

RIVEREAST

# News Bulletin

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**Benevolent Birthdays...** Marlborough residents Sawyer and Reese Montstream recently chose to have their birthday parties for a cause. They raised \$300 for Relay For Life in Glastonbury this weekend. They also collected items for the Marlborough Food Bank. Sawyer, 4, is in preschool at MCNS and Reese, 6, is in kindergarten at Marlborough Elementary School. They are the daughters of Kendra and Brendon Montstream.

## Teen Spearheads Food Drive for Haiti

by Geeta Schrayter

Hunger is a worldwide issue. According to the World Food Programme, which is part of the United Nations system, 842 million people don't have enough to eat, with 827 million of those living in developing countries. Countries like Haiti, where 24 percent of children under five are affected by chronic malnutrition – a number that rises as high as 40 percent in the poorest zones.

In response to this, Hebron resident Emily Saunders – and other members of the community who stepped forward to help her – worked together last month to try and alleviate some of that hunger, by packaging 30,000 meals to send to Haitian children.

The idea came to Saunders, 16, after she attended a Catholic children's retreat through Church of the Holy Family in Hebron, where she learned about the non-profit Feeding Children Everywhere.

Feeding Children Everywhere (FCE) is "a social charity that empowers and mobilizes people to assemble healthy meals for hungry children," according to the website [feedingchildreneverywhere.com](http://feedingchildreneverywhere.com).

To do this, Saunders explained the organization provides the tools necessary for groups to package meals in assembly-line fashion to send to different places around the world. According to the website, they bring all the event materials in a truck to the planned location and set everything up. Volunteers then "package the meals while having a great time" and FCE hauls them off.

Saunders said that when FCE northeast regional manager Heather Yoreo explained at the

retreat they needed volunteers and individuals to host these food-packaging events, she knew she wanted to participate – and that's exactly what she did.

As host, Saunders needed to provide the money, the volunteers and the space for the event. To make this happen, she brought the idea to her church, where they took it on as this year's Lenten Challenge and raised the \$7,500 needed for the project.

Church of the Holy Family pastor Father Michael Smith said the parish was behind Saunders as soon as she brought the idea forward.

"When Emily came up with the project we were all behind it," Smith said. "We had a bean and soup dinner and had people come so that we could have that awareness [and raise money] and then we had people volunteer for the day so we could work as a community" to package the meals.

Since it was the Lenten Challenge, Saunders said members of the parish – particularly the children – were given various challenges related to hunger to help raise money, such as putting five cents into a jar for every spice they have in their cabinet at home or whenever they eat a particular item. In addition, donations were received from individuals who were unable to volunteer.

Then, when April 5 rolled around, "We needed the volunteers to come together" Saunders explained.

And come they did. In fact, so many people showed up to help that FCE had to set up 11

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## Low Turnout Passes \$31.56M Portland Budget

by Elizabeth Bowling

Not many voters bothered showing up at the polls Monday, but those who did sent Portland's proposed \$31.56 million 2014-15 budget to an easy victory.

The \$31,561,273 spending package – a 2.39 percent total budget increase from the current year – passed at referendum Monday with a total of 295 votes for, and 157 votes against.

That represents a scant 7.8 percent turnout of the town's 5,791 registered voters, according to referendum moderator Kelly Mainetti.

The budget features a 0.50 mill increase, or 1.61 percent, from the current year's mill rate of 31.28, making this year's mill rate 31.78. A mill is \$1 tax per \$1,000 of assessed property value. So, under the new mill rate, if a house is assessed at \$200,000, then its taxes for the 2014-15 fiscal year would be \$6,356, up from the current year's \$6,256.

The 2014-15 budget can be broken down into three categories: education, total other expenditures and total general government.

The Board of Education budget totals \$19,249,703. "Total other expenditures" comes in at \$3,103,038.

The \$9,208,532 that falls under "total general government" includes: general government, \$1,373,732; public safety, \$1,830,667; public works, \$2,153,800; planning and development, \$161,019; health and human services, \$285,455; Portland library, \$678,700; employee fringe benefits, \$2,580,159; and risk management, \$145,000.

Portland resident Susan Alyson Young expressed disappointment in how few people came out to vote Monday. She said she was "appalled at the low turnout for voting today on a budget that affects everyone. Whether you're for or against you should exercise – in a free America – your right to vote."

Young wasn't willing to disclose whether she voted 'yes' or 'no,' but she was proud to have voted.

One 'no' vote was cast by a voter who wished to simply be identified as "Laura," asking that the *Rivereast* not publish her last name.

"Taxes are getting so high," she said. "They [members of the Board of Selectmen] need to start trimming some of the fat."

Asked what specifically she'd like to see cut,

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Just 7.8 percent of voters showed up at Portland Senior Center Monday to cast ballots on the town's \$31.56 million budget.



Hebron resident Emily Saunders, along with Church of the Holy Family and many members of the community, came together April 5 to package 30,000 meals for Haitian children. Shown here, at left, are Saunders and Father Michael Smith. At right, are just a few of the many individuals that came to help; Saunders said the number of people who volunteered was “overwhelming.”

**Food Drive cont. from Front Page**

assembly lines at the church, instead of the customary 10. During two one-hour shifts, more than 30,000 meals consisting of lentils, white rice, vegetables and pink Himalayan salt were then packaged – a process that involved weighing and bagging the appropriate amounts of each item.

Although the day was a success, Saunders said the planning didn’t come without its challenges. She explained she was at times worried not enough money would be raised or not enough volunteers would show up – especially after she came down with mononucleosis.

“I had mono a little while ago so I was out of school for about a month and a half, and it was kind of at a really bad time,” Saunders ex-

plained. “It was when we were getting [the event] together and trying to get the word out. We didn’t want to do it too early and have people forget or do it too late. So that put a damper on getting the word out there.”

But Saunders had plenty of support to get her through.

“Through that whole time I had my family, my friends and my faith to just reassure me that in the end it was going to be ok,” she stated.

And in the end, those concerns proved unwarranted. Enough money was raised, and Saunders said, “Our original goal was for at least 70 people but we had so many more.”

“We had more than enough volunteers,” Smith added. “It was excellent. There was such

amazing energy and good spirit amongst the people, and I was just thinking, ‘We have to do this more often, have people come together to work for the good of the community and other people in need.’”

“Seeing it all come together on that day and seeing volunteers just flow in for a good 20 minutes – it was kind of overwhelming,” Saunders said. “You saw people from age 5 to 85, all packaging meals for the greater good and for kids in Haiti.”

Saunders said one of her favorite sights during the event was when she saw a little girl who couldn’t reach the table sitting on a high barstool, right next to her mom and an elderly lady.

“It was cool to see a child and an older woman,” she stated. “The entire community was able to come together to do this.”

Smith concluded, “I was impressed with the passion and the willingness of people to participate.”

The meals that were packaged as a result of Saunders initiative and the work of Church of the Holy Family and the Hebron community will be combined with other meals gathered at FCE events. The aim is to fill a cargo box – that’s about 250,000 meals – to be sent to Haiti in September. Saunders said the meals will mainly be distributed to schools and orphanages.

**Low Turnout cont. from Front Page**

she said that would be for the selectmen to decide.

One voter, who also asked to be referred to only by his first name, Doug, said he voted in favor of the budget because the increase is a relatively “small amount.”

“It’s a good thing to keep the projects moving forward,” he said, noting, for example, road-work.

“Everybody complains about the potholes but nobody wants to pay for them,” Doug said. “It’s a tough thing to keep the town moving in the right direction.”

But he said Portland – his hometown of 30 years – certainly is “heading in a good direction.”

Another ‘yes’ vote came from local firefighter Todd Ghent, who said of the fire department, “We need things.”

He said he thought the Board of Education budget was too high, but voted ‘yes’ anyway because the education and town budgets are “lumped together.”

Board of Selectmen member Kathy Richards was happy the budget was approved.

“I am glad to see the budget passed by such a large margin,” she said. “I feel this shows that

the voters of Portland have confidence in the Board of Selectmen. We are always concerned with the impact the budget has on the taxpayers and work diligently to keep any increase to the mill rate at a minimum.”

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield was also glad at Monday’s outcome.

“I’m very pleased that the budget passed. It allows us to proceed with our objectives for next year,” she said. “A budget is a good planning tool and now we’re able to go into operation.”

“Our Board of Selectmen does a good job at addressing the needs of the community and its ability to pay,” Bransfield continued.

She also credited the education board for its good work.

“I believe our superintendent and Board of Education do an outstanding job in meeting the education needs of the town and, at the same time, watching the costs,” Bransfield said.

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With the budget passed, the Board of Selectmen can continue with business as usual. Its next regularly scheduled meeting is Wednesday, May 21, at 7:30 p.m. at the Portland Library.

# Hebron Resident Writes About Revolutionary Spies

by Geeta Schrayter

Most Nutmeggers are familiar with the name Nathan Hale. Hale was a Connecticut resident who ventured behind enemy lines during the Revolutionary War to spy on the British. He was captured before he could make a safe return, and is famously attributed with saying “I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country,” before being executed for espionage.

