

RIVEREAST

News Bulletin

Serving Amston, Andover, Cobalt, Colchester, East Hampton, Hebron, Marlborough, Middle Haddam and Portland

Volume 40, Number 7

Published by The Glastonbury Citizen

June 12, 2015



Welcome!... The town center's "Welcome to Marlborough" signs, located on Route 66, were recently replaced. The new signs were made possible using state Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant funds. Town Hall worked closely with ARTWORKS, a local Marlborough business, which designed and installed the signs. Pictured here with one of the signs is ARTWORKS owner Andrew Chasse and First Selectwoman Catherine Gaudinski.

Second Arrest Made in Horse Farm Assault

by John Tyczkowski

State police last week arrested a Southington man and charged him in connection with a murder-for-hire conspiracy police said resulted in the brutal assault of an East Hampton woman at her horse farm last fall.

State police arrested James J. McMahon Jr., 48, on Friday, June 5 in connection with an alleged home invasion and assault Sept. 16 at White Birch Farm in East Hampton.

Police charged McMahon with criminal attempt to commit murder, conspiracy to commit first-degree assault, first-degree assault, home invasion and first-degree burglary.

All charges are Class B felonies, except home invasion, which is a Class A felony with a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years.

In the attack, police said Lisa Rader, the owner of the farm, sustained life-threatening injuries. She spent three months recuperating in a nursing home after.

Police said information obtained from Rader's son-in-law, Matthew Frick, 28, whom they arrested May 21 on charges of aiding and abetting the assault, helped lead to McMahon.

According to an affidavit for a warrant for his arrest, McMahon had been employed as a dishwasher for seven months at Stadium Burgers and Brew in Plainville, which Frick had purchased in late August 2014 and owned until

its closure the next month.

It was there that McMahon had overheard Frick complaining about his mother-in-law, with witnesses saying Frick frequently talked about wanting to "bash [Rader's] head in," according to the affidavit.

Also in the affidavit, several other witnesses gave statements that said Frick had mentioned on a regular basis that Rader was "a crazy, evil person who made [Matt and his wife Amy Rader Frick's] lives hell."

In an interview with detectives on May 21 after his arrest, Frick said McMahon had approached him one day at work, though Frick did not know who he was beyond "Jim," and told him, after hearing those comments, "If there is something I can help you with that is not work related, talk to me."

Frick then said he hired McMahon for \$600 to kill Rader, and that he had visited McMahon at his residence two days after the assault occurred.

In an earlier statement Frick gave March 4, after a voluntary polygraph examination, Frick said Rader Frick had no knowledge of and was not involved in hiring McMahon, whom Frick referred to at the time as an unknown male.

Also in that earlier statement, Frick had said

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Top Two RHAM Students Look Back

by Geeta Sandberg

Graduation is looming, and for two seniors at RHAM high school that means the end of four years of hard work – work that was not without its reward, however, considering Tim Breckel and Maeve Howard, both of Hebron, were named the Class of 2015's valedictorian and salutatorian, respectively.

Speaking on both students this week – who have known each other since kindergarten – RHAM High School Principal Scott Leslie said they "both exemplify what you would hope to see in the students that are held up as the valedictorian and salutatorian."

He furthered, "They obviously are very, very, very smart but they're also so committed to their academics. So their success isn't just due to their ability; it's due to just a tremendous amount of hard work. They're both not just willing – but committed – to putting their all into all of their school work and in terms of getting to be valedictorian and salutatorian that would be enough to get them there but both of them are so well-rounded. They're just really, really interesting students who have so many outside interests."

Breckel, who is heading to Boston College in August to attend the Carroll School of Management, where he was accepted into the busi-

ness school honors program, shared this week he had a high school schedule that included "every honors class I could take," along with a number of Advanced Placement classes during his junior and senior years.

In addition to academics, Breckel also found the time to play varsity tennis all four years – he was captain this year – and be class treasurer and be involved with the RHAM Leos Club, of which he was vice president this year.

