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The 24th annual Hebron Maple Festival was held last weekend, attracting crowds to town for food, activities – and syrup-making demonstrations. Here, Woody Acres Sugar House owner Russ Schaller explains the sweet process to Jim Carroll and his son James. Photo by Julie Kristoff

Crowds Throng To Maple Fest

by Geeta Schrayter

Spring paid a visit last weekend, just in time for the 24th annual Hebron Maple Festival. The temperature may have only hit the 40s, but it felt plenty warm thanks to the cold everyone had gotten used to, and enticed people to venture out and enjoy all the weekend had to offer.

On Saturday, melting snow, mud and puddles were all signs spring would – eventually – be here to stay. Another sign could be found at the various sugar houses where, slowly but surely, the sap needed to make the star of the show – pure Connecticut maple syrup – had begun to run.

At Pierce's Sugar House, which was at a standstill earlier in the week due to the cold, the process was just getting started. A slow but steady drip of sap could be seen from the first maple tree the family tapped when they moved to town years ago, and steam rose from the sugar house chimney as owner Ray Pierce was finally able to start boiling the sap he'd collected – which was mostly frozen.

(Last week, Pierce explained he needed enough liquid sap to cover the bottom of the evaporator and keep the temperature at a steady 112 degrees Fahrenheit; only then could he start adding the blocks of frozen sap.)

Despite being able to get the process started, though, it was too late for syrup to be ready for the weekend. And so, while visitors were able to view the process and ask questions, there was no warm syrup to purchase.

"There were a lot of good questions as usual," Pierce said of the weekend. But, he furthered, "we had no product."

"We were able to boil off and finally make our first batch on Sunday," Pierce explained Wednesday, "so there were a lot of disappointed people, but we are in the process of boiling now. ... We were able to pick up 7-800 gallons of sap."

In spite of the lack of syrup during the actual Maple Festival, Pierce said "the weekend was phenomenal as far as attendance." And even without the sugar houses operating at full throttle, there were still plenty of ways to enjoy maple syrup throughout the weekend.

The center of town bustled. There was a constant line for maple cotton candy and cups of maple milk; people enjoyed maple pudding cake, maple milkshakes and ice cream soda floats, maple fudge and maple- and chocolate-covered pretzels.

Pulled pork sandwiches were available to enjoy with a side of maple-flavored baked beans, as were maple-flavored ham, egg and cheese sandwiches.

The American Legion, as always, also offered fare like hamburgers and hot dogs, French fries and fried dough, which could be savored with pizza sauce, powdered sugar and cinnamon or a drizzle of maple syrup.

The scent of the various treats filled the air as people ate and mingled, standing together and talking or walking around to look at the various events.

Inside Old Town Hall, the annual quilt show put on by the Hebron Historical Society provided an opportunity to look at a variety of

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'True Beauty' Focus of New Play in East Hampton

by Elizabeth Bowling

Kate Upton may look like a true beauty on the cover of this year's *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit edition – but what readers don't see is the team of hair and make up artists that get her camera ready and the crew of tech geniuses that Photoshop her to perfection. That unattainable perfection puts an immense amount of pressure on every young woman who doesn't look like the final product of a Kate Upton photo shoot.

Cue artistic director of Epoch Arts Elizabeth Namen, who works with young, local girls to build their confidence and teach them that there is more to being beautiful than outward appearances.

"We want them to have enough self-esteem to not buy into" the idea that beauty is only on the surface, Namen said.

Namen established a group called "Breaking Silences" seven years ago when she saw there was a need for girls to get together and, essentially, break their silences. The group is a sort of sisterhood in which teenaged girls are encouraged to share their stories with one another and with their instructors. Those stories include first- or second-hand struggles with self-esteem, as well as experiences with bullying,

self-harm or suicide, and absentee or alcoholic parents.

Breaking Silences falls under the umbrella of Epoch Arts, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping young people learn to express themselves through the arts. Namen has been involved in Epoch Arts since it opened 17 years ago.

Breaking Silences is made up of 20 girls in grades six through 12. It meets one night each week throughout the school year at the Epoch Arts building. According to Namen, the program is funded by a \$4,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Middlesex County. Currently two of the 20 girls in the group are from Portland and the rest are East Hampton residents.

Every year, the girls of Breaking Silences write and put on an original play about women. Namen said the group always puts on its play in March because it's National Women's Month. This year's play – which runs this weekend only – is called *True Beauty*; it's about a beauty contest filled with superficial contestants who are judged by a blind judge, thus making their physical beauty moot.

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Breaking Silences, an Epoch Arts girls' group, is putting on an original, one-act play called *True Beauty* today and tomorrow, at 7 p.m. both nights, at Epoch, located at 27 Skinner St., East Hampton. The group is made up of 20 local girls, who will address what it means to be beautiful.



David Armata, co-owner of Ted's IGA in Hebron, stands watch as some of the kids at the ice cream contest held during the Maple Fest race to finish first, while the crowd cheers them on.



As always, there were plenty of quilts to admire at the annual quilt show put on by the Hebron Historical Society. The quilts ranged in size, style and age, ensuring there was a cozy cover to catch everyone's eye.

Maple Fest cont. from Front Page

quilts, both big and small, old and new, classic and ornate.

Nearby, the Hebron Volunteer Fire Department offered up sugar and snow and excited kids were able to tour fire apparatus.

Further up Main Street, more kids gathered Saturday for the ice cream eating contest put on by Ted's IGA. The kids were split into different age groups and excitedly raced to finish their ice cream. Some succumbed to the pain of brain freeze, but all finished with smiles on their faces – and ice cream smears, too.

"It was a very good turnout," said Ted's co-owner David Armata. "I was very pleased."

Armata added the contest had been taking place during the Maple Fest for over 11 years and along with getting people down to the store, it was fun, too.

"It's a fun event we do," he said. "We really enjoy doing it."

Maple Fest Committee Chair and owner of Wenzel's Sugar House Ron Wenzel said this week it appeared that "fun" extended beyond the kids to everyone who attended the festival.

"I didn't get any nasty-grams" about the weekend, Wenzel laughed. "It appears everyone had fun."

And at his sugar house, he said they did "very well."

"I was very, very surprised and pleased," he stated.

Like Pierce, the weather kept Wenzel from making as much maple syrup as he normally would around this time, but he was able to offer up syrup for sale over the weekend he'd made the year prior.

"It's been an unusual winter" he said, adding that he's been able to make 10-15 gallons

of syrup in the days since the festival.

Wenzel said anyone looking to purchase syrup from one of the sugar houses in town who wasn't able to over the weekend should give them a call. He explained they make syrup because "we like to do it. And if we have it, we like to sell it. But we don't have a store per se, so give us a call if you want to come down and get some."

Speaking on the festival, Town Manager Andrew Tierney said this week everything went "great." Tierney said he was in the center Saturday, attended the Hebron Lions' pancake breakfast Sunday and ventured to some of the sugar houses.

"I was very happy with the turnout," he said. "We met people from Canada and Wisconsin who happened to be in the area and came."

Tierney said the festival provided people the opportunity to get outside and get rid of some of their cabin fever while also showcasing the town.

"It brings a lot of people to town," he explained. "It showcases the center of town, people talk about it for days and weeks afterwards. There are a lot of people that display their wares from Hebron and their businesses, and from what I heard everybody was busy."

And while now there may be a lull from that busyness, as the 24th annual Maple Festival has come and gone, time will undoubtedly fly by, and when September arrives once more, planning will begin for next year, which is bound to be extra special as it will mark the festival's silver anniversary.

But until then, visitors will have sweet maple memories of this year to get them by.

Additional photos from this year's Maple Fest can be seen at glcitizen.com.



There was quite the crowd in the center of Hebron last weekend, as visitors from near and far – Hebron Town Manager Andrew Tierney said he'd met with people from Canada and Wisconsin – gathered to break their cabin fever, socialize, enjoy some maple treats and a variety of events.

True Beauty cont. from Front Page

Namen recalled the girls brainstorming for the play and telling her, "We want to tell our stories."

Through sharing their life experiences, Namen said the girls addressed "some pretty tough issues." She added, "They're strong, brave girls."

Namen said the group and the play wouldn't be nearly as successful as it is without the help of her assistant directors, Carlee MacDonald and Rachel Martin.

Martin started working with Breaking Silences one year ago. She said she was initially drawn to the group because she "really loved what Breaking Silences was here for."

She said she likes being involved in a group that helps girls "grow to be in a confident place." She added, "I feel every young girl needs confidence developed."

Martin explained that Breaking Silences is for "at-risk girls," as well as those that are "in a good place." The purpose of the group is to empower girls, celebrate what makes them unique and help them cope with the pressure of conforming to stereotypes.

Martin's role in this year's play, in addition to being one of Namen's assistant directors, is to prepare the projections that will go up on stage on a billboard-type screen. The projections include images of models before and after the Photoshop process, for example.

She said her job is to show the audience how much make-up and Photoshopping goes into making models look so stereotypically beautiful.

She said she now knows first-hand "how negative it is in that modeling industry."

"It was scary," Martin said of her task. "I hated it."

She concluded, "I think these girls are absolutely gorgeous and beautiful just the way they are."

The girls took four weeks – starting in January – to write the play and started rehearsing immediately after the writing was completed, Namen said.

Regarding the plot of the one-act, hour-long play, Namen said in the beginning of the play, the girls' characters are "superficial and fake." Then they find they are being judged solely based on their inner-beauty.

Namen said the play poses the question, "Once you take away the superficial stuff, who are you? What is your character?"

At one point in the play, the girls wear sashes that have negative words written on them and replace those sashes with ones that have more positive messages.

Namen summed up the play as having "a great message."

The girls agreed.

Valerie Girvin, 16, a sophomore at East Hampton High School, joined Breaking Silences two months ago. She said for her personally, the play "is about stripping yourself of negative things." That's why she'll be stripping off sashes with the words "hideous" and "push-over" and replacing them with a sash that reads, "hope that things could change."

When she wrote her lines for the play, Girvin said she was inspired by a past of self-harm. And though she said she still feels anxiety when it comes to speaking, writing and performing in front of others, she is learning "to not fear criticism."

"I'm a little bit nervous but I'm hoping it'll

go well," Girvin said.

Olivia Scovill, a 16-year-old junior at Vinal Technical High School, said the meaning of the play, to her, is about "being yourself."

Scovill has been a member of Breaking Silences for four years and was eager to share her story in this year's play. She said her writing was inspired by a "bad past" that she had with her father. She will be shedding a sash that reads "ghost" and replacing it with one that says "hope."

"I'm really not nervous because I've been doing plays for a long time. I'm excited," Scovill said.

Jordan D'Avignon, 15, is a freshman at Vinal Tech and has been in Breaking Silences for two years. "I can trust everybody here," she said of the group, "I feel like this is my second home."

