

RIVEREAST

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East Hampton High School student Chris Ryan collects a water sample from a site at Lake Pocotopaug in late January. The EHHS Environmental Club collected water samples from several sites around the lake.

Looking Out for Lake Pocotopaug

by John Tyczkowski

It may be cold outside, but nearly two dozen East Hampton High School students are collaborating on a regular basis with the Friends of the Lake, to collect water samples from Lake Pocotopaug.

On one expedition, in late January, several students from the EHHS Environmental Club went out to the lake to collect samples to measure the lake's turbidity, or the amount of dissolved solids in the water.

Dissolved solids, such as soil particles, are what carry excess nutrients into the lake, which can fuel algae blooms, Roger Abraham, club adviser and EHHS science teacher, said. The level of turbidity in the lake over time, and in what locations around the lake, would help indicate where heavy nutrient flows are centered and if there are any seasonal trends.

Earlier in January, the Friends of the Lake donated a turbidity meter and associated equipment to the club to allow them to conduct the tests.

The goal is to compile a database of lake-testing results to look for long-term trends in the lake's health, Abraham said.

Chris Ryan, a junior, has been a member of the club since the beginning of his sophomore

year, and said he simply wanted to get involved in helping the lake and other environmentally friendly initiatives.

"I was interested in a lot of what they've got going on, and I figured I could help out," he said. "Hopefully before I graduate, we'll be able to gather a year and a half's worth of data on the lake, and track the changes over time."

Besides the lake, Ryan said, the club is involved in composting unwanted fruits and vegetables from the school cafeteria, as well as creating an obstacle course out of the nature trail behind the high school.

"They're both good ways to give back," he said.

Senior Allyson Bolton has been a member of the club for three years.

"I've always liked nature, and I've always wanted to help preserve it," she said. "And I wanted to see a cleaner Lake Pocotopaug."

Bolton said she's gone to the lake every year with her friends, and that every year, "it's gotten dirtier and dirtier."

"It's such a big part of the town, it's what people really know about the town," she said. "It's something we need to take care of."

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When Life Gives You Gobs of Snow...

by John Tyczkowski

It's a whole new way to have an ice cold beer. East Hampton residents Josh Scavetta and Stephen Croll have taken advantage of the near-record snowfalls in town over the past six weeks by indulging in a classic winter activity.

And that would happen to be building a snow fort.

"I've been building snow forts since I was a kid. Every couple years I'd build another one and they'd just keep getting bigger and bigger," Croll said. "And now, we just had all this snow to work with, so I figured we'd pile it up and see how big of a fort we could make."

In front of the North Main house stands a giant dome with a Christmas tree on top, and an otherwise non-descript snowy outside.

But once inside, it becomes obvious this isn't a little kid's snow fort. The structure can fit 16 people, and contains electricity and even a bar.

Croll said the two created the structure last month, when, for several weekends in a row, the weather dumped feet of snow on the town and temperatures were in the single digits, or lower.

As to how they created the snow fort, he said it was mostly basic equipment.

"It was really just chipping away and tunneling in with shovels," Croll said. "I had these blue bins, I would fill them up with snow and Josh would grab them and pull them out and dump them outside."

To make the actual pile, a friend with a plow came along to push all the extra snow he could into that one location, and the two piled on all

the extra snow they could using snow blowers.

Dubbed "the Ice Box," the igloo came from an idea in Croll's head, with no actual blueprints or plans.

"We kind of just started digging and made it up as we went," he said.

In addition, the single-digit and sub-zero temperatures during those weekends made the snow so frozen that they never experienced any cave-ins.

After entering the structure, visitors walk down a short hallway, which then abruptly bends around a corner to lead into the main room. On one side is a bar with shelves and a drink cooler carved out of the snow, and around the other sides of the igloo are more shelves and seats.

Scattered around the walls are drink holders, slots for speakers and spaces for some lights.

There's also even a plaque opposite the bar that says "Ice Box" in chipped-out block letters.

Though some rain and an ever-so-slight warming of temperature earlier this week meant the ceiling had sagged down to less than six feet of clearance as of press time, Scavetta said the igloo originally had a seven-to-eight foot ceiling after its initial construction three weeks ago. The walls of the igloo are also several feet thick, he said.

The Ice Box is also wired for electricity, with extension cords from the house powering the lights and speaker system.

"On the outside you can't hear anything be-



An inside view from behind the bar of the Ice Box, Stephen Croll and Josh Scavetta's ice creation. The igloo contains a bar and electricity for lights, speakers, a toaster and a space heater, and seats about 16 people.

cause the snow's a great insulator," Scavetta said. "But on the inside, it sounded awesome."

The two even included a toaster in there too, Scavetta said.

"I was serving up bagel bites for people," he said.

Also, Scavetta said he put a space heater in

the igloo when the duo had people over for the Ice Box's first – and so far only – weekend gatherings two weekends ago.

"It was so cold outside, that with the space heater on, we barely got the inside temperature up to 30 degrees," he said. "You don't normally

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EHHS Environmental Club members, from left, Caroline Nocera, Josh Welburn, Alex DePasquale, Chad Stanton Chris Ryan, Ehren Meisinger and Hannah Welburn, stand at the lake's edge, with EHHS science teacher Roger Abraham at center.

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Bolton also said she's very happy with how the club has changed over the years.

"Previous years, it's only been a small amount of people, like just me and two other people," she said. "But this year, with 20 people, we're actually getting projects done."

Ehren Meisinger, a junior who wants to pursue environmental studies in college, characterizes himself as "really invested in the lake, our town's main attraction," which is what prompted him to work on a novel solution to the lake turbidity problem.

"When I was younger, me and my dad would go out on the Thimble Islands, and we learned there was a guy out there planting kelp gardens to give fish places to live and to help clear up the water," he said. "Kelp is a natural filter. It inspired me; I wanted to find some way to help the lake. Anything we can do, I'm totally into it."

Meisinger said his idea, which he read about online, involves planting a highly-absorbent plant, such as grasses or alfalfa, in floating boxes at key points around the lake. Grown via hydroponics, the plants, not needing soil, would absorb the excess nutrients in the lake and help with the dissolved phosphorous problem.

"Naturally, we have to get permission from the DEEP to do that first, and then the Lake Commission. I'd also like to go to the Friends of the Lake and work with them on it," he said. "I want something actually done before I graduate, not just an idea. That would be amazing."

"It would also be cool for the school too, being able to say that we helped clean up the lake and make it healthier and safer for everyone," he said.

Meisinger also said he plans to come back and help out with the lake even after he graduates and goes to college.

"I want to be able to continue to help with the lake," he said.

Alex DePasquale, also a junior, is another first-year member of the environmental club, and said he's been "really concerned" about the lake.

"I've always liked going to the lake, and it's been getting dirty, and I want to help clean it up," he said. "I think Ehren's hydroponics idea is a great start, and I support the continual testing for keeping tabs on how the lake is doing."

"I'd love to see a turn-around in some of the lake's numbers before I graduate," he said.

Senior Hannah Welburn, a first-year member of the club, said she's made caring for the lake her major priority.

"I've lived in East Hampton my whole life, and I've lived on the lake for a few years now," she said. "I see the lake as a unique asset to this town; it's something East Hampton as a whole should take advantage of. We need to take care

of it, and not just for us but for all the wildlife it supports."

"Waking up every morning and seeing it out of my window, I wanted to do something to make it cleaner and more enjoyable for everyone in town," she said.

In addition to supporting Meisinger's hydroponics plan, Welburn said she's "a big fan" of regular lake testing.

"We need that long-term data to actually see what the differences are and hypothesize how they occur," she said.

Welburn said she enjoyed the hands-on experience and learning she got from attending the first lake-testing trip in late January.

"In addition to the science, the teamwork was wonderful to see, it was great seeing a lot of kids who care about the lake coming together," she said.

For the future, Welburn said she would love to see an expansion of the lake clean-up day to reach non-lake residents, and an increased awareness in town of how to care for the lake through flyers and other campaigns.

"I want people to want to work to keep the lake clean, we need to put more effort into that," she said. "There needs to be more effort in prevention, rather than going back and fixing things after the fact."

Finally, Welburn said she'd like to eventually run for the Conservation-Lake Commission, but in the meantime, she said she's proud of the club's efforts.

"We're really taking things in the right direction, we've taken on a lot of projects, and not just for the lake, and we're following through," she said.

Abraham said the lake is just one of the causes that the club has come together for.

"This year, I said to them, 'Let's fix up the cross-country trail.' They worked really hard, they went out there and were spreading wood chips and everything," he said. "They just like getting involved in something, it's good for them."

Abraham said that, this spring, he'd like to take the club to Conservation-Lake Commission meetings as well.

"I'd like them to get to know everyone there, and to maybe start volunteering," said Abraham – himself no stranger to helping the lake, having previously served on the Lake Commission and volunteered with the Water Pollution Control Authority.

Specifically, Abraham said, he'd like to see the club become involved with the annual lake clean-up in April.

"The idea of fixing the lake really got the kids latched on to something," he said. "It's kind of been snowballing, and it'll be exciting to see where it goes."



Josh Scavetta, left, and Stephen Croll pose in front of the Ice Box with the tools they used to carve out its inside. They used snow blowers and got help from a friend with a plow to create the giant snow pile.

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picture a heater in an igloo."

Originally, the igloo had a large inflatable Santa Claus on top, but high winds a few weeks ago put an end to that.

Scavetta and Croll said they had numerous people pull up and ask what they were doing during the construction phase.

"People would pull over, or they'd walk over, and they'd start taking pictures and talking to us," Croll said. "Especially with that massive Santa on top."

