrounded by the love and warmth of her family. She was born March 17, 1924 in Pittsburgh, PA, to the late Emma Julia (Schenkemeyer) and Andrew Elmer Alfred Swanson.



Raised in Portage and Johnstown, PA, she graduated from Johnstown High School in 1941. She graduated from the University of Michigan with a BS in Education in 1945 and later won a scholarship in physical therapy to Stanford University, receiving a certificate upon graduation in 1946. Pat worked in physical therapy at Memorial Hospital in Johnstown before accepting a teaching position in physical education in Ypsilanti, MI. In January 1949 she married the love of her life, J. Elmer Swanson. Next month, the two would have celebrated their 62nd anniversary. While teaching in Ann Arbor, Pat conducted physical exercise classes at Ann Arbor YMCA.

The family moved to Portland in September 1963 when Elmer began working at Wesleyan. Pat started a physical fitness class for Wesleyan women and still played in a Wesleyan University women's bridge group. Pat returned to teaching in 1965 in a half-time physical education position at Portland Middle School. She taught there until 1976 when she moved to Gildersleeve School, where she was especially proud of establishing Field Day. She felt that this enabled all students to participate – not just the best athletes.

Pat was a member of the Grace Guild at Zion Lutheran Church, the Monday Club at Wesleyan University and the Portland West Ladies Group that golfed on Tuesdays. Pat loved to swim, and went regularly to Jobs Pond with the Family Swim Club and later to the Portland Fire Dept. facility on Great Hill Pond.

Cherishing her memory are her loving husband J. Elmer Swanson; their daughter, Kristen, and husband, Andy Cohen, of Oak Hills, CA; their son, Jay, and wife, Martha, of Portland; two grandchildren, Dr. Chris Swanson, of Philadelphia, PA, and Atty. Ingrid Swanson, of Hartford; a sister, Emma Jane Shaner of Bellvue, Nebraska; two nieces, Leslie and husband Bryan Stone of Omaha, NE, Kim and husband Dennis Briggs of Trinity, FL; and many cherished cousins and long-time friends.

She enjoyed over 35 years with "The Friday Night Group" – a wonderful group of friends. Pat was blessed to have the companionship and care of Pam Zibron, Deb, Melissa and the compassionate and loving care of the staff of S7, Middlesex Hospice and Palliative Care Unit.

Funeral services were held Dec. 15 at Zion Lutheran Church in Portland and burial followed in the Swedish Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, friends may make donations to the Zion Lutheran Church Memorial Fund, P.O. Box 202, Portland, CT 06480, or Middlesex Hospice & Palliative Care Unit, 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457.

Messages of condolence may be sent to the family at www.doolittlefuneralservice.com.

Marlborough

D'Arcy R. Cook

D'Arcy R. Cook, "Ron," 82, of Marlborough, loving and devoted husband of Ruth A. Cook, passed on to be with his savior Jesus Saturday, Dec. 11, at Marlborough Medical Center. Born in Newton, MA, he was the son of the late D'Arcy G. and Minnie Cook. He was a veteran of the Korean War and resided in Marlborough for 37 years.

Besides his wife he leaves a sister Phyllis A. Cook of Sarasota Springs, NY, and St. Augustine, FL.

A graveside service was held Wednesday, Dec. 15, in the Marlboro Cemetery, Marlborough. There were no calling hours.

Memorial donations may be made to the Marlborough Medical Clinic, Jones Hollow Rd., Marlborough, CT 06447.

The Mulryan Funeral Home has care of arrangements.

Hebron

Joseph Francis Dent

Joseph Francis Dent, 92, of Hebron, passed away peacefully in the presence of his family on Sunday, Dec. 12. Born Sept. 10, 1918 in Hartford, he was the last surviving of the six children of the late Herbert and Nellie (Duffy) Dent.