Through Breaking Silences, the 15-year-old said she learned "not to judge people right away. They might be going through something and we don't know it."

Regarding *True Beauty*, D'Avignon said, "I feel like it's going to touch a lot of hearts this year."

D'Avignon said she will replace the word "depression" with "hope" in the play.

"I've been depressed all my life," she said. "Then I joined Breaking Silences and felt less depressed."

Emma Peltier plays the winner of last year's beauty contest in *True Beauty*. The 14-year-old EHHS freshman is new to Breaking Silences and said, "I'm excited but I'm also nervous because I've never done a play."

Her character will replace the words "gossiping" and "bitterness" with "encouragement" and "forgiveness."

Regarding her first year with Breaking Silences, Peltier said, "I feel like I'm more aware of what actually goes on in the world because some of the girls have gone through some really tough stuff."

Namen said working with 20 teenaged girls is tiring but "so gratifying."

She recalled one instance about a month ago when three of the girls in the group were so mad at each other they wouldn't even speak to one another. One evening at Breaking Silences, Namen subtly addressed the topics of bullying and friendship. Slowly the girls realized that the way they were acting toward each other was inappropriate and soon they became friends.

When Namen asked them what happened to cause them to become friends, they told her, "it's because of this place," she recalled.

"That's what keeps you going," Namen said, sounding satisfied. She added that her job is to "plant the seeds" and hope that the girls bloom.

Namen said she feels working with these young girls is her purpose in life. She is particularly passionate about promoting mental, physical and emotional health in young women because she has a 10-year-old daughter. Put simply, Namen said, "We want our girls to be healthy."

True Beauty will hit the stage today, March 14, and tomorrow, March 15, at 7 p.m. both nights at Epoch Arts, 27 Skinner St., East Hampton. To reserve tickets for the show, email info@epocharts.org, or call 860-365-0337. For more information on Breaking Silences, visit the Epoch Arts website, epocharts.org.

Portland Musicians to Release First Album

by Elizabeth Bowling

Local band J-Cherry and the Strawberries recently finished recording its first album, *In the Belly of the Beast*, a 13-track record due to be released in April.

Portland resident Jennifer Shafer Wood, 43, is the lead vocalist and songwriter, not to mention the title name for J-Cherry and the Strawberries.

In an interview Monday morning in Shafer Wood's studio, the singer explained how she came up with the stage name "J-Cherry" about eight years ago. She said she wanted a name with "more pizzazz" than Jennifer. Shafer Wood recalled stumbling upon an open-mic in Hartford at a place called "The Russell." It was there that she recited her poem entitled "Cherry."

"After I did the poem, the emcee said, 'You're not Jennifer, you're J-Cherry,' and I said, 'I like that!'"

Asked how the other members of the band were dubbed "the Strawberries," Shafer Wood said, "It all happened at a music festival [in Rhode Island]."

Shafer Wood and the band weren't featured in the festival; in fact, they were there as music fans. But they found an area in which to perform.

"We were joking, 'We're J-Cherry and the Strawberries,'" Shafer Wood said, noting that it had a nice ring to it, "and it stuck."

Shafer Wood said the band formed about four years ago and its members range in age from 28 to 63. She laughed that the "middle-aged band" is young at heart.

Shafer Wood said she and the Strawberries use her shed-turned-music studio in her yard to play their music in the winter, but when the weather warms up they move into her big red barn, just a few yards away from the studio.

The first Strawberry, Tim Sparks, 50, does vocals, plays rhythm guitar, and is a songwriter for the band. He's also Shafer Wood's husband. The two have been married for two years. Shafer Wood said she and her husband "feed off of each other" when they perform.

While Shafer Wood focuses on raising a family and creating art, Sparks works as a hotel manager in Niantic.

Kevin Day, 46, is not featured on the album, because he joined the band after it recorded *In the Belly of the Beast*. But the East Hampton resident currently plays the drums in J-Cherry and the Strawberries and serves as the front man in the Belltown band Gigglesauce.

The drummer featured on the album is Phill Bullaro, 47, of Portland. Rich Hatfield, 55, of Deep River, plays lead guitar, and Steve Far,

28, of Naugatuck, plays bass and guitar, and sings.

Stan Lindh, 63, of East Hampton, serves as the final Strawberry. He is a poet and percussionist. He goes by his stage name, "Sympetalous," which Shafer Wood said means "flower that is opening." One of Lindh's poems is featured in the band's new album, in a song called "The Illuminati."

Regarding the band's process in writing its songs, Shafer Wood said, "Everybody contributes." She furthered, "We like to feature other bandmates' work and play it all together."

Because everybody writes and contributes, she said, "it keeps the sound dynamic."

Shafer Wood said her band often gets compared to Jefferson Airplane, a band from the 1960s and '70s, and she often gets compared to that group's lead singer, Grace Slick.

She described J-Cherry and the Strawberries music as having "an ethereal feel." She said listening to the band is like going back in time to a cafe in the '60s.

She further described their sound as "funky blues" with "a kind of rootsy feel to the songs."

The album title, *In the Belly of the Beast*, is based on a poem Shafer Wood wrote years ago. "It's a really intense poem about life – it's got good points and it's got bad points," she said.

Shafer Wood said she was inspired in creating this album by "life and the experience of being." She added, "Poetry and music are just the best way for me to express myself."

The poet and singer is also an artist. Shafer Wood used pen and ink to draw the album's cover. The front cover of the album is a blue ink drawing of half of a woman's face – her eyes are closed which represents "unconscious space," Shafer Wood explained. The back of the album is a black ink drawing of another half of a woman's face – this one with her eyes open, representing "conscious space," Shafer Wood furthered.

Shafer Wood's always been interested in poetry – "I've been writing poetry since I was a kid," she said – though she also had a musical background, as she sang in the choir when she was in school.

When she writes music now, Shafer Wood said the lyrics come first, then the instrumentals. However, she said she likes to improvise lyrics with her husband when he plays a riff.

Shafer Wood said the songs on this album "question the world that we're living in now." For example, one of the songs on the album that her husband wrote called "Dirty Water" essentially makes the claim that "there's some-



Local band J-Cherry and the Strawberries is due to release its first album next month. Jennifer Shafer Wood, pictured here, is the band's lead singer.

thing not quite right," Shafer Wood explained.

But Shafer Wood said her favorite song on the album is, "Lies," which was written by her late father. "It was hard for me to learn to sing [this particular song]," Shafer Wood said, but once she finally got it, "it was like magic."

Shafer Wood said she had lost touch with her father for many years. But in 1999, the two reconnected and she became inspired by his music. She visited him twice where he was living in Switzerland, before he passed away in 2001. Her father's widow gave Shafer Wood his Gibson Les Paul guitar.

Shafer Wood doesn't play the guitar, but she'd have her friends try it on for size. Much like Cinderella's glass slipper, as Shafer Wood put it, her now-husband Sparks picked up her dad's guitar and "played it so beautifully." At the time, the two were just friends, but shortly after this, their romance blossomed.

Between the two of them, the couple has five children – four are Shafer Wood's and one is Sparks'.

Shafer Wood said she lived in Portland on-and-off for about 12 years. She said the Portland area has a lot of "nooks and crannies" in which local artists can showcase their music and other works.

The band recorded its album just a few minutes down the road from home, at The Coffee House Recording Studio in Middletown. It was produced by Michael Arafeh and recorded in front of a live audience.

"It's a process," Shafer Wood said of putting an album together. "It's tenuous sometimes; mostly it's a lot of fun."

She said it took about a year "to come up with the body of music" for the album.

But when it came time to actually record the music, Shafer Wood said, "we were tight. Everybody was in sync together." She described all the band members as "charged up," causing the recording to come out "great," she said. Though she admitted being in a recording studio is "nerve-racking."

The next and final step for J-Cherry and the Strawberries is to actually print the album. To help fund the printing process, the band started a Kickstarter campaign.

Essentially, Kickstarter is a website where artists can raise money to produce their works without the need of record companies and producers. Shafer Wood called the campaign "a win-win situation" for the band and its fans because rewards are given to the people who donate money. For example, when someone pledges, they get a copy of the album.

As of Monday, J-Cherry and the Strawberries raised \$600 via its Kickstarter campaign, but Shafer Wood said their goal is to raise \$1,500. The deadline for pledging is March 24.

To learn more about J-Cherry and the Strawberries, or to contribute to the Kickstarter campaign, visit Shafer Wood's blog, jcherry.presents.com. To follow her on Facebook, like her fan page, "J-Cherry" (by searching for "J-Cherry" on facebook.com).

Bransfield Proposes \$31.61 Million Portland Budget

by Elizabeth Bowling

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield presented her proposed \$31.61 million town budget for 2014-15 at a public hearing Tuesday night at Portland High School.

The proposed spending package is up 2.55 percent – or \$787,491 – from the current year's \$30.82 million budget.

Bransfield's proposed budget is broken down into two categories: spending for General Government – coming in at \$12,349,643 – and a proposed \$19,261,703 for the Board of Education.

The approximately \$12.35 million General Government budget is up 3.89 percent – or \$462,016 – from the current year's \$11,887,627 budget.

The budget also features a proposed mill rate of 31.95, up from the current year's rate of 31.28. In terms of taxes, this would translate to a homeowner with property assessed at \$250,000 being charged \$7,987.50 in taxes, up from the current year's \$7,820.

Approximately \$1.38 million of Bransfield's total proposed budget for General Government will go to the "general government" line item, which includes funding for the first selectwoman, Board of Selectmen, assessor, Board of Assessment Appeals, town clerk, central services and technology department, among others.

Another approximately \$1.84 million is allocated to public safety and approximately \$2.16 million goes to public works. Approximately \$2.59 million falls under the "employee fringe benefits" line item and around \$2.06

million falls under the "debt service" line item. The last big line item is "sundry," which calls for approximately \$1.04 million in next year's budget.

The "planning and development" line item is set at approximately \$167,000; "health and human services" would get about \$285,000; "risk management" line item, \$145,000; and the Portland Library, about \$678,000.

Regarding the overall proposed increase of 3.89 percent for General Government, Bransfield said it is mostly due to an emphasis on capital.

The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is a five-year plan that identifies items that require major repair or replacement with regard to the town's infrastructure. The CIP includes a proposed five-year capital lease in the amount of \$1,372,000. Capital lease principal and interest payments are increased by \$288,428, which is 62 percent of the General Government increase.

In terms of Portland's CIP, \$1,645,121 has been proposed for fiscal year 2014-15 – \$121,000 of that approximately \$1.65 million is estimated to be funded through taxation and \$86,000 of it is estimated to be funded through water and sewer usage fees.

For the 2014-15 year, the Board of Education is set to receive \$46,000 from the CIP; the fire department, \$484,000; grounds maintenance, \$165,000; Parks and Recreation, \$35,000; the police department, \$126,000; public works, approximately \$634,000; the sewer

department, \$45,000; town-wide improvements, \$69,000; and the water department, \$41,000.