Asked how he managed to balance everything, Breckel explained it had a lot to do with inner drive.

"You need that drive to get it done," he stated, "And then pushing yourself towards it, keeping the big picture in mind, knowing maybe one night of less than the required amount of sleep is worth it to get the good grades, into a good college, and hopefully a good career."

Breckel added, "I could have seen it as kind of an impossible challenge, but I did it piece by piece and the results paid off."

However, Breckel said he hadn't expected those results to include being named valedictorian. He explained when he'd checked at the beginning of senior year he was number two, but when the final rankings were announced, "I went down to guidance and to the secretary

and asked her for the final rank and she wrote it on a piece of paper and handed it to me and was smiling and the note said '1 out of 277' so it was a big surprise."

Regarding how he felt about his time at RHAM coming to an end, Breckel said it was just starting to sink in, but he's excited about what lies ahead.

"These four years have been a challenge, but definitely something I will look back at fondly, not cringing," he explained. "I feel like I put in my all with my extracurricular activities and my grades, and I feel that I'm ready for college."

He added, "I'm more excited than anxious about graduating and leading up to college and the next four years and the rest of my life."

However, Breckel said he'd miss knowing everyone like he does at RHAM.

"I think what I'll miss most is the relationships with everyone," he said, including those formed with teachers like Shaun Keane, his AP statistics teacher who also used to teach tennis.

"I feel like he's one of those very knowledgeable teachers," Breckel said of Keane. "He's always there to ask a question. He's one of the top teachers at RHAM really, and I enjoyed

having him."

This week, Keane had similarly nice things to say about Breckel, calling him "a phenomenal student."

"It has been a great pleasure having him in my classes the past two years," he stated. "When I think of a model student Tim Breckel comes to mind. His work ethic, positive attitude, and modesty are exemplary. Tim's dynamic and humorous personality creates a great environment wherever he is. I wish him the best of luck in the future as he will surely be missed at RHAM High School."

Similarly, RHAM engineering teacher David Ruddick had positive words to share about Howard, who called him one of her favorite teachers this week who, she said, "does a really good job encouraging people to interest themselves in engineering."

"I have enjoyed teaching Maeve for the time she has been at RHAM," Ruddick said of Howard. "Always positive, always cheerful, she is a wonderful, intelligent, young woman who is curious about everything."

Ruddick added, "Last year, when she managed to get into the digital electronics class, she appeared quite happy. What she didn't re-

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he had arranged for the hit via written correspondence only, with instructions only that Rader be “taken care of,” and that he had no further contact with McMahon after delivering the payment and instructions via a letter.

It is there that the account of what happened diverges.

In his own statement provided June 2 before his arrest, McMahon said he asked for a full payment of \$1,000 for the hit which Frick agreed to. McMahon also stated he intended to “rip off” Frick and not complete the hit.

But McMahon told police Frick had contacted him daily after providing the initial \$600 payment, asking when “he was going to kill” Rader. McMahon also said that Frick had stated he told his wife he planned to have Rader killed.

It was at that time McMahon said Frick provided him with a map of the farm showing the best path of entry to where Rader stayed and told him to arrive after the 11 p.m. news, when Frick thought she would be sleeping.

On the night of Sept. 16, McMahon said he had a few drinks before driving to the farm. He also said when he assaulted Rader in her bed,

he used his fists, as he said he did not want to kill her. However, when Rader grabbed a fire-place poker to fight back, McMahon said he blacked out and could not remember anything after that.

About two days afterward, McMahon said Frick approached him and expressed frustration and anger that McMahon did not kill Rader. McMahon said he did not return to work after that incident.

Court records show that McMahon was issued an order to have no contact with co-defendant Frick or with Rader, and that McMahon’s request to block the press from his initial court appearance and to seal his arrest warrant and affidavit were denied.

Previously, McMahon had been convicted of evading responsibility in Bristol Superior Court, and had served a six-month suspended jail sentence alongside one year of probation.

