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Grease is the Word... Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School in Marlborough held its Spring Choral and Recorder Concert Tuesday, April 6. Pictured above are "greasers" from the fifth- and sixth-grade chorus number "Greased Lightning." From left are, Austin Drexler, Michael La Bella, Jack Caplan and James La Bella. Missing from the picture are "greasers" Sean Neary, Zachary D'Agata, Andrew Leslie and Nathan Bramwell. The concert featured the third- and fourth-grade chorus, the fifth- and sixth-grade chorus, the recorder band with accompaniment from the sixth-grade jazz band, the Harmonia singing group and the combined chorus. The chorus selections were led by Donna Arseneault and Sue Burgess and the recorder selections were led by Bruce Foote.

Portland Selectmen Adopt Budget

by Claire Michalewicz

The Portland Board of Selectmen voted to adopt the town's \$29.62 million budget at their meeting on Wednesday evening.

All five Democrats on the BOS supported the budget. Carl Chudzik voted against it. His fellow Republican, John Anderson, was not present at the meeting.

At their budget deliberations last week, the selectmen trimmed nearly \$200,000 from First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield's original proposed budget. The cuts take \$125,000 from the Board of Education budget, and \$69,000 from town operations.

Town officials were expected to meet with the unions after press time on Thursday to discuss a possible zero percent salary increase to manage the cuts. Teachers are due to receive a 2.15 percent salary increase in the 2010-11 fiscal year.

Bransfield explained Wednesday was the deadline to pass a budget, so even if the unions agreed to a smaller pay increase, it was too late to amend the budget. However, Bransfield said, the selectmen would not set the mill rate until after the budget referendum, so they could adjust that if the unions agreed to concessions. Any revenue that the town doesn't spend will go into the fund balance.

"We have many numbers we don't know when we pass the budget," she said, explaining that revenues from the state were also unknown at this point.

The next steps in the budget process are the town meeting Monday, May 3, and the referendum Monday, May 10.

Sue McDougall, president of the teachers' union, the Education Association of Portland, said renegotiating the contract would be difficult for the teachers. McDougall said that BOE members had already talked with the union about negotiating, but had never asked for concessions. To ask for concessions now, McDougall explained, would be to completely renegotiate all aspects of the teachers' contract.

"We're already down to skin and bones," McDougall said, but added that the union was happy to start negotiations for next year's contract in July.

At the meeting, Finance Director Tom Robinson presented the monthly financial report. Robinson explained that there was a shortfall in expected revenues, so he was instituting a freeze in discretionary spending on town operations, starting on Thursday. The freeze would not affect the BOE budget.

Robinson added that the town may see an increase in revenues in May, when lien notices go out.

Also at the meeting, the selectmen reviewed possible changes to the proposed High Street water main project. Bransfield announced that the town had some unused money in an old fund set aside for well development. She said that

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Forum to Focus on Teenage Drug Use

by Lindsay Fetzner

Participants in an upcoming forum on opiate use hope parents will come away with a new knowledge of warning signs to look for in their children.

The discussion, entitled "What Every Parent Should Know: Connecticut Drug Trends and Drug Identification Program," will take place Tuesday, April 13, at 7 p.m., in the auditorium at RHAM High School, 85 Wall St., Hebron. Hosted by AHM Youth & Family Services' Drug and Violence Prevention Task Force, the focus of the evening will be on illegal drug use among children and teenagers in the community.

The event will feature two guest speakers. Wayne Kowal, Coordinator of Public Education for the Statewide Narcotics Task Force and Mary Marcuccio, founder of Parents 4 A Change, will address parents on how drugs are used, what they look like and the warning signs if a child is involved with drug use. It is AHM's final parent forum of the 2009-10 school year.

"We will bring adults together with these two professionals to look for signs that [parents] should really key into if they have any concerns or fears that their kids or grandkids are involved in drugs," said Joel Rosenberg, executive director of AHM.

Kowal, who has been coordinator for four

years, said two of the major issues in the state are pharmaceutical abuse and the direct connection between the pharmaceuticals and heroin addiction. The addiction to pharmaceuticals is very expensive, he said, and on the street illicit pharmaceuticals can cost approximately one dollar per milligram. One pill alone could cost anywhere from four and 75 dollars a piece, he said.

"It can lead to a daily drug habit that could be as high as two to five hundred dollars per day," Kowal said. "And it is difficult to sustain that type of drug addiction."

As a result of the high cost, he said, many people end up becoming addicted to heroin.

Three years ago, Marcuccio, a Southington resident, started Parents 4 A Change in response to her son's addiction to opiates. She described him as a smart, very capable kid who became addicted to recreational drugs, then prescription pills and finally heroin. "We were just totally blindsided," she said. She said her family today continues to deal with the effects of the addiction, as it is a lifetime illness, but would not get into specific details about her son.

As a result, Marcuccio searched for a support group that was specific to teen opiate use in the state. Not finding "that group," she was motivated to start the nonprofit organization,

which she described as "my life and my soul." Marcuccio is involved with the organization full-time, and said her day is consumed with "the crisis management piece" from parents who contact her.

Parents 4 A Change, Marcuccio said, has three focuses. The first is to raise awareness about teen opiate abuse. "It is not being discussed enough," she said. The second is to create deterrence within both the community and the home. The last focus is to provide support for parents. "The goal was to create a group that has parents who have the experience to be a support for other parents," Marcuccio said.

During the forum, Marcuccio will provide an overview of the organization, in addition to talking about parenting. She said it is important to know not only what to watch out for, but what to do and not to do if parents discover that their children are involved with drugs. "How do we stop enabling a drug-addicted kid," she said. "It is very hard, but it has to happen." Marcuccio will also discuss opiates in general and their dynamic, focusing on both heroin and prescription pills alike.

The presentation to parents will inform them of indicators for different types of drugs present in Connecticut, Kowal said. He said the top four are, in no particular order, marijuana, cocaine/

crack cocaine, heroin and pharmaceuticals. Kowal said he will focus on the specifics of each drug and what parents can look for in their children as well as the packing and paraphernalia of the drugs.

According to Kowal, there are several health changes that can be an indicator to parents, many which affect the health of children. A child could lose weight or have poor concentration and short-term memory, in addition to a lack of energy and dilated or shrunken pupils, Kowal said. Additional indicators are a change in friends or groups of friends, change in sleeping patterns, withdrawal from friends and/or family and a drop in grades or attendance at school, he said.

"If you have a kid who you believe is not drug involved, please don't think it couldn't happen to you," Marcuccio said. She said a false sense of security could occur if "you go to church, you pay your taxes, you do good in school." However, the drug addiction can "hit any family any time." "It doesn't matter what kind of parent you are," she said. "It is about the drug itself."

Like Kowal, Marcuccio said that as prescription pill addictions become too expensive, many turn to heroin. Marcuccio said heroin runs about

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\$5 per bag and “has no stereotype.”

“My experience has shown that in the world we live in today, heroin is the easiest illicit drug to get your hands on,” she said.

Marcuccio said heroin is also the cheapest drug, which “is frightening,” and called it “an equal opportunity killer.”

“Our kids have access to this drug in a way that I think society is still unprepared for,” Marcuccio said. “It is on the family and community levels, and that’s what I want to change.”

Kowal, who also presents to healthcare professions, provides in-service training for teachers and other specific organizations, said that parents who attend forums such as this one are usually very open to the information provided and ask a lot of questions on the topics presented. “It will definitely open their eyes to some of the indicators they might not have been aware of,” Kowal said. “It is good information tools the parents can use.”

A few years ago, Rosenberg said AHM did a parent forum on a blend of topics, including drug and alcohol use, but with heavy emphasis on the alcohol abuse. The forum, which he said was very well-received, looked into how alcohol use can affect a student’s educational future, college acceptance and future employment, among a host of other aspects of a student’s life. “Unlike the last forum on Internet safety, this topic is a little more difficult to present because it will talk about what all of

us, as parents, don’t want to think could happen in our lives,” Rosenberg said.

In an effort to expose the other side of the spectrum, this month’s forum will focus on drug abuse, trends and identification. “This forum will take a totally different angle,” Rosenberg said. “It is kind of like a toolkit of what parents need to be aware of.”

Rosenberg said the local state troopers, whom he described as extremely helpful and engaged, have shed light on just how frightening the issue has become in the community. “The opiates today, from what I’ve learned, have stronger and more highly-addictive powers because drugs are so much more pure today,” he said. Rosenberg said more and more teenagers and children are gaining access to prescription medications, and quickly become addicted.

“We hope that people will be encouraged to come out and spend a few hours listening to two very different perspectives that have very, very important information to share,” Rosenberg said. Resource guides will also be available at the meeting.

Marcuccio urged parents to attend the forum – it is a simple investment in your child’s safety, she said. “The biggest harm you can do as a parent is say, ‘not my kid,’” she said. “That is the battle we are fighting.”

More information on Parents 4 A Change is available at www.parents4achange.net or by calling Marcuccio at 860-621-1682.

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she was still awaiting a response from one of the town’s lawyers, but that the money in the fund would be enough to cover the remainder of the project.

The original project called for replacing the water main all the way up to the tanks at the top of the hill, but because of funding difficulties, the selectmen voted in February to scale back the project to just replace the pipes up to Spring Street.