But what many may not be aware of is that Nathan Hale was far from the only spy to call Connecticut “home” during the American Revolution, as Hebron author Mark Baker discusses in his latest book, *Spies of Revolutionary Connecticut*.

“It’s everywhere,” Baker stated. “I thought spying and covert intelligence was more isolated. I didn’t realize how much there really was.”

He added, “The proliferation of spies in Connecticut – it was incredible.”

Baker explained his interest in spies from the Constitution State was sparked after he kept hearing about covert intelligence and spies like Hale and Silas Deane at historical events and lectures.

“I kept saying ‘What is going on with all this spy activity?’ so I dug a little deeper and I was surprised at what I found – and I’m sure I’m not the first one – but I really wanted to tie it all together,” he said.

And that’s exactly what he did in his book, which includes stories of Hale, Deane, Ethan Allen, Thomas Knowlton, the Culper Spy Ring and others, as Baker “navigates the intrigues, dangers and double crosses of Connecticut’s most legendary Revolutionary spies,” according to the book’s synopsis.

After visiting various sites around the state where some of this spy activity occurred, Baker said he’d think to himself, “If there was a book on this I’d buy it right now.”

There wasn’t, so Baker wrote it.

“This is that book,” he furthered. “It ties it all together.”

Baker called Connecticut’s espionage history “fascinating,” and said there were a lot of intricate elements he wanted to put together in a single book.

And to gather those “intricate elements,” Baker explained he put in quite a bit of work, including traveling around the state – and the world.

“I went everywhere,” he shared, ranging from the War Room in Versailles, France, to the War Office in Lebanon, Connecticut.

According to a press release on the new book, Baker “wanted to be certain that he brought every perspective into the book.”

“Not only did I believe that I had to read their letters and visit their homes,” he stated in the release, “but I needed to know where these spies made their decisions and why.”

During a recent interview, Baker added he also paid a visit to the homes of the spies that were still standing, along with their graves and historical societies in the area.

“The traveling was great,” he said regarding the process. “That was really the key thing. And visiting the homes was wonderful. ... I had to go see where [John] Trumbull, for example, lived and walked.”

According to the book, Trumbull was the American artist who created the famous painting *Declaration of Independence*, and was detained in England for seven months during the war, accused of “bearing arms against the king” and threatened with hanging as an American spy.

“I wanted to feel the surroundings, I wanted to travel the distances. I wanted all that,” Baker continued. “It helps me so much to envision what I’m writing. I really have to experience things.”

Baker said he wanted to draw readers as close

to the subject as possible, and the book does that by allowing readers to learn not only about the various spies – including infamous traitor Benedict Arnold, who was born in Norwich, and Edward Bancroft, who eventually settled in Hartford and spied for both sides during the war – but also some of the things they were up against, their techniques and tools. Those techniques included bribery and eavesdropping, as well as secret meetings, disinformation, forgery, interrogation, sabotage and code-making.

Secret codes fall under what Baker refers to as “deceptive methods” in the book, which also includes invisible inks, templates and the different ways information was transported. In the book, Baker delves quite a bit into cryptography, and even includes various codes for the reader to try and solve – including those used by General George Washington.

As a result, in addition to teaching readers about espionage history in the state, Baker provides the perfect opportunity for the reader to discern if they hold up to the likes of Enoch Crosby, who took part in numerous spy missions where he gathered intelligence, infiltrated Loyalist groups and neighborhoods, and successfully thwarted more than one attempt to raise up an enemy company during the war.

Crosby, Baker wrote, was a “bona fide American hero.”

Speaking on who might find his book interesting, Baker went on to say that, so far, readers have run the gamut since its publication earlier this year.

“What I’m finding is a wide range of people,” he said. “Older people who are fascinated with history and want more elements, or want to know a little more; young kids and teenagers who play video games like *Assassins Creed [III]*, which follows the Revolutionary War pretty precisely. ... So it’s a wide range and I’ve been fortunate it’s attracted a lot of atten-



Mark Baker

tion.”

*Spies of Revolutionary Connecticut* isn’t Baker’s first foray into writing. He’s published 16 other nonfiction books, including *Title Town, USA: Boxing in Upstate New York* and *Basketball History in Syracuse: Hoops Roots*. He has also written about auto racing, baseball and rock and roll – with more on the way.

Baker is a former business executive and entrepreneur. He’s resided in Hebron with his wife for the past seven years: the couple has three grown children.

*Spies of Revolutionary Connecticut* is available for purchase at most independent bookstores as well as chains such as Barnes and Noble. It is also available online.

Baker’s next scheduled appearance is for June 28 at Byrd’s Books in Bethel.

# Portland Woman Starts Youth Summer Camp

by Elizabeth Bowling

A week away for summer camp sounds like every kid’s – and, quite honestly, grown-up’s – dream. A week in the fresh air, without any responsibilities like homework or Facebook. A week of games, crafts and making new, lifelong friends. In sum, a week at Camp Kota.

The brand new summer camp was created by Portland’s own Melissa Luke, a resident for the past six years and a teacher in East Haddam for the past eight.

“I grew up in summer camps,” Luke said. “I love camp. It’s absolutely my dream to own and operate a summer camp.”

A dream that has come true. Luke, with help from her husband, David, is now the proud owner and director (with a state camp director’s license) of Camp Kota, a sleep-away or day camp for children ages 8 through 15.

Luke explained in an interview Wednesday she’s leasing the property on Cave Hill Resort in Moodus from a co-worker who also happens to be the owner of the resort. Luke said she approached her co-worker and pitched the idea nearly a year ago, and has been working on bringing it to fruition ever since.

This summer is the first of Camp Kota’s existence, but Luke already has a clear vision of what camp will be like for the kids.

“It’ll be, primarily, a youth recreation camp,” she explained, with an emphasis on “giving kids a great summer, making memories and building leadership skills.”

According to the camp’s mission statement, “At Camp Kota we encourage a healthy and active lifestyle while promoting positive interpersonal skills and relationships.”

Camp Kota will be a “technology-free zone,” Luke said, so no cell phones except to call home before bed.

Technology has been eliminated not as a torture mechanism for the youths, but to put the focus on social interaction and being outside.

So far 25 kids are signed up, but Luke’s goal

is to have 40 kids in each session – though the resort can accommodate up to about 70.

Each session runs Monday through Friday and Luke has leased the property for two weeks in July, the weeks of the 7th and the 14th.

Each session has a “special theme,” Luke said. One is “Mystery Week.” Something mysterious will happen on the Monday the kids get there and there’ll be clues throughout the week so kids can piece it together.

The other session is “Hollywood Week.” It’ll feature movies that are popular with kids now, like *The Hunger Games*, and campers will participate in events like *Zombie Runs*, Luke said.

Other activities not related to the theme will also be part of the fun, like dances, arts and crafts, pool activities, sports, outdoor movie nights on the big screen, fishing, paddle boat and row boat races, and other games.

Luke said her and her husband’s long-term vision for Camp Kota is for it to “grow and be our life.”

She said in the future she’d love for it to be open eight weeks in the summer instead of just two. And she’d like to have campers come from all over the country, not just locally. She’d also like to be able to bring in international counselors to “bring culture” to the campers, she said.

Currently, Luke has eight full-time counselors on staff and 12 additional counselors in training to help out. She plans to keep the ratio of counselors to campers at 10:1 or smaller.

Campers are given the option of day camp or overnight camp. Those who chose to stay only during the day are given an opportunity, on Thursday of their session, to spend the night and see how they like it.

Cost for overnight camp is \$550; day only is \$335. Luke is offering an “incentive program” – if you refer someone and they sign up, it’s \$100 off your tuition. There’s also a military discount for kids with parents on active duty. That, too, is \$100 off tuition.

Each cabin has four bedrooms and two bath-



Owner and director of Camp Kota Melissa Luke, pictured here with her husband David, is excited for her new summer camp to get underway come July. Behind them are some of the cabins overnight campers will be sleeping in.

rooms. Campers would bring their own linens and toiletries.

Luke assured, “Our cabins are secure; they lock at night.”

She also affirmed the camp is fully insured for any liabilities.

According to Luke, “Kota” is Native American for “alliance” or “friend.”

“That’s exactly what summer camp is all about,” she concluded. “It’s about forming alliances and friendships.”

Camp Kota is having an open house tomorrow, May 17, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Cave Hill Resort, the location of Camp Kota, 138 Leesville Rd., Moodus.

Counselors will be available to take questions at the Open House and parents can register their children in person at the Open House, online or by calling Camp Kota. Registration will remain open until camp starts July 7.

For more information on Camp Kota, call 860-999-4130 or visit [campkota.org](http://campkota.org).

# Massage Business Comes to Marlborough

by Melissa Roberto

Massage therapist Alexandra Smith has opened her first independent office in the heart of Marlborough called CenterPeace Therapeutic Massage – and it's a business venture Smith said she's looking forward to sharing with a community that is new to her.

