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Hebron resident Theresa Oei scored a perfect 2400 on her SATs. The teen has varied accomplishments in a variety of areas. She is shown here with her award-winning entry at the Connecticut Science Fair earlier this year.

Hebron Teen Notches Perfect SAT Score

by Lindsay Fetzner

Scoring a perfect 2400 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) is something that less than .02 percent of 2009 college-bound seniors achieved. Out of 1.5 million test takers nationwide, just 297 students achieved such a score, according to CollegeBoard, the organization that prepares the tests.

Hebron teen Theresa Oei is one of them.

Theresa, a junior at East Catholic High School, achieved a 2400 on the March 2010 SATs. Ironically, Theresa received her results on April Fool's Day. "I couldn't believe it," Theresa said. "I was hoping it wasn't an April Fool's joke."

Theresa's family shared her emotions on the scores. Her mom, Ellen, said she was "pretty blown away."

"It was flawless," Ellen said, adding that Theresa's three younger siblings were "thrilled for her" as well.

Up until high school, Theresa was home-schooled at the "Oei Home School," an institution her younger siblings still attend. Ellen said she wanted her children to realize that "learning is a personal responsibility" and "not something that just happens in an institution." At her home school, Theresa said she had more flexibility during the day, which Ellen said offered her the opportunity to "educate the kids as we best saw fit." Theresa said the transition from the home school to the high school "wasn't too

difficult" and that the teachers and students alike were "very welcoming."

Christian Cashman, principal and chief administrator at East Catholic, said Theresa is the first student at the high school to achieve a perfect 2400 on the SATs. (Other past students have achieved 1600 on the old version of the test; the new version, with the 2400 maximum score, has been in existence since 2005.) "She is a stellar student and a stellar person," Cashman said.

Theresa's character, Cashman said, is "absolutely sterling" and she is very respected by her peers. He said after Theresa's fellow students found out about her achievement, they gave her a standing ovation in the library media center. "It speaks volumes about who she is," Cashman said. The entire school community, Cashman said, is "incredibly proud" of Theresa and her achievement. "She is a very special person."

Theresa is one of 181 students in the junior class at East Catholic and is under the guidance of counselor Dr. Lawrence DeJohn. "She's an exceptional student," DeJohn said. He has worked with Theresa for her entire high school career.

DeJohn said when he heard the news, he was "ecstatic." "I was so pleased for her," he said. In DeJohn's six years at East Catholic, Theresa

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Haitian Doctor Speaks to Colchester Congregation

by Katy Nally

Dr. Franco Jean-Louis said he can "still hear the echo of children crying" from when he arrived at his Haitian orphanage on Jan. 14, two days after the 7.0 earthquake ravaged the island country.

All of the 134 orphans survived the quake, "just because of the grace of God," Jean-Louis, the executive director of the Christian Haitian Outreach Orphanage, said.

The doctor spoke at the Abundant Life of the Assemblies of God church in Colchester last Sunday, April 25, as part of the worship service. Later, during a question and answer session he detailed his experience of the earthquake.

The church, and a sister affiliate in Meriden, support Jean-Louis' orphanage and are planning a May 24 mission trip to Haiti.

When the earthquake hit on Jan. 12, at about 5 p.m., Jean-Louis was actually 10 hours north of Port-au-Prince. He said he was on the phone with his staff at the time, and he heard crying in the background. Jean-Louis said the phone conversation only lasted about five more seconds before the connection cut out. Shortly after that, he felt the quake himself.

It took Jean-Louis two days to trek through mountains in a minivan, which he described as a "tap tap," before he reached the orphanage in Mariani, about 22 miles west of Port-au-Prince.

He said, at that point, it was impossible to travel by plane. "We had to suffer two long days," he said. During his journey, he said he saw "dead people all over."

When he arrived in Port-au-Prince, Jean-Louis was inundated with injured people seeking medical attention. He said he was the only physician for 10 dozen people.

"The scene is something that I will never be able to describe to you," Jean-Louis said. "That was horrible."

The orphanage was really only equipped with the medicine used to treat some of the children, so the quality of care was somewhat limited, Jean-Louis said. Wounds were washed with unclean water and tied with whatever material was available. Amputations were performed without anesthetic, he added. "We had to make the choice to let people die, or live with the pain," he said. "Doing nothing was not an option."

Jean-Louis, who participated in Doctors Without Borders and has 17 years of medical experience, said he did things in the 12 post-quake days that he had never done before during his professional career. "I had never seen what I saw then," he said. (Jean-Louis, seemingly still shaken up by what he encountered, did not go into any specific details.)

During the first and second week after the

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Dr. Franco Jean-Louis, the executive director of the Christian Haitian Outreach Orphanage in Haiti, spoke to the Abundant Life of the Assemblies of God church Sunday. Pictured from left are Pastor Shirley Ellis, Jean-Louis and Pastor Charles Brown.

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is the first of his students to achieve a perfect 2400 on the SATs.

He described Theresa as a “sweet, humble, yet very competent person” who is “well deserving of the honor.” Her strong goals to succeed and achieve have definitely played a part in her success, he said.

Theresa’s workload for this year is composed of seven courses, four of which are at the AP level, and include calculus, US history, language and composition and biology. Biology, Theresa said, is among her favorite courses she is taking. Although Theresa will begin looking at colleges this summer and has not decided on a definite major, she is considering pursuing something in the sciences.

Theresa’s AP biology teacher, Lesa Milas, said Theresa has “an Energizer bunny battery that keeps her going.” Not only is Theresa a very humble and modest student, Milas said, but she is also “a sponge for knowledge.”

DeJohn said Theresa’s coursework has “almost entirely been at the honors level” and in her three years at East Catholic, “has excelled in all of her subject areas.”

Ellen described Theresa similarly, and said she is a “highly-motivated” individual, who “loves to learn.” “She is willing to learn anything that we expose her to,” Ellen said. “She has always had a great hunger for learning.”

Outside of the classroom, Theresa is also active in Irish step dancing and ballet. She has been doing ballet for about 11 years at the Connecticut Concert Ballet in Manchester. Ellen talked of her daughter’s passion for ballet and said, “She enjoys dance...that’s her sport.”

Theresa has competed in numerous step dancing competitions over the years. Currently, she is ranked third in New England from the New England Regional Championships in Providence, RI, 13th in North America from the North American Irish Dance Championship

in Nashville, TN, and 38th in the world as a result of the World Irish Dancing Championships held in Scotland. Theresa has also been step dancing for 11 years.

But her accomplishments don’t stop there. Theresa took part in the 62nd Annual Connecticut Science Fair, held at Quinnipiac University in March. She earned a first-place Future Sustainability Award with her project, *Prototype Dual Kite Power System to Harvest High Altitude Wind Energy*, in addition to many other recognitions. As a result, Theresa won a trip to the International Sustainable World Energy, Engineering & Environmental Project (I-SWEEP) Olympiad in Houston, TX, which was held April 14-18.

Theresa earned a gold medal in the senior energy category at the I-SWEEP. Theresa’s project was just one of 10, out of a total of 170 projects in the category, that earned a gold medal. According to the Connecticut Science Fair Association, Inc., nearly 1,000 students from 43 states and 69 countries attended and competed in the competition.

Milas said Theresa’s “full plate academically” is challenging in itself, but adding the travel and presentations for events such as the science fairs “go to show how well organized and motivated she is to go above and beyond.” “She is really going places,” Milas said.

DeJohn agreed, and said, “She has so many strengths,” alluding her to achievements both in and out of the classroom. “She is also very well-rounded.”

Theresa’s inspiration throughout her successes, she said, has always been her parents. “They both value education a lot and it was a priority in our house,” she said. Theresa cited Ellen’s devotion to home-schooling both her and her siblings over the years.

“Definitely, they were the inspiration,” Theresa said.

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earthquake, Jean-Louis said his facility welcomed between 2,000 and 2,500 refugees. However, that number has significantly decreased to about 250, and the orphanage houses 124 additional children. Jean-Louis said nine orphans have since been adopted by Americans and 15 more are going through the process.

But because many people are still without homes, or even shelter, Jean-Louis said the country is still “in need of assistance.” “All of Haiti is a refugee camp,” he remarked.

Jean-Louis added that because it’s the rainy season, the winds and storms are especially bad. “I look at them and my heart was crying,” he said of the refugees. “You see them with their broken dreams.”

Most of those who died in the earthquake were adults, Jean-Louis said, so there has been an influx of orphans, many of whom “still believe their parents will come back.”

Orphanage staff does their best to accommodate the orphans, and is in the process of enlarging the facility, he said. Their mission is to “make life easier” for the children and to provide at least one hot meal for them each day. But, he noted, “we can never say we have enough food,” because it is shared between the

children, staff and refugees.

The doctor profusely thanked the church and its members for their continued support of the orphanage. “You sent your own people and your money,” he said. “We do appreciate it.”

Although the devastation was extensive, Jean-Louis was hopeful when it came to Haiti’s future. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the death toll caused by the earthquake has reached over 222,000 people.

“We are all the way to the bottom,” he said. “There is no farther you can go, you have to come up.”

Jean-Louis cited a recent three-day fast and prayer session (which he said involved over one million Haitians) as evidence that Haiti is on its road to recovery. “God is about to bring life, and life abundantly,” he said. “I believe Haiti will again be beautiful. Haiti will be the pearl of the island that it was in the past.”

Currently there are 19 people signed up for the May 24 mission trip, and six spots are still available, Pastor Shirley Ellis said. For more information about the trip, call the church at 860-537-3982.

For information about the orphanage, visit www.christianhaitianoutreach.org.

Hebron Lions Hold Annual Night of Giving

by Lindsay Fetzner

Last Friday, the Hebron Lions hosted their annual Night of Giving, where they honor and reward local organizations for their commitment to the community. More than \$50,000 was handed out, to over 15 groups.

“It is so heartwarming to bring the community into one room and be able to make all of our organizations that we donate to better off than they were that night,” said Joe Krist, chairman of the Hebron Lion’s Charities.

