

RIVEREAST

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I Like It!... Portland residents Elwin Guild and Chantal Foster pick out and mark the spots in town they're most proud of. The process was part of an exercise to identify focal points residents would like to address during the process of updating the town's Plan of Conservation and Development. See related story on page 31.

Council Renews Town Manager's Contract

by John Tyczkowski

The East Hampton Town Council voted along party lines at the end of a contentious meeting Tuesday to renew Town Manager Michael Maniscalco's contract for two more years.

Although evaluations are typically held in closed executive sessions since they're personnel matters, Tuesday's evaluation was held in open session at the request of Maniscalco, who has the option to do so under state law.

Along with the actual 4-3 vote to renew Maniscalco's contract, the evaluation itself was marked by a party line split in terms of attitudes toward the town manager.

Republican councilor Mark Philhower said he was "extremely disappointed" in Maniscalco's "handling of the high school renovation status letter."

However, Philhower added Maniscalco "got thrown under the bus" with regard to the letter, which discussed a possible change in the amount of money the town would be reimbursed by the state for the project.

"It appears that other members of the council knew about the existence of the letter but refused to share it with the rest of the council," he said. "That's something I have a real problem with."

Republican councilor Patience Anderson did praise Maniscalco for "working hard" on the

natural gas pipeline contract, his rapport with the press and his "willingness to give his time" to the town.

At the same time, she said Maniscalco was "outright untruthful" about the high school project during the town's facilities public meeting in January.

"He lied in an open meeting and has lost my trust," Anderson said.

Outside of the meeting, Anderson clarified that she alleged Maniscalco knew about the renovation status problem and then signed paperwork moving the project forward, but denied prior knowledge of the problem in a public meeting in February.

"I had a telephone conversation with him prior to the meeting in which he indicated to me that he knew about the problem," she said. "I asked him why he signed the papers knowing what he did. He said he felt he needed to sign them, and that he couldn't not sign them."

Anderson added, "I indicated to him that it was my opinion that if he shared that with all of us [on the council], we would not have had an issue and we would have certainly found that he had cause to halt the project; nobody would have blamed him."

Anderson said at the open meeting Maniscalco "worked hard" on the project.

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Colchester Residents Slam Special Ed Director

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

"If you're lucky, your son will do as well as a valet – parking cars."

That was just one of the things parents of special education students have allegedly heard from Kathy Shaughnessy, director of pupil services and special education for Colchester Public Schools.

Parents of the students filled the media center at William J. Johnston Middle School Tuesday night, voicing their concerns about Shaughnessy to the Board of Education.

Resident Mike Lovetere opened up the floor during public comments with a statement from the parent group.

"How would you feel if you were told this when your child was young?" Lovetere asked the board, referring to the valet comment. "There are countless parents in this town and in this room tonight that have heard that and far worse things by the director of special education."

Lovetere went on to say that on Jan. 29, a group of 25 parents met with school board member Michael Voiland, board chairman Ron Goldstein and schools superintendent Jeff Mathieu to express their concerns about a proposal before the board to keep Shaughnessy employed for another two years past her announced retirement date in November.

Concerns from the parent group included the changing of IEPs (Individualized Education Plans) outside of a PPT (planning and place-

ment team) without parental knowledge or consent; holding PPTs in a parent's absence in spite of a parent's request to be included; unprofessional, offensive behavior and treatment of parents; intimidation and retribution directed toward parents and teachers who disagree with the director's recommendations; misrepresenting PPT discussions in IEP documents; failure to document parent concerns in an IEP in spite of parents' requests; ignoring, dismissing and disagreeing with medical diagnosis and professional evaluations; and predetermining placements and services unilaterally and prior to PPT meetings.

"These actions have caused a large number of parents to hire attorneys or advocates to get basic services for their children, causing hardships on families and unnecessary financial burdens to the town," Lovetere said.

At that Jan. 29 meeting, Lovetere continued, the parent group was told the Board of Education would hire an interim assistant director to investigate the complaints and chair PPT meetings. However, Lovetere said, when the position was brought in front of the full board for approval, it was presented as a means to help the current director "catch up on her workload since there have been retirements in that department." Goldstein corrected Lovetere during Tuesday's meeting, stating that, when it was brought up to the school board, there were three reasons given, and one was to investigate par-

ents' concerns.

"Every family in the parent group has expressed fear of retribution by this director as a result of this complaint," Lovetere said. "It's a feeling of intimidation and bullying combined with fear that our children will somehow pay the price, as in services being cut."

Lovetere stated the parent group is asking the board to investigate their complaints and hold the superintendent and Shaughnessy accountable since "many of these complaints were brought to the attention of the superintendent with no obvious action to investigate or correct." The parent group's demands include barring Shaughnessy from chairing PPTs for the duration of her contract, and to not approve the request of the director to be rehired for an additional period after her retirement.

The issues, Lovetere said, "should not continue because of the negative light they shine on our town, because of the undue stress and anxiety this individual's actions have on our families and because it is the right thing to do."

Lovetere added to board members, "In the past, the majority of these parents have supported the school budget as well as your position on the BOE. This will no longer happen if this situation is not corrected. This group as well as the citizens that support it here tonight will be at every board meeting until we get justice for our children."

After Lovetere, numerous parents stood up

to add additional comments on their personal experiences with Shaughnessy and the troubles they've had getting services for their children.

"The board does not react directly [to public comment] at meetings," Goldstein said. "However, I want to say we hear you. Having folks come and express their concerns is going to be impactful."

Goldstein said since the original comments Jan. 29, the board has responded with the addition of the temporary assistant director to pupil services. The position is being filled by two people, one to take care of PPTs and the other to investigate into the concerns.

"Now we have specific statements that will be considered," Goldstein said. "The job description, yes, lists many things and [responding to parents' complaints] is not the sole responsibility, but right near the top."

Mathieu added the person looking into the concerns started Thursday, and the other person will begin next week.

"We have the process started," Goldstein said. "The position had not been in the works and was approved in direct response."

Goldstein said that, while the board can't predict the response from the investigations, "if actions are needed, they will be taken seriously."

"Some parents expressed urgency," Mathieu said, "but we can't do it sloppily."

On Wednesday, Goldstein and Mathieu fur-

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calco denied having any prior knowledge of the renovation status problem.

“That is where the untruthfulness comes into play,” she said. “He admitted it to me on the phone and then misrepresented to the public that he had no knowledge of the problem prior to signing the papers.”

Maniscalco responded outside of the meeting to Anderson’s allegations.

“The letter in question was sent to the Superintendent of Schools and carbon copied to the finance director. The letter had to do with a payment request from the town, and basically said that some of [the town’s] request for payment was not eligible,” he said.

Maniscalco said he and the finance director only discussed the potential issues with the town’s cash flow that came from the payment request problem.

The finance director “didn’t even bring the letter with him,” Maniscalco said. “We were very worried about making payroll, and that’s what we discussed.”

The town was able to fix the cash flow problem, he said.

Regarding the letter itself, Maniscalco said the finance director only told him the Capital Region Education Council (CREC) and the building committee were discussing it.

“I think unfortunately people are looking for something that’s not there,” he said. “Nobody in this community benefits from this project failing. We need to all work together to make this a success.”

Maniscalco said CREC had told the High School Building Committee that the renovation status was not an issue.

“As soon as I heard it was a problem, I stepped in and started working on how to fix this,” he said. “And [the High School Building Committee and I] have worked very, very, hard at making the project a success, and setting up a situation where it would be a success.”

Maniscalco also said he was planning to reach out to the Republican members of the council and hold individual meetings with them.

“I want to hear their concerns in a more in-depth manner than at the meeting,” he said. “And what I really want to hear from them is how they see we can move forward from this.”

Councilor Ted Hintz Jr. said he echoed his fellow Republicans’ thoughts with regard to Maniscalco and the high school project.

“There was a lack of information given, on when it was given and to whom it was given. That is a real concern to me,” he said.

Meanwhile, the democrats on the board had more praise than censure for Maniscalco.

Democratic Council Vice Chair Kevin Reich also remarked on Maniscalco’s willingness to cooperate with the council’s recommendations, especially on communication with staff, which Reich said “continues to be the bane of our existence.”

For example, at his last evaluation in September, the council told Maniscalco he should improve his communication with town staff. As a result, Maniscalco hired a certified business coach from Shelton, Tom Maier, to aid progress in that area.

Maniscalco said he’s already held two team-building meetings with the town staff and Maier, and that Maier met individually with town staff members to identify concerns Maniscalco could then work on with them.

“I appreciate the fact that you’re working with a coach. It can only bring about better things in the future,” Reich said. “The long and

the short of it is, the tenor is more positive now.”

Reich added, “It’s going to take a lot of effort on your part – and theirs – to achieve positive change. But the gains you have made, you have to be pleased with.”

Reich also commented on how Maniscalco handled the matter of learning about the high school renovation status letter, and the associated information.

“If you don’t ask the right questions, you don’t get the right answers,” he said. “I think this was a learning experience and that you probably would’ve done it differently next time.”

Reich acknowledged that his current evaluation was slightly lower than his September evaluation, but also said that overall, Maniscalco was still doing a “stellar job” in his position as town manager.

Councilor George Pfaffenbach agreed.

“No one’s perfect in this world and mistakes get made, but on the whole we’re moving forward and in the right direction,” he said. “I can’t see making a big production out of a few things that maybe could have been done differently because I think the overall momentum is going the right way.”

Pfaffenbach said Maniscalco was always “out and about” and very active in the town outside of his office.

“I think he’s a class act and we’re very fortunate to have him,” he said.

Councilor Philip Visintainer also praised Maniscalco on his willingness to work with the council on the areas they specified he needed to concentrate on.

“[Mike has] answered our concerns, and he’s making improvements where he could, and to incite a sense of teamwork among his staff. He’s spending a lot of time in making our town better,” he said. “I’ve heard it said that Mike doesn’t work to live, he lives to work. He certainly is a worker.”

Council Chair Barbara Moore pointed out the stability that has come with Maniscalco’s service to the town, since between 2005 and 2013, East Hampton had five town managers and interim town managers.

“I am not criticizing those who served, only pointing out how much better off we are now,” she said. “We now have the consistency we were hoping for.”

Moore, echoing councilors’ statements throughout the evening, said that “nobody sitting in the room is perfect” but she believed the council “hired the best applicant” for the town manager position.

“We wanted new ideas. Mike came to us with new ideas and the hope to unite our employees,” she said. “Not everyone agrees with his ways, but that is expected. And he is eager to work with constructive criticism.”

Moore urged the council to continue to work with Maniscalco.

“The sitting members of the Town Council and those members who sit here in the future will continue to struggle with the task of making decisions and working with the town manager to make him successful,” Moore said. “We must be part of the solution and constantly give him constructive ideas.”

After the meeting, Maniscalco echoed that same willingness to continue to cooperate with the council.

“I look forward to working with all of them,” he said. “I’ve got a lot of things I’m focused on for the town, and I’m looking forward to working with the council on them.”

Residents Slam cont. from Front Page

ther explained the process to the *Rivereast*.