Smith, a Hebron resident, comes to town after having worked for a total of five years in Colchester. After receiving her national certification in massage therapy from the Connecticut Center of Massage Therapy in Newington in 2008, Smith worked for three years in conjunction with Colchester chiropractor Dr. Aaron Casey. Smith then worked for a couple of years at Family Physical Therapy in Colchester, where she said she had the opportunity of working with clients with a range of physical ailments, from disk issues, Lyme disease, multiple sclerosis, and Parkinson's disease, to others recovering from surgery.

While Smith explained massage therapy might not necessarily fix her clients' ailments, she said her goal is to simply "help them feel a little better."

And while the responsibility of any massage therapist is to assure the client is satisfied, Smith shared what the career does for her in return.

"I've always been interested in the body and how it works," she said of her interest in the field. "It's gratifying in that you're making people feel better."

Smith had actually started her career in the marketing field, she said. Although massage therapy is a route she said she had wanted to take for years. Now six years into it, Smith reiterated it's a career that "is very gratifying."

Smith pointed out that each massage therapist has his or her own style. Her style is heavily-dependent on making sure her clients are happy.

"It depends on what they want, of course," Smith said, adding, "Typically I find it the most effective if they can feel it. I don't want pain

and I don't want tears, but I want them to feel it."

Although Smith confirmed massage can be used as a method of relaxation, she said her focus is the therapeutic aspect of it.

"I'll treat anybody but I like to treat people who are in pain or who have a certain issue," the massage therapist explained, adding that she also has received a certification in orthopedic massage.

Inside her new space in Marlborough – which exists in a private room within the same space as A Therapeutic Touch – Smith said her goal was to provide an environment that is both "quiet and serene."

Additionally, assuring that clients are comfortable is also a part of her plan.

"I want a place where people feel comfortable because I really feel like when you can let go that's when the healing starts," she said.

Smith provides a variety of massage services within her new space, including Swedish, deep tissue, sports and prenatal massage, to seated chair massage and what she feels is her most "unique" offering, Thai.

"Thai massage is a different style of body work," Smith said. "You receive it on the mat; you're fully clothed. It's a lot of stretching similar to putting people into yoga poses."

Smith is also in the process of bringing another offering to the business: what she said she's thinking of calling "workplace serenity."

"I see a lot of people with workplace issues sitting at their desk, using their neck and shoulders and their forearms," said Smith.

Although, no matter which type of massage a client is looking for, Smith shared, "I can handle just about anything."

In terms of what brought Smith to Marlborough, she said it was due to the town's "fantastic location" off of Route 2. Better yet, her business is tucked right in the center of town, surrounded by other businesses like Reale Hair, ReVive Cycling and the offices of Attorney Joe



Hebron resident Alexandra Smith, shown here, has opened a new business, CenterPeace Therapeutic Massage.

La Bella.

Aside from working with existing clients who have followed her to Marlborough, Smith said she is also looking forward to building relationships with new clients.

"I think we connect. We have fun," Smith said of her relationship with clients. "We're able to laugh together and share each others ups and downs. People are pretty open with me in what's going on in their lives. I think that's important that they have a connection with whoever they're working with."

Smith furthered, "It's a new adventure for me to have this and I'm excited to be in

Marlborough because it's basically a community I haven't been in yet."

The massage therapist also volunteers at St. Francis Hospital. On Wednesday evenings she works with clients at Professional Therapeutic Massage in Colchester, and once a week at the Norwich Inn and Spa.

To schedule an appointment with Smith at her new space in Marlborough, at 33 North Main St., readers can contact her at 860-614-9899. Readers can also email Smith at [info@centerpeacemassage.com](mailto:info@centerpeacemassage.com) and check out the business website at [centerpeacemassage.com](http://centerpeacemassage.com).

## Marlborough Budget Passes on First Try

by Melissa Roberto

It was a calm evening in Marlborough Monday, as a majority of the 50 voters in attendance at the annual town meeting passed all four votes, which included the approval of the recommended \$22.23 million budget for the 2014-15 fiscal year.

Forty-five taxpayers voted in favor of the coming year's spending package while four voted against it. The 2014-15 budget totals \$22,230,125, which reflects an overall increase of 2.86 percent over the current fiscal year, or an increase of \$618,893.

The spending package is made up of Marlborough's portion of the RHAM Board of Education budget, of \$7,793,370, which passed at referendum Tuesday, May 6, in addition to the local Board of Education budget at \$7,271,585, town operations at \$4,612,856, contingency at \$20,000 and town debt, at \$2,532,314.

A Board of Finance meeting directly following the town meeting resulted in the setting of

the mill rate for the 2014-15 fiscal year. The mill rate will climb .69 mills, from 30.76 to 31.45. This means that, for a home assessed at \$200,000, the taxes on it would be \$6,290, up from the current year's \$6,152.

Marlborough voters also approved three other questions that went before them. By a vote of 46-4, voters approved \$485,750 to be transferred from the general fund undesignated fund balance to the reserve for capital and non-recurring fund for the purchase of capital requests. The capital requests to be paid for in the coming year include: \$45,000 to go into the future capital expenditure reserve, \$40,000 for the upcoming 2015-16 revaluation, \$136,500 towards the engineering costs of rebuilding Fawn Brook Bridge, \$35,000 to go towards the design and engineering costs of Williamsburg and South roads, \$30,000 for a fuel oil tank at Fire House 2, \$4,200 to purchase a mounted radio in a police car, \$11,500 for three police portable radios, \$60,000 to go towards a fuel mas-

ter system for the Public Works Department, \$73,550 to go towards the purchase of a backhoe/loader, also for Public Works, and lastly, \$50,000 for road improvements.

Additionally, by a vote of 47-3, leftover funds, totaling \$8,634.62 from completed capital projects, was approved to transfer into the capital and non-recurring fund; \$410.62 was leftover from the purchase of a Public Works Ford 4X4, and the remaining \$8,224 was leftover money from the roof project at Richmond Memorial Library.

The final vote, which was approved 47-2, allows the town to enter into a five-year lease/purchase agreement for the purchasing of 20 air packs for the Marlborough Volunteer Fire Department, at a cost that is not to exceed \$180,000. The air packs are used by fire fighters and will replace the current 1998 packs, which were to set to expire later this year.

Shortly after the approvals, First Selectwoman Cathi Gaudinski thanked attend-

ees.

"I want to thank all the board members/commission members who are here this evening and the residents for coming out," said Gaudinski. "I just want to let you all know we worked very hard to come in with a reasonable budget that we hope you find reasonable as well."

Board of Finance Vice Chairman Cliff Denniss, who was acting as the board's chairperson in Evelyn Godbout's absence, commented positively on the outcome, but also referenced the low attendance. The 50 people at Monday's meeting represented a slight 1.26 percent turnout of the total number of registered voters in town.

"I'm disappointed with the low number of people that came to the meeting but I am glad it passed," said Denniss. "I think it's a good budget, and we'll just go on now and start working on next year's!"

The 2014-15 fiscal year will begin July 1.

# Andover School Board Learns About Technology Use

by Geeta Schrayter

The Board of Education Wednesday learned about the various ways technology is used at Andover Elementary School.

During the presentation, various teachers shared examples of technology use, beginning with librarian Carol Zujewski.

Zujewski explained, "For a couple of years I have wanted to have better access for students to the online catalogs."

There are three computers in the library, and Zujewski stated when the upper grades would come to the library, she would have them "standing 2-3 deep" waiting to use the computers. She added purchasing more computers wouldn't work since "there really is no wall space in here for more, and I have an issue with a lot of wires around."

In addition, she wasn't sure laptops and iPads would serve the purpose she was looking for – but then she started to learn about Chromebooks and decided that would work best.

This year, eight Chromebooks were purchased, which are now used to access the catalog, making 11 access points for students.

Zujewski said, "We're just scratching the surface of what these can do" but concluded, "They're great. They've really improved access here for the older kids."

Principal David Griffin then talked about the way technology was used for the Smarter Balanced Testing. He explained the school had signed on to do a field test this year, and setting up involved a lot of preliminary work like coming up with the schedule, making sure there were enough access points for students to take the tests – which are all done online – and that the laptops had enough battery life.

But after all that, he said, "It really went like clockwork. I don't think we ran into any glitches."

Griffin said there were over 600 assessments administered during the testing period, which

started in March and finished at the end of April by the time all the makeup tests had been done. The assessments included various tests for English language arts and math.

"The fact that we have a [computer] lab here and 10 portable labs – we were very fortunate because of the board's understanding that this is the education of the future: we need the technology," he stated.

Once Griffin finished, art teacher Jay Ames shared how he uses technology for artwork in his fourth-grade class. After using their sketchbooks to design logos, he then has them create the logos using Microsoft Paint.

"It's not the most sophisticated graphic program" he said as some artwork examples were shared. "But I go through all the tools in it and all those are basic tools in other programs."

He added they were "very simple" versions, "but once they've gotten comfortable with those tools – it's really the same basic tools and methods as the more sophisticated programs that are professional. So it's a good start."

Technology is also used to aid in special education.

