



RIVEREAST

News Bulletin

Serving Amston, Andover, Cobalt, Colchester, East Hampton, Hebron, Marlborough, Middle Haddam, Portland and Salem

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A propane leak in Portland last Saturday led to an explosion, destroying a Summer Street duplex and injuring two firefighters – one seriously. The leak was caused after a backhoe hit the valve of an underground propane tank, fire officials said.

Propane Leak Leads To Portland Explosion

by Claire Michalewicz

Two firefighters were injured – one seriously – and a duplex was destroyed when a propane leak caused an explosion in Portland last Saturday afternoon.

Firefighters responded to 194-196 Summer St. for a suspected propane leak, but within minutes, the propane ignited, creating a fireball and setting the house on fire. The exact cause of the explosion remains under investigation.

Nobody was home at the time of the explosion, although a dog was later found dead in the house.

Lieutenant Todd Ghent, who was trapped in the explosion, was treated at the burn unit at Bridgeport Hospital with burns to his head, face and neck, Portland Volunteer Fire Department Robert Shea said. Ghent's condition has improved since Saturday, and on Monday night he was released from the hospital to continue his recovery at home, First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said.

"It's good that he's home," Shea said. "Todd is on his way to a recovery and we're hoping it will be a full recovery."

Another firefighter, Tim Goff, sustained minor burns to his wrists, Shea said, and was treated and released at Middlesex Hospital.

Shea explained that his department responded to a call about a possible propane leak at 2:26 p.m., after a contractor removing snow with a backhoe hit the valve of an underground propane tank, releasing it into the atmosphere. Shea said firefighters found a low concentration of propane in the yard, but walked into a "bubble" of higher levels of the gas.

Ghent and Goff were monitoring propane levels alongside the house when the alarm on Ghent's propane detector sounded to indicate the risk of an explosion, Shea said. Because of the snow piled up behind the house, the propane vapor couldn't escape, and formed a bubble near the spot where Ghent was standing, Shea said. Ghent didn't have time to move, as the explosion happened almost immediately, Shea said.

"It was a coincidence of time," Shea said, that the propane ignited just as Ghent was starting to move out of the way. "One more step

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Snowstorm Relief Might Come from FEMA

by Katy Nally

It doesn't show signs of stopping, and the cost of the many snowstorms area towns have endured this winter is starting to add up.

Luckily, there might be some relief in sight, as Connecticut is in the process of applying for Federal Emergency Management Agency funding to compensate for the Jan. 12 storm that dumped up to 30 inches of snow in some towns.

If FEMA decides to grant the Connecticut applications, it will give cities and towns 75 percent of the amount requested. Expenses eligible for reimbursement are anything spent on snow removal, as well as repairs for any damages incurred over a 48-hour period.

There are two criteria for towns and cities to qualify for FEMA funding. First, the snowstorm must have been record-breaking. Rich Harris, spokesman for the state Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security, said the state is still waiting to hear from the National Weather Service if the Jan. 12 snowstorm set a record for snowfall.

And second, Connecticut counties must reach an expense threshold. For example, the amount requested by towns and cities in Tolland County, which includes Hebron and Andover, must meet or exceed about \$445,900. The thresholds are calculated on a per capita basis.

According to Hebron Fire Marshal Randy Blais, the town requested \$36,600 in FEMA funding, which was the amount spent plowing and salting roads after the Jan. 12 storm. The figure also includes the cost of fixing the town's salt shed that collapsed due to snow, Blais said.

In Andover, officials applied for approximately \$20,000, which covered work, materi-

als, overtime and equipment, First Selectman Bob Burbank said.

Burbank seemed optimistic about receiving FEMA funds.

"I think our chances are pretty good as long as enough towns apply and we meet the FEMA criteria – we're pretty sure it does as far as the amount of snow," he said.

Blais agreed.

"If we hear they declare it a disaster, I would think we'll get some [money] back," he said.

In addition to Hebron and Andover, there are 11 other towns in Tolland County.

The other four towns the *RiverEast* covers span three different counties – Portland and East Hampton are part of Middlesex, Marlborough is in Hartford County and Colchester is in New London County.

Marlborough First Selectman Bill Black said his town was looking to recover \$51,000, which covers labor, materials and equipment, plus an additional \$21,000 that was spent on overtime.

The threshold for Hartford County is about \$2.803 million, and includes 28 towns, plus Marlborough.

In Colchester, officials applied for just over \$40,000 to cover snow removal expenses.

"Colchester would certainly benefit from receiving funding from FEMA," First Selectman Gregg Schuster said in an e-mail. "Our snow budget is depleted and the additional funds would go a long way. However, I am not very optimistic that the federal government will give money to New England towns because there has been a lot of snow."

As part of the 21 towns and cities in New London County, Colchester and its neighbors must reach the FEMA threshold of about \$847,000 to receive funding.

In Middlesex County, Portland applied for approximately \$35,000 to cover labor, overtime, materials, equipment and equipment repairs, Public Works Director Rick Kelsey said.

"We, like most towns, are over budget on our snow removal operations, and the money would certainly help to reinforce [that budget]," Kelsey said.

With the addition of this week's storms, Kelsey said Portland had already gone "above and beyond" its line item for road salt, and the town has "expended a considerable amount of money to keep our equipment repaired."

East Hampton applied for about \$62,000 in FEMA funds, Finance Director Jeff Jylkka said, adding that he was "optimistic" the town would eventually qualify and receive emergency funding. East Hampton's request covers salt and sand, equipment costs, overtime for public works and Water Pollution Control Authority officials, as well as police officers.

According to the East Hampton Public Works Department, after the Jan. 12 storm, about 82 percent of the department's budget for salt and sand was expended, and about 60 percent of its labor line item was spent. But, since that storm, the state has seen several more heavy snowfalls.

Middlesex County, which includes 15 towns and cities, has a FEMA threshold of about \$507,100.

In total, the state must reach a FEMA thresh-

old of about \$11.14 million to qualify for disaster funding.

The applications submitted thus far by cities and towns are part of the pre-assessment by FEMA. If the expenses incurred reach the thresholds, and the National Weather Service declares the Jan. 12 storm record-breaking, FEMA would then declare the state, or specific counties, disaster areas.

But it could be a few months before towns hear back from FEMA, Blais said.

If approved, this wouldn't be *RiverEast* towns' first brush with FEMA funding. Last spring, Colchester received money after New London County was declared a storm disaster area.

On March 28 last year, a rainstorm pounded area towns, including Colchester, East Hampton, Hebron and Portland, for three days. Town officials worked throughout the storm, and days afterward, to pump out basements and flooded buildings.

In Colchester 70 residential basements were pumped out by fire officials, according to a March 2010 *RiverEast* article.

The town's pump station worked constantly for four days, and, as a result, two sewage pumps were submerged and burned out. At the time, a public works official in Colchester estimated the total damage at about \$10,000.

By April 30, cities and towns in three counties, New London, Middlesex and Fairfield, were eligible for FEMA funding, after President Barack Obama approved a request for disaster declaration.



Nobody was home at the time of the explosion, although a dog was later found dead in the house. The two families that lived inside the duplex are now staying with family members.

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and he would have been out.”

Goff was able to move about six feet away, avoiding the bubble of propane vapor, but Ghent was “engulfed in the fireball,” Shea said. The force of the explosion knocked Ghent to the ground and dislodged his helmet, leaving his head, face and neck exposed, he said.