The Lions Club started in 1969. Although the group has given donations on a yearly basis ever since, it didn’t start a designated Night of Giving until 1988, according to Krist. Of the more than \$50,000 donated last week, Krist said approximately \$30,000 will stay “right here in the community [at Hebron-based organizations], which is pretty special.”

Since the start of the Lions in 1969, Krist said the group has given over \$2 million in donations at the local, state and international level.

One of the donations made last Friday was a \$4,500 contribution to the Russell Mercier Senior Center. Thanks to the funds, a van that is part of the Dial-a-Ride fleet will remain in Hebron. Senior Services Coordinator Sharon Garrard said the senior center currently has three vehicles in the fleet – one inherited car, a 12-passenger handicapped-accessible vehicle gotten through a state contingency grant and a 20-passenger handicap-accessible van through Federal Transit Authority grant money.

Garrard said the 20-passenger van was received through the Greater Hartford Transit District (GHTD). The lease on the van was due to expire “very soon,” Garrard said, so the senior center was faced with either returning the vehicle to GHTD or purchasing the vehicle for \$4,500. Krist said the senior center did not have that money in its budget and, when the Lions heard about this, “we made it happen by finding additional funds to buy the bus for the seniors.

Krist said out of all the donations made last Friday, this was the one “that is going to be the most memorable this year – the year the Lions were able to buy the bus.” He said he was thrilled that the Lions were able to find the additional funds to purchase the van. Krist also looks forward to the senior luncheon to be held in May at the Lions Fair Ground, where they will be transported in the van.

Out of all of the vehicles the senior center has, Garrard said this van is most frequently utilized for group social transportation, like the luncheon, because most of the requests for transportation are singular rides to various places.

“It is crucial to the quality of life for people to be able to enjoy the camaraderie of others, develop supportive relationships and be able to get out and enjoy the company of others,” Garrard said.

Garrard said it’s important for the senior center to have more than one handicapped-accessible vehicle, to provide options, in case there are disabled seniors looking to go to different places.

“With the donations from the Lions and individuals stepping forward, it goes to show what a true community Hebron is, and that people are willing to step forward and help one another,” Garrard said.

Also honored was AHM Youth and Family Services. Executive Director Joel Rosenberg said donations from the Lions Club date back to 1983, the year AHM was formed. Lions Club member, John Soderberg, who was also a resident state trooper in town, “was instrumental in making the first introduction between the Hebron Lions and AHM,” Rosenberg said.

The Lions Club was “literally the first donor to support AHM,” Rosenberg said, and over the years, have had a “profound and lasting impact on the entire agency.” Rosenberg said many of the programs and services AHM offers today are due in part to the financial support from the Lions Club. “It’s been key to any success our agency has had,” he said.

Rosenberg also mentioned the generosity of the “hundreds and hundreds” of local donors in the community who contribute to AHM regularly. In addition to the Lions Club, Rosenberg said the Leos Club, based out of RHAM, also presented AHM with a donation that would directly support the youth service bureau’s teen center. Over the winter months, the Leos held a spaghetti dinner that benefited project graduation as well, he said.

“It was an incredible event,” Rosenberg said. “They are among the finest examples of what community and philanthropy is all about.”

Easter Seals *Camp Hemlocks* was another recipient of the Lions’ generosity. Camp Director Jen Person said the Lions have donated



At the 2010 Hebron Lions Night of Giving, last Friday, April 23, the Lions donated \$4,500 to the Senior Center to go toward the purchase of a handicapped-accessible bus from the Greater Hartford Transit District. Above are Hebron Senior Services Coordinator Sharon Garrard and Bernice Barrasso of Hebron Lions Charities.

to the camp each year that she has been at the camp, which is nearly five years. The money the camp received goes directly to “camperships,” which helps campers who can’t afford the entire cost of the camp. “Especially in times like this where people are financially strapped, we wouldn’t be in business without campers,” Person said.

Person said the donation helps the camp “to reach out to more campers” and to “help those who wouldn’t be able to afford to come.” Each summer, Person said nearly 350 children with disabilities or special needs attend the camp and about 50 attend a separate day camp program for children who are not disabled or have special needs.

Hebron Interfaith Human Services (HIHS) will put one quarter of its donations from the Lions toward the food share and the remaining three-quarters to Ted’s Supermarket, according to HIHS Vice Chair Rick White, who accepted the donation last Friday. White said the limited selection at the food share was the reasoning behind putting much of the donation toward

Ted’s, which he said has been “very, very good” to them by offering a discount.

White said over the years, the Lions have “been very, very gracious” and is grateful for their continuous donations to HIHS.

Other recipients of the night included Fidelco, Wishes on Wheels, Camp Rising Sun, District 23 C Diabetes, chairpersons of AHM project graduation, the Douglas Library and the chief of the Hebron Volunteer Fire Department, among many others. The Lions also set aside money for two separate \$4,000 scholarships.

Krist said over the 41-year club history, the Lions have given to not only local and state organizations, but also donated on the international level. The Lions donated \$4,000 to the Lions Club International Foundation, with \$2,000 earmarked for assistance in Haiti.

Lions Vice President John Johnson Jr. said the Night of Giving is the Lions’ “proudest night.”

“It is our chance to show the fruits of our labor and to distribute the funds that we have worked hard to raise,” he said.

Few Complaints at Budget Hearing in Marlborough

by Katy Nally

Finance Board Chair Cathi Gaudinski presented a budget at Monday's public hearing that included what she called the "lowest tax increase I've seen since my 25 years in town."

However, the Board of Finance (BOF) still met Tuesday and cut an additional \$5,000 from the overall budget, totaling a \$20.88 million spending plan.

The 2010-11 budget package calls for a 0.38 percent tax increase, or a mill increase of 0.1, which is an increase of 0.22 percent over the 2009-10 proposal.

Residents did not disagree with Gaudinski and remained relatively mum throughout the hearing. Only four people offered questions or comments Monday evening, one of whom was Democratic Town Committee Chair Russ West.

He informed the Board of Finance (BOF) he and his committee members were in support of the 2010-11 package.

The hearing lasted under one hour and approximately 50 people attended.

Gaudinski presented a PowerPoint presentation and outlined the BOF's rationale for constructing the \$20.89 million budget. She highlighted three issues that have been of public concern: salary increases for Town Hall personnel, the Public Works supervisor/building and grounds position, and repair funds for the library.

Full-time elected and salaried employees at Town Hall will have a pay increase of 1.5 percent, Gaudinski said. This would affect five positions, including the first selectman, the first selectman's secretary, the town planner, the tax

collector and the town clerk. "We thought it was appropriate to give those workers a slight increase," Gaudinski said.

Contracted Town Hall employees will receive a 3.75 percent salary increase, she said.

All salaried Town Hall employees will receive their salaries over 27 pay periods, instead of the usual 26. Gaudinski noted four workdays, which were furlough days for the 2009-10 year, were added back in.

Another position, the Public Works supervisor/building and grounds, was added back into the town operations budget at full time with a cost of about \$55,000, Gaudinski said. This addition was at the request of the Board of Selectmen (BOS), she added.

The finance chair also touched on funds for repairs at Richmond Memorial Library. It was originally proposed to decrease funds for the library by about 5 percent, or a \$15,000 cut. But, at the request of the BOS, about \$10,500 was added back in, netting a 1.5 percent cut, Gaudinski said.

The library received a Small Towns Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant in September 2009, and Gaudinski said the BOF and BOS are working with the library to "reposition those dollars."

During public comments, residents also brought up concerns about attracting businesses to Marlborough, the probate court and legal fees.

First Selectman Bill Black assured residents that town officials were doing everything they could to "make our community

desirable" for new businesses. He said sewers would "support" businesses and mentioned another incentive the town could offer – a public water system.

Gaudinski fielded the questions about the probate court and legal fees. She said the town has signed a five-year lease to rent its probate court office and its third year is coming up. She said Black asked the probate administration if Marlborough could get out of the lease early, but the request was denied. If the lease remains unchanged, the yearly payment of \$14,400 will continue until 2012-13 budget.

In January 2011 the Marlborough Probate Court will relocate and merge with East Haddam's, East Hampton's and Portland's probate courts, and will be located in East Hampton. After that transition, "we might have an empty space," Gaudinski said.

Lastly, Gaudinski said the legal fees were increased because two contracts for town employees will be due soon. "We need to budget for the negotiations," she said.

Overall, the largest chunk of the \$20.88 million spending plan is for education, at \$6.906 million for the elementary school and \$7.11 million for RHAM. Gaudinski said Marlborough's levy for the RHAM budget is decreasing because the percentage of Marlborough students at the high school is also going down.

The town operations budget came in at \$4.34 million and debt at \$2.51 million.

Gaudinski reviewed the budgeted 2010-11 revenues and mentioned "the only item that's

increased in our revenue is our taxes." She noted the almost-perfect 2009 tax collection rate of 99.2 percent, and said she anticipated the rate to remain in the "99 percent range." "I think the residents were being diligent in paying their taxes," Gaudinski added.

The finance board wrapped up the hearing and commended the local and RHAM boards of education and the BOS for their work on this year's budgets. "I believe everyone worked very hard in bringing a diligent budget to the Board of Finance in the economic climate we're dealing with," Gaudinski said.

Board of Education Chair Betty O'Brien said she thought the limited number of public comments Monday night was a good sign that there would be no paper ballots used at the upcoming town meeting vote. She explained, only when the vote is "contentious" are ballots used, and this package would "absolutely" pass. (Last year, it took three tries before taxpayers finally approved the budget; paper ballots were employed at one point during the process.)

The BOF met Tuesday to send the budget to town meeting and made small adjustments to the town operations budget, and adopted a lesser RHAM budget, due to the RHAM Board of Education trimming its budget earlier this month. A total of \$3,400 was taken from a combination of heating oil and transfer station equipment line items, and about \$1,500 was cut from the RHAM budget.

The town meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 10, at 7 p.m., at Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School, 25 School Dr.

