

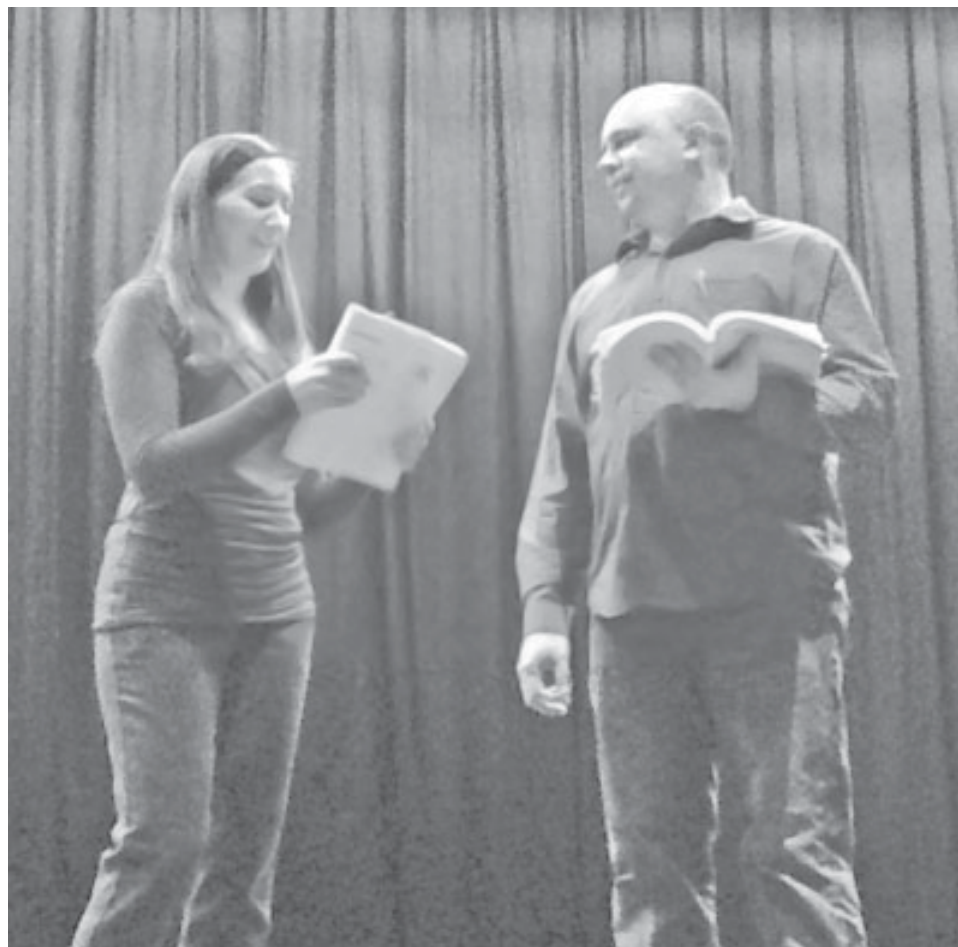
RIVEREAST News Bulletin

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Shrek is Coming... Elizabeth Shapiro (Fiona) and Kevin Spirey (Shrek) rehearse Wednesday for *Shrek the Musical*, Colchester Community Theatre's latest production, which will open at the Bacon Academy auditorium Friday, Feb. 13. See story on page 22.

Aid for EHHS Project in Jeopardy

by John Tyczkowski

Last Thursday, councilors and town officials attempted to get to the bottom of a convoluted situation involving the reimbursement classification for the East Hampton High School renovation project.

At the meeting, officials attempted to ascertain the specifics behind the reclassification, the impact to the town, whether certain key documents were lost or submitted late and how the town might be able to salvage the situation.

Two weeks ago, the town's High School Building Committee received notification from the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) that the state would change the high school's reimbursement classification.

The state's Department of Administrative Services (DAS) may be reclassifying the \$51 million renovation project, which could cause the town to lose \$7 million in state reimbursements, they learned.

Michele Barber, vice chair of the committee, spoke at the Town Council meeting. Voters approved of the high school building project given renovate-as-new figures, which would make the total cost to the town only \$27 million.

However, CREC told the town that the renovation and expansion of the 1963 building project would now be classified as an extensive alteration/roof replacement (EA/RR) project in November. That classification decreases the number of eligible costs and in-

creases the out-of-pocket expense to the town.

If the town doesn't scale back to renovate-as-new levels, it would be in danger of losing the 50 percent reimbursement rate because of switching to the EA/RR classification.

To that end, Barber, along with Superintendent of Schools Diane Dugas and Town Manager Michael Maniscalco, met with DAS Commissioner Melody Currey and officials from the Office of School Facilities earlier on Thursday to sort out the matter.

"Our town went to referendum with a certain figure; our taxpayers believed we would be reimbursed so that our burden would be \$27 million," Barber said. "And as a building committee, we will not let the cost go higher than that."

Barber said the project reclassification was due to the size of the high school facilities relative to the school's student body.

"Our school is oversized," she said. "It has more space than what is eligible for enrollment projections for the next eight years."

Specifically, she said, the auditorium is too large for the amount of students at the school, and the hallways are too wide according to building code.

Barber said Currey suggested the town could reduce the total cost of the project by reducing the total size of the school from its current 117,000 square feet to less than 99,000 square

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Burbank, Linddy and Buchardt to Run After All

by Geeta Schrayter

Andover First Selectman Bob Burbank announced this week he plans to seek reelection as a petitioning candidate on the May ballot — and his fellow selectmen Jay Linddy and Elaine Buchardt will be right there with him.

All three failed to win endorsements when town Republicans and Democrats held their caucuses last month.

However, in a press release sent out Tuesday, Burbank wrote, "I have decided to seek reelection as First Selectmen on the third line of the ballot. I am going this route rather than a Republican primary to allow all of [the] voters to have the choice of who will lead their town government."

At their caucus last month, town Republicans voted 80-19 to endorse resident Curt Dowling for first selectman over Burbank, who has held the position since 2007.

Burbank expressed his appreciation for those who voted for him that day, but said in the release, "While I appreciate the caucus process the vote this time was indicative of stacking the meeting. That is perfectly legitimate to do but does not give the true representation of the Republican Party."

Originally, Burbank said he had been contemplating retirement once his term ends in May; however, he shared in a phone interview

this week he wasn't comfortable leaving the town in the hands of either Dowling or the endorsed Democratic candidate, Jeff Maguire.

"If somebody had come in and learned the job and saw all the responsibilities that go into this office, and I felt comfortable that I was going to be turning the town over in good hands, then I would have perhaps considered" retirement, Burbank explained.

But that wasn't the case. After hearing from both candidates, Burbank said he was left with "little choice" but to run as he didn't feel confident in either.

"There are literally hundreds of job responsibilities for the first selectman," he added. "You don't just walk into this job and think that this town is going to run by itself."

Burbank continued, "When I hear someone stating that 'Well, the departments should run by themselves without oversight,' that scares me. This is what happened prior to my coming into office and by charter the first selectman has the responsibility of oversight, and if they don't do that then things can get quickly out of line, as people in this town should be well aware of."

He added, "I spent the last eight and a half years [working] to run this town efficiently and I really don't want it to become undone."

In the release, Burbank furthered, "During my administration, we have had little controversy. My interaction with residents for the most part has been friendly and cordial."

He elaborated this week, explaining the office tries "constantly" to interact positively with the public.

"We try to handle them as cordially as possible," he stated. "You can't always make everybody happy but our staff has been made aware that they answer to the public in general. We've had meetings to that effect and they understand that, but it sometimes can be difficult, if someone starts yelling at you, to stay cordial, and it happens sometimes; we're all people. But we do try our darndest to serve the town residents to the best ability."

Burbank added if he were re-elected, he would "try to continue to run the town as efficiently as possible."

He concluded in his release, "I look forward to continuing our journey together for the best of the town, seeking grants and keeping the tax rate at a level where struggling residents can continue to live in this town."

In addition to Burbank, Linddy also left the Jan. 13 caucus without an endorsement for either the Board of Selectmen, of which he is cur-

rently vice first selectman, or the Board of Education, of which he is currently chairman.

This week, he explained his decision to run as a petitioning candidate for the Board of Education, saying he had been asked by residents to continue on and see the completion of some projects.

"I had no intention [of running again] but I sat down with the superintendent [Andrew Maneggia] and we do have a major project going for next year on the roofing, replacing that and trying to have that on state grants. So that's a major thing," he explained, adding "It's just one last thing that I've been working on with Andy for three years and I just was asked" to continue on.

Linddy stated, "A lot of people have come up to me and said 'reconsider' but it would just be for one four-year term, nothing after."

Similarly, Linddy said people had approached him about remaining on the Board of Selectmen, too.

"People had come up to me and the main concern was looking at the future of taxes, and we've been here for a while without any change," he stated. "We do have responsibilities and certain things must be done but the people are not going to take huge increases."

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Aid for EHHS cont. from Page 9

feet to regain its classification.

However, Barber said despite the efforts of Downes Construction and Director of Facilities Don Harwood to cut square footage, it appeared the school would be unable to meet that number.

At the same time, she said she was optimistic about finding a compromise. One such avenue might be a space waiver, which would increase the amount of square footage eligible for reimbursement, and obtain a slightly higher reimbursement rate than was figured into the \$27 million cost.

This might work, she said, because the town can't really reduce hallway size or replace the auditorium due to the layout of the school.

"If this works out, we would get more from the state, and the cost to the taxpayers might ultimately be less," Barber said. "This isn't a guarantee, but in good conscience, we have to pursue this route."

Barber also said the committee needed to plan for a worst-case scenario in case the project classification became EA/RR. Under that plan, the high school would have to pay out-of-pocket for the high school's new gas boilers, and assess which parts of the renovation project would and wouldn't be critically needed.

Also, Maniscalco said they learned at the meeting that these renovation headaches are not unique to East Hampton.

"In the last two years, [DAS] identified that there were over six projects that have had very similar issues to ours that successfully went for a legislative fix," he said.