A proud WWII veteran, having served in the U.S. Army as a sergeant in New Guinea, he was honored as Hebron's first Veteran of the Year on Nov. 12. He always had a love of the old west and horses which started after reading the Will James book *Smoky the Cowhorse*. He took his rodeo name from this book and was known on the rodeo circuit and to all his friends as "Smoky Joe" Dent. It was through his love for horses that he met his wife of 63 years, Elizabeth Brooks Dent at the old Laredo Ranch in Keeny Park in Hartford.

In addition to his beloved wife, Elizabeth, he leaves his daughter Victoria "Tory" MacDonald, her husband, Michael and their son, Kyle Joseph MacDonald; son-in-law, Edward Morabito of Phoenix, AZ, and grandson, Seth Morabito of Santa Clara, CA. Joseph was predeceased by his daughters Carol Ann Dent Dreselly, late of Coventry in June 2004 and Leslee Ann Dent Morabito, late of Trinidad, CA, in January 2009.

He was also predeceased by his brothers, George, John and Herbert Dent and his sisters, Lillian Dent and Helen Duncan.

Smoky used to ride bulls for a living in his younger days and one of the highlights of his life was a trip to the professional bull riders' event last year at Mohegan Sun. When his daughter wrote to them to see if they would allow him to get down behind the chutes for his 90th birthday they opened their hearts to him and made him feel like he was family. Everyone that he met, from Adriano Moraes to Ty Murray and Randy Bernard, treated him with the utmost respect and took time out of their very busy schedule to talk with him and listen to what he had to say. He especially enjoyed our host and guide, Jodie Edmonds and liked to call her his little sweetheart. The family will never forget what they did for him that day! When he came home he looked at us and with tears of joy in his eyes, he said "thank you for the best day of my life."

The family would love to give special thanks to all that helped Joe in his final days. Diane Lally for her friendship, faith and her ability to verbally "spar" and hold her own in conversations with Joe, VNA East Hospice unit and especially, Kathy Killarney, RN, for helping to make and keep Joe comfortable and Lend A Hand of Cromwell for sending us Stephen Boadu who treated Joe with the utmost respect and dignity.

Friends called Wednesday, Dec. 15, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. An American Legion/VFW Memorial Service was observed that evening. The funeral liturgy was celebrated Thursday at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave., Colchester, with Fr. Michael S. Smith officiating. Committal with full military honors will follow in St. Peter's Cemetery, Hebron. There are no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made in his name to the Hebron VFW or the Rider Relief Resources, Inc., 101 W. Riverwalk, Pueblo, CO 81003; reference "Smoky Joe" Dent.

For online condolences, visit www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

East Hampton

Howard Arthur Renaud

Howard Arthur Renaud, 79, of East Hampton, passed away Thursday evening, Dec. 9. Born in New Britain, son of the late Arthur and the late Mary (Osalza) Renaud, he graduated from New Britain High School, served in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean Conflict and was employed at Pratt & Whitney in East Hartford until his retirement in 1973.

He is survived by a sister, Loretta (Renaud) Daddabbo of Clinton and Hollywood, FL; three nieces, Cathie Glidden, Marie Holloway and her fiancé Daniel Oliva with whom he made his home, and Lucy Fish and her husband Reggie; a nephew, John Daddabbo and his wife Valerie; several great-nieces, great-nephews, great-great-nieces, great-great-nephews and cousins.

Friends and relatives were invited to call at Porter's Funeral Home, 111 Chamberlain Highway, Kensington, on Tuesday, Dec. 14. Funeral and graveside services were private at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to The American Cancer Society, New England Division, 30 Speen St., Framingham, MA 01701. Directions to the funeral home can be found at www.portersfuneral.com.

Hebron

Nancy L. Maudsley

Nancy L. Maudsley, 68, the wife of Richard Wilson, died Tuesday, Dec. 7, at Manchester Memorial Hospital. Nancy was born in St. Albans, VT, the daughter of Charles and Yvonne (Mayo) Rushlow and had lived in Hebron for many years. She was formerly employed at the Bidwell Care Center.