LifeStar Transports Motorcyclist in Marlborough

by Katy Nally

A LifeStar helicopter touched down in Marlborough on Route 2 near exit 15 Monday, April 19, after a motorcyclist crashed into the center median and was ejected from his vehicle.

Robert Allen of Oakdale was transported to Hartford Hospital for "non-incapacitating" injuries at about 7:20 p.m., State Police said.

Allen totaled his Harley-Davidson FLHX after losing control of the vehicle, leaving the roadway and veering onto the left shoulder, State Police said. He then crashed into the cen-

ter median and was ejected from the motorcycle and came to rest in the center of Route 2, State Police said.

Allen was reportedly not wearing a helmet. Marlborough Volunteer Fire Chief Bill Lord said the motorist was lucky he landed in the grassy center of Route 2, as opposed to the pavement. He said Allen was still conscious after he was thrown.

Lord said traffic on Route 2 was rerouted and the area was shut down for about two and a half hours.

Fugitive Charged in Colchester with Risk of Injury

by Katy Nally

Police in Fairfax, VA, arrested a 19-year-old resident of that state after he fled from Connecticut with a juvenile Colchester resident, the Connecticut Department of Public Safety (DPS) announced last week.

Christopher Carroll, of 1386 Laurel Rock Ct., Clifton, VA, was charged with risk of injury to a minor, which is a felony, and custodial interference, a misdemeanor, State Police said. He was returned to Connecticut and processed at Troop K in Colchester on April 21.

On April 4, the Colchester Resident State Trooper's office received a complaint from a Colchester woman who said her juvenile daughter was missing and might be headed for Virginia, an April 21 DPS press release said. State Police Detective Sgt. Sean Cox said Fairfax County Police in Virginia located

Carroll and the victim about 12 hours after Connecticut police became involved in the case.

The victim was returned to her parents, the press release said.

Fairfax Police took Carroll into custody as a fugitive from justice and on April 21 he was handed over to Connecticut troopers.

Carroll is held on \$200,000 bond to appear in Norwich Superior Court. His next court date is Monday, May 17 and his case is listed as "awaiting plea" on the judicial website.

Additional charges against Carroll are anticipated as the detectives have developed probable cause, Cox said. The case is still under investigation.

Cox would not confirm if this type of crime happens often, but he did say more people are traveling to commit crimes with the introduction of the Internet.

Residents Approve School Renovation in East Hampton

by Claire Michalewicz

East Hampton residents voted on Monday evening to go ahead with a \$3.40 million project to renovate Memorial Elementary School.

The plans for the school include replacing the leaky roof and a 30-year-old underground oil tank. Finance Director Jeff Jylkka explained that the town expected the state to reimburse over half of the project cost.

Meeting moderator Red McKinney held up a detailed packet that explained the project and how the town had reached the \$3.40 million figure. He said the packets were available at the town hall for any residents who wanted more information.

"The roof is leaking, and it's leaking badly, and this is the best the town could do," McKinney said.

About 25 residents attended at the meeting, and they also voted to send the proposed \$38.00 million 2010-11 budget to referendum next Tuesday, May 4. Voting will take place from 6 a.m.-8 p.m. at East Hampton High School, 15 North Maple St.

If approved, the budget will increase taxes by .97 of a mill, or 4.04 percent.

The motion to set the referendum date passed unanimously, but two residents, Mary Ann and

Kyle Dostaler, voted against the motion to approve the school repairs.

After the meeting, the Dostalers explained that they wouldn't support the school repairs because East Hampton should have applied for funding for the project from the American Resource and Recovery Act last year.

In 2009, the town submitted its plans for the senior center addition and proposed moving of the town hall, but not for the school roof. Projects submitted for stimulus funding, Mary Ann said, were supposed to be "shovel-ready," which the town hall and senior center were not. The school roof, however, would have been ready for construction immediately.

"You wouldn't even need a shovel," joked Kyle. "It's the roof."

"Now the taxpayers are footing the bill," added Mary Ann.

At the meeting, Board of Finance member Judith Isele also expressed concern about the project, pointing out a sentence in the resolution that allowed the town to alter the scope of the project. Isele said she was apprehensive that the cost of the project could increase, but Jylkka replied that they had set aside \$260,000 in contingency funds.

Council Submits Grant Application for New Parking Lot in East Hampton

by Claire Michalewicz

The Town Council solicited ideas for a Community Block Development Grant at a public hearing before its meeting on Tuesday, but ultimately decided only on a plan for a new parking lot next to the senior center. The council later voted to submit the grant application.

The grants, explained Larry Wagner of L. Wagner and Associates, a town planning firm, are awarded to projects that meet one of three specific objectives – removing an imminent threat to safety, fixing blight conditions, and helping low-to-moderate income people, including senior citizens.

No one at the hearing suggested any other projects to include in the grant application.

The plan would develop an empty lot next to the senior center into a parking lot with about 20 spaces. According to the stipulations of the grant, the lot would have to be exclusively reserved for seniors for 20 years, but Wagner assured the council that the town could accomplish that by putting up a sign saying that the lot is for seniors only.

The council also discussed the possibility of putting a footbridge between the lot and the senior center, but decided to save that for another time, since the grant wouldn't be large enough to cover both projects.

"I'm getting the sense that the seniors don't need a bridge anyway," said Town Council Chairwoman Melissa Engel.

Resident Mary Ann Dostaler asked Wagner if there was any way around the seniors-only rule, saying that reserving it for 20 years seemed extreme.

"If we could not have that rule," she said, "that would be beneficial to the town."

But Wagner said there was no other way the project could meet the grant's guidelines.

Councilman Thom Cordeiro asked Town Manager Jeff O'Keefe what the town's chances of getting the grant were. O'Keefe estimated that their odds were about 50-50, but they were likely to get it next year if not this year.

"If there's any project that we can get in, we'd be foolish not to," O'Keefe said.

Gilead Church in Hebron Welcomes New Mission Minister

by Lindsay Fetzner

Although Gilead Congregational Church welcomed its newest staff member on Palm Sunday, March 28, it was an unofficial introduction. Rev. Debbie Pallatto-Fontaine, the church's new minister of mission, officially celebrated her ordination this past weekend, in her hometown of Woodstock.

Pallatto-Fontaine was ordained at the First Congregational Church of Woodstock, where she has been a highly involved and active member for over 20 years. In September 2004, Pallatto-Fontaine was commissioned there as a clergy member and became a commissioned minister of spiritual formation, a position she served the church in for three years. She also served in weekly worship, developed and led spiritual life programs, and worked with the Christian Education Ministry and Board of Deacons, among many other things, she said.

At the Mercy Center at Madison, Pallatto-Fontaine completed two different two-year certificate programs. One of the programs from 2002-04 was the School of Spirituality program and the other, from 2004-06, was the Spiritual Direction Practicum, from which she received certification as a spiritual director.

Pallatto-Fontaine also served the Storrs Korean Church as a commissioned minister for two years, assisting in worship, liturgy design, and provided outreach to the surrounding community. Pallatto-Fontaine completed her role at the church in May 2009.

In 2009, Pallatto-Fontaine graduated from the Hartford Seminary, where she earned a Master of Divinity in the focus area of spirituality. On the day of her graduation, she interviewed for a position as a teacher/coordinator

at the School of Spirituality at the Mercy Center. Pallatto-Fontaine was offered the position and became the only teacher/coordinator within the school. Pallatto-Fontaine taught courses in prayer, human development, spiritual direction and sacred scripture, among other areas.

When Pallatto-Fontaine came across the position for Minister of Mission at Gilead Congregational Church, she said, "It was a job made in Heaven." She said it was the title that first drew her attention, but after all of the coursework she completed over the years, Pallatto-Fontaine knew it was a role she could serve the church well in. "I wanted to work in a setting committed to mission and outreach," she said.

Pallatto-Fontaine will serve as the first minister of mission at the church, which is an endowed position. After Bob and Lynn Owens lost their daughter Kathy unexpectedly to cerebral palsy in August 2009, they wanted to do something to honor her name but also her courage, memory and personality within the church, Pallatto-Fontaine said. As a result, the part-time position was endowed to the church.

"She was someone who cared deeply for people," said Rev. Denise Esslinger of Gilead Congregational Church. "And it is a wonderful way to honor a special person."

Esslinger said the church is "so, so fortunate to have [Pallatto-Fontaine] joining us. ... She is compassionate, energetic and really has a calling to mission." Esslinger said she is also looking forward to Pallatto-Fontaine being a staff member at the church, as she has been the only clergy member on staff at the church.

As the minister of mission, Pallatto-Fontaine

said she will plan and coordinate mission trips, both domestic and international. She will not only work in the area of mission, but also spirituality and spiritual formation. "I look forward to working with the Board of Missions at Gilead and to be a part of the wonderful work they are already doing at the church in regard to mission and outreach to the community," she said. Pallatto-Fontaine will be present at the church assisting in worship on Sundays and also in the office on Mondays, she said.

Esslinger is equally as excited for the new position and said Pallatto-Fontaine was a very suitable candidate for the role. "She jumps right in and gives 100 percent," Esslinger said. "She doesn't only talk the talk, but walks the walk."

One of Pallatto-Fontaine's short-term goals is to plan and coordinate a mission trip to Haiti. She stressed the importance of making the trips intergenerational, and incorporating all age groups within the congregation. Pallatto-Fontaine said she also wants to adopt a church overseas, offer workshops and retreats on mission education and spirituality as well as to plan various cultural events in the church. Esslinger said mission is "really what we feel we're supposed to be about – reaching out to care and love not only Hebron, but also the bigger community and world," she said.

Pallatto-Fontaine said she has several ideas for national trips that the church can take part in. In addition to her full-time role as a professor of teacher education and family studies at Becker College in Worcester, MA, Pallatto-Fontaine has a lot of experience overseas, specifically in China.