Scavetta said the two had some fun with telling people what it was.

"I'd tell them 'Oh, it's a cat shelter,' or some-

thing crazy like that. We'd never say it was an igloo," he said. "Or a new salon in town, that was a good one."

Croll said he'd seen other news outlets covering other snow structures around the state – but, until the *Rivereast* stopped by, no media had paid attention to theirs.

"Those may have looked prettier on the outside, but ours is the coolest on the inside," he said.

"Ours definitely is the biggest and best on the inside, we put a lot of work into it," Scavetta added. "Neon lights, a bar, a toaster? You don't expect that in a snow fort."

East Hampton Woman Dies in Middletown Fire

by John Tyczkowski

An East Hampton resident was one of two women killed in a house fire in Middletown early Saturday, Feb. 28.

Kim Crowley, 44, of East Hampton, and Cheryl Micale, 36, of Middletown, died in the blaze at Micale's ranch house at 309 Barbara Rd., Middletown, the Middletown Fire Department said in a press release.

The fire remains under investigation, and fire and police personnel are not releasing the name of the man, the press release stated. Investigators from the Middletown Fire Marshal's Office, the Middletown Police Department and the State Fire Marshal's Office

are working to determine the cause of the fire.

No further information is available due to the pending investigation, Middletown Fire Chief Robert Kronenberger said.

A GoFundMe page has been established to help the Micale family rebuild after the fire at www.gofundme.com/nh3hk4. The website states the blaze "completely destroyed the house and all [of the family's] belongings."

Crowley is survived by her husband, Christopher, and her two sons, Kevin Malone and Christopher Crowley Jr. Her obituary appears in this week's *Rivereast*, on page 26.

Marlborough School Board Adopts \$7.48 Million Budget

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

At its meeting last Thursday, Feb. 26, the Board of Education adopted its 2015-16 budget – after a number of reductions were made and an additional kindergarten teacher was added.

The spending package totals \$7,483,267, and is a 2.91 percent increase over the current year's budget of the \$7,271,585. It's also slightly higher than \$7,463,798 budget Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz first proposed to the board in January. However, a higher-than-projected amount of students registered for kindergarten, and there was a need for an additional teacher, Sklarz said.

After adopting full-day kindergarten last fall, Sklarz said New England School Development Council (NESDEC) had projected there to be 60 registered kindergarteners for the 2015-16 year. Sixty kindergarteners would have warranted three full-time teachers, he said. However, by last week's board meeting, 69 kindergarteners had registered for next year – prompting the need for a fourth teacher.

The addition bumped the cost for certified personnel to \$4,045,002 – by far the biggest portion of the adopted budget.

Board member Theresa Brysgel confirmed that the addition of the teacher means there will be 28 full-time teachers in the proposed budget including the reduction of a sixth-grade teacher.

"No one is being let go," Sklarz said. Of the

sixth-grade teacher he said, "She will have a position here."

This means teachers will simply be shifted around to different grades next year.

Although Brysgel said she understood that, with overall enrollment at the school going down, the teams would be disrupted – but she still said shifting the teachers has been a hard decision to make.

"My concern is with third and fourth grade now having 100 kids each," Brysgel said. "We're going to [eventually] need the fifth sixth-grade teacher."

However, board member Betty O'Brien saw things differently.

"I don't have a hard time with this," she said. "It's the nature of the beast in education. Teachers are certified to teach everything."

Sklarz said that, since no one is being laid off, the budget shows a decrease in unemployment costs.

In the 200 line for employee benefits, Sklarz said they decreased the amount for tuition reimbursement for professional growth for Marlborough Elementary School Principal Dan White and Assistant Principal Kim Kelley by \$2,500. Another part of the decrease was that unemployment has been lowered since Sklarz said they will no longer be laying anyone off. That line now totals \$1,065,661.

The 300 line for purchased professional services stayed the same as the original budget at \$237,248. That 69.25 percent increase came after the changeover from a social worker to using AHM Youth Services for those services, moving the money from the salary line to purchased professional services.

In discussing line 400, which includes the duct cleaning, Sklarz said he had read up on ducts, and no two associations agreed.

"Some say don't do it routinely," Sklarz said. "Ten years is not routinely."

However, Sklarz said, since it was recommended to the board by the town's public works director, Chris Corsa, it's the "time to do it."

Sklarz also added that the board should consider putting in a contingency fund for maintenance.

"We just had an \$8,000 bill to fix the heating in the nurse's office," Sklarz said. "Maybe an unanticipated maintenance fund is needed."

There is no heat in White and Sklarz's offices because the pipes were never finished, Sklarz said.

The 500 line for other purchased services remained at \$450,006 from the original proposed budget.

Another change to the budget Sklarz said they made was reducing the amount for teachers' supplies from \$400 per teacher to \$300 per

teacher. Sklarz said the district will instead try and use district-wide supply funds to buy supplies that can be used year after year in the classrooms, eliminating some of the need for parents to purchase many of the items. That line now totals \$291,750.

School board vice chair Wes Skorski asked about the FIRST Lego league for some of the older grades that was included in the wants list, but not in the budget. Kelley said they have reached out to a grant to fund the program. O'Brien suggested the school appeal to the Marlborough Education Foundation for a grant or the PTO, since both expressed that they have money to give to the school.

In the 700 line for capital outlay, the board has \$20,000 for the playground upgrades. Sklarz said they have to do something with the MECCA playground since its in their agreement with MECCA that the school upkeep all maintenance. Sklarz also said they are in the process of applying for a grant for the playground.

The 800 line for other objects remained at \$20,913 from the original proposed budget.

* * *

Now that it's adopted, the \$7.48 million spending plan goes to the Board of Finance. It's due to be presented to that board Wednesday, March 11, at 7 p.m., at MES.

Marlborough Author Releases Second Book

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

It's not exactly a dream come true for Lynda Mullaly Hunt of Marlborough – because it's not a dream she ever had.

Three years ago, Mullaly Hunt, a former teacher at Gilead Hill School in Hebron, found herself a published author with her first book, *One for the Murphys*. Now she has released her second book, *Fish in a Tree*.

"I never thought it would be published," Mullaly Hunt said. "*One of the Murphys* was like a sliver. Imagine ignoring it. You have to get it out. I had to dig it out."

However, Mullaly Hunt wasn't always a writer; in fact, she never used to enjoy it.

"I was the kind of student that struggled in school with reading and writing," Mullaly Hunt said. But, she said, her sixth-grade teacher in West Hartford, Constantine Christy, helped her thrive – and Mullaly Hunt began to see things turn around.

Years later, as a third-grade teacher at Gilead, Mullaly Hunt had begun taking pieces of writing with errors in it and giving it to her students to critique.

"They were too young to look critically at their own writing or share with their peers," Mullaly Hunt said. "They would go at it. That was the first time I realized how much I liked to write."

In 1997, Mullaly Hunt left Gilead when her daughter was born and took up writing as her craft full-time.

"I saw a writing group posted and joined on a whim," Mullaly Hunt said. Mullaly Hunt soon found herself spending all of her time in a window seat at the Barnes and Noble in Glastonbury, writing a book she said she thought would only be seen by her.

As the director of a writer's retreat for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI), Mullaly Hunt usually brings in editors and agents for retreat attendees. One day, with only 25 pages of *One for the Murphys* written, Mullaly Hunt found herself with an editor interested.

"I went home and treated *Murphys* like a full-time job," Mullaly Hunt said. However, she remained skeptical that editor's initial interest would lead to anything. "I never expected the call to come," she said.

But eventually that call came, from Nancy Paulsen, who has an imprint at Penguin Young Readers Group. Mullaly Hunt said she went screaming through the house with her two chil-

dren.

"We all ran across the yard to where my husband was with no shoes on," Mullaly Hunt said. "We all jumped around happy."

Mullaly Hunt stressed she wasn't an overnight success.

"I worked on my craft for nine years," Mullaly Hunt said. "I don't have a pile of rejections because I simply didn't submit. It was good old-fashioned fear. Instead I looked for people to push me."

One for the Murphys was released in 2012. The book's main character, Carley Connors, is a foster child who lands into a loving home she didn't think existed. Mullaly Hunt said the book is set in Glastonbury, and is very loosely based around a friend from Glastonbury that she knows.

The book, Mullaly Hunt said, is more geared toward fifth to eighth graders with some of the topics it covers.

"The emotional arc is mine although it's a fiction story," Mullaly Hunt said. "I was very vulnerable in this book."

Another middle school-aged book, *Fish in a Tree*, is about a girl named Ally Nickerson who struggles to read and write and therefore gets in trouble at school. The book is geared toward any age from third-graders to early high school. While the book had only been out since Feb. 5, it's seen a lot of success, she said.

This time around, Mullaly Hunt set the book in West Hartford – and is a tribute to a certain former teacher of hers.

"It's a love letter to my sixth-grade teacher," Mullaly Hunt said. "School was not a place I felt successful. My fifth-grade teacher never asked me for an assignment. They had low expectations of me. My sixth-grade teacher looked at me with fresh ideas."

As a former teacher herself, Mullaly Hunt said teachers are often portrayed in books as those to stay away from.

"This [book] celebrates teachers," Mullaly Hunt said of *Fish*. "Teachers are silent heroes."

Mullaly Hunt said she was never dyslexic, but she fit many of the markers and included some of her real-life experiences in *Fish in a Tree*. One such example is a poetry award Ally receives from her teacher. This actually happened to Mullaly Hunt; indeed, Ally's poem is the exact same one Mullaly Hunt won the award for.