But, as Portland's CIP is a five-year plan, the proposed amount identified for 2015 through 2019 totals \$9,816,821. (Though according to Bransfield's presentation, "Of the five years, only the first year is approved by the Board of Selectmen with the remaining years more of a 'wish list' which will be looked at and reviewed annually prior to actual budget adoption.")

According to Bransfield's presentation, the Grand List value for the 2014-15 fiscal year is \$802,729,670 – an increase of \$5,732,473 from the current year's Grand List. Bransfield called the Grand List increase "good news." The value of one mill is \$802,730 – an increase of \$5,733 over the current year.

* * *

The approximately \$19.26 million Board of Education budget is up 1.72 percent – or \$325,475 – from its current year's \$18,936,228 budget. Bransfield called the 1.72 percent school board increase "a very modest increase."

Bransfield said the Board of Education budget makes up approximately 60 percent of the total town budget, which is typical for Portland. Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen explained at the public hearing Tuesday the major Board of Education budget categories for the 2014-15 school year.

Doyen said the "largest expenditure" is the "salaries" line item, which includes additional classroom staff.

Doyen said the "salaries" line item includes "all of our people expenses." She noted, "We are a people-driven kind of organization."

The additional staffing includes a half-time high school math teacher; a half-time special education and board certified behavior analyst; two paraprofessional positions (to be filled by one person); \$20,000 to go toward the high school play that is produced every other year; and an increase in the athletic director's stipend.

Regarding the increased athletic director stipend, Doyen said, "We were significantly under what other districts were paying their athletic directors. It's a very important position."

Another major budget category is the "purchased services" line item, which is an "eclectic collection of outside services we purchase or contract with," Doyen explained. For example, garbage and waste pick-up, as well as laundry services and the school lunch program fall under this category.

Doyen said purchased services are proposed to increase for next year "primarily to sustain our school lunch program."

Doyen also noted some decreases in costs, like in the "repairs and maintenance," "books, supplies and utilities" and "technology hardware and software" line items. Those savings are due to the one-time expense of configuring all-day kindergarten, a decrease in natural gas rates, and technology grant money, respectively.

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More information on the town budget can be found at portlandct.org.

East Hampton School Board Discusses Testing, Field Trip Concerns

by Elizabeth Bowling

The Board of Education addressed a handful of matters at its meeting Monday night, including the new standardized testing, field trip concerns and inclusion in a potential town facilities feasibility committee.

Regarding the new standardized testing, Superintendent of Schools Diane Dugas said the “testing window” for the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) field test is March 18 to April 4.

Dugas said she looks forward to getting feedback from the field test and seeing how prepared the district is for the SBAC at this point.

School board member Scott Minnick said that in future meetings, he’d like to know more about what’s going on with SBAC testing.

“I’m just curious to know the level of disruption the SBAC test is causing,” Minnick said, noting that the district is “limited” – in terms of computerized test-taking – to the number of computers it has, which turns testing into a months-long process.

Minnick also expressed concern Tuesday regarding chaperones for field trips. Regarding this weekend’s Model United Nations Club overnight trip to the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Minnick asked, “Is a one [teacher chaperone] to 24 [students] ratio some-

thing we’re comfortable with?”

Dugas responded, “My understanding is that the UMass staff are there” to help the chaperone throughout the conference.

Even so, Minnick said, “I would feel more comfortable with two chaperones – one being male and one being female.”

Minnick asked that there be a concerted effort going forward to include at least one chaperone of each sex for field trips.

But as for the Model UN Club’s trip to UMass this weekend, the board unanimously voted to move forward with it as planned – with only one chaperone.

* * *

Regarding the Town Council’s proposed resolution to create a town facilities feasibility committee, the school board voted to suggest to the council that a member of the Board of Education be on the committee if it is, in fact, created.

Specifically, the board voted unanimously to petition the Town Council to reconsider the membership of its proposed resolution for a town facilities building committee to include one member of the Board of Education.

Board member Josh Piteo expressed his approval of the motion. He said, “Of course you

have to have somebody from Board of Ed. on [the town facilities feasibility committee].”

Board of Education Chairman Ken Barber agreed, saying, “I think that seeing as how pretty much two-thirds of the town’s physical plan is entrusted to us as the caretakers, we should at least have some sort of representation.”

“This will impact the schools,” he furthered, noting that any change in town facilities could impact where town meetings are held, for example.

Barber concluded, “We just want to be a part of the discussion. That’s all we want.”

(The Town Council decided at its meeting Tuesday night that it would wait until its next meeting, Tuesday, March 25, to vote on the resolution.)

* * *

Monday night’s Board of Education meeting also included a presentation to the board by East Hampton Middle School Principal Nancy Brier and guidance counselor Joanna Mercaldi on the middle school’s student advisory model. Brier called the advisory program “an important part of our middle school program” and “part of our character building initiative.”

Essentially, the program is a way for students to build a community between their peers and their program advisors. Mercaldi said the program is a way for teachers and advisors to support students. She furthered it’s a way for students to gain experience in active listening, encouragement and talent recognition.

Brier furthered that having a “strong, warm, inviting, safe, respectful school” leads to better learning for students and enables them to build good relationships with their peers.

She said for this year’s advisory program there is a focus each month of the school year. Those focuses included cooperation, responsibility, thankfulness, friendship, kindness, compassion, pride and respect.

Regarding the advisory committee’s decision to touch upon a different topic each month, Mercaldi said, “We wanted to make sure that we were hitting topics that were really developing [the students’] character so that way they can be valued members in our community.”

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The next regularly-scheduled Board of Education meeting will be held Tuesday, March 25, at 7 p.m., at the East Hampton High School library.

East Hampton Man Arrested on Multiple Charges

by Elizabeth Bowling

An East Hampton man was arrested Tuesday on multiple charges relating to firearms and illegal drug possession, police said.

According to state police, Erich Hansen, 32, of 93 Main St., second floor, was charged Tuesday, March 11, with possession of: over a half ounce of marijuana; a controlled substance; a controlled substance with intent to sell; a controlled substance with intent to sell within 1,500 feet of a school; and drug paraphernalia. He was also charged with criminal possession of a firearm; illegal and unsafe storage of a firearm; and two counts of risk of injury to a minor.

According to a press release from the Statewide Narcotics Task Force North Central Field Office, the Narcotics Task Force conducted a several-months long investigation before executing a search and seizure warrant for the Main Street apartment. The task force was assisted by investigators from the East Hampton Police Department and special agents from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the release stated.

As a result of the search and seizure, police seized a loaded .38-caliber revolver, 105 .38-caliber rounds, a digital scanner locked into the EHPD radio frequency, 41 pills of Adderall, eight ounces of marijuana, a digital scale and \$1,078 in cash.

The news release stated Hansen was initially held on a \$150,000 bond, and was due at Middletown Superior Court Wednesday, March 12. According to the state judicial website, Hansen has since been released on a promise to appear, and is next due in court March 24. He has yet to enter a plea, according to the website.

According to court records, Hansen has a history of arrests dating back to 2005. The list includes a charge for possession of a controlled substance (one half to four ounces of marijuana).

Additionally, Hansen was sentenced with unconditional discharge for illegal operation of a motor vehicle under 14-140 suspension; sentenced to one year of jail time, execution suspended, and two years of probation, for second-degree failure to appear; sentenced to 90 days jail time, execution suspended and one year probation for illegal operation of motor vehicle under suspension; and one year jail time, execution suspended, and 18 months’ probation for fourth-degree conspiracy to commit larceny.

Regarding Tuesday’s arrest, the press release also stated that a “Drug Endangered Children referral” was made to the Department of Children and Families, which is conducting its own independent investigation.

East Hampton Residents to Vote on Purchase of Fire Tanker Truck

by Elizabeth Bowling

The Town Council voted at its meeting Tuesday to set a town meeting for Monday, March 24, at which residents will vote on the purchase of a \$250,000 fire tanker truck to be used by the East Hampton Volunteer Fire Department.

If approved by the town attorney, and then approved at the town meeting, the funds for the purchase would come out of the general fund.

This is a change from what the council originally proposed at its last meeting, Feb. 25. Initially, the funding was proposed to come out of

the general fund as well as the public safety fund. Now, the entirety of the purchase would come out of the general fund, as recommended by the Board of Finance.

The town meeting is set for Monday, March 24, at 7 p.m. at the East Hampton Middle School library.

* * *

The next regularly scheduled East Hampton Town Council meeting is Tuesday, March 25, at 6:30 p.m. at Town Hall.

Hebron Resident Dies from CO Poisoning

by Geeta Schrayter

A Hebron woman was found dead in a car in Lebanon Monday morning, as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning, state police said.

According to police, Hebron resident Brittany Holland, 25, and Lebanon resident Casey Senechal, 26, were found Monday in a running car located on Smith Road in Lebanon near Route 207.

Police said a 911 call was received at 8:50 a.m., after someone passing the vehicle noticed the engine was running and the occupants seemed to be in distress.

After responders arrived, Holland and Senechal were located inside the vehicle and pronounced dead at the scene.

The scene was secured by responding troopers and processed by the State Police Major Crime Squad Detectives who conducted an untimely death investigation.

Police said the preliminary investigation determined there was “no criminal aspect” to the case, and that was confirmed Tuesday by Connecticut State Police Public Information Officer Lt. J. Paul Vance.

In an update sent Tuesday afternoon, Vance said the medical examiners had ruled carbon monoxide poisoning as the cause of death and “the troopers conducting the investigation have ruled the deaths accidental.”

East Hampton Police News

2/23: Fred T. Jones III, 43, of 7 Kim Ileen Ct., Cromwell, was issued a summons for speeding, failure to maintain insurance and failure to carry registration, East Hampton Police said.

2/26: Kevin J. Donadio, 55, of 16 Kryval Rd., Meriden, was arrested for DUI, failure to drive right and following too close, police said.

3/1: Eliza Vezzani Patterson, 18, of 3 East Rd., Storrs was arrested for disorderly conduct, third-degree assault, third-degree burglary, second-degree criminal mischief and evading, police said.

Hebron Police News

3/2: State Police said residents of a home on Gilead Street had their vehicle windows smashed out while parked in their driveway sometime between March 1 and 2. Police said the homeowners also reported some items had been stolen from the garage behind the house, which had been locked. Police said this incident is being investigated.

3/5: State Police said Jennifer Cordeau, 20, of 168B Boston Turnpike, Bolton, was arrested on an active warrant for sixth-degree larceny and illegal use of credit card.

3/9: State Police said Tammy Burnett, 45, of 274 Old Colchester Rd., Amston, was charged with DUI and restricted turns.

Marlborough Police News

3/5: State Police said Cathleen Wetmore, 50, of 24 Penee Ln., Colchester, was charged with DUI.