As part of the Summer English Teaching Program sponsored by the Amity Foundation in China, Pallatto-Fontaine taught oral English to teachers in the summer of 2000 in Changzhi, a city that stands in the southeast of the Shanxi Province. And in 2002, she taught in Hailar, Inner Mongolia. She continued her work in China and through a partnership with Becker College, Pallatto-Fontaine was an English as a Second Language teacher at the Beijing-Geely University during the fall of 2003 and spring of 2004. She taught university students and offered professional development to the other English teachers.

In 2005, 2006 and 2008, Pallatto-Fontaine taught English and Christian materials to pastors and seminary instructors for the China Christian Council, as part of the Huangshan Summer English Program. Also in July of 2008, Pallatto-Fontaine traveled to Shanghai and facilitated workshops on "The Pastor as Counselor" for the China Christian Council.

Pallatto-Fontaine said she is "looking forward to getting to know people and to hear what some of what their ideas, priorities and interests are at the community, national and international levels." Although she is just setting up her desk and "making this church feel like home," Pallatto-Fontaine said it is important to hear what is on the mind's of the church members and learn how she "can be of the greatest service to them." In the short time she has been with Gilead Congregational Church, she said, "I have felt a tremendous graciousness and warmth from the church."

Former Hebron Finance Director Drops Two Counts From Suit

by Lindsay Fetzner

Jim Day, the town's former finance director, has dropped two counts from a lawsuit he filed against the town in January. The suit has also been moved from state to federal court.

Day sued the Town of Hebron and then-Interim Town Manager Andy Tierney in January, three months after the Board of Selectmen (BOS) fired him. In his complaint, Day accused the town of terminating him for whistle-blowing and practicing his right to free speech. Tierney was accused of invasion of privacy and defamation.

On March 19, the defendants moved to dismiss two counts of Day's complaint. On March 23, an amended complaint was filed, reflecting the changes. The two counts dropped were intentional and negligent infliction of emotional distress against Tierney.

The distress charges stemmed from, according to the January suit, Tierney falsely accusing Day of sexual harassment. The accusation, the January filing said, "created an impression based on false information to the general public" that Day had "engaged in wrongdoing, engaged in a continuing course of retaliation against plaintiff for exercising his right to free speech and terminated his employment in a public forum." Tierney's conduct was referred to as "extreme and outrageous."

The other four counts remain in the suit. The first two counts against the town are for whistle-blowing and exercising his right to free speech. Day claims he was terminated for "having spoken out on the illegal and unethical practices" of both Tierney and other town employees. Additionally, the reasons for terminating Day were fabricated by the town in order to "cover up its true motivation," the lawsuit said. No explanation as to what was the "true motivation" was included in the suit.

The third and fourth counts against Tierney are for defamation and invasion of privacy. Day claims that false accusations were published in local newspapers. As a result, Day continues

to "suffer damages." Mental anguish, emotional distress, humiliation, embarrassment, loss of employment and income and loss of enjoyment of life are among some of the damages stated on the litigation.

The litigation states that because of the information in the newspapers, the public was led to believe that Day had indeed engaged in sexual harassment while he was finance director. His reputation was damaged by Tierney's actions, the litigation states, and the invasion of Day's privacy "placed him in a false light to the public."

Day, a Lebanon resident, did not return a call for comment for this story.

Tierney said this week that in addition to "diligently stating our case in the courtroom," it would be there that "the truth will come out." He could not comment on any piece of the complaint specifically due to the fact it is pending litigation.

George Kelly, who could not be reached for comment, is representing the town and Tierney. Day is being represented by Katalin Demitrus, who was out of the office this week.

Day started as the Hebron finance director in February 2009, and reported to former Town Manager Jared Clark. When Clark resigned one month later, a management team was appointed to fill the position. It included Tierney, who held the title of Interim Town Manager, Executive Assistant Donna Lanza and Town Planner Michael O'Leary.

As finance director, the litigation stated it was his responsibility to safeguard the assets of the town, serve as the liaison between the town and its outside accountants, and review the town's financial records. Day claimed that during his employment he "performed his duties competently and with diligence."

According to the lawsuit, when Day discovered that the town had spent an excess of \$61,000, without authorization, from the money received from the state for the Village Green

project, he brought it to the attention of several town employees, because he believed it to be illegal. They included O'Leary, Financial Administrator Elaine Griffin, Accounting Clerk Sue Hushin, as well as Mal Leichter and Mike Hazel.

Day claimed that despite his efforts to bring the information to both the public and the BOS, he was "hindered by the team." According to the litigation, the issue of the illegal expenditures was brought up at a board meeting in July 2009. However, as of Oct. 15, 2009, according to the lawsuit, the topic still had not been raised at a town meeting for the approval of the taxpayers.

In addition to the inconsistencies with the Village Green project, Day discovered accounting practices "that were less than transparent, budget overruns, negative funds, and instances in which town monies were distributed prior to receiving bond monies," the litigation stated. These were found during the first six months that Day was employed as finance director.

During a meeting with the team in August 2009, Day was given a letter signed by Tierney informing him that his "probationary period of employment was being extended by 90 days." During this extension period, progress reviews would be conducted. The litigation stated that the reason for the 90-day extension was "that he was not a team player, was argumentative and confrontational."

The management team informed Day that he had been given a 2.5 rating out of a possible 5.0 in addition to negative evaluation comments as part of his evaluation. When he asked for the evaluations, the litigation says that Day was told they had been destroyed to protect those who had completed them, which he claims is a violation of state law.

Day claimed in the suit that the probationary period extension was directly related to the

financial inconsistencies he found while serving as finance director. In addition, the litigation stated that both Tierney and the team used both the probationary period extension and Day's review to force him "to cease and desist from bringing up financial inconsistencies within the town's financial reporting."

Shortly after the review was completed with the team, Day wrote a letter he gave to various board members in town. In the letter, he discussed the problems he was having with the team and the inconsistencies he had discovered since he became finance director, according to the litigation. Day met with several board members as well.

In October 2009, Day was placed on paid administrative leave. The reasoning, according to the litigation, was "due to an investigation currently being conducted." The matter was slated for discussion with the BOS during an executive session at its Oct. 15, 2009, meeting. Day was terminated that same night by the BOS, based on the recommendation of Tierney.

According to the suit, in a letter that Tierney read at that Oct. 15 meeting, he stated that Day "presented a confrontational and argumentative attitude toward his staff, other department heads and the management team." Also, according to the litigation, Tierney said there were "several instances of derogatory comments" where staff "reported their concerns about comments that may be considered sexual harassment."

Day claimed in his complaint that Tierney's investigation "was a sham, replete with personal bias and false allegations, and incomplete."

According to the suit, Day is seeking compensation for the loss of his job, including "loss of back pay and benefits, future economic losses, emotional distress, harm to reputation and loss of enjoyment of life." He also seeks punitive damages from the violations involving the town.

\$47.62 Million Budget Sent to Town Meeting in Colchester

by Katy Nally

The boards of selectmen, finance and education gave the proposed 2010-11 budget resounding approval after a public hearing Tuesday night, and sent the \$47.62 million spending plan to the town meeting.

The proposed budget calls for a mill increase of 1.42 mills.

Town officials highlighted two major concerns that were brought up by residents at budget hearings on Monday and Tuesday: cutting athletics and the use of the undesignated fund balance.

A parent of an eighth-grader at William J. Johnston Middle School (WJMS) spoke Tuesday about the impact of cutting freshmen sports at Bacon Academy. A total of 10 teams are slated to be cut, including freshmen boys' and girls' basketball and soccer, indoor track at Bacon and junior varsity boys' and girls' basketball and soccer at WJMS.

Board of Education (BOE) Chairman Ron Goldstein suggested fundraising as one way to keep an athletic program going. He said lacrosse began as a club and now it's funded through parents.

"This was a real hard one for us," Superintendent of Schools Karen Loiselle said about cutting athletics. When the school board was faced with cutting half a million from the education budget "there was no way we could continue to hold sports harmless," she said.

BOE Vice Chair Don Kennedy agreed with Loiselle, adding "we asked to keep sports as far off the cut list as we could."

The Board of Finance (BOF) supported the education budget, but several members noted

sports was a "very hot, emotional topic," as BOF member John Ringo called it. "I'd be in favor of putting those things back in, but right now we don't have the money," he said.

Officials also discussed the potential impact of "dipping" into the undesignated fund balance. There was some concern from board members, and from resident Jim Kelly, that using funds from the town's savings account to offset a tax increase could present a sticky situation down the line.

First Selectman Gregg Schuster said the undesignated fund balance is normally kept between 7 and 10 percent of the town's debt, but the budget proposes reducing that amount to about 5.75 percent. "This was not a decision we've made very lightly," Schuster said.

BOF Chair Bruce Hayn said he was comfortable with this decision but added, "I've been saying for years we've got to wean ourselves off" of borrowing from the undesignated fund balance. "We need to look at the future more, but we don't always have the money to do it," he said.

Selectman James Ford called the decision to dip into the undesignated fund balance a "leap of faith," but said he still supported the budget as presented.

The \$47.62 million 2010-11 budget will increase the mill rate to 25.07 mills. This means a Colchester homeowner with a house assessed at \$203,000 will pay \$288 more each year in taxes.

"We realize this is a significant tax increase over what you're paying now," Schuster said, adding, "this is just to maintain what we have."

Since the revaluation in 2007, the mill rate has been relatively flat and didn't rise over 0.7 mills. Before that, the last time there was an increase of more than one mill was in 1998-99.

"We've just come to a point in this economy," Schuster said, "where we can't continue the flat mill rate."

The town operations budget came in at \$13.57 million, showing a 1.68 percent increase over the 2009-10 adopted budget. It includes cuts all-around and the elimination of four positions and a reduction to two. One highway department official, one library employee, the public health coordinator and the second resident state trooper are all slated to be cut. A Parks and Recreation Department employee will be reduced to seasonal and a library position will become part-time. "We're doing as much as possible to keep our budget low," Schuster said.

There were few additions to the town operations budget, but about \$200,000 for road improvements made the list. Schuster's rationale for the increase was that "you don't want to get to the place of a road replacement instead of a road repair."