“There’s a plan in place to review and investigate their concerns,” Goldstein said. “Kathy is a longstanding employee with a terrific track record and we do the process deliberately and carefully.”

(Mathieu said Shaughnessy would not be able to comment for this story, due to school system policy about employees talking to the media.)

“I do know the parents are frustrated because they don’t perceive we are working fast enough,” Mathieu said. “Really, we have done quite a bit in the past month.”

Mathieu explained since the first meeting with the parents at the end of January, he created a job description, got the description approved by the Board of Education personnel subcommittee, the budget subcommittee approved the funding, and then the full Board of Education approved it. The position was then advertised, Mathieu held multiple interviews then the two people were hired to split the position.

“There has been quite a lot of progress, and now the process begins,” Mathieu said.

Goldstein said the first time he’d heard of the complaints against Shaughnessy was the Jan. 29 meeting with the group of parents.

“I understand that student matters are handled confidentially among administrators,” Goldstein said. “One person even mentioned [discussing concerns about Shaughnessy with] a prior superintendent. I don’t know what happened or was said then.”

Mathieu, however, said that before the meeting with the parents at the end of January, he did “receive a few phone calls and talked to just a couple of parents at the beginning of the year.”

Goldstein said because of student confidentiality, administrators and teachers are very restricted as to what they can talk about to non-teachers including the board.

Although Goldstein said they do hope to have some answers by this spring as the temporary positions are only accounted for in the 2014-15 budget for \$40,333 and not in the proposed 2015-16 budget. Mathieu added they hope to have a report to present to the Board of Education by June 30.

“Perhaps it’s not quickly enough, but there is a process and everyone should be thoroughly reviewed,” Goldstein said. “We can’t rush to a

conclusion.”

Goldstein did confirm that Shaughnessy has notified the board of her retirement in November, but there has been no action taken on the renewal of the contract.

Also at Tuesday’s meeting, Mathieu announced the new Bacon Academy principal, Matthew Peel. Peel will begin on July 1.

Peel, of Pawcatuck, was formerly associate principal at Griswold High School.

“We are extremely excited to find a candidate who will enhance the academic rigor of Bacon Academy and who also shares the same family values as our Bacon family,” Mathieu said.

The process for a new principal began in August 2014 following the resignation of former principal Mark Ambruso, who resigned to take a similar position in the state school system. Donald Gates has been filling the vacancy as interim principal, and will continue in the role until Peel starts.

“It is my opinion that he will connect and work well with students, faculty, staff, parents and the community of Colchester,” Gates said. “He will develop relationships of trust and work with colleagues to strengthen the school environment. He will lead in the development of a climate that offers challenges and rewards in support of the educational opportunities our school so proudly offers its students.”

“The board was impressed with his range of experience as an associate principal for seven years, his clear enthusiasm, and his concern for students,” Goldstein said.

Peel earned his bachelor’s degree in Pure Math from Bowie State University in Bowie, Maryland, a Master’s degree from the University of Phoenix, and both his 092 (administrative) certification and Sixth Year in Administration degree from Sacred Heart University in Lisbon.

Also Tuesday, the board appointed Amity Goss as permanent principal at Colchester Elementary School and Linda Rhodes as permanent assistant principal, removing both of their interim titles at the schools.

The next Board of Education meeting will be Tuesday, April 7, at 7 p.m., at William J. Johnston Middle School.

Maneggia Retiring at End of Andover School Year

by Geeta Schrayter

Andover Elementary School Superintendent Andrew Maneggia announced this week he’d be retiring at the end of the school year.

Maneggia submitted his letter of resignation during the Board of Education meeting Wednesday night. The resignation is effective June 30.

“Originally when I made a commitment with the board to come here I made a commitment for three years and it’s been 11 years,” Maneggia said Thursday. “And from my perspective it’s been a very good 11 years and through the board, through our staff, we’ve been able to accomplish many good things for the Andover school.”

Maneggia went on to say that, during his tenure, a lot had been done regarding curriculum and technology, and to the building – including the construction of an addition.

“We’ve done a lot with the school facilities themselves in terms of maintenance – creating a maintenance plan, cleaning and

preventative maintenance and so forth, so all those things are in place now.”

He furthered, “That’s not to say those things won’t change – curriculum is always changing, and with the new approach to Common Core we have to modify what we’re doing to comply with that, but we’ve been able to accomplish a lot of things.”

And with retirement now on the horizon, the Bolton resident said while he had no particular plans and didn’t see his lifestyle changing all that much, he was looking forward to having more time with his wife.

“We’ll have more time to do things we want to do, but we don’t have any plans to travel around the world or anything like that,” he stated, “We’ll just have more time, that’s really what it boils down to.”

But from Andover school’s perspective, things are likely to be different, as Maneggia ends his tenure at the school, and a new superintendent arrives next year.

Hebron Principal Campbell Set to Retire

by Geeta Schrayter

Along with the end of another school year, the arrival of June will also mean the end of a tenure. Hebron Elementary School Principal Amy Campbell announced last week she'll be retiring after this year.

Campbell submitted her letter of resignation March 4, in which she wrote that her resignation would be effective June 30.

"I have had the honor of being a professional educator for 34 years, the past five of which have been in Hebron," she wrote. "As such I had the privilege of working with hundreds of teachers and thousands of students, with those in Hebron especially near and dear to my heart."

Prior to Hebron, Campbell spent 27 years working in Preston.

Speaking on her time there this week, Campbell said, "I credit them with giving me lots of leadership opportunities and I eventually got to a point in my career where I was ready for a new challenge. So I went back for my 092 [administrator certification] and landed in Hebron."

Campbell started as Hebron Elementary's assistant principal in 2010, and became principal in January 2012.

Campbell called Hebron "a wonderful town – a wonderful school district."

"We have phenomenal kids and that's a credit to the parents that are raising them and the teachers that are working with them," she said. "I just consider myself very lucky to have landed here."

Campbell added, "Being an administrator is a very challenging job – a 24/7 kind of job – and you never quite know what your day is going to be like. You have a plan in place, then you enter the building and that very often changes, so that's taught me to be very adaptable."

But Campbell shared "while I love what I do, I want to *leave* loving what I do, and I recognize I'm just not interested in giving the 24/7 for many more years."

She also said she felt this was the right time because of the current state of the district.

"I feel like the school is in a very strong place. The teachers are phenomenal – all the staff here does a tremendous job; I felt like it was a very good time for them and it all kind of meshes together."

In addition, the Norwich resident said she was looking forward to spending more time with her family. Her husband, she explained, has already been retired for a number of years, and her older son and daughter-in-law are expecting a child.

"So I'm excited to be a grandmother," she said.

Furthermore, Campbell said she was planning to enjoy a number of hobbies. She shared she and her husband "both like to travel quite a bit. My younger son is a baseball player [the New York Mets' Eric Campbell] so hopefully we'll be seeing many more of his games. We both love the beach, so I will certainly have a better tan this summer than I have in the past few years."

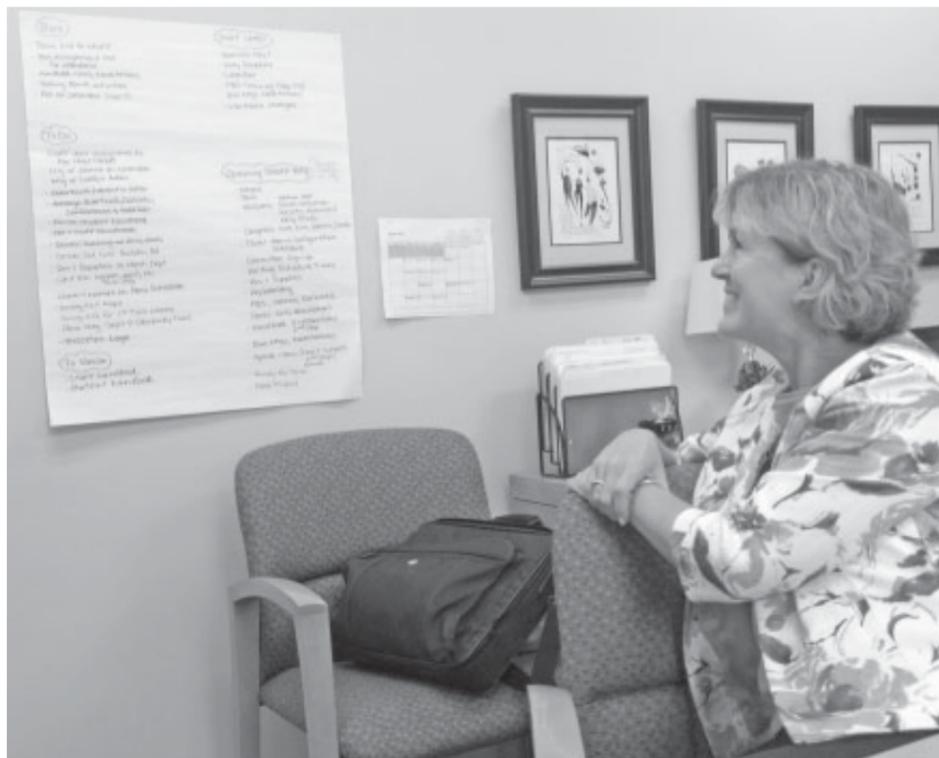
Campbell continued, "I love to knit and love to read. I hope to take up golf and join my husband on the golf course, and we both like to putter around the house and repair things – my older son has flipped houses in the past and we're looking forward to helping with that."

But while she has some ideas of what she'll do, Campbell said she has no concrete plans – and that was perfectly alright.

"I don't have a set plan and it'll be nice not to have a set plan for a while – not to have that calendar that I have to check morning and night," she said.

Regarding Campbell's impending retirement, Board of Education Chairwoman Maryanne Leichter said, "We have been very fortunate to have Amy and we're sorry to see her go, but she's made her decision to retire at this time. She's been wonderful to have with the students, and a top-notch administrator in the district."

Meanwhile, Gilead Hill School Principal



One of the things retiring Hebron Elementary School Principal Amy Campbell is looking forward to is not having a set plan of things to do – such as the lengthy to-do list seen in this file photo from August 2013, when Campbell was getting ready for the first day of school.

Eric Brody said he "couldn't be happier for her."

"She's very deserving of that and I'm a little jealous actually," he laughed. "It's great. Certainly it's a loss for the district and Hebron Elementary School but she's reached a point in her career where she deserves this so I couldn't be more pleased for her personally, even though I'll be sad not to be working with her professionally."

However, there's still a few months remain-

ing before Campbell's departure from an environment she says "becomes such a part of you."

"It's hard to imagine that won't be a part anymore – that I won't be checking the Staples flyers in August to see what folders are on sale," she stated, concluding, "There's nothing like being around children all day to keep your priorities in order, to allow you to find laughter every day and to see the world different."

Finance Board Debates, But Passes, AHM Budget

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

On Wednesday, the Board of Selectmen presented its proposed budget to the Board of Finance, during a meeting that included a heated discussion on AHM Youth and Family Services' proposed spending plan.

The overall proposed 2015-16 town budget is \$23,272,399, a 4.69 percent increase over the 2014-15 approved budget and represents an increase of \$1,042,274.