McMahon’s bail was set at \$1 million, which he did not post, and he is scheduled to appear in court next on June 23.

State police said in a press release that they are expecting a third arrest.



Tim Breckel



Maeve Howard

RHAM Students cont. from Front Page

alize is that I was probably more pleased to have her in class than she was to get in. I think Maeve will do wonderfully at Yale in the next few years and I fully expect great things from her.”

Howard, like Breckel, has had a full plate throughout high school, attending both RHAM and the Greater Hartford Academy of Math and Science, a decision she made because “I was looking for some diversity as well as greater opportunities to study math and science.”

For junior and senior year, Howard shared she had eight and a half classes. In addition, she ran the math team, took part in Model UN and was treasurer of the Leos Club.

Speaking on what motivated her, Howard said, “I think it was just that I didn’t want to be bored. I wanted to try as many things as possible because I’m interested in so many different things.”

But getting everything done required finding the right balance, which, for Howard, meant realizing the importance of personal time and sleep.

“I think I’ve just recognized this year that I have to be able to sleep,” she said. “And balancing it was more like, I have to accept that sometimes I can’t do everything all at once. So sometimes I’d have to take a little bit of time for myself.”

With graduation next week, Howard said things were starting to wind down, “which is kind of a relief because it’s been an intense year.”

But things won’t slow down too much for her once she gets her diploma; over the summer she’ll be working at Hartford Public Library in the Center for New Media as a mentor, working to get people aged 12-18 interested in science and technology. She’ll also be working in the IT department at Aetna.

Although Howard said she was excited to attend Yale – a place she said was “basically Hogwarts” – she added she’d miss the people at her high school.

“There’s always that stereotype about one group of people that are jocks, one group that are band geeks, but people don’t really do that here,” she said. “Everyone was really friendly to everyone, and I think that’s my favorite part.”

Howard concluded, “I don’t want to leave my friends, but that’s the nice thing about social media, that I don’t have to give them up completely. But I’m very excited to start college and start a new chapter in my life.”

That new chapter starts after graduation, which takes place next Thursday, June 18, at 6:30 p.m., at the school.

Observations & Ruminations

by **Mike Thompson**

This will come as a shock to no one who was around the state last week, but, after some warmer-than-normal temperatures in the days immediately following Memorial Day, the weather over-corrected itself. Big time.

Seemingly discontent to merely return to, say, the 70s, the mercury last week plummeted: mid-50s to maybe around 60 during the day, and 40s at night. In the span of just a few days I went from turning on the AC in my apartment to actually turning on the heat at night a couple of times. I wore a jacket to work. One night last week, I took a walk around the neighborhood after I got home from work, and it was like I was walking on an October evening. A perfectly pleasant October evening, mind you, but still – it felt like October. In June. It wasn’t right.

But, as I learned last weekend, it could’ve been worse. It could’ve been 200 years ago.

A friend of mine pointed me to a story that enlightened me about 1816 – or, as it came to be known in New England, The Year Without a Summer.

There were signs in the springtime months that year that things weren’t quite right. For example, on April 24 it hit 74 degrees in Salem, Mass. – exceptionally warm for that time of year. Within 30 hours the temperature had plummeted to 21 degrees.

The weird spring that year was taking its toll on vegetation, prompting East Windsor bibliophile Thomas Robbins to write in his diary, “The vegetation does not seem to advance at all.”

Then June hit – and the bottom fell out.

On June 6, six inches of snow fell on New England. A Plymouth (Conn.) clockmaker by the name of Chauncey Jerome wrote in his autobiography that he walked to work that day sporting heavy woolen clothes, an overcoat and mittens.

Again: on June 6.

The next day, flurries fell in Boston – the latest snow had ever been recorded in Beantown. On June 11, the temperature registered at 30.5 degrees in Williamstown, Mass. In Vermont, lambs were dying from exposure. And, while it’s technically not New England, up in Montreal frozen birds dropped dead in the streets.