"In real life, I was grateful [Christy] was so nice" Mullaly Hunt said, "but [Ally's] a bit

angrier and sees it as a pity award."

However, school was only one facet of Mullaly Hunt's childhood.

"I had a very difficult childhood," Mullaly Hunt said. "I've gained a lot of perspective since then. I never take anything for granted. I have the ability to stop and remember how grateful I am."

Mullaly Hunt said, as a writer, she worried more about the "sophomore slump" with *Fish in a Tree* – as *One for the Murphys* was such a success.

"I spent a lot longer with *Fish*," Mullaly Hunt said of the time it took her to write the book.

What has surprised her the most about her books has been kids' reactions.

"I get thousands of letters for *Murphys*," Mullaly Hunt said. "It's not all kids in foster care, but kids that feel lonely or abandoned."

She said the kids in the letters tell her she has given them hope.

"I never shed a tear writing it, but I sit at my desk and cry over [the letters]," Mullaly Hunt said.

Mullaly Hunt said she is just beginning to get letters for *Fish*, and she said they seem to go along the theme of kids beginning to understand themselves and respect themselves for being unique.

"There's also a heavy theme of grit in *Fish*," Mullaly Hunt said. "You make mistakes, stand up and brush yourself off."

Part of being an author is traveling around speaking to audiences, as a way to promote your book. It's something Mullaly Hunt has mixed feelings about.

"Traveling and being away is hard," she said. "I don't accept every invitation anymore."

However, she said she loves speaking to middle schools.

"I give a very honest, surprising talk to middle-schoolers," Mullaly Hunt said. "I talk about my writing craft and my personal approach along with resilience and grit."

She said that in her talks, she links her personal stories to how she wrote the books. Some of the writing advice Mullaly Hunt gives middle-schoolers are to do what works for them – and allow themselves to write "terrible stuff."

As for her own writing process, Mullaly Hunt said that when she wakes up each day, "I never know what I'm writing that morning."

One of the things she does, she said, is "write chapters on notecards and move them around." For *Murphys*, Mullaly Hunt said she had more



Lynda Mullaly Hunt

than 50 3-by-5-inch notecards.

"I write the first two chapters, then the last chapter and fill them in," Mullaly Hunt said. "My outline-loving friends don't understand."

Part of the craft is knowing what to throw out and what to keep, she said.

"You have to sit down, write for hours, know it's terrible, shake it off and write again tomorrow," Mullaly Hunt said.

Since *Murphys*' release in 2012, Mullaly Hunt has found herself at numerous speaking engagements – including one which she never thought she would ever be at.

"I was recently the keynote speaker for Scholastic Book Fairs," Mullaly Hunt said. "I was not the kid who bought the books. It was surreal for me."

She ended her keynote speech by thanking the many teachers and industry workers for the work they do.

"I ended with a 'thank you' for doing your work and helping some of the kids who wouldn't get their hands on a book," Mullaly Hunt said.

Her work with Scholastic continues this month, as Mullaly Hunt is a judge for the company's "Kids Can be an Author" contest.

Mullaly Hunt said her third book is currently under contract and planned for release in the fall of 2016. She said she also has verbal agreements for books four and five.

Tierney Presents 3.54 Percent Budget Increase for Hebron

by Geeta Schrayter

On Wednesday night, Town Manager Andrew Tierney presented an initial budget to the boards of selectmen and finance in the amount of \$37,026,107 – an increase of \$1,265,700 or 3.54 percent over the current year’s budget.

Despite the presentation, though, Tierney said, “This year, more than ever, it’s important to keep an open mind that this is a fluid document.”

In his written budget message to the boards Tierney elaborated, saying, “The numbers will change as we go through the next couple of months. The proposed budget is based on information available today, with placeholders for unknown or estimated amounts.”

As it currently stands, the budget includes \$9,146,216 for general government spending; \$12,175,093 for the Hebron Board of Education budget, which was approved at the school board’s Jan. 22 meeting; and \$15,604,798 for the town’s portion of the overall \$28,129,675 RHAM Board of Education budget.

Regarding the latter, Board of Finance Chairman Mike Hazel mentioned the RHAM Board of Education had “just started the process” and had more work to do on the budget.

“RHAM’s still got to sharpen their pencils – they’ve got a job to do,” he said.

RHAM spending makes up the largest portion of the proposed town budget, at 42 percent. This is followed by the Hebron Board of Education at 33 percent, and the general government budget at 25 percent.

If the RHAM budget were approved as it currently stands, Hebron’s levy would rise \$601,284, or 4.76 percent from the current year. The levy is determined based on student enrollment, and for the 2015-16 year Hebron is responsible for 55.83 percent of the school budget, the most of the three RHAM towns.

The general government budget is listed as increasing \$473,521 or 6.92 percent. Other drivers include a 27th payroll, or “calendar creep,” in the amount of \$105,000. Tierney explained Thursday this is the result of being paid bi-weekly.

“We get paid bi-weekly and that doesn’t add up to the calendar days, so every 11th year we get another pay period,” he stated.

At the meeting, Board of Selectmen Chairman Jeff Watt expressed frustration that nothing

had been put in place ahead of time to prepare for the 27th payroll, but Tierney said Thursday this was a problem that had been “inherited” from past town officials, and he was looking to put something in place to handle things differently moving forward.

“I’m going into contract negotiations with three unions at the same time,” he stated. “I’m going to suggest paying twice a month on the 1st and the 15th as the Labor Department suggests.”

He added, “Moving forward, I’m going to put something in place.”

Tierney furthered there are also salary obligations and other contractual commitments such as insurance, oil and electricity rates driving the budget, and the cost for state trooper services could possibly increase.

“We’re being told this year the state is looking to bump fringe benefits [from 86 percent] up to 100 percent [responsible by the town] so we’re working with that with legislators to have our voices heard at the state level,” he stated at the meeting.

Budget drivers also include the cost of a RHAM school resource officer, an initiative that was approved by the RHAM Board of Education; \$15,000 to update the town’s zoning regulations; and the rest of the funds needed for an EMS responder – something that was approved last year; and approximately \$30,000 for a computer replacement plan.

“We don’t have a computer replacement plan right now,” Tierney stated. “It’s time to start that up.”

However, Tierney went on to share two of the above drivers actually had offsetting revenues. The cost of the RHAM resource officer – \$100,000 – would be reimbursed by RHAM. Tierney added Thursday it looks as though money for the resource officer is in both the Hebron budget and the RHAM budget; however “it’s in our budget but it’s offset” while “it’s also in RHAM’s budget but isn’t offset.”

Although confusing, he said the item needs to be shown in the town budget since the resource officer is a town employee.

Furthermore, the \$22,500 in second year funding for the EMS responder, which will bring that item to \$45,000 annually, will be fully offset by ambulance revenue.

Other initiatives included in the budget – that also have offsetting revenue – include a shared building inspector with Marlborough. Tierney said an additional \$14,000 is included in the budget for that position, which totals \$130,050. But, he added, \$52,000 will be reimbursed by Marlborough.

Another \$8,000 is also included in the budget which, along with \$105,660 from Parks and Recreation revenues, will be used for turf management at RHAM. However, this amount will also be fully reimbursed by the school.

Tierney shared that, if the reimbursements are taken into account, the town budget increase is actually \$268,521 or 2.78 percent over the current year. However, due to accounting processes, these items need to be listed as expenditures, with the reimbursements later listed as revenue. As such, the town budget increase is shown with the 6.92 percent increase.

“The biggest part is to get people to understand” that these items will be reimbursed, Tierney shared. Board of Finance Vice Chairman Malcolm Leichter agreed, saying, “The issue is going to be getting the public to understand that.”

Also included in the budget is a \$636,965 general government contribution for Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects over \$25,000; \$50,297 for capital expenditures that cost \$5-25,000; \$50,000 in annual contribution for Revaluation; and \$5,000 for capital non-recurring projects.

Recommended CIP Committee projects included in the presented budget are: for the Public Works Department, road resurfacing and road improvements for \$253,346 and a replacement dump truck with a plow for \$95,000; for the Board of Education, \$130,124 to replace the roof over the 1947 and 1988 wings of Hebron Elementary School; for the Fire Department, \$76,370 for the lease payment on a replacement fire truck purchased last May, \$33,719 for Company No. 1 parking lot repaving and work to the building’s foundation, and \$40,000 for a command vehicle.

In addition, \$52,000 is included for Parks and Recreation to replace a dump truck; there is also \$16,500 to install a generator at Douglas Library along with \$10,000 to begin replacing some of the carpet and flooring in the building;

\$15,600 is included to replace the Dial-a-Ride vehicle at the senior center; and \$25,132 is included to relocate the Emergency Operations Center to the Town Hall.

The above CIP projects total \$747,791 with the balance, after the general government contribution, to come from LOCIP funding in the amount of \$69,933; a balance from previous appropriations in the amount of \$28,893; and \$12,000 from the sale of the old ET-210 fire truck.

The funds for capital expenditures that cost \$5-25,000 would be used for a fuel management system at the Public Works Department costing \$14,500; a five-inch LDH hose for the Fire Department at \$6,500; radios for the Police Department at \$17,700; a ductless air conditioning unit for the server room in the Town Hall for \$6,500; and \$5,097 to repair some fencing at the Hebron dog pound.

If the budget were approved as it currently stands, it would result in a mill rate increase of 1.27, bringing the mill rate to 37.02. For a home assessed at \$250,000, this would mean a \$316 increase in taxes, to \$9,255.

However, taxpayers needn’t worry just yet. Tierney said Thursday, “we’re already finding money - we’re already lowering [the number].” For example, he said, “We’ve already found \$12,000 in CIP reserves so that’s going to change.”