The budget calls for a 2.01 mill increase, or 6.40 percent tax hike. With the current mill rate at 31.45 mills, this increase would bring the mill rate to 33.46 mills. One mill, First Selectwoman Cathi Gaudinski explained, equals \$695,529.

The town operations budget would total \$4,700,047, a 1.89 percent increase, or \$87,191, over the 2014-15 approved budget. The increase, Gaudinski said, is because of fixed expenses including energy and fuel costs, health and liability insurance, road and snow maintenance, as well as contractual obligations such as the Resident State Trooper program. Traditionally, the state has partially funded towns' resident state trooper costs, but Gov. Dannel Malloy, in his proposed 2015-16 state budget, would have towns pick up 100 percent of the tab themselves. The impact of this change to the Marlborough town budget would be \$75,000.

Marlborough's portion of the proposed RHAM schools budget is projected to rise \$547,079 from current year spending – although Gaudinski stressed the RHAM Board of Education is still working on its budget. Impacting this change is Marlborough's levy increasing from 29.03 percent to 29.65 percent. The percentage of the RHAM budget each of the school district's three towns pays is based on the students' town of residence.

The local Board of Education budget is proposed at \$7,483,267, a 2.91 percent increase, or \$211,682, over current year spending.

The capital expenditure line totals \$910,470,

which includes money for roads and infrastructure along with: an automated buildings system upgrade to the elementary school; money for the Board of Selectmen's future capital expenditure reserve; security upgrades for town facilities; designing the Jones Hollow Bridge; design and engineering for the potential phase II of the town's water system (the town has applied for a Small Town Economic Assistance Program grant for the project, although the money has yet to be awarded); design and engineering for the widening of, and replacement of guardrails on Austin Drive and Exit 12 off of Route 2 (for which the town received STEAP money last year); HVAC controls for the library; a new Ford Interceptor SUV for the police; and replacing the Public Works 2006 Ford F350 utility truck.

Town debt accounts for \$2,515,759, a 0.65 percent decrease from 2014-15.

But the bulk of the meeting dealt with AHM Youth and Family Services' proposed \$1,312,473 budget for 2015-16. Of the budget, the town is responsible for \$88,165, a \$3,042,82 increase from the current year. (The portion each town pays of the AHM budget is derived from the RHAM levy.)

Each of the boards of selectmen and finance in Andover, Hebron and Marlborough votes on AHM's budget each year; in order for the budget to pass, it needs to be approved by five of those six boards.

On March 2, the Marlborough Board of Selectmen voted down the town's AHM spending. During that meeting, selectmen expressed concern about the upward trend of the budget. However, they also voiced their concern that if the Board of Selectmen did not vote in favor of the budget, then the board would be perceived as not caring about AHM's work and programs the bureau offers.

In the end, though, selectmen felt the increase was too much, and said that, given the size of

AHM's budget, there should be a way to keep the cost flat or at very least a minimal increase to the towns.

At Wednesday's Board of Finance meeting, local Board of Education member Louise Concodello stood up during public comment to express her concerns over a possible 'no' vote by the finance board.

"Fifty-one percent of the [AHM] budget comes from grants, fundraising and private funding," Concodello said. "It's a regional non-profit which allows for opportunities to pay for programming and services without relying on tax dollars."

Concodello agreed the budget has gone up – but said that, in the past, Hebron has felt the biggest increase.

Moreover, Concodello wondered about the future of AHM if Marlborough were not a part of it.

Jeff Watt, chairman of the Hebron Board of Selectmen, also spoke during the meeting.

"I would hate to see our families impacted by a 'no' vote," Watt said.

Brendan Shea, treasurer for AHM, said the bureau had a reasonably good year.

"We paid off our mortgage," Brendan Shea said. "It helps us free up expenses. [The increase] is really only cost of living for staff."

"I've become more and more familiar with the workings of AHM," Marlborough selectman Dick Shea said. "You can't measure the value [of AHM] in dollars and cents."

However, Shea said – from the perspective of a selectman and, he stressed, not speaking as the board – "we're looking at an atrocious year for taxpayers."

Shea said he has looked at the impact of the RHAM budget and the levy projections and Marlborough continues to increase.

"I voted to reject because it's the only way to request them to go back and take a second look," Shea said. "I feel bad, but while representing voters in a difficult year, I felt it was

the right thing to do."

Joel Rosenberg, executive director for AHM, explained that the reason the bottom line of the budget looks much larger this year is because of two grants AHM received, which total \$133,000. This money is shown in both the expenses and revenue for AHM, showing an increase, but an increase that is already paid for by the grants. Those grants included a federal Drug Free grant only given to 200 districts nationwide and a state Department of Children and Families grant to aid the Juvenile Review Board and give the review board additional hours to focus on young people with a first time offense.

"It's basically neutral," Shea said. "It's a 14 percent increase for revenue and expenditures."

Cliff Denniss, vice chairman for the Board of Finance, still questioned why the town and school is paying more if they have freed up funds from paying off the mortgage and are getting the grant funds.

"The Board of Selectmen were saying why can't you find \$3,000 in the budget to not have an increase to the town?" Board of Finance Chairwoman Evelyn Godbout said. Brendan Shea replied it's not just \$3,000 because it would have to mean an increase to no towns or schools, being a loss of much more than \$3,000.

The Board of Finance then took a vote on the AHM budget and approved the budget 4-2 with Denniss and Doug Knowlton voting against the spending and Ken Hjulstrom, Godbout, Susan Leser and Midge Denno voting 'yes.'

The Board of Finance will now hold workshops including the presentations of both the local Board of Education budget and the RHAM Board of Education budget. These dates are to be announced.

The Board of Finance's public hearing will be Monday, April 27, and the budget vote at the annual town meeting will be Monday, May 11.

Bransfield Proposes \$32.21 Million Budget in Portland

by John Tyczkowski

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield presented her 2015-16 general government budget proposal at a public hearing Tuesday evening.

The total proposed spending package clocks in at \$32.21 million – a 2.07 percent increase over the current year’s budget. The amount includes \$19.73 million for the Board of Education, and \$12.48 million for general government spending.

While the Board of Education budget was presented, and adopted by the school board, in January, Tuesday was the town’s first look at Bransfield’s general government proposal – a spending plan that would be a 1.39 percent increase over the current year’s.

To put it in perspective, Bransfield said, the proposal actually represents a smaller increase than the current year’s budget did over the 2013-14 spending plan.

“These are very modest increases this year,” she said. “We’ve been trying to keep a steady pace and make sure we can avoid spikes in your taxes.”

By comparison, the current year’s budget represented a 2.39 percent increase over 2013-14 spending.

The budget proposal actually calls for decreases in several areas, including general administration costs, planning/development and debt service. However, these decreases were offset by increases in other areas.

Among these is the Public Works account. Bransfield is seeking \$2.23 million, an increase of 3.35 percent from the \$2.15 million in current funding. Public Safety is proposed to rise 3.04 percent, from \$1.83 million to \$1.87 million, and the Health/Human Services line (which includes funding for the health department and the senior center) is slated to rise 2.29 percent, from \$285,455 to \$291,994.

Also among the increases is Portland Library, for which Bransfield has included \$692,450, a 2.03 percent increase from the \$678,700 in the current year’s budget.

Bransfield also said that the coming year will have fewer capital expenditures than the current year, but that a priority for capital expenditures will be maintaining town buildings, such as additional work on the Brownstone Intermediate School, which had its windows replaced last year.

Some capital items planned for the next year however, would be improvements to parks and

fields, the extension of the Air Line Trail, a revaluation of properties in town, upgrades of town government and Board of Education computers, additional planning with the Complete Streets Group and improvements to town sidewalks.

* * *

Bransfield also mentioned the town will be experiencing a slight drop in state revenues this year due to a tightening state budget.

The total amount of funding from the state will drop by \$13,532 to a total of \$4,582,487.

“We’re not terribly affected this year,” she said. “Some towns may be experiencing a greater loss of revenue.”

The total amount of town revenues from taxes for the year was \$27,331,932, which represented a 2.50 percent increase over last year’s tax revenues.

On a related note, the town’s Grand List Value rose by an additional \$2.7 million this year, leading to a total value of \$805,462,641.

“Without raising taxes, we automatically have an additional \$86,000 just from the increase in value of the grand list,” Bransfield said.

If the proposed budget is adopted, she said, property taxes are slated to go up by 0.68 mills to a total of 32.46, which represents a 2.14 percent increase from the current mill rate of 31.78.

For perspective, Bransfield said the 2016 tax increase is in line with the past few years’ increases.

“Increases have been at or below two percent the past few years, very similar to the expenditures the town has faced,” she said. “Again, we’re trying to keep pace, rather than letting things go very low or go very high, so we can run the town effectively.”

* * *

However, before she got into the expenses driving general government spending Tuesday night, Bransfield touched on some of the grants the town had received over the past year and how they were being used.

First, the town received three Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grants for the fourth and final stage of improvements at Riverfront Park, for designing the Route 17 Recreational Complex and for building a new sand/salt shed for Public Works.

“That should be completed by the end of June,” Bransfield said of the recreational complex plan. “That includes two soccer fields, two

baseball fields, a walking area and the potential for another pavilion, as well as a play area and a small splash pad.”

The \$200,000 grant covers the design of the site, dealing with environmental concerns from the tobacco farming at the site and a regrading plan for the site.

The town also received a Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) grant to complete a brownfields assessment for land on Brownstone Avenue near Riverfront Park.

“That land has old oil tanks on it, and we know there’s potential for contamination there,” Bransfield said. “So we have \$200,000 to assess what’s under the ground and to plan how to mitigate whatever is there.”

Though the land is privately owned, only municipal governments can apply for the specific grant, which the town applied for because reclaiming the land is in line with town priorities, she said.

“We feel that to bring back that riverfront land to something that could have activities on it and commercial development would be advantageous to everyone, including those who participate at the Brownstone Exploration & Discovery Park and the Riverfront Park,” Bransfield said.

Finally, the town also received \$50,000 Vibrant Communities Initiative Grant to create a marketability plan for the development of the former Elmcrest Campus. Bransfield encouraged those in attendance to come to the March 17 public planning meeting on the future of the former Elmcrest site to learn more about the grant’s role.

* * *

Bransfield also gave a breakdown of the revenues from Brownstone Exploration & Discovery Park during 2014.

More than 85,000 people visited the park during that year, and the town of Portland received \$341,095.68 from them, or 15 percent of the park’s gate revenues, per the town’s contract with the park.

Bransfield said the town will be reexamining the contract with the park over the coming year and looking at possible changes in an effort “to improve the relationship that we have with that business.”

Bransfield noted that, from January 2007 (when the town began receiving revenue from

the park) through last December, Portland has received \$1,475,555.

“The town purchased the quarries and the entire riverfront in 1999 for \$1,050,000,” she said. “So you have recouped the investment that you made, and now you’re beginning to really see a return on your investment in that property.”

* * *

Bransfield also summarized some major projects completed over the past year, which included the medical office building on Free-stone Avenue, the Cumberland Farms on Marlborough Street, the Connecticut Pharmaceuticals facility on Main Street under the Arrigoni Bridge, the renovation of the Carlson Welding building in the same place and the renovation of Connecticut Valley School of Music & Dance building on Main Street.