Portland Police News

2/19: Richard Fazzino, 55, of 126 High St., was charged with third-degree criminal mischief, Portland Police said.

3/7: Elle Vaughan, 47, of 9 Highland Ave., was charged with second-degree breach of peach, police said.

3/9: A 17-year-old male was arrested for possession of less than half an ounce of marijuana, police said.

Andover Crash Sends Two to Hospital

A three-car crash on Route 6 last week sent two to the hospital, state police said.

Police said the crash occurred shortly before 7:30 a.m. Tuesday, March 4, eastbound on Route 6, near the intersection with Route 316. Police said a vehicle driven by Melissa Mishriky, 32, Cromwell, was stopped behind a vehicle driven by Timothy C. Papineau, 50, of Baltic, at a red light. A vehicle driven by Alyssa Naylea Torres, 30, of Manchester, then struck the rear of Mishriky, forcing her to hit Papineau, police said.

Police said Mishriky and her passenger, Shawn B. Cyr, 32, of Newington, were transported to Manchester Memorial Hospital by the Andover Fire Department for complaints of pain. Torres was issued a violation for failure to keep a safe and reasonable distance.

Good Turnout for Budget Forum in Colchester

by Melissa Roberto

Monday's public forum on the Colchester town operations and education budgets was attended by a crowd of more than 50, and featured several citizens speaking both in favor and opposition of costs proposed for the 2014-15 fiscal year.

The two budgets total \$54,168,280, an increase of \$1.94 million over the current year, or 3.72 percent. Both spending packages were presented for the first time to the Board of Finance last week. The town operations budget, presented by First Selectman Gregg Schuster, totals \$13,767,042, while the Board of Education budget totals \$40,401,238.

Each budget is to be voted on separately at a referendum scheduled for May 6.

At the start of Monday's forum, Schuster said he was "glad to see a good turnout." He said the forums are designed for the public to give feedback and ask questions in order for elected officials to know what to do in terms of next steps. Of course, Schuster stressed to the crowd, the budget process is "lengthy and requires lots of input."

"It's not an easy decision," the selectman furthered. "We're always battling between the needs and wants of the town versus what's affordable. Hopefully we can make the best decision with input from all of you."

Additionally, Schuster explained the finance board only has the authority to tell the Board of Education how much to reduce or cut, but does not have the authority to decide what should be reduced or cut. The town operations budget differs in that the finance board is allowed to determine which actual line items get reduced or cut.

Paula McDonald was the first member of the public to speak. President of the Colchester youth football league, McDonald requested money be placed into the budget for Parks and Recreation staffing and for field repair. Schuster admitted that in the past not enough money has been put into the fields over time, but said fields in town are difficult to fix due to overuse of them.

Director of Operations John Jones agreed. "The problem is they're overused," he said. "We have never had a chance to shut down a

field for a season and redo it completely like it should be. We have a couple fields in dire need. We just can't keep up with the fields when we have people on them 24/7."

Lynette Dimmock also spoke to the topic. She said money within the Parks and Recreation account seems to get slashed each year, and would like to see funding stay in the budget so fields – like one already scheduled to be closed in the fall – can be maintained and made safer.

Citizens also weighed heavily on the education budget. One man in the crowd felt it could be trimmed.

"There [are] so many expenditures that don't have to do with the quality of education, safety, learning," the citizen said. "Do we really need a new loudspeaker? Do the schools really need carpeting?"

Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein explained the loudspeaker is a replacement of a system at Bacon Academy that is "very clearly" a security issue, allowing school officials to communicate with students during a lockdown.

Others seated in the crowd said they'd like to see no cuts made to the education budget.

"I do not see a lot of fat in the system," Vincent Rose said. "This is not a budget that has a lot of places to trim. I stand strongly in opposition to any cut in the education budget."

Additionally, in terms of the school budget, a majority of citizens expressed concern about the possibility of additional staff members being cut from the budget. The proposed Board of Education budget calls for 1.6 staff reductions; however, at their March 6 meeting, Board of Finance members discussed the impact of additional staff reductions, as enrollment is projected to drop district-wide by 142 students.

Bacon Academy student Alexa Gagosz passionately spoke in support of maintaining small class sizes and against teacher reductions.

"We want people to come here to Colchester," Gagosz said. "In order to have the enrollment go up, which will help us financially, the only way to do that is for people to see our test scores, to see how our education is. We can't

have good test scores unless we have the correct number of kids in a class size."

Plus, Gagosz added, "We have an excellent staff at the high school."

Goldstein admitted 80 percent of the school budget is in staffing, because "people" is what makes up the district and the "quality of the system." He assured the crowd there are other areas that would be looked at in terms of reductions and that decisions are based upon "what's right for the kids," adding he personally felt class sizes of 30 students is "inappropriate."

Even Board of Finance Chairman Rob Tarlov put the crowd at ease regarding school staff reductions. He stressed no decisions have yet been made, and explained the topic had been discussed last week so finance board members could better understand how the schools and staff operate.

"I ask a lot of questions because we have to justify what we do to a lot of different people," Tarlov said.

One woman in the crowd said she felt small class sizes such as one with six students "just isn't cost-effective," to which another student, Emma Wake, said teachers who often teach small, advanced placement (AP) classes also teach larger ones.

Bacon Academy math teacher Meaghan Kehoegreen pointed out the high school has large classes too.

"We're sitting hear talking about how small our class sizes are but it runs the full gamut," the math teacher said. "I would say the average is 24-25 students. It's not just small classes."

Cuts to the school budget were further discussed at Tuesday's board of education meeting and Wednesday's finance meeting. (A full article of this appears elsewhere in this issue.)

Another topic discussed by the public Monday was the Colchester Police Department. Schuster has proposed an extra \$28,000 for the town operations budget to add one additional police officer. He said this was to help the local department move towards 24/7 police coverage, and pointed out Colchester officers are off-duty at 11 p.m., leaving only one state trooper re-

sponsible for coverage of the town along with two other towns. Schuster added the state police Troop K barracks often give off the "false impression" that there's 24/7 police protection in Colchester.

Citizens seemed surprised by the lack of overnight coverage, and Ralph Marshall commented he's "willing to pay the extra money" for an additional officer.

Colchester Police Officer Brian Kowalsky, who was present at the forum, attempted to ease citizens' minds, by explaining Colchester officers give higher attention to the town than the state police.

"We take part in serving the town," he said. "We want to do everything we can to help you with your issue whatever it may be."

Schuster said he did not want the public to panic.

"We just don't believe that level of [local police] coverage is adequate anymore," Schuster explained.

After the forum, Goldstein spoke positively of the evening's dialogue.

"I think we had a terrific dialogue about a lot of issues in the budget overall, not just the education budget," the chairman said. "This is the right stage to provide it to us."

Finance board chairman Rob Tarlov had also reminded citizens in the forum of the difficulty boards face each year. His comment referenced results of a budget survey that was taken by the public. (The survey had been distributed to the public on the town website and hard copies were made available at Town Hall, Cragin Memorial Library and the Senior Center.)

"The one thing that never changes with this survey is that people want their taxes cut but not their services," Tarlov said. "Things get more expensive every year so to maintain services cost more every year. ... It's a true balancing act trying to keep the services as they are and still hold the line on our taxes."

Discussions on the budget and possible action on it are scheduled to take place at a Board of Finance meeting scheduled for Wednesday, March 19, 7 p.m. at Town Hall.

Colchester Board Looks at 'Probable' School Budget Cuts

by Melissa Roberto

Superintendent of Schools Jeffry Mathieu Tuesday presented more than \$200,000 possible reductions to the Board of Education budget. The school board then presented the list to the Board of Finance Wednesday, and while no action has yet to be taken on the cuts, Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein Thursday described the reductions as 'probable.'

According to Goldstein, discussion between both boards at the March 6 Board of Finance meeting had left school board members with the impression their budget would need to be trimmed. Therefore, school administration met Monday to create a list of reductions.

The list produced a total of \$220,443 in cuts. These included cuts to materials, technology, professional development, and the most cost savings result in cuts to staff. Citizens voiced concerns about cutting school staff on Monday at a public forum (a full story on that forum appears elsewhere in this issue) but after Monday's meeting, Goldstein said 80 percent of the budget goes to salaries, and that cutting staff is "just a reality" the board would look at.

In Tuesday's Board of Education meeting, Mathieu stressed the \$40.4 million he originally presented, and that the school board subsequently approved, is a budget he felt was "ex-

tremely reasonable."

"That budget had things in it that were going to move the town forward," Mathieu said. "We hear it from the board all the time about test scores, opportunities for students, and that budget brought that."

He continued, "No where was there, in my opinion, fluff in this budget," adding that the cuts he presented to the board Tuesday "do have impact."

The largest cut would be a \$53,813 expense of one guidance counselor at Bacon Academy. Mathieu said this is a position "near and dear to my heart," as he formerly requested for eight years adding the position during the time he was the high school principal. The decision to include the position on the list of cuts is due to reduced enrollment. However, even with the reduced enrollment, the impact would bring the caseload for four remaining counselors from 171 students to 215, Mathieu said.

Another possible cut would be of a full-time kindergarten teacher, which would yield a savings of \$48,596. This too is due to projected enrollment decline, as the New England School Development Council (NESDEC) predicts 13 fewer kindergarten students for the next school year, Mathieu said. Kindergarten class sizes cur-

rently average 19.8, and the impact of losing a teacher would bring average class size to 20.7.

Still, Mathieu said there is caution in this reduction. There are 78 children in town eligible for kindergarten who haven't yet enrolled for the 2014-15 year. And it may be months before Mathieu knows for sure how many kindergarteners will climb on board for next year, as parents can register their children as late as the first day of school.

"If all of a sudden we have more students, I may be coming to the board saying 'NESDEC was off in our projection,'" he explained. "There are some sweaty palms and nerves in doing that."

Other staff reductions discussed involved a .4 math teacher, a .4 English teacher, and a .4 social studies teacher, all at Bacon Academy. Each would produce a savings of \$19,405.

Additionally, a reduction of \$18,000 for Technology Thin Client labs at all of the schools was presented. The impact is that those would be purchased from a technology grant instead.

Also, Mathieu proposed reducing funding for student testing for Advanced Placement (AP) classes by \$14,580. The cost of taking the tests per student used to be covered by Project Opening Doors (POD), but that funding has since ended. In his initial budget presentation last

month, Mathieu had proposed district to pay in full for the tests. The reduction would result in the district covering half of the costs, meaning students would be responsible for paying the other half.

Other reductions Mathieu presented Tuesday include an \$8,000 cut of server racks, reducing projector bulbs and a projector at CES, reducing English reading materials at the William J. Johnston Middle School (WJMS), and trimming professional development at Jack Jackter Intermediate School and WJMS.

Though no cuts have yet to be finalized, if they were implemented, the budget would drop to \$40,180,795, which would represent an increase of 2.83 percent over the current budget, as opposed to the initial 3.39 percent increase.