He also echoed Barber's feelings about working with DAS to solve the problem that way.

"It was encouraging to talk with the staff at DAS and hear from them that they're interested in working with the building committee and the community, and doing what they can do to get this project as a renovate-as-new project," he said.

Also, Maniscalco told the council that he, Barber and Dugas learned the state is allowed to adjust renovation categories as it sees fit, both at any time during construction, and from anywhere from three to five years after construction completion.

"It sounds to me, from talking with some of the staff at DAS, that it's not an uncommon thing to have happen," he said.

State Sen. Art Linares and state Rep. Melissa Ziobron were also in attendance at last week's Town Council meeting, to provide a legislative alternative to the town's administrative appeal.

Ziobron discussed the possibility of using the fact that the high school project is part of a school facilities omnibus bill in the General Assembly as a way to secure the high school a renovate-as-new reimbursement classification.

She also said the town residents could write in their support for that section of the bill via public testimony later in the legislative process.

Linares, a second-term member of the Senate Education Committee, said he was involved in helping with a similar problem in another town during his first term, which was resolved successfully.

"We were able to solve this in other towns, and we can solve this here," he said. "Ultimately, it's going to take a group effort, we all have to be on board."

At the same time, though, both legislators reminded the council that this legislation would not head to the General Assembly's floor until late May, and because of that, they couldn't offer the town a solid guarantee.

Council vice chairman Kevin Reich said he was "a frustrated camper" regarding how the high school building project's reimbursement issue had been handled up to this point.

"It's not like we don't have an architectural team, or an additional team that oversees the financial part of it and all the forms that have to go in," he said. "We even have another team in charge of monitoring the funding and all the guesstimates."

"I'm amazed we're here, discussing this issue, with all the expertise that we have. I'm beginning to question that expertise," he said.

Reich, who served as the assistant superintendent of schools in town for several years, and helped oversee several smaller school projects, also said he'd never known the state to change reimbursement classifications at will.

"Once it was etched in stone, it was etched in stone," he said.

* * *

Before Barber spoke at the meeting, councilor Patience Anderson expressed outrage at what she said was the building committee's "absolute failure to protect the taxpayers' vote" and ensure renovate-as-new status, alleging the committee did not do enough to ensure required forms were filed on time, and were not lost.

"I'm furious – I'm absolutely furious," she said. "This is unconscionable...and completely reckless."

Anderson and fellow Republican councilors Ted Hintz and Mark Philhower said they lost their confidence in the building committee, and called for a vote to remove all members of the high school building committee, and have the town council take up their duties.

"I don't have any faith in the building committee," Anderson said. "This is negligence in the nth degree."

The meeting then briefly derailed, with councilors speaking over each other, and two residents in attendance also shouted out their opinions – offering such thoughts as "sack 'em!" and "let 'em go!" – before council chair Barbara Moore regained order.

The motion to dissolve the committee failed 4-3, along party lines.

However, Moore and Reich said the committee should have a plan of action on how to address this issue, and be ready to present it to the Town Council at its Feb. 10 meeting.

Later, Barber said she wanted to make clear that the building committee didn't know about the change in renovation status until January, like the council, and had they known earlier, they would not have started construction in November.

"From all aspects, outside looking in, or even inside looking at what we were looking at, we were renovate-as-new," she said.

The focus then turned to CREC and The SLAM Collaborative, a national architectural and planning firm involved in coordinating the renovations, and their alleged roles in the reimbursement change and the lack of communication of that to the town.

Barber said that the building committee did in fact receive an email from CREC, by way of Superintendent of Schools Diane Dugas and town finance director Jeff Jylkka, saying the project's classification would be changed, around Thanksgiving.

"We responded to CREC, saying 'What's going on here?' and they said 'We'll look into it, don't worry about it,' and no dollar value was put on it at that point," she said. "SLAM was also going to get involved and look into it."

In addition, Barber said that CREC and SLAM filed an application for renovate-as-new status on July 17, 2014, but were only informed in November that the state lost their paperwork. CREC and SLAM then resubmitted the application for renovate-as-new in December.

It was also at that time that the committee learned that said paperwork had even been submitted in the first place.

"I expected to open up a wall and find a rare form of rattlesnakes that we'd have to give a good home to at the cost of a million dollars, but I didn't expect this," she said, of the communication breakdown. "We're paying a lot of money for these people to let us know how this project should be moving forward, and this is a huge roadblock that none of us anticipated."

"We are going to do what we need to do to get this project in at \$27 million to the taxpayers of East Hampton," she said.

Andover Officials cont. from Front Page

Liddy added, "I'm just going to hang in there and hopefully all these people that want me around will send me back."

He said he was grateful to everyone who re-elected him each time his term was up, and added while all the candidates were qualified, "the big word here is 'experience'" which he felt he, Burbank and Buchardt possessed.

* * *

Two days after the Republican Caucus, Andover Democrats met for a caucus of their own, at which Buchardt – who's been on the Board of Selectmen for the past nine years – wasn't endorsed either. Prior to the caucus, Buchardt said she had "absolutely" planned to run for the board again, but when she didn't garner an endorsement, she wasn't sure if she

wanted to run as a petitioning candidate.

However, she explained this week, "A lot of people wanted to be able to vote for me and this was the only way that they were going to get that chance."

Buchardt added, "A lot of people were upset I wasn't going to be a selectwoman anymore – including me! So I decided to put it out there to let the public vote."

Buchardt concluded, "I hope I have the ability to continue on with the work that I've been doing and I would like to hear from the entire town as opposed to just a few select Democrats that came to the caucus."

* * *

The Andover municipal elections take place May 4.

Hebron Grand List Goes Up Slightly

by Geeta Schrayter

The report is in, and the Oct. 1, 2014 Grand List of assessable properties in town has increased just under a half percent, with the net Grand List moving to \$782,003,550, for an increase of \$3,351,700 or .43 percent.

Real estate totals \$693,935,240, which is an increase of \$2,477,200 from the 2013 Grand List.

In a Jan. 26 memo to town officials, Assessor Debra Gernhardt explained the major increase in this area is “due to new residential dwelling construction and improvements to existing buildings.”

In addition, she shared the construction of the new CVS/pharmacy in town had been completed, which wasn't the case last year. Griffin also said some property on Church Street which was only two thirds complete last year had also been finished.

Furthermore, Gernhardt said 2014 saw the revaluing of some forest land in town – in keeping on an every-50-years schedule.

“There are four properties containing a total of 157 acres of land that received this [forestland] classification in 1964,” she stated. “On the 50th year, the values are required to be revalued for assessment purposes with these new values remaining in place for the next 50 years.”

The total assessment on these four parcels was \$7,650. The new total assessed value is \$14,280.”

The top 10 real estate assessments for 2014 were: Village Shoppes LLC at \$1,995,070; Hebron Properties LLC at \$1,470,000; Blackledge Country Club Inc. at \$1,464,680; Hebron Country Manor LLC at \$1,309,770; Hebron Lincoln LLC at \$1,224,230; 41-61 Main Street LLC at \$1,071,350; Grayville Estates of Hebron LLC at \$1,024,660; Houston, Hayden O. Jr at \$846,930; Hulk, William T. and Amelia at \$840,070; and Footehills Farm Inc. at \$805,870 for an assessment total of \$12,052,630.

Personal property also increased in 2014, from \$15,154,370 to \$15,636,330. Gernhardt wrote this was due to the purchase of new items by property owners as well as the opening of CVS/pharmacy and Colchester Construction LLC.

Connecticut Light & Power Co. (now known as Eversource Energy) continued to be the top personal property assessment in town last year, at \$7,750,850; this was followed by the Connecticut Water Company at \$1,428,770; Ted's Inc. at \$338,120; Blackledge Country Club Inc. at \$299,260; CVS Caremark Corporation at \$281,800; Cellco Partnership at \$278,590;

AT&T Mobility Inc. at \$260,170; Tallwood Country Club LLC at \$237,390; CT Solar Leasing LLC at \$209,730; and Sprint Spectrum LP at \$205,530, which amounts to \$11,340,210 in assessment.

Lastly, motor vehicles increased \$392,540 to \$72,431,980 which Gernhardt said was expected because the current year list usually mirrors what happened in the prior year's supplemental list.

“The 2013 supplemental list had an increase due to the increase in purchases of new vehicles,” Gernhardt stated.

Regarding the overall list, Town Manager Andrew Tierney said, “I'm glad it's up instead of down.”

“We're still going in the right direction,” he stated. “We were hoping to have it up a little more than that – that's our goal for next year. But we're going to work with what we have; the tax department is doing a great job collecting taxes, so we're paying the bills but trying to move forward with some economic development.”

Tierney added he was going to start going through the budgets from the various town departments next week and mentioned the town's Capital Improvement Budget “is down slightly from last year's monetary request.”

And, he added, “We continue to apply for grants to offset some of the costs that the taxpayers would otherwise have to be burdened with.”

The Grand List is used by the Board of Finance to help set the mill rate for the upcoming fiscal year. The mill rate is then used to determine residents' taxes; a resident can determine their taxes by multiplying the mill rate by their total assessments. One mill is equal to \$1 in tax per \$1,000 of assessed property and under the current mill rate of 35.75, a resident with a home assessed at \$250,000 would pay \$8,937.50 in taxes.

Anyone who wants to appeal their assessment must submit a written application to the Board of Assessment Appeals by Feb. 20. Appointments will then be assigned starting with the first meeting date which is Monday, March 9, at 7:30 p.m.; a second hearing date is scheduled for Thursday, March 12, at 7:30 p.m.; and a third hearing is set for Saturday, March 21, at 9 a.m.

For more information go to hebronct.com or call the assessor's office at 860-228-5971 ext. 149.

Marlborough Selectmen Ponder Capital Items

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

With budget season quickly approaching, the town's Capital Non-Recurring Committee delivered its list of items to the Board of Selectmen at the selectmen's meeting Tuesday.

“We ended up with categories and assigned priorities,” selectman and chairman of the CNR Committee Dick Shea said.