“These are all really nice improvements to our Main Street, our industrial park and our Route 66 areas,” she said.

Some pending projects for the coming year included commercial development near Route 17 at Wilcox Lane near the soccer fields, improvements to the St. Clements Castle property that could include an inn or hotel, and commercial development on the former Elmcrest property.

* * *

The Board of Selectmen will hold budget workshops on March 18 and March 24, with budget deliberations on April 1 and April 7.

Selectmen will adopt the budget on April 8, and a town meeting on the budget will follow on May 4 with a budget referendum on May 11.

Bransfield recommended residents give input to the board members, and to become involved with the budget process this year, and thanked residents for their continual participation in the town.

“I can’t thank you enough for making Portland such a nice town to live in, and such a pleasant place to raise a family,” she said.

* * *

The proposed town budget can be accessed from the main page of the Town of Portland website, located at portlandct.org. The proposed Board of Education budget, and capital improvement plan, can be accessed from the main page of the Portland Public Schools website, located at portlandctschools.org.

Town Clerk Sworn In, Assessor Selected in Portland

by John Tyczkowski

There are some new faces at Portland Town Hall these days.

Mary Dickerson was sworn in at last Wednesday’s Board of Selectmen meeting as Portland’s new town clerk.

Following the retirement of 37-year town clerk Bernie Dillon on January 1, assistant town clerk Paula Slym had been working as acting town clerk.

Dickerson will serve for the remainder for Dillon’s term, until Dec. 31. The elections in November will select a town clerk for the next four-year term.

The Democratic Town Committee recommended Dickerson, who received a majority of the committee’s votes, to the selectmen, who unanimously approved her as town clerk.

“I have had the pleasure of working with Mary on the Economic Development Commission for a number of years,” selectman Fred Knous said. “She’s a very detailed person and will do an outstanding job.”

“I’d like to say, while I don’t always agree with the Democratic Town Committee, I think they made a great choice,” selectman Ryan Curley said to laughs from those in attendance.

Slym was present at Wednesday’s meeting to administer the oath of office to Dickerson.

After taking the oath, Dickerson thanked the board.

“I’m very happy for the opportunity,” she said.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said she was “very grateful” to have Dickerson and Slym

“on the team.”

“It’s a great occasion to have two very qualified people serve not just because of their schooling and their experience, but because they deeply care about the town of Portland,” she said. “I know you’ll both do a fabulous job.”

Dickerson is a Portland native and has most recently been serving as the town’s economic development consultant – a position she resigned from after starting as town clerk. She also was a member of the Board of Education in town from 1999-2001, and served as Deputy First Selectwoman on the Board of Selectmen from 2001-02.

Also at Wednesday’s meeting, Gail Pititto was unanimously ratified as the town’s as-

essor.

“After reviewing 12 applications, [Director of Finance] Tom Robinson and I conducted a couple of interviews and Gail has been selected by me as the best candidate to be our new assessor,” Bransfield said.

Pititto, who has been serving as interim assessor since December, thanked the board as she stepped forward and said she was honored to have the opportunity.

“I look forward to many years of service with you,” Bransfield said to Pititto.

Knous said he thought Pititto was “an excellent choice.”

“I couldn’t think of a better choice,” he said. “Congratulations!”

Lee-Lewis Resigns from Marlborough Finance Board

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

Torin Lee-Lewis has resigned from the Board of Finance, effective immediately.

Lee-Lewis was appointed to the board last May, to take the place of fellow Democrat Lauren Cragg. However, since that appointment Lee-Lewis had only attended “one or possibly two” meetings, according to finance board chairwoman Evelyn Godbout. In her resignation letter, dated Feb. 26, Lee-Lewis stated she is stepping down due to family health reasons and a change in work travel load.

Lee-Lewis’ term runs through this November. To fill it, the Democratic Town Committee has endorsed Eric Young, who is currently an alternate on the board, Godbout said. “I also endorsed him,” she added.

“It’s a good thing Eric is endorsed,” Godbout said. “He’s been attending and is a productive member.”

Young’s recommendation will now go to the Board of Selectmen for a vote at its March 17 meeting.

Citizens Outline Priorities for Portland's Next Decade

by John Tyczkowski

Residents turned out last Thursday evening to voice their thoughts and opinions on where Portland should head over the next decade.

Nearly 30 people came to the Waverly Center for a Planning and Zoning Commission meeting featuring Glenn Chalder, president of Planimetrics, the Avon-based planning and consulting firm aiding in updating the advisory document.

Planimetrics had previously worked with the town to help create the 2006 Plan of Conservation and Development.

According to a state statute put into effect this year, each municipality in Connecticut must have such a plan on file and must update it every decade.

If a municipality has a plan that is more than 10 years old, it would lose out on the ability to apply for many state grants.

Portland's deadline for its plan is March 2016.

Representatives from several citizens' groups including the Brownstone Quorum, the Elmcrest Campus Advisory Committee and the Complete Streets Group were in attendance at the March 5 meeting.

Upon walking into the Waverly Center, residents received an envelope from Town Planner Deanna Rhodes, filled with stickers and slips of paper used as part of a large interactive set-up to gather opinions about different features of the town.

As part of that, there were three tables set up with maps of the town, titled "Where do you live?", "What are you proud of?" and "What are you sorry about?"

Residents would then mark with a single blue sticker where they lived in town, mark several spots they were proud of in town with green stickers and mark areas in town they were not proud of with red stickers.

A fourth table at the opposite end of the room held several ballot boxes, labeled with various topics ranging from "Residential Development" to "Community Character." Residents could then drop in slips of paper with different values, allocating different planning points to various priorities in town.

After residents settled into their seats,

Chalder collected the town maps and the ballot boxes to use the information in the evening's presentation.

Chalder first ran through basics about the town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).

"It's a visionary document used to guide growth and change in Portland and protect natural resources," he said. "The focus is: what type of community do we want to be? It's not a set of regulations dictating what the town will do."

In addition, Chalder said the plan also largely guides the activities of the Planning and Zoning Commission, which is why there is a large emphasis on physical development in town.

"That emphasis is also what the state statute specifies," he said. "However it's important not to just make the plan because the state tells us to, but also because it's crucial to have a shared vision for the future of Portland."

Chalder also stressed the 2016 POCD will be a modification of the existing plan, accounting for new trends such as the town's aging population and an emphasis on sustainability and resiliency – and will not be a complete redo of the old plan.

"We don't want to be reinventing the wheel here," he said. "There are a lot of new factors, but this is still the same town. We want to be able to balance those new concerns with important points from the last plan to create a coherent vision for the future."

Looking at the three town maps residents had marked with stickers, several trends emerged.

Residents in attendance represented several parts of town, including the Main Street area, the other side of town near the state forest and East Hampton, and a few spots in between.

"I think this is a very important thing to recognize for tonight's discussion," Chalder said. "If everyone in the room was from the same neighborhood, we might have a geographic bias in the room."

Most of the dots indicating what residents in attendance were proud of in town were centered on the quarries, Riverfront Park, historic Main Street from the fairgrounds to the bridge, including the former Elmcrest property, the walking trail around the town reservoir and the

public schools.

Chalder said this map was a way to help guide the focus of the new plan.

"When people identify 'prouds' in the community, they're also identifying what they'd like to encourage in the future," he said. "They can guide trends. For example, just from this, the waterfront seems very important to the town, as well as its historical character, and the schools."

Finally, spots the residents in attendance "were sorry about" included the industrial developments and oil tanks under the Arrigoni Bridge and on the other side of the quarries on the riverfront, the intersection of Routes 17A and 66, sidewalks downtown and the Ledges near Cobalt. Interestingly, the former Elmcrest property was on this list as well, as residents voiced their displeasure at the site going largely untouched for the past several years.

"Conversely, the value of identifying 'sorries' is finding out what we would want to discourage in town, or work on," Chalder said. "Marking both the 'prouds' and 'sorries' helps people visualize how they want to guide their town, and that's why this exercise is so useful."

Next, Chalder went over the results of the planning points residents allocated using the marked ballot boxes.

According to the tallies of the planning points, residents' top focuses for Portland's next decade were business development, town facilities and services, and open space preservation, in a three-way tie.

Other priorities included traffic circulation; walking, biking and bus transportation; historical resource protection, natural resource conservation, community character and water, sewer and utilities.

After the formal presentation, Chalder opened up the floor to town residents' comments on the various areas of the plan.

As part of the exercise, Chalder said residents could talk about current realities and future ideas for the ballot box topics, but could not engage others in debate or "rehash old issues," in order to move the meeting along and focus on the goal of moving the town forward.

Patterns that emerged included a focus on

attracting businesses and jobs to Portland, especially along Route 66, without compromising the town's historic small-town character and its aesthetics.

Along those lines, residents said that expanding business would also expand the town's tax base, which would allow for better municipal services for the entire town.

In addition, residents also made it clear they felt revitalizing the former Elmcrest campus was not only important to attract businesses, but also to create a more attractive downtown to greet people passing through on the state highways, and to take advantage of that large traffic flow to attract spending to local businesses.

Residents also mentioned the need for public access to the riverfront, including a public boat launch. Several residents talked about reclaiming the riverfront area adjacent to the quarries.

The competition of the Route 17 Recreational Complex was named as a priority. Several residents stressed the importance of town-controlled recreational fields in place of using fields through another entity, such as the YMCA at Camp Ingersoll or the Oakwood Soccer Park on Route 17.

Other ideas floated included a public swimming pool, a set of building standards to preserve the historic character of Main Street, the creation of a town green, the establishment of a historical walk highlighting areas of Main Street, the quarries and Riverfront Park and re-routing Route 66 at the 17A intersection to create better pedestrian access and calmer motor access to a revitalized Elmcrest Campus.

Chalder said after the discussion that the town plans to have a preliminary draft of the new Plan of Conservation and Development this summer, with a complete draft by September or October, to stay on track for the March 2016 due date.

The town's current Plan of Conservation and Development can be found at: www.portlandct.org/Portals/12/Departments/Land%20Use/PDF/PlanofConservation.pdf.

Colchester Finance Board OK With School Budget

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

The Board of Finance didn't have many questions for the Board of Education when the education budget was presented to the board March 5, and on March 9, the Board of Finance reached a consensus to accept the proposed budget as is.

Superintendent of Schools Jeff Mathieu, Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein and school board member Don Kennedy presented the proposed 0.84 percent increase budget to the Board of Finance.

The proposed budget has not changed since Mathieu originally presented it to the Board of Education Jan. 29, and totals \$39,995,370, a \$333,575 increase over the current year's \$39,661,795 spending package.

To begin the presentation, the group showed a video created by Bacon Academy students that highlight things going on in the district and the things the budget supports.

Goldstein explained that this year's budget was built around the theme of engagement and how the district has engaged with the community, met their expectations and involved the community in what the school district does.

After quickly going through the proposed budget line by line to discuss some of the changes, Goldstein discussed why decreasing enrollment doesn't necessarily translate into a decreased school budget. The New England School Development Council (NESDEC) has projected enrollment in the school system is going to drop from 2,645 in the current school year to 2,549 in 2015-16.