Also at their meeting, the selectmen voted to institute a \$100 fee for construction without a permit. Bransfield said the building official, Lincoln White, had proposed the fee to avoid safety issues from any construction that happens without his supervision. The selectmen held a brief public hearing on the proposed fee before their meeting, but no one raised any objections to it.

One resident came to the meeting to speak out about the town budget in the informal dis-

cussion during the meeting.

“I just feel like the taxes are high,” said Matthew Rice. “I’m just putting it out there.” Rice also suggested turning off some of the town’s streetlights to save money, and added that the town should anticipate that revenues from the state could stop.

“You’re bringing us such wonderful thoughts,” joked Bransfield, before thanking Rice for speaking.

Rice’s streetlight proposal is not new – Bransfield explained that the town had proposed removing some lights a few years ago, but hundreds of residents had protested. Chudzik added that the selectmen had recently discussed the streetlight issue, and had agreed to look into it in the coming years.

The next BOS meeting will be held Wednesday, April 21, at 7 p.m., at Portland Library, 20 Freestone Ave.

Portland Friend of the Animals Makes TV Appearance

By Claire Michalewicz

Out of her house in Portland, Kearen Enright has managed to turn two very different interests into one interesting career.

Enright is a wildlife rehabilitator, caring for injured and abandoned animals in her backyard. She’s also an artist, and most of her work is based on the animals she cares for. She uses the profits from her art sales to pay for her animal rescue efforts. And now she’s the subject of a brief documentary piece that will air on CPTV next Thursday.

Enright started working as a wildlife rehabilitator 10 years ago, when she was a stay-at-home mother. She said she wanted a job that would let her work from home with her children, so she completed her training and began taking animals in.

“I’ve always liked animals,” she said, “and there was a need for this.”

Despite her years of experience, Enright said her job can still be difficult at times.

“There’s always more to learn,” she said. “I just trust my gut.” Enright said she usually rehabilitates mammals, but occasionally takes in birds for a change. She gets the animals when people call the Department of Environmental Protection, who refer them to her.

Most of the animals she takes in, Enright said, are babies that need to be fed around the clock, and feeding them take up much of her time.

“It does become all-consuming,” she explained. “You need an indulgent spouse and children.” Enright, who grew up in Haddam, studied theater at UConn, before working for several years on films and Broadway plays. She and her husband then moved back to Connecticut, where they raised their four children.

The children, ages 11 to 17, frequently help take care of the animals. Her oldest son, said Enright, wants to study pre-med because he was inspired by a vet who came to treat some of the animals.

Enright houses the animals in the outbuild-

ings in her yard. When the animals are ready to return to the wild, she releases most of them on her 6.5-acre property. (She takes rabbits elsewhere so they’ll be safer from predators.) Enright uses a “soft release,” gradually releasing the animals into the wild and supplementing their food as they adapt to their new surroundings.

Enright started selling her art around the same time she started rehabilitating animals, using the money she raised to help support the animals.

Enright said her main mission is to educate people about what to do when they find an injured animal. People, she said, can be one of the biggest challenges in her work. Some are too afraid to pick up an animal and take care of it, while others interfere too much and break up the animal’s family. Enright sometimes gives talks in schools about what to do if they find an injured or orphan animal, and she also talks about animals when she sells her art at craft fairs.

“I don’t think I’m changing the world,” she said. “But I think I’ve made people more aware and more compassionate.”

Enright said she hopes people will be inspired by her enthusiasm for rescuing animals. “Enthusiasm is always contagious,” she said.

Her art projects started as a temporary fundraiser, but Enright continued selling her creations to help fund her rescue work. She draws, paints, and makes jewelry, and sells her creations at craft fairs and through her website, kearen.net. She’s also working on writing and illustrating children’s books, including one about Portland’s brownstone quarries and others about some of the animals that she has rescued over the years, and also

“There’s always certain ones that touch your heart,” she said. Enright described a story she was writing, about a baby morning dove that had been run over by a lawnmower, but recovered in her care and was released into the wild.



Kearen Enright feeds one of the baby squirrels that she’s raising until they can be released into the wild.

Paul Smith produced the feature on Enright for CPTV. Smith knew Enright through mutual friends, and said Enright’s hard work in two such different fields fascinated him.

“She’s such a kind-hearted person and a caring person,” Smith said. He said he was happy to be able to feature Enright on television to help her get her message out.

Smith said Enright is one of the quietest people he knows, so it was a challenge for both

of them to put her story on TV. He said many people in Portland, even Enright’s neighbors, were unaware of the things that she does.

“We kinda have a diamond in the rough here in Portland,” he said. “It’s cool that I was able to find her and let people know that she exists.”

The feature about Enright will air on CPTV’s *All Things Connecticut* on Thursday, April 15, at 8 p.m.

\$33.87 Million Budget Sent to Hebron Public Hearing

by Lindsay Fetzner

The Board of Finance (BOF) voted unanimously last Thursday, April 1, to bring a \$33.87 million 2010-11 budget to public hearing on April 13. The proposed spending package calls for a 1.01 mill increase, or 3.5 percent tax increase.

Also last Thursday, the BOF voted 4-1 to cut the proposed Board of Education budget by \$177,649, to bring it to \$11.89 million, an increase of \$175,739, or 1.5 percent, over current year spending.

Prior to the board's decision, the BOE presented to the BOF an updated budget recommendation of \$12.07 million, or a 3.02 percent increase. The BOE provided subsequent further reductions to reach a 1.59 percent, .82 percent and zero percent increase to the 2010-11 education budget. Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz said there was "an enormous amount of thoughts that went into the hypotheticals." The process was "painful," she said, and tried to develop a framework that had the "least impact on the children."

Up until last week's meeting, the proposed BOE budget had been \$12.08 million, a 3.14 percent increase. However, earlier in the day last Thursday, Cruz trimmed the budget by \$14,777, due to savings from a retirement, and this brought the budget to \$12.07 million. The proposed increase to the budget meant an increase of \$353,388 over the prior year's budget of \$11.72 million.

Fixed cost increases totaled \$405,035 with \$279,799 in salaries, \$119,210 in benefits, \$468 in transportation and an additional \$5,558 in computer leases. As of last Thursday, concessions from the non-union employees totaled \$10,574 and from the administrators, \$15,379.

During public comment at the beginning of the meeting, all-day kindergarten (AKD) again raised concerns with the public. Dave Burgess urged the board to consider the BOE's request without any reduction. "Some might see [ADK] as a costly initiative, but it will eventually save the town money," he said. Burgess, who noted he is a former BOE member, said ADK is a national trend that Hebron "cannot be left behind" in.

Resident Christina Bravi agreed with Burgess and said she too supported the budget submitted by the BOE. "It should be up to the voters to decide," she said. Bravi said she felt the budget the BOE presented "is realistic and under their contractual requirements." "It is not fair to let our children suffer at a small increase," she said.

Cruz provided three hypotheticals to reach the three cut points. The scenarios were not endorsed by the BOE, but were provided as a result of a request from the BOF. Cruz said the reductions were prioritized and "things we felt had an even application across the board."

To reach a 1.59 percent increase, or \$185,849 higher than the current year, three teaching positions would be cut: one Challenge & Enrichment (C&E) teacher (\$61,500), a .7 music position (\$24,539) at Hebron Elementary School and a fourth grade classroom teacher (\$61,500). Cruz said there are currently two openings in the school district that could absorb the loss of the fourth grade and C&E teachers, but that the music teacher would be the direct loss of a person and the reallocation of those responsibilities.

According to Cruz, C&E is a state and federal mandate, and with the reduction of a teaching position, clusters might be eliminated in addition to the discontinuation of open door push-in services. With the cut, there would only be one teacher for the entire district, Cruz said.

Resident Dominic Marino voiced concern on cuts to C&E as well as the music program during public comment. With C&E cuts, Marino said the town will face "inequalities that could almost be viewed as discriminatory." Marino also said the ADK program also benefits about 90 people, as opposed to music, which benefits close to 250 people. "I think if you are looking to cut costs, some of these programs that are indulgent are something that we should look at," he said.

Marino also suggested that the curriculum position and superintendent role be made part-time. He noted that in Marlborough, the superintendent is presently part-time, serving pre-k through grade 6. Marino brought up the China Partnership Program also. Although Marino said it is a "beautiful idea," he recommended that the teacher/ambassador who comes to the US stay with a host family in an effort to save money. "We need to cut costs any way that we can," he said.

A \$20,000 technology lease would also be eliminated to reach the 1.59 percent increase. Cruz estimated there are currently about 400 computers in the district, but are "really not enough," she said. Without the technology lease as a line item, the school district is "not increasing, but maintaining" the computer collection. The technology plan calls for the replacement of old equipment and the machines that have gone off warranty. The replenishment, Cruz

said, called for between 70 and 80 computers.

An additional C&E position (\$61,500) and a custodian (\$27,928) were under the second hypothetical umbrella, the one that would bring the budget to a .82 percent increase. The C&E reduction would mean no direct services to students, according to Cruz. The custodian reduction, however, would bring cleanliness standards down to a level three or causal inattention level. These reductions totaled \$89,428 and if removed from the proposed budget, would mean an increase of \$96,421 and a .82 percent increase.