Second grade teacher Kirstina Frazier explained iPads had been purchased for the special education department so all the teachers had them available. She shared they each found the applications, or programs, that were most appropriate for each student, and set up folders to organize them for each particular student. These applications, she said, "can be used in a variety of ways to meet [Individualized Education Program] goals or as a reward system."

One of the programs used by the department is Dragon Dictation, Frazier explained, which assists students who may need help "taking what they want to say and getting it in print."

The students are able to speak a command, and the program will transcribe what they say or perform various commands.

"It's a great way for students to get what they have down," Frazier explained, "and it levels the playing field too because these students have as many great ideas as others and we want them to be able to write them down."

Also available at Andover Elementary School are various online subscriptions, which, Frazier said, "we really think benefit our students and teachers."

She explained the current subscriptions at the school are Think Central, which has math lessons for the school's Smartboards as well as the ability to create and take assessments; Brain Pop and Brain Pop Jr. which is "a warehouse of fun and interactive videos and games students can use"; and IXL, which has tools for teaching math and language arts.

In addition, the school subscribes to Discovery Education, which Frazier said has "really become a very important part of our instruction" and covers a wide variety of subjects from, for example, one of Frazier's current topics: Ghana, "all the way to fractions."

The school also has a subscription to Type to Learn, which helps students improve their typing skills; and BloomBoard, which is used by the teachers and administrators for teacher evaluations and professional development.

Finally, Remedial Reading Teacher Krysta Cariboni shared how she utilizes technology to assist in her work.

"We all have the luxury of having Smartboards in the classrooms," she said, but now, the school also has six to seven touch screen laptops which she called "a huge benefit."

She explained these laptops can be brought to the classroom to use when small group work is being done.

"We never had the ability to bring technology with us before into a classroom," she said.

She went on to share some of the programs she used, such as the sound train, which helps kindergarteners work on beginning and ending sounds. She showed the board the screen, which had a long train with empty cars on it. In the very last car there would be a picture – like a cat.

The students must determine what the last sound and letter in the word is, then pick the picture from a selection on the bottom of the screen that begins with the same letter, such as "tree," drag it into the next train car, and continue.

"It's like having a mini Smartboard right with you and kids love it," Cariboni stated.

She said they also use an online database to store information on the students they're working with.

"So there's a lot of different ways we've been using technology," she said.

Frazier concluded, "So we thank the board for your support. We know we are very fortunate here. I'm always very proud of what we have in Andover."

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Also at the meeting, the board voted unanimously to approve a list of general maintenance items provided by Superintendent of Schools Andrew Maneggia, for an amount not to exceed \$30,000.

Included in the list are improvements to the basketball court, finish work on the gym floor, painting the outside doors, repairs to the HVAC system and an upgrade to the cash register used in the cafeteria to make it easier to record the number of free and reduced lunches that are purchased.

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The next Andover Board of Education meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 11, at 7 p.m. in the Andover Elementary School library.

## Budget Referendum Next Week in Andover

by Geeta Schrayter

Voters will head to the polls next Tuesday, May 20, to decide the fate of the proposed \$10.65 million budget for the 2014-15 fiscal year.

The budget totals \$10,651,362.45, which is a \$27,320.93, or .26 percent, decrease over the current year's budget. That number includes \$4,269,044 for Andover Elementary School and \$3,949,770 for Andover's portion of the RHAM budget, which decreased \$11,905 and is based on the number of students from town who attend the schools.

If approved, the proposed budget will result in a mill rate decrease of .05 to 30.72. The mill rate is used to calculate a resident's taxes, and for a house valued at \$200,000, this would mean a \$10 tax decrease from \$6,154 to \$6,144.

The town education budget is approximately \$65,000 less than the current \$4.3 million bud-

get. Overall, Superintendent of Schools Andrew Maneggia explained at his January presentation the budget stays relatively the same with a few increases spread throughout the accounts. However, there were also some significant decreases.

These include a \$13,228 decrease in salaries due to a reduction of two teaching positions in response to declining enrollment; a \$38,374 decrease in the insurance account, which Maneggia said was a result of a lower insurance increase and changes to insurance plans; and a \$23,999 decrease due to one less student outplacement.

On the town side, Board of Finance Chairwoman Georgette Conrad explained that, in addition to the decreases for both RHAM and the elementary school, the proposed number includes a \$5,433 decrease in capital expenditures; a \$3,870 decrease in interest expense; and

a \$1,559.08 decrease in the amount for AHM Youth and Family Services.

There are also some proposed increases, including an additional \$12,000 for snow removal which replaces money cut in previous years' budget; an additional \$6,865.83 for the Public Works Department which includes union raises, funds for tree removal and vehicle maintenance; and \$6,154.32 for the Town Office Building Account for the replacement of laptops that run on Windows XP which is no longer supported by Microsoft.

An additional \$4,977 has also been added for maintenance and gas for the senior vans and more money for the drivers, along with an additional \$3,096.44 for the Planning and Zoning Commission budget which includes wage increases, and \$1,380 to update wiring at the

Old Town Hall.

The budget also includes a 3 percent wage increase for non-elected employees, while unionized employees will receive a 2 percent raise. Elected personnel will also receive a 3 percent wage, an increase that was voted on and approved at the May 7 Town Meeting.

Three capital requests are also included: \$50,000 for the purchase of a minivan with a wheelchair/walker accessible ramp; \$33,145 for the second of a five-year annual lease to purchase dump truck; and \$16,306 for 16 voice amplifiers and radio interface units for the Fire Department.

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The budget referendum will take place Tuesday, May 20, from 6 a.m. – 8 p.m. at the Andover Town Office, 17 School Road.

## Weapons Search Conducted at Bacon in Colchester

by Melissa Roberto

Bacon Academy administration and Connecticut State Police conducted a weapons search at Bacon Academy Wednesday morning following an incident that had occurred at the school two weeks earlier, according to Superintendent of Schools Jeffrey Mathieu.

Mathieu sent home a letter to parents Wednesday notifying them of the search. The letter states nothing had been found but that the search was done "out of an abundance of caution" following an incident that occurred two weeks ago. The letter explains approximately two weeks ago two students notified school administration that "they had witnessed another student in possession of a weapon at school."

It continues, "Immediately following those students' reports, administration notified the

police and began an internal school investigation."

According to the letter sent home, the student allegedly in possession of the weapon has not been in school since and "will not be in school for the remainder of the school year."

The police investigation led to the precautionary search held Wednesday, the letter explains. Mathieu said State Police would be issuing a statement about the search. Because this is an ongoing investigation, Mathieu said further details would be provided by the police.

"As always, the well-being and safety of students and staff are our highest priorities," Mathieu stated in the letter.

State Police could not be reached for comment.

## Fire at Chevy Dealership in Colchester

by Melissa Roberto

Colchester Police and the Colchester Hayward Fire Department responded to the scene of a structure fire Monday afternoon that may have been set by a group of juveniles.

According to a press release at Troop K, the local fire and police departments responded to 120 South Main St., the old Chevy Dealership, for a fire that had been set in its

basement.

The release states "multiple juveniles were seen running from the scene prior to the Fire Department's arrival."

Anyone with information about this incident is asked to contact Officer Jonathan Goss at 860-537-7270.

# East Hampton Finance Board Cuts \$292,482 from Budget

by Elizabeth Bowling

Before the Town Council did some trimming of its own, the Board of Finance met last Thursday and again this past Monday to make cuts to the 2014-15 town budget, which was rejected by voters at referendum earlier this month.

The finance board cut \$292,482 from the \$40.87 million spending package, which was shot down by voters May 6 by a 1,180-839 vote. The board sent the revised budget to Town Council, which made additional cuts Tuesday and sent the budget to a May 27 town meeting and a June 3 referendum. (A story about the council meeting appears on page 22.)

Finance Board Chairman Ted Turner said of his board's newly-approved budget, "Because of the polarity of the 'no' votes [at the first referendum], we had to make deep cuts," Turner said. We passed on our best efforts to the Town Council."

The finance board voted 5-2 last Thursday on a three-part motion, with board members Don Coolican and Lori Wilcox opposed.

The motion was: to reduce the town budget by 0.5 percent, for a total of \$50,019; to reduce the Board of Education budget by 0.5 percent, which is a total of \$142,463; and to pay down \$500,000 in increments of approximately \$142,000 using the fund balance, starting with one payment in next year's proposed budget.

But when the finance board met again Monday, members made several changes to the budget; most notably, they decided against the bond payoff.

According to Turner, the payoff would have included \$142,407 in this year's budget plus three similar payments at a later time.

But, he said, the Town Council's policy states the tax rate cannot be lowered using the fund balance.

Town Finance Director Jeff Jylkka said another reason the board changed its stance on the bond payoff was because it would have been racing against a deadline.

"The board decided against the bond payoff due to timing issues relating to the transaction

closing prior to June 30," Jylkka said in an email. "As a result, \$142,407 was put back in the debt service account."

Another change Monday was to not reduce the town portion of the budget by 0.5 percent.

Instead, \$10,019 was reduced from the town manager's budget, \$40,000 was reduced from contingency, and \$15,000 was cut from the employee wellness program, Jylkka said.