Goldstein explained there are three forces – outside forces, inside forces and student-centered forces – that determine the budget, regardless of enrollment.

For the outside forces, Goldstein said there are increasing state and federal mandates that cost money such as Common Core State Standards, teacher evaluation, high school reform, Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) testing and other new assessments. There is also the cost to districts for magnet school tuition, utility costs, health insurance and contractual agreements such as percent salary increases and step increases. Although in 2015-16, the teachers will be receiving a cost of living salary increase, there is no step movement,

which provide raises to teachers based on how long they've been with the district. For the 2016-17 year, though, there is a step movement in the teachers' contracts, costing the district more. Another outside force impacting the budget, Goldstein said, is flat, or even decreased, state support.

As far as inside forces inside the district driving the budget, Goldstein said there are new budget protocols in place including capital budgets and health insurance to keep up on costs, technological enhancements driven by mandates, and technology support services.

As far as the student-centered forces, Goldstein said those include the cost for all-day kindergarten, enhanced AP offerings, ongoing support of the Higher Order Thinking (HOT) school philosophy at Jack Jackter Intermediate and continuing success of team teaching at William J. Johnston Middle School.

Among the initiatives in the proposed school budget is \$97,077 for a full-time Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), who would deal with the most behaviorally-challenged students. The school system currently subcontracts out

its BCBA work, at a cost of \$27,500. Board of Finance member Tom Kane asked what the benefit would be from the full-time BCBA.

"\$27,500 is [for] one day a week," Mathieu said. "This is five days a week and mostly at CES and JJIS. Right now we are not meeting the needs of students at those two schools."

Meanwhile, Board of Finance member James McNair questioned the temporary assistant director to pupil services position.

"It's for out-of-district PPTs (planning and placement teams) and to assist the reviews of parents' concerns," Goldstein said.

But, despite some questions, Board of Finance members overall expressed their pleasure with the school's proposed spending plan.

"I'm impressed with that [\$39,995,370 million] number right there," board member Art Shilosky said.

The Board of Finance reached a consensus at its public forum March 9 to accept the education budget as is at its next meeting, which is scheduled for Wednesday, March 18, at 7 p.m., at Town Hall.

Colchester Fields Biggest Issue at Public Budget Forum

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

After a public forum during which residents mainly expressed the need for more field maintenance, the Board of Finance Monday suggested it would adopt the proposed 2015-16 town budget as is, without any cuts.

The proposed budget totals \$53.86 million, an \$862,935 increase from current year spending. Of the budget proposal, \$13.86 million is for general government spending – which covers town fields.

Paula McDowell, chairwoman of youth football in town, spoke during public comments regarding the need to do something for the fields.

“Whatever you can do we would be grateful,” McDowell said. “I don’t know if the answer is more maintenance, more people or additional fields. I’m just here to support youth sports, fields and Parks and Recreation.”

According to McDowell, the fields are in rough condition. Jason Henderson, resident and associate professor at the University of Connecticut, added kids are putting cones in holes in the fields so they won’t step in them.

“We received a report from Jason to develop a field maintenance program,” Jim Paggioli, director of Public Works, said. Henderson specializes in plant science and landscape architecture at UConn along with athletic fields. “Some recommendations are attainable and some last year couldn’t get funded in the budget.

Paggioli said Public Works has priced out economical repairs such as a pump at the pond to help power irrigation in the fields.

“We have the start of pieces,” Paggioli said. “At some point, we have to cost it out. Maybe [youth sports] leagues can pitch in.”

McDowell stated that even though membership in the sports leagues is down, the leagues are always willing to donate.

“Every year we don’t do something it gets worse and worse,” McDowell said.

Rob Tarlov, chairman of the Board of Finance, said part of the building program at William J. Johnston Middle School is adding a field.

“If you look at the budget, surrounding towns are spending \$15,500 alone on overseeding,” Henderson said. “We’re grossly underfunded. You aren’t maintaining what you have now.”

Henderson said another issue with the fields is the potential for a lawsuit.

“It’s not if, it’s when, for a lawsuit from a child getting hurt,” Henderson said. “If things aren’t done routinely, it’s going to get worse.”

Realistically, Henderson said, the town should be spending triple the \$15,000 they are spending now on field maintenance.

“There’s in-ground irrigation there, but it’s not maintained properly,” Henderson said. “It’s a safety issue. It’s neglect; it’s negligence.”

Chris Ferrante, chairman of the Parks and Recreation Commission, said his experience with youth sports has been positive.

“We are very fortunate to have a good relationship with Public Works as well,” Ferrante said. “We’ve made contributions financially, of materials and of labor. However we have no ability to maintain the fields throughout the year.”

However, by the end of the season, Ferrante said, the top soil layer Parks and Recreation laid down is gone – without a way to preserve it. Ferrante said parents ask where their money goes and Ferrante answers, back into the fields.

“Parks and Recreation is stretched thin,” Ferrante said. “It’s tougher year to year” to fund and maintain the fields.

Although Ferrante said Parks and Recreation tried to put in a resting system for the fields, without any funds to rehabilitate the field, “all it’s doing is delaying the decay.”

“What we’re doing is not enough,” Ferrante said. “We’re putting a Band-Aid on a gunshot wound.”

In the Parks and Recreation Commission’s eyes, Ferrante said, concerns are “more frequent and less pleasant from parents.”

“Our answers to pass it on are getting unacceptable,” Ferrante said. “We need to demonstrate we’re willing to change the pattern.”

Tarlov said last year there was extra money in the budget, however due to all of the referendums, it was taken out.

“We know it’s a problem,” Tarlov said. “We’re trying to get the most out of the least. Short-term I’m not sure if the money is there. It’s difficult to offer much hope on the short-term.”

Tarlov said someone mentioned bonding and it’s the same issue as the roads.

“The longer they go, the bigger the problem and it balloons up,” Tarlov said. “We need to figure out a solution.”

The Board of Finance questioned a line item for \$5,000 for a sand volleyball court and new benches.

“We shouldn’t build new when we need to maintain what we have,” board member Tom Kane aid.

Tarlov said Soby could speak with the department head to potentially move that \$5,000

over to field maintenance.

After looking over the proposed \$53.86 million budget Monday, the Board of Finance reached a consensus to accept the proposed budget as is at its next meeting.

“Looking at this statistically based on past behaviors, it has a better than 50/50 chance of passing,” board member James McNair said. “It’s a modest tax increase. Let it alone.”

If approved, the budget would feature a 0.47 mill rate increase, which would translate to a 1.57 percent tax increase.

“I’m good with” the budget, Kane said – and added, though, he was watching where the finance board could cut the spending proposal, if indeed it does get rejected by voters. “The non-vocals aren’t going to tell us to cut it.”

Board member Art Shilosky said he agrees 100 percent.

“Both budgets are responsible,” Shilosky said of the school and town proposed budgets.

John Ringo was the only Board of Finance member not in total agreement.

“Percent increase is not a concern,” Ringo said, but added, “If we don’t make any cuts, we’re setting up for immediate failure. When we had a zero percent increase, a large amount voted ‘no.’ Where are the people who are going to vote no? They have no constructive ideas for us.”

The proposed budget will now go to the Board of Finance at its next meeting, scheduled for Wednesday, March 18, at 7 p.m., at Town Hall; if approved, the budget proposal would then head to public hearings.

East Hampton’s Breaking Silences Play to Discuss Relationships, Choices

by John Tyczkowski

Epoch Arts’ original play returns this weekend with *Pieces of Us*, a production examining how individual choices and uncontrollable events impact relationships and change lives.

The performance is a two-act play written and performed by Breaking Silences, the group of 20 girls in grades seven through 12. The play has been an annual fixture of Epoch Arts for the past nine years.

Breaking Silences falls under the purview of Epoch Arts, a non-profit arts-for-youth organization founded 18 years ago, which began as the Ague Spring Players.

The girls group is funded by a grant from the Community Foundation of Middlesex County. Two girls are from Portland while the rest are from East Hampton.

And every March, which is National Women’s Month, Breaking Silences writes and stages an original play tackling weighty topics women face, Elizabeth Namen, artistic director at Epoch Arts, said.

“There was just a need within the organization for girls to have a place to talk about these problems,” she said. “One girl became two became three, so I set aside one night a week for a girls’ group, which became Breaking Silences.”

The group meets every Wednesday at Epoch arts September through June, during the school year.

Namen also said the cap of 20 was a deliberate choice to keep discussions comfortable and “to make sure the girls get to really know each other.”

The actual writing process takes only four weeks in January, and it’s based upon months of journal-writing and small-group discussions from September forward.

“We do a mini-production in December, and that’s after eight weeks of meeting,” Namen said. “So compared to that, this one is really quick. But the topic is on their heart and in their mind, so they’re prepared and ready to work.”

This year, the girls worked with the theme of relationships, Namen said, and were divided into three groups: Authority (parents, school

figures, police), Boyfriends and Friendships.

The girls explored what makes good and bad relationships, and how others’ perceptions can change actions and relationships, and focused the play on those themes, she said.

Because others’ perceptions of a person is such a central theme to the play, the girls also created masks from molds of their face to represent that “we’re always hiding behind something for other people at some point in our life,” Namen said.

Also, a big part of that exploration involved taking into account the impact of alcohol and drug abuse, as well as neglectful parents.

“Through those discussions, it just kind of took on the theme of drinking and driving and partying,” she said. “Everything we do here is kind of out of the box. We talk about issues people don’t always like to talk about. We’ve talked about heroin, abuse, AIDS, cancer, all these things. But we’ve really never dedicated the whole thing to teenage drinking and driving and partying before.”

In addition, Namen said the play also examines the motivations behind those behaviors and attempts to explain the causes.

Olivia Scovill, a senior at Vinal Technical High School, is no stranger to Epoch Arts, having been involved in Breaking Silences for the past seven years.

Her first Breaking Silences play was “*Life is a Sidewalk*,” which examined the labels everyone has placed on them while in school.

However, one of her favorites was *A Time To Remember*, a 2011 play that dramatized peoples’ reactions to the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, on the day they occurred.

“I played the wife of someone who was in one of the towers,” she said. “I was on the phone with my husband the entire time, through the last moments. That was pretty powerful.”

This year, Scovill plays a “party girl” who is ignored by her parents at home, and as a result turns to drinking to cope.

Emma Peltier, a sophomore at East Hampton High School said this is her second year with Breaking Silences.

Her first performance was last year’s *True*



From left, Ally Brogan, Bethany Leighton, Lexi McGuigan, Val Girvin and Brittany Marrow rehearse for this weekend’s production of *Pieces With Us*. The girls are part of Breaking Silences, a group at Epoch Arts that produces an original play every year, tackling tough issues.

Beauty, which examined the pressures girls and women feel to conform to society’s expectations of what they should look like to be accepted.

But this year, Peltier said her character is very much a reflection of who she actually is in real life.

“I have a lot of pressure in my life, and my character does too. She has a lot of expectations she has to meet school-wise and in extracurricular activities,” she said. “It was easier to write the character, but I’m a little nervous to perform it because I don’t know how my parents are going to react.”