The CNR Committee examines one-time-only capital expenses in town, and ranks them in order of priority.

Some of the items the committee had deemed as high-priority, including the setting aside of money for the town's next revaluation (which will occur in the 2019-20 fiscal year); the setting aside of money for capital improvements; an HVAC control system for Richmond Memorial Library; a replacement police cruiser; and the acquisition of the former Marlborough Moose Lodge property on South Main Street.

The police cruiser would cost \$55,000, including the cost of the car and required equipment for a police officer. The HVAC control system would be \$31,230. The cost of the potential Moose property acquisition, however, has yet to be determined.

“It's possible to get open space grants,” Shea said of the Moose property, which Moose International is seeking \$425,000 for – an amount significantly higher than its assessed value of \$338,000.

However, First Selectwoman Cathi Gaudinski said acquiring a grant wouldn't necessarily be an ideal solution. She said it might in the long run cost less to not use a grant, due to the costs of the surveys and other steps needed for the grant-applying process.

“So you could get \$60,000 for a grant, but it's \$40,000 to pay for all of the rules,” Shea

said.

Plus, Gaudinski added, “If we get a grant, it's restricted on the use of the property.”

Ultimately, she said, whether the town would seek any kind of grant money “depends on the price settled on” between the town and Moose International.

Another item on the CNR list included a new dump truck and utility truck for the Public Works department.

“Was the utility and dump truck on the radar last year?” selectman Denis Soucy asked.

Shea said they were not on the list last year since Public Works did work on the payload and can push that off while the other two need it. Shea said one of the trucks is around 15 years old and gets a lot of use.

Also among the high-priority items on the list were improvements at the Marlborough Elementary School playscape – although Shea admitted the details about the improvements have been rather vague to this point.

“There hasn't been a lot of information about it,” Shea said. The Board of Education “say they want to do something since the equipment is marginally safe, but we're waiting on quotes. There's no number there yet.”

Shea said he wasn't confident the school board would have numbers soon, as the board and Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz are currently putting together the school budget for the 2015-16 fiscal year.

“The funding source for the playscape has not been determined,” Gaudinski said.

Meanwhile, Shea questioned the Board of Education's issue with funding capital improvements in general.

“I would think they would be sitting pretty with capital improvements since they have two grants, MECCA funds and the Medicaid reimbursement,” Shea said.

Shea also mentioned the school district got a \$60,000 grant for security, but the grant requires the board to pay \$30,000 and for the state to pay \$30,000. However, he said, the funds “are not in their current budget.”

Gaudinski questioned why the school hasn't been putting money back into the fund balance, which is often used to offset the tax increase or fund capital projects. The fund balance is created with any leftover money from the previous year's budget that went unused.

“Town operations is the only returning fund balance,” Gaudinski said.

“It's safe to say there's an overwhelming view of both [the local and RHAM boards of education] that they have needs and are not going to return it to taxpayers,” Shea said.

Shea said RHAM has a lot of needs and began using its fund balance last year to make repairs that had been put off in previous years' budgets; these included leaks and failing windows and air conditioners.

“They hang onto the extra money and fix things that are broken,” Shea said. The school board's attorney “said they can do it, but they have to have a district meeting and have the money slated for items.”

Shea went on to say that RHAM has “set the practice and we won't see [the money] anymore.”

“I'm not sure everyone on the [local and RHAM] boards understand that [not returning surplus funds to the towns] affects the mill rates,” Gaudinski said.

Shea agreed with Gaudinski, saying, “It's likely most board members don't realize it returns to the town and affects the tax rate.”

Gaudinski said the town has also used the fund balance in the past to help lower debt.

However, Soucy stressed the difficulty of getting a board to return its surplus funds to towns if it has already started not to do so. “It's like getting toothpaste back in the tube,” he said.

Gaudinski said although the Board of Selectmen has a practice for how boards in town should handle their fund balances, it hasn't been formalized, and the selectmen need to create policies to clarify it.

As far as the CNR committee moving forward, Gaudinski suggested the selectmen figure out a way to give the committee an estimated amount of funds that may be available for capital projects, and this may help guide the committee. Also moving forward, Gaudinski said she hopes the committee can get each board's opinions on what items to put on the list, be it by vote or in some other form.

“It's like a big puzzle,” Gaudinski said of the CNR items.

For the town budget, the town operations budget will be completed by Tuesday, Feb. 17, for an initial review by the selectmen that night, Gaudinski said. The selectmen went on to schedule two additional meetings to go over the town operations budget, on Tuesday, Feb. 24, and Thursday, Feb. 26, at 5:30 p.m. both nights, and both nights at Town Hall.

The next Board of Selectmen meeting is Feb. 17 at 7 p.m. at Town Hall.

Andover Grand List Sees One Percent Increase

by Geeta Schrayter

For the second year in a row, the Andover Grand List, which represents the assessed value of all taxable property in town, has increased about 1 percent.

The Grand List totals for the year ending October 2014 came in at \$266,739,700 which is an additional \$2,670,000 or 1.01 percent in assessment.

This week, First Selectman Bob Burbank said, “It's nice to see we had an increase – as slight as it was – but it's always better that the Grand List goes up than down.”

Real Estate increased \$1,801,600 to \$231,602,700 while personal property increased \$379,700 and motor vehicles increased \$388,700.

The top three real estate taxpayers in town continue to be Whispering Hills LLC, with an assessment of \$905,200, followed by Martin, Marshall at \$790,200, and the Eastern Connecticut Housing Authority at \$781,800. Rounding out the top 10 are 84 Route Six LLC at \$765,800; Kenneth R. and Katherine Marcia at \$582,600; Hillside Self-Storage Center LLC at \$578,300; Pamela B. Hatem at \$578,300; Andover Plaza LLC at \$569,700; Charles B. and Radenka Maric at \$510,000; and Danielle B. Maguire at \$493,700. In total, the top 10 taxpayers' assessments for \$6,502,000 in taxes.

On the personal property side, the top 10 taxpayers' assessments total \$5,547,170. Connecti-

cut Light & Power Co. (now known as Eversource Energy) has the highest assessment at \$3,649,960. Switching positions this year are Scott Electrocrafts Inc. who is the second-highest personal property taxpayer at \$542,500, and Algonquin Gas Transmission LLC at \$484,520, who was second last year. Next on the list are Saqib Tasneem at \$218,750; AT&T Mobility LLC at \$202,210; Andover Landscaping LLC at \$120,410; Cellco Partnership at \$89,920; ICA Donuts LLC at \$82,360; Sprint Spectrum LP at \$80,940; and Ronald Bisson at \$75,600.

Once the Grand List is set, it's used by the Board of Finance to help set the mill rate for the upcoming fiscal year. This is determined

by dividing the town's budget by the Grand List total.

The mill rate is then used to determine residents' taxes: a resident can determine their taxes by multiplying the mill rate by their total assessments. One mill is equal to \$1 in tax per \$1,000 of assessed property. Under the current mill rate of 30.72, a resident with a home assessed at \$250,000 would pay \$7,680 in taxes.

Anyone who wants to appeal their assessment can submit a written application to the Board of Assessment Appeals before Feb. 20. For more information or to access an application, go to andoverconnecticut.com and click on “town departments” followed by “Assessor.”

CCT Hopes New Musical is ‘Shrektabulous’

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

Next week in Colchester, an ogre will fight a dragon and rescue a princess while falling in love, a lord will get his perfect kingdom and a group of fairy tale creatures will get their revenge.

It's the story of *Shrek the Musical*, which will take the Bacon Academy auditorium stage next weekend.

Presented by the Colchester Community Theatre and sponsored by the Colchester Parks and Recreation, the more than 80-person cast has been working nonstop to be ready for opening night Feb. 13 after missing rehearsals due to snow days. However, the cast and crew have been up to the challenge and according to choreographer Lesley Gallagher of Cromwell, "it'll come together with the magic of the fairy dust of theater."

Using an arrangement by Music Theatre International, the musical is based on the Oscar-winning 2001 DreamWorks animated film and book written by William Steig in 1990. According to the synopsis for the musical, Shrek will learn that real friendship and true love aren't only found in fairy tales.

"After [performing] *Les Miserables* last year, we needed to change subject matters and do something fun," Wallis Johnson, director, said. "It's about storybook characters, but from a very different vantage point."

To put on a production of this size, work on *Shrek the Musical* began last March and April, with Johnson and other high-ranking CCT members reading the script and figuring out all the small details.

"The entire production crew puts on the best show we can," Johnson said.

CCT President Diane Ozmun said the challenge of snow has been something the production group has gotten used to.

"It's part of the process by now," Ozmun said. "We've learned to be proactive and have a flexible cast."

The cast has also faced other challenges, but Ozmun said they're facing everything head on. One big challenge has been executing the dragon onstage.

"It's a puppet operated by at least five people," Ozmun said of the dragon. "She's a character in herself and needs to come alive on stage."

The crew has also been working on creating each look for all of the characters. Ozmun said this cast especially has a record number of varieties of specific character looks.

"We need to make animals look like animals and not distract by thinking there is a person behind it," Ozmun said.

The crew also has been learning prosthetics

to create the iconic look of Shrek.

The cast is as varied as their characters with both veteran CCT actors and newcomers to the group. Steve Sabol of West Hartford plays Donkey and is a newcomer to CCT, along with his two daughters, Annabelle, 7, and Amelia, 9, who are in the children's ensemble.

"When I got the part of Donkey, I called my dad and he said, 'Finally a part that suits you,'" Sabol said. "I would never in a million years expect to be Donkey. I'm a big, fat, white guy, so I thought Shrek, but personality-wise, I'm more Donkey."

Part of what makes the experience special for Sabol is when he can work alongside his daughters.

"It's fun because they tell me when I'm funny and when I'm not," Sabol said. "If I can make them laugh, I've got a shot."

The difficult part for Sabol has been creating a Donkey that is not just an impersonation of Eddie Murphy, who voiced Donkey in the animated film.

"It's a character everyone knows so well," Sabol said. "We'll find out if I succeed."