The education budget, however, remained cut by 0.5 percent and it was reduced by an additional \$85,000, making the total cuts to the education budget \$227,463.

As a result of the finance board's last two meetings, the "Town Operations" budget is down from a 3.11 percent increase to a 2.09 percent increase, and the Board of Education's budget is down from a 3.49 percent increase to one of 2.67 percent.

The overall mill rate as approved by the finance board Monday is 27.40 – a 2.89 percent increase or 0.77 mill increase from the current year's 26.63 mill rate.

\* \* \*

The vote Monday to approve the \$292,482 in cuts was 4-1 in favor of the reductions, with Wilcox voting against. (Members Don Coolican and Alan Hurst were absent.)

Wilcox addressed why she voted 'no.'

"It's too high," she said. "I am against any new positions being created at this point. I'm not against them in the long run, just right now."

The "new positions" to which she referred are the police captain's position and the facility and grounds foreman position. (Though Town Council Chairwoman Barbara Moore insisted Tuesday that the foreman position is not new; her explanation can be found in the story on the council meeting.)

Wilcox was, however, in favor of a new part-time position at the senior center, to help with additional programming.

Turner affirmed the final cuts made by the board Monday will not affect the part-time senior center position, nor the police captain and

the facilities and grounds foreman positions.

The finance board approved the police captain's position to begin Oct. 1.

The facilities and grounds foreman position, however, was approved for the full year.

\* \* \*

East Hampton's Chief of Police Sean Cox said at last Thursday's Board of Finance meeting he thought the budgetary request from the police department was "very reasonable."

He explained in 2010, the department had one chief, five sergeants, 10 patrolmen and one fully-funded open patrolman's position. But, in that same year, he said the department was reduced by one chief and one active patrolman, and funding was ended for the open patrolman position.

Since then, he said, the only position to be reinstated was the chief.

According to Cox, the department presently has one chief, three sergeants, nine patrolmen and two open patrolmen positions.

"We had far more positions than than we do now," he said. "Additionally, we've had two of our more senior sergeants retire. With that we lost a great deal of experience and knowledge to our agency."

Cox said the department could gain back some experience by hiring a police captain with experience.

Cox went on to plea his case for the necessity of a police captain. He said a captain would provide an "impartial layer" between the chief and the police union.

"Lack of an impartial layer has led to controversy in recent history with this town," he said, also noting the financial expense of internal affairs investigations, which are currently done by an outside attorney.

"Each investigation costs thousands of dollars to do," Cox said. "That said, had we a captain position, that person could do the impartial investigations. I cannot do the investigation and install the discipline; it's just ripe for controversy and ripe for litigation."

In addition to conducting any necessary investigations, the police captain would be responsible for applying for grants, for example, grants for DUI and speed enforcement, Cox said.

The captain would also serve as the "Emergency Management Director," which is currently a volunteer position, done on a part-time basis because the volunteer has a full-time, day job.

"Emergencies happen during the daytime," Cox said of the inefficiency.

Cox said a captain would also work to improve the department's first responder status.

"We only have one EMT on staff," Cox said. "What I would charge the captain with – one of his first charges – would be to change that and elevate the level of training that we have and get a majority of our people to get to a level of EMT or better."

Cox then proceeded to pass around to the board members photos of the department's current state of disrepair.

"It's very antiquated," Cox said of the building, noting its lack of handicapped accessibility and cleanliness.

He also mentioned "water seepage" in the evidence room, which is something the department has requested money for in the coming year's budget. Other issues included, but are not limited to, poor ventilation in the building, too-close proximity in the prisoner processing room, and all-male bathroom facilities for prisoners, including female prisoners.

Cox concluded by asking the finance board to "look at the responsibilities you place on the police department" when considering cuts to make to the budget.

Town Manager Mike Maniscalco followed up by informing the board there is \$75,000 in capital to address some of the capital needs of the Police Department. Plus, he explained, the Police Department has a "Special Services Fund."

# East Hampton Council Sends Budget Back to Referendum

by Elizabeth Bowling

Following last week's sound rejection of the proposed \$40.87 million 2014-15 budget, the Board of Finance and Town Council brought out their scissors, cutting a total of \$322,355 from the spending package and sending it to another referendum early next month.

The finance board did the lion's share of the cutting – \$292,482 worth – at its meeting last Thursday and this past Monday; a story about those cuts appears on page 25.

But, after the finance board sent the new budget to Town Council, the council Tuesday trimmed another \$29,873, bringing the new budget to \$40.55 million, a \$1,312,363 increase over the current year.

The slight reduction caused the mill rate increase to drop to 0.75 mills, a 2.82 percent increase from the current year. The mill rate, if voters approve the budget at its second referendum, will be 27.38. A mill is \$1 tax per \$1,000 of assessed property value. So, under the new mill rate, if a house is assessed at \$200,000, then its taxes for the 2014-15 fiscal year would be \$5,476, up from the current year's \$5,326.

The new, revised budget was approved by a tight 4-3 vote, along party lines: Town Council Chairwoman Barbara Moore and her fellow Democrats George Pfaffenbach, Phil Visintainer and Kevin Reich voted in favor of it, and Republicans Ted Hintz Jr., Patience Anderson and Mark Philhower voted against it.

The council's additional \$29,873 reduction was to the town government budget and was the result of pushing off the hire of a police captain from Oct. 1 to Jan. 1.

The finance board cut the Board of Education budget by \$227,000. The council didn't make any further cuts to the school budget – instead, it reorganized the cuts.

The cuts to the capital budget now total \$107,700, which represents: custodial floor cleaning, \$10,300; bathroom upgrades, \$18,000; interior finishes, \$10,000; classroom furniture, \$29,000; media center, \$10,000; phone system, \$16,000; middle school sidewalk extension, \$14,400.

And cuts to the operating budget, as determined by the Town Council Tuesday, total \$119,300.

Moore said Tuesday she also wanted to clear up some of the "misinformation" that she felt East Hampton residents seem to believe.

She stressed to the members of the public in the audience that funding for bonding is not in the budget.

"The Town Council and the Board of Finance is not spending \$600,000 on bonding at this time," she said. "That's done at a later time. It's done when we can all sit down and decide if we want to bond things, if we want to make a purchase, if we want to lease things – there's many options for purchasing things for Public

Works, as well as other large items. That was never, ever in the budget."

Moore also said that borrowing \$500,000 from the debt sinking fund is not in the budget.

"I don't want you to think that we're sneaking things in [the budget] that you're not fully aware of," she said to the audience. "But I want you to be aware of what's not in the budget."

Additionally, she said there is only one new position on the budget, and that's the police captain. Moore affirmed that the police captain would be on contract and not a member of the union.

Regarding the facilities and grounds foreman position, Moore said, "The facilities person is not a new position. It's something smaller than we've ever had before actually. It's a lesser position."

The facilities manager position, as listed in the 2013-14 budget, will cover the cost of the facilities and grounds foreman position on the 2014-15 budget, she said.

Even so, Philhower expressed his lack of support of the foreman position Tuesday. He suggested the town share the recently-hired Board of Education's facilities person.

Pfaffenbach countered. He posed the question of whether the education facilities person would "just be a nice guy" and take on additional work for free.

Ultimately, the foreman position remained

on the budget.

Anderson expressed concerns regarding the new police captain's position, despite Police Chief Sean Cox's explanation of its importance. (That explanation can be seen in the Board of Finance story on page 25.)

Anderson said she'd like to see a comprehensive job description for the police captain position. She also said she'd like to wait to explore the idea of hiring a captain until after the two vacant positions in the Police Department are filled.

But, like the foreman, the captain position remained.

In concluding his thoughts on the updated budget, Pfaffenbach said, "The town is moving forward, things are changing. We have to keep up with it. We have to take care of our maintenance."

He furthered, "There's never been a good year when we can raise taxes. It's always going to hurt, and we've got to do it in increments."

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The council determined the second town meeting on the budget will be Tuesday, May 27, at 6:15 p.m. at Town Hall, prior to the regularly-scheduled Town Council meeting at 6:30. Members of the public will vote at the town meeting May 27 to officially send the budget to referendum Tuesday, June 3, from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. at East Hampton High School.

# Next Generation Takes on Semkow Farms in Colchester

by Melissa Roberto

Semkow Farms on Parum Road in Colchester endured much devastation last year, with a blizzard destroying seven of its nine greenhouses, and, shortly after the passing of its longtime owner, Frank Semkow.

However, following in her relatives' footsteps, Robia Semkow, Frank's niece, was destined to keep the farm alive – and so she left her career as a cop in Las Vegas and moved to the 12-acre farm in Colchester to oversee the nursery and assure it would be open to the public this spring.

"Obviously it's in the blood to be farmers," Robia said.

Semkow Farms opened last Friday, May 9, just in time for Mother's Day weekend. Robia and her family have spent the last seven months in transition—from making the big move to the farm house on the Parum Road property, learning how to utilize the heavy machinery on site, to putting the farm back together following its destruction.

The new owner said the damage to the greenhouses has brought the nursery to a smaller scale of products than what Semkow customers may be used to, but it is stocked with what Robia feels are some "beautiful" products to kick off the season.