Ghent avoided inhalation burns by holding his breath as long as he could, Shea said. Firefighters are trained to hold their breath, he said, though it’s often difficult to remember during an emergency.

“It’s amazing that he survived,” he said. He said Ghent was able to move into a snow bank, and was alert and speaking when other firefighters attended to him.

Ghent was transported by ambulance to Hartford Hospital, and immediately airlifted to the burn unit at Bridgeport.

“He is a go-to guy,” he said, explaining that Ghent had been with the department for 30 years. Having him in the hospital, Shea said, was “pretty tough on the department.”

Shea said he doesn’t know what caused the blast, but said it likely came from a heat source inside one of the units, like a water heater or furnace. Portland and state fire marshals are still investigating.

As soon as firefighters arrived at the scene to address the propane leak, they started evacuating neighbors from their homes in case of an explosion. They removed one dog from inside the residence, but didn’t know that another one was still inside. That dog, a chocolate Labrador retriever, was later found dead inside the house.

When the explosion occurred, Shea said, only one fire crew was on the scene, with oth-

ers still on their way. Shea said the firefighters who were there had to balance treating the injured firefighters and extinguishing the blaze. Compounding the problem, Shea said, were large snow banks that made it difficult to find a fire hydrant. Shea said a hydrant on Summer Street didn’t provide enough water pressure, so firefighters had to connect to another one on Bartlett Street.

Several other fire departments sent mutual aid, Shea said – East Hampton and Glastonbury covered other calls in Portland, while the Middletown, Westfield, Haddam and Durham departments sent their tanker trucks to the scene.

“I can’t say enough about the departments that responded,” he said.

The two families that lived inside the duplex are staying with family members, Shea said. Building official Lincoln White said Tuesday that while one side of the duplex is completely destroyed, an architect and an engineer would visit the site later this week to determine if it’s feasible to restore the other side, or if it should be torn down.

Shea said he wanted to remind residents to clear snow from around the fire hydrants on their properties. He said that while it is difficult to do when the hydrant is buried under a snow bank, the hydrants are important for the safety of the community.

Meanwhile, both Shea and Bransfield are glad Ghent is home and recuperating.

“He’s a hero, that’s for sure,” Bransfield said. “All our workers are heroes in this weather, and especially Todd, who was so horribly injured in that fire.”

From the Editor’s Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Where are we going to put it all?

That was a question I heard asked more than once last Thursday, after Mother Nature dumped another foot of snow on the Manchester/Glastonbury area (and more in other towns; Colchester, for example, received 18 inches). Seriously, that’s becoming a problem. Driving already has become something of an adventure, even on sunny days; we’ve only had a few days in between storms, and most of those days have been so cold there’s been minimal melting, and as a result snowbanks have gotten higher, and larger. Taking a left turn in some places has gotten just plain dangerous.

Then there’s the increased traffic congestion. There aren’t more cars on the road these days; there are just fewer places to put them all. Some four-lane roads have become three lanes, or even two. And some two-lane roads, one. I’ve seen dedicated right-turn lanes that simply no longer exist, buried under mounds of snow. (Portland schools, as I’m sure you’ve heard, closed Monday due to the roads in town simply being too narrow for the buses.) As a result of all these disappearing lanes, driving anywhere tends to take longer these days than it usually does.

And when you finally get where you’re going, you might have no place to park. I’ve been in parking lots that seem to have as much as 25 percent of their spaces taken up by snow. It’s all terribly frustrating.

Besides the question of where to put it all, there’s this question: When are we going to educate our kids? There has been quite the number of snow days across Connecticut this winter. Now, when I was growing up, schools make up snow days up through June 30 and then, if any more need to be made up, they come out of April vacation. I believe many school systems still do this. The Monroe school system, however, took the bold move this week of cancelling February vacation. Those who have firm, can’t-be-broken plans are excused, although they’ll be given homework to do on their vacation.

But the driving hassles and school-related inconveniences are minor in comparison to some of the other problems this snow has

caused. It seems every day for the past week or so you’ve heard of multiple buildings in the state collapsing under the weight of the snow. (Portland has seen a few of these, as Claire Michalewicz reports on in this week’s *Rivereast*.) People have landed in the hospital after falling off their roofs while trying to shovel the snow off of it. There have been car accidents galore, in just about every fashion possible. And then there was that terrible explosion in Portland over the weekend, which was caused when a backhoe removing snow struck a propane tank.

Simply put, this winter sucks. I’m tired of it, I really am. Three weeks ago, when we got close to 30 inches of snow in one day, that was kinda cool. That was a once-in-a-generation snow event, something that was rather neat to have experienced. But enough is enough. I came to this realization Tuesday afternoon, as I was getting ready to leave work and plod through the snow- and ice-covered roads back to Manchester. I’ve never been as tired of a winter as I am of this one. And there’s still at least a month and a half of it to go. (And yes, I know the official state groundhog – Chuckles at the Lutz Children’s Museum in Manchester – didn’t see his shadow Wednesday, thus predicting spring is “just around the corner.” The way this winter has gone, I’ll believe it when I see it.)

* * *

From Florida this week came a reminder that, as bad as it is right now, warmer weather will eventually come. Baseball players have started showing up to training camp. While the official day for pitchers and catchers to report is Feb. 15, some players have already begun turning out, for voluntary workouts. A few Mets, for example, have already made their way down to the team’s spring training facilities in Port St. Lucie, Florida.

The idea of turning on SNY and seeing baseball players running sprints and fielding ground balls seems pretty appealing right now. It’s a sign that the “boys of summer” will soon be here. And the key word in that phrase these days is “summer.”

* * *

See you next week.

Portland Police News

1/25: Michael Cannata, 66, of 218 Main St., was charged with violation of conditions of release, Portland Police said.

East Hampton Police News

1/19: Jamere D. Jackson, 20, of 21 Norfolk St., Middletown, was issued a summons for failure to display marker plate, misuse of marker plate and operating an unregistered and uninsured motor vehicle, East Hampton Police said.

1/22: Nicholas E. Anderson, 27, of 90 Anthony Ln., Westbrook, was arrested for third-degree assault and disorderly conduct, police said.

1/24: Christen A. Chapone, 20, of 4 Depot Hill Rd., was arrested for second-degree failure to appear, police said.

Andover Resident Remembered for Service to Town

by Courtney Parent

George J. Collette, 88, passed away last Monday, Jan. 26, leaving a great impact on his community and many memories for all those lucky enough to have known him.

Collette was born in Shelburne, VT, in 1922. But he spent the majority of his life as a Connecticut resident, moving to Hartford with his family shortly after his birth. He spent the last 55 years of his life in Andover.

Collette was a giving man, who spent his life helping others. In 1942, at just 21 years old, he began a life of generosity, joining the Air Force before he was even of legal age to consent. His parents signed for him, but unfortunately he was only able to serve one year as his B-52 was shot down on its first mission over the Philippines and he was left with an "involuntary paralysis," and couldn't move his legs. Thankfully, Collette was able to overcome his paralysis and, while his injuries left him unable to become an airline pilot like he had planned, he was still able to attain his private license.

He went on to continue a life of purpose, volunteering for the Andover Fire Department for 20 years, driving the Andover senior van as a volunteer for more than 25 years, and tending to the Veterans Monument in the town center.