“I’m excited for them to come see it, though,” she said.

Scovill said one of the biggest takeaways from the play, for anyone, is to remember to make good choices.

“It’s okay to go out and have fun with friends, you just don’t make bad choices,” she said. “You don’t have to get in the car with someone who’s been drinking, for example.”

In addition, she said another key lesson for audience members of any age is for people to own the bad choices they’ve made.

“You’ve got to learn from them; that’s important,” she said. “And most importantly you have to be able to admit to what you did and take responsibility for your actions.”

Pieces of Us will take place tonight and tomorrow, March 14, at 7 p.m. at Epoch Arts at 27 Skinner Street in East Hampton.

Tickets are \$7. To reserve them, call 860-365-0337 or email info@epocharts.org. For more information on “Pieces of Us” and Epoch Arts, visit epocharts.org.

East Hampton School Board Talks Regionalization of Calendar

by John Tyczkowski

Board of Education members conducted a first reading of the proposed 2015-16 school year calendar – a reading that soon turned into a discussion of state mandates.

Superintendent of Schools Diane Dugas showed a calendar that was specifically created in preparation for legislation that mandates all schools in the same region share the same calendar.

The legislation comes largely from the efforts of the Commission on Municipal Opportunities & Regional Efficiencies, a General Assembly-founded body focused on cost savings and effective use of municipal resources through regional cooperation.

“That mandate doesn’t go into effect next year; it goes into effect the following year (2016-17),” Dugas said. “We have looked regionally at how we can have some consistency for next year however.”

For next year, Dugas said East Hampton has aligned its vacations, as well as days off such as Election Day and some professional development days, with other schools in the region.

“It’s very similar to our past calendars so far,” she said.

Also, Dugas suggested in the future, with regional calendars, East Hampton could put out two years of calendars at once to help parents plan, and to help teachers in different districts better sync up their collaborative efforts.

However, board members soon began asking questions about the pros and cons of syncing the East Hampton Public Schools calendar with

other shoreline schools.

Board member Josh Piteo expressed concerns about vacation times for families.

“If everyone in the region is leaving at the exact same time for vacation, that’s going to create some problems,” he said. “Every place will be booked and prices would just go crazy. It’s to the families’ benefit to have different vacation dates; that kind of legislation makes going away cost-prohibitive to some people.”

Board chair Ken Barber said he wanted to know if East Hampton could “opt out” of the calendar change.

“No, you cannot,” Dugas said. “It’s a legislative mandate.”

“I’m just not sold on the idea,” Barber said.

Board member Scott Minnick wanted further details about how a unified calendar would foster greater regional cooperation.

Dugas said the idea is to allow greater professional development collaboration between districts, but that she also had personal concerns over East Hampton-specific initiatives impacted by the impending calendar change.

“I will tell you I see a difficulty with that as a superintendent because we have a district advancement plan that may not be the same as another district’s,” she said. “It is that local control issue to be honest, being able to focus your needs, but there are opportunities for good cost savings.”

“There are pros and cons to it, without a doubt,” she said.

Dugas said she would address the board’s

concerns and would have responses back to them for the second reading and subsequent vote at the board’s next meeting.

In honor of School Board Recognition Month, Dugas, along with Assistant Superintendent of Schools Tim Van Tassel, took a moment to thank the Board of Education for its work, on behalf of the district.

“You generously give of yourself to ensure that decisions directly affecting our schools are made with the voice of this community, people who are close to our schools and who know our teachers, parents and students,” Dugas said from a statement.

She also read some of the board’s recent achievements.

“In a short time, your ability to add full-day kindergarten, strengthen our technology infrastructure, increase coherence through strategic budgeting and celebrate our students’ success with a commitment to communication are just some of your many accomplishments,” she said.

Dugas and Van Tassel then stood and applauded the board members, as did educators in attendance.

Barber then thanked Dugas and Van Tassel.

“It’s a pleasure to do this, and everybody knows how much time we do put in, and how diligent everyone is at their efforts,” he said. “Thank you very much.”

Also, board members received navy blue umbrellas with the East Hampton Public

Schools seal on the top as thanks for their volunteer service.

Dugas also updated the board on the state of snow days in the district. As it stands now, she said, the school year is set to end on Friday, June 19.

“That’ll be great if we can just maintain that date,” she said. “I’m optimistic with the temperatures getting into the 50s that we might begin to see spring soon.”

Also, Dugas said the district has currently used six snow days. According to the snow day plan, any more snow cancellations would be made up with days taken from April vacation.

However, she said she would prefer to use the May professional development day first instead of cutting into vacation.

“Using that day in May would maintain where we’re at and it would keep graduation on a Friday which is nice,” Dugas said. “But hopefully we’ll stay stable and won’t have to worry about that.”

Lastly, board members closed with a moment of silence to remember Kim Crowley, who died last weekend in a house fire in Middletown.

Barber said Crowley was a dedicated mother and a wonderful person who will be greatly missed.

The next Board of Education meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 23, at 7 p.m. in the East Hampton High School library.

Despite Resignations, Linddy Still Running for Andover Boards

by Geeta Schrayter

Despite his resignation from the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education last month, Jay Linddy said Thursday he still plans to run for a spot on both boards in the May municipal election.

Linddy, who was Vice First Selectman and chairman of the Board of Education, had resigned from the boards Feb. 4. At that time he had expressed an interest in focusing on other hobbies – such as playwriting – and said he was tired of the arguments, particularly as a selectman, between other board members as well as the public.

A week before his resignation, though, Linddy had shared his plans to run as a petitioning candidate in May along with current First Selectman Bob Burbank and selectwoman Elaine Buchardt – none of whom were endorsed at their respective party’s caucus.

And now, Linddy said that’s his plan once again.

Regarding his change of mind, Linddy said over 100 people had come up to him to share

their concerns, particularly regarding the town’s budget.

“We have to control spending. Some people are fortunate they can pay [the tax increases] but most people cannot,” he explained, mentioning there were some major purchase requests coming down the line, and “I understand all the people’s needs and we should be able to give them the needs, but it’s getting at the point now where nobody’s going to be in Andover.”

If taxes increase, Linddy added the seniors would start to leave town, and “what happens when you push them out is people come in with children and the Andover [Elementary School] budget goes up.”

Linddy added, “I am very concerned. I have to pay taxes like everybody else. I am very concerned that we’re going to be taxing out our seniors and the average working class so I think we got to control that.”

Regarding his reasons for resigning, Linddy reiterated it had much to do with the behavior he witnessed as a member of the Board of Se-

lectmen, which he called “troublesome.”

“Everybody doesn’t have to agree on everything and it’s healthy *not* to agree on everything but man, we just have the most negative going at it,” he said, adding the same was occurring during the campaigning that was taking place in town.

“This campaign so far has been very negative and that irritates me,” he stated.

Linddy went on to explain that sort of divisiveness didn’t happen on the Board of Education. He mentioned over the last several years the school has returned over a million dollars to the town.

“That was all done, not with everybody agreeing, but when you went to meetings you had a job to do – and that was for the best interest of the children and the taxpayers – and we did that,” Linddy said.

Linddy said taxpayers should choose him in May due to his experience.

“Why vote for me? I have the experience,”

he said plainly, adding, “Most everybody coming in doesn’t have that experience.”

Speaking on Linddy’s decision, newly-elected Board of Education Chairwoman Christina Tamburro said she had been sorry to see him resign from the board and added, “I am happy to have his service for as long as he wants to offer it.”

Similarly, Superintendent of Schools Andrew Maneggia said Linddy had been a “very valuable” board member.

“His experience and his knowledge of the community and his involvement in the community have made him a very valuable board member over the years and he has been on the Board of Education for a long, long, time and is very familiar with the programs that are in the school and with the fiscal facility. So I’m glad to see that he has decided to run.”

The Andover municipal elections take place May 4.

Changes Afoot for Andover School Board

by Geeta Schrayter

On Wednesday, some changes took place on the Board of Education when new officers were elected – and a new member was appointed.

The changes come as a result of the resignation of Jay Linddy last month, who had been chairman of the board. Linddy resigned from both the Board of Education and the Board of Selectmen, where he was Vice First Selectman.

(However, Linddy shared this week he still plans to run for a seat on both boards in May.)

During Wednesday’s meeting, the board unanimously voted to elect Christina Tamburro as chairwoman, and Whitney Covell as vice chair. Lisa Hewitt meanwhile, was named secretary.

Regarding her new role, Tamburro said this week “I think I have a legacy of strong history with the way the board had been stewarded by Jay for so many years. We’ve had terrific history with [schools superintendent Andrew Maneggia] and now with the new principal there’s a lot to look forward to.”

Tamburro added, “As long as my services are needed I’m willing to offer them and I think it’s my civic responsibility to do that as best I

can.”

Maneggia added, regarding the new chair, “Christina has been serving as vice chair and has done a good job in that capacity and so the board followed its policy when there is a vacancy or a change in leadership and the board policy served the board well.”

The members then voted to appoint resident Fred Oliver to fill the vacancy on the board. In January, Oliver had been endorsed by the Andover Republican Town Committee as a candidate for the board in the upcoming May municipal elections. But Linddy’s resignation provided him the chance to take a seat on the board a few months earlier. After Linddy’s resignation was made known, Republican Town Committee Chairman Ted Sakelarakis wrote a letter explaining the committee voted Feb. 23 “to recommend and support the appointment of Fred Oliver.”

This week, Sakelarakis elaborated, explaining Oliver – along with Mike Russo, the second endorsed candidate for the Board of Education – came to the Feb. 23 meeting.

“They both gave tremendous presentations

and answers to questions and by a razor thin vote – because they’re both excellent candidates – Fred ended up getting the endorsement,” he said.

Maneggia added “I think the board made a good decision. He’s very knowledgeable of the community and is involved in education so I’m sure that he’ll bring that background to the board.”

Speaking on his appointment, Oliver said this week, “I’m happy about it.” Although he mentioned the position was only guaranteed until the election, he said “it gives me an early chance to become familiar with what goes on. I don’t know much about being on the Board of Education – I’ve never been on before – so this gives me a little bit of a chance to learn about how it works and what the issues are.”

In his letter of interest, Oliver shared he’s lived in town for 11 years and has a son in fifth grade at Andover Elementary School. He currently works as a science teacher at an independent college preparatory school in New London, and for the last three years he’s been on the Andover Youth Soccer Association board

of directors as field maintenance director. In addition, he is a member of the board of directors with the Community Organized and Operated Latchkey program, a privately run afterschool program at the school.

“In all of the boards and committees that I have served on I have endeavored to approach issues with an open mind, to listen carefully to others, and to make thoughtful and constructive contributions to discussions,” he wrote. “I believe that my experience as a parent, educator, and member of a variety of boards and committees gives me a reasonable background for joining a board of education.”

Oliver concluded, “I will do my best to educate myself about the relevant issues and laws in order to do my part to make sure that Andover Elementary School continues to provide a solid education for our children in a way that makes wise use of our tax dollars.”

The next Board of Education meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 8, at 7 p.m., in the Andover Elementary School library, 35 School Rd.