The third scenario, to reach a zero percent increase, drew heavily from the Spanish language department. A Spanish teacher (\$61,898), Spanish resources (\$8,500) and Spanish supplies (\$1,000) would be cut. Cruz said these cuts could have ramifications to the students when going on to RHAM High School, as they are a direct loss of exposure "critical for 21st century skills." An additional paraprofessional cut (\$19,695) and reduction in supplies (\$5,328) would bring to the bottom line to zero. Support in the library and reading services would be lost with the paraprofessional cut, in addition to bus and recess coverage, according to Cruz.

Cruz also discussed class size in light of three teaching positions on the chopping block in the first scenario provided to reach the 1.59 percent increase. She said BOE members worked "diligently" to maintain board-recommended class sizes and took a hard look at the fourth grade. With the reduction of the teacher, class size could increase if there were families that moved in over the summer months with elementary school-aged children, according to Cruz. "No matter what decisions you made, there are outcomes," Cruz said.

BOF member Lynn Guerriero informed the public that three BOF members have children in the school system but, she said, "[We] can't keep cutting all the other facets of our budget and have this Board of Education not contribute to that." The BOE and the superintendent, Guerriero said, will "make the appropriate cuts" and make decisions that will have the least impact on the children.

"I truly respect the board of education," BOF member Mal Leichter said, who are focused on the education of the children. However, he said, "I do not support a zero budget, but I do support some reduction." In light of the tough financial times, Leichter said he does "not think anything in their budget is not able to be sub-

stantiated."

The BOF addressed the first hypothetical Cruz presented. This scenario, with a 1.59 percent increase, is very close to the town and RHAM budgets, Leichter said. "We've had a lot of good input from everyone in town," he said, which dealt with bringing the budget in at a zero percent increase as well as concerns with the ADK program. He said, although the budget could not be left at its full amount the BOE voted on, Leichter wanted to the public to be able to have "their bit to say," which would come at the public hearing next week and in the final budget referendum on May 4.

Hazel said the 1.59 percent cut point was "not an unreasonable spot to end up at this point," as it matches the other two sectors (RHAM, town). Hazel stressed that everyone share a level of pain equally with the proposed cuts as well as the importance of not singling out any one board in the process.

Interim Finance Director Elaine Griffin confirmed later in the meeting that RHAM would come in with a 1.5 percent increase, at the maximum, for the 2010-11 fiscal year.

The BOF also discussed the revenue portion of the budget, which BOF chair Mike Hazel said, "is a big problem." "We have spending issues, but we have a revenue problem," Hazel said. As of April 1, \$200,000 was the total for the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) Assessments, according to Griffin. Last year, the assessments totaled \$480,000. "WPCA was the biggest kick in the gut," Hazel said.

Back taxes and lien fees were proposed at \$250,000, an increase of \$50,000 from last year. Griffin said that she is "very confident that \$250,000 can be met," which amounts to a 25 percent increase over the current year. Griffin said there are about 30 families in town on payment plans at the current time, who are being charged interest. Overall, she said more people have been paying their tax bills late.

If everything was funded at zero, Hazel said the increase in taxes would still be roughly .7 mills because of the population increase at RHAM and the loss in revenue. "We have no choice around population allocation," he said. "This is a problem we can do nothing about." BOF member Thomas Sousa agreed. "There will be a tax increase," he said. "We're just debating how much."

The public hearing on the budget will be Tuesday, April 13, at 7:30 p.m. in the auditorium at RHAM Middle School, 20 RHAM Rd.

Curriculum Director Leaving Hebron School System

by Lindsay Fetzner

The director of curriculum and technology, Michelle Puhlick, has accepted a position in Hartford and will leave the school system at the end of this month.

Puhlick will serve as the Executive Director in the Office of Academics for Hartford Public Schools. Puhlick filed a letter of resignation March 26, and the Board of Education (BOE) was expected to accept her resignation at a meeting last night, after press time. Her last day in Hebron will be April 23.

Over the course of this year, Puhlick has been involved in the Executive Leadership Program at the University of Connecticut (UConn), a superintendent preparation and certification program. As part of the program at UConn, she completed an internship under the Hartford Superintendent of Schools Steven Adamowski. Puhlick's experience in Hartford made her come to the realization that "they are a really hardworking school district and are trying to make a difference for the kids," she said this week.

Puhlick said her interest in becoming a superintendent is "something that has built over time."

"As you move up the career ladder in education, the more you do, the more enticed you are about affecting education in a positive way," she said. Although she said she has been preparing to make a move that would later poise her for a superintendent's role, the opportunity to work in a larger school district, specifically kindergarten to grade 12 in Hartford, was "really enticing" to Puhlick.

In 2000, Puhlick accepted an administrative position in Hebron. Prior to her acceptance, she

completed an internship in the district through the UConn Administrator Preparation Program (UCAPP) in 1998. Upon completion of the program, Puhlick was eligible for state certification as an intermediate administrator. This year marked her 12th year in the district, counting her internship work. Puhlick said she will miss her relationships with the people the most, a group she called "top-notch."

As the director, Puhlick has a wide variety of responsibilities, which she said was "one of the things I've loved about this job." In addition to writing the curriculum, Puhlick also prepared the instructional and technology budget for the district, and was involved in various initiatives either mandated by the state or selected by the district to participate in. She is also heavily involved in all of the technology programs for the students in addition to their rollover assessments. "It is really varied and exciting work," she said.

At last night's BOE meeting, Cruz made her recommendation for the position. Earlier this week, Cruz said she hoped to fill the position soon, as Puhlick will only be with the district until April 23. Cruz attributed the 90-percentile performance of the school system to Puhlick and the work she has done while at her post in Hebron.

In Puhlick's resignation letter, she wrote to the BOE, "From day one, I have felt supported, respected, and appreciated. I am proud of all that has been accomplished over the years and believe that the staff and students in Hebron are truly special." She said it was an honor to be part of the district and thanked the BOE for the opportunities they have provided to her.

School Board Resolves Dispute with Former Hebron Principal

by Lindsay Fetzner

During an executive session of the Board of Education (BOE) last Tuesday, March 30, a labor disagreement with former Hebron Elementary School Principal Joanne Collins was resolved.

The unanimous vote authorized BOE Chairwoman Jane Dube and Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz to sign the agreement regarding Joanne and Richard Collins. The agreement states that the Hebron Administrators' Association withdraw, with prejudice, all complaints in the state board of labor relations case. Collins went up against the BOE through the state labor relations board, which she was able to do through the administrators association.

The exact reasoning behind Collins' dispute with the BOE is unclear, as Cruz and Dube would not comment on the matter, and Collins did not return calls for this story.

As part of the agreement, \$12,000 would be paid to Joanne and Richard Collins, jointly. They will receive half of the amount (\$6,000) this month and the remaining \$6,000 around July 1. The agreement states that Collins did not suffer a loss of wages while employed and that the \$12,000 does not establish the payment of wages. Rather, the payments are "for the sole

purpose of resolving any and all matters arising out of Collins' employment by the board."

Collins, who now serves as principal at East Haddam Elementary School, voluntarily resigned from her post in Hebron on July 31, 2009. As part of the agreement, Collins cannot seek any further employment by the BOE.

A copy of Cruz' letter of reference from February 2008 will be put in Collins' personnel file, maintained by the BOE, according to the agreement.

Both Collins and Cruz are not authorized to participate in any disparaging comments regarding the board, or either Joanne or Richard Collins, respectively, the agreement states.

Kathryn Veronesi, principal of Gilead Hill Elementary School and president of the Hebron Administrators' Association, signed the agreement last Thursday, making the agreement effective on April 1. Veronesi did not return calls on the matter. The Collins signed the agreement on March 23 and Cruz, along with Dube, on March 30.

Attorney Richard Mills of Shipman & Goodwin LLP in Hartford, who was present at the BOE executive session last week, did not comment on the settlement.

Bus Safety, Open Choice Discussed at Portland BOE Meeting

by Claire Michalewicz

The Board of Education (BOE) tackled bus safety and the Open Choice program at a quick but eventful meeting at the high school on Tuesday evening.

Board members also met in executive session after the meeting to grapple with how they will manage the \$125,000 cut the Board of Selectmen proposed. (The discussion was in executive session as it involved teachers' contracts.)

Bus safety continued to be an important issue for the BOE, as board members voted to adopt a new set of procedures for overseeing safety at Nichols Bus Company. Nichols, which provides school bus service to Portland and other neighboring towns, has come under scrutiny in the past few weeks after they were revealed to have the third-worst safety record in the state.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Sally Doyen developed the guidelines with East Hampton's Superintendent, Dr. Judith Golden. The rules require Nichols to better organize their files, so the history of violations for each vehicle is easier to find. In addition, drivers are required to immediately notify Nichols and the BOE of any safety violations.

"It's a consistent message from both cus-

tomers," said board member MaryAnne Rode of the new regulations, explaining that it would make the inspection process easier for Nichols and for the towns of Portland and East Hampton.

The BOE also voted to approve several school projects that the high school seniors are working on for their leadership class. Their projects include murals that showcase the various clubs and sports at the school, and a senior lounge. The lounge will be available as a place for seniors who meet certain GPA requirements to relax when they don't have class.