He added the town also expected to receive better numbers for insurance.

Tierney again stressed near the close of the meeting “this is a fluid document.”

“Like I said,” he furthered, “as we find things we’ll bring them forward, and be as transparent as possible.”

He concluded, “We’re looking. We’re starting to cut back, dive in, dissect and we’ll continue to work on it.”

* * *

The next regular Board of Selectmen meeting and budget workshop was scheduled for Thursday night, after press time. Another budget workshop is scheduled for next Tuesday, March 10 at 7:30 p.m. in the Douglas Library.

For more information on the budget go to hebronct.com and click on “Budget Information.”

Due to Snow, Hebron Maple Fest Postponed

by Geeta Schrayter

The 25th annual Hebron Maple Festival has been put on ice for a week, thanks to the amount of snow in the center of town.

The festival was to take place March 14 and 15 – the second weekend in March, as is tradition – but Town Manager Andrew Tierney explained Wednesday there was simply too much snow that needed to be cleared in preparation for the event.

“Last week, I had notified the [Maple Festival] Committee members that we would assist with some of the snow removal to help people set up, and in doing that, we anticipated possibly a week of no snow and some melting,” Tierney stated. “But just the opposite has happened.”

Indeed, there were snowfall events in town Sunday night and Tuesday night, and more snow was expected again Thursday.

With the amount of snow on the sides of the

roads, on the sidewalks and where the various festival participants set up their booths and tents, Tierney furthered, “It’s just more than we could move at this point in time.”

In addition, the Public Works crew has work that needs to be done in other areas of town before it could get to the areas for the Maple Festival, “and to pull them off [of those jobs] before they’re done would be a matter of public safety” Tierney said.

Tierney said that, after informing the Maple Festival Committee of all the work left to do, the committee made the call to postpone the event.

Sugarhouse owner and committee member Ron Wenzel explained Public Works is “going to be doing sight lines on the side roads and catch basins because it’s going to be warming up, and they asked us if we could postpone for those reasons and I said, ‘Why not?’ If they’re going to be gracious enough to take care of the

clearing, we can work with them.”

“We’re not used to having this amount of snow in the center of town” Tierney said, but added that, with an extra week before the festival, “We’re hoping there will be some warming and melting between now and then.”

He added there had been talks of moving the festival’s non-sugar house activities to the parking lot at RHAM High School, “but that would take away from the meaning and ambience” of the event, which lets visitors stop at places as varied as the firehouse, the American Legion post and different businesses on Main Street.

Tierney said he knew changing the date might inconvenience some people and prevent others from attending, but in the end, the decision, while “painful,” was “on the side of safety.”

Minor Collision Between School Bus, Truck in Hebron

by Geeta Schrayter

There was a minor collision between a school bus and a box truck Wednesday morning, while the bus was en route to RHAM middle and high school.

According to Schools Superintendent Bob Siminski, the accident took place on Deepwood Drive in Amston around 7:05 a.m. Wednesday.

The two vehicles were traveling in opposite directions and “I think simply collided,” Siminski said.

“The mirror on the bus was what was damaged,” he stated, adding, “It might just be the

narrow roads because we’ve gotten so much snow; ice wasn’t a factor.”

The bus was carrying about 20 students at the time. No one was injured, and after about half an hour, the bus was able to continue on to the school.

Siminski said another bus was sent to start from the other end of the bus route to pick up students, so they wouldn’t be left waiting at their stops.

Siminski reiterated, “It sounds like it was a misjudging [of the distance between the two vehicles].”

Bacon Academy Fencing Stabs Top Honors at Conference

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

The average person might not think about picking up a sword and going fencing – but for the students of the varsity teams at Bacon Academy, fencing is their lives.

On Feb. 28, the team accomplished something they haven't seen in several years: an Eastern Connecticut Conference championship.

The girls' foil team stabbed the ECC Girls' Foil Championship with junior Alyson Litwin winning Individual Girls' Foil Championship. The girls' team included Litwin, Audrey Mecca, Rose Lillpopp and Talia Felker.

"It was kind of rough," Litwin said. "I had to knock out two teammates. I pulled off more than I expected."

The boys' epee team won their Boys' Epee Championship with senior Ian Senerth winning his second individual medal in his career taking third place. The boys' epee team included Senerth, Tyler Keller, Jacob Boislard and Chris Wilson. The boys' foil team took second in their ECC Boys' Foil Championship. The boys' foil team included Adam Boislard, Dan Maynard, Zak Kranc and Brandon Speight.

"I was fencing a friend I knew," Senerth said. "We just settled and had fun. It was the highlight of that tournament."

Senerth credits the team's success during the championship to hard work on the off season and helping each other out.

"Our bond and commitment to the weapon made us successful," Senerth said.

Senerth hopes to head to Sacred Heart University next fall where he wants to continue fencing.

Coach Mike Vinickas expressed pride in his team, and noted it's the team's first year as a varsity sport. "It's been a club for 13 to 14 years at Bacon Academy," he said.

This was also Vinickas' first year coaching the team, following the retirement of longtime coach David Comas. A graduate of Bacon

Academy, Vinickas said he was a "natural successor" to Comas since he fenced with Comas, and went on to fence at Eastern Connecticut State University as well.

"I was very nervous at the beginning of the year," Vinickas said. "I had experience assisting the team before, but hadn't been head coach."

Vinickas explained a lot of the team's success comes from the students' dedication to also taking private lessons at ICON in Wallingford both during the season and during the off season.

"I practice four times a week including private lessons," Litwin said. "I love fencing; it's a stress reliever."

Litwin said when she's practicing by herself, she's especially hard.

"During tournament, I let loose and get very competitive," Litwin said.

The sport is divided into two categories, foil and epee. Foil, Vinickas explained, is a lighter blade and the torso is the only target. Foil also has right of way rules as to how points are scored. Epee is a thicker, heavier blade and the entire body is the target with no real right of way rules.

"During my sophomore year, a former epeeist came," Senerth said. "I liked it a lot more than foil. My private coach is an epee coach. I find it more enjoyable and a lot more free."

Over the years, the club has grown in popularity at Bacon, Vinickas said.

"The sport has been on the rise," Vinickas said. "We went from four students to now 16."

And while the team participated as a club sport in the ECC tournament in the past, winning this year, its first as a varsity team, was "big," Vinickas said.

"We've only won one ECC championship several years back," Vinickas said. "Now we won two this time. It was really amazing."



Adam Boislard (left) pairs off with Alyson Litwin during a fencing team practice on Wednesday, in the hallway outside the Bacon gym.

Vinickas said the girls' team really surprised him.

"They were at the bottom of ECC last year," Vinickas said. "Now they're on the top."

Vinickas was especially surprised by freshman Talia Felker, who has only been fencing for three months. He credits that, however, to the team captains.

"The captains have every quality of leadership I can ask for," Vinickas said. "The captains do a lot of the coaching."

That coaching is evident during their prac-

tices. While Vinickas will work with two students, the others will pair off and work on each other.

Team captains include Litwin, Senerth and Adam Boislard.

Vinickas said things are looking good for next year as all the girls are returning, but the team will be doing some rebuilding in boys' epee and foil.

The team will be off to the Hopkins School in New Haven on March 7, for the state individual tournament.

Soby Presents \$53.86 Million Budget in Colchester

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

On Wednesday, First Selectman Stan Soby presented the town's proposed budget to the Board of Finance – a \$53,858,812 spending package that, if approved, would be a 1.63 percent increase over the current year's budget.

If approved, the budget would increase the mill rate by 0.47 mills, from 30.57 to 31.04.

The budget includes spending for general government, public safety, public works, community services, debt service, transportation and capital and education.

The education portion is by far the biggest part; the budget, without school spending, would total \$13,863,442 – a \$529,360 increase from the non-education portion of the current year's budget.

Some of the highlights of the general government section of the proposed budget include funding for legal for charter revision, three union contracts that are in negotiation, reduction of the fire marshal position to 20 hours a week and an increase in professional services. It also includes certification for the assistant town clerk, increased hours for one of the Information Technology workers from 23 hours a week to 29 hours a week and Microsoft licensing fees. A reduction in the proposed budget was a decrease in expected claims for health insurance; however, there was an increase in claims for workers compensation.

The general government line totaled

\$3,383,684 in the proposed budget – a decrease of \$58,341 from the 2014-15 approved budget.

The public safety line calls for an increase in resident state trooper costs, as Gov. Dannel Malloy has proposed towns fully fund their own resident troopers. This would mean a \$60,000 increase to the town. For the police, there is also an increase in overtime to support operations, an increase in hours for the administrative staff from 35 hours a week to 40 hours a week and an increase in police equipment to replace the portable radios.

For the fire department in the public safety line, there is an increase in per diem hours to replace part-time firefighter/EMS positions that were eliminated in 2015. These per diem hours would cover Saturday and Sunday shifts. There is also an increase in safety equipment for on-going replacement of turnout gear, funds for a consultant for the strategic plan and an increased cost for KX dispatch services.

The public safety line totaled \$2,693,377 in the proposed budget, a \$200,388 increase over last year.

In the public works line, there are increased funds for road improvements, especially after this tough winter, Soby said, and increased funds for snow removal. The public works line totaled \$3,387,030, a \$152,429 increase over last year.