Sabol said *Shrek* is a show that will appeal to kids and adults, and quipped that one reason for this multi-generational appeal is there are "plenty of fart jokes."

Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein is a veteran CCT actor who will leave his lawyer suit behind to embody the character of Thelonius, Lord Farquaad's right-hand man.

"I'm a dark and spooky guy that threatens the Gingerbread Man," Goldstein said.

Goldstein began with CCT in 2006, and said the theatre got him hooked on performing.

And the seasoned Goldstein will be sharing the stage with the youngest member of the cast, newcomer Michael Dickey, 6, of Colchester, who will play Baby Bear.

"I learned how to dance with Lesley, where I'm supposed to be on stage with Wallis, and have been learning music," Dickey said. Dickey had been asking since he was three years old to be in a performance. "I'm excited to be on stage for the first time."

Although one thing Dickey wishes he could change is his costume.

"My costume is really hot and I wish there was popcorn in it," Dickey said.

As far as costumes, Kevin Shirey of Middletown who plays Shrek will have the real challenge with prosthetics. However, one of the biggest challenges for Shirey has been voice work in order to sound Scottish, like Shrek.

"My wife's family is from Scotland," Shirey said. "I've had to work on my Scottish accent and talk like Shrek. It's a lot more work than I expected."



From left, Amy Polek (Pinocchio), Kelsey Gamble (Gingerbread Man), Terry Ryan (Papa Bear), Joan Andrews (Mama Bear) and Michael Dickey (Baby Bear) work out a scene during rehearsal on Wednesday for *Shrek the Musical*.

Shirey helped him and the other leads to rehearse in the short amount of time by recording a CD with all of them reading the script.

"You can hear the other characters and know what to expect," Shirey said. "You use every sense of the word including hearing it, writing it, looking at it and speaking it."

Shirey said usually musicals have eight to 10 weeks for rehearsals, but CCT had only six weeks for *Shrek* – and the rehearsal schedule became even more abbreviated after the recent snowstorms canceled rehearsals.

Although it's been a tough time, Shirey said it will all come together and be a great show.

Newcomer to CCT Elizabeth Shapiro of Wolcott will fall in love with Shrek through her character, Fiona. Playing Fiona hasn't been too difficult for Shapiro since she said she's a "bit of a kindred spirit with Fiona."

"She's one of the more complex characters," Shapiro said. "She's fighting with who she should be and who she is. She's also crude and farts and burps."

Shapiro said the production will come together "hard and fast."

Students of Jack Jacker Intermediate School will see a familiar face in the cast with Mike Byrne of East Hampton who plays Lord Farquaad. Byrne is a fourth grade teacher in town.

"You'll get your money's worth," Byrne said. "It should be good."

"People attending the show are going to laugh and have a great storybook moment," Johnson said. "We've sold out in the past and are selling like crazy already."

Performances begin on Friday, Feb. 13, at 7 p.m. and continue Saturday, Feb. 14, at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. and Sunday, Feb. 15, at 2 p.m. at the Bacon Academy Auditorium at 611 Norwich Ave.

Ticket prices are \$15 for adults and \$12 for seniors and children ages 12 and under. Preferred seating tickets (a maximum of 50 per performance) are available for \$25 each. Online ticket sales (credit card only) are available now through ShowTix4U, see additional information at colchestercommunitytheatre.com. In-person ticket sales (cash and check only) are available at Copies Plus...more between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday to Friday at 31 Halls Hill Rd. Credit card sales are available through CCT's virtual box office by calling (860) 222-5767. Leave a name and phone number and calls will be returned within 24 hours. Tickets at door are subject to availability. All ticket sales are final.

In case of inclement weather, call 860-537-7297 for updates. CCT is sponsored by the Colchester Parks & Recreation.

Colchester Sees ‘Fairly Flat’ Grand List

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

Colchester saw only a small 0.6 percent increase in the 2014 grand list over the 2013 grand list.

The Oct. 1, 2014 Grand List of assessable properties totaled \$1,216,568,000, a \$7.39 million increase over the 2013 list which totaled \$1,209,174,800.

Assessor John Chaponis said the increase will bring an additional 226,000 in tax dollars based on last year's mill rate.

Last year's Oct. 1, 2013 grand list also increased by 0.6 percent.

The grand list, Chaponis explained, is the aggregate valuation of taxable property within a given town. The assessor updates the list annually by adding any new taxable property and removing any property that is no longer taxable.

"Many Connecticut towns have just filed their Grand List and the aggregate total has gone down from last year to this year and that is because personal property depreciates,

people didn't buy many new vehicles, and real estate has been combined, demolished, or assessments were reduced due to court case (tax appeals)," Chaponis said.

Colchester's grand list is divided into three categories: real property, motor vehicle and personal property. Only two of the three categories rose in the 2014 list.

Real property saw a \$6,238,800 increase to total \$1,044,354,400. Motor vehicle also saw an increase of \$1,454,400 to total \$117,413,600. Personal property had a \$300,000 decline to total \$40,300,000.

Chaponis said the decline in personal property is "pretty flat and insignificant" since one excavator can cost \$300,000. He also said the motor vehicle increase of approximately \$1.45 million was also fairly flat.

"I think in this economy, any municipality is lucky to have any grand list increase and I've seen newspaper articles about Bristol and Middletown this year, Rocky Hill last year, and these are towns that saw their Grand List de-

creased and it was not a revaluation year," Chaponis said.

To obtain the net Grand List total, all three categories are totaled, and then the assessor adds in an estimate for prorates and a motor vehicle supplement. The 2014 Grand List shows prorates at \$1,900,000 and a motor vehicle supplement of \$15,100,000. Once all of those values are determined, an estimate of what is expected to be taken off the list – by means of corrections or adjustments made by the Board of Assessment Appeals (BAA) – is subtracted from the total. Like last year's list, Chaponis estimated BAA corrections at \$2,500,000, thus resulting in the \$1,216,568,000 net total.

The Grand List is used by the Board of Finance to help set the mill rate for the upcoming fiscal year. The mill rate is then used to determine residents' taxes; a resident can determine their taxes by multiplying the mill rate by their total assessments. One mill is equal to \$1 in tax per \$1,000 of assessed property and under

the current mill rate of 30.57, a resident with a home assessed at \$250,000 would pay \$7,642.50 in taxes.

The top 10 real estate taxpayers on the Oct. 1, 2014 list were: Country Place of Colchester LTD Partners at \$9,211,100; SS1 Colchester LLC at \$7,232,900; City of Norwich at \$4,835,900; Gaia Colchester LLC at \$3,695,100; Sharr Realty LLC at \$3,518,000; S+S Worldwide Inc. at \$3,401,500; Genesis Health Ventures of Bloomfield Inc. at \$3,220,000; GND Too of Colchester LLC at \$3,117,000; Keystone Shoppes LLC at \$2,768,700; and Colchester Realty LLC at \$2,726,990.

The deadline to file a written appeal if a taxpayer is unhappy with their assessment is Feb. 20. Chaponis said failure to file a fully completed appeal application form prior to the appeal deadline constitutes a waiver of your right to appeal in that year. Appeal applications must be in the office prior to 4:30 p.m. on Feb. 20.

Mathieu Proposes Record-Low Budget Increase for Colchester

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

Superintendent of Schools Jeff Mathieu was all smiles at last week's Board of Education meeting, and for good reason – he presented the board with what he said was the lowest initially proposed budget increase in Colchester school's history.

With an 0.84 percent increase, the proposed \$39,995,370 budget is so low that Mathieu said he "hopes the board doesn't want to shave any more" from it.

The spending proposal is a \$333,575 increase over the approved 2014-15 budget of \$39,661,795.

"When I went in with the administrators to build the budget, I had two goals," Mathieu said at the Jan. 29 meeting. "I wanted to be under 1 percent and under \$40 million."

"I'm encouraged that it's at such a low level of increase," Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein said. "It was in response to some of what we heard last year from the community. It was our goal to bring in an extremely low level of increase."

Goldstein said things go up every year and it's "harder and harder to do that, but especially important this year."

The proposed budget increase would have been higher than it is – and would not have met Mathieu's goal of less than \$40 million – but the superintendent partially offset increases in the budget by making \$141,778 worth of reductions.

Among the new items in the spending package is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). Although the district had already been paying \$27,500 for an outside contractor, Mathieu said the position was important enough to hire full-time. The BCBA works to conduct behavior assessments, interpret results and design and supervise behavior interventions for the most behaviorally-challenged students. The person will be receiving \$97,077.

"The position will benefit everybody, not just the students served," Goldstein said. "It will even benefit the students not directly served."

Salaries continue to make up the largest part of the budget. In the salaries line, there is a proposed 2.65 percent increase of \$636,333 to make a total line item of \$24,617,084. This increase includes the additions of a kindergarten

teacher, two special education paraprofessionals, which were all added for the current school year after the school budget was approved by voters last year. The additions were due to expected increases in enrollment. Also included in the increase are coaches' stipends for William J. Johnston Middle School sports and Bacon Academy freshman sports, which were also added after the school budget passed last year. All of these items are currently being paid for via transfers from other items, but are now being included in their correct location of the salaries line item.

Also included among the increases are: the addition of the BCBA; a general wage increase with no step movement for teachers; the nurses' contract settlement; step increases for custodians and office professionals; an additional \$10,000 for additional hours for the early childhood coordinator and an increase of one work day for the 12-month hourly employees in 2015-16.

Some of the reductions in the salaries line include the ending of two long-term substitute teacher positions at Jack Jacter Intermediate School, including one grade four teacher and one grade five teacher. Another reduction was at Colchester Elementary School for a part-time math teacher. Mathieu said this person would be reassigned. The teacher reductions come after a decline in enrollment especially in fourth and fifth grades.

Mathieu stressed that the school system is not laying anyone off. By reducing the half-time math teacher at CES, administration is able to add additional hours to existing positions in music, art and technology. At JJIS, with the reduction of the two grade teachers, administration is adding additional hours to existing positions in reading, math and technology.

"People are retaining their job in a different capacity," Mathieu said.