Two years ago, after 25 years of volunteering as the senior van driver, the community showed Collette just how much his efforts

meant and how important he was to the town. He was thrown a surprise retirement party, at which he was presented with a proclamation from the state of Connecticut. State Senator Edith Prague presented the award for his dedicated service to the Andover community.

First Selectman Bob Burbank pointed towards Collette's efforts for the town and its citizens. "He was always very involved with the town, particularly the senior programs," said Burbank.

Collette served as vice chair of the Commission on Aging and chair of the Senior Transportation Committee. He was also a member of the Andover Seniors Club since its inception and president for 10 years.

Fiancée Barbara Foran emphasized his wonderful, endearing personality.

"George was a sweet, patient, cheerful man with a whistle on his tongue, a twinkle in his eye and a very big heart," Foran said. "He will be missed terribly by not only his family and extended family, but all the people whose lives he touched."

Collette was a dedicated family man. Growing up he was raised in a large household with nine brothers and sisters. As an adult, he was blessed with three daughters, nine grandchildren (one of whom is following in his footsteps, serving as a major in the Marines; she has been on seven different deployments, Foran said),

four great-grandchildren and four great-great-grandchildren. He also had a large extended family from fiancée Foran.

It was not only family whose lives Collette touched, but also members of the community, one of whom considered him family. Municipal Agent Cathy Palazzi expressed her respect and admiration for Collette, saying he was like a second father to her.

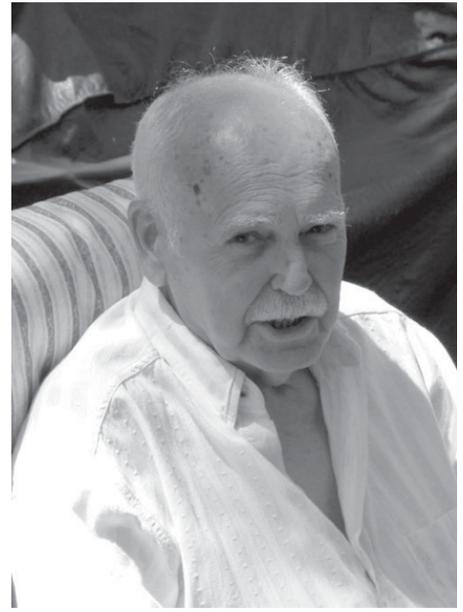
"I can't say enough good things about him," Palazzi said. "Serving people was his job and he was fantastic at it. He gave me some of the best advice I've ever gotten."

Palazzi complimented Collette's great organizational skills, as well as his effectiveness in making meetings run smoothly following "Robert's Rules," ensuring everyone spoke in turn and dialogue was handled in a productive manner.

Collette was a great man, valued by his community and best known for his cheerful nature and huge heart.

"Every time I'd see him he'd say, 'Hi doll, how are you,'" Palazzi said. "And I'm going to miss that."

Collette was so loved in the community, flags in Andover are currently flying at half-staff, Foran said. There will be a memorial service at the Andover Congregational Church on Saturday, Feb. 5, at 11 a.m. Online condolences may be made at tierneyfuneralhome.com.



George Collette

Forum Held on Economic Future for Route 6 in Andover

by Courtney Parent

The Route 6 Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) held a public forum Monday to discuss the next steps in planning for the 12.4-mile stretch known as the Hop River Corridor.

The council included representatives from each of the four towns included in the project, Andover, Bolton, Columbia and Coventry. First Selectman Bob Burbank and Selectman Elaine Buchardt represented the town of Andover.

Route 6 REDC Chairwoman Joyce Stille began the meeting by introducing facts and figures about the Route 6 corridor, as well as, information gained through planning research.

Simsbury-based LADA P.C. Land Planners conducted the majority of the research for the council. LADA interviewed more than 25 businesses, conducted on-site surveys and gathered input from MetroHartford Alliance, WINCOG, and CRCOG.

Along the 12.4-mile corridor – which stretches from Bolton Notch, where routes 6 and 44 split off, to the Columbia-Willimantic

town line – there are 29 intersections, six full traffic lights, one flashing yellow light and just a single crosswalk for pedestrians. There are also 197 residential homes. Research showed that of the total acreage in the corridor – both developable land and land that has already been developed – 40 percent to 60 percent is usable for commercial or residential purposes.

The council discussed the "need" for economic development along the Route 6 corridor and also addressed perceived traffic concerns such as safety and congestion.

The main reason for development being that all four communities, Andover, Bolton, Columbia and Coventry, are in need of additional revenue. Right now, there is significant "out-commuting" in these towns, where there are four times the amount of people living in town and working out of town as those both living and working in town.

"We are concerned about the towns as a whole," said Stille. "Concerned with the assets we all have and trying to expand upon those."

The council gave a two-screen presentation to aid the public in envisioning what the Route 6 corridor could look like. On one screen the council displayed different development sites, with before and after photos of what the location currently looks like and what it could look like in the future. On another screen the council utilized Google Earth to show exactly where each site was located.

The main developments mentioned include a new business park, increased signage and landscaping that would create a "sense of arrival," streetscape improvements such as increasing the number of sidewalks and crosswalks, placing parking lots to the side or rear entrances of commercial businesses and of course implementing new commercial businesses. Some specific developments include a new business park and streetscape improvements at the Bolton Crossroads, façade improvements to the Andover Plaza and expansion of the plaza at Lighthouse Corners.

The main constraint addressed at Monday

night's meeting was the lack of public water and sewer systems. LADA is currently entertaining the possibility of doing on-site sewage treatment from a shared packaged sewage treatment site.

One of the main initiatives the council wanted expressed was to balance any new developments with the preservation of open space and agricultural land. No developments should deteriorate the small-town beauty shared by these four communities.

"We recognize that what we are doing is a challenge," said Stille. "But we hope that you realize that it is an opportunity for us to move forward."

According to Stille, the council will meet with state officials in the near future to discuss the "smart growth" on the corridor. The goal is to have draft regulations to move forward with over the next six months to a year.

For more information on the Route 6 Hop River Corridor project or to view the complete LADA report, visit route6hoprivercorridor.com.

Hebron School Board Adopts \$11.81 Million Budget

by Courtney Parent

Following another scantily-attended public forum, the local Board of Education last Thursday adopted an \$11.81 million budget for the 2011-12 fiscal year.

The spending plan represents a 0.87 percent increase, or \$102,215, over the current year's budget.

Last Thursday's school board meeting was preceded by the last of three public forums held on the budget proposal. There was just a handful of community members in attendance. During the meeting, board members addressed different questions residents had asked during the forums, and also explained different technology systems that they are hoping to implant in the schools.

The board presented three budget possibilities at the meeting, per the request of the Board of Finance: one that featured a zero percent budget increase; a "maintenance" budget that would have been a 0.67 percent increase; and the 0.87 percent increase, which is the increase the school board had been seeking.

Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz's original proposal, which she presented in December, was for an \$11.88 million budget, or a 1.42 percent increase. The budget revisions the school board has made include reductions from health/benefits for employees, heating oil, diesel and maintenance.

"People are saying, loud and clear, you simply can't pull the rug out from under education," said Cruz. She is confident that there is enough flexibility in the 0.87 percent budget that the Board of Education can afford to be flexible in the process.