In the community and human services line,

there is an increase in hours for the social services coordinator for youth and social services from 22 hours a week to 28 hours a week, the reinstatement of a youth center supervisor, increase of \$5,000 of funding toward the Collaborative for Colchester's Children (C3), continued funding for a substance abuse counselor, an increased cost for the Chatham Health District and reinstating two hours per Saturday during the school year for Cragin Library. The proposed budget also includes funding for National Association of Parks and Recreation and ACA Revenue and Leadership Training, a software to better track revenues, for the Parks and Recreation department, and the MySeniorCenter data tracking system for the senior center.

The community and human services line totaled \$1,539,620 in the proposed budget, a \$69,672 increase.

Debt service decreased by \$71,400 to total \$1,901,466 in the proposed budget.

The capital line included funds for the vehicle reserve funded according to the vehicle replacement plan, increased funds in the buildings and grounds reserve, and flat funding the equipment reserve, open space and revaluation funds.

As far as capital improvements are concerned, Soby said there are funds to repave the town hall parking lot and driveway, connect to the public sewer maintenance building, mini-

mal repair on the town garage parking lot, a new police cruiser and SCBA units/masks/bottles for the fire department. The capital improvements also include money for information technology, including a virtual network, hardware replacement and GIS improvements.

The equipment reserve, which is flat-funded, would cover a laptop to support the new election system, a fireproof filing cabinet for voter registration records, the second phase of the fire department hose replacement catch-up, fire department AED replacements, a rescue strut system for the fire department and a wood chipper for the grounds maintenance.

The capital line totals \$958,265 in the proposed budget, a \$236,612 increase over last year.

Soby stressed that although Malloy has said the proposed state budget is flat-funded, there are many pockets where money would be taken out, and some affect the town such as funds for the library and C3.

"The governor's numbers are a starting point," Soby said. "Sometimes it's a little better after legislation. Considering the deficit, we are sticking with these numbers, and we typically don't expect them to get worse."

The next budget meeting will be a public forum Monday, March 9, at 7 p.m., at Town Hall.

Portland Selectmen to Phase in New Water and Sewer Rates

by John Tyczkowski

Selectmen voted along party lines Wednesday to phase in proposed water and sewer rate changes over a longer period of time, instead of raising rates immediately this April.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield and fellow Democrats Kathy Richards, Fred Knous and Howard Rosenbaum voted in favor of the phasing in, while Republicans Carl Chudzik and Ryan Curley were opposed. Selectman Brian Flood, a Democrat, was absent from the meeting.

Currently, town water and sewer operations combined run a deficit of over \$600,000. On average, the town adds \$3,000 to that deficit every week, though actual weekly amounts may be lower, Bransfield said.

Selectmen originally proposed the flat fee rate would increase from \$15 to \$35 per quarter, per customer. From feedback at a previous public hearing, the board reduced that to \$30.

The fee for connecting to the town's sewer system would double from \$25 to \$50 as well.

Regarding basic usage rates, the water usage rate would increase 19 percent from \$3.88 per hundred cubic feet of water to \$4.62, and the sewer usage rate would increase 22.5 percent from \$4.96 per hundred cubic feet to \$6.08.

The \$5 reduction would result in a projected loss of \$50,000 for water and sewer operations.

However, selectmen agreed to be more aggressive in enforcing collections on delinquent accounts to provide for a short-term source of revenue to make up for that.

At the same time, selectmen discovered that, due to a lack of a specific ordinance on the books, they were unable to levy fines or shut off water to customers who violated water and sewer use regulations.

They reserved the 'violations' section of the water and sewer changes proposal in anticipation of creating a relevant ordinance later on, Bransfield said.

Knous presented a schedule to phase in the water and sewer rate increases over the next calendar year.

"This would allow people to do a little planning, and to prepare," he said. "It's a way to try

to mitigate the impact of this increase. I don't want anyone to face 'sticker shock.'"

Knous specifically mentioned how not phasing in the increase would "immediately and negatively" affect renters, as well as low-income households and single persons on fixed incomes.

"They're going to get socked with this," he said.

Knous also mentioned how increasing the rates all at once could actually cause usage to go down, backfiring on the town.

"It's a general rule; when you raise the usage rates on something, the use tends to go down," he said. "People will tend to conserve more; maybe they'd go out of town to wash their car, for example."

Under Knous' plan, water rates would be raised to \$4.25 in July, followed by the final increase to \$4.62 next April. Sewer rates would be raised to \$5.52 in January 2016, and the final increase to \$6.08 would follow in April 2016.

"All other increases would take place on July 1st of this year," he said.

Chudzik said he was in favor of implementing all rate increases at once.

"I know you're trying to mitigate the hurt, but if you do that, we're all just going to hurt bigger down the road," he said. "We have an infection here; clear the infection up! If you let it fester, it's going to be bigger the next time we look at it."

"To do this may look like it's helping people, but it's not really helping," he added. "It's hurting people."

However, Knous defended his proposal.

"We're trying to give people who are on the edge of a bit of a break," Knous said. "We're here to balance the budget, yes, but we're also here to serve the people, to mitigate circumstances that cause a hardship."

"I don't think there's that much hurt to the town if we don't 100 percent address the deficit at once," he said.

Curley pointed out that the town charter states that the Board of Selectmen has a respon-

sibility to balance the town budget each year.

"We have that responsibility and we can't deliberately vote against it," he said. "It's tough that we have to be in this situation, but we should've been raising rates over time and should've been dealing with this before now."

Specifically, Curley said the phase-in plan would not fix the deficit, whereas an immediate rate increase would.

"We need to stop the bleeding immediately, and spreading out the increases won't do that," he said. "In fact, it'll make the deficit a lot worse."

Knous passed a handwritten copy of the phase-in proposal to Curley at the meeting. Curley objected to not having had a copy of the phase-in proposal to look over beforehand, however, and to the timing of the vote.

"Without the full board's knowledge, you've kind of changed the rules here, and circumvented what we discussed," he said. "At the last meeting, we voted to put this rate increase proposal as is."

Knous said he "accepted responsibility" for not providing copies of his phasing proposal before the meeting and vote.

"I should've gotten those to you before the meeting, I apologize," he said.

Curley also said he would've liked to have heard Flood's opinion on the phase-in proposal as well.

At the previous Board of Selectmen meeting discussion, Flood had voiced opposition to Knous' first draft of the phase-in plan, which would have occurred over two years.

Bransfield said that rates will still increase to their required levels over time.

"Simply, a phase-in over one year will give a little bit of extra time to our customers to account for the impact of a large increase," she said. "It is a necessary increase for our continued operations."

After the vote during public comment, Water and Sewer Commission Chairman Dick Cote told the selectmen he was "very disappointed" in their decision.

"You're asking the people with wells and

septic systems to subsidize the shortfall in the water department," he said. "This has happened for years. And those people out there on wells and septic systems are just as poor as those people on sewer and water systems."

"You could've done a total correction here tonight, and you chose not to do it, I'm just very disappointed," he said.

Resident Shirley Olson said, rate phase-in aside, the selectmen needed to make sure they were more aggressive in collecting on delinquent accounts.

"Business doesn't run this way; if you have outstanding bills, you go after them, it's simple. Kathy, you should know that, as a businessperson," she said to the board. "Go after them, aggressively."

Bransfield answered by saying the town is planning to have a tax sale this spring to collect on those accounts, and will have a follow up tax sale based upon how this spring's collections turn out.

However, Olson said the town needed to do more.

"You have a plan, yes, but it's not aggressive enough, that's all I have to say," she said.

Curley said he felt "disrespected" by not having access to a copy of Knous' proposed phase-in guidelines before the meeting.

"Overall, I think at least we're moving forward with this," he said. "It was just a shock to me because I hadn't heard the proposal before tonight. It kind of came off to me as a political maneuver."

Mostly, Curley said he wished he and the rest of the board had had more time to "talk over" the proposed phase-in plan.

"You can't be expected to vote on something if you've never seen it before," he said. "I really do feel we have a responsibility to balance the budget, and it is unfortunate we have to make tough decisions like this."

A copy of the rate changes is available at www.portlandct.org/Portals/12/PDF/notice/2015/NoticeBOS03-04-15PH.pdf.

Business, Businessman of Year Honored in Portland

by John Tyczkowski

About two dozen people showed up to Portland Library Wednesday for the Portland Economic Development Commission's annual business of the year award ceremony.

"Our goal is to recognize the business and the people that make Portland a great place to live and to work," EDC consultant Mary Dickerson said. "This year, I think the two that were chosen are really exemplary of what businesses and businesspeople have to offer for Portland."

This year, Portland Golf Course on Bartlett Street secured that title for 2014, which also marked the golf course's 40th year of operation.

Joe Kelly opened the course in 1974 after two years of working with Geoffrey Cornish, a world-renowned and award-winning architect who had designed courses throughout the U.S., Canada and the U.K.

"PGC was designed to utilize the rolling hills of the Connecticut River Valley, with tree-lined fairways, various elevation changes and doglegs," Dickerson said. "The course features a pro shop, a restaurant with fantastic views and a special event hall."

Dickerson said that she herself had learned to play golf at PGC.

Joe's sons, John and JT Kelly, began managing the course in 1994, and the trio also worked to create the Portland Golf West and Quarry Ridge golf courses in town.

Dickerson then read off a long list of ways the business has helped and improved the town of Portland.

"PGC was the basis for the development of a whole neighborhood around the golf courses. These homes have held their value and the neighborhood continues to be one of the most sought-after in Portland," she said.

The benefits also extended to the high school, Dickerson said.

Because of PGC, two generations of PHS students have had the opportunity to play for the school's golf team," she said. "This team has generated a number of phenomenal players who have won county, state and regional titles, been awarded college scholarships, found careers in the golf industry or just found a lifelong passion for the game."