On Wednesday, the finance board accepted the recommendations but did not take any action on them. While Goldstein explained Thursday that the finance board did not request any further cuts from the school budget, he described the ones the board discussed Tuesday as "probable."

The Board of Education budget is to be further discussed and possibly acted on by the Board of Finance in its meeting next Wednesday, March 19, at 7 p.m. at Town Hall.

AES Principal Search Progressing

by Geeta Schrayter

The Board of Education Wednesday was given an update on the principal/director of curriculum search necessary due to the upcoming retirement of Andover Elementary School Principal David Griffin at the end of the school year.

Superintendent of Schools Andrew Maneggia said at the meeting the search was “on target” for a March completion date. He said interviews with three of the top five candidates took place Tuesday evening, and interviews with the final two were expected to take place Thursday.

“Hopefully we’ll be able to make a decision tomorrow night,” Maneggia said Wednesday, “then we will follow through on it; check references, do site visits and so fourth depending on the outcome of our search.”

Maneggia added a special Board of Education meeting will need to be scheduled once the committee finalizes the search.

School board member Whitney Covell, who is also part of the search committee, said there were a total of 12 applicants. Speaking on the final five, she said, “We feel the prospects were positive.”

“We’ll just have to see what tomorrow night holds and how well they perform,” she stated.

The end of Griffin’s tenure at Andover Elementary School may be known, but it hasn’t yet arrived, which means Griffin is still hard at work in both his role as principal and director of curriculum.

At Wednesday’s meeting, he focused on the latter when he discussed some of the professional development work taking place at the school.

“I think the teachers have done a wonderful job going to professional development to learn

how to roll out the Common Core [State Standards]” he said, before showing a video to the board to help illustrate “what’s going on in the classroom, what are the shifts in curriculum, and what’s expected of students and how teachers are going about it.”

In the video, math under the CCSS in an elementary classroom was examined to show some of the shifts in instruction and the learning that’s required of students. Part of the video also looked at English Language Arts under the CCSS.

Regarding math, Griffin said the expectations for each grade level have been “trimmed down.”

“So instead of having a spiral effect it’s more like a staircase,” Griffin explained. “Children have to master one step before moving to the next level.”

Griffin said some of the “extraneous materials” that had been a part of the kindergarten through second grade curriculum have been taken out, and “put in where the Common Core feels students can better understand it.”

“When I took math as a kid it’s kind of like you learn your multiplication tables, you learn formulas but there’s no understanding of that,” he stated.

Now, kids are going to have to understand what it is they’re doing and the reasons behind it.

Regarding English Language Arts, Griffin said there was going to be a shift away from “plain literature” and more of a focus on non-fiction writing.

“As adults, as college learners, as business people, most of the material we have to read and synthesize is non-fiction,” he explained as justification for the changes.

Everything Griffin mentioned and what was depicted in the video “is basically what our teachers are challenged with.”

“We talk about being lifelong learners and this is true of our teachers,” Griffin said. “They are embracing Common Core and they want to do a good job. Our teachers are saying ‘what do the standards look like in practice?’ and that’s what we’re doing in professional development.”

Maneggia added onto his point. “When we talked about professional development in the school calendar we indicated there’s an additional half day and a need for a lot of professional development time and that was the reason for adding that,” he explained.

The next scheduled half-day is March 21 and Maneggia said technology and math would be examined. For example, there’s a program that accompanies the school’s math series and moving forward, students will be taking computerized tests.

Maneggia called the work “tremendous” and said the staff at the school was doing a great job addressing everything, “but we just wanted to make the board aware of the challenges we’re all facing whether elementary teacher or high school.”

Also at the meeting, an update was provided on a possible regional bus contract to be shared between the Andover, Hebron, Marlborough and RHAM school boards.

Maneggia explained bidding would open March 25 and it was an opportunity the towns had worked hard to make happen.

“We finally got all the towns in the regional school district to have the same ending point for their contract,” he stated. “That took quite a

feat – it took almost three years to accomplish that, believe it or not.”

Most bus contracts are for five years, Maneggia explained, so the different towns had to renew their contracts for different amounts of time depending upon when they were entered into in order to align the ending dates. For example, Andover had to ask for a two year renewal, while Marlborough needed a one year renewal.

With all the contracts set to expire June 30, the group was “finally able to go out for a contract that would include all the towns, or it would allow the bus companies to bid separately and individually for various towns,” Maneggia stated.

A pre-bid conference was held Feb. 25 and attended by Nichols Bus, First Student Inc., Dattco Inc., and M & J Bus Co. Attending the conference was a requirement for any company that intended to bid on the contract, so Maneggia said the above companies were those expected to bid March 25, although they were under no requirement to do so.

After the bidding, Maneggia said an analysis would be done to determine which option is best for Andover.

“It may be nice to have one company do the whole region, but if that’s not the most cost-effective for Andover, my recommendation is that we take the bid that is most cost-effective for us,” he stated. “So we’ll wait and see what happens.”

The next regular Andover Board of Education meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 9, at 7 p.m. in the Andover Elementary School library.

Marlborough Finance Board Takes First Look at Budget

by Melissa Roberto

First Selectwoman Cathi Gaudinski Wednesday night gave a presentation to the Board of Finance for the proposed town operations and capital budgets for the upcoming 2014-15 fiscal year.

It was the first such presentation to come before the finance board. Present were board chairwoman Evelyn Godbout, vice chairman Cliff Denniss and members Doug Knowlton and Scott Fleehar.

The town operations budget was communicated at a total of \$4,612,919, or an increase of \$175,604, or 3.96 percent over the current fiscal year. Capital projects were shown totaling \$1,067,835, but are proposed to be funded through a number of methods.

The overall spending of the town will include more than just the aforementioned budgets. Though still subject to change, Gaudinski showed Marlborough’s portion of the RHAM budget at \$8,042,879, the local Board of Education budget at \$7,301,585, debt service to the town at \$2,535,314, and contingency – or costs for an emergency – does not yet have a value.

By plugging in the values that are known, the town’s overall spending package for the next fiscal year was shown at \$22,509,697, an increase of \$898,465, or 4.16 percent. However, in weeks ahead, the finance board will hold budget workshops, at which each budget will be reviewed before going to a public vote at an annual town meeting already scheduled for Monday, May 12.

In terms of the town operations budget, Gaudinski shared town revenue is at a 4.16 percent increase.

“We did quite well on our tax collection,” Godbout said, to which Gaudinski agreed.

Debt payment trend was also shown at a decline over the current year, which is what

Gaudinski said “we’ve been waiting for.”

Gaudinski explained budget drivers in the town operations budget were salaries and benefits, health, dental and life insurance, insurance and bonds, the resident trooper contract, road maintenance, snow removal and technology refresh.

Health insurance was shown at a 4 percent increase across the board, which affects 35 plans, including town and school employee accounts; Gaudinski described the health insurance increase being locked in at the same increase for all accounts as a “first.”

What Gaudinski told finance members is “the biggest increase you’ll see” in the operations budget is a \$45,000 jump within the resident trooper account. A contract has just been renewed by the state legislature, and it involves retroactivity, Gaudinski said.

The line items of snow removal and road maintenance supplies each are proposed to increase \$20,000 over the current year; the two line items total \$150,000.

Heating oil and diesel were presented to drop. Heating oil was presented to go from \$3.08 per gallon to \$3.00; diesel was shown going from \$3.16 to \$3.05 per gallon. Gasoline, proposed at \$3.52 and propane, at \$3.23, are each placeholders, Gaudinski said.

Eleven capital projects were also discussed and presented to be paid for in a variety of ways. A majority are to be paid for through the capital and non-recurring fund (CNR fund), at a total of \$485,750. That total is made up of: \$45,000 for the future capital expenditure reserve, \$40,000 for the grand list 2015 revaluation, \$171,500 for engineering costs of Williamsburg and South Road and reconstructing Fawn Brook Bridge, \$30,000 to replace an oil tank at Firehouse No. 2, police radio replace-

ments at \$15,700, a fuel master system for public works at \$60,000, a backhoe/loader for public works at \$73,500, and road improvements at \$50,000.

The budget proposes for \$19,775 to come out of a Parks and Recreation revolving fund, which is made up of the department’s revenue it receives from programs. \$15,650 would go towards reconstruction of the Rolling Ridge Tennis Court, and \$4,125 is proposed to go towards sand renewal at Blish Park Beach.

Finance board member Cliff Denniss questioned the need for the tennis court repair. He said it seems as though only residents living near the court utilize it.

“It’s a lot of money for a facility used by very, very few people,” Denniss said.

Gaudinski explained the court is open to anyone in the town. She said repairs include fixing a drainage issue, asphalt, nets and striping. The posts are also caving in, she added.

Denniss said he would like to know what the cost would be to remove it. He also asked Gaudinski to speak with an attorney to legally discuss the possibility of a homeowner’s association taking over the maintenance and liability of the court.

“Of course, I’m not sure if [an] association would even want to do that,” Denniss said, “but I would like to know we could do that and still comply to the deed.”

Selectman Denis Soucy said he personally knows of two families who do not live in the neighborhood who use the court. Gaudinski furthered she would look into Denniss’ requests but explained, “When we’re looking at facilities for Parks and Rec. that’s the one that needs to be taken care of.”

A backhoe/loader proposed for the public works department was presented at a cost of

\$130,000. The idea is to split the cost between two funding sources—the first is for \$73,550 to be paid for through the CNR fund, and the remaining \$56,450 is proposed to come from the capital expenditure reserve.

Gaudinski also shared road improvements are proposed at a total of \$375,860, with \$50,000 to be funded through the CNR fund, \$251,000 to be paid for through two state grants, and \$74,860 is proposed to be paid for through a general supplies line item within the town operations budget.

Discussion was also had on the capital expense of paying for 20 new air packs for the Marlborough Volunteer Fire Department. The value was initially included to be paid for through the CNR fund at a cost of \$180,000. However, Gaudinski said a five-year lease was also looked into, which would cost \$45,000 annually.

Fire Commissioner Mike Schadle and finance board member Doug Knowlton, member of the fire department, explained the need for the packs. The air packs were purchased in 1998 and have a 15-year life span, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), a federal agency that enforces safety and health legislation.

“I did a lot of research on the Internet,” Knowlton explained. “There’s a lot of departments in municipalities that would like to [extend the life of the packs] but it’s not approved to extend them beyond 15 years. We’re right now at 15 years.” A decision has not yet been made on how to fund the packs.

Budget workshops will continue, with the first occurring next Wednesday, March 19, at 7 p.m. in the Marlborough Elementary School library, where the local and regional school budgets will be presented.

Marlborough School Board Approves \$7.3 Million Budget

by Melissa Roberto

The Board of Education last Thursday, March 6, unanimously approved its 2014-15 fiscal year budget that amounts to \$7,301,585, which will head to the Board of Finance next for consideration.