As far as the employee benefits line, it has a proposed decrease of 5.71 percent, or \$395,153. The line totals \$6,523,703. This decrease, Mathieu said, comes from a reduction in estimated claims, changes in the plan design, and a reduction in the amount of people covered.

For the instructional line, including supplies, professional development and curriculum re-

lated items, there is a proposed 4.30 percent increase of \$44,736. The line totals \$1,084,965 in the proposed budget. Mathieu said this increase includes technology purchases such as iPads, iPad carts and thin clients. Thin clients are an upgrade to teachers' computers in their rooms that eliminates hard drives and fans and transfers the information to a general data center.

"We have a very significant investment in technology," Goldstein said. "We used the reductions in health insurance to catch up on technology."

Goldstein said the amount that the board has slated in the proposed budget for technology allows the district to be eligible for a state fund matching grant. If approved, the district would receive a two-to-one match of its funds, which would mean an additional \$300,000 toward technology.

Some items the district hopes to be able to purchase with that money would include Chromebooks, SMART boards and iPads.

"We're leveraging local dollars to get a significant amount of state dollars," Goldstein said.

The Board of Education approved the application for that grant at last week's meeting.

In the transportation line, there is a proposed 1.40 percent decrease of \$35,530 in the total line item of \$2,510,029. Mathieu said because of declining enrollment they were able to eliminate a bus run. They also saw a reduction in fuel costs and an increase in demand for special education transportation.

The budget proposal also calls for a 15.45 percent decrease in the professional services line, including legal and software licensing. The decrease represents \$48,436 in the total line item of \$265,097. Mathieu said this drop comes with a reduction in legal services since the district has no union negotiations in 2015-16 along with a reduction in software licensing.

The budget also calls for a 6.18 percent increase in the property and liability insurance. This increase represents \$7,381 in the total \$126,827 line item., and Mathieu said it comes after an estimated three percent rate increase for liability insurances, an estimated 10 percent rate and exposure increase for student accident insurance and increasing claims.

For office services, including professional development, office equipment contracts, telephones and postage, the district saw a proposed 1.96 percent increase totaling \$7,089. The total line item in the proposed budget is \$368,898. Mathieu said the reasons behind the increase includes the replacement of copies and renewal of lease terms at favorable rates, the addition of servers to support the thin clients, a district web filter and continued upgrades to the Bacon Academy wireless infrastructure.

The district also will see an increase in tuition. Mathieu proposed a 6.72 percent increase, or \$145,302, in the tuition line item which totals \$2,307,879. This increase comes with more special education students, more magnet school enrollments and one additional vocational agriculture student.

However, due to lower heating fuel costs and with the school's energy efficient systems saving in electricity cost, the line item for facilities and grounds is decreased by 1.72 percent, which reflects \$30,899 in the total line item of \$1,760,834.

Included also in the proposed budget is a flat-funded capital outlay of \$259,430 and a proposed 1.64 percent increase in the debt service fund. This increase reflects \$2,752 in the total line item of \$170,624. Mathieu said the increase for debt services comes after an increase in the principal and interest payment for the energy project lease along with a lease payment increase in 2016-17 and 2017-18 that will remain level until 2024-25.

Goldstein said he is anxious to begin speaking with the public about the proposed budget.

"I encourage people to come to our meetings and welcome us to their meetings to be out there talking and informing them what the budget is all about," Goldstein said. "I'm hopeful that the public will see the work we're doing to keep it so low."

Goldstein ended by calling the proposed budget both "responsive and responsible." Responsive in the fact that the board listened to last year's comments from the community about what they wanted and responsible in the way to keep things functioning smoothly throughout the district.

Portland Enters Into Cooperative Purchasing Agreements

by John Tyczkowski

This week, the Board of Selectmen decided to enter into two cooperative purchasing agreements to facilitate the acquisition of key equipment for the latest Brownstone Avenue phase.

Cooperative purchasing agreements are beneficial for the town because it allows a company with expertise in those equipment areas to handle the competitive bidding process, and not the town, First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said.

One of the reasons the decision came up was because the latest phase of development involves securing a cover for the stage at the Riverfront Park, in order to direct sound out toward the river and improve acoustics.

"I don't know the last time we had to buy a roof for a stage around here," First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said, laughing. "This is an effort to streamline some work, and save some effort in terms of bidding, and to get good products for the town."

Also up for improvement are a paved driveway, running water at the park including Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant bathrooms, and improvements to the storage building on the grounds.

Nathan L. Jacobson & Associates, an engineering firm from Cheshire, will be handling the improvements to the park during this phase, Bransfield said.

The two companies the town decided to enter into agreements with are HGACBuy out of Texas and the National Joint Powers Alliance out of Minnesota.

Neighboring Glastonbury and East Hampton,

as well as dozens of towns ranging from Groton to Barkhamstead to Mansfield, have entered into such agreements already.

"Numerous towns utilize these agreements to purchase bidded products that they probably don't buy that often," Bransfield said. "By having a bigger cooperative doing the bidding and awarding, it means we don't have to go through that process ourselves."

Both cooperatives specialize in recreational and park equipment, she said.

She said there is no cost to enter into these agreements, but they still require the approval of the board.

Selectman Carl Chudzick said he wanted to make sure the town would be able to use grant money to make purchases via these cooperatives, and Bransfield said that was a top priority the town would look into with the state.

Selectmen unanimously approved entering into the agreements.

* * *

Selectmen also discussed legislative priorities for the current session, which included topics ranging from land acquisition to safety measures at the Ledges.

Selectman Fred Knous talked about the town looking into acquiring property from the state off of Route 66 that includes the Top Dog building, which the Providence & Worcester Railroad has rights to use for storage, and rail access.

"Each year, the General Assembly looks at requests for grants of property from various legislators," he said. "These can be for economic

development, infrastructure repairs, a variety of things."

Knous said the process does not cost the town anything, and that each year, a given town usually tends to end up with that requested property.

"Many times the town ends up with a valuable piece of property that adds to the community, and can add to the tax base as well," he said. "We should be taking this opportunity to acquire property that can benefit the town, for no cost."

Bransfield said she had already presented the request to State Rep. Christie Carpino, and that the town would be monitoring the request's progress through the Assembly.

As an added bonus, Bransfield said the property is also on the original Air Line Trail route, which combines perfectly with the recent pushes to expand the trail through the town to the Arrigoni Bridge.

Also, Carpino and state Rep. Melissa Ziobron are sponsoring a bill, HB 6341, which would place rumble strips on Route 66 at the Ledges, an area known to be especially dangerous, Knous said.

"It's a very serious problem," he said. "Hopefully, with this effort, we would be able to see some progress."

Most recently, a fatal crash at the ledges occurred last month. Two previous fatal car accidents happened in September and November 2013. Both were single-car.

Additionally, in July 2014, a single-car rollover car accident occurred at the Ledges

during rush hour, but the accident was non-fatal.

* * *

Selectmen also voted to transfer money reserved in the previous fiscal year for revising the town's Plan of Conservation and Development to the appropriate fund to reserve it for the same use for the next fiscal year.

Bransfield said unless the town transferred the \$20,000 from the town's planning department to the town's transfer-out account in the general fund, the town could no longer use that money for the next year.

"From there, it would go to the transfer-in account in the capital account, and then we would appropriate it to the plan consultant," she said.

According to the town charter, when such a transfer is proposed, selectmen must notify residents, who then must vote on whether or not to pass the transfer.

"This is really just an accounting issue, that allows the money to cross the fiscal year and allows its continued use," Bransfield said. "But the final decision rests with the residents."

There will be a special town meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 18, at 7:15 p.m., before the regular meeting, at 7:30 p.m. on the proposed money transfer.

* * *

The next Board of Selectmen meeting will take place Wednesday, Feb. 18, at 7:30 p.m., in the Mary Flood room of the Portland Public Library.

With Snow Days Piling Up, Portland Board Keeps Scheduled Day Off

by John Tyczkowski

Following last week's blizzard and another foot that fell on the town this past Monday, Portland schools have seen four snow days so far in the 2014-15 school year – and there's still a month and a half until the first day of spring.

Nevertheless, after much deliberation, the Board of Education decided Tuesday to keep next Friday, Feb. 13, as a day off for students, as had been scheduled – and to make up instructional time lost to snow days elsewhere.

"We've had a little snow this year so far, haven't we?" Superintendent of Schools Philip O'Reilly quipped Tuesday.

So far due to snow days, Portland's projected last day of school is Thursday, June 18.

"If we have two more snow days, that will put us into the next week," O'Reilly said. "And we may or may not have two more snow days. But then again, we are only at the beginning of February."

The issue at hand Tuesday was whether to keep Feb. 13 as a professional development day for staff, or to turn it into a full school day to begin to make up for instructional time lost over the past two weeks.

"There may be some parents that have plans and trips for their families," O'Reilly said of having school Feb. 13. "But when you weigh it with going to school the third week in June when parents have trips planned, it's a one-for-one swap; it gives us some leeway."

In addition, O'Reilly said he wanted to "avoid touching" April vacation if possible.

"It would be a tough one to change," he said.

In addition, Chair MaryAnne Rode said Feb. 13 would be a good option because staff were already planning to be at school for professional development.

"There aren't any other opportunities within the calendar that fit this," she said.

If there were school Feb. 13, the professional development day would be tacked on to the calendar after the as-yet-undetermined last day of school.

Outside of next Friday, O'Reilly said the only other options to make up snow days would have to come from Good Friday, Memorial Day or April vacation.

However, secretary Andrea Alfrano said the board could always call a special meeting and decide to have school for a day or two during February break instead.

"We could take back Feb. 16 or 17, we've done that before," she said. "We once sent the kids to school on Presidents' Day with three or four days' notice. It has a precedent – that's all I'm saying."

Board member Chris Darby said he was wary of altering scheduled vacation days.

"People have already made plans, and I'm concerned about changing the school calendar on short notice," he said. "I don't feel we're at the point where we need to panic."

Rode cautioned the board, saying that changing Feb. 13 to a school day and sacrificing a professional development day wouldn't be a guaranteed fix.