The town budget represents about 28 percent of the total package and education makes up the rest. The BOE budget is \$34.05 million and represents a 3.31 percent increase over 2009-10.

Goldstein said there were several reasons for the jump in the BOE budget over this year. First, the student population is increasing in Colchester, due to more people moving into town; as a result, the board is projecting 60 new students will join the school district for the

2010-11 year.

Secondly, last year Colchester received stimulus money and now the board has to "make up for those funds that are no longer there," Goldstein said.

The first round of cuts made to the education budget included eliminating 9.55 FTE (full-time equivalent) of certified staff and 2 FTE of classified staff. Capitol projects, technology and instructional supplies were also reduced.

After the first set of cuts, the BOE was then asked to cut half a million more dollars, which, Goldstein called a "significant challenge for the Board of Ed." At that point, BOE members "thought it would be important to talk with our union," he added.

For the second straight year, staff at Colchester schools gave concessions, this time totaling \$239,000, in the form of two furlough days. "I'm happy to say, and I'm humbled to say, every one of our employees stepped up to the plate yet again," Goldstein said.

However, if voters turn down the budget through the referendum vote on May 11, concessions for staff will be renegotiated.

To get to the \$500,000, the BOE also cut the 10 athletic teams mentioned earlier, as well as library books and stipends for leadership positions.

After the public hearing, town officials discussed concerns, but all said they supported the presented budget. The BOF voted to send it to the BOS, and the BOS sent the budget to the town meeting, which is scheduled for Tuesday, May 4, at 7 p.m., at Town Hall, 127 Norwich Ave.

New London County Declared Storm Disaster Area

by Katy Nally

President Barack Obama approved Governor M. Jodi Rell's request for disaster declaration, and three counties were recognized as disaster areas as a result of an end-of-March storm that caused severe flooding in several towns.

Municipalities in New London, Middlesex and Fairfield counties are now eligible for disaster relief funding if they go through the assistance program process, state Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security spokesman Scott DeVico said.

Colchester Public Works Director Mark Decker is due to meet today, April 30, with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) officials to start an applicant briefing for its assistance program.

The briefing would allow town officials to apply for direct assistance through FEMA and have questions answered, Rell said in a press release.

The March storm, which began on the 28th and lasted until the 30th, caused widespread flooding throughout Colchester. Several gravel roads were damaged and others collected debris, Decker said. The pump station on Pros-

pect Hill Road was also pumping continuously for four days, and as a result, two sewage pumps got submerged and burned out. However, these were not the main pumps.

Overall, Decker said, "we were very fortunate that we did not have an exorbitant amount of damage."

Decker estimated the damages incurred during the storm totaled about \$10,000. "It's not a huge amount relatively speaking, compared to other towns," Decker added.

According to FEMA's website, www.fema.gov, the federal government will cover 75 percent of the cost to repair or replace damaged public facilities, including roads, bridges and schools. It will also cover 75 percent of the cost of removing debris from public areas and the 75 percent of the cost of some preventative measures.

DeVico said FEMA already came to several municipalities, including Colchester, as part of a preliminary damage assessment. According to Rell's press release, she used this damage data to make her disaster declaration request.

Rell also submitted a request for individual

assistance, which would have helped homeowners, renters and businesses, but it was denied Tuesday.

"This decision is not only disappointing – it's wrong, and I will appeal it," Rell said in another press release. "I have directed our state emergency management officials to immediately gather whatever information may be needed to further support our application for assistance."

DeVico said individuals may still be eligible for relief funds even if they didn't go through the preliminary process right after the storm.

According to Rell's office a total of 1,315 homes in the three declared disaster counties, as well as in New Haven and Windham, entailed damages totaling about \$5.26 million.

Two other towns that the *Riverest* covers, Portland and East Hampton, are part of Middlesex County and could attend an applicant briefing on Tuesday, May 4.

As of Tuesday this week, East Hampton Public Works Director Keith Hayden said he did not plan on applying for FEMA aid, because

there was not significant damage to town facilities. Portland Public Works Director Richard Kelsey said Tuesday a decision had not yet been made.

"This is the beginning of critical and welcome news for Connecticut," Rell said about the municipality aid. "My office will continue to work closely with our delegation and our federal partners as we seek additional federal assistance for the hard-pressed homeowners and employers who have also been deeply affected by these severe storms."

Aside from FEMA funding, loans with a 2 percent interest rate are available through a state program to repair "urgent structural" damages and to replace "critical appliances such as furnaces and water heaters," Rell's press release said.

However the loan carries maximum limits of \$20,000 for structural repairs, \$750 for hot water heaters and \$7,000 for furnaces.

More information is available at www.chif.org.

Council OKs Moving O'Neill Memorial to Sears Park in East Hampton

by Claire Michalewicz

The Town Council Tuesday voted to go ahead with a proposed amphitheater in Sears Park to memorialize the late Governor Bill O'Neill.

The town had originally planned to build a small park in a vacant lot at the corner of Main Street and Route 66. Because the town was priced out of buying that lot, the Bill O'Neill Memorial Park Committee decided last month to build the amphitheater instead. The town is funding it with a \$200,000 grant from the state, though the exact details of the project are still unknown.

The council voted 5-1 in favor of changing the project, with Sue Weintraub voting against it because she said she felt that Route 66 was a better location for a memorial, and worried that the town was passing up a one-time opportunity to buy the lot. (Councilman Bill Devine was not present at the meeting.) Before the vote, the council had been more divided on the issue, until O'Neill's widow, Nikki, spoke in favor of the amphitheater.

"I think my husband would love it," said O'Neill. She added that while she didn't like the fact that people have to pay admission to enter Sears Park, Parks and Recreation Director Ruth Plummer had agreed to waive the fees for some special events.

"I'm not gonna vote against Nikki," council

member John Tuttle joked after O'Neill spoke. Tuttle and fellow Council member Chris Goff both thanked O'Neill for sharing her views, saying that it made it easier for them to make their decision. Goff agreed to support the amphitheater if the town could take another look at the fees for the park, which he said were unfair.

The council also agreed not to give up on the idea of purchasing the empty lot on Route 66 at a later date, if its owner, Thomas DiStefano, agreed to a lower price.

A proposed noise ordinance was the other main talking point of the evening, with the council deciding to set up a subcommittee that would review the issue of noise in the town, and provide suggestions for how to deal with it. The decision came at the urging of Fran Klein, a resident who has repeatedly come to meetings to suggest the town implement a noise ordinance.

The noise ordinance had been debated for months, primarily as a way to deal with the noise of the music at Angelico's Lakehouse during warmer weather.

Town Council Chairwoman Melissa Engel suggested that the town organize a subcommittee, with Weintraub and Goff, along with Building, Planning and Zoning Administrator Jim Carey and a police officer, among others. The subcommittee will report its findings to the town

council in June.

"Take noise as an issue in East Hampton and just brainstorm about it," Engel instructed Weintraub and Goff.

Some residents are hoping that the noise problem will be solved even sooner. Paul Angelico, owner of the bar, is currently working to soundproof the outdoor areas of his bar to deflect the sound away from nearby residents.

Tuttle suggested that the town wait to see if the soundproofing works, adding that noise is subjective, and a law could be difficult to enforce.

"There's all kinds of noise in town," he said. "Some might find the Congregational Church carillon to be noise."

"We do need to put a foundation in place," said Weintraub, explaining that noise ordinances had worked in other communities.

Residents who live near Angelico's seemed happy that the town had decided to address the issue.

"Please do something," Phil Wielgosh had urged the council at the beginning of the meeting. "It's too damn loud."

Angelo Tammara agreed. "We shouldn't be forced to live that way," he said. "Not at all."

In other business, the council also heard the Charter Revision Commission's final report,

which they voted on last week. Commission Chair Terry Concannon presented the changes to the charter, which include staggered four-year terms for Town Council members and clearer policies for filling vacancies on boards and commissions, among other smaller changes. The commission's report is available on the town's website, www.easthamptonct.org. The commission's final changes will go to a public hearing before the next council meeting on May 11.

Also at the meeting, the council voted to submit an application for a Community Development Block Grant, which they had discussed at the public hearing before the meeting. If the town receives the funding, it will use it to construct a new parking lot for the senior center. They also voted to award the contracts for continued construction on Flanders Road and Haddam Neck Road, which should be completed this summer. Engel also issued proclamations to Phil Visintainer and Chuck Stickler, commending them for fifty and thirty years of service with the East Hampton Volunteer Fire Department.

The next town council meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 11, at 6:30 p.m., at Town Hall, 20 East High St., after a 6 p.m. public hearing on the Charter Revision Commission's findings.

Budget Presented at Public Hearing in Andover

by Lindsay Fetzner

At a public hearing Wednesday, the Board of Finance (BOF) presented a \$10.39 million 2010-11 budget. The proposed spending plan is a decrease of .17 percent, or about \$17,400, from the current year.

The \$10.39 million package calls for no increase in the mill rate; it would stay consistent at 27.60, with one mill representing \$277,593.66.

"The stars lined up for us this year," BOF chair Cathleen Desrosiers said. "We were able to get a lot of things accomplished this year with no increase to the taxpayer."

Desrosiers said that although some of the budgets had a small increase, the majority of the budgets came in with a zero percent increase. There was an offset of \$178,208 from a "tax sale" of back tax properties. As a result, the town was able to collect back taxes on approximately 13 different properties, some of which date back 15 years, First Selectman Bob Burbank said. The "tax sale," Desrosiers said, "helped tremendously" because while the "back taxes are accruing, the rest of the tax payers are carrying this burden."

Desrosiers said that even with no increase to the taxpayers, the 44 town employees were able to get raises. The raises, which total \$12,366.73, equal out to approximately \$281.06 for each employee, she said. There were no furlough days included in the budget presented.

Among the most significant increases, percentage wise, to the budget were an increase of 32.22 percent, or \$4,060, for elections; an increase of 41.18 percent, or \$350, for civil preparedness; and 37.45 percent, or \$2,509, for senior transportation. Welfare increased 29.82 percent, or \$850; and capital expenditures jumped 71.43 percent, or \$102,500.