"Annuals, perennials, herbs, fruits and vegetables," Robia listed off current and soon-to-be products at the farm. "I'm going to be trying a small line of exotics, and introduce something very fun to the kids called fairy gardens."

The property of Semkow Farms has been inhabited by Semkows before it even got its name. Robia's great-grandparents, on her father's side, purchased the property for \$7,000. In the 1930s, the next generation, Robia's grandparents, settled on the farm and began running it as a poultry farm with "free-range chickens running everywhere," Robia said.

Following her grandparents' retirement, Frank Semkow, Robia's uncle, took over. In 1989, he planted a small patch of geraniums he grew on the porch of the farmhouse. Shortly thereafter, Semkow Farms was established and evolved into a stocked nursery of greenhouses filled with plants and flowers of all kinds.

Robia said her uncle "had his vision and he knew what he was going to do."

A walk around the farm can give insight into the life Semkow enjoyed. He was a car enthusiast, having restored over 200 Corvettes in his lifetime on the property. Robia's two children now enjoy regularly fishing in their pond, which the deceased owner had dug himself years ago.

"This is where Frank made everything happen," Robia said while walking around the farm. "My uncle made it into what everybody sees today."

Robia explained her uncle died of cancer last July, not too long after he witnessed the snowstorm wipe out many of his greenhouses.

"I actually think about it sometimes," Robia said, "in the sense that it killed him to see that happen to not only his livelihood but everything he put his heart and soul into."

And that is part of the reason Robia didn't hesitate in moving across the country to assure Semkow Farms would live on.

"It hasn't missed a year yet," Robia said. "And that's why it was important to me. I'm an only child so I don't have other family. It was important to show my boys how that works – to keep my family's legacy going."

Growing up, Robia moved around the world with her parents due to her father William's job, but still has fond memories of visiting the farm.

"Moving all around the world my entire life, I was never really able to call a place 'home,'" Robia explained, adding the farm is where her dad, who now lives in California, had grown up. "Coming back here to the farm every other summer created the sense of a 'back home' feeling that I didn't realize I had been missing."

Robia continued she "always" knew she would one day return to the farm but added, "actually being here is way more satisfying than I ever dreamed possible."

Robia and her two sons, Christian, 9, and Gabriel, 8, moved to town last August. Robia's husband, who she said is supportive of the move, has remained in Las Vegas due to his job. Robia had been employed by the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department for 13 years. Shortly before coming to Connecticut, she had tested to become a sergeant – a career goal of hers, she said – and the family had just moved into what she said was her "dream home." But that doesn't mean that made the decision to take over Semkow Farms a difficult one for the mother of two; in fact, it was just the opposite.

"If there was something not perfect in Las Vegas, I feel I would have made the decision for the wrong reasons," she said. "The fact that everything was so well-aligned made my decision easy."

Not to mention Robia's "claim to fame" out west was growing a "healthy and cool vegetable garden in the desert."

"So this should be a piece of cake," she quipped.

It seems Robia and her boys have already grown accustomed to life on the east coast. In fact, while many Connecticut residents were cooped up inside earlier this year, wondering when winter would ever end, they were busy "playing and working."

"I got very efficient on my tractor all winter long," Robia said with a laugh. "I'm sure natives were driving by scratching their heads like 'What is this girl doing?'"

Robia also said it's been great to receive support from her dad and others.

"He has great confidence in me and has taught me well in life," Robia said of her fa-



**Frank Semkow Jr., the longtime owner of Semkow Farms, passed away last July. Now, in an effort to keep the farm and its nursery alive, Robia Semkow, Frank Semkow Jr.'s niece, has taken ownership and reopened the nursery.**

ther. "I feel honored to have been presented with this. My friends and family across the United States have also been very supportive, and check on me almost daily."

And while most would say Robia's actions are admirable, she remains humble.

"It's not some tremendous feat; it's just more matter of fact," she said. "This is what it is, this is what has to be done, and that's what my job is—just to do it."

Additionally, Robia furthered the first seven months in Colchester have been "really good" – and she credits her "Connecticut angels" for making the transition manageable.

"I have some people I'm very thankful have come into my life," she said of her new friends. "They have made a huge impact and made me not only feel welcome but have given me a tremendous hand and see this also as a vision they want successful."

In order to get prepared for the season, Robia said she has kept busy "reprioritizing." That involves turning broken metal greenhouses into tables, making sure the farm is stocked with specimens, and also coming up with some fun ideas for the seasons ahead.

"I want to move this into a little bit more of a longer season. I see this property also being a wonderful spot for Halloween activities and fall festival-type things," Robia explained.

But, first and foremost, Robia said her goal is to continue tradition in Semkow Farms, so it's the same as Colchester remembers it.

"It is my goal to do right by the customers, by my uncle and my family," she said. "This isn't being rebuilt for me; it's being rebuilt for you."

And opening weekend proved that the community hasn't forgotten about Semkow Farms.

"Overall the tremendous support and encouragement was so overwhelming," Robia said. "I got to hear wonderful things and stories about my uncle."

Although the damage has made it tough to get Semkow Farms back to what it used to be, Robia said that is her vision. She's also seeking input from customers.

"I want it to be what you're used to, customized by your requests," she said.

And in the meantime, the motivated new owner said she's enjoying her new adventure on the "Eastern seaboard."

"The whole reason of moving here is to get my hands dirty and watch my plants grow," adding she has one more responsibility, which also happened to be the last bit of advice her uncle shared with the family: "Have fun."

To find out more about Semkow Farms, readers can call the farm at 860-537-2670 or visit it at 489 Parum Rd. The farm is open for operation Tuesdays-Fridays 10 a.m.-6 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays 9 a.m.-6 p.m. It is closed Mondays. Readers can also email [Semkowfarms@live.com](mailto:Semkowfarms@live.com) or visit the farm's Facebook page, accessible by typing 'Semkow Farms' into the Facebook search engine.

# Lighter Budget Heads to Town Meeting in Colchester

by Geeta Schrayter

On Wednesday, a proposed 2014-15 budget that's over \$300,000 lighter than the number that failed at referendum earlier this month was forwarded to a town meeting.

The cut brought the combined budget down to \$53,372,877 from \$53,658,889 and includes \$39,933,795 for the school budget and \$13,439,082 for the town; the spending package will head to a town meeting next week.

Board of Finance Chairman Rob Tarlov explained Thursday when the Board of Education met Tuesday night, they made cuts that equaled the amount requested by the finance board: \$247,000.

Although the cuts were spread throughout the budget, the largest reductions were: a \$29,191 reduction in hours from a school psychologist; \$26,681 from the removal of eighth

grade art; \$26,431 from the removal of all middle school sports; and \$24,255 from the elimination of a .5 school guidance counselor position.

On Thursday, Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein said, "The budget proposal is responsive to the fact that the budget was defeated and we needed to make difficult cuts to services to students."

In addition to the education cuts, Tarlov said the town government budget was reduced by \$69,948 at Wednesday's Board of Finance meeting.

Of that number, \$45,027 will come from the fire and ambulance department, with a majority – \$25,836 – coming from a reduction in funding for the ambulance incentive program.

The second-largest cut amounted to \$14,329 and came from grounds maintenance. Tarlov explained spending had been increased to take care of the recreational fields "and we pulled that back out."

Another cut Tarlov said it would be important for the public to be aware of was a \$4,666 reduction from the library. This, he said, would result in fewer hours.

Tarlov also shared the town would be receiving more revenue from the state than originally anticipated.

Of the additional revenue, which totaled \$60,057, about half was transferred to the capital fund to pay for an architect for pre-design work for the school project.

The remaining \$30,057 was used to help re-

duce the mill rate.

Tarlov said the cuts the board approved weren't all of the suggested cuts provided by the first selectman; he explained the finance board chose not to cut road maintenance or the substance abuse counselor at the youth center.

Following Wednesday's finance board meeting, the Board of Selectmen scheduled a town meeting on the new number for next Wednesday, May 21, at 7 p.m. in the Town Hall.

"If the town votes to move [the budgets] to referendum, the referendum is scheduled for Thursday, May 29," Tarlov explained.

He added the board felt they were now at a number most of the voters would be acceptable with and concluded, "hopefully we'll get a lot more people voting than last time."

*From the Editor's Desk*

## Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

A few weeks back, reporter Geeta Schrayter wrote a nice story profiling Hebron's Christopher Larkin, who had landed a role in The CW's new drama series *The 100*. Well, last week news began trickling out about which shows the networks are canceling and which ones they're renewing for the fall – and I'm pleased to say *The 100* is sticking around for another season.

Congratulations, Christopher, and continued good luck.

Unfortunately, the TV news wasn't quite as good for Glastonbury's Eli Baker. The 12-year-old last year landed a starring role in the NBC sitcom *Growing Up Fisher*. The *Rivereast's* sister paper, the *Glastonbury Citizen*, had, quite understandably, written a lot about the series, which debuted in February. I admit to never having seen it, but I was hoping, for Eli's sake, it would succeed – much as I was excited to see *The 100* picked up, even though I have also not seen that show. I like local success stories – and landing a regular role on a hit television series is a pretty great achievement.