"Unfortunately, we don't have control over the weather," she said. "There's nothing to say

that it would put us in any better of a position.

She also mentioned how the board needed to balance the concerns of parents who want their children to have structure and continuity of education with those parents who had already made plans because they were assured Feb. 13 would be a day off.

"I appreciate both sides' points, and I've lived both sides of it," she said. "But we as a board need to consider: Is this situation extreme enough that we have to upset the applecart, do we feel we'll be able to answer to this?"

However, board member Michael Pelton brought up the point that if Feb. 13 were made a school day, the professional development activities the principals of all schools devoted time to planning would now be moot.

"That's the only scheduled professional development day between the beginning of the year, and the end of the year," he said. "That makes it, I think, even more important. If you throw out that day, principals don't have a scheduled time to work with their teachers until June."

However, O'Reilly said that he had discussed this option with the schools' principals, who unanimously supported school on Feb. 13, though he said he had not been able to consult with staff.

Rode said she was in favor of keeping Feb. 13 a professional development day.

"We live in New England; there are going to be storms, there's going to be disruption," she said. "People are going to complain if we go either way. But at least [if we keep Feb. 13 as a

professional development day], this is what we said we were going to do at the beginning of the year."

The board voted 4-2 to keep Feb. 13 as a professional development day, off for students.

* * *

O'Reilly also mentioned the creation of a new district-wide communication plan, as mentioned in the board's own learning priorities list.

Portland Middle School Principal Scott Giegerich will be working on developing it, he said.

"He has volunteered to head up a group of staff members and parents, to come together to come up with a formal communication plan for the town to use," he said.

In addition, O'Reilly said the Board of Education should send a representative to that committee's meetings as well.

He also said the full communication plan will be presented to the full board upon its completion, at a to-be-determined date.

The board previously discussed and set its goals last fall. In addition to fostering communication between the board and the town and between board members, other goals included revisiting and revising the board's own goals to be more measurable and metrics-based, and reestablishing regular subcommittee meetings on various aspects of the board's operations.

* * *

The next Board of Education meeting will take place on Tuesday, March 3 at 7 p.m. in the Portland High School media center.

Portland Sidewalks Subcommittee Discusses Revising Ordinance

by John Tyczkowski

The Board of Selectmen's sidewalk subcommittee held its inaugural meeting Wednesday, to begin to discuss a myriad of issues plaguing the town's sidewalks and sidewalk ordinance.

Specifically, selectmen discussed the town's need to update its current sidewalk ordinance, which is not specific enough of a number of issues from town liability to who is responsible for repairing damaged sidewalks.

Previously, points of contention had arisen among the selectmen over whether the town or abutting property owners should be responsible for repairing publicly-used sidewalks, especially if damage was due to town trees.

The discussion had intensified in recent months due to the steadily deteriorating state of sidewalks on Main Street, as well as an opportunity via a Small Town Economic Assistance Program [STEAP] grant to fix some problematic sidewalk sections on Spring Street while repairing a water main there.

Selectman Fred Knous, acting as chair, discussed an ordinance in Wethersfield that specifically states the town is responsible for repairing sidewalks damaged by the town, and that the process is overseen by the public works director.

"It's been handled sort of informally here in practice in the past, but we should codify it in our ordinance as well," he said.

To that end, Knous mentioned "a number of town-planted trees" had been pushing up sidewalk sections, creating uneven walking surfaces, and that he felt it was the town's responsibility to repair those sidewalk sections.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield mentioned how the town had engaged in limited tree-related sidewalk repairs in the past on East Main and Spring streets.

"We had to cut down the trees, stump-grind and then replace the sidewalks by patching," she said.

In one case on Spring Street, she said, a tree grew in such a way that it interfered with power lines, and then became diseased, so Connecticut Light & Power paid for its removal, and the town took care of replacing the sidewalk and curbs.

Selectman Carl Chudzik suggested that the sidewalk and tree subcommittees tackle that common issue.

"This is just going to get worse, with the trees continuing to grow," he said. "Both committees need to coordinate, one issue goes into the other."

Subcommittee members also discussed a priority list for which sections of sidewalks should be repaired first.

Selectman Ryan Curley said that, due to fre-

quency of use, school routes should be the first priority.

"The first focus should be the most-trafficked areas in town, and school routes tend to be those," he said.

Chudzik added the next priority should be Portland's downtown and business district areas.

In addition, Bransfield said she would have the town attorney review the current ordinance and present specific points to fix in terms of the town's liability regarding snow and ice.

If properly written, the ordinance would exempt the town from liability if a pedestrian happened to slip on an uncleared sidewalk abutting private property, since private property owners are responsible for snow and ice clearance under state statute.

Subcommittee members discussed the case of Plainville, where the town took pains to revise its ordinance in the wake of a state Supreme Court ruling.

That ruling states unless a town possessed a properly worded ordinance exempting it from such liability, the town would be held liable for injuries sustained by a pedestrian on an uncleared, private property-abutting sidewalk.

Bransfield also took time to clarify for the subcommittee the town's process in asking

abutting private property owners to clear their sidewalks, especially crosswalk areas on Main Street.

"The letters will go out to those owners, advising them of the ordinance and their responsibilities, and that they must comply," she said. "The ordinance does also say (the town) can go out and clear the sidewalk nearer to schools, and for handicapped-accessibility, and then we bill them. We don't fine; we bill."

Bransfield stressed that according to the ordinance, the town must take the time to notify property owners before acting.

"Notification is very important in terms of implementing the ordinance correctly and fairly," she said.

To that end, she discussed how the public works secretary developed a "very attractive friendly reminder" for property owners, available at town hall, in the form of a door knob hanger, which lays out responsibilities under the ordinance.

Additionally, subcommittee members expressed their desire to work with the Complete Streets Group in town. The group's goals include increasing pedestrian accessibility throughout town, which overlaps with the selectmen's focus on repairing and upgrading sidewalks.

Hebron Plow Damaged in Hit-and-Run

by Geeta Schrayter

Information is being sought in a hit-and-run accident Monday that damaged one of the town's plow trucks.

Hebron Town Manager Andrew Tierney explained this week at around 8 p.m. Feb. 2, a white pickup truck with a plow attached attempted to pass one of the town's plow trucks on Old Colchester Road. The driver then lost control of the truck and slid into the town's vehicle.

"A private plow hit one of our trucks and damaged it pretty heavily," Tierney stated, explaining, "The pickup truck smashed the whole back plus the cab corner – so there's quite a bit of damage to a truck which is fairly new."

Tierney said anyone with information can call the resident state trooper's office at 860-228-3710.

East Hampton Police News

1/23: Dennis Donovan, 51, of 11 Sturbridge Rd., Marlborough, was issued a summons for operating an unregistered and uninsured motor vehicle, misuse of plates and failure to display a front marker plate, East Hampton Police said.

1/28: Bradley Grant Everett, 28, who police said they have no certain address for, was arrested pursuant to an active warrant for first-degree failure to appear, police said.

Hebron Police News

2/1: State Police said Jason Pinney, 34, and Cory Burtchell, 38, each of 53 Old Andover Rd., were each arrested and charged with attempt to commit sixth-degree larceny.

Colchester Police News

1/29: State Police said Jonathan Hendrickson, 30, of 51 Pickerel Lake Rd., was arrested and charged with failure to appear.

1/31: State Police said Matthew Martell, 43, whose address police listed as P.O. Box 255, Hadlyme, was arrested and charged with DUI and operating an unregistered motor vehicle.

2/3: State Police said Malcolm Hernandez, 22, of 172 Hilliard St., Manchester, was arrested and charged with failure to appear.

2/3: State Police said Nicholas Polit, 37, of 11 Chowanek Rd., Columbia, was arrested and charged with failure to appear.

Obituaries

Portland

Charles T. Wiernasz

Charles "Charlie" Wiernasz (Winner), 64, of Portland, passed away Monday, Jan. 26, at Middlesex Hospital. Born March 29, 1950, in Middletown, he was a lifelong resident of Portland where he made lifelong friends of many.

He was the son of the late Rose (Yoroski) and Stanley (Wiernasz) Winner of Portland.

He was also predeceased by a brother, Peter Winner, and uncle, Adolf Yoroski.

Charlie worked as an electrician for many years, was an active member of the St. Francis Society and a proud supporter of the Portland Volunteer Fire Department.

Charlie is survived by his nephew, Bari F. Winner of Portland, and his grandniece, Bailey Rosemary Winner.

Services will be private and at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Church of St. Mary, 51 Freestone Ave., Portland, CT 06480.

Hebron

Robert M. Sweikert

Robert M. Sweikert, 47, of Hebron, passed away unexpectedly at his home Monday, Dec. 19.

He is survived by his partner of 16 years, Mark S. Clark of Hebron; his father and mother, William and Maryann Sweikert of Danbury; sister and brother-in-law Maryann and Jon Porter of Redding; brother and sister-in-law William and Kathy Sweikert and their children of Danbury; as well as his younger sister, Christine Sweikert of Danbury.

Bob was born in Yonkers, N.Y., and grew up in New Fairfield, where he graduated high school in 1985. He later received his bachelor's degree from Western Connecticut State University and his master's degree in education from the University of Bridgeport.

Bob taught middle school for many years in Connecticut and Rhode Island. He later worked in the publishing industry for McGraw-Hill.

He was very passionate about the well-being of animals and volunteered for Protectors of Animals. Please send any donations in memory of Bob to POA, Inc., 144 Main St., East Hartford, CT 06118.

Amston

Marie S. Savage

Marie S. Savage, 78, of Amston, beloved wife of Daniel Savage Jr., died Monday morning, Jan. 26, at Middlesex Hospital. Born Nov. 21, 1936, in Burlington, Vt., she was the daughter of the late Chris and Marie Saltus.

Marie was a resident of Amston since 1983. Prior to that, she lived in Middletown, where she and her husband owned and operated City Ambulance Service and Marie's Answering Service. In 1977, they moved to West Palm Beach, Fla., where she worked as a CNA. After moving back to Connecticut, she worked at Harrington Court in Colchester as a CNA until she retired.