Rode commented that she was initially skeptical about the senior lounge project, but in their presentation before the meeting, the students had explained how class officers would monitor the lounge to keep it neat and orderly.

"This is the first year I've seen so much interaction between students and the Board of Ed," Rode commented.

Board members also voted 4-3 to open four new places at Valley View School through the Open Choice program, which allows students from Hartford to attend schools in surrounding suburbs. BOE members Jenny Lohmeyer and Benjamin Srb were unable to attend the meeting, and both voted by proxy. Lohmeyer had

requested that the vote be postponed until the next meeting so that the BOE could have a better discussion, but Chairman Christopher Phelps explained that the vote had already been postponed.

Christopher Bongo, along with Lohmeyer and Srb, voted against opening the new spaces. Bongo explained that Portland had too many other issues to deal with, and that he was worried about the expense of having more students.

"There's too many irons on the fire, and the economy's not good," he said. "I'd want to get my ducks in a row before I invite guests over."

Other BOE members felt that Open Choice program would not cost the district any extra money.

"I don't think the numbers are an issue," said Rosemary Waitowitz.

Andrea Alfano agreed. "It's all been so far presented very positively," she said.

The BOE also voted to continue paying tuition for Portland students who are enrolled part-time at the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts, though they will not pay for any students who enroll part time in the future.

In a special presentation before the meeting, teacher Krista Karch proposed a summer technology camp program at the high school, which

the BOE voted unanimously to approve. Held in July, the first one-week session will focus on filmmaking, and the second on broadcasting. The camps cost \$100 per session, and are open to students entering sixth through ninth grades. Interested parents and students can contact Krista Karch at the high school for more information.

After the meeting, the BOE convened for an executive session concerning potential contract negotiations. In their budget deliberations the previous week, the Board of Selectmen had reached a consensus to cut \$125,000 from the BOE's budget. (The Board of Selectmen voted on a final budget Wednesday, April 7, the day after the BOE meeting.) At the budget deliberations, Selectman Carl Chudzik had requested double that amount in cuts from the BOE budget, asking Doyen if the cuts could come from salary freezes.

Doyen said at the BOE meeting that the budget cuts would take a while to resolve and the BOE may schedule additional meetings to work out how to deal with them.

The next regular BOE meeting will be held Tuesday, May 4, at 7 p.m., in the library at the high school, 95 High St.

East Hampton BOE Members Review Accreditation Prep Work

by Claire Michalewicz

School officials discussed the high school's ongoing preparation for the high school's accreditation process at Monday's meeting of the Board of Education (BOE).

East Hampton High School Principal Dr. Linda Berry explained a letter she had recently received from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), the organization responsible for accrediting the school every 10 years.

The high school was accredited in 2007, but, Berry explained, she had submitted a progress report to NEASC last fall. NEASC responded with a list of commendations for things the school was doing well, as well as suggestions for future improvements. Berry presented the lists to the BOE, along with updates on how the high school was working to improve in these areas.

NEASC had suggested that the high school renovate their building, including updating their science classrooms and bringing in more technology, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Judith Golden said.

The high school is expected to submit another progress report to NEASC in March 2012.

BOE members showed concern about some of NEASC's recommendations, especially those about renovating the building to improve technology and better meet space needs.

"Do they take economic factors into account?" asked BOE member Donald Coolican. Coolican asked Berry what would happen if the high school didn't submit a progress report, and Berry explained that NEASC would require additional progress reports to be sure that EHHS was cooperating with its recommendations.

"I don't know who elected these people, but I don't like them," Coolican said of NEASC. "The high school administration doesn't need help."

BOE Chairman Michael Vasquez insisted that even without NEASC's help, the high school would still need renovations at some point.

"With or without NEASC, we all agree that this needs to be done," Vasquez said. BOE member Glenn Gemma asked why the BOE hadn't been working on plans to renovate the high school, mentioning that a year had gone by since they last discussed it.

"What can we do as a board to expedite this?"

Gemma asked. Golden recommended that Gemma, with the Transportation, Buildings and Grounds committee, draft a letter about a proposal to renovate the school.

Coolican remained pessimistic. "How would we get it past a town referendum?" Coolican asked.

Other areas for improvement, Berry explained, included a new model for faculty to hold each other accountable, and getting rid of levels in some classes, so that students of a variety of abilities could work together.

The BOE also reviewed their current year's budget, comparing the school system's projected expenses with the money they had spent so far. At present, the BOE has gone \$452,633 over budget, but is still ahead due to excess cost reimbursement from the state.

In her superintendent's report, Golden explained that she had attended a conference about the Reach For The Top grant program, which states competed for. At the conference, Golden said, she learned that having more local education associations participate in the application process would increase Connecticut's chances

of receiving funding in the future, and said she would bring more information to the next BOE meeting on April 26.

Golden also recognized several students for their work with the high school's Model UN group. Melissa Jordon, Dylan Bonoff, Andrea Nease, Jeff Fidler and Erik Guy Harper all received awards at recent Model UN conferences, and Golden presented them with certificates in recognition of their achievements.

The BOE voted to adopt its meeting schedule for the upcoming school year. The board decided to look into moving the meetings from their usual location at the high school to rotating them between different schools. BOE member Joanne Barmasse protested, saying that it would be more difficult for both BOE members and parents to remember where to go. Other BOE members felt that moving the meetings could help make parents of children at other schools feel less intimidated about going to the meetings.

The next BOE meeting will be held on Monday, April 26, at 7 p.m. in library at the high school, 15 North Maple St.

East Hampton BOF Sends \$38 Million Budget to Town Council

by Claire Michalewicz

East Hampton's Board of Finance voted 4-2 Wednesday to send the town manager's proposed budget to Town Council next week.

In its current form, the \$38 million budget calls for a mill rate increase of .97 mills, which translates to an overall tax increase of 4.04 percent. During deliberations in the weeks leading up to the vote, the BOF agreed to take \$13,000 from town operations and use it to fund a part-time position at the senior center, but the dollar amount of Town Manager Jeffery O'Keefe's budget remains unchanged.

On Monday, town residents had gathered at the high school to voice their comments and concerns at the public hearing.

At the meeting, Superintendent of Schools Judith Golden announced that the Board of Education had reached an agreement with the teachers' union to change their expected salary increase to a two-year payment (see related story on page 29). The move will save the Board of Education \$166,000, pending approval from the Town Council.

Many residents and parents came to the hearing to request that the cuts to the BOE budget be reversed.

Linda Chambers said that her four children had gone through the East Hampton school system, and the quality of education had decreased over the years. Chambers said she was worried that the lack of elective courses at the high school would affect her youngest daughter's chances of getting into the colleges of her choice.

"You have to remember that courses get cut when teachers do," Chambers said.

Another parent, Amy Meisinger, had similar feelings.

"Our kids cannot afford to lose teachers," said Meisinger. She explained that her children, in fifth and sixth grade, had still not had the opportunity to use computers, which put them at a disadvantage compared to students from other towns.

But other residents felt that the BOE hadn't investigated enough options to save money.

"If it really was for the kids, teachers wouldn't be taking a raise," said Kenneth Lee. "Everyone should be giving back." Lee urged the BOF not to be "intimidated" by people who were pushing for the BOE cuts to be reversed.

"I don't feel the Board of Ed did what they

could have to make concessions," said Karen Lee. Lee explained that the BOE would have to determine what they would do to manage the cuts, and "if they determine that teachers have to go, teachers have to go."

The BOF discussed putting money back into the school budget, but decided not to because of the \$166,000 savings from extending the teachers' contract.

BOF member Judith Isele explained that the smaller cut to the BOE budget shouldn't affect any positions. "It's not \$200,000, which was a big number," she said.

BOF Chairman Matt Walton agreed, explaining that giving money back to the school system could send the wrong message after all the talks about cutting back from every town department.

Not all BOF members seemed fully satisfied with the proposed budget.

"I'm gonna make a very unpopular comment," said Anderson. "I'm having trouble digesting this budget. I do feel we can do better."

"The Board of Finance has missed an opportunity to take a leadership position," she continued.

Isele observed that the hearing was the first time she had heard residents say that the budget was too high. All the previous comments she'd heard, Isele explained, had been from people concerned about the cuts to the BOE budget.

Fellow BOF member Tom O'Brien explained that if the budget fails at a referendum, the BOF will assume that voters will think the budget is too high, and will look for more ways to cut it.

Some residents said that the burden on taxpayers was too high, and the town should focus on receiving more grant money and bringing more industry into East Hampton. O'Keefe responded that the town was working to apply for more grants, and that he had set money aside to hire specialists to apply for specific grants. In addition, he was looking into hiring someone to find businesses that would be interested in moving into town, but it was important to develop the municipal water system first.

The Town Council will vote on it at their regular meeting on Tuesday, April 13, at 6:30 p.m. at Town Hall, 20 East High St.

Resignation and Interviews at Colchester BOS Meeting

by Katy Nally

During his liaison report at last Thursday's meeting of the Board of Selectmen (BOS), selectman Stan Soby announced that Police Commissioner Tony Camilleri resigned, effective March 24.

Also at the meeting, the BOS interviewed three potential candidates for the town's Health District Task Force and held an executive session to discuss the fledgling Cragin Library employees union.