The spending package reflects an increase of 1.67 percent over the current school budget, or an increase of \$119,980. The approved budget is actually \$3,200 more than what Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz initially proposed in January, which totaled \$7,298,322.

Sklarz said he's particularly pleased with next year's budget because it's one he feels keeps in line with a promise made by "past boards and the new board." That promise, he said, was that "as soon as the economy improved we would start restoring items like instructional supplies that had been reduced in the past."

Sklarz furthered the budget's ability to include funding for mandates such as the Common Core curriculum as well as staying true to the board's promise with only a 1.67 percent increase is "pretty remarkable."

"This is an exciting budget and the fact that the board, across the board, supported it is remarkable," he concluded.

The \$3,200 increase is the net result of multiple adjustments made to the January proposal, including both increases and decreases to line items. Sklarz said these changes are a result of either items being omitted from the budget or school officials receiving "more accurate" numbers for items that were once placeholders.

For example, health insurance costs were first placed in the budget at a 7.1 percent increase over the current year. That percentage dropped to 4 percent following negotiations, thus reflecting a drop of \$25,900.

However, another adjustment added nearly \$25,000 to the salaries account to cover the costs of two part-time music teachers at the school becoming full-time employees in the 2014-15 school year. This is due to instrumental music teacher Bruce Foote's retirement at the end of the school year.

"We were going to go out and hire a new instrumental music teacher and it turns out the two part-time choral teachers both expressed

desire to be full time and they were extremely qualified," Sklarz said.

One of the current part-time choral teachers will take over the instrumental music program in Foote's place, and the other will be responsible for the choral department.

Other additions from the original budget proposal include \$10,000 to the curriculum supplies account and \$2,400 to the health room supplies account. Sklarz said these costs were included because teachers and even parents were paying out of their own pockets for items either used for lessons or other items such as tissues, hand wipes, sanitizers, etc.

"What we were finding was there were certain supplies we should be buying as a district and it shouldn't be the parents' and teachers' responsibility," Sklarz said.

Additionally, \$4,800 for six laptops was eliminated from the initial budget proposal within the capital outlay account. This is due to the laptops being pre-funded this year through the undesignated fund balance based upon monthly financial reports showing the board has a surplus.

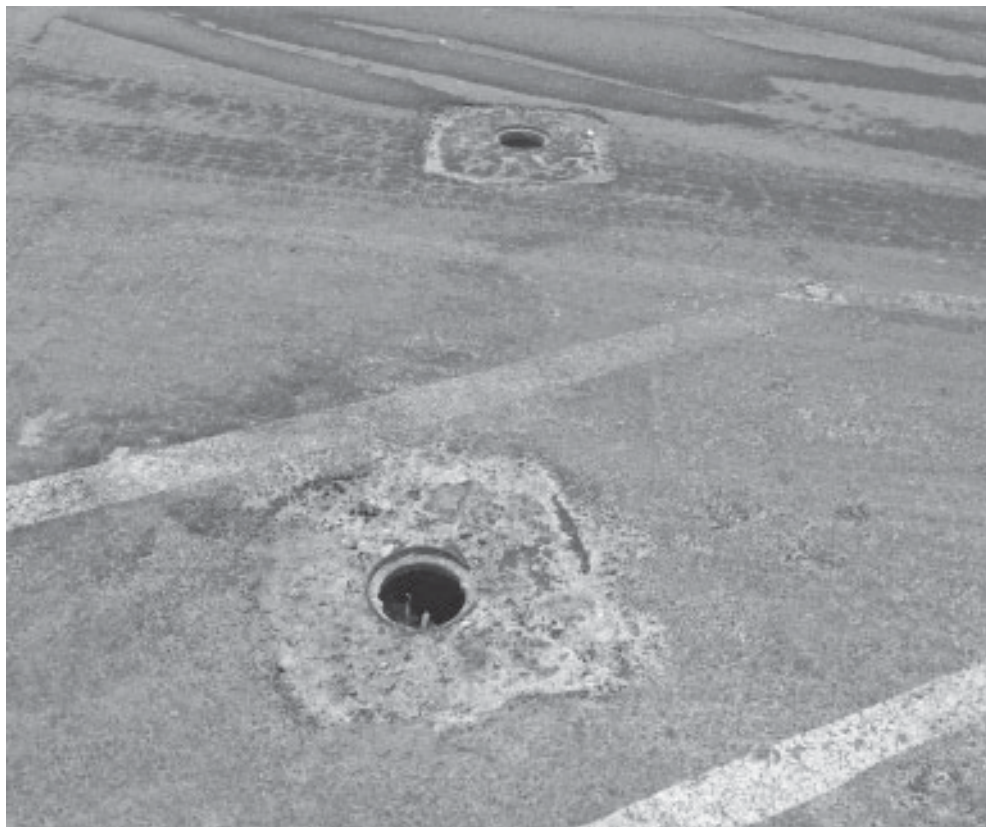
"We decided we really needed those laptops now," Sklarz said, adding the new laptops will replace old ones used by teachers.

Among the bigger additions in the approved budget – items that were already included in Sklarz's initial budget proposal – are \$17,000 for the salary of a new office reception/security person, \$151,000 to fund phase two of the reinstated Spanish program, as well as \$6,000 for the Future Problem Solvers Competition.

Following the board's approval, Ruth Kelly said this week she feels she is personally "very happy" with the budget.

"The vote was unanimous and I think we presented a reasonable budget that serves all of our needs and restores some things that were previously cut," Kelly furthered.

Now that it has been approved by the Board of Education, the school budget is scheduled to be presented to the Board of Finance at a special meeting on Wednesday, March 19, at 7 p.m. in the Marlborough Elementary School Library.



Two exposed holes within the parking lot of Three Fellas Pizza restaurant have caused residents to complain for months. This week the *Rivereast* learned the holes will be repaired soon.

Holes in Front of Marlborough Restaurant to Be Filled

by Melissa Roberto

Two exposed holes in the parking lot of Three Fellas Pizza Restaurant that have caused citizens to worry about safety hazards are to be repaired within the next week, according to a town official.

The holes are located outside of a handicapped parking space just feet away from the entrance of the pizza restaurant, in the heart of town on North Main Street. Three Fellas is adjoined by 7-Eleven, and just around the corner is Maxum Fuel gas station.

According to an employee of one of the three businesses who wished to remain anonymous, customers have voiced many complaints of the holes over the last year. The employee said some customers have even stepped into the holes.

According to employees at the businesses, both the owner, Harvey Ofshay, and property manager, Pete Parotta, have been made aware of the issue, but neither has attempted to make a fix. The two were unable to be reached for comment.

Maxum Fuel employee of five years Ethan Francks said this behavior of the landlord is typical. A few years ago, he said, gas station employees used their own money to replace a broken air conditioner. Francks added he used to see Ofshay visit the property each year but he has not done so in the last year. Francks said he believes the owner is elderly, and perhaps has not been physically able to visit.

Francks added he has noticed the holes outside of the pizza restaurant himself, but has not personally received complaints.

The holes have gathered leaves, cigarettes and gum wrappers over time. However, First Selectwoman Cathi Gaudinski and Town Planner Peter Hughes said this week they had not received complaints about the holes and were not made aware of the situation until the *Rivereast* notified them of it.

The holes are not potholes; rather they are holes that connect to the water system underground. These holes are supposed to have caps placed over them to be level with the ground, like 13 others that exist on the property, Hughes said. The planner reached out to the engineering company, Leggette, Brashears & Graham Inc., this week to install caps over the holes to fix the issue. The engineering company is responsible for monitoring the water system four times per year, which includes taking water samples out of the wells, Hughes said.

However, Hughes said the exposure of the holes is probably a result of the caps coming off – something he said is common this time of year because of snow removal.

The exact timing and reasoning for the caps coming off is unknown, but the town planner said residents should expect to see the issue resolved within the coming week.

Colchester Police News

3/3: State Police said Colin Giles, 36, of 33 Taftville-Occum Rd., Norwich, was taken into custody on a PRAWN warrant for second-degree failure to appear.

3/3: State Police said social workers from the Department of Children and Families contacted Troop K regarding an alleged incident involving the risk of injury to minors. The case is currently under investigation.

3/3: State Police said Robert Neilson, 65, of 191 Dr. Foote Rd., was charged with second-degree failure to appear.

3/3: State Police said Anibal Crespo, 23, of 46 Windham St., Willimantic, was charged with violation of a protection order, first-degree criminal mischief, second-degree criminal attempt, and two counts each of sixth-degree larceny and third-degree burglary.

3/5: State Police said Louis Pelletier, 31, of 111 Ballahack Rd., East Haddam, was charged with violation of probation.

3/6: State Police said Steven E. Mims, 35,

of 57A Gates Rd., East Haddam, was charged with second-degree failure to appear.

3/6: State Police said Michael Rodriguez, 52, of 32 Old Post Rd., Wethersfield, was arrested during a traffic stop investigation for failure to drive in the proper lane on a multiple lane highway, littering and DUI.

3/7: Colchester Police arrested Stephen Downing, 37, of 438 Lebanon Ave., Apt. 1, after he turned himself into Troop K on an outstanding arrest warrant for third-degree larceny of a motor vehicle and second-degree forgery. The charges are a result of a report of a vehicle being stolen from a residence on Cragin Court last December.

3/10: State Police said Marlon Hamilton, 26, of 238 South Whitney St., Hartford, turned himself into Troop K on an active arrest warrant for operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license and failure to drive in the right lane on a multiple lane highway.

Marlborough Fire Chief Passes the Torch After 24 Years

by Melissa Roberto

After holding the title of Marlborough Volunteer Fire Department Fire Chief for nearly a quarter of a century, Bill Lord stepped down from the leadership role on March 2, during the department's annual election of officers.

Lord, born and raised in Marlborough, comes from one of the founding families of the town. His great-grandmother is the late Florence S. Lord, a former politician, librarian and teacher in Marlborough, and whom the senior housing complex in town is named after.

But as the fire chief for 24 years, it seems Lord has left a legacy of his own in Marlborough. Whether barreling into a home filled with smoke, or attending to victims of a car accident, fellow fire members described Lord as an "excellent" fire chief, and someone who took his job seriously.

Lord has spent a total of 34 years as an active member, joining the department in January 1980. Ten years later, he was elected to the highest rank of the department as fire chief.

Though a volunteer position, the chief is responsible for everything pertaining to the department, from equipment, grounds, buildings and membership to its budget.

Asked why he remained in the all-encompassing role for so long, Lord's answer was simple: "I loved it."

"I told the guys on Sunday when I stepped down that it was an honor and a privilege to serve this department," Lord said Monday from the firehouse on Route 66.

He viewed his work at the department as an honor because it allowed him to work with "all of the great officers and members of the department, as a team," he said.