In addition, Dickerson also highlighted the countless golf tournaments the course has hosted that "raised millions of dollars for local regional charities and programs."

Though there was a list of nearly 20 entities PGC aided, a sampling of those organizations included the Hal Kaplan Middlesex Mentor Program, the Hospice Golf Tournament for Middlesex Hospital, the Portland Food Bank and the Interfaith Golf Open.

After applause and being called up with JT to receive a plaque from Dickerson from the EDC and the town, John took a moment to speak to the audience.

"On behalf of JT and I, I'd like to thank Mary for all her hard work, and the Economic Development Commission for their work, [First Selectwoman] Susan Bransfield for supporting us, and [state Rep.] Christie Carpino's support as well," he said. "This is a great, great honor."

Carpino was on hand to present a proclamation from the General Assembly signed by her and State Sen. Art Linares.

"This is the best part of my job, recognizing businesses that really make 'home' what 'home is meant to be," she said. "I wish you all the best."

"And I have clubs, I have shoes, but I have perhaps a lack of skill, so maybe I'll come down this summer some time," Carpino laughed.

Longtime resident Peter LaMalfa was named businessman of the year for 2014, in the EDC's first time giving that award.

"This was really done because there are a number of people in this town who, besides what they do for business, very quietly work to make this town a place other businesses want to come to," Dickerson said. "They mentor other businesses, they make it a great place to live [and] they work with a diverse group of programs."

Dickerson said her first job was at Glastonbury Bank & Trust on Main Street, and she saw LaMalfa every day since he worked upstairs, with his real estate business.

"I didn't know I would come back full circle 30 years later to work with him on the Economic Development Commission," she said.

LaMalfa began working in Portland as a barber at the age of 16 for his uncle, Charlie Napoli, on Main Street. He served in the military for two years and attended school to become a teacher, but soon returned to the barbershop.

After his uncle died, LaMalfa took over the shop in 1956 and renamed it "Pete's," Dickerson said.

LaMalfa worked there with his brother Tony for years until LaMalfa went into the real estate business, opening LaMalfa Agency Realtors, now a part of William Raveis Realty, also on Main.

"Pete has helped many Portland and area residents launch their careers in real estate as both an employer and mentor. He has exemplified fair and honest business practices," Dickerson said. "He and his staff have worked with so many families over the years to help them find the perfect house here in Portland, or to help families sell their homes when the time came."

In addition to his work, she said, LaMalfa has been involved in a wide range of charitable organizations. She said he is the longest-serving active member of the Exchange Club in town, for 52 years, was a member of the group that helped start the Hospice Golf Tournament

for Middlesex Hospital, and served for nearly a decade on the Economic Development Commission, amid many other groups.

"There really is no way to place a value on Pete's contribution to the Economic Development Commission here in Portland. He was always, first and foremost, an advocate for small business, and for the Town of Portland," Dickerson said. "He was always focused on the issues in a non-partisan and fair-minded way."

"After more than 60 years serving Portland as a businessman, advocate, volunteer and commission member, I am proud to present Peter LaMalfa with the 2014 Businessman of the Year Award," she said.

Dickerson called LaMalfa forward to receive a plaque and applause.

"Thank you very much. I want to thank everyone on the commission, and everyone else in the Town of Portland for 54 years of making this a terrific place to raise a family," LaMalfa said, then added, succinctly, "I'm pretty short on giving speeches; thank you very much."

Carpino presented LaMalfa with a General Assembly proclamation, and also mentioned how Portland had recently been named one of the top 10 places to live in the state for young families by NerdWallet, a personal finance website.

"It's people like you, Pete, who enable us to be proud of that," she said. "Thank you for all you have done over the years."

Dickerson took one final moment to thank the Kellys and LaMalfa.

"If it wasn't for people like this and businesses like this, Portland wouldn't be the kind of place where we'd want to live and where we'd want to stay," she said. "And that's why generations of us live here, because through their efforts, Portland is such a great place to be."

Obituaries

Colchester

Joann Riddell

Joann (Boson) Riddell, 82, of Colchester, widow of the late Robert J. Riddell, passed away unexpectedly Thursday, Feb. 26, at Middlesex Hospital. Born Feb. 12, 1933, in Norwich, she was the only child of the late George Boson and Eunice (Seyms) Boson Flowers.

Joann was a lifelong resident of Colchester. At the age of 11, she survived the Hartford Circus Fire in July of 1944. In 1950, she graduated from Bacon Academy in Colchester as salutatorian and went on to earn her Master of Arts degree in education from the former Willimantic State Teachers College (now ECSU).

On April 19, 1953, she and Robert were married and shared 22 years of marriage before he predeceased her on June 14, 1985.

Initially starting in Colchester, her 37-year career was spent teaching third grade at the East Haddam Elementary School. During the summers, she had served as director of the Colchester Day Camp for many years, even into her retirement – and still return to substitute teach during the subsequent school years.

Mrs. Riddell was a longtime member of the Colchester Federated Church, where she was Deacon Emeritus, Past President of the Women's Fellowship and lifetime member of the choir for nearly 50 years.

Joann was also past president, member of the Board of Governors and a museum docent of the Colchester Historical Society. Since the mid-1990s, she had served as coordinator of the CHS Annual Festival on the Green/Fife & Drum Muster.

A 7th Degree Granger, she was a 44-year member and Past Master (for four terms) of Colchester Grange No. 78, having held every office (with the exception of chaplain) at least once; as well as a member of the 5th Degree New London County Pomona No. 6; 6th Degree Connecticut State Grange and the 7th Degree Priests of Demeter National Grange.

Joann was also past (and founding) member of the Colchester-Hayward VFC Auxiliary, as well as the widow of a life member of the company.

When her children were young, the family shared many camping trips throughout New England and Canada, and Joann always enjoyed her trips to the Vermont cottage. In what spare time she had left, she enjoyed painting and needlework, as well as making weekly trips to Dodd Stadium in Norwich to take in a baseball game with her son, Gary.

She leaves three sons, James (and wife Sharon) of Lebanon, Gary of Colchester and Robert (and fiancée, Debra Kehoe) of East Granby; three grandchildren, Bryan of Lewiston, Maine, Rebecca of Tampa, Fla., and Regina of So. Windham; and numerous extended family and friends.

In addition to her husband and parents, she was predeceased by her stepfather, Walter Flowers.

The family received guests Monday, March 2, at the Colchester Federated Church, 60 Main St., Colchester, immediately followed by a funeral service.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to the Church (60 Main St., Colchester, CT 06415) or to the Colchester Historical Society (P.O. Box 13, Colchester, CT 06415).

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

Portland

James M. Halstead

James "Doodley" M. Halstead, 61, of Portland, passed away Wednesday, Feb. 25, at Silver Springs Care Center in Meriden. He is the son of Margaret (Haas) Halstead of Portland and the late Louis Halstead.

Born on March 24, 1953, in Middletown, he lived in Portland for most of his life. He was a constable for the State of New Hampshire and worked as a machinist at Whitmore Behm Tool Co., the charter fishing boat "The Sunbeam," and lastly as a mechanic at Portland Boat Works. He was a U.S. Army veteran having served in Korea during the Vietnam War era. He was a member of the National Rifle Association, he enjoyed fishing and hunting and long drives to the state forest to meet up with his friends.

Besides his mother, he leaves his sisters, Cathy Graham and her husband, John of Middletown, and Carol Revicki and her husband, Peter of Portland, nephews, Jesse Revicki of East Windsor, and Travis and Cody Revicki both of Portland.

Funeral services and military burial will be private and at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society Connecticut Chapter, 659 Tower Ave., First Floor, Hartford, CT 06112.

To send an online expression of sympathy, visit portlandmemorialfh.net.

Colchester

Darryl Arthur Lewis

Darryl Arthur Lewis, 48, of Colchester, formerly of Moodus, beloved companion and best friend of Susanne Allen, passed away unexpectedly Thursday, Feb. 26. Born July 26, 1966, in Willimantic, he was a son of the late David Alan Lewis Sr. and Dorothy (Fedus) Lewis.



Darryl was a proud veteran, having served in the US Navy during Desert Storm. He later went on the work in all phases of construction, a Jack of all trades. Darryl enjoyed hunting, fishing, working on cars and telling stories about life and family. He had an amazing sense of humor and a heart of gold. Most importantly, he will be remembered for the love he gave so generously to his soulmate Sue and the kids.

In addition to Sue, he leaves a son, Conner Lewis; two brothers, David Jr. of Waterford, Douglas and his partner Jennifer of Colchester; a sister, Christina of Colchester; his stepmother, Sandra Lockhart Lewis of Colchester; stepdaughters Nicole and husband Kevin Hinton, Chelsea and husband Derek, his pride and joy Kellie Allen; grandchildren Makenzie, Tiffani, Jonathan, Haylee and Jordan; nieces and nephews, Christian and Allie and numerous extended family members and special friends.

In addition to his parents, he was predeceased by a grandson, Jayden A. Hinton.

Calling hours were Thursday, March 5, at Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A memorial service followed immediately at the funeral home. Burial will be private.

Donations in his memory may be made to the Wounded Warrior Project, woundedwarriorproject.org.

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

East Hampton

Grace Wells

Grace (Gavin) Wells, 92, of East Hampton, widow of the late Robert L. Wells, died Friday, Feb. 27, at Middlesex Hospital. Born Nov. 19, 1922, in Providence, R.I., she was the daughter of the late Joseph D. and Gertrude (Marrin) Gavin.

Grace had lived in East Hampton for more than 50 years. She was a communicant of St. Patrick Church, and was active in the East Hampton Senior Center. Grace had retired from the East Hampton Ambulance Association and had been a volunteer at Middlesex Hospital for many years. Grace and her husband loved to travel and were past members of the Winnebago Travel Club.