Besides her husband, she is survived by her daughter, Dawn S. Carriera and husband Peter of East Hampton; two sons, Daniel Savage III of East Hartford, Eric Allen Savage and wife Toni of Marlborough; brothers Andy Saltus of Cromwell, William Saltus and wife Josie of Haddam, Chris Saltus Jr. and his wife Cindy of Virginia, and sister Lillian Schieman and husband John of Virginia; five grandchildren; and 12 great-grandchildren.

She was predeceased by her daughter, Rosemarie Roberts.

Marie enjoyed gardening and had a love for life and showed it by taking care of people, aiding them to get well. She always touched the hearts of everyone she met. Her memory will live on for years to come.

East Hampton

June Wylie

June Wylie, 91, of East Hampton, went to heaven Tuesday, Feb. 3, to join her husband Sam, and her mother and father, Ida and Norm Barbour.

Burial will be in the spring.

Colchester

Debera Jo Carilli

Debera Jo (Corbett) Carilli, 53, of Colchester and Windsor Locks, passed away quietly at home Wednesday, Jan. 28. She was born on March 10, 1961, in Bath, Maine.

She leaves her son, Andrew Tredor of Windsor Locks; her parents, Bruce and Janet Corbett of Colchester; and several aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.

Ms. Carilli was a 1979 graduate of Bacon Academy in Colchester. Debera loved the outdoors, and went on to earn her degree as a CT Master Gardener. She worked for several garden centers in both Connecticut and Virginia, and had also worked for JC Penney as an associate.

Despite battling kidney failure and related ailments over the past few years, she still enjoyed gardening, feeding the birds in her backyard, wreath-making for the holidays and cherished her pets, family and all things "dragonfly."

Services and burial will be private; there are no calling hours. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the American Kidney Fund, 11921 Rockville Pike, Ste. 300, Rockville, MD 20852.

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

Portland

Gary H. Clark

Gary Clark, formerly from Portland, the son of Ruth Clark, died suddenly Monday, Dec. 15, 2014, in Colorado. He was born Nov. 18, 1957.

Gary leaves his sisters and brothers, George Clark, Joan Rice, Claire Ciochini, Ruth Norton, Carol Bowerman, Linda Brown, Alice Valli, Paula Oakliff, Richard Clark, Allan Clark, and leaves numerous nieces and nephews.

He was predeceased by one sister, Jane Clark, and Brother, Robert Clark, plus his mother, Ruth Clark.

There will be no memorial service or calling hours.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Guiding Eyes for the Blind or the Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation. He loved his dog.

He will be buried in Trinity Church Cemetery with his mother, sister and brother.

Cobalt

Patricia E. Horner

Patricia E. (Stuart) Horner, 87, formerly of Windsor and West Hartford, beloved wife of the late Harold T. Horner, passed away Saturday, Jan. 31. Born in New Haven, daughter of the late Charles and Laura (Caswell) Stuart, she lived in Windsor for over 56 years.

She was a longtime parishioner of St. Gertrude Church. Pat's interests included sewing, reading, swimming, doll collecting, and dancing with her late husband. However, as the mother of seven children, she cherished the time she could spend with her family most of all.

She leaves three sons, Roger T. Horner and Michael S. Horner and his wife Tobi Jones all of Woodland, Calif., and Thomas F. Horner and his wife Shellee of East Granby; four daughters, Jacqueline Horner of Manchester, Patricia Rux and her husband Rowland of East Hampton, Mary Jane Somerset and her husband Mark of Newington, and Sally Horner Connelly and her husband Tim of Windsor; as well as 11 grandchildren, Roger, Aelaine, Patrick, Tracey, Rowland, Jonathan, Elizabeth, Logan, Kelsey, Megan and Timothy; and seven great-grandchildren. She also leaves a brother William Stuart of New Jersey.

Pat's family would like to thank the staff of the Cobalt Lodge for their exceptional care and attention.

Her family received friends Thursday, Feb. 5, at the Carmon Poquonock Funeral Home, 1816 Poquonock Ave., Poquonock section of Windsor. Family and friends gathered today, Feb. 6, at 9 a.m., at Carmon's in Poquonock followed by a Mass of Christian Burial at 10 a.m. at St. Gertrude Church, 550 Matianuck Ave., Windsor. Burial followed in Mount St. Benedict Cemetery, Bloomfield. Contributions may be made to either Cobalt Lodge Recreation Fund, 29 Middle Haddam Rd., Cobalt, CT 06414 or Windsor Public Library, 323 Broad St., Windsor, CT 06095.

For directions or condolences, visit carmonfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Sylvia J. Gilman

Sylvia J. Spooner Gilman, 78, of Stratham, N.H., formerly of Colchester, passed away after a courageous battle with cancer Friday, Jan. 23, at the Merrimack Hospice House in Haverhill, Mass.

She was born in Gardner, Mass., the daughter of Carl and Hazel G. McComb Spooner. She married Barry Gilman Dec. 31, 1987, in Colchester. Mr. Gilman passed away in 2006.

She is survived by her daughter Hazel G. (Gray) Turner of Stratham, N.H.; four sisters, Priscilla Batchelder of Springfield, Vt., Coralie Via and her husband Al of Hamden, Susan Wybraniec and her husband Stanley of Lisbon, Judith St. George and her husband Peter Partyka of Oakdale (they live in Preston); one brother, Michael Spooner and his wife Vicky of Oakdale; two grandchildren, Jennifer Gray of Niantic and Brett Turner of Stratham, N.H.; and many nieces and nephews.

Besides her parents and husband, she was predeceased by a son, Theodore Gray, and a brother, Donn Spooner.

The family will receive relatives and friends Saturday, Feb. 7, from 11 a.m.-1 p.m., at the Thomas L. Neilan & Sons East Lyme Funeral Home, 48 Grand St., Niantic. A celebration of her life will be conducted at 1 p.m. and interment will follow in Maplewood Cemetery, Norwich.

Colchester

Irene Keel

Irene (Mogelnicki) Keel, 94, of East Hartford, beloved wife of the late John Keel, passed away peacefully Friday, Jan. 23. Born in Holyoke, Mass., May 21, 1920, she was the daughter of the late John and Katherine (Stachelek) Mogelnicki.

Irene's family was the center of her life and spending time with them was her greatest joy. A loving mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, she will be dearly missed by her four sons, Jason Keel and his wife Beverly of Glastonbury, Frank Keel and his wife Pamela of Glastonbury, Jonathan Keel of Saratoga Springs, N.Y., and Jeffrey Keel of Mansfield; six adored grandchildren; and six cherished great-grandchildren.

In addition to her husband and parents, Irene was predeceased by all five of her siblings, Stella Mogelnicki, Delia Mogelnicki, John Mogelnicki, Alex Mogelnicki and Peter Mogelnicki.

Irene's family would like to thank the staff at Harrington Court and all of her friends at the East Hartford South End Senior Center.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Friday, Jan. 30, at Blessed Sacrament Church, 36 Cambridge Dr., East Hartford. Burial followed in Rose Hill Memorial Park, Rocky Hill. Family and friends called prior to the Mass on Friday, Jan. 30, at the D'Esopo-East Hartford Memorial Chapel, 30 Carter St., East Hartford.

Donations in Irene's memory may be made to the Harrington Court Resident Council Fund, 59 Harrington Court, Colchester, CT 06415 or to the East Hartford South End Senior Center, 70 Canterbury Street, East Hartford, CT 06118.

To share a memory of Irene with the family, visit desopo.com.

Hebron

Virginia Golemba

Virginia (Bantle) Golemba, 82, of Hebron, departed this life Saturday, Jan. 31.

Ginny leaves John H. Golemba, husband of 51 years. She is also survived by her children, Brenda (Golemba) Conti and John S. and his wife Fiona Golemba along with her beautiful grandchildren, Johnny and Jessica. Ginny also leaves her brother, Warren and his wife Charlotte Bantle of Glastonbury.

She was predeceased by her brother, Bruce Bantle, and sister, Myrna Balanoff.

Ginny was born and raised in Glastonbury, and graduated from Glastonbury High School with the Class of 1950. John and Ginny have called Hebron home for the past 42 years. She devoted her life to God and family. Ginny enjoyed teaching Sunday school to pre-school children for many years. She also enjoyed baking and needlework, not only for her family but also for those in need.

"He hides my soul in the cleft of the rock. That shadows the dry thirsty land. He hides my life in the depths of His love. And covers me there with His hand."

Calling hours will be today, Feb. 6, from 1 to 2 p.m., followed by a brief service at Samsel & Carmon Funeral Home, 419 Buckland Rd., South Windsor.

The family especially appreciates the care provided by the Visiting Nurses of Vernon and the ECHN Center for Wound Healing at Manchester Memorial Hospital.

For online condolences and directions, visit CarmonFuneralHome.com.

Marlborough

Carol A. Prucha

Carol A. Prucha, 72, passed away Saturday, Jan. 31, surrounded by her loving family, in Marlborough. Born Jan. 23, 1943, in Rockville, she was the daughter of the late William F. Prucha and Stella (Konarski) Prucha.

Carol enjoyed bingo, listening to the oldies, playing cards, electronic games and shopping. She is survived by her husband of 13 years, Chris Nichols; brother, William Prucha and his wife, Paula of Lisbon; sisters, Donna Blanchard and husband Charlie of Jewett City, Barbara Turano and significant other Howard Marchant of Jewett City, and Joan Sprague of Jewett City; and several nieces and nephews.

A Memorial Mass will be held at noon Saturday, Feb. 7, at St. Mary's Church, Jewett City.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Carol's memory to the Henry Low Heart Center at giving.harthosp.org/donate or Hartford Hospital, Attn: Fund Development, 80 Seymour St., P.O. Box 5037, Hartford, CT 06102.

Leffler Funeral Home has been trusted with arrangements. For the online memorial, or to write a message of comfort, visit lefflerfuneralhome.com.