The \$11.81 million budget adopted last week features both increases and decreases from the current year's spending plan. These include a

\$33,138 technology increase, a \$28,420 workers compensation increase, a \$25,622 overtime increase and a \$7,990 increase to office supplies. There would also be a \$38,400 textbook decrease, a \$31,838 legal decrease and a \$24,233 unemployment decrease. Also, this year's budget featured \$3,075 for construction, while the 2011-12 budget proposal features no construction funds.

The school board's main budget priorities were to retain small class sizes, update technology, diversify the educational programs and to promote student growth and achievement.

Among the new technology items included in the proposed budget is a Student Information Management System (SIMS) called Power School. The system includes the storage of student demographic data, health records, data analysis and state reporting data. There is also a grade book program, a cafeteria connection, and a parental portal in which parents can log on and track their child's progress. The system is housed on a web-based server so it is easily accessible from any location.

Power School is included in the 0.87 percent proposed budget as well as the 0.67 percent maintenance budget. The new system would cost \$31,200. A state law passed last July requires that school systems have a functioning student database. The current student database being used is FileMaker.

School board member Jane Dube questioned the inclusion of Power School in the maintenance budget.

"Maintenance budget' means that we are maintaining our current record-keeping system. The Power School would be a new system," Dube said. "We need to be very forthcoming.

This is a large replacement of a failing process, not maintenance to an existing one."

Board of Education Vice Chairman Brian O'Reilly had a different view of the maintenance budget, voicing his opinion towards cuts that would be required by it.

"It isn't a true maintenance budget or we wouldn't be cutting .5 teachers and classes," O'Reilly said. "We are asked to provide this, but a zero percent budget is not the budget I will be supporting."

If the Board of Education went with a zero percent budget, it would have to eliminate two full-time positions, board members said. With the 0.87 percent budget, the school board would eliminate 0.5 teaching positions (based on enrollment needs), which would be one long-term sub position.

Board of Education Chairman Mark Allaben said that if the budget were to go to zero percent, the schools would not only have less in up-to-date technology, but also less in support for staff.

Cruz explained why Power School is necessary for the schools' growth. She also emphasized the growing number of districts currently using this new system.

"We have found over the years that the database is not growing with us and our needs," Cruz said. "Over 97 districts in the state are using Power School. We would be developing a foundation for the future."

In terms of technology, the board would also like to implant SMART Tables and SMART Boards into the classrooms. Their proposal includes leasing six SMART Tables – three for kindergarten and three for first grade – which would be equal to \$7,800. There are also 10

proposed SMART Boards, five for both second grade and sixth grade, equaling \$12,780.

O'Reilly backed the decision to get more technology in the schools. He emphasized the money they would save on textbooks and worksheets, while also pointing out the large amount of information that is now available to students online.

Another item discussed at the meeting was other possible revenue streams where the Board of Education could collect funds. Cruz credited the district's lack of funding to its small size.

"Because we are such a small district, lots of the time we try to write grants, but aren't competitive enough," Cruz said. "We're looking for other revenue sources that are legitimate through all the audit laws."

Possible revenue sources mentioned varied from financial reimbursement to offset services for Department of Children and Families placement, to title grants to offset expenses, to possible retirements, to using solar panels to down the electricity cost.

The last major concept discussed was in regards to diversifying the educational programs offered. Specifically, board members conversed about the possibility of introducing foreign language studies such as Chinese and German. Ideally, the board said, the language studies would be offered as an after-school program. However, a more cost-effective online learning program was mentioned for future consideration.

Now that the budget has been adopted by the Board of Education, it has been forwarded to the town and will be passed on to the Board of Finance for a public hearing.

BRDA Completes Interim Cleanup of Industrial Building in East Hampton

by Claire Michalewicz

The Brownfields Redevelopment Agency (BRDA) announced this week it has completed interim cleanup actions at the town-owned industrial building at 13 Watrous St.

Funded by a \$200,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency, about 320 tons of contaminated soil were removed from the site and safely stored, BRDA member Mary Ann Dostaler said. She said the soil had been contaminated with toxic polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs. The soil also contained solvents, oils and metals.

The Massachusetts-based TMC Environmental Services began the cleanup in November, BRDA Chairman Dan Wolfram said. TMC also removed several containers and tanks of oil, and backfilled and regraded the soil, he said.

The cleanup, Wolfram explained, entailed removing up to a foot and a half of soil from the site and having it transported offsite. Wolfram said these were only interim cleanup measures, and the lot had been fenced off until the town obtains funding to finish.

Wolfram said the building had been used as a power facility for the Summit Thread Company in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The building contained coal-powered steam boilers, he said. It was used for a variety of other purposes in more recent decades. Most recently, Dostaler said, the building housed a car repair shop.

Wolfram said the BRDA doesn't know how the PCBs got into the soil, though it suspects they may have come from electrical transformers, or from contaminated soil that might have been deposited there.

According to the EPA, PCBs were used in

electrical equipment, insulation, paint and plastics from 1929 until they were banned in 1979. The EPA says the chemicals can build up in soil and in food sources, and have been known to cause cancer and other health problems.

Dostaler said the BRDA worked closely with the EPA to maximize the removal of contaminants while adhering to federal regulations concerning PCB cleanup.

"We had a limited amount of money, and our issues exceeded that amount," Wolfram said. He said the TMC crew dug "until we ran out of money," and were able to remove the most badly-contaminated soil.

Dostaler said that while the cleanup is not complete, "we took it as far as we can possibly go."

"We got a lot done with the amount of money we had," Wolfram said. "The EPA's very pleased with us."

Wolfram said the Watrous Street property had been a major priority for the BRDA. He said they started looking at cleaning it up in 2003, shortly after the town acquired the building. In 2003, Dostaler said, the town received its first EPA grant, which they used to study 13 Watrous St. and several other Village Center properties.

Since then, she said, the town has received four more EPA grants, for a total of \$975,000. Two of the grants are for assessments of hazardous substances throughout town, one for 13 Watrous St., and one for a property at 103 Main St.

Wolfram said the BRDA planned to clean up the Main Street property, the former Gong Bell Company, in the spring. A small municipal parking lot is planned for that lot, to be used



Interim cleanup at a town-owned industrial building on Watrous Street is complete, the Brownfields Redevelopment Agency announced this week. Shown here is a backhoe removing contaminated soil at the site.

for overflow from the community center, he said.

Wolfram said the process of obtaining grants from the EPA is competitive, and said East Hampton had received more funding than many larger municipalities. This was because of the BRDA's and Town Council's dedication to cleaning the Village Center, he said.

"What continues [to set] us apart from other

municipalities is our commitment to the revitalization of the Village Center," Wolfram said in a press release.

The BRDA is encouraging property owners in the Village Center who are interested in having environmental investigations carried out on their property to contact the agency through the town manager's office at 860-267-4468.

East Hampton Parent Unhappy With School System's Bullying Policy

by Claire Michalewicz

The East Hampton school system says it's taking steps to address bullying in its schools, but at least one parent says those steps aren't enough.

In a letter sent home to parents today, Superintendent of Schools Judith Golden outlined the policies in place for handling bullying and other altercations between students at the town's schools.

But Jessica Squier said the policies aren't effective. Her 6-year-old son, a first-grader at Memorial School, has been taunted by other children since he was in preschool, she said.

"He has been pushed, hit, sat on and threatened," she said. "The school basically told me they did all they could.

"They need to admit they have a bullying problem," Squier said.