She is survived by her son, Henry J. Iasiello of California; two daughters, Elizabeth Roden and her husband Nathan of Middlefield, Barbara Iasiello Brothers of Middlefield; five grandchildren, granddaughter Victoria Brothers and her partner Michael Bingris and his children Alex, Abby and Andrew, with whom Grace had lived, Yanna Iasiello, Kelson Iasiello, Gabriel Brown and Meagan McGrath.

She was predeceased by two sons, Paul and Rick Iasiello, and a daughter, Susan Iasiello.

Friends called at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, Wednesday, March 4. A funeral liturgy was celebrated Thursday, March 5, in St. Patrick Church. Burial will be private in St. Patrick Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to East Hampton Food Bank, 22 East High St. East Hampton, CT 06424 or to the East Hampton Ambulance Assoc., P.O. Box 144, East Hampton, CT 06424.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

East Hampton

Beverly Carlson

Beverly (Warner) Carlson, 82, of East Hampton, died peacefully Friday, Feb. 27. She was born Aug. 30, 1932, to the late Joseph and Alma (Comstock) Warner in Hadlyme. She was married for 42 years to her late husband, Paul C. Carlson.

Beverly is survived by her son, David, and his wife, Laura (Benedict) Carlson; three adoring grandchildren, Alexander, Madeline and Ainsley Carlson; her sister, Sharon (Warner) and her husband, Philip Visintainer; and many nieces and nephews who knew her as Aunt Bev or Aunt Lowly.

She was predeceased by her son Jeffrey, sister Ramona Warner, and brother Richard Warner.

Beverly had a keen interest in genealogy and preserving family history. Her interest in nature included birding and tending her flower and vegetable gardens. She enjoyed cooking and was known for her potato salad at picnics and her egg nog at Christmas. Over 30 years, she worked as a nurse at Cobalt Lodge, Cromwell Crest, Rest Haven and Chestelm. In her final years, she was cared for by the wonderful staff at Chestelm, which was her first employer after graduating from nursing school.

She was a member of the Haddam Neck Covenant Church, 17 Haddam Neck Rd., East Hampton, CT, 06424, where a memorial service will be held Saturday, March 7, at 2 p.m. A private interment will be held later in the spring.

Those wishing to make a memorial donation in Beverly's name may do so to her church.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

East Hampton

Kim Marie Crowley

Kim Marie Crowley, 44, of East Hampton, passed away tragically Saturday, Feb. 28, in a house fire in Middletown.



She is survived by her husband, Christopher Crowley Sr. of East Hampton; her two sons, Kevin Malone of Beacon Falls and Christopher Crowley Jr. of East Hampton; her parents, Leonard and Gretchen (Vicky) Spickle of Southbury; her two brothers, Robert Spickle and his wife Mary of Beacon Falls and Leonard Spickle and his wife Dawn of Lake Elsinore, Calif.; her grandson, Chris Jarell Malone of Pennsylvania; and a niece and two nephews.

Kim was a longtime employee of Webster Bank, where she held a position as AVP of banking center operations and touched the lives and hearts of many co-workers.

Kim enjoyed bike riding, shopping, baking and was a huge musical rock fan. She was a loving wife, mother, daughter and beloved friend to many. Her warm-hearted and spirited personality will truly be missed by many.

A memorial service was held at Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, Thursday, March 5. Friends called at the funeral home Thursday, before the service.

In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to the Christopher J. Crowley Jr Memorial fund at any Webster Bank location.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

Kevin Rush

Kevin Rush, 49, of Colchester, passed away unexpectedly Sunday, March 1. Born in Peekskill, N.Y., he was a son of John Rush of The Villages, Fla., and the late Mary (Ordenach) Suroviak.

Kevin worked in auto body repair shops throughout his career. Most recently, he worked for Brustolon Buick GMC in Mystic. Kevin was a loving and devoted father to his son, Jason. His favorite pastime was taking Jason to see the monster trucks.

He will be sadly missed but always remembered by his son, Jason; his father, John; three brothers, John and wife, Roxann, Michael (with whom he made his home) and Charlie Lineberry, all of Colchester; three sisters, Joyce and husband, Paul Setterstrom of Colchester, Mary Lineberry of Oakdale and Raleigh Lineberry of Norwich; and numerous extended family and friends.

The memorial liturgy will be celebrated at 11 a.m. today, March 6, directly at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave. Burial will be private. There are no calling hours.

Donations in his memory may be made to the American Diabetes Association, 2080 Silas Deane Highway, 2nd floor, Rocky Hill, CT 06067.

Care of arrangements has been entrusted to the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester.

For more information, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Hebron

Anna Rose Jones

Anna Rose Jones, 84, of Hebron, widow of the late Sidney Jones, died Tuesday, March 3, at Hartford Hospital. Born Jan. 9, 1931, in East Haddam, she was the daughter of the late Nicholas and Marion (Woodward) Passarella.

Anna graduated from Nathan Hale Ray High School and was retired from Brownell & Company in Moodus. She had resided in East Haddam before moving to Hebron 28 years ago. Anna loved playing cards with everyone.

She is survived by her loving daughter, Marie Jones of Hebron; sisters-in-law Ruth Flemke of East Hampton, Margaret Blake of Moodus; and brothers-in-law Bob Jones of Colchester, Ben and Alice Jones of East Hampton, Kenneth and Lucille Jones of Portland, Don Emerson of East Hampton; her special cousin, Ted and Betty Gill of South Windsor; her friend of over 65 years, Leona Pizzitola; numerous nieces and nephews and special nieces, Beth Pulford, Judy Flemke, Marikay O'Donnell, and special great-nephew, Brandon Pulford.

She was predeceased by her sister, Hazel Priest.

Funeral services will be held at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, Saturday, March 7, at 11 a.m. Friends may call Saturday from 10-11 a.m. Burial will be in the family plot in the spring in New Hebron Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Hebron Volunteer Ambulance Association, P.O. Box 911, Hebron, CT 06248.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Marlborough

Marie A. LeConche

Marie A. LeConche, 95, beloved wife of 60 years of the late John A. LeConche, passed away Sunday, March 1, at the Marlborough Health Care Center. She was born at home in Hartford June 2, 1919, not far from the location of the Charter Oak Tree.

Daughter of the late Walter and Frieda Kruger, she graduated from the historic Hartford High School where she was active in scouting and athletics. She lived in Hartford for most of her life, then Rocky Hill for 31 years.

Marie will be remembered for her multifaceted artistic abilities. Her love of all things floral led her into the business of wedding bouquet design, dried flower arranging and holiday decorating, including her church sanctuary. In her later years, one could find her knitting tiny hats for the premature newborns at area hospitals. From visiting residents in nursing homes to canning pickles and pears, Marie had boundless energy and a giving heart. Her numerous delectable recipes will remain as one of her legacies for all who were nourished in her cozy home.

Marie loved all gardens, the change of seasons, painting in oil and photography, but most of all she treasured her four children and five grandchildren.

She is survived by two daughters and two sons, Deborah J. and spouse Robert P. Campbell of Marlborough, Andrea M. and spouse Harold C. Elston Jr. of South Glastonbury, John G. LeConche and significant other Cathy Grenier of Manchester, and Glen A. LeConche and spouse Victoria Anderson of West Hartford. Marie was a cherished grandmother to Christopher R. Campbell and his wife Laura Stock of Plantsville, Jonathan T. Campbell and his wife Amanda of Glastonbury, Jeffery W. Elston of Manchester, and Nicholas A. and Isabelle A. LeConche of West Hartford. Marie is survived by her sister Emily Jefferson of Pearcy, Ark., and many cherished nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by two brothers, Walter and William Kruger as well as a sister, Gretchen Marley.

There were calling hours today, March 6, from 8:30-9:30 a.m., at the Dillon-Baxter Funeral Home, 1276 Berlin Tpke., Wethersfield, followed by a service officiated by the Reverend Dr. Jay M. Terbush. Burial will be private for the immediate family.

Those wishing to remember Marie with a memorial gift are invited to perform an act of kindness in her memory or donate to a charity of their choice.

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

Portland

Ona Newkirk Langer

Ona Newkirk Langer, 87, passed away peacefully at the Portland Care and Rehabilitation Center Thursday, Feb. 26. Born in 1928 in Middletown, she was the daughter of the late Clarence and Alice (Harris) Newkirk.

She was the wife of the late William M. Langer Jr., and the sister of Lois Newkirk Mattern of Bourne, Mass., and Jerry Newkirk of Lafayette, Colo., both deceased.

Ona and Bill had two children, Chris and Rhonda. The family settled on Willow Brook Road in Cromwell in 1958. The couple later moved to Higganum in 1984 to enjoy their retirement years and also spent many summers at their beach cottage on Cedar Island in Clinton.

Ona graduated from Middletown High School and acted as secretary for the Class of 1946 as well as class reunion secretary. She began her career as a Legal Secretary for Judge Aaron Palmer of Middletown. She also worked nights for Pratt & Whitney Aircraft while Bill was in the Army. Ona later worked for 25 years as a secretary at the psychology department at Wesleyan University until her retirement. She also worked for many years in secretarial support for the National Science Foundation's annual grant merit review program in Washington, D.C.

Ona enjoyed traveling with friends, sewing, needlework, and was an avid flower gardener and animal lover. When her children were young, she was a member of the First Baptist Church of Middletown and worked as a church volunteer, creating and implementing craft sessions in the children's department.