"That's the best part about it – the camaraderie, the getting to know different people and the reasons why they join," Lord concluded.

Lord said his departure from the role was planned. He said he wanted to dedicate more time to two of his other roles – husband and dad. Lord and his wife Dianne have three daughters, Jenna, 12, and 10-year-old twins, Charissa and Rachel. Lord is also the deputy fire marshal for the town, and is a mechanic maintainer within the Public Works Department.

As expected, two dozen years as fire chief means Lord has plenty of memories to look back on. What he said is "absolutely" a highlight is the department's "claim to fame" – the annual chicken barbecue that takes place the first Sunday of October.

"That's the time we get to actually talk to the townspeople," Lord said. "It's just a great coming together of the town."

Of course, being a firefighter for more than

30 years means Lord has witnessed his share of tragedy and loss. The most common incidents he believes the department responds to are residential fires and auto accidents that result in fires. The department also responds to calls in surrounding towns.

"Those are all tragic in their own right and they're all different," Lord reflected. "We always felt bad for anyone that has any kind of fire or tragedy."

In addition to the events occurring outside of the firehouse, Lord also witnessed many that took place in-house. In 24 years, he concluded the department has made "leaps and bounds" in terms of improvement. Perhaps one of the biggest improvements has been the technology, he said.

"They didn't have thermal imaging cameras when I first became chief," Lord explained. "Those are cameras we can see in smoke and use to find hidden fire."

Lord has also seen advancements in apparatus. Commercial vehicles from the 1960s and 70s were eventually upgraded to custom fire trucks. He said these changes were made possible thanks to the citizens of Marlborough.

"The residents have always, always been so supportive of the fire department's endeavors and I can't thank them enough for that," Lord said.

Of course, Lord's departure also means welcoming someone new to the role. The department elected Kevin Asklar to be that someone. Asklar said it was an honor.

"I'm honored to be elected to that position by the body," said the new chief. "I look forward to the growth of our department."

Asklar also expanded on his predecessor.

"Bill has done an excellent job for the past 24 years," he said. "He's seen the department go through some major changes and he has adapted well to all those changes and has grown the department to be the success it is."

Deputy Chief Sam Totodo, also elected March 2 to the deputy role that he has previously held, had nothing but positive things to say about Lord.

"Not only was he chief and our leader for a long time," Totodo said, "but he was also a good friend."

Totodo added he feels Asklar will bring forth "a lot of ideas that are going to contribute to the fire department."

In turn, Lord said he is comfortable with his departure mainly because he knows he's leaving the department "in good hands."

"There's some really well-qualified people that stepped up," he said. "I had no reservations of turning the department over to them."



Bill Lord stands within the fire house on route 66, where he spent the last 24 years as the Marlborough Volunteer Fire Department Fire Chief and 34 as a member. Lord stepped down from his role March 2.

Other elected officers are Assistant Chief Eric Colantonio, Captain Jimmy Moody, Captain Kurt Burkhart, Rescue Captain Mark Merritt, Lieutenant Charlie Grossman, Lieutenant Jason Bevans, and Rescue Lieutenant Doug Knowlton.

Lord humbly contributed the department's success to the support he received by several people. One of those people is Captain Mark Merritt, rescue captain of the Roy B. Pettengill Ambulance and chief of service.

"Mark has pretty much been there the same length of time as I have," said Lord. "He's done an excellent job with the ambulance portion, which really lightened my load as far as managing the department."

Lord also was appreciative for mutual aid from surrounding towns.

"We work together," he said. "They've always been supportive of us and hopefully they feel the same."

Lord also honored the late Walter "Mike" Kelly, who passed away in November 2012. Kelly was a former fire commissioner.

"He was instrumental in helping the department out and helping me out as a fire chief," Lord said. "He's greatly missed."

Lord also wanted to thank the current fire commissioners, Mike Schadtler, Ray Weber and Doug Thibodeau.

"They do an awesome job in supporting the fire department and making sure the residents are well served by this department," Lord said.

Lord's thanks also extended to past fire chiefs who came before him, Weber and Dave Johnson. The two were "always very supportive of the position having been in it and were very helpful to me," Lord said.

Certainly, he said, he could not leave out his wife who "has always been supportive of me doing this job."

Lord concluded Asklar is someone he has "no qualms at all about" when thinking about the future of the department.

"We're in a good place," said Lord.

And having now passed on the torch, Lord says he is still going to try to remain an active member and will "help out wherever I can."

Obituaries

Amston

Edward T. Bernard

Edward T. Bernard, 59, of Amston, left this world Friday, March 7, to be reunited with his parents, J. Henry and Julia (Hennessey) Bernard.

Edward leaves behind his wife, Michelle; his daughter, Tammy Carlson, her husband, Matthew, and their sons Jeremy and Ryan; his son, Timothy, his companion, Rose Boston, and their son, Nikolai; his sister and brother-in-law, Kathleen and Philip Sheridan of Colchester; his sister, Ellen Bernard of Andover; his nieces, Erin, Meghan and Cara, and his nephew, Michael.

The memorial liturgy was celebrated Tuesday, March 11, at the Church of the Holy Family, 185 Church St. (Route 85), Hebron. There are no calling hours.

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

Marlborough

Virginia McCullough

Virginia "Ginny" McCullough, 74, of Marlborough, beloved wife of Dennis Hawrylko, passed away peacefully at home Saturday, March 8, after a long illness. She was born in Newark, N.J., on June 6, 1939, daughter to the late Etta Fay (Thomas) and John McCullough. She was a graduate of the University of Hartford.



Ginny worked at the Traveler's/Citi Corp for many years as an art director. During the 1990s she owned and operated McCullough Design, a graphic design firm. Ginny was also a docent at the Wadsworth Athenaeum for many years.

Ginny will be fondly remembered for her passion for the arts and her love of sailing. She and her husband, Dennis sailed the New England coast for more than 25 years.

Ginny was predeceased by her son, David Dlugos of West Hartford.

In addition to her husband Dennis, Ginny is survived by a daughter, Kim Maynard and her husband Joe and their two children, Meg and Scott of Glastonbury; a son, Thomas McCullough of Easthampton, Mass.; a daughter-in-law, Nora Dlugos and three children Rory, Kiki and Ellen of West Hartford; a step-son, Matt Hawrylko and his wife Christy and three children, Jake, Alicia and Jessica of South Windsor; and a step-daughter, Mary Olson and her husband Chris and their three children, Emma, Katelyn, and Lilly Mae of Canton, Ga. She also leaves a brother, Ed McCullough and his wife Doris from Indianapolis, Ind., and a sister, Pat McCullough and partner Bill Perry of The Villages, Fla.

There are no calling hours. Services will be private.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made in Ginny's name to the Wadsworth Athenaeum, 600 Main St., Hartford, CT 06103 (thewadsworth.org).

For online condolences, visit mulryanfh.com.

Colchester

Alice Irene Hardy

Alice Irene Hardy, 91, most recently of Phoenix, Ariz., passed away peacefully Saturday, March 8, at Phoenix Mountain Nursing Center. Born in Colchester, she was the daughter of Ferdinand and Irene Stula.

Her husband, Nickolas Hardy, who served in the U.S. Navy in World War II, predeceased her on Nov. 1, 2001.

She is survived by her daughter, June Hardy and son-in-law, Roy Greengrass, of 92 Shell Place, Discovery Bay, Calif.; her sisters, Frances Zawacki of Fairbanks, Alaska, Sister Helen Stula of Cenacle Retreat House, Chicago, Ill.; and brother, Kenneth Stula of Athens, Ga.

Alice was a salon owner and operator in Mystic and Groton Long Point, where she resided most of her life. Alice will be remembered for her warm heart and the sincere affection she showed others.

Graveside services were today, March 14, where she joined her husband at the National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona in Maricopa County, Ariz.

Funeral arrangements are by Messenger Pinnacle Peak Mortuary of Scottsdale, Ariz. Online condolences may be made to the family at messengermortuary.com.

Portland

David W. Ferrier

David W. Ferrier, 71, of Bluffton, S.C., formerly of Portland, passed away Monday, March 10. He was born in Spokane, Wash., Dec. 24, 1942, and married his loving wife of 28 years, Sharon Peterson Ferrier, on Aug. 24, 1985.

In addition to his wife, he leaves behind his daughters Lauren and Kathleen; sons-in-law Dante Valentino and Mark Gibson; former wife, Ellen S. (Roberts); stepchildren Kimberly Sweeney and husband Marc, Timothy Cramer and wife Debra, and Christopher Cramer and wife Monica; 13 grandchildren Ryan, Erin, Mason, Evan, Jordan, Sarah, Lily, Livia, Gianna, Liam, Wyatt, Kayla and Alanis; several nieces and nephews; and his best four-legged friend, Tucker.

A memorial service will be held at the First Congregational Church of Portland, 554 Main St., Portland, Saturday, March 15, at 11 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the First Congregational Church of Portland.

Andover

Edward Lavoie

The Mass of Christian Burial for Mr. Edward Lavoie, 77, of Enid, Okla., will be held Saturday, March 29, at 11 a.m. at St. Bernard Church, 25 St. Bernard's Terrace, Vernon.

He was born on Aug. 9, 1936, to George and Emma Michaud Lavoie in Caswell, Maine, and passed away March 1, 2014 in Enid, Okla. He grew up and was educated in Caswell. He moved to Hartford where he met and married Lucy Berube on July 13, 1957. They moved to Andover before moving to Vernon where they made their home.

He worked in construction and had a trucking company with his brothers, Joe and Jim, Lavoie Trucking. He retired in 1987 and moved to Florida. He worked for a brief time for the Public Works Department in Pasco County. He moved to Enid in 2012 to be near family.

He is survived by his sons, Edward and wife, Karen, of East Granby, Michael and wife, Denise, of Enid, Okla.; daughter, Annette and husband, Paul Nutile, of Ellington; grandchildren, Timothy, Eric, Devyn, E.J., Taylor, and Brittany; brothers, Joe and Jim.

He was preceded by his wife, Lucy; his sister, Rita; brothers, Ovide, Albert, and William.

Memorials may be given to the American Cancer Society with Brown-Cummings serving as custodian of the funds.

Condolences may be given online at Brown-Cummings.com.

Hebron

Richard L. Ellis

Richard L. Ellis, 71, of Hebron, husband of Nancy Wells Ellis, died Wednesday, March 5, at Hartford Hospital. Born Sept. 21, 1942, in Hartford, son of the late Bernard and Euneta (Strong) Ellis, he had lived in Glastonbury for 31 years, moving to Hebron in 1999.

Dick graduated from South Windsor High School and UConn and was a senior engineer at Pratt & Whitney for 30 years, retiring in 1999.