As for the capital expenditures bump, Desrosiers said "the roads are in disrepair and need to be worked on." A list of roads has been compiled, identifying those with significant

damage. As a result, an additional \$40,000 was put into the budget for work on the roads, she said.

The local Board of Education budget, at \$4.07 million, is an increase of 1.91 percent over last year, or \$76,409. Due to a decrease in Andover population at RHAM, the budget reflects a 3.53 percent decrease in the town's levy, or \$146,195 from last year. "[Andover] RHAM enrollment is down, so the levy payment is down," Desrosiers said. "RHAM's overall increase went up 1.35 percent."

Several residents and board members voiced their appreciation for the education budgets. "The schools did a fabulous job this year," Desrosiers said. "I commend the local board and the RHAM board." Andover resident Joan Foran also said she wished "to commend the Board of Education and superintendent [Andrew Maneggia] for an excellent budget."

"I am aware of the detail and work that went into it," Foran added. "And I hope it passes."

Desrosiers said, overall, "we're fixing the roads, we're giving raises, we're educating the kids, we're fixing leaking roofs, and we did it all with zero [percent increase]. ... It's a good budget."

On the revenue side, Desrosiers said it is "a conservative estimate of revenue." Revenue is estimated to be \$2.59 million, which is a decrease of \$50,593, or 1.92 percent, over last year. The most significant decreases were for fund balance interest (44.44 percent, or \$4,000), previous year's taxes (41.18 percent, or \$21,000), the transfer station (40 percent, or \$800) and waste redemption (63.95 percent or \$5,300).

"We are trying to maintain stable finances for the town and keep the mill rate even," Desrosiers said. "Hopefully we will be able to do this next year, but I don't anticipate all the things lining up the way they did this year."

In an interview last week, BOF member

Georgette Conrad said she felt the board "did very well" in preparing the budget. Keeping the mill rate the same was the biggest goal, she said, because "people can't afford to pay more right now." "We are proud of this," she said.

Resident Dianne Grenier applauded the BOF for doing "a wonderful job," but asked if a line item could be added in the next couple of weeks for the website committee that is in the works of being put together. Grenier said although the website committee has not been formed yet, there are funds in the budget set aside for the charter revision committee clerk, which has not been formed yet either. Funds for the charter revision committee clerk fall under the clerk line item, which is a total of \$2,300, a number consistent with last year's budget.

Grenier said she presented the Board of Selectmen (BOS) with a list of 12 interested people at their last meeting on April 7. BOS member Elaine Buchardt was selected as the liaison for the committee, Grenier said, and has met with those people to evaluate their skill levels.

Desrosiers responded to Grenier's concern by saying that no names or talk of the website committee was brought up until the public hearing, which is why there was no consideration in a monetary way for the committee. "We knew the charter [revision committee] was forthcoming and selecting members," she said. "And we received numerous [names of] people who want to be on it."

Burbank explained that Andover had a website in the past, but the committee behind it disbanded when the state legislature required that minutes be posted within 48 hours. If this requirement was not met, Burbank said that committee could be brought before the Freedom of Information Commission. "It was the decision of the BOS to officially disband," he said. The website was taken over by a group of

volunteers and is currently a private, non-funded town website.

Buchardt informed the public that, "we are reforming the website committee." She said there are private individuals that are paying the domain charges out of their own pockets for the website. Buchardt requested that \$500 be allotted for the committee in the budget. The committee will be discussed at the next BOS meeting, she said, which is slated for May 5.

At the close of the meeting, the BOF made a motion to add \$500 to the budget for the website committee, upon the approval of the BOS, which passed unanimously.

A grant writer for the town was also addressed by Foran. "We are a property tax town," she said. "We have very few businesses. We need to be aggressively pursuing anything that is revenue for the town." Foran talked of other smaller towns in the state, similar in size to Andover, which have grant writers and were able to collect a significant "chunk of change" from grants, she said.

However, in response to Foran, Burbank said hiring a grant writer on salary could be very costly and range from anywhere from \$60-80,000. "In my opinion, I am not sure it would be practical," he said. "The town is too small to get a lot of the grants."

Andover currently has a grant writer who is paid through the grant and receives a portion of the money received from the grant, Burbank said. He said people also had to keep in mind that many of the grants the town receives are matching grants as well. Desrosiers suggested that because residents do not know many of the grants the town gets, that at town meetings, the grants should be communicated to the public.

The budget was sent to town meeting, slated for Thursday, May 6, at 7 p.m., at Town Hall, 17 School Rd.

Portland's Chudzik Eyeing State Representative Seat

by Claire Michalewicz

With the Portland budget process nearing its end, selectman Carl Chudzik is shifting his focus to Hartford. The Republican is gearing up his campaign for state representative for the 32nd Assembly District, which covers Portland, Cromwell and part of Middletown.

Chudzik announced his bid for office in February, but has been busy with the Board of Selectmen for the past few months. He said it was more important for him to focus on the job he was elected to do, before preparing for his future plans. Now that the \$29.62 million budget is going to referendum (residents will vote on it May 10), he has more time to focus on his campaign.

Chudzik said his website, www.chudzik2010.com, should be up and running soon. Because he wanted the Portland community involved in his campaign, he enlisted some students, along with teacher Dave Kuzminski, to design the site for him in a class.

This isn't the only way Chudzik has involved young people in his campaign – he said his 10-year-old daughter Addie was his primary inspiration in running for office.

"I wanted to make sure that she had the same opportunities that I had," he said, pointing out that the country's debt was growing and was placing an unfair burden on younger generations. Chudzik said he's running on a platform of small government, more fiscal responsibility, lower taxes, and more productivity.

But he acknowledges that these ideas don't set him apart from any other candidate. What

makes him different, he explained, is his experience in small business, and his passion for the environment.

After studying marine science in college, Chudzik worked exporting eels, teaching, bartending, running a café and supervising the construction of chicken coops, before starting his real estate business in his hometown of Rocky Hill, where he grew up above his father's television store. It's his diverse resume, Chudzik said, that gives him an edge over other candidates.

"Because of my diversity in what I've done," he said. "I think I could fit in many, many different boxes."

In all of these jobs, Chudzik said, he's had to be his own boss, so he knows how to manage a business. He said that one of the most important things he's learned is to budget money, setting it aside when business is good so he won't suffer in leaner times. He said that the government isn't always good at budgeting, so he wants to put what he's learned about business to work for the public.

"So many people are hurting," Chudzik said of the current recession. He said that even a small decrease in taxes could be a huge help for people who are "living on the razor's edge."

Environmental issues are Chudzik's other main target. He wants better transit systems within Connecticut and the country, and less dependence on oil. Chudzik said he'd love to have more nuclear power plants in the state, providing cleaner electricity. Power plants, he said, would not only generate electricity, but

also bring thousands of needed long-term jobs to the state.

"There's so much we could do in Hartford," Chudzik said, the excitement audible in his voice. "There are so many different facets. I want to go to Hartford."

Chudzik's not ready to go to Hartford yet – he'll be up against another Republican candidate, Christie Carpino, in the primary this summer, and if he wins there, he'll have to face off against Jim O'Rourke, the Democrat who's held this seat for 20 years.

O'Rourke said he feels that Chudzik would be a worthy opponent.

"I've always respected him as a selectman," he said of Chudzik. "I know he'll give it his best."

Still, O'Rourke said he's confident with his record so far as a representative. "Every time the town of Portland has needed me, I've been able to get the job done," he said.

But Cindy Varricchio, chairwoman of Portland's Republican Town Committee, said she's confident in Chudzik's strength as a candidate.

"Being a small business owner is key," she said. Varricchio said that small businesses have always been the backbone of the U.S. economy, but the country has lost sight of that in recent years.

"I admire what he's doing," she added. "It's not easy."

Portland First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield also commended Chudzik for his decision to run, calling it "an important part of



Carl Chudzik

our democratic process" and wishing him well.

Chudzik said he's looking forward to his campaign now that he has more time to focus on it. "This is my sphere," he said of working with local residents. Helping out the community, he said, has always been his primary focus.

"Volunteerism is the most important thing we can do," he said. "As busy as you are, you have to give back. It will make you feel good."

East Hampton BOE Members Talk About School Funding, Renovations

by Claire Michalewicz

School funding and high school renovations sparked some lively discussions at the Board of Education (BOE) meeting Monday evening.

The BOE voted to participate in the next round of the federally-funded Race To The Top program, which provides school funding money to the winning states. Delaware and Tennessee were recently awarded money after winning the first round of the program, but Superintendent of Schools Judith Golden explained that 13 more states still had the opportunity to win.

At a conference that she recently attended, Golden said, she learned that part of the reason that Connecticut hadn't won was that not enough local education associations (such as the BOE) had signed on to participate. If Connecticut won the competition, East Hampton would receive about \$10,000 a year for four years.

Some BOE members explained that they didn't want to participate for ideological reasons.

"It didn't sit right with me at all," said Debra Robinson after reading the outline of the program. She said she was worried that the participating school districts would have to focus on getting money, rather than on meaningful improvements within the schools.

Carol Lane agreed, saying that she didn't want East Hampton to participate "because of

the money and not because of belief."

But other BOE members felt it would be foolish to pass up the chance for extra funding.

"More and more, we define and spell education 'CMT,'" said Glenn Gemma, explaining that he didn't like the increased emphasis on standardized test scores. But he was quick to add that the BOE shouldn't pass up an opportunity for more money.

"I'm not sure if we're shooting ourselves in the foot," said Chairman Michael Vasquenza, explaining that the state would inevitably implement reforms that the town would have to find a way to pay for. "We're gonna have to do these things with or without the money."

After much discussion, the BOE voted 4-3 to join in Connecticut's application for the next round of the competition. Robinson, Lane and Sheila Wall voted against it. (Members Joanne Barmasse and Josh Piteo were not present.)