EHHS Building Committee Begins Project Manager Search

by John Tyczkowski

Last Thursday, the East Hampton High School building committee approved a set of standards for a new project manager. The committee said it hopes to have a new manager in place by the end of March.

The job advertisement was posted last Friday.

The committee dismissed its previous project manager, the Capitol Region Education Council, in late February. A letter for cause for dismissal from Town Manager Michael Maniscalco specifically addressed missed deadlines for filing documents critical to the reimbursement process.

The status of \$7 million in funding for the proposed \$51 million renovation and expansion project is in question, due to a possible loss in state reimbursement.

Allegations that CREC had failed to provide the state with the required paperwork on schedule, and that CREC had failed to keep the committee informed of complications and changes to the project's renovation status, prompted the town to send the letter of dismissal for cause.

These "multiple material breaches" of CREC's contract with East Hampton, as stated in the letter, which were critical to keeping the building project on track, led to the town dis-

missing CREC as project manager.

The committee convened to review the request for proposals one last time at a special meeting Thursday, March 5. Members Cynthia Abraham and Steven Karney worked with Maniscalco to create the RFP.

Maniscalco reminded the committee that skills and qualifications are a major factor in the new project manager selection, in addition to bidding amounts.

"It's not just who bids the lowest dollar amount, it's who is the most qualified," he said. "There have been times when the town has passed over lower bids in favor of better qualifications."

After the meeting, Abraham said the deadline for responses is Friday, March 20, and that interviews will begin on Wednesday, March 25 for qualified applicants.

"We'll have the interviews during the day and we'll do our individual scoring that evening," she said.

If all goes according to schedule, the new project manager will be announced at the committee's regular meeting on March 26, she said.

"Maybe we'd also make a motion at that meeting, but it's too early to tell," Abraham said.

Willard in as Andover Selectman

by Geeta Schrayter

In January, town Republicans endorsed Steve Willard Jr. to run for the Board of Selectmen in May. However, Willard's already found himself a seat on the board, as he was selected last week to fill a vacancy left by the Feb. 4 resignation of Republican selectman Jay Linddy.

Willard was endorsed at the Jan. 23 Republican Town Committee (RTC) caucus, along with current selectwoman Cathy Desrosiers and first selectman candidate Curt Dowling.

But Linddy's resignation last month meant someone needed to be appointed prior to the public's May vote, and that someone happened to be Willard.

The RTC voted to endorse Willard for the seat, and committee chairman Ted Sakelarakis said this week he was "excited" Willard had been appointed by the selectman, adding, "I think he's going to make an excellent selectman. He knows the town. He's lived here his whole life and he goes to a lot of board meetings of different boards so he knows the general outlook of what's going on."

Sakelarakis concluded, "I'm really happy he was elected by the Republicans and I'm grateful that the Board of Selectmen voted him in."

Willard was appointed 3-1, with selectwoman Julia Haverl voting against. Haverl, a Democrat, explained this week she thought Willard "is going to be a good member of the Board of Selectmen" but she didn't vote for him because he's Republican.

Along with Sakelarakis, Willard also submitted a letter expressing his interest to join the selectmen, writing, "It is my feeling that I would be a valued asset to the board. My admiration

for this town fuels my desire to have a hand in how it is operated and really pushes me to do the best job possible."

Speaking on his arrival to the board – sooner than hoped – Willard said this week, "I'm very excited. I'm really happy."

He explained he was able to take part in his first meeting the same night he was appointed – last Wednesday, March 4 – because the appointment took place early on in the meeting.

"So I was able to start working then," he said, adding he's already rolling up his sleeves and getting involved.

"I started contacting different boards and commissions in town to try to set up meetings just to get a pulse on what's going on," he said.

He added he looks forward to getting oriented, and said, "I'm treating this as if my term was four years. I'm not just getting appointed as a campaign move, I'm doing everything I'm supposed to be doing as a board member."

Willard continued, "As I said before I want to get a pulse of what's going on in town, what feelings there are as far as how the Board of Selectmen is being currently run, and if there's anything I can do to make it run even better."

He concluded he wouldn't take the next few months on the board "lightly," and said "of course, the hopes are that I'll get elected [in May] and hopefully this will help people understand how important it is for me to be elected."

* * *

The municipal elections take place Tuesday, May 4.

East Hampton Police News

2/28: Juan Daniel Robles, 18, of 29 Watrous St., was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and second-degree threatening, East Hampton Police said.

Colchester Police News

3/4: State Police said Brian Nardelli, 34, of 10 Woods Edge Dr., Newington, was arrested and charged with DUI and failure to drive in the proper lane.

3/5: State Police said Rebekah Voiland, 28, of 182 Walnut St., Southington, was arrested and charged with criminal impersonation and forging a prescription.

3/6: State Police said Steven Taylor, 46, of 544 Norwich Ave., was arrested and charged with violation of probation.

3/9: State Police said Zachary Jascowski, 27, of 12 Settlers Lane, was arrested and charged with DUI, traveling too fast and tampering.

Marlborough Police News

3/4: State Police said Eric Watkins, 37, of 43 Chapman Rd., was arrested and charged with DUI and carrying a firearm while under the influence.

3/7: State Police said Jeremiah Jeffries, 26, of 390 Garden St., Hartford, was arrested and charged with failure to appear.

Andover Police News

2/27: State Police said Leopold Laffitte, 20, of 219 Rocky Hill Ave., New Britain, was arrested and charged with risk of injury to a child, second-degree sexual assault and employing a minor in obscene performance.

3/6: State Police said Luis Byron, 21, of 43 Times Farm Rd., was arrested and charged with DUI, evading responsibility, operating under suspension, failure to have lights on, failure to have insurance, operating an unregistered motor vehicle, failure to grant right of way, interfering with an officer and breach of peace.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

The weather started getting beautiful Sunday, got even more beautiful Monday and, if the handy Weather Channel app on my phone was accurate, it remained gorgeous all week. Now, I realize it'd be foolish to think we're fully out of the woods quite yet – after all, last year we got a freak snowstorm on March 31 – but I'm thinking the worst of winter is behind us.

And aside from the heartiest of snow lovers, I don't think anyone's going to miss it.

Last week, as we all know, Mother Nature decided the flip of the calendar to March meant two things, diddly and squat; snow fell Sunday night, a little more fell Tuesday night (this time followed up by ice), and then several inches were deposited on southern Connecticut Thursday, in a weird storm that left northern Connecticut with barely a dusting (and some towns didn't even get that much).

Last week also brought another tragic snow-related story, but this one had, while not exactly a happy ending, at least that makes you feel proud of your fellow man.

Mirosław Dabrowski, 57, was shoveling snow off the roof of his Manchester house last Tuesday when he suffered a heart attack. A team of first responders worked valiantly to save him, but Dabrowski never regained consciousness. He was later pronounced dead at Manchester Memorial Hospital.

Sadly, Dabrowski's death wasn't the first this winter. But what made this story stand out was what the first responders did afterward. Later that morning, town police officers, firefighters and paramedics returned to Dabrowski's home to finish shoveling the man's roof.

It certainly wasn't something they had to do, but the first responders chose to do it anyway – and it was pretty heartwarming to read about.

Dabrowski's wife Teresa told the *Hartford Courant* her husband was a hard worker, who would always reach out to help others and ask for nothing in return. She told the newspaper he would have been very thankful to the first responders.

"He would be very appreciative that someone was looking out for his family," she said. "We are all grateful to them."

Fire Chief David Billings told the *Courant* that often, when concerted lifesaving efforts like the ones they performed on Dabrowski end in death, emergency personnel feel frustrated and helpless. He said finishing Dabrowski's work gave them a sense of satisfaction.

"It's a way of completing the picture," Billings told the paper.

The story wound up making national headlines – and I'm not surprised. It really is a pretty inspirational story, considering that it came, as I said, from such a tragedy.

* * *

From the "you just can't make this stuff up" department: The Florida Department of Environmental Protection has been prohibited from using the words "climate change" or "global warming" in any of its official communications.

That's right – the state that is perhaps most vulnerable to climate change is banned from acknowledging it even exists.

The Florida Center for Investigative Reporting (FCIR) reported last week the unwritten policy went into effect shortly after Gov. Rick Scott took office in 2011. Scott has repeatedly stated he isn't convinced humans are affecting climate change, and has said he would need "something more convincing than what I've read" to change his mind.

Just last year, in response to Scott saying he "was not a scientist" when asked about climate change, a group of scientists asked to meet with the governor to explain the science behind it to him. He agreed, but only gave the group 30 minutes to speak and, according to geologist and University of Miami professor Harold Wanless, "spent the first 10 minutes doing silly things like prolonged introductions."

So what was a mere half hour to start with then became 20 minutes, and, Wanless said, while the governor listened, "there were no questions of substance."

Sounds to me like it wouldn't matter how many scientists explained the matter to Scott; he'd already made up his mind.

For the record, the official stance from the Florida DEP, and from the governor's office, is that there's "no policy on this," in regards to the ban of "climate change" and other related phrases. But former DEP employees FCIR interviewed – including a former DEP attorney, who was fired in 2013, allegedly because he repeatedly complained the department wasn't forcing laws to protect the environment – said otherwise. The order was clear; it just wasn't written down.

And lest anyone think it's just a semantics issue, that perhaps the DEP is using other words to get the point across (I prefer "bye-bye beaches" myself), that's not the case. It's changing the entire way issues are handled – and not for the better.

For example, the FCIR story told about an incident last November, in which the Coral Reef Conservation Program held a meeting to train volunteers to use a PowerPoint presentation about the threats coral reefs faced. Two DEP employees, Ana Zangroniz and Kristina Trotta, showed the presentation to the volunteers and then asked if anyone had a question.

One of the volunteers in attendance was Doug Young, president of the South Florida Audubon Society and a member of the Broward County Climate Change Task Force. "I told them the biggest problem I have was that there was absolutely no mention of climate change and the effect of climate change on coral reefs," Young said.

In response, Young said, Zangroniz and Trotta replied, "We are not allowed to show the words, or show any slides that depicted anything related to climate change."

Trotta – who has since left the DEP, and I can't say as I blame her – told FCIR that, when staff would complain about the mandate, her "regional administrator told us that we are the governor's agency and this is the message from the governor's office. And that is the message we will portray."

Scott has apparently changed his mind on at least one of these points. According to FCIR, he seems to have caved on "sea-level rise," which was previously referred to as "nuisance flooding." In his proposed budget for the next fiscal year, Scott has set aside \$106 million to deal with the effects of rising oceans – although \$50 million of that is for a sewage plant in the Florida Keys, and \$25 million is for beach restoration, an amount FCIR said critics have maintained is "hardly a comprehensive plan to protect homes, roads and infrastructure."

Plus, it's also a little bizarre Scott is okay with addressing the "what" at this point, but not the "how" or the "why" behind it.

I don't get what else has to happen for Scott and people like him to accept the reality of climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, established by the United Nations, wrote last year that "human influence on the climate system is clear." The report's authors were scientists from 27 countries. What, are people waiting for a 28th country to ring in?

And keep in mind this is Florida – a state whose eastern, western and southern borders are ocean, ocean and more ocean. It's not exactly a good place to have your head in the sand when it comes to climate change.