Under the schools' policies, Squier said, a child has to be victimized by the same student on at least two separate occasions for the behavior to be considered bullying. She said this policy isn't effective, since it doesn't address all situations in which students harass others.

Superintendent of Schools Judith Golden said bullying is defined by state law, and teachers and administrators are responsible for dis-

tinguishing between bullying and other altercations.

But Squier said these policies aren't adequate, since it means a child can be victimized by several different students, and it wouldn't count as bullying.

Squier said her lawyer, Kenneth Barber, recently met with Golden and with Memorial School Principal Karen Fitzsimmons, who said they did what they were required to by law. Barber confirmed that Squier is his client, but said he could not speak about the details of the meeting.

"I was bullied from kindergarten to the day I graduated," Squier said. "I won't let that happen to my son."

"The East Hampton school system has failed me, and now my son," Squier said. "He loves school. He doesn't want to miss a day." She said her son had not had problems with other students in the past few months, but she still has concerns.

Golden said that while she could not comment on any individual student's behavior or concerns, she wanted to reassure parents that teachers and administrators do address bullying in the schools.

Golden said she was sending a letter home to parents today to address concerns about bullying, and to explain the schools' policies for handling problems.

"Bullying has become increasingly problematic in today's society," Golden wrote. "Our legislators wisely updated and approved the statutes regarding bullying in school so that we would be able to more effectively deal with such situations when they occur."

She explained that under Public Act 08-160, bullying is defined as "any overt acts by a student or group of students directed against another student with the intent to ridicule, harass, humiliate or intimidate the other student while on the school grounds, at a school-sponsored activity of on a school bus, which acts are committed more than once against any student during the school year."

Since the behavior had to happen more than once, Golden said, many other altercations or teasing between students could be misinterpreted as bullying, but would not count as bullying under state law. For example, she said, if a child was harassed by one student one day, and another student later, parents might interpret it as bullying.

But though that would not count as bullying, she said, teachers would still address the students' behavior.

Another problem that often goes unnoticed, Golden said, is cyberbullying. She said school employees contact parents if it comes to their attention, but the best way to prevent it is usually for parents to closely monitor their children's online activities.

If parents suspected their children were being bullied, she said, they should contact the school administrators.

"It may be difficult or your child during the investigation but in the long run will be empowering for him or her," she wrote.

Memorial School Assistant Principal Maryssa Edele said she had no further information about the school's bullying policies, beyond what Golden had addressed in her letter.

Squier said she isn't looking to cause a stir, but simply to keep her son safe. In a letter to the *RiverEast* in the fall, Squier encouraged parents of other bullied children to contact her, but she said she only received three responses from parents of current East Hampton students.

"I know that there are more than that," Squier said. "People need to stand up for their kids."

MHHDC Changes Minutes, Former Member Not Satisfied

by Claire Michalewicz

The Middle Haddam Historic District Commission has voted to make some of the changes to its meeting minutes that a former member requested, but these changes may not be enough.

At its meeting last Thursday, Jan. 27, the commission voted to change its minutes from May 17, 2006, to read that Margaret McCutcheon Faber had been elected to the position of "clerk/vice chair," rather than "clerk," as the document had previously read.

But Faber said these changes are both incorrect and insufficient. In a letter sent to the commission on Wednesday, Feb. 2, Faber says that the minutes should read "vice chair/clerk" rather than "clerk/vice chair." Nowhere in any of the documentation about the issue is her position listed as "clerk/vice chair," Faber said.

Faber, who served on the commission from 2006-07, sent the current commission members a written request in November. She explained that she had been elected "vice chair/clerk" at the meeting on May 17, 2006, but due to a clerical error, her position was only recorded as clerk.

Later, Faber alleged, other commission members accused her of trying to usurp power by claiming to be vice chair. The other members, Faber said, insisted that she had only been elected clerk. Faber said the claim that she had wrongfully assumed the position was part of a pattern of bullying from former commission members that led her to resign in 2007, after less than a year on the MHHDC.

In her November letter to the commission, Faber requested that the minutes be altered to accurately reflect her position. She said she would file an ethics complaint if they didn't comply by Dec. 31, but changed that deadline to Jan. 31 after the commission canceled its December meeting.

The commission requested an opinion from Town Attorney Jean D'Aquila, who explained that on the meeting recording, Faber was clearly elected "vice chair/clerk," and the minutes could be changed to reflect that. But, D'Aquila said, minutes can only be changed to correct an error or omission. If Faber had been referred to only as "clerk" at all subsequent meetings, those

minutes could not be changed, D'Aquila said.

At the commission's meeting, Chairman James Royster proposed changing only the minutes from the meeting at which Faber was elected to her position, but not the subsequent meetings.

"We would open up the possibility of endless tinkering with already-approved minutes," Royster said. "The time to make changes is the subsequent meeting when minutes are adopted."

Royster pointed out that in subsequent meetings, the commission didn't take any action with regard to Faber's position. Since Faber was referred to as the clerk, he said, the records should reflect that.

The commission also declined to notify all members of the MHHDC since 2006, with Royster explaining that Faber could notify them herself if she wished.

"Our focus should be to ensure the accuracy of our records," Royster said.

There was little discussion from other commission members at the meeting. Vice Chairman Richard Walsh asked Royster to read the

corrected motion aloud, but instead, Royster explained where the words "vice chair" should be inserted.

Royster said Thursday that the commission would take up the matter at its next meeting. Vice chair and clerk, Royster said, are two separate positions, sometimes held by two different people.

"The order in which those positions are stated does not matter," Royster said. "It's just become absurd."

Faber said she thinks the minutes for the subsequent meetings should be changed as well, but she didn't include this request in her letter "because the most important correction is the actual motion." In all the subsequent meeting minutes, she said, her position is only mentioned at the beginning, in the list of commissioners present. In total, she said, there are 10 places that should be corrected.

The next MHHDC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 24, at 6:30 p.m. at Town Hall, 20 E. High St.

Heavy Snow Leads to Building Collapses Across Portland

by Claire Michalewicz

After four building collapses late last week, the town may have averted a fifth over the weekend, as Portland Library was saved from possibly becoming the latest architectural casualty of heavy snow buildup.

Building Official Lincoln White said it was noticed last Friday morning that the snow on the roof had caused its western portion to sag, pushing the ceiling down with it. The library was closed Friday and Saturday while crews worked to remove snow from the roof, and it returned to its normal position. The library was able to reopen on Monday.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said the sagging in the library was so bad that the door to a meeting room was scraping against the ceiling tiles. As a precaution, she said, crews also cleared snow from roofs on the modular classrooms at Valley View School, part of the senior center and Firehouse One over the weekend.

White said the town was looking at its capital improvement fund to consider replacing the library roof in the next year.

The concern about the library roof came after four building collapses in town last Thursday, Jan. 27. No injuries were reported in any of the collapses.

Portland Volunteer Fire Department Chief Robert Shea said the first collapse was reported around 4 a.m. last Thursday at Midstate Recovery Systems, located at 285 Airline Ave. The three-sided building completely collapsed under the weight of the snow, Shea said. The collapse triggered the building's sprinkler system, he said, causing flooding in the area and shutting down the building's electrical system. Representatives from Midstate Recovery could not be reached for comment this week.

Shea said the second call came about an hour later, at the vacant A & M True Value hardware store on Route 66. The roof of the vacant sec-

tion buckled under the weight of the snow, but the left side of the building, which houses Natural Nails & Spa, was unaffected.