According to Police Commission minutes, at the end of the last commission meeting Tuesday, March 23, Camilleri announced his resignation, which was effective the next day.

He said in his resignation letter, which was on file at Town Hall, he was leaving the commission for "personal" reasons.

In December, the BOS held an executive session "to discuss police commission actions" and invited Camilleri to join, but First Selectman Gregg Schuster said this week the resignation and the meeting were not related.

Police Commission Chairman Glenn Morron said Tuesday he and the other commission members would miss Camilleri. "It's a tough

blow for the Police Commission because he was very knowledgeable and resourceful," Morron said.

He was appointed to the Police Commission by the BOS on May 21, 2009 and the end of his term was set for November 2011.

Camilleri was unavailable this week for comment.

The selectmen haven't yet officially accepted Camilleri's resignation, but will do so at their April 15 meeting. The BOS will then advertise the vacancy and do interviews. No timetable has been set for the process, and Schuster said at press time Thursday he does not yet have a candidate in mind for the position.

After Soby briefed the board on the police commission, the BOS held a brief executive session to discuss what the meeting agenda labeled a "negotiation strategy" with the newly-formed library union.

Schuster said Cragin Library employees filed a petition in December to form a union and the town is currently in negotiations. Schuster said the town decided not to fight the employees' decision because "if they're going to become a

union, they're going to become a union."

The union encompasses eight people who work more than 15 hours, Cragin Library Director Kate Byroade and Schuster said.

Byroade, who is not part of this union but is a member of the administrators', said the group formed just before she began working at Cragin.

Schuster said he anticipates negotiations will go smoothly and does not "foresee any problems."

* * *

The BOS also took the first steps toward creating Colchester's Health District Task Force.

Schuster said this week the Health District Task Force is charged with looking into whether Colchester should join a regional health district or remain independent.

Thursday was the first of the interviews, and Schuster said he expects seven people in total, five regulars and two alternates, will join the group. Schuster said the BOS could start making appointments to the task force as early as the next selectmen meeting on Thursday, April 15.

The group will have to the end of 2010 to come up with its decision.

If the task force finds the town should link up with another health district, Schuster said there would be "considerable" savings, but there would also be a decrease in revenue, because of the loss of certain fees such as health inspections. He said it was important to "compare apples to apples."

Possible area health districts Colchester could join include, Chatham, which covers Marlborough, East Hampton, East Haddam, Portland, Hebron and Haddam; Uncas, which covers Norwich, Bozrah, Sprague and Montville; and Ledge Light, which covers East Lyme, Groton, Ledyard, New London and Waterford.

Schuster said there is also the option of Colchester forming its own health district that small neighboring towns can join.

Residents interested in joining the task force can download a board/commission application from the town's website, www.colchesterct.gov, or call Schuster at 860-537-7220.

Andover Selectmen Talk About Route 6 Economic Development

by Lindsay Fetzner

A draft on economic development for Route 6 sparked discussion among Board of Selectmen (BOS) members at their meeting Wednesday evening.

A lengthy draft of the challenges and opportunities on the roughly 13-mile stretch of Route 6 was compiled to showcase the findings for Route 6 development. The draft states that the location and out-commuting from the four towns that encompass Route 6 have caused "a major retail/service leakage problem." This problem, the draft said, is because residents travel to other towns and communities for their shopping needs or to obtain services. In addition to Andover, Bolton, Coventry and Columbia are on board with gathering ideas for the future of Route 6.

Selectwoman Elaine Buchardt said the draft is a collection of thoughts and information that was gathered by the Route 6 Regional Economic Development Council. "It is a vision plan

and an action plan," she said.

Zoning maps were distributed along with the draft, highlighting historical areas as well as those areas that can sustain development. "No one wants huge factories or big boxes," she said. "But there is other development that is possible." Buchardt said the council is looking into the possibility of sharing expenses and revenue that would come out of developments on the corridor. Selectman Jay Lindy voiced concern over sharing revenues and costs with the other area towns and whether the funds would be allocated appropriately.

The draft detailed specific desired uses for Route 6 by community residents. Among the top developments were a bank, doctor's offices, a pharmacy, restaurant/tavern, farmers' market, nursing home/care facility and, lastly, a grocery store. Bolton and Columbia were closely in line with Andover in their desired developments.

Among the undesired specific uses were adult entertainment and car dealerships in Andover, the draft states.

Buchardt said phase two in the project, in addition to gaining feedback, would include trying to determine the loss to the towns if no new development were added to the corridor and it were to remain in its current state. "How many business dollars are being lost?" she asked. "Where are the dollars going?" She noted that surrounding towns like Manchester and Willimantic are possibilities for where the funds are being directed.

First Selectman Bob Burbank stressed the importance of zoning regulations and working with the Planning and Zoning Commission. "Zoning is a very important key," he said. "They [PZC] should be putting on their planning hats."

An appointment to the Conservation Commission was announced at the meeting. Com-

mission Chairman Mike Palazzi said he was very happy to have Scott Warren join the commission. BOS member Susan England agreed and said they are "very excited to have a new generation involved."

Buchardt also discussed the Andover Economic Development Commission's business fair, which will take place Saturday, May 15. The fair is an opportunity for local businesses to present and showcase to the public what they have to offer. Buchardt said the commission is inviting all of Andover's businesses. Buchardt noted that the commission is working on improving signage and advertising for the event in an effort to draw a large majority of the public to the fair. The fair, which is free to the public, will take place in the community room of the Town Hall between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.

The next BOS meeting will be Wednesday, May 5, at 7 p.m. at Town Hall.

After Flooding, FEMA Comes to Colchester

by Katy Nally

Members of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) came to Colchester this week to inspect flooding damage caused by the recent rainstorm.

Fire Marshal Reed Gustafson said this was part of the pre-assessment process for receiving aid from the federal government. On Wednesday, Gustafson said he was set to inspect 24 residences for possible damage.

Last Thursday, April 1, First Selectman Gregg Schuster said members of Colchester Hayward Volunteer Fire Department (CHVFD) pumped out 68 residences. And, he added Tuesday, "I'm sure it went up" since then.

According to CHVFD calls report, on Tuesday, March 30 alone, fire department members responded to 20 flooding calls. There was one flooding call three days later on April 2 on Mill Hill Road.

On March 30, fire department members cer-

tainly were busy, as there was at least one call per hour from 6 a.m.-7 p.m., except for 9 a.m. The incidents were scattered, and only more than one flooding call came from Parum Road.

According to www.weather.com Colchester received a total of 4.95 inches of rain from Sunday, March 28 to Tuesday the 30. Monday was the rainiest day, when 2.36 inches fell.

During the Thursday, April 1, meeting of the Board of Selectmen, Schuster said there had been no declaration of disaster made yet, but the pre-assessment process to receive aid is now underway.

Schuster stressed there are other aid programs available for residents through the state that provide things like low-interest loans to repair damages. A link for these programs is available on the town homepage www.colchesterct.gov.

East Hampton School Board, Teachers' Union Reach Contract Agreement

by Claire Michalewicz

The Board of Education (BOE) and the town's teachers' union have reached an agreement to extend the teachers' existing contract for an extra year.

Their agreement spreads the teachers' expected salary increase over two years, saving the BOE \$166,000 in the upcoming fiscal year, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Judith Golden explained. This savings will cover most of the \$200,000 cut that Town Manager Jeffery O'Keefe proposed for the BOE budget, which the town's Board of Finance voted to adopt on Wednesday evening.

With the agreement, the teachers would receive a 1.4 percent increase during the 2010-11 year and 1.4 percent during 2011-12.

The BOE had been in talks with the union, the East Hampton Education Association, for the past two months, trying to find a way to mitigate expected budget constraints in the next fiscal year.

The Town Council will vote on both the town budget and the teachers' union agreement at their regular meeting on Tuesday, April 13.

The agreement could also help the BOE in planning their 2011-12 budget, as the board members could plan the budget around a smaller-than-expected salary increase. In exchange for the savings, the teachers have guaranteed step movement for the next three years, and their insurance contributions will remain the same for two years and increase in the final

year. The renegotiated contract also removes teachers from their obligation to work a self-directed day during the summer period, Golden explained.

The East Hampton Education Association reached its agreement last Monday, and the BOE ratified it on Tuesday. The decision came after two months of negotiations.

Golden announced the decision to the Board of Education on Monday, and also discussed it at the Board of Finance's public hearing on the budget later Monday evening.

BOF Chairman Matt Walton explained that he was happy that the school board had found a way to save money, but that he did not want to reverse the rest of O'Keefe's proposed cut.

"If we restore the money, I don't know if it would give the right message," Walton said, referring to the sacrifices the town had asked every department to make.

School officials say they're grateful that the teachers agreed to negotiate.

"This agreement affords us a better opportunity to maintain the programs and services for students necessary to offer a high quality education," Golden said in a press release. "We're very appreciative," she added later.

Don Coolican, chairman of the BOE's personnel committee, agreed.

"It's a significant savings," he said. "You have to give, you have to take. They gave us a lot."

Fire Strikes American Legion Hall in Hebron

by Lindsay Fetzner

Fire crews responded to a late morning fire at the American Legion Hall on Main Street Wednesday.