Wanless, that University of Miami professor who met with Scott last year, told FCIR it will be hard to plan for climate change if officials can't talk about climate change. And I do believe he's right.

I hope Scott lets people talk about it real soon.

* * *

See you next week.

Obituaries

Glastonbury

Lilla Coley Martinez

Lilla Coley (Taylor) Martinez, 73, of Glastonbury, passed away peacefully after a courageous battle with cancer Sunday, March 8. Born in Hartford on May 14, 1941, to Alfred Benjamin Taylor and Dorothy (Pfau) Taylor, she grew up on the family farm in Glastonbury and remained there for her whole life.



She is survived by her two sons, Rik Martinez and his wife Nancy Barrett and their two children, Matthew Barrett and Cheyenne Martinez; Mark Martinez and his wife Amy Martinez and their two children, Hannah and Daniel Martinez.

She is predeceased by her longtime significant other, Gerald Kershenbaum.

She was a graduate of Glastonbury High School and the University of Hartford. She later attended respiratory therapy school at St. Francis School of Respiratory Therapy and had a long career at Hospital for Special Care in New Britain, retiring in 1999.

Lilla was a quiet caring soul who enjoyed working in her garden and tending to her perennials around her home. She loved her hummingbird stations and bird feeders and found great enjoyment with other wildlife that came onto the family farm. Mostly, she enjoyed spending time with her family and her close friends.

The family would like to thank her many friends who supported and comforted Lilla during her illness and the St. Francis Hospital Cancer Center for the wonderful care she received there.

Calling hours will be today, March 13, from 4-7 p.m., at Glastonbury Funeral Home, 450 New London Tpke., Glastonbury, CT 06033. Burial will be a private service at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, please send donations to Masonicare Partners Home Health & Hospice, 111 Founders Plaza, Suite 200, East Hartford, CT 06108 or Friends in Service Here (FISH) P.O. Box 205, Glastonbury, CT 06033.

To leave an online condolence, please visit glastonburyfuneral.com.

Hebron

Cynthia Grinnell

Cynthia Grinnell, 78, of Avon, formerly of Hebron and Hartford, died Monday, Feb. 9. Cynthia was born Jan. 19, 1937, in Providence, R.I., daughter of the late Albert and Dorothy (Jennings) Grinnell, she was raised in Littleton, R.I., attended local schools and earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics from the University of Rhode Island.

She had lived in Hartford for a few years but had spent most of her life in Hebron. Cynthia worked for the United Technologies Research Laboratory for many years as well as teaching programming at Hartford State Technical College. As a Hebron resident, she had served on the Board of Selectmen, the Board of Education and as tax collector. She was on the building committee for the Town Office Building Expansion and on the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Cynthia's activities and her involvement span many years of dedicated volunteer service to the Hebron community. She was longtime member of the Hebron Democratic Committee and served as secretary of the committee for many years.

Cynthia is survived by her brother, Alan Grinnell and his wife Bernadette of Mystic; a grandniece, Maddie Grinnell; cousins Nancy Mason and Fred Caswell; and her dear friend, Nola Johannes of Manchester.

Funeral services will be held Sunday, April 12, from 1-3 p.m., at Russell Mercier Senior Center, 14 Stonecroft Rd., Hebron. Burial will be private in the New Hebron Cemetery. There are no calling hours.

Memorial donations may be made to the Russell Mercier Senior Citizen's Center, 14 Stonecroft Rd., Hebron, CT 06248.

To sign the online register book, go to holmes-watkinsfuneralhomes.com.

Colchester

Joanne Howard Nose

Mrs. Joanne Carol "JoJo" Howard Nose, 60, a resident of Route 92, Belington, W. Va., formerly of Colchester, departed this life Wednesday morning, March 4, at her residence.

She was born Monday, Jan. 10, 1955, in New Britain, a daughter of the late Harry Ralph Howard Sr. and Carmela Mabel Paradiso Howard. She was united in marriage on May 27, 1989, to Arthur Lynn Nose, who survives at their home. Their relationship including their years of marriage totaled 31 years.

Also surviving are one son, Christopher Earle Cocola and wife Samantha of Enfield; one daughter; Carolyn Jean Cocola of Belington, W. Va., who considered her mom her best friend; two stepsons, Sean Lee Nose and wife Jane, and Christopher Edwin Nose both of Uniontown, Pa.; one stepdaughter, Jamie Beth Nose Duppe of New Salem, Pa.; seven grandchildren, Aydan Duppe, Ailey and Addyson Nose, of Uniontown, Pa., William and Delaney Nose, of Uniontown, Pa., Marina Santina Cocola and Isabella Carmela Cocola of Enfield; two brothers, Harry Howard Jr. and family, Paul Howard and family, one sister, Barbara Tanzi and family, all of Connecticut; two special nieces, that always kept in touch with her, Michelle O' Dea and family and Jaimee Tanzi.

Mrs. Nose was a graduate of Pulaski High School in New Britain. She worked at the University of Florida Ext. office as a legal counsel. She had also worked for the Aetna Health Insurance Co. in Middletown and Hartford, and the FAS Financial in Rocky Hill, and had also worked in the U.S. Food Service as a customer service representative. She was a Presbyterian by faith and attended the Seven Rivers Church in Lecanto, Fla.

She had resided in Colchester and in Inverness, Fla., before settling in Belington, W. Va.. She acquired numerous friends in all of places she lived, and was dearly loved by so many. She was an avid photographer and also deeply loved the mountains of West Virginia. She also loved to cook, and her specialty was her lasagna. She was a collector of *The Wizard of Oz* memorabilia and loved to feed and watch the birds.

She will be greatly missed by all who knew and loved her.

Friends were received at the Talbott Funeral Home, 56 N Brandenburg St., Belington, W. Va., Friday March 6, and again Saturday, March 7, when final rites will be conducted from the funeral home chapel with the Pastor James "Oz" Gray officiating. Interment followed in the Sugar Creek Cemetery near Belington.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks memorial contributions be made to Mountain Hospice, 1002 South Crim Ave., Belington, WV 26250. The Talbott Funeral Home in Belington is in charge of the arrangements for Mrs. Joanne Carol "JoJo" Howard Nose.

Condolences may be sent to the family at talbottfuneralhome.com.

East Hampton

Joyce Tracy LaVelle

Joyce Tracy LaVelle, a longtime resident of Wethersfield, passed away Tuesday, March 3, at Arden House in Hamden.

Born Oct. 28, 1931, in New York City, Joyce was raised by her beloved parents, Harold and Sarah Tracy of Wethersfield. She spent her girlhood summers at Lake Pocotopaug in East Hampton, sailing and swimming with her cousins.

Joyce was a talented student athlete at Wethersfield High School, where she was on the girls' basketball and soccer teams. Joyce was "one of the liveliest, friendliest, and wittiest members of our class," her high school yearbook entry said. "She hates a dull moment, and will do anything within her power to change such a situation."

Joyce graduated from WHS in 1949 and pursued a career in nursing. She graduated from the Middlesex Hospital School of Nursing in 1952, and later worked as a nurse in New York City. Joyce earned her bachelor's degree from New York University. She married Gordon J. LaVelle, M.D., a California native whom she met in New York City. The couple moved to Middletown and had two children. They later divorced.

Joyce raised her children in Wethersfield, where she served as a Cub Scout den mother. Despite suffering from multiple sclerosis, Joyce led an active life and enjoyed summertime swims at Mill Woods Park. Joyce moved to Arden House in 2006.

She is survived by her son, Philip J. LaVelle of Washington, D.C.; daughter, Elaine T. LaVelle, of North Haven; and son-in-law, Albert Bosch, of North Haven.

Joyce's family extends their sincere gratitude to the staffs of Arden House and the Clelian Center for their care and compassion.

A memorial service will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Joyce's memory may be made to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Hebron

Lillian Laneri

Lillian Francis Berounsky Melody Laneri passed peacefully from this life Monday, March 2, at the age of 99. Born in Amesbury, Mass., she resided most of her life in East Hartford, Glastonbury and Hebron.

She was predeceased by husbands James Melody and Robert Laneri, and by five siblings.

She is survived by her daughter, Linda Melody Kearns and husband Richard of Columbia, and grandsons Brendon Kearns of Sydney, Australia, and Dillon Kearns of Groton.

Her burial will be private.

Visit byes.com to sign her guest book or to share a memory with her family.

Marlborough

David M. Reed

David M. Reed, 37, of Marlborough, husband of Alyssa (Bartley) Reed, died Sunday, March 8. Born March 30, 1977, in Springfield, Mass., son of Gerald and Nancy (McCann) Reed of Stafford Springs, he was raised in Somers and moved to Marlborough last year.

Besides his wife and parents, he is survived by his children, Ryan Reed, Silas Reed and his son that will be born in June. He also leaves a brother, Gerald B. Reed of Enfield; two nieces, Jessica and Ashly Reed; and several aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews.

A memorial service will be celebrated today, March 13, at noon, in the Congregational Church of South Glastonbury (corner of Main and High streets). Friends called at the Mulryan Funeral Home, 725 Hebron Ave., Glastonbury, Thursday, March 12.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Reed children's education fund, c/o Gerald T. Reed, 19 Clearview Dr., Stafford Springs, CT 06076.

For online condolences, visit mulryanfh.com.

Portland

Lorraine Pizzini

Lorraine (Milardo) Pizzini, 85, of Middletown, formerly of Portland and Florida, wife of the late Thaurio L. Pizzini, died Sunday, March 8, at Water's Edge Health Care. Lorraine was born in Middletown Dec. 16, 1929, the daughter of the late Michael and Mary (Trabucchi) Milardo.

Prior to her retirement, Lorraine was the owner of Magic Mirror Beauty Salon. She was a communicant of Saint Sebastian Church.

Lorraine is survived by a daughter, Holly Ann Pizzini of Middletown; two sons, Thaurio G. Pizzini of Idaho, Richard M. Pizzini of New York; a brother, Robert Milardo of Pennsylvania; a sister, Dorothy Priest of Georgia.

Funeral services were held today, March 13, at 9:15 a.m., from the Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown, followed by a 10 a.m. funeral liturgy in St. Sebastian Church, Middletown. Burial was in St. Sebastian's Cemetery, Middlefield. Friends called at the Biega Funeral Home Thursday, March 12.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Alzheimer's Association, Connecticut Chapter, 200 Executive Blvd., Southington, CT 06489.

To share memories or express condolences online, visit biegafuneralhome.com.

East Hampton

Gary Chapps

Gary Chapps, 68, of East Hampton, passed away peacefully Sunday, Feb. 22. He was born Nov. 10, 1946, to the late George and Eva Chapps of Enfield.

He was predeceased by his wife, Robin Ashe Chapps.

He is survived by his son, Shawn Chapps of Enfield, and Christopher and Kerri Chapps of Old Saybrook. He also leaves two granddaughters, Samantha and KateLynn.

Gary was a electrician by trade and was co-owner of Systems Operating Services. He had a love for cooking and gourmet food in which he shared with his late wife. He was a lifelong member of the Lions organization.

The family will be holding a private burial in the spring.

Donations in his name can be made to your local Lions organization.