White said the two sections of the building had been constructed at different times. The vacant portion, he said, was built in the 1940s, while the adjacent two-story section went up in the 1990s. He said that as long as the roof on the older section of the building doesn't weaken any more, the newer section should be safe.

A third collapse was reported around 9 a.m., at a house on Tryon Street where a porch collapsed. Shea said firefighters had a difficult time responding to the scene, as the street had not yet been plowed.

A fourth collapse was reported late Thursday evening, White said, at Middlesex Marine at 674 Main St. White said the showroom, with a large glass window, buckled under the heavy snow and collapsed. On Monday, clean-up crews were working to remove the damaged portion of the building. The owner of the boat store could not be reached for comment this week.

* * *

Snow wreaked havoc on more than just buildings in town, as the Portland Public Schools calendar was disrupted, again. The schools were closed Monday – for the seventh time this year – after the roads were deemed unsafe for school buses. The Board of Selectmen made the decision at an emergency meeting held Sunday afternoon, Bransfield said.

Bransfield said she toured the town on Sunday to survey the roads, and decided that many of them were too narrow for buses to safely pass. She called an emergency meeting and consulted with police Lieutenant Ron Milardo and Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen.

Bransfield said the propane explosion and fire on Summer Street delayed snow removal over the weekend, because many of the public works employees were helping out at the scene.



Four buildings collapsed in Portland last Thursday, Jan. 27, including Middlesex Marine, pictured above. Town officials said the large glass window in the showroom buckled under the weight of the snow.

On Sunday and Monday, she said, employees worked 24 hours a day, in three shifts, to clear snow from roads.

She said the crews weren't able to clear all the roads, but they did enough work for schools to open on Tuesday morning. The schools then dismissed students early that day, due to another snowstorm. Bransfield said two school buses were hit with difficulties that afternoon, with one involved in a minor collision with a pick-up truck and the other getting stuck in the snow.

The collision happened around 12:15 p.m., Bransfield said, on Cox Hill Road, east of Penfield Road. She said a pick-up truck side-

swiped the bus and caused minor damage to both vehicles.

There were 17 children on the bus at the time, and no injuries were reported, she said. She said the bus was able to continue on its route.

Bransfield said the other bus got stuck in snow on Maple Road at around 1 p.m. The public works department responded to sand the road, and the bus continued. Nichols Bus Service representative Ashley Johnson said there were 19 elementary school students on the bus. No injuries were reported, she said, and it took about 45 minutes to free the bus.

Portland schools were closed again on Wednesday.

Friends Look Back on Life of Longtime Portland Selectman

by Claire Michalewicz

Last month, Portland lost a dedicated longtime friend, public servant and baseball coach. Thomas W. Flood Jr. died Jan. 23 at the age of 67, after a long illness.

Friends and family members recalled Flood as outspoken and colorful, but always committed to helping others.

A member of the Democratic Town Committee for over 35 years, Flood also served a total of 14 years as a selectman, from 1989 to 1991, and from 1993 to 2005. Flood was also known for his commitment to youth services in town, and his involvement in many of the local baseball leagues.

Pinky Murphy was a lifelong friend of Flood's, and said Flood was an outspoken man with strong beliefs, who always had an interest in helping others.

"He was just a good man," Murphy said. He said the two had attended St. Mary's grammar school together in Portland, and remained friends into adulthood.

"We seem to have grown in sync in each stage of our lives," Murphy said.

Over the years, Murphy said, the two were involved in local politics together, and enjoyed watching sports and playing poker. Murphy said sports were one of Flood's passions, and he was an avid fan of baseball, basketball and football.

Howard Rosenbaum served on the Board of Selectmen with Flood for seven years, and said he was unique in his personality and viewpoints.

"I don't think he'll be replaced anytime soon," Rosenbaum said, saying that Flood had a way of speaking his mind even if his opinion might be unpopular.

"I might say he wasn't a good politician in that sense," Rosenbaum added with a laugh, explaining that Flood didn't always say what people wanted to hear.

"He just said what he thought," Rosenbaum said. "It was well-thought out, and he used good logic."

Rosenbaum and Flood were both on the board when the town purchased the Brownstone quarry properties, and said Flood was one of the strongest proponents for buying them. Rosenbaum said Flood led the other selectmen down to the property on a tour, since he was the only one who knew how to get there.

"In my mind, he added a tremendous amount to the Board of Selectmen," he added.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said working with Flood was always exciting, and said he was probably "unmatched" in terms of his dedication to Portland.

"He was passionate about education and also passionate about his town," Bransfield said.

According to his obituary, which appeared in last week's *Rivereast*, Flood, one of 11 children, was born in New Haven, and spent most of his life in Portland. He owned his own investigative business for over 35 years. His son Brian explained that his father mainly worked with lawyers on personal injury claims, conducting interviews and investigating their cases.

John Buckley, an attorney who worked with Flood for over 30 years, called him "an original." Buckley gave the eulogy at Flood's funeral, which was held on Saturday, Jan. 29, at the Church of Saint Mary.

"He was one of a kind," Buckley said this week. "He was as good of a private investigator as I ever met and as good of a friend."

Buckley also said Flood showed a commitment to democracy and political ideals.

"He was a Democrat with a capital 'D,'" Buckley said. "He believed in people. He believed in their ability to do things."

One of Flood's other passions was baseball.

Flood started the town's American Legion baseball league in 1980, since the town had no baseball program for teens 16 and older. Rick Borg coached baseball with him for several years, and said that even when Portland's team was brand-new, Flood always expected the best from his players.

"Although we were never the best team in the [division], we were very competitive in large part because Tom demanded excellence," Borg said in an e-mail.

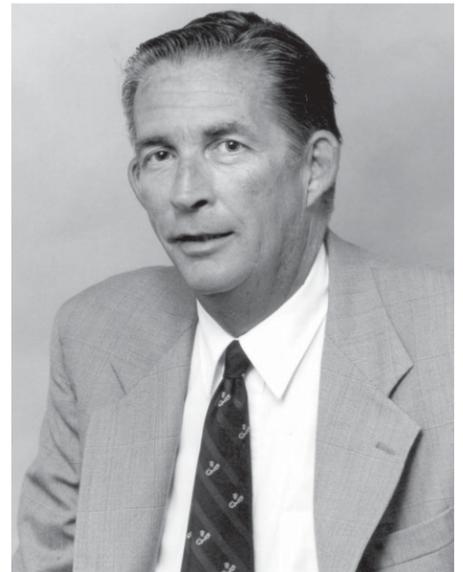
Borg said Flood was known for the colorful language he used with his baseball players, and part of the assistant coaches' job was to keep parents out of earshot during his post-game speeches. Brian Flood said he remembers his father teaching his players how to catch groundballs.

"Do you know why you have a crack in your ass?" Flood said his father would say. "God gave you a crack in your ass so you could bend over and catch groundballs."

Borg said Flood would often run between work and the baseball games, often calling to tell them he was running late and would meet the team there.

"Sometimes what 'running late' meant was that he was in Albany, NY at 4:30 p.m. and the game was at 6:00," Borg said in an e-mail. "Somehow he would always show up before the first pitch."