Fire Marshal Randy Blais said the call came in to the fire department at 10:05 a.m. Two people who had just come into the hall smelled smoke and called the fire department. The fire was contained within the hour after crews made sure there were no other dangers while on the property.

No injuries were reported.

The fire started in a crawl space below the first floor, Blais said. The fire was caused by electric heat tape wrapped around the water

pipe to keep it from freezing. He said wrapping tape around the pipe used to be common several years ago, but this is the first he has seen in a few years, Blais said.

Nothing was damaged in the crawl space. The fire burned between the two floor joists. The floor in one bathroom had to be pulled up. The fire was deemed accidental and Blais said there was very light smoke damage to the first floor.

Mutual aid from Columbia, Colchester, Willimantic and Andover were called in. Blais said it is better to have the crews on their way and not need them than have to wait in the event other assistance was necessary.

New Foundation Encourages Enhanced Education in Marlborough

by Katy Nally

Three local women are leading Marlborough students by example and thinking outside of the box when it comes to education.

Becky Granatini, Lisa Seethaler and Chari Norton began the Marlborough Education Foundation (MEF) in February and are currently recruiting foundation members.

The mission of MEF is to bring education opportunities to all students at Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School by providing the necessary funds and volunteers' time.

So far, there are two main components of MEF to enhance students' education – Talents on Tap and mini-grants for teachers.

The three women said they were very excited about Talents on Tap and Norton added the idea came as they were all "grieving the loss of Clusters" at the elementary school. Indeed some aspects of the new program resemble Clusters, which was eliminated from the current school year curriculum, but other parts will be new for students.

Clusters was a one-hour session held every Friday beginning in May each school year, when a volunteer would come and speak about, and usually demonstrate, their particular specialty. Past participants include members of the state police, a local veterinarian and a doctor.

Even principal of Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Loraine Giannini sounded enthused at the new idea of Talents on Tap. "We can replace [Clusters] with something just as exciting and meaningful," she said.

Talents on Tap, like Clusters, will bring in volunteers from the community to share their specialties with students. Granatini will act as a liaison for the program, so teachers can come to her with ideas, she said.

Seethaler gave the example of a landscaper teaching students about gardening and giving a demonstration. Another option was having an engineer come in to talk about basic physics and work with levers and pulleys. Norton noted the volunteers don't have to demonstrate an aspect of their career; it can also be a hobby.

Talents on Tap is a way for students to pursue "something they're interested in," Granatini said. "I think when a child is interested in something, the learning just accelerates," Giannini added.

The three are also considering some type of

publicity compensation for volunteers of the pilot program.

The scope of Talents on Tap will be up to the discretion of the teacher, Seethaler said. "They take it and run with it," she said. The program aims to "tap into students' interests," and at the same time, "align with teacher's curriculums," Norton said.

Unlike Clusters, the program might not run once a week. Instead, Seethaler gave the example of bringing in someone with an artistic background to enhance a literature curriculum, allowing students to "learn on a deeper level," she said.

So far, several teachers who heard the presentation on MEF applauded the new group's effort to support education, the three women said. Seethaler said when she, Granatini and Norton spoke to the Parent Teacher Association, where teachers were present, "everybody applauded." She said some at the meeting called Talents on Tap "Clusters on steroids."

MEF will present to teachers at the elementary school in May.

Norton said it was MEF's goal to "support teachers so they are empowered to provide authentic education for kids."

In addition to Talents on Tap, MEF will also provide mini-grants for the school. Teachers can begin applying for the grants during the next school year.

Like other education foundations, MEF will fundraise for these grants, then award them to staff. In other towns, this type of grant has provided things such as microscopes, poetry nights and visiting authors. Granatini said it was a chance for teachers to "try something new in the classroom."

MEF is currently seeking a grant writer for the foundation to help with this program, Seethaler said.

Fundraising for the foundation will begin this summer, starting with a tag sale Saturday, May 22. Norton added the group might also set up a booth at Marlborough Fun Day. A fun run at the school is also set for next fall, and proceeds will go to MEF.

The three women said once the foundation accumulates more funds, it could begin to consider large-scale projects like science labs.



Marlborough Education Foundation formed in February, and aims to provide education opportunities for students at Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School. Pictured above are school staff and foundation members with their children.

The idea for MEF first came up during a conversation with Giannini, Seethaler said, adding that the foundation was really the principal's "brainchild." Since then the trio has gone through a lot of organizing, planning and brainstorming. "I think they're starting to get some really good ideas," Giannini said. "It's a huge undertaking."

But the three Marlborough women are no strangers to "huge undertakings." All three have their masters, two in education and one in social work. Both Norton and Granatini have worked as teachers for a number of years.

Altogether, they have three children at Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall, with three more to join soon.

And while they said they lamented losing Clusters, creating MEF was not in response to that loss. All three women stressed that MEF would not replace items cut from the school budget, and the foundation was not set up to offset school costs with donations.

Seethaler was hesitant to refer to MEF as the "icing on the cake" because it will offer more than just special educational treats. According to Norton, "every kid would be impacted," by MEF.

The women were hopeful the community would be receptive to the idea of MEF. "This community is amazing," Seethaler said. "We all want our kids to be as talented and educated as they can be. ... It all comes back to the children."

With the initiation of MEF, Marlborough joins over 100 other Connecticut towns that have education foundations.

MEF will hold its kick-off meeting Thursday, April 29, at 7 p.m., at Richmond Memorial Library, located at 15 School Dr. Those interested in joining are encouraged to attend. For more information about the foundation visit www.MEFct.org, or call Granatini at 860-467-6177, Seethaler at 860-295-9853 or Norton at 858-699-2032.

Unshredded Probate Court Documents Found in Marlborough Trash

by Katy Nally

Due to a recent "human error," the Marlborough Probate Court is in hot water.

In the beginning of March, documents with Social Security numbers and other sensitive information wound up in a trash bin unshredded, published reports said.

Marlborough Probate Court Judge Stephen Kinsella said this week the incident occurred when the probate office underwent a changeover from former Judge Frank Corbo to Kinsella on March 3.

Kinsella said the Marlborough probate clerk came in to clean the office the week of the changeover and threw away eight boxes, one of which contained records such as photocopies of birth and death certificates, drivers' licenses, checks and Social Security cards, bank account numbers, land deeds and wills, according to published reports.

Kinsella said these documents were "destined to be shredded," but were not.

"How exactly it happened I'm not certain," Kinsella said. "I can promise it will not happen again."

Although the documents were disposed of improperly, Kinsella assured "nothing has gotten out."

After the materials were thrown out, an unidentified person contacted the *Journal Inquirer* and gave the newspaper the findings. The documents are currently at the *Journal Inquirer*, and Chief Counsel for the Office of Probate Administration Thomas E. Gaffey reviewed the files last Thursday, April 1.

Gaffey said this week he did not know when the pages would be returned to the Marlborough Probate Court.

He said most of the documents were probate court applications or correspondence between attorneys. He said some pages, however, were "in support of an application" and included things like photocopies of drivers' licenses and Social Security cards.

He said one document, which appeared to be a cover sheet, was marked to be shredded.

Probate Court Administrator Paul Knierim said this week "most if not all" the documents had dates that corresponded to Corbo's time as judge. Corbo did not return calls for comment this week.

Both Kinsella and Knierim maintained this was an "isolated incident," adding "[The clerk] is a very responsible person," who is "very distraught over it," Kinsella said. Kinsella would

not identify the clerk.

"Based on our investigation, there's no evidence of intentional wrongdoing whatsoever," Knierim said. "It was a simple human error any of us could have made."

In addition to disposing of the documents improperly, there might also be an issue with the information not making its way into the court's permanent record.

Gaffey said that while some documents were clearly marked as recorded, for others, it was not so clear. He said the only way to know for sure would be to verify with the Marlborough Probate Court's records.

Knierim said to his knowledge, and his staff's, a mishap like this has never before happened at the Connecticut probate courts.

As a result of the incident, now documents marked for shredding from the Marlborough Probate Court will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in Town Hall until they can be disposed of properly, Kinsella said. When asked if he thought this accident might occur again, Kinsella said definitely not because the clerk "is afraid to throw anything away now."

Kinsella said the clerk would not be reprimanded for the "obvious oversight." Knierim

said any punishment is left up to the discretion of the probate judge, which, in this case, would be Kinsella. "It certainly will never happen again," Kinsella said. "She's a very competent clerk."

According to Knierim, even before this incident occurred, eight training sessions on records management were already scheduled for probate court personnel. He said the disposal policy would not change, but the courses would serve as a refresher on the "proper destruction of these items."

Last fall, the state decided to shrink its number of probate courts from 117 to 54. During these training sessions "priority will be placed on the proper management of documents" in the transition process, Knierim said.

Kinsella mentioned a "silver lining" to the dumping of the files. The incident at the Marlborough Probate Court is certainly reason to "be very careful in this transition process," he added.

By Jan. 5, 2011, the Marlborough Probate Court will merge with East Hampton's, East Haddam's and Portland's. The new court will be in East Hampton.

Obituaries

East Hampton

Charles R. Barnes Jr.