* * *

School board members also talked about proposed renovations for the high school. Gemma, the board's Transportation, Buildings and Grounds liaison, presented three renovation plans for the high school: the one the BOE had approved last March, as well as two alternate plans.

The plan the BOE approved would cost \$16.08 million, but the state is expected to pick

up about half the bill. That leaves a cost of \$8.45 million to the taxpayers of East Hampton. The plan would construct a new gymnasium on the south side of the building, turn the existing gym area into science classrooms and labs. The two small wings of classrooms at the north end of the school would be demolished, leaving the school's total size unchanged.

Both alternate plans Gemma presented involved renovating the entire building to like-new condition and would cost over twice as much. The BOE decided to delay action on the renovations until they held a special meeting with Town Facilities Manager Frank Grzyb and other town officials.

BOE member Don Coolican pointed out that even if the plan got past the Town Council, the voters would still have to approve it. "But on the other hand," Coolican said to Gemma, "make sure you don't do anything to make it fail."

Gemma said he was unsure if the plan could be ready for the November referendum, but he wanted to make sure that another year didn't go by before it was approved.

* * *

Also at the meeting, Gemma announced the board had hired an independent bus inspection company, Transit Resource Center, which would inspect all of Nichols Bus Services' ve-

hicles in June. The BOE had agreed to hire an independent inspector last month, when a *Hartford Courant* article highlighted Nichols' spotty safety record. In the following weeks, both Nichols representatives and school officials from East Hampton and surrounding towns agreed to set up a new system of inspections.

The BOE also voted unanimously to approve the list of 144 graduates from East Hampton High School. Vasquenza noted that this was an unusually large graduating class, and joked that he always wondered what would happen if the BOE didn't approve the list.

East Hampton residents are set to vote on the town's budget, including the \$25.88 million BOE budget next week. Robinson, speaking on behalf of the BOE's public relations committee, said she hoped as many people as possible voted.

"My goal was to make sure nobody didn't know May 4 was budget day," she said. Robinson and Golden said they would be sending a letter home with students today, April 30, to urge their parents to vote in the referendum.

"It doesn't matter how you vote," Robinson said. "Just vote."

The next BOE meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 10 at 7 p.m., in the library at the high school, 15 North Maple St.

Marlborough Police News

4/19: A 14-year-old was charged with disorderly conduct and third-degree assault, State Police said.

4/19: Richard Baver, 41, of 100 Tolland Rd., Bolton was charged with disorderly conduct and third-degree assault, State Police said.

Colchester Police News

4/20: John Rhodes, 44, of 137 South Main St., Marlborough, was charged with DUI and failure to maintain lane, State Police said.

4/22: Keith Yurewitch, 48, of 629 Old Colchester Rd., Salem, was charged with failure to register motor vehicle, improper use of plates and DUI, State Police said.

4/24: Dominick Jonah, 20, of 20 Main St., No. 5, was charged with failure to appear, State Police said.

4/24: David Benjamin, 41, of 254 Geer Rd., Lebanon, was charged with criminal violation of a protective order and threatening, State Police said.

4/26: Sean Harrison, 31, of 18 O'Connell Rd., East Haddam, was charged with misuse of registration, having no insurance, driving an unregistered vehicle, operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license and having no front plate, State Police said.

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Portland Police News

4/17: Sylvia Flejszar, 17, of 4 Juniper Hill Ct., Cromwell, was charged with speeding, Portland Police said.

4/20: Timothy Demerchant, 27, of 1503 Portland Cobalt Rd., was charged with sixth-degree larceny, credit card theft, illegal use of credit card and identity theft, police said.

4/20: Claudette Worth, 49, of 46 Main St., Newington, was charged with violation of protective order, police said.

4/20: Nicole Maddox, 36, of 47 Nelton Ct., Hartford, was charged with DUI and risk of injury to a minor, police said.

4/24: A 16-year-old male was arrested for possession of less than four ounces of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia and second-degree threatening, police said.

East Hampton Police News

4/14: Christopher D. Sanzo, 22, of 13 Bates Dr., Middle Haddam, was arrested for operating under the influence of alcohol, failure to drive right and evading responsibility, East Hampton Police said.

4/15: Robert A. Paris, 48, of 19 South Main St., Marlborough, was arrested for obstructed view, misuse of plates, operating without insurance, operating without a license and operating an unregistered motor vehicle, police said.

4/16: Trevor S. Smith, 36, of 164 Hog Hill Rd., was arrested for operating under the influence of alcohol, police said.

4/19: Coty G. Rugar, 22, of 10 Eighth St., Newington, was arrested pursuant to a warrant for third-degree burglary, fourth-degree larceny and conspiracy to commit burglary, police said.

Obituaries

Colchester

Gerard Coutu

Gerard (Gerry) Coutu, 53, of Irvine, CA, formerly of Colchester, passed away Sunday, April 18, in California. He was Born July 29, 1956, in Springfield, MA, son of the late Roland and Genevieve Rayman.

Gerry graduated from Bacon Academy High School Class of 1974 and earned bachelors' degrees from the University of Connecticut in mathematics and English in 1982. He also earned a masters' in electrical engineering in 1986 and a PhD in engineering in 1992.

An engineering consultant, Gerry was a lecturer at UConn at Avery Point, the Hartford Graduate Center and in the CA University system. He was a talented writer and patron of the arts.

He is survived by his beloved family: his wife Janis and son Paul, both of Irvine, CA; a brother, Paul Coutu of Norwich; a sister, Janet Coutu Parlato of Waterbury; several aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and cousins.

A Mass of Christian burial will be held Saturday, May 1, at 11 a.m. at St. Andrew Church, Norwich Avenue, Colchester. Burial to follow in New St. Andrew's Cemetery. There are no calling hours.

Belmont/Sabrowski Funeral Home of Colchester is in care of arrangements.

Hebron

Dorothy Wiley

Dorothy (Dottie) Wiley, née Osback, recently of Hebron, formerly of Santa Cruz, CA, passed away Wednesday, April 21, after a long struggle with lung cancer and emphysema.



She is survived by her two remaining children Barbara Link and Daniel Hatch of Colchester. She was predeceased by her husband, Albert Wiley, and three daughters: Audrey Tarkington, Judy Bodolay and Kathleen Hatch.

Dorothy is also survived by 12 grandchildren, 24 (soon to be 26) great-grand children and seven great-great grandchildren, plus many nieces and nephews.

She was born Dec. 31, 1919, in Passaic, NJ, and married Daniel Hatch Sr. in 1936. In 1952, she was left to raise her four remaining children having only a high school education and little work experience. She managed to find work, keep her family together and raise them successfully. In 1965, she was remarried to Albert Wiley. After his death, she moved to Santa Cruz, CA, and lived there for 23 years. She moved to Hebron in 2004 to be close to her family on the east coast.

At her request, Dorothy was cremated and her ashes scattered in the Pacific Ocean as was her husband Albert. There will be a celebration of her life on May 8 at her son's home in Colchester. Anyone wishing to attend may contact her son, Dan, at 860-537-2399.

East Hampton

Christine M. Coleman

Christine M. Coleman, 57, of East Hampton, died Tuesday, April 13, at Middlesex Hospital. Born Jan. 6, 1953, in Northampton, MA, she was the daughter of Ernest Vanasse and Marion LaFleur Vanasse.

Christine was a data processing designer for the insurance industry before her retirement. She was a communicant of St. Patrick Church in East Hampton.

Besides her father, she is survived by her sister, Patricia Ann Dunkel of Massachusetts and her close friend, Diana Resler of East Hampton.

A memorial service was held Tuesday, April 20, in the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton. Burial private. Friends called at the funeral home on Tuesday morning before the service.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Connecticut Humane Society.

To leave online condolences, visit www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

Elizabeth Wackelin

Elizabeth Florence (Zering) Wackelin, 88, of Minneola, FL, formerly of New Britain and Lake Hayward, passed away Friday, April 16, in Florida. She was the widow of Kenneth P. Wackelin, who died in 1991.



A New Britain native, she maintained her home at Lake Hayward until 2009 and her home in Florida since 1984. Florence was a member of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in New Britain; was former vice president of the Mother's Club of Smith School in New Britain and served as recording secretary of the New Britain Salvation Army Home League from 1964 to 1999.

Surviving are two sons, Kenneth Wackelin and his wife Andree of Stafford; and Donald Wackelin of Clermont, FL; three daughters, Florence Casey also of Clermont; Cynthia Judd and her husband Thomas of Amston; and Susan Oliver of Coventry; two sisters, Emily Rochette of Minneola, FL and Evelyn Brenner of Berlin; 11 grandchildren; 23 great-grandchildren; 10 great great grandchildren; several nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by a grandson, Robert Johnson; five brothers and three sisters.

Funeral services were Monday, April 26, at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, 99 Franklin Sq., New Britain. Burial in Fairview Cemetery. Calling hours were Sunday, April 25, at Carlson Funeral Home, 45 Franklin Sq., New Britain.

Memorial donations may be made to St. Matthew's Lutheran Church or to the New Britain Salvation Army, 78 Franklin Square, New Britain, CT 06051.

www.carlsonfuneralhome.com

East Hampton

Harry Basso Sr.

Harry "Bill" W. Basso Sr., 85, of East Hampton, husband of the late Phyllis (Hale) Basso, passed away Thursday, April 22, at Chestelm Health and Rehabilitation Center. Born April 3, 1925, in Portland, he was a son of the late Ernesto and Carmelina Basso.

Harry was a U.S. Army veteran of World War II, a member of the International Union of Operating Engineers and a past member of the Portland Fire Company No. 2. He worked for D. Arrigoni and Sons in Middletown for 23 years as a heavy equipment operator and then for the town of East Hampton's Department of Public Works for 10 years.

Harry is survived by two sons, Harry W. Jr. of Haddam Neck and John E. Basso and his wife Elizabeth of East Hampton; two daughters, Mary Ann Nilson and her husband Russell of Haddam Neck and Jane M. Selavka and her husband Michael of Cape Coral, FL; one brother, Donald Basso of Portland; seven grandchildren, Erica, Christina, Nathaniel, Lara, Evan, Rachel and Celia; two great-grandchildren, Kai and Charlie and numerous nieces and nephews.