Besides Richard, Nancy is survived by her son, Robert Maudsley and his wife Jane of Holland, MA; her daughter, Lori Maudsley of New Britain; her grandchildren, Daniel and Joseph Maudsley, Ashley and Amber Maudsley; and her great-grandchildren Donavan and Starr.

Family and friends called at the John F. Tierney Funeral Home, 219 West Center St., Manchester, on Saturday, Dec. 11. A funeral service was held that day at the funeral home, followed by burial in East Cemetery, Manchester.

Portland

Linus Sanstrom Jr.

Linus L. Sanstrom Jr., 68, of Jobs Pond Road, Portland, died Thursday, Dec. 9, at his home under Middlesex Hospice Care. He was the husband of Nancy Kelley Sanstrom.

Born in Middletown, June 10, 1942, a son of the late Linus L. and Vera Facius Sanstrom Sr., he was a lifelong area resident. He was a 1962 graduate of the UConn School of Agriculture and had been a very proud dairy farmer for over 25 years. He was a parishioner of the Church of Saint Mary.

Besides his wife, Nancy, he is survived by his daughter, Mary Sanstrom of Maine; his sons, John Sanstrom of Newington, Linus Sanstrom and his daughter-in-law Karen of Hebron, and Daniel Sanstrom of Portland; he was "Papa Moo" to his grandchildren, Rachel, Andrew, Jacob and Abby, and his great-granddaughter Peyton. He is also survived by his brother, Robert Sanstrom and his sister-in-law Rosemary of Portland; his brothers-in-law, Dan Kelley of Florida and Richard "Chop" Kelley and his sister-in-law Joan of South Windsor; his nieces, Kerry, Kristin and Jennifer; and his "special aunt," Eileen Foley of West Hartford.

He was predeceased by his daughter, Judith Lynn.

His family received relatives and friends in the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, Sunday, Dec. 12. Funeral services were held Monday, Dec. 13, from the Portland Memorial Funeral Home and at the Church of Saint Mary for a Mass of Christian Burial. Interment followed in St. Mary's Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, gifts in his memory may be sent to the Knights of Columbus, Council 7, P.O. Box 7, Portland, CT 06480.

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

Colchester

Edmund Joseph McMahon

Edmund Joseph McMahon, "Ted," 71, of Colchester and formerly of Hamden, beloved husband of Linda (Shanahan) McMahon, went home to the Lord peacefully Tuesday, Dec. 14. Born Aug. 20, 1939, in New Haven, he was a son of the late Alfred and Margaret (Dinneen) McMahon.



A 1958 graduate of Hamden High School, Ted was voted as "Best Dancer," which he held a lifelong love of, along with singing. He went on to study at SCSU. On Oct. 13, 1962, he and Linda were married at Blessed Sacrament Church in Hamden.

Mr. McMahon was a sales representative for Nabisco for 28 years and later was groundskeeper for My Father's House in Moodus for seven years before his retirement. He was an active communicant of St. Andrew Parish in Colchester, a member of the Francis Cardinal Spellman Council 6107 Knights of Columbus and was active with the ACTS Community. Ted was also involved with the AFG 12-step fellowship for many years.

He held a lifelong love of the outdoors, both hunting and fishing, but his greatest joy was found in his devotion to his family and faith.

In addition to his loving wife of 48 years, he is survived by four children and their spouses, Kathleen and Daniel Moody of Apache Jct., AZ, Teddy and Cindy McMahon, Jr. of No. Franklin, Maureen and Rob Sullivan of Hebron and Jen and Dan Utz of Colchester; 10 grandchildren, Julie, Gehrig, Anita, Riley, Brigid, Eamonn, Abigail, Brian, Padraig and Jeremiah; his sister, Peg Vanatta of Manning, SC; two brothers and their wives, Alfred and Myrna McMahon Jr. of Georgetown, SC, and James and Linda McMahon of Wallingford; and numerous extended family members and friends.