A Bennington, Vt., farmer named Benjamin Harwood wrote in his diary, “The heads of all the mountains on every side were crowned with snow. The most gloomy and extraordinary weather ever seen.”

What made matters worse – or, at least it would have made them worse in my book – is it didn’t just stay cold. All summer, temperatures seasawed up and down – with the warm days tantalizing people into thinking maybe, just maybe, there’d be a summer after all. But then the cold would come.

For example, on June 22 the mercury soared to 101 degrees in Salem, Mass. But just two weeks later, on July 6, a cold northwest wind ushered in a three-day cold snap. Temperatures fell to 30 degrees in northern New England, and 40 degrees in Hartford and New Haven.

Keep in mind, it was 1816 when all this was going on. Farming was a way of life – it’s how people ate – and the extreme cold wreaked havoc on the crops.

In New Hampshire, that early July frost destroyed the bean crop, and it killed the bean, cucumber and squash crops in

Kennebunkport, Maine. An ongoing drought in most of the United States, including New England, didn’t help matters – and genuine fears of famine began to grow.

August then arrived and, at least at the start, things were sunny and warm. Buoyed by the conditions, farmers planted a round of new crops, hopeful the growing season would last. But the cold arrived again.

On Aug. 13 and 14, a cold spell froze the corn crop north of Concord, N.H. On Aug. 20, a storm hit Amherst, N.H., and the temperature dropped 30 degrees within a few hours. And once again, it snowed in Vermont.

In Maine, farmers wrapped rags around their plants to protect them. And some people managed to make it. Some wheat, rye and potato crops pulled through. In Ashland, N.H., for example, Reuben Whitten was able to grow wheat on his south-facing farm. He shared it with his neighbors – who later credited him with saving themselves from starvation.

But by and large, crops were doomed. A severe frost on Aug. 28 dashed any hopes of salvaging what remained of corn crops. In Maine and New Hampshire, farmers cut up whole fields of corn for fodder.

Meanwhile, people were going hungry – and there were reports of people eating raccoons and pigeons, just to get by. In Vermont, people foraged for food such as nettles, wild turnips and hedgehogs.

The calendar turned to September, and temperatures began to warm again – only to drop to 26 degrees in Hanover, N.H., by Sept. 26. Snow fell throughout the region, and a killing frost froze crops in the field and apples on the branch.

Not surprisingly, with so many crops lost, people had to pay a pretty penny for what was left. Prices soared for wheat, grains, meat, vegetables, butter, milk and flour. In Maine, the price of potatoes doubled – and the price of oats tripled.

Things got better the next year – but they didn’t start out that way. Summer began cold again, which prompted many farmers in the Northeast to pack it in and head to the Midwest, according to the New England Historical Society.

What caused The Year Without a Summer? No one really knows for sure. But many believe it had something to do with a massive volcanic explosion on Mt. Tambora in Indonesia the year before. The explosion killed 15,000 instantly, and soon after another 65,000 died of disease and starvation. The historical society said volcanic ash and debris thrown up into the stratosphere is thought to have blocked the sun and caused a gradual lowering of temperatures.

It also should be noted 1816 was also in the middle of what meteorologists have called a “mini-Ice Age,” which lasted from 1400 to about 1860, and caused unusually harsh winters, short growing seasons and dry weather.

Whatever the case, though, it was destructively cold that summer. Reading about it definitely gave me some perspective on the unseasonal cold we experienced last week. Did I have to wear a jacket? Yes. Was there frost on the ground, or snowflakes in the sky? No.

We had it pretty good.

See you next week.

WJJMS Project Heads to Referendum in Colchester

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

After months of deliberations, public hearings and impassioned pleas both for and against it, the \$48.66 million William J. Johnston Middle School renovation project heads to referendum next Tuesday, June 16.