In his eulogy, Buckley said, he told an anecdote that he said illustrates the way Flood seemed to draw people in. Buckley said he and Flood were working with a man who had been injured in an accident and had taken up oil painting. The client took a photo of Buckley and Flood, and promised to paint a picture of Buckley after he won the case. A few months



Thomas W. Flood Jr.

later, he said, Buckley went to the client's house to pick up the painting – only to find that he had painted a picture of Flood.

"I told him 'You've forgotten who the lawyer was,'" Buckley said.

Flood leaves behind his wife, Nancy McGetrick Flood, four children and three grandchildren, along with many siblings and nieces and nephews.

"Tom was an original. I will never forget the fun times we had together and all I learned from him," Borg said.

"He was just a wonderful, wonderful guy who would do anything for anybody," Buckley said. "He enjoyed nothing more in life than helping people."

Obituaries

East Hampton

Brian Joseph Hasselman

Brian "Moose" Joseph Hasselman died unexpectedly in Last Vegas, NV on Jan. 11. Brian was born Jan. 3, 1971, in New Britain, son of Gerald Hasselman and Michele Filon.

He attended school in Bristol and East Hampton. Brian was a graduate of East Hampton High School and the Connecticut School of Broadcasting.

He was a police explorer with Post 42 of the East Hampton Police Explorers. He worked various musical venues as a sound mixer, and founded and owned Blue Moose Productions in Southington. A lover of all music, Gov't. Mule, the Allman Brothers and Stevie Ray Vaughan were a few of his favorites. He produced CDs for various enterprising up and coming musical groups.

He was an extreme and aggressive wheelchair rugby player with the Connecticut Jammers. He was an advocate for the NSCIA Chapter in Las Vegas, NV.

Brian leaves behind a large and loving family, friends, mentors and musical acquaintances that spread throughout the United States and Canada. Brian is survived by his father, Gerald Hasselman and stepmother, Nancy Varney Hasselman of East Hampton; his mother, Michele Filon Totten; sister Amy of Wolcott; his paternal grandparents, Arthur and Marie Hasselman of East Hampton; and many aunts, uncles and cousins.

He was predeceased by his Aunt Annette Hasselman, Uncle Fred Higgins, maternal grandparents Mr. and Mrs. David Filon, Uncle John Filon, Aunt Barbara Filon, Uncle David Filon, cousins Randall Bendas and Robert Varney and Yvonne Varney Culver.

Besides family, Brian is survived by friends Sal, Murph, Jim and many, many others to cherish their fond memories of Moose.

Special thanks to Nana Hasselman for her continuous love and support and to Sal for looking after Brian in Las Vegas.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, Feb. 12 at noon in the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton. Burial will be in the spring at the convenience of the family.

Friends may call at the funeral home on Saturday morning from 10 a.m. until the time of the service.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to NSCIA CT Chapter, c/o Gaylord Hospital, Gaylord Farms Road, Wallingford, CT 06492, or to a charity of the donor's choice.

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

Colchester

Charles O. Peterson

Charles O. Peterson of Colchester passed away Thursday evening, Jan. 27, at the Chestelm HCC in Moodus. He was 84 years old and had lived an exemplary life.

He leaves behind his wife of 62 and a half years, Laura; three sons, Bruce, Charles and Daniel; two daughters-in-law, Susan and Carol; and two grandchildren, James and Colleen.

Charles was employed for many years at IBM and retired from there in 1982. After his retirement, he and Laura began building houses first in Rhode Island and four years later in Lyme, then in North Carolina and later back in Colchester – they loved building houses.

Charles served with the Armed Forces during World War II in the Army and received an honorable discharge in 1946. He then went to college at USC, graduating in 1952. He took time out to get married to Laura in 1948 then went back to school. He was a devoted Christian man and attended St. Paul Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles where he met and married Laura. They had three children, the first two being twins, Bruce and Charles, and later, Danny. The company IBM wanted Charles at World Headquarters in New York, so they agreed to move to the East Coast, where they resided for 49 years.

They had moved to Stamford from Los Angeles. They were active in the Fish (First Presbyterian) Church in Stamford for many years. Charles was an elder in the church and taught church school and was on many other boards and committees. Once retired, they moved to Rhode Island and built a house overlooking the Sound and were active in Dunns Corner Presbyterian Church again serving as an elder and on other committees.

Moving back to Lyme, they were active in the Congregational Church in Lyme until they left there for North Carolina. They enjoyed ice-free winters for six years before missing family get-togethers so much they came back to Connecticut settling in Colchester, the 57th best place to live in the U.S.

His family would like to thank those dedicated nurses and aides at Chestelm for their great care during his time there.

Friends called Tuesday morning, Feb. 1, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, before a chapel service with full military honors. Burial will be private in the State Veterans Cemetery, Middletown.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Alan Kent Barcomb

Alan Kent Barcomb, 60, of Colchester, formerly of Manchester, beloved husband of Patty (Keily) Barcomb, passed away Friday, Jan. 28, at Yale-New Haven Hospital.

Alan was born in North Adams, MA on Sept. 12, 1950. He resided in Bennington, VT, and later moved to Connecticut where he graduated from Wilbur Cross High School in New Haven. He was employed at Foxwoods Casino for the past 17 years and previously had worked for 14 years as a machinist at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft, East Hartford. He loved Harley Davidson and was an avid 10-pin bowler.

Alan was dedicated to his family, wife, Patty Barcomb of Colchester; two sons, Alan W. Barcomb and his wife Christine of East Haven, Jason Barcomb and his companion, Allison Batdorff of Bloomfield Hills, MI; daughter, Ashley Thomas and husband, Benjamin of Colchester; father, William Barcomb and wife, Betty of Murrells Inlet, SC; mother, Anne (Cormier) Fox and husband, Joel of Wellfleet, MA; brother, Lowell Greene of Bennington, VT; two sisters, Barbara Anderson of Bennington, VT, and Tammie Barcomb of Northfield, MN; five grandchildren, Matthew, Daniel and Alyssa Barcomb, all of East Haven, Shannon Keily Barcomb of Colchester and Beatrix Eryn Batdorff of Bloomfield Hills, MI. Other survivors include numerous nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, cousins.

Funeral services were held Wednesday, Feb. 2, at Holmes Funeral Home, 400 Main St., Manchester, with visitation prior to the service, at the funeral home. Burial will be private.

Memorial contributions may be made to American Heart Association, P.O. Box 417005, Boston, MA 02241-7005.

To sign the online guestbook or for directions to the funeral home, visit holmes-watkinsfuneralhomes.com.



Portland

E. Stuart Mitchell

E. Stuart Mitchell, 81, of Portland, beloved husband for 57 years of Janet (Bates) Mitchell, died Tuesday, Jan. 25. Stuart was born in Springfield, MA, on March 23, 1929, son of the late Earl M. Mitchell and Priscilla McGinnis Mitchell.

Stuart graduated in 1948 from the Lenox School, Lenox, MA and received a Bachelor of Science degree in animal husbandry from UMass – Amherst in 1952. He was an Eagle Scout, a proud member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon and a Mason with the Belchertown Lodge, Belchertown, MA and a founding member of the Eagle Mafia. Stuart was commanding officer of the 143rd Tank Battalion of the Connecticut National Guard – Naugatuck saving numerous lives during the historic floods of 1955.