Charles R. Barnes Jr., 87, of East Hampton, beloved husband of Olive (Collins) Barnes, died Sunday, April 4, at Middlesex Hospital. Born June 13, 1922, in Roselle Park, NJ, he was the son of the late Charles R. and Bird (Tufts) Barnes. He had proudly served his country as a Navy pilot during WWII. Charles was a retired innkeeper for over 20 years having owned the Colburn House in Manchester Center, VT, the Avalanche Motor Lodge in Manchester, VT, and the Iron Kettle in Shaftsbury, VT.

Besides his wife, he is survived by his daughter, Deborah Mooza of Marlborough; his sister-in-law, Margaret Barnes of New Jersey and his two grandchildren, Melissa R. Mooza and William R. Mooza.

Funeral services will be held today, Friday, April 9, at 11 a.m. in Buckingham Congregational Church in Glastonbury. Burial will follow in Old Buckingham Cemetery. There will be no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the American Cancer Society, 538 Preston Ave., P.O. Box 1004, Meriden, CT 06450.

The Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, has care of arrangements. To leave online condolences, visit www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

East Hampton

William V. Mooney Jr.

William V. Mooney Jr., 77, of East Hampton, died Monday, April 5, at Middlesex Hospital. Born Aug. 18, 1932, in Queens, NY, he was the son of the late William V. and Martha (Nilsen) Mooney. William was a retired machinist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

He is survived by his brother, Richarhd Mooney of East Hampton, and two sisters, Ellen Nicholas and Pat Smith.

Funeral services will be private at the convenience of the family.

The Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, has care of the arrangements.

Hebron

Clermont E. Genesse

Clermont E. Genesse, 87, of Amston and formerly of Hartford, widower of the late Francoise (Gilbert) Genesse, passed away Tuesday, March 23, at the Middlesex Hospital Hospice.

He was born Dec. 30, 1922, in St. Come, P.Q., Canada. Early on, he worked as a lumberjack in Quebec before moving to the United States. Mr. Genesse was a carpenter with Local No. 43 for many years before his retirement. He was a long-time member of the Knights of Columbus St. Anne Council 6119 in West Hartford.

He is survived by three children and their spouses, Jacques and Pauline Genesse of Columbia, Monique and George Gonsalves of Amston and Jocelyne and Peter Higgins of Enfield; 10 grandchildren; six great grandchildren; four sisters, two brothers and numerous extended family members and friends.

The memorial liturgy will be celebrated 10:30 a.m. today, April 9, directly at the Church of the Holy Family, 185 Church St., (Route 85), Hebron, with Fr. Michael Smith, officiating. There are no calling hours. Committal will follow in the New Hebron Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to the Alzheimer's Association, 279 New Britain Ave., Ste. 5, Kensington 06037.

Visit www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com for online condolences.

East Hampton

Mary Forastiere Larson

Mary Forastiere Larson, born Aug. 24, 1941, died March 29, after a courageous battle with cancer. Mary Forastiere Larson, who resided for many years in Bloomfield, died in Englewood, FL. She was 68.

Mrs. Larson spent her childhood in Newington, CT, and worked as an administrative assistant at CIGNA in Bloomfield, CT. Mrs. Larson and her husband, Charles Larson, moved to Florida but continued to summer in East Hampton for a number of years.

Mrs. Larson leaves her loving husband, Charles Larson of Englewood, FL, and East Hampton; her sister, Barbara Forastiere of Jensen Beach, FL; her daughters, Diane Marchitto of Canton, Susan Larson of Edgewater, FL, and Mary Murphy of Tariffville; and nine grandchildren.

On Saturday, April 10, at 10:30 a.m., family and friends will gather for a funeral Mass at Sacred Heart Church, Wintonbury Avenue in Bloomfield, to remember Mrs. Larson. A private interment will be held for the immediate family.

Colchester

Neal Grundy

Neal Grundy, 92, of Colchester, beloved husband of Emilie (Brewer) Grundy, passed away Monday, April 5, at Apple Rehab in Colchester, after an extended convalescence. Born Aug. 22, 1917, in Webster, MA, he was the son of the late William and Ida (Sprague) Grundy.

On April 11, 1942, he and Emilie were married and he enlisted in the U.S. Army in November of that year, proudly serving in the Rhineland and Central Europe during World War II. He would later serve with the U.S. Army Reserve/National Guard 76th Division between 1956 and 1963. He was a longtime member of the American Legion Dept. of Connecticut Post 200 in Rocky Hill.

Mr. Grundy had worked for PP&G Co., Red Wing Oil and again for PP&G before working as a credit manager for over 20 years for Automatic Comfort in Hartford. He went on to work for Intercultural Associates in Thompson as well as in cash registers and printing before his retirement.

A man of great faith, he was a member of the Leffingwell Baptist Church in Bozrah. He was a former member of Gideons International, as well as the First Baptist Church of Lebanon, the American Baptist Movement and the Christian Missionary Alliance, of which he was also past Treasurer of the New England District, and the Groton Heights Baptist Church.

In addition to his beloved wife of nearly 68 years, he is survived by two children and their spouses, William and Sharon Grundy of Groton and Phyllis and Kevin Boyes of Norwich; four grandchildren, Larry, Eric, Seth and Emilie; seven great grandchildren; and numerous extended family members and friends.

He was predeceased by two brothers, Robert and Malcolm.

The family will receive guests from 4-6 p.m. today, April 9, at the Leffingwell Baptist Church, 388 Salem Tpk. (Route 82), Bozrah. A Memorial Service will follow at 6 p.m. Burial with full military honors will be private in the State Veterans Cemetery, Middletown.

Donations in his memory may be made to Gideons International, 1563 North Road, Groton, CT 06340.

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

East Hampton

Ruth Dickson Shaw

Ruth Dickson Shaw, 92, formerly of East Hampton, wife of the late Frank A. Shaw, died Monday, March 29, at Chesterfields Health Care Center in Chester, after a brief illness.

A resident of Chester Village West retirement community since 1991, she was previously a long-time resident of Clinton. Born in Manchester, NH, she attended Smith College and, following her marriage, lived in Providence and Rumford, RI, East Hampton, and Tonawanda, NY, before moving to Clinton in 1963.

She was a member of the Congregational Church and the Priscilla Club, an avid bridge player, and an active participant in numerous organizations, including the Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, PTA and the Clinton Power Squadron. In addition, she served as a volunteer driver for the American Red Cross during World War II and for MOTS in Clinton.

She leaves a son and daughter-in-law, Dickson and Carol Shaw, of New York City; a daughter and son-in-law, Nancy and David May, of Salem, MA; a daughter, Judith Shaw, of North Providence, RI; five grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; and five great-great-grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held in Chester at a date to be determined.

East Hampton

Richard C. Cannata

Richard C. Cannata, 67, of Colchester Avenue, East Hampton, died Monday, April 5, at St. Francis Hospital.

Born in Middletown June 13, 1942, a son of the late Sebastian and Josephine Galuzzi Cannata, he was a Portland resident for most of his life. He was a graduate of Portland High School and had been employed as an installer for Ceiling Systems Inc., of Cheshire. He was a parishioner of the Church of Saint Mary where he took great pride in assisting Fr. Ashe any way he could with the Mass. He was also a member of the Knights of Columbus.

Mr. Cannata is survived by his two daughters, Sherry Rawlings of New Britain, and Michelle Waynich and her husband Roger of Greenbrier, TN; his son, Richard Cannata of East Hampton; his grandchildren, Ryan Rawlings, Jacqueline Rawlings, Courtney Cooper, Prestin Cooper and Sean Rawlings; his great-grandchild, Deedee Rawlings; his brother, Michael S. Cannata and several nieces and nephews.

He was predeceased by his brother Joseph Cannata.

His family received relatives and friends in the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, Thursday, April 8, from 5-8 p.m. Funeral services will be held today, April 9, at 10:15 a.m. from the funeral home and at 11 a.m. at the Church of Saint Mary for a Mass of Christian Burial. Interment will follow in St. Sebastian Cemetery in Middlefield.

In lieu of flowers, gifts in Richard's memory may be sent to the Church of Saint Mary, 51 Free-stone Ave., Portland, CT 06480.

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

Colchester

James Orsatti Sr.

James Anthony Orsatti Sr., 80, of Colchester and formerly of Agawam, MA, widower of the late Frances (Walsh) Orsatti, passed away Tuesday afternoon, April 6, at home with his loving daughter by his side. Born June 28, 1929 in Springfield, MA, he was a son of the late Virgilio "James" and Antoinette (Costabile) Orsatti.

In 1951, he married his beloved Frances and they shared 35 wonderful years of marriage before she predeceased him in 1985.

Mr. Orsatti proudly served with the U.S. Army during the Korean War. He owned and operated a Sunoco Service station in West Springfield, MA for many years before his retirement. While in Massachusetts, he was active with both the ELKS and Unico. Over the years, he was an avid Yankees fan and loved to collect automotive and baseball memorabilia. He will be remembered for his larger-than-life personality and the memorable first impression that he left with all who met him.

Survivors include two children, Lynn Orsatti and her partner Kenneth Lajoie of Colchester, with whom he made his home, and James Jr. and his wife Carol of Agawam; five grandchildren; two siblings, John and Margaret Orsatti, both of Agawam; his beloved friend, Patricia Barnes of Suffield; and his ever-present accomplice, Alley the cat.