Ona is survived by her son, Chris Robert Langer and his wife, Carolyn Haggerty Langer of Sparta, Tenn., along with her two grandsons, Dennis Langer of Eagle Rock, Calif., and Corey Langer of Nashville, Tenn.; and her daughter, Rhonda Langer Knauf and her husband, John E. Knauf Jr., of South Glastonbury.

The family would like to thank the staff at Portland Care and Rehabilitation for the wonderful care that Ona has received over the past three years.

Funeral arrangements will be private.

Donations in Ona's memory may be made to Middlesex Hospital, 28 Crescent Street, Middletown, CT 06457.

Notes of condolence may be sent to Rhonda Knauf, 651 Main St., South Glastonbury, CT 06073, or share your memories and condolences online at doolittlefuneralservice.com.

Portland

John Henry Marks

John Henry Marks, 76, of Wallingford, died peacefully early Thursday, Feb. 26, at Masonicare Hospice in Wallingford, after battling lung cancer.

John was born in 1937 in Portland to Russell Marks and the late Hazel (Sherman) Marks. He graduated from Southington High School and served in the U.S. Air Force. He was married to Patricia A. (Norke) Marks for the past 52 years. John was employed as a carpet installer for many years and worked over 20 years as a quality control inspector at Raymond Engineering (Kaman Aerospace).

John enjoyed bowling, fishing, and hunting. He coached junior bowlers at Wallingford's T-Bowl Lanes and was a certified hunting safety instructor at Mattabassett Rifle and Pistol Club in Berlin.

In addition to his wife Patricia, John is survived by son David (Karen Moro) Marks, granddaughters Emily and Lauren, and great-grandson Caius. He also leaves son Raymond (Jennifer Longueville) Marks and grandchildren Kaylin and Tyler. Both families reside in San Mateo, Calif. John was brother to Carol (Fran) Hochla of Hastings, Fla., Ronald (Joan) Marks of Tolland, Rose (Greg) Cournoyer of Palm Bay, Fla., and has several nieces and nephews.

A private memorial service will be held at the convenience of the family.

Donations in his memory may be made to the Sisters Project, P.O. Box 1643, Wallingford, CT 06492. The family is grateful to this organization for the comforts they provide to family members and patients in hospice care.

Hebron Police News

2/27: State Police said James Fisher, 40, of 14 Meadow Brook and Nicole Smith, 32, of the same address, were each arrested and charged with third-degree assault and disorderly conduct.

Marlborough Police News

2/25: State Police said Gerard Grate, 53, of 100 Mueller Rd., Hamden, was arrested and charged with failure to appear.

2/26: State Police said Carleton Forbes, 22, of 48 Baltic St., Hartford, was arrested and charged with operating under suspension and reckless driving.

2/28: State Police said Herode Obas, 33, of 2030 East Broadway Rd., Tempe, Arizona, was arrested and charged with DUI and improper parking.

East Hampton Police News

2/23: Lisa Ann Repoli, 50, of 43 Jacobson Farm Rd., was arrested and charged with violating a restraining order and disorderly conduct, East Hampton Police said.

2/24: Bryan Christopher Kneeland, 31, of 37 Old Middletown Ave., and Jessica Ann Spearin, 30, of the same address, were arrested pursuant to active warrants stemming from several different shoplifting incidents, police said. Kneeland was charged with fifth-degree larceny and conspiracy to commit fifth-degree larceny, police said, and Spearin was charged with fifth-degree larceny, conspiracy to commit fifth-degree larceny, and sixth-degree larceny.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

I was one of many surprised – and, quite frankly, dismayed – to learn about the state police's reassignment of Lt. J. Paul Vance. Vance is basically the face of the state police; he's been their public information officer since 1999. Last week, news broke that, later this month, Vance will be transferred to the state police's traffic division, where he'll oversee a unit of about 30.

It's a move Vance didn't request, and one the state police couldn't really provide any justification for, outside of an ominous "we're going in a different direction" statement.

I fail to see how any "different direction" would be better than what the state police already have.

Having been a town news reporter, and then editor, in this state since 2001, I've had occasion many times to speak with Vance about a story. He's never been anything but nice, polite and helpful. He presents information and answers questions clearly and concisely; he lets you know as much as he can, and when he can't divulge something, he'll tell you he can't divulge it – always in a very courteous manner. He's never short or brusque, no matter how many phone calls from different media outlets he's dealing with at a particular moment.

He also understands you're simply doing your job. Which seems like a small point, but it's one that you don't always sense people get.

In short, Vance has been a complete professional.

Yes, Vance has been in the role since 1999 – but if you've got a good thing going, why change it?

Again, the state police have no real explanation, with state police commander Col. Brian F. Meraviglia telling the *Hartford Courant*, "He had a good run. He's done a good job. He's served us well. It's a change of pace...something fresh."

To his credit – and really, I wouldn't expect him to react any different – Vance is taking the high road through all this.

In an interview with *The Day*, Vance – while admitting the move "wasn't something I asked for or wanted" – said he accepted the transfer as "another phase of my career."

"We serve at the pleasure of our superior officers. You do what you're told," Vance told *The Day*. "I've been in this position for 16 years with multiple commissioners and colonels and governors. I've served successfully. I'm willing to undertake the next assignment that the commissioner has given me. I look forward to the opportunity. I'm a soldier. I'm a trooper."

Vance said he appreciated all the support he's gotten since the news broke. Indeed, a union representing state police captains and lieutenants has come out against the move, and there's even a "Bring back J. Paul Vance" page on Facebook (which, as of Tuesday evening, had more than 9,000 'likes').

I doubt if any of this will make a difference, but maybe it will. Vance has done such a good job for such a long period of time, he's earned the right to say when he wants to stop being the PIO. If that's not to be, though, I certainly wish Vance all the best in his new role with the traffic division.

And whoever his replacement is as PIO – well, he or she will certainly have some big shoes to fill.

* * *

I read this week state lawmakers are going to consider banning something that, frankly, I've never understood why it *isn't* banned.

State Rep. Mitch Bolinsky, R-Newtown, is sponsoring a bill that would prohibit driving with open cans or bottles of beer, wine or alcohol in the car.

Currently, it's of course illegal for motorists to drink while driving. But passengers can imbibe to their heart's content – as long as the driver doesn't consume.

That's never really seemed to make sense to me. Beyond the simple fact that it must be awfully tempting to drive down the road while the guy sitting right next to you is downing a beer, who's to say the driver doesn't take a swig, or two or 10, from his friend's brew when, say, no police officers are around?

Sure, if the driver got pulled over they'd likely be in trouble once the officer smelled the alcohol on their breath, but the reason why you don't drink and drive shouldn't be to avoid getting busted by police. It should be because you don't want to get into an accident.

Thirty-nine states already have laws against open containers of alcohol in a car – this doesn't surprise me. It feels like a no-brainer law.

A ban on open containers in cars has gone before state lawmakers before – and has failed. In 2009, for example, some lawmakers argued the ban would unfairly penalize designated drivers, who would be ticketed for their passengers' drunken actions.

"The driver, through no fault of his own, who is designated to protect his friends... and to keep them safe, is now going to get a ticket," state Rep. Mary Fritz, D-Wallingford, said at the time, according to the *Courant*.

I suppose Fritz is right, and that would pose a problem – although I'm not sure how much of one. I admit, I've relied on the kindness of designated drivers in the past, and the thing is, they hold all the cards. When they say it's time to go, it's time to go. If they'd tell me not to bring my beer in their car, I wouldn't bring my beer in the car. I mean, they are my means of transportation – my options are fairly limited at that point.

It'll be interesting to see if lawmakers again voice similar concerns to what Fritz brought up six years ago, and if they so, how they can work around the issue. But I'm hoping they can find a way. The law just makes too much sense, in my mind, to fail again.

* * *

In closing, let me point out that, as I wrote last week was a strong possibility, we did it: February wrapped with an average temperature of 16.1 degrees – making it the coldest month in Connecticut history (or at least in the 135 years the state has been keeping records of such things).

It's not exactly a record anybody is thrilled to hold, I know, but take heart, fellow Nutmeggers; it could always be worse. Syracuse, N.Y., also notched its coldest month on record in February – with an average temperature of 9.0 degrees. Nine!

Granted, I know it's upstate New York, so you can expect cold – but that's just absurd. Makes 16.1 seem downright balmy.

Where's my swimsuit?

* * *

See you next week.

Colchester Police News

2/23: State Police said Ryan Santoro, 32, of 136 Charles St., Torrington, was arrested and charged with DUI, reckless driving, operating an unregistered motor vehicle and failure to drive in the proper lane.

2/25: State Police said Richard Barboza, 51, of 74 Hunt Rd., Columbia, was arrested and charged with evading responsibility, having no insurance and unsafe backing.

2/26: Colchester Police said Brittany Wood, 24, of 108 Hagen Rd., Salem, was arrested and charged with DUI and unsafe backing.

2/26: State Police said Keri Golias, 36, of 6 Rondaly Rd., was arrested and charged with failure to appear.

2/28: State Police said Justin Heafy, 27, of 19 Birchbank Rd., Shelton, was transported to the Marlborough Clinic for minor injuries after his car hit the guard rail and rolled onto its roof on Route 2 westbound between exits 18 and 17.

3/1: State Police said Adel Benedek, 36, of 15 O'Connell Rd., was arrested and charged with failure to appear.

3/2: State Police said Kirsten Elliott, 39, of 7 River St., Stonington, was arrested and charged with fifth-degree larceny.

3/3: State Police said Miguel Velasquez, 24, of 15 Barker St., Hartford, was arrested and charged with failure to appear.