Stuart worked in the metals industry initially working with Bay State Smelting and Refining in the Springfield, MA, area. His family moved to Connecticut to begin Mitchell Smelting & Refining, first operations were in the Botsford section of Newtown, later moving to and settling in Portland. The family added the companies: CIMCO and Specialty Refractories and later purchased Scott & Daniels in Portland. Stuart and his brother Richard developed and built Chimney Point Marine in Old Saybrook. Stuart was introduced to sailing by his wife and went on to participate in the Off Soundings race and compete in the Newport to Bermuda race in their yawl, Swan IV.

One of Stuart's passions was for rehabilitating raptors and teaching the public to respect the environmental value of Birds of Prey. His first fully-documented success was a bald eagle referred to as Miss Enfield who was rehabilitated, banded and released. She was located years later nesting near Montreal, Canada. This success led him to build the Raptor Hilton, taking in an average of one hundred raptors per year. After 28 years the Raptor Hilton was closed, so that Stuart and Jan could indulge in another passion, traveling and photographing wildlife. His favorite photographic subjects were grizzly bears.

Stuart felt that camping was meant to be in a tent whether at the Arctic Ocean, along the Mackenzie River or on Tuktoyaktuk in the Northwest Territories. He, and his beloved Jan, tented their way across the USA, north into Canada and Alaska numerous times using numerous routes. They celebrated their anniversary at the Arctic Ocean twice. Wanting to share his photos, Stuart began a small card company selling cards in both the US and Canada. When not traveling, Stuart spent summers in Port au Persil, Quebec and winters in balmy Connecticut. Stuart was also president of Hartford Audubon Society from 1973-75 and 1977 Hartford Audubon Society Member of the Year and treasurer of the Connecticut Foundrymen's Association for many years.

Stuart is survived by his sons, Mark Stuart Mitchell and Keith Bates Mitchell; two daughters, Suanne Mitchell-Jackson and her husband, Albert; daughter, Lynne Mitchell and her partner, Julian Hatch; granddaughter, Chloe Jackson; and grand-dogs, Boo, Kerry and Opie.

Stuart was predeceased by a brother, Richard Arlen Mitchell.

A celebration of Stuart's life was held at the Hemlock Grange Hall Sunday, Jan. 30. The family suggests that the best way to memorialize Stuart would be to buy a birdfeeder, fill it daily with black oil sunflower seeds and think of him as you watch the birds come in to feed.

Portland

Melanie Dawn Tortora

Melanie Dawn "Mel" Tortora, 36 years old, of Portland, beloved wife of Thomas Michael Tortora, passed away suddenly Friday, Jan. 28, in Hartford Hospital with her husband at her side. She was born on May 21, 1974 in Allentown, PA, daughter of the late Larry and Sharon Casey.

Besides her husband, she is survived by her grandmother, Joyce Mohr, and her two brothers, Shawn Bruce Casey and Jamie Lee Casey, and her nieces and nephews, Taylor Lynn Casey, Evan Bruce Casey, Sierra Charlene Casey, Arianni Dawn Casey and Jade Ryann Casey.

Melanie was a devoted wife and friend to many. She loved her animals, boating, gardening, and of course her passion was her stained glass projects which are adorned throughout their home and many of her friends' and families' homes.

A service will be held today, Feb. 4, at 11 a.m., in the Portland Memorial Funeral Home 231 Main St., Portland. Burial will be at a later date.

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

Hebron

Archie B. Vincent

Archie B. Vincent, 73, of Glastonbury, beloved husband of Theresa (Slogesky) Vincent, died Thursday, Jan. 27, at Hartford Hospital. Born July 7, 1937, in Harrisville, PA, son of the late Kenneth and Helen (Gardner) Vincent, he had lived in Hebron for 35 years and 10 years in South Carolina, moving back to Glastonbury a short time ago.

Prior to his retirement in 1992 he worked in the Research Lab at UTC for 35 years. Archie was a member of the Elks in Willimantic, the Myrtle Beach Car Club and the Moose Club. He was an avid golfer and bowler and had served in the U.S. Navy.

Besides his wife he is survived by his three children and their spouses, Donna and Thomas Mancino of Coventry, Kimberly and Timothy Kelly of Glastonbury, David and Connie Vincent of Vernon; five grandchildren, Erica, Alex, Abbie, Erin, Justin; a brother-in-law and sister-in-law, John and Kathy Slogesky of Glastonbury; several nieces and nephews and many long time friends that he enjoyed dinner and traveling with. He was predeceased by two brothers, James and William Vincent.

Funeral service was Monday, Jan. 31, in the Mulryan Funeral Home, 725 Hebron Ave., Glastonbury. Burial with military honors will be in Neipsis Cemetery in the spring. Friends called at the funeral home Sunday, Jan. 30.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the American Cancer Society, 825 Brook St., Rocky Hill, CT. 06067.

For online tributes, visit mulryanfh.com.

East Hampton

Algert Usanis

Algert Usanis, 89, of East Hampton, widower of the late Louise (Leveque) Usanis, died Monday, Jan. 24, at Middlesex Hospital. Algert was born June 21, 1921, in Windsor Locks, and served his country during WWII in the U.S. Army. He had worked as a truck driver for Pratt & Whitney before his retirement. He was a member of St. Patrick Church.

He leaves his close friends Richard and Lois Caron of East Hampton and was predeceased by his wife Louise in 1989.

A graveside service was held Monday, Jan. 31, in the family plot in St. Patrick Cemetery in East Hampton, with the Rev. Walter Nagle officiating. The Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, has care of the arrangements. To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Portland

Hope J. Kachinsky

Hope J. Kachinsky of Portland, formerly of Middletown and Beverly Hills, FL, climbed the stairs to Heaven Wednesday, Jan. 26, just two days shy of her 86th birthday.

Hope was born in Gouverneur, NY to Thomas and Ruby (Kellogg) Higgins. She was raised in Scranton, PA, but spent most of her girlhood summers in Gouverneur frolicking at Sylvia Lake with her best friend Mabel. Hope was a member of the Girls Scouts of America for over 50 years. Many women will remember her as their dedicated troop leader and summer camp director. She was a past matron of Puritan Chapter of the Order of Eastern Star, as well as a former member of the First Baptist Church in Middletown and a current member of the First Congregational Church in Portland. She will be remembered by many from the beautiful hand embroidered pictures that she created and bestowed as gifts.

Hope leaves in this world her much-loved children, daughter, Faith Fraulino and her husband, Jeff of Portland, and son, Stephen Kachinsky and his fiancée Pabla Barros of Valley Glen, CA. She also leaves five grandchildren whom she loved so much: Michael, David and Timothy Fraulino of Portland and Christine and Juliet Kachinsky of Valley Glen. Hope is also survived by a cousin, Norma Brass and her husband, Sanford, of Star Lake, NY and her sister-in-law, Martha LaPorta of Middletown. She will be missed by her dear friend Helen, who phoned her every day, as well as her girlfriends from childhood who always kept in touch with her: Margaretta, Mabel, Muriel and Virginia.

Hope was able to stay in her own home with the feline light of her life, Rodney "the Boss," due to the faithful and diligent care of her homecare aides, Pam and Cheryl and her family will be forever grateful to them.

Hope's beloved husband, Alfred Kachinsky and their son Alfie were already at the gates of Heaven to welcome her.

A memorial service to celebrate Hope's life was held Wednesday, Feb. 2, at First Congregational Church, 554 Main St., Portland.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in her memory to the First Congregational Church of Portland Memorial Fund or The Connecticut Humane Society.