Dick raced model motor boats and sailboats competitively. He wrote articles for the magazine *Model Yachting* and was a member of the Greater Hartford Model Yacht Club. He made model speed and sailboats. One of the model speed boats, the Stiletto, that he designed and made with his partner, Ed Ruoff, was sold around the world. He also raced cars at Limerock Park in Salisbury.

Dick graduated from Officer Candidate School and served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War.

Besides his wife he is survived by two sons, Theodore L. Ellis and Gregory W. Ellis, both of Hebron; a sister Jean Solaroli and her husband Lee of Sturbridge, Mass.; a brother-in-law, Harold Wells and his wife Susanne of Hampden, Maine; two nieces and their spouses, Marci and Erik Magnus of Massachusetts, and Julie and Mark Rando of Florida; three nephews, Adrian and Robyn Wells and Ben Wells, all of Maine, and Lucas Wells of New York.

The family would like to thank Dr. Stacey Nerenstone and Dr. deMarcaida and all the doctors, nurses and staff of the step-down unit at Hartford Hospital for all their care and compassion shown by them during Dick's illness.

A memorial service celebrating Dick's life will be held on Saturday, March 15, at 11 a.m., in the Buckingham Congregational Church, 16 Cricket Ln., Glastonbury. There are no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Buckingham Congregational Church, 16 Cricket Ln., Glastonbury, CT 06033, or to the Mayo Clinic, Dept. of Development, National Correspondence Office, Mayo Clinic, P.O. Box 450, Albert Lea, MN 56007-0450, or to the Helen and Harry Gray Cancer Center, Hartford Hospital, c/o Fund Development Office, 80 Seymour St., P.O. Box 5037, Hartford, CT 06102.

For online condolences, visit mulryanfh.com.

Hebron

Brittany Leigh Holland

Brittany Leigh Holland, 25, of Hebron, died unexpectedly Monday, March 10. Born Nov. 1, 1988, in Rockville, loving daughter of Justeen (Bombardier) and Scott Bligh, she had lived in Hebron many years.

Brittany worked at the Union Street Market at the University of Connecticut. She was studying nursing at Three Rivers College. She was a competitive pool player and loved to play bingo.

Besides her parents, she is survived by her brothers and sisters, Jake Holland, Sydney Holland, Logan Bligh, Dylan Bligh; grandparents Bernard and Kathleen Bombardier all of Hebron, Lorraine Mitchell of Spring Hill, Fla.; her aunt and uncle, Charles and Loida Bombardier; and cousins Omar and Natalia Bombardier of Berlin; and her beloved Cooper.

She was predeceased by her sister, Courtney Holland, her aunt, Melissa Bombardier, and great-grandmother, Mary Miller, and her dear friend Casey Senechal, who passed with her.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated today, March 14, at 10 a.m., in the Church of the Holy Family, Hebron. Burial will follow in New Hebron Cemetery. Friends called at the Mulryan Funeral Home, 725 Hebron Ave., Glastonbury, on Thursday, March 13.

For online condolences, visit mulryanfh.com.

Portland

Peter Campion Bransfield

Peter Campion Bransfield, 80, of Portland and Westbrook, son of Joseph and Marguerite Bransfield, passed away peacefully Saturday, March 8, surrounded by his wife and children, following a brief illness.

Peter was born and raised in Portland, where he met his loving wife of 53 years, Harriet Hughes Bransfield. Upon graduation from Portland High School, where he played three sports, he attended Providence College, on an ROTC scholarship.

After graduating with a degree in finance, Peter served honorably in the US Army Corps of Engineers, stationed in France. He later received his master's in business administration from the University of Hartford.

Peter worked for Pratt and Whitney Aircraft for 35 years where he specialized in finance and international programs, including a three-year assignment to Brussels, Belgium. He retired in 1993 and enjoyed reading, travelling with friends, woodworking, golf, sailing and watching UConn Husky basketball.

Most importantly, Peter was devoted to his family and most enjoyed being with Harriet and watching his legacy grow through his children and grandchildren.

Peter was the proud father of five children and their spouses, Catherine and Richard Lawlor of Amherst, Mass., Peter and Mary Bransfield of Hopkinton, Mass., Mimi and John Cahill of Sudbury, Mass., Paul and Adrienne Bransfield of Westbrook, and Jim and Amy Bransfield of Old Saybrook. His pride and joy were his 14 grandchildren; Michael, Patrick, Peter, Matthew, Molly, Kate, Meg, Joey, Andrew, Jack, Emma, Quinn, Alex and Evan. In addition to his immediate family, he is survived by his sister, Marie Gole of Meudon, France; his brother, Joseph, of Portland; and many nieces and nephews.

He is predeceased by his brother, John, of Portland, and his grandson, Joey, of Amherst, Mass.

The funeral service will be held today, March 14, at 11 a.m., at St. John's Catholic Church in Old Saybrook. Visitation will be held this morning from 9-10:30 a.m., at Swan Funeral Home, 1224 Boston Post Rd. in Old Saybrook.

The family wishes to thank the doctors and nurses at Naples Community Hospital for their extraordinary care and support in Peter's final days.

Donations can be made in Peter's name to the American Red Cross.

To sign the online guestbook, visit swan-funeralhomeoldsaybrook.com.

Colchester

Myretta Robbins

Myretta Robbins, 65, passed away on Monday, March 10, 2014.

A time of reflection will be held at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, March 19, at the Belmont/Sabrowski Funeral Home, 144 South Main St., Colchester. There are no calling hours and interment will be private.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Sunday was a delightful day, as I made my annual return to the Hebron Maple Fest. Sunny skies and mild temperatures (well, only Saturday was mild in the textbook sense; Sunday featured highs in the upper 30s, which is a bit colder than normal for this time of year, but considering the winter we've had, I'll take it) brought crowds aplenty – and lots of fun.

A friend and I first made our way to the center of town, where we had a quick lunch – burgers and fries – at the VFW/American Legion tent, and then wandered down the sidewalk a bit to see various crafts and knick-knacks being offered, and picked up a couple brownies being sold to help the homeless shelter in Willimantic.

Then it was off to the sugar shacks. This year, I opted to hit up Pierce's Sugar House – which I confess, in all the years I've gone to the Maple Fest, I had never been to. Usually I go to the Wenzel house or Woody Acres – sometimes both – but Pierce's I never ventured out to. I'm glad I decided to do it this year.

After finding a spot to park – as Maple Fest regulars know, parking is typically at a premium at the sugar houses, although at Pierce's on Sunday it wasn't so bad – my friend and I ventured up to the house and walked inside, where a display was being given on just how sap was converted into syrup.

It was a lesson I'd seen several times, but never in quite that way; as Geeta Schrayter wrote in her cover story about the Maple Fest last week, the extreme cold we experienced this winter has pushed back the maple syrup season. Ideal syrup-making weather features highs in the 40s and lows in the 20s, and while it's generally a safe bet we'll have been at that point for at least a little while by the second weekend of March, this year it just wasn't the case. As the mercury struggled, day in and day out, to climb above freezing, the syrup-makers in Hebron and all over the state realized that the sweet season was going to be delayed a little bit this year.

So when the weather – finally – warmed up a bit last weekend, it was full steam ahead with the syrup-making. When we were at the sugar house, the evaporator was boiling at full power, and folks were coming in from the back room dumping buckets of frozen sap – readers may remember seeing them alongside Geeta's story last week – into the evaporator. The house was filled with sweet-smelling steam.

Because Pierce's had just begun making the syrup, and because the process involves so much sap to get even a little bit of syrup (it takes about 40 gallons of sap to get one gallon of syrup), there was no syrup at the ready just yet Sunday. But you knew it would be before too long, and, to quote Ralphie from *A Christmas Story*, all would be right with the world.

After I picked up a couple T-shirts – yes, including the "I'd Tap That" shirt – my friend and I headed over to the Wenzel Sugar House. The house had plenty of bottles of syrup for sale – yes, it was last year's syrup, but it was still good – and, perhaps just as important, was also the selling place for Gilead Congregational Church's wonderful maple pudding cake. I need to have a piece of that every year – warm and with ice cream on top, please. The Gilead folks had copies of the recipe for the cake, so I picked one up, and am eager to try it.

My friend and I then headed up the hill to the sugar house. Unlike at the Pierce house, the sap wasn't boiling, but I always enjoy checking out the evaporator anyway. Plus, the

house is real neat inside, with lots of cool antique signs and a display of bottles of the various mass-produced syrup you can get in grocery stores (Log Cabin, Vermont Maid, Mrs. Butterworth's, etc.) along with placards showing just how much real maple syrup is in those concoctions. Hint: it's usually zero percent. Whereas genuine, Hebron-made syrup is, as another placard states, 100 percent real maple syrup. It's a difference that you can taste; you really can.

After bumping into Ron Wenzel on the way out and having a very nice chat with him, my friend and I headed back to Manchester. Our bellies were full, our sweet teeth had been satiated, and a gorgeous sunny afternoon had been well-spent.

* * *

From the "methinks you have too much time on your hands" department: The European Union is fed up with American-made cheeses that dare to call themselves parmesan or gorgonzola. And the union wants those names back.

The Associated Press reported Tuesday that, as part of trade talks, the European Union wants to ban the use of European names like parmesan, feta and gruyere on cheese made in the United States.

Uh.....why? After all, it's not like French fries are actually from France, or that anyone ordering a macchiato from Starbucks thinks it's coming direct from Italy. So what's the EU's problem?

Well, the union feels that the American-made versions of feta, muenster and others are but pale shadows of their original European counterparts, and thus cut into sales and identity of the European cheeses. For example, parmesan cheese should only come from Parma, Italy, the Europeans argue. I haven't looked at the back of a Kraft canister in a while, but I'm pretty sure theirs doesn't.

Even more absurdly, the union said feta cheese should only come from Greece – even though there's not actually a place in Greece named "Feta." The EU argues that feta "is so closely connected to Greece as to be identified as an inherently Greek product."

After decades of making and marketing these cheeses, U.S. dairy producers, cheesemakers and food companies are, according to the AP, pretty upset about what the European Union wants, which they say would hurt the \$4 billion domestic cheese industry and confuse consumers.

"It's really stunning that the Europeans are trying to claw back products made popular in other countries," Jim Mulhern, president of the National Milk Producers Federation, told the AP.

The AP said that, while the European Union has not yet laid out a public proposal, the list of American-made cheeses the union is expected to have a beef with may include parmesan, asiago, gorgonzola, feta, fontina, grana, gruyère, muenster, neufchatel and romano.

Shockingly, there's precedent for this absurdity. The European Union recently struck agreements with Canada and Central America restricting the use of certain cheese names unless the cheese came from Europe. For example, under the Canadian agreement, new feta products manufactured in our neighbor to the north can only be marketed as "feta-like" or "feta-style" – and they can't use Greek letters or other symbols that evoke Greece.

"Please pass the feta-like cheese product, honey." Hmm.....doesn't really have a great ring to it.

* * *

See you next week.