The funeral liturgy will be celebrated 11 a.m. today, April 9, directly at Sacred Heart Church, 395 Chestnut St., Springfield. Committal with full military honors will follow in St. Thomas Cemetery, West Springfield.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to Masonicare Partners Hospice, 111 Founders Plaza, Ste. 200, East Hartford, CT 06108, in grateful recognition of the compassionate care shown to James and his family.

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

Hebron Police News

Sometime between March 30 at 5:30 p.m. and March 31 at 7:15 a.m., someone entered Tarca's Hebron Automotive Repair on Wall Street and stole an undetermined amount of tools, State Police said. Anyone with more information is asked to contact the Hebron Resident State Trooper's Office at 860-228-3710.

3/31: Kerrigan Cowles, 22, of 32 Ridgewood Dr., Marlborough, was charged with DUI, State Police said.

4/5: Thomas Peno, 50, of 108 Wellswood Rd., Apt. A3, Amston, was charged with sixth-degree larceny, State Police said.

Portland Police News

3/31: A 16-year-old male was arrested for possession of drug paraphernalia, Portland Police said.

4/1: Matthew Swart, 23, of 50 Nunnawauk Rd., Newington, was charged with third-degree criminal mischief, police said.

4/2: John Dillon Jr., 39, of 201 Rose Hill Rd., was charged with driving under the influence and failure to drive right, police said.

East Hampton Police News

3/24: Jeremy Bourbeau, 20, of 29 Maennerchor Ave., Taftville, was arrested for following too close and driving under the influence, East Hampton Police said.

3/24: Thomas Baranowski, 55, of 228 Marvin Rd., Colchester, was arrested for failure to drive right and driving under the influence, police said.

3/26: Robert Bisi, 68, of 93 Collie Brook Rd., was arrested for failure to driving right and driving under the influence, police said.

3/27: A 15-year-old female juvenile was issued a juvenile summons for failure to have tail lamps illuminated and operating a motor vehicle without a license, police said.

3/27: Donald Philipchik, 46, of 86 Bartlett St., Portland, was issued a ticket for using a cell phone while operating a motor vehicle, police said.

3/29: Josh Winiski, 27, of 41 East High St., was arrested pursuant to a warrant for failure to appear, police said.

Colchester Police News

3/31: Seth Apt, 20, of 116 Bretton Rd., Manchester, turned himself in for two counts of third-degree larceny, State Police said.

3/31: A youthful offender was charged with third-degree burglary, third-degree larceny, possession of less than four ounces of marijuana and possession of tobacco by a minor, State Police said.

4/1: Dale Previti, 21, of 123 Prospect Hill Rd., was charged with DUI, State Police said.

4/1: Ryan Lange, 21, of 54A Chestnut St., Apt. 31, Manchester, turned himself in for four counts of violation of probation, State Police said.

4/1: Stephanie Carl, 24, of 662 Hartford Rd., Salem, was charged with assaulting medical personnel, State Police said.

4/1: Ryan Stocking, 30, of 33 Hubbard Rd., Haddam, was charged with third-degree burglary and conspiracy to commit third-degree burglary, State Police said.

4/3: Dominick Jonah, 20, of 385 South Main St., was charged with possession of prescription pills and sixth-degree larceny, State Police said.

4/4: Brandon Sorensen, 23, of 7114 Patriot Way, West Greenwich, RI, was charged with failure to appear, State Po

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

I hope everyone had a delightful Easter weekend, spent with family and friends and lots of food. I also hope you all had a chance to enjoy some of the delightful weather we had. I love when the weather gets nice. While it's true this winter wasn't as snowy as years past, it was just cold and snowy enough to make the arrival of spring a very welcome one indeed.

In fact, as I write this Monday night, the weather forecasters are predicting near summer-like conditions, with highs even reaching the 80s! Of course, by the time you read this, a cold front will have arrived and temperatures will be back in the 50s. Still, 50s are better than 40s, and *much* better than 30s.

This week also brought the return of baseball. The season opened Sunday night for the Yankees and Red Sox, and Monday and Tuesday for everybody else. (Yes, folks, there are other teams.) My Mets started the season promisingly, with a decisive 7-1 victory on Monday, despite having their starting shortstop, centerfielder and first baseman all on the DL. The promise of an Opening Day victory lingers longer for some teams than it does for others; hopefully it'll stick around the Mets for a while this year.

* * *

I'm a little late (in that the story about her being honored was in last week's issue), but let me extend my congratulations to Hebron resident Donna McCalla, who recently was named a 2010 Distinguished Advocate by the state Commission on Culture and Tourism (CCT). I was happy to see Donna get the award; I've known for a while she's very dedicated to her Hebron community.

I first became familiar with Donna when I started covering Hebron, fresh out of college, in the fall of 2001. At that time, she was a member of the town's Board of Finance. But I got to know her more later on, when she helped start up the group Hebron Dollars and Sense. The political action committee had started to come into prominence around the same time the RHAM school budgets started going through multiple referendums before townspeople finally approved them. There was one year the number of referendums swelled to 13, with RHAM not getting a budget approved until January, despite the fiscal year having started the previous July. I was there for all of those votes, and Donna was too, fielding my phone calls and offering up her opinion as to just what might get the budget passed.

But in recent years Donna's name has been in the *Rivereast* more in connection with local history. And for good reason. You would be hard-pressed to find a local historian as dedicated to their town as Donna has been. One of her most high-profile causes of late has been the Peters House, located on East Street right next to the new Burnt Hill Park. Donna's made many pleas on its behalf to town officials and has done countless hours of research on the dwelling. Last year, with the Hebron Historical Society (of which she's president), she even helped to produce a short film dealing with the legend of Caesar and Lowis Peters, the two freed slaves believed to have lived in the house.

Donna is by no means a one-issue kind of person, however. Her interest in town history is broad in its reach; she has been involved with the restoration of the Gull and Burrow Hill school houses, the preservation of Prophet's Rock, the preservation of the Gilead Hill one-room school and much more. She's also heavily involved with the Hebron Historical Society's varied Maple Fest activities every year, and even makes that delicious icy maple milk I waxed (sort of) poetic about in this column last month.

Oh, and Donna's also super helpful. She's almost always accessible, and willing to talk

with you, to give you quotes for a story or just background information you may not have, no matter what the subject might be. A few weeks ago, I found myself one Wednesday afternoon set to run a Maple Fest preview story on the front page, but without a good, cover-worthy Maple photo that I also hadn't used last year. I took a gamble Donna might have something I could use, so I called her up and, sure enough, she did, and quickly e-mailed me over several photos from which to choose. I was very grateful, and very relieved, that she was able to help out. But I wasn't altogether surprised. To paraphrase a certain ex-Red Sox outfielder, it was just Donna being Donna.

Donna's not the type to send in letters each week tooting her own horn or touting the most recent achievement of the Hebron Historical Society. Indeed, in Lindsay Fetzner's story last week about the CCT award, Donna was quoted as saying, "It's this entire town and all the work that so many people, organizations and businesses have contributed to preserving Hebron's history. It is never one person."

But that doesn't mean accolades such as these are not warranted. Indeed they are, and I'm quite pleased to see her so honored. So, again, congratulations, Donna.

* * *

I enjoy a good pun. It's a trait I perhaps inherited from my mother, who just loves puns. In fact, it seems the more wince-inducing one is, the more she eats it up. But, anyway, when a friend of mine recently passed along a series of puns, I was intrigued, and figured I'd share a few. Be warned: there are some real groaners in here. But at the same time, you'll likely get at least a couple of laughs. I did.

— Two Eskimos sitting in a kayak were chilly, thus proving once again that you can't have your kayak and heat it too.

— Did you hear about the Buddhist who refused Novocain during a root canal? His goal: transcendental medication.

— A group of chess enthusiasts checked into a hotel and were standing in the lobby discussing their recent tournament victories. After about an hour, the manager came out of the office and asked them to disperse. "But why?" they asked, as they moved off. "Because", he said, "I can't stand chess-nuts boasting in an open foyer."

— A woman has twins and gives them up for adoption. One of them goes to a family in Egypt and is named "Ahmal." The other goes to a family in Spain; they name him "Juan." Years later, Juan sends a picture of himself to his birth mother. Upon receiving the picture, she tells her husband that she wishes she also had a picture of Ahmal. Her husband responds, "They're twins! If you've seen Juan, you've seen Ahmal."

— These friars were behind on their belfry payments, so they opened up a small florist shop to raise funds. Since everyone liked to buy flowers from the men of God, a rival florist across town thought the competition was unfair. He asked the good fathers to close down, but they would not. He went back and begged the friars to close. They ignored him. So, the rival florist hired Hugh MacTaggart, the roughest and most vicious thug in town, to "persuade" them to close. Hugh beat up the friars and trashed their store, saying he'd be back if they didn't close up shop. Terrified, they did so, thereby proving that only Hugh can prevent florist friars.

Mahatma Gandhi walked barefoot most of the time, which produced an impressive set of calluses on his feet. He also ate very little, which made him rather frail and with his odd diet, he suffered from bad breath. This made him ... a super-callused fragile mystic hexed by halitosis.