However, NBC canceled *Growing Up Fisher* late last week. I'm sure, judging from what the *Citizen* and other area papers wrote about him, Eli will continue auditioning for shows, and I wish him the best of luck.

\* \* \*

Speaking of TV cancellations, a few came down last week that are worth noting. Of the pink slips handed out – and there were many – I was most disappointed to see ABC's *Suburgatory* shown the door. Now in its third season, the show is a delightful comedy about a single dad and his teenage daughter who move from New York City to a suburb known as Chatswin – a complete send-up of affluent suburbs. Chatswin is ridiculously over the top, but it's meant to be so, and seeing the father-and-daughter duo both react to the absurd surroundings and also carve out a life and develop friendships there is just a lot of fun each week.

Bothered by its ratings at the end of the 2012-13 season, ABC ordered only 13 episodes for this season, and brought it back as a midyear replacement. Its ratings still weren't great, but creatively, the show is firing on all cylinders. It frequently makes me laugh out loud, and it's got heart too. *Suburgatory's* production company, Warner Bros., is reportedly shopping it around to other channels, such as TBS. It's a slim chance it'll lead to a new home for *Suburgatory* – these types of relocations rarely wind up working out – but, nonetheless, I'm keeping my fingers crossed. The show deserves to keep going.

Another sitcom that's laugh-out-loud funny and also has heart, and has also been shown the door by its network, is NBC's *Community*. While I found the show, which is – ostensibly anyway – about a group of friends/study group members at a community college, to be quite creative and often hilarious, I was actually not as bummed about its cancellation as I was *Suburgatory's*. The show

ran for five seasons – a somewhat incredible feat, given its very low ratings – and lost two of its original cast members this year. While the series found two other characters to plug in their place, the two departures left a void that never went away.

Plus, the characters all graduated at the end of season four, and this past season they were brought together in an attempt to “save Greendale” – i.e., make their new alma mater – Greendale Community College – a better place. The mission was largely accomplished by the end of the season, which makes me wonder what they would do in season six to justify still being at Greendale. I mean, I know the show long ago abandoned its college plots in favor of just having the cast do, well, strange things, but still, I did wonder how far things would stretch to keep the study group together.

I would've liked to have seen a sixth season of *Community*, if only because, while the show has peaked, it was still, like I said, wildly inventive at times and always brought a smile to my face. But I just don't get the feeling it was cut down while still in its prime, as was the case with *Suburgatory*.

Also disappointing is CBS' cancellation of *The Crazy Ones*, a sitcom that starred Robin Williams and Sarah Michelle Gellar as an out-there father and his more straight-laced daughter working at an advertising agency. I didn't watch the show every week, but when I did, I enjoyed it – and could also see where it could use improvement.

The show, like *Suburgatory* and *Community* and a lot of other sitcoms out there, is filmed with one camera, like a movie, and not in front of a studio audience. While that's fine for a lot of sitcoms, for *The Crazy Ones*, it just didn't work. This was a show that needed to be shot *Big Bang Theory*-style: three cameras, in front of a live studio audience. One of its problems was that I got the sense Williams was being told to tone it down a bit – he wasn't being his usual manic self. He did a perfectly fine job with the part, and could definitely still make you laugh, but it felt like the show was wasting him. Why bother casting him if you're not going to let him be, well, Robin Williams?

A good way to let him be who he needed to be would have been to put the show in front of a studio audience – a format Williams thrived in for four seasons on *Mork & Mindy* in the late '70s and early '80s. Now, the three-camera format limits you a bit in terms of location shooting, shooting on different sets, etc., but, for reasons I wouldn't be surprised were financial (as I'm guessing the salaries for names like Williams and Gellar, not to mention the show's creator, David E. Kelley, were pretty high), the show didn't seem to stray from its main office setting very often.

Basically, while the show had flaws, it had a lot of potential too, and I think CBS would have been wise to bring it back – and to make it a three-camera show as well.

\* \* \*

See you next week.

## East Hampton Police News

4/25: Keith Height, 41, of 49 Neptune Ave., Moodus, was issued a summons for traveling too fast and having insufficient insurance, East Hampton Police said.

4/29: Jason Canterbury, 31, of 5 Bellevue St., was issued a summons for operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license and operating an unregistered motor vehicle, police said.

5/1: Kimberly A. Crumb, 38, of 38 Tarragon Dr., was arrested for DUI, failure to drive right and risk of injury to a minor, police said.

5/4: Kyle Rutkowski, 20, of 127 Pearl St., Enfield, was issued a summons after he was involved in a motor vehicle accident involving a parked vehicle at 15 East High St. and left the scene, police said. Police said Rutkowski was charged with evading and operating with a suspended license, police said.

5/9: Shylan Lamar Young, 26, of 116 Middletown Ave., was arrested for third-degree assault, second-degree threatening and disorderly conduct, police said.

## Colchester Police News

5/6: At 3:39 p.m. Colchester Police responded to a one-car crash on Windham Ave. The vehicle, driven by Judith L. Porter, 65, of 137 Martin Rd., Hebron, struck a utility pole located off the roadway. The Hebron Fire Department transported Porter and her passenger, Bridget Walsh, 3, of 56 Oakleaf Dr., to Marlborough Clinic by the Hebron Fire Department for evaluations.

5/7: Colchester Police conducted a traffic stop on Bull Hill Road and Arthur C. Flesjzar, 20, of 34 Standish Rd., was found to be in possession of narcotics. Flesjzar was charged with operating an unregistered motor vehicle, insurance coverage fails to meet minimum requirements, narcotics kept only in an original container, illegal sale of drugs, possession of narcotics and possession of a controlled substance.

5/7: State Police said Christopher D. Palamar, 42, of 268 Westchester Rd., turned himself in on an active PRAWN warrant for second-degree failure to appear.

5/7: State Police said Aimee Soucy, 25, of 1529 Portland Colbalt Rd., was arrested on two counts of first-degree failure to appear, failure to respond to a payable violation, and three counts of second-degree failure to appear.

5/8: State Police said Paul Ferrero, 21, of 108 Sheepskin Hollow Rd., East Haddam, was charged with disorderly conduct and interfering with an emergency call.

5/8: Colchester Police said they are investigating the report of a stolen debit card that was

## Marlborough Police News

5/11: State Police said Anthony J. Mecca, 51, of 26 South St., Canton, was charged with DUI and speeding.

## Portland Police News

5/9: Ronald Coates, 34, of 204 Main St., was charged with first-degree failure to appear and second-degree failure to appear, Portland Police said.

# Obituaries

## Amston

### Nancy Janet Ray

Nancy Janet Ray, 80, of Amston, passed away Sunday, May 11, at Apple Rehab Center in Colchester. Born March 25, 1934, in Nashua, N.H., she was a daughter of the late William and Viola Clement.

She married Donald Ray Sr. in 1955. The couple shared 34 years together before he predeceased her in 1989.

She worked as a teacher aid at RHAM high and middle schools for many years.

Nancy was a long time member of the Hebron PTA. She was also a former member of the Amston Lake Fire Department, Women's Auxiliary and she was a Cub Scout den mother when her sons were young.

Nancy was an avid Red Sox and Huskies fan. She loved gardening and the beach, but most importantly, she will be remembered as a devoted and loving mother and grandmother.

She will be sadly missed but always remembered by five children and their spouses, Brenda and husband Donald Pigan of Colchester, Donald and wife Laurie Ann Ray of Lebanon, Lori Dumas of Florida, Michael and wife Joyce Ray of Columbia, Patrick Ray and Betty Moore of Scotland; a sister, Joyce Clement of Merrimack, N.H.; 10 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren and numerous extended family members and friends.

Calling hours were held Thursday, May 15, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral will be held today, May 16, gathering at 11 a.m. at the funeral home, with the service at 11:30 a.m., and burial in New Hebron Cemetery will immediately follow.

The family wishes to express their heartfelt gratitude to the staff at Apple Rehab for the loving care given to Nancy.

For online expressions of sympathy, visit [auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com](http://auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com).



## Glastonbury

### Rose Venti

Rose (Zorick) Venti, the loving widow of Andrew Venti, died Sunday, May 11, at home with her family at her side. It is so fitting that she died on Mother's Day, as her family came first in her life, her mothering nature shown through to all who knew her, and she was reunited on Mother's Day with her daughter Andrea Venti Tedesco, who predeceased her in 2006.

Rose was a longtime resident of Wethersfield, but lived the last three years in Glastonbury with her daughter Dr. Rozann Venti and her son-in-law Gary Edwards. She also leaves her brother Peter Zorick, her sister and brother-in-law Teresa and Bruce Larue, all of Wethersfield, and her great friend and caregiver for the past 20 months, Hawa Koroma. She leaves many nieces and nephews. She is predeceased by her siblings, Anne Dunnrowicz, Barbara Varrone, Stephen Zorick and John Zorick. Rose previously worked for the State of Connecticut Depts. of Labor and Transportation.