In addition to his parents, he was predeceased by three brothers-in-law, Chuck Vanatta and John and Neil Shanahan.

Friends may call from 4-7 p.m. Monday, Dec. 20, at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave., Colchester. The funeral liturgy will be celebrated at 11 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 21, at St. Andrew Church. Ted's cousin, the Most Rev. Peter A. Rosazza, Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of the Archdiocese of Hartford, will be principal celebrant. Interment will follow in the New St. Andrew Cemetery, Colchester.

The family would like to extend their heartfelt appreciation to the staff of both the Norwich and Rocky Hill DaVita Dialysis Centers for their care and concern shared with Ted over the past few years.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to the National Kidney Foundation of Connecticut, 2139 Silas Deane Hwy., Rocky Hill, CT 06067 or to Immaculata Retreat House, P.O. Box 55, Willimantic, CT 06226.

Care of arrangements has been entrusted to the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester. For online condolences, visit www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Marion Scott

Marion Scott, 71, of Colchester, passed away Tuesday, Dec. 14, in Colchester. He was born April 15, 1939, in Sumter, SC, son of Joseph S. and Rebecca Williams Scott.

Marion was a 30-year career serviceman, serving in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War, a member of the Elite Green Beret attaining the rank of Master Sergeant.

He is survived by two sons, Christopher and Terry; a daughter, Sherry; and a brother, Larry Scott of Miami, FL; four sisters, Betty L. Turner of Colchester, Eileen Fletcher of New London, Catherine Foster of Georgia, Theresa Scott of Pennsylvania; and a host of nieces of nephews.

He was predeceased by three brothers, Joseph E., Timothy M. and Robert E. Scott.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, Dec. 18, at the Belmont/Sabrowski Funeral Home, 144 South Main St., Colchester. Burial to follow in Linwood Cemetery with full military honors. Visitation will be one hour prior to the service.

Colchester

Eileen M. Prendergast

Eileen M. Prendergast, longtime resident of White Sands Beach, Old Lyme and former resident of Newington, beloved mother, grandmother, sister and friend, died following a long, courageous battle with ALS Tuesday, Dec. 14, at Harrington Court in Colchester.

She was born Dec. 5, 1939, in Hartford, the daughter of Edward and Agnes Glynn McCullough. She was the widow of James Prendergast.

Eileen was employed for many years in the tax department at Aetna. She loved time with her family and friends most, and was known for her light happy presence. Even in her darkest hours, laughter with family and friends was her favorite pastime. Eileen touched the lives of so many people, and is a role-model for Medicare advocacy's mission to improve the standards of Medicare coverage for all of us. Her true courage and bravery are an inspiration to all who knew her.

She is survived by her son, Richard Prendergast and his wife Karen of Cheshire; her daughters, Eileen Mastro and her husband Jamie of Wilbraham, MA, and Ann Marie Maffuid and her husband James of Colchester; her brother, Edward McCullough of Naples, FL; her sisters, Mary Abrams and Ann Hennessey, both of West Hartford; her grandchildren, Alissa, Danielle, Michael and Christopher Maffuid, Owen and Conor Prendergast, Elizabeth, James and Julia Mastro.

In addition to her husband, she was predeceased by her siblings Katherine Murphy, Robert and John McCullough.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held Saturday, Dec. 18, at 10:30 a.m., in Christ the King Church, 1 McCurdy Rd., Old Lyme. Burial will follow in Duck River Cemetery, Old Lyme. A visiting hour will be held Saturday from 9:30-10:30 a.m. in church.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations in her memory may be made to ALS Association of Conn., 4 Oxford Rd., D4, Milford, CT 06460.

To sign the online guest book, visit www.fultontherouxoldlyme.com.