Harry was predeceased by one daughter Victoria E. Basso; three brothers Joseph, Henry and Felix Basso and two sisters, Rose Basso Rosso and Clelia Basso Zampini.

The funeral was held Monday, April 26, at 10 a.m., at St. Bridget Church in Moodus. Burial with military honors will follow in Rock Landing Cemetery in Haddam Neck. Calling hours were held Sunday, April 25, at Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton.

The family would like to thank the friendly staff at Chestelm for the wonderful care they showed to Harry.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the St. Bridget Ladies Guild, P.O. Box 422, Moodus, CT 06469 or to the Alzheimer's Association, 279 New Britain Rd., Kensington, CT 06037.

Family and friends are invited to send a condolence message by visiting www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

Eunice Turner

Eunice (Lester) Turner, formerly of Colchester, was born in Eastman, GA, on Oct. 13, 1922. She is one of seven daughters and a son, born to the late Percy and Mozella (Jester) Lester. She received Christ at an early age, as her father was a Deacon and founding member of the New Piney Grove Baptist Church in Eastman. Eunice was called to her Lord on Sunday night, April 25, at Apple Rehabilitation Services in Colchester.



She received her elementary and secondary education in Eastman, GA, Dodge County. In 1940, she married the late Payton Crocker Turner and to this union they were blessed with six girls. She was a devoted and loving wife and mother. While residing in Georgia, she lived on a farm where they raised animals and crops. After relocating to Colchester in 1947, she became a seamstress for Levine & Levine Coat Factory, where she was employed for over 20 years. She later was employed at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft in East Hartford, where she worked for over 25 years and then retired. Her passion for sewing continued, sewing from her home for residents of Colchester for many years.

Eunice was a faithful and devoted member of the Colchester Federated Church where she served as church treasurer of the Baptist Society of Colchester. Until she became ill and unable to help, she volunteered at the church regularly. She often sewed and donated items for the church's Holly Fair and assisted with The Crier newsletter. She also participated in the Serendipity Bible Study cell group in her home which was made up of predominately women.

At the age of 80, Eunice was still an avid walker who could be seen at least three times a week taking her stroll through town early mornings. She will be remembered for her strong discipline, sewing talent, for her love of family, and for her pleasant and quiet disposition.

She leaves to mourn her passing, yet celebrate her life, her six daughters and three son-in-laws, Doris Alvin of Pensacola, FL, Earnesteen Allen, of Colchester, Willi Webb of Raleigh, NC, Gwendolyn Powell (Granthan), of Bloomfield, Jeannette Turner Holt (William) of Atlanta, GA, Yolanda Cooper (Roosevelt), of Windsor; two sisters, Fredericka Hamilton of Daytona Beach, FL and Cleo Coney, of Miami, FL; her brother and sister-in-law, Samuel and Hattie Turner; brother-in-law, Elbert Bray; sister-in-law, Lula Bell Morgan; 13 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren, one great-great grandchild and a host of extended family and friends.

In addition to her husband Payton, who predeceased her in 1982 after 42 years of marriage, she will join her parents, four sisters, and a brother, Ruth Bray, Mary Lee Mack, Emma Jean Fields, Lillian Wilcox and Felmon Lester.

Friends may call 10-11 a.m. today, April 30, at Colchester Federated Church. The funeral will follow at 11 a.m. with the Rev. Dr. Linda U. Barnes officiating. Interment will be in the Linwood Cemetery, Colchester.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to the Colchester Federated Church, 60 Main St., Colchester, CT 06415 or the Alzheimer's Association, 279 New Britain Ave., Suite 5, Kensington, CT 06037.

For online condolences, visit www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Portland

Anita Gore Cooley

Anita Gore Cooley, 84, of Cattle Crossing, Portland, died Sunday, April 25, at Middlesex Hospital after a brief illness. She was the wife of the late James Love Cooley. Born in Newark, NJ, on Nov. 7, 1925, a daughter of the late Edward and Thelma Moffette Gore, she was a Portland resident for nearly 60 years.

She had been employed as a computer programmer for Travelers Insurance Co. and had previously worked at United Technologies Research Center. She was a member of Trinity Episcopal Church. She was active on the Three Mile Island AMC Camp Committee and the Portland Fife and Drum Corps. She volunteered for Meals on Wheels and Wadsworth Glen Nursing Home. She enjoyed doing needlepoint, crossword puzzles, swimming, walking with her friends and being with her family.

Mrs. Cooley is survived by her daughters, Ann Cooper and her husband Jack of Gardner, KS, Lynn Cooley and her husband Ted Killiam of Guilford, Pam Blandino and her husband John of Paxton, MA, and Amanda Cooley of Natick, MA; her grandchildren, Jimmy Cooley, J.J. Cooley, Carmen Blandino, Katrina Blandino, Eleanor Killiam, Charlotte Killiam, Jennifer Stoner, and Robert Cooper; her sister, Thelma Ann Johnson of Waretown, NJ; and her brother, Edward Gore of Southbury.

She was predeceased by her son, James Russell Cooley.

Funeral services will be held Sunday, May 2, at 1 p.m. at Trinity Episcopal Church, 345 Main St., Portland. The Rev. Steven Ling, Priest-in-Charge, will officiate. There are no calling hours. 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 Meals on Wheels at www.mowaa.org.

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

Colchester

Sandra Ann Laws

Sandra Ann (LaChance) Laws, 68, of Palm Coast, FL and formerly of Colchester, passed away Tuesday, April 27, at the Harrington Court GHC Center in Colchester.



Born July 28, 1941, in Hartford, she was the daughter of the late Joseph and Irene (Carter) LaChance. Ms. Laws was a caregiver at area group homes for many years before her retirement.

She will be missed and remembered by her family, to whom she was ever devoted: four children and their spouses, Brian and Robin Laws of Colchester, Michael and Charlene Laws of Amston, Joseph and Jennifer Laws of Palm Coast, FL and Stacey and Kevin Bigoness of Windham; 12 grandchildren, Melissa, Brandon, Daren and wife Kelley, Charlie, Maegan, Brylene, Kyle, Sarah, Nathan, Savannah, Bethany and Kevin; a great-grandson, Jason; her brother and sister-in-law, Bruce and Aileen LaChance of East Haddam; a special niece, Ally; her best friend, Bonnie; and numerous extended family members and friends.

In addition to her parents, she was predeceased by a grandson, Jeremy.

Friends may call 5-7 p.m. today, April 30, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The memorial liturgy will be celebrated at 1 p.m. Saturday, May 1, directly at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave., Colchester. Interment will be in the family plot in St. Ann Cemetery, Avon, at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to the American Cancer Society, 225 Dunham St., Norwich, CT 06360.

For online condolences, visit www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

I've thought about it, but at least as of yet, I just can't bring myself to eat it.

I'm talking about the new KFC "Double Down" sandwich.

I'm sure you all have seen a commercial for it or read a story about it or simply learned of it through word of mouth. It's a new sandwich KFC introduced a couple of weeks ago that takes bacon, cheese and "the Colonel's secret sauce" and puts it not between two pieces of bread, but rather, between two boneless fried chicken filets.

The sandwich has generated lots of talk – apparently because someone had the audacity to actually create such a thing. A sandwich that replaces the bread with fried chicken filets seems to represent American fast-food decadence at its worst. Of course, as some have pointed out, it's hardly the most gut-busting item you'll find at a fast food joint. In fact, at a mere 540 calories and 32 grams of fat, it stacks up pretty evenly with the Big Mac, which weighs in at 540 calories and 29 grams of fat. But still, the Double Down seems to be the appalling food item of the moment.

It's not the health implications of the Double Down that have scared me off it. It just looks kinda gross.

Eventually, I might come around and give it a shot. And don't worry, dear reader, when that day comes, I'll be sure to share my thoughts with you.

Since I began writing this column in the middle of 2008, I've devoted a somewhat-alarming amount of ink to my various food indulgences. When looking recently at some of my very first observations and ruminations, I came across this, from an Aug. 28, 2008, column:

I discovered a new taste sensation last weekend. I was down in New Jersey, visiting a friend, and we went to a place called the Brownstone Diner & Pancake Factory for breakfast. As the name of the restaurant suggested, it was big on pancakes. And its specialty proved just too good to pass up: scrambled eggs, sausage and cheese, wrapped

up in a pancake.

It was like a giant breakfast burrito, only with a pancake in place of the tortilla. And what a pancake it was: flavorful and very moist, the kind of pancake that you pour syrup on and it soaks it right up, like a beautiful, edible sponge.

I remember that pancake burrito. It was delicious.

The following week, I was writing about the upcoming Hebron Harvest Fair, when I took a sidetrack to discuss the wonder that is the fried Oreo (a treat which I apparently felt the need to tell you guys I first had at the Haunted Graveyard at Lake Compounce; the meaningless pieces of trivia you can glean about my life by reading this column may one day prove handy on *Jeopardy*, although I kinda doubt it):

When you order up a batch (you usually get about six to eight fried Oreos in an order), they make them fresh for you, right on the spot. The process behind them is really rather simple. They roll around a cookie in some dough, then quickly fry it up. You not only get tasty fried dough, but inside there's a warm cookie.

Most people aren't used to having Oreo cookies warm. I know I hadn't experienced them that way until my first order of fried Oreos. They're great fresh out of the package, but they're delicious warm. And even though they're fried, they never get so hot that the cream filling inside burns your mouth. I imagine that wouldn't be the case if you microwaved them. Anyway, if you're at the fair this weekend, you should try some of the fried Oreos. You will not be disappointed.

I wrote about other things in those early columns too – ranging from gas prices to the presidential election to the final game at Shea Stadium – but food definitely seemed to be a prevailing theme. Apparently, I enjoy writing about food almost as much as I enjoy eating it. I'm guessing many of you have already figured that out.

* * *

See you next week.