Her family would like to thank her internist, Dr. Stephen Milewski of Newington, who gave Rose excellent and kind care for many years, the folks from Vitas Hospice, her former caregiver Rose Mbye, and Ann Olsen, the owner of Helping Hands in Bolton.

Funeral services will be held today, May 16, at 10:30 a.m., from the John F. Tierney Funeral Home, 219 West Center St., Manchester, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial at 11 a.m. at the Church of the Assumption, Manchester, with burial to follow in Mt. St. Benedict Cemetery, Bloomfield. Family and friends may call at the funeral home this morning from 9-10:30 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to the Church of the Assumption, 29 Adams St. South, Manchester, CT 06040, in memory of Rose.

For online condolences, please visit [tierneyfuneralhome.com](http://tierneyfuneralhome.com).



## Colchester

### Robert G. George

Robert "Bob" G. George, of Enfield, formerly of Colchester, entered into eternal rest at the age of 68 on Friday, May 9, at Mercy Medical Center, Springfield, Mass.

Robert was born on Dec. 3, 1945, in Boston, Mass., son of the late Andrew and Marion (Smith) George. He had resided in Enfield for the past 17 years and in Colchester before that.

Bob received his MBA from the University of Hartford. He served his country honorably with the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War. Bob was employed for over 30 years with the State of Connecticut, Department of Corrections. In his leisure time, Bob was a talented craftsman having made some beautiful pieces of furniture and also enjoyed watching the UConn Huskies women's basketball games.

Robert is survived by his two children, Robert G. George, Jr. and Maryjo R. George and husband Christopher Wilkerson, his cherished and adored granddaughter, Rosemary R. Wilkerson, all of Raleigh, N.C., and his significant other, Pamela King of Enfield.

His family received relatives and friends Thursday, May 15, at Browne Memorial Funeral Chapels, 43 Shaker Rd., Enfield, followed by a memorial service with Pastor Michael Coons officiating. Interment will be at the convenience of the family in the Elm Grove Cemetery, Mystic.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations in his memory may be made to the CT Veteran's Home & Hospital 287 West St. Rocky Hill, CT 06067 or the Wounded Warriors Project, P. O. Box 758517 Topeka, KS 66675.

To leave an online condolence message, directions or more information, visit [brownefuneralhome.com](http://brownefuneralhome.com).

## Portland

### Edward Schufer

Edward Schufer passed on Tuesday, May 6. Ed was born in Portland. He lived in Middletown and Rocky Hill before settling in East Haddam.

He was a veteran of the Korean War. He had been a member of the Elks and VFW. He worked at Shapiro's, Chandler Evans and retired from Colt Industries and NAPA, where he was known as "Fast Eddie." He had the memory of an elephant, loved the Red Sox, gardening, bowling, playing cards, jumble puzzles, jigsaw puzzles and making people laugh.

Ed was predeceased by his loving wife Lil. He will be deeply missed by his daughter and son-in-law Darlene and Bill Ganley; daughter Jan Buxton of Vermont; brother and sister-in-law John and Midge Schufer; grandchildren, Devin, Mallory, Kayla, Shelby, Beau & Brett, great grandchildren Brexton, Seanna and Addison; in-laws, Ray and Jeannette, Dick and Pauline, Don, Ardy and many nieces and nephews. "Oxygen Eddie" will also be missed by his valued friends at the Hide-a-Way.

A funeral Mass at St. Andrews Church in Colchester will be held in his memory on Saturday, June 14, at 9:45 a.m.

No flowers please; "Save Your Money."

## Marlborough

### Regina Kepenis

Regina (Mockunas) Kepenis, 88, died peacefully at Marlborough Health Care Center Friday, May 9. Regina was born on Sept. 1, 1925, in Utena, Lithuania.

She was predeceased by both parents and her beloved husband, Jaroslavas Kepenis.

She is survived by her children, Aurelijus, married to Marilyn, Loreta, married to Darryl Ciantar; three grandchildren, Douglas, Allison, married to Richard Isolde, Kyle Ciantar; a great-grandchild, Anthony Isolde.

Funeral services were Wednesday, May 14, with the funeral liturgy in St. Columba Church, 328 Route 66, Columbia. Private burial followed in Colonel Ledyard Cemetery, Groton.

In lieu of flowers, please make donations in Regina's name to Bolton Music Works Inc, c/o Bolton High School, 72 Brandy St., Bolton, CT 06043.

Arrangments are through the Potter Funeral Home, Willimantic.

## Colchester

### Antoinette R. Burbank

Antoinette R. "Toni" (Ventura) Burbank, 83, formerly of Colchester, a kind and gentle soul, departed this world Tuesday, May 13, surrounded by her loving family, to join her beloved Bob in Heaven.

Toni was born on May 3, 1931, in Mingo Junction, Ohio, a small town outside of Steubenville, and moved to Hartford as a young child along with her parents, Emelia and Gioacchino "Jack" Ventura and her sister, Susan.

Toni met the love of her life, Robert G. "Bob" Burbank at age 18 and they were inseparable until his death in 1996. They were married for 44 years and lived a beautiful life, full of family, faith and friends. They spent summers at Lake Hayward in Colchester for over 30 years, loved their time share in Hilton Head, S.C., loved their children unconditionally and loved their God. They were the type of parents everyone dreams of having. We as their children were blessed to have them and will forever remember the lessons they taught us about life and love and how to treat people.

Toni resided in Hartford, Wethersfield, Lake Hayward, Boynton Beach, Fla., and most recently Newington for the last 10 years. She and Dad loved to travel and saw many places in their lifetime. They made a yearly trek to Arizona to spend quality time and maintain a close and loving relationship with Marlene, Rob and Tatiana. Whenever and wherever they were needed for support, they were always there and we will miss that dearly in our lives.

Toni was a loving mother, grandmother, sister and friend. She leaves three children and their spouses, Mark and Sue Burbank of Southington, Marlene and Rob Doyon, formerly of Arizona and now back in Wethersfield, and Scott Burbank and the predeceased Erin Burbank of Wethersfield; and five grandchildren, Aimee and Angela Burbank, Tatiana Doyon and Madison and Alex Burbank.

This tribute would not be complete without acknowledging her sister/best friend/lifelong companion whom she spoke to daily for her entire life, Susan Bruno along with her husband Merrill of Wethersfield. Toni also leaves several nieces and nephews and their families and many, many friends who loved her dearly.

She will be fondly remembered for her loving and caring nature. She loved her family above all else, but also loved to help those in need, especially those in need of a job. She was famously known as "Toni from Manpower" and spent 37 years with that organization working for her great friend and mentor, the late Helen Gay of Colchester. Many of you reading this obituary can thank our mom for finding your career path after working for Manpower.

Toni was very proud of her Italian heritage; she came from humble beginnings on Marsh Court in Hartford, and spoke fondly of the "Old Front Street," belonged to the Young Italians organization and her trip to Italy many years ago was still a true highlight in her life. She had a great talent/passion for cooking and loved to cook for others. She would bake meals or cookies and enjoyed surprising her circle of friends and acquaintances with a basket to enjoy. Her famous Easter Brunch and Sunday dinners were a family tradition that will never be forgotten. She was a beautiful person, both inside and out, and will be missed by many.

Rest in peace, our wonderful mother, and big hugs to those who have passed before you.

Calling hours are today, May 16, from 4-8 p.m., at D'Esopo Funeral Chapel, 277 Folly Brook Blvd., Wethersfield. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated Saturday, May 17, at 10 a.m., at St. Elizabeth Seton Church, 280 Brook St., Rocky Hill. Everyone is invited to go directly to the church. Burial will follow in Mt. St. Benedict Cemetery, Bloomfield.

For online expressions of sympathy, visit [desopo.com](http://desopo.com).

## Marlborough

### Harold Robert White

Harold Robert White, "Hal," 78, of Marlborough, beloved husband of Dolores (Iannuzzi) White, passed away Saturday, May 10, at home, with his loving family at his side. Born Jan. 16, 1936, in Brooklyn, N.Y., he was the last surviving of the five children of the late Harold and Margaret (Hout) White and was raised by his Uncle Bill Hout.

Mr. White had served proudly with the U.S. Air Force. He was an executive for The Hartford Insurance Company for many years before his retirement.

Hal was an active member of the Marlborough community, having served on the boards of selectmen, education and finance. He was also president of the Marlborough Association of Senior Housing and was integral in the establishment of the Florence S. Lord Senior Housing Center.

Most importantly, he was a devoted husband, father and grandfather who will be greatly missed.

In addition to his loving wife of 49 years, he is survived by two children and their spouses, Michael and Dana White and Denise White and Bruce Bialkin; four grandchildren, Alexandra and Jocelyn White and Benjamin and Nathan Bialkin; his Kellogg Road family and numerous extended family members and friends.

The family received guests Wednesday, May 14, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A chapel service was observed that evening. Burial was private.

Donations in his memory may be made to VNA Health Care, Dept. 106093, PO Box 150485, Hartford, CT 06115-0485.

For online expressions of sympathy, visit [auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com](http://auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com).