Marlborough

Norma Jean St. Amand

Norma Jean (Guardiani) St. Amand, 75, of Manchester, passed away peacefully Sunday, Feb. 1, at Hartford Hospital, surrounded by her loving family. Born in Hartford, she was the daughter of the late Albert and Yolanda (Lorenzetti) Guardiani.

Norma resided in Wethersfield and Marlborough for most of her adult life. She was retired from Hartford Hospital, where she worked for 30 years. However, her true passion was playing the piano and she shared her talent with many at senior centers she would travel to.

Norma was a member of the Red Hat Society and was active in her Bible Study Group. She loved to cook, enjoyed trips to Vermont, Maine and Cape Cod and loved spending time at the Connecticut shore, walking the beach and watching the trains and boats pass by.

She is survived by her four children and their spouses, Karen and Kevin Brett of East Windsor, Stephen and Maureen St. Amand of South Windsor, Denise and Jim Pandolfo of Rocky Hill, and Kevin and Michelle St. Amand of South Windsor; her brother, Albert Guardiani of Wethersfield; her sister and brother-in-law, Louise and Richard Heller of Farmington; her grandchildren, Melissa Desilet, Ashley Desilet and her fiancé Eric Bolella, Zachary, Tyler and Luke St. Amand, and Samantha, Jake, and Max St. Amand; many nieces and nephews; and her longtime companion George Childs.

Norma was predeceased by her sister, Alberta L. Guardiani.

Funeral services are private. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the American Heart Association.

Taylor & Modeen Funeral Home, West Hartford, has care of arrangements. For online condolences, visit taylorandmodeen.com.

Portland

Betty Zimmerer

Betty (Olson) Zimmerer, 86, of Middletown, passed away on Tuesday, Feb. 3, 2015 at Midstate Medical Center. Betty will join her late husband, John "Jack" K. Zimmerer, eight years and one day later.

Born July 4, 1928, in Portland, she was the daughter of the late Carl Herman and Lorraine (Nichols) Olson. Betty was raised in Portland and graduated Portland High School. She was a member of Saint Paul Lutheran Church now Faith Lutheran Church. Betty married Jack on July 24, 1948 and they went on to spend fifty-nine wonderful years together. She was a devoted wife, mother and grandmother and a true animal lover.

Betty is survived by her son, Kenneth J. Zimmerer and his wife, Margaret, of Bristol; her daughter, Karen Aubut and her husband, David, of Middletown; six grandchildren, Katherine Zimmerer Kutarba, Karl F. Zimmerer, Ronald Jennings, JoAnn Picard, John Hampson and Tina Brown; and 11 great-grandchildren.

Funeral services will be held today, Feb. 6, at 11 a.m., at Doolittle Funeral Home, 14 Old Church St., Middletown. Burial will follow in Pine Grove Cemetery. Family and friends may call this morning before the service from 10 to 11 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Betty's memory may be made to Protectors of Animals, P.O. Box 24, South Glastonbury, CT 06073-0624.

To share memories or send condolences to the Zimmerer family, visit doolittlefuneral.com.

Obituaries

Colchester

Jane Ann Cooper

Jane Ann Cooper of Colchester passed away Sunday, Feb. 1, at Marlborough Health Care Center after suffering with Alzheimer’s for several years. Born March 29, 1939, she was the daughter of the late Fred and Evelyn McKnight of Unionville.

A graduate of Farmington High School, Class of 1957, Jane Ann was married to the late David Cooper of Colchester and was a homemaker for many years.

She was predeceased by one son, Bruce Cooper, and is survived by her son Paul Cooper of Norwich; daughter Deborah Cooper of Colchester; daughter-in-law Pat Cooper, and grandchildren Michael, Samantha, and Jesse Cooper all of Hudson, N.H.

Burial will be at Rosehill Cemetery of Rocky Hill with a private service for family.

East Hampton

Richard A. Lonsdale

Richard A. Lonsdale, 76, of East Hampton, passed away in Royal Palm Beach, Fla., while vacationing with his wife Donna Sunday, Feb. 1, after a brief illness. Richard was born Nov. 16, 1938, in Hartford, son of the late William Hargraves Lonsdale and Marion(Laflamme) Lonsdale.

Richard was a veteran of the Vietnam War, having served in the US Navy on the U.S.S Wasp. Richard was employed at Pratt and Whitney as a tool and die maker all the way up to his retirement. He was an avid outdoors man who loved fishing and hunting and spending time with his two dogs, Tippe and Rascal. He was a very talented wood carver who enjoyed making special gifts for his family and friends.

Richard is survived by his wife of over 50 years, Donna Ferro Lonsdale. He also leaves behind his son, Bill Lonsdale and his wife Debbie of East Hampton, his two beloved grandchildren, Loren and Billy Lonsdale. He is also survived by a sister, Dorothy Espeseth and her husband Clifford of Stuart, Fla., and his brother-in-law Rocco Ferro of Royal Palm Beach, Fla. He also leaves behind numerous nieces, nephews and cousins.

A memorial Mass will be held at a later date to be determined.

From the Editor’s Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Boy, what a game!

Like most of you, I’m guessing (and the numbers back me up on this, but more on that later), I watched the Super Bowl Sunday night. I watch it every year; sometimes the games are good, and other times – like last year – they’re stinkers, with one team blowing the other out.

Well, Sunday’s game was one for the ages; in fact, it was perhaps the best Super Bowl I’ve seen in years.

That’s not just because the Patriots won. Sure, I was rooting for them (living in Connecticut, it was tough not to), but beyond that, it was just a thrilling game. The teams played to a tie in the first half, meaning essentially a whole new ballgame when the second half started. Yes, when the Patriots were down by 10 in the fourth quarter, the mood at the party I was at got pretty bleak. But that just set the stage for that tremendous comeback.

Which was soon followed by the Seahawks’ would-be comeback. When Seattle’s Jermaine Kearse made that unreal catch of the football, that absurd juggling act when, amazingly, the ball never touched the ground, it looked like the Patriots’ snatching of victory from the jaws of defeat was perhaps not to be.

One play later, Seattle’s on the one-yard line, their coach Pete Carroll orders a pass instead of having Lynch run the game-winning touchdown in and.....well, you know the rest by now.

For the record, I don’t think it was that bad of a call. Yes, it was instantly derided throughout social media as “the worst call in Super Bowl history,” but I could see the logic behind it. The Pats knew Lynch would be running – it would have been the most predictable of plays, and they’d have been ready for him. The website Slate.com had a nice piece defending Carroll’s call. “On second down with 26 seconds remaining and one timeout,” Slate columnist Brian Burke wrote, “the Seahawks would have had to pass on either second or third down to guarantee they would have time for a fourth down if needed.” Burke opined that if Seattle were going to pass, it would be better to do it on second down than on third, so as “force the Patriots to respect both options [pass or run] on all remaining downs.”

Burke also pointed out in his column that interceptions from the one-yard line are extremely rare; in fact, the one thrown Sunday was the first thrown all season. Which brings me to a point that I feel was overlooked in all of this. The Patriots’ Malcolm Butler made a darn fine interception. Watch the replay; he basically just pops up and takes it out of the receiver’s hands before it settles in his hands. It was a great pick.

Can I see the logic in running the ball? Sure. But passing the ball isn’t as bad of a move as it was made out to be. There’s no guarantee the ball was going to be intercepted.

Amid all of the “worst call ever” brouhaha, I read a few comments online along the lines of, Seattle gave this game to the Patriots, the Patriots didn’t win so much as Seattle lost, etc. And that’s nonsense. Even if you subscribe to the theory Carroll’s call was infinitely stupid, it still takes two to tango. You can’t throw an interception unless somebody

actually, you know, intercepts it. The Patriots made a heck of a comeback and at the end of the game Butler made a heck of a nice interception. To say the Patriots didn’t deserve that win is ridiculous.

* * *

Being the entertainment junkie I am, I always look forward to the Super Bowl commercials. This year’s batch didn’t disappoint – among my favorites were the *Breaking Bad* and *Brady Bunch*-inspired ones, as well as the clever spot with former *Today Show* cohosts Bryant Gumbel and Katie Couric spoofing how befuddled they were by the Internet 20 years ago – but I did notice they weren’t all laugh riots as they have been in years past.

There were serious spots designed to make you think – including the Nationwide ad featuring the kid who, it turns out at the end of the ad, was dead. The commercial was instantly derided for being quite the downer of a spot – and it was, but it was also a pretty powerful one. Some of the other, sillier ads I forgot nearly as soon as they aired, but that one left an imprint.

So did the Dove spot which featured children of varying ages, from babies to adults, crying out for “Dad” – some tearfully, some joyfully. I admit it left a little lump in my throat as I watched it Sunday, and it did again when I re-watched it this past Tuesday.

There was an interesting – and depressing – backlash to the tampon company Always’ ad promoting women. The spot showed young girls explaining what they feel it means to run like a girl, or throw like a girl, or fight like a girl; they feel it means to do so quickly, and powerfully. Always juxtaposed this against interviews with boys and young women, who explained they felt “like a girl” meant to run, or throw, or fight, very weakly and embarrassingly. The point of the spot was for women to take back the phrase “like a girl.” Always even ended the ad with #likeagirl.

Some men reacted on Twitter rather disgustingly to this, complaining that the ad was exclusionary because it didn’t address guys – where, these troglodytes whined, were the #likeaboy hashtags? In fact, these guys, who apparently call themselves “meninists” (men who are opposed to feminism; yes, I never knew that was a thing either and, yes, I’m a little embarrassed for my gender that it exists), were so bothered by it they made #likeaboy a trending item on Twitter, sending out little 140-character messages of derision such as “#likeaboy because I can actually run and throw.”

It didn’t take long for these guys to get put in their place – both by women as well as more-enlightened men (which I’d like to believe is most of us). The “likeaboy” movement was nicely taken down by tweets such as “throws tantrum during a one-minute feminism ad during an all-male sports event #likeaboy.”

The Always spot was a powerful commercial, one that, like the Nationwide one, made you think. It’s unfortunate there was that backlash to it – and even more unfortunate “meninism” is apparently a thing.

* * *

See you next week.