The project carries a \$48,656,713 price tag. However, due to projected state reimbursement, the cost to the town is expected to be \$20,664,232.

The proposal calls for renovating many aspects of the building, demolishing the older 1950s and 1960s wing, and building a new two-story main section for classrooms.

The building committee behind the project opted for this option over solely new construction, as that alternative would have cost the town \$2 million more, and there was no guarantee the new construction would save money in the future for energy or operating costs.

The new-look school, which, if approved, would open during the 2017-18 school year, also would reflect declining enrollment. Instead of the current five-teacher teams, the school would feature two teams for each grade, made up of four teachers each. WJJMS Principal Chris Bennett has said that, while this isn't ideal for academic learning, it can be done.

Cutting down the teams also saved in cost per square foot, by shrinking the overall footprint of the new school.

The option presented for referendum keeps two gyms in the school, and allows for the renovation of the pupil services area. The pupil ser-

vices department currently is in an area set to be demolished. It also includes space for two fields, increased parking and separated areas for bus drop-off and parent drop-off.

The building for WJJMS alone would be a total of \$44,754,213, with a cost to Colchester of \$17,261,700. The section for Pupil Services totals \$1,627,500, but with reimbursement is a cost to Colchester of \$1,127,532. The gym would cost \$2,275,000 before any reimbursement. According to Barbara Joslin, one of the architects behind the project, the district must prove to the state that the gym is part of the curriculum, as it is a second gym. If it can do that, there will be reimbursement.

Town officials have said the project will not affect the town's mill rate, since town debt is currently decreasing at such a rate that this project would just replace it.

A group of parents in favor of the project have formed a political action committee called Building for the Future, and this week spoke with the *RiverEast* about why they were backing the proposal.

"I have two kids in school and I'm concerned about the conditions of the building for a long time," parent Jo-Ann Holmes said. "The project presented to voters is the most economic, smartest plan developed."

Another local PAC, the Colchester Conservatives, has proposed to consolidate the WJJMS students into Colchester Elementary School and Jack Jackter Intermediate School. But resident

Irene Malsbenden, who is in favor of the renovation project, said the consolidation wouldn't work.

"There are shortcomings that are not thought-out," said Malsbenden, who is also a member of the project's building committee, but stressed she was speaking as an individual. "The whole proposal failed to consider the number of special education staff that assist."

Malsbenden said the proposal also did not account for family consumer science rooms and the resources needed for those.

"That proposal is more problematic than people realize," she said.

Others cited concerns about the safety of the school along with health issues as additional reasons for a new school.

"Serious attention is needed at all levels [of the schools]," parent Michelle Gilman said. "It goes beyond [patching]."

Parents mentioned there were days school had to be canceled, because of the heat on the building's second floor. They also mentioned broken bathrooms and concerns about asthma and other health-related problems.

"The conditions impede education," parent Joy Tyler said. "The kids upstairs are too hot and wearing shorts in the winter and others are too cold. It depends on the wing."

If the project fails at referendum, Tyler said she worries WJJMS staff will take this to mean the community doesn't care about them, and it

will ruin morale at the school.

"Our obligation as a community is to support rebuilding the facility and all of the town facilities," Gilman said. "It's going to cost taxpayers more in the long term" if they are not rebuilt.

Advocates of the project hope people will come out and vote next week.

"It takes longer for my kids to pick out a cupcake than [it does for people] to vote," parent Gina Henderson cracked.

Meanwhile, resident Jim Ringuette opined that "if voter turnout actually represented [the community]," there wouldn't be any question the project would pass.

"There are a lot of families that do support, but don't make time to physically vote," he said.

For those that can't make it to the polls next Tuesday, absentee ballots are available in the town clerk's office at Town Hall until Monday, June 15, at 4:30 p.m.

Town and school officials have said plans need to be submitted to the state for approval by June 30. If the project fails next week, the town would need to apply for special legislation to extend the deadline. If not granted this extension, the town would have to wait another year before any plans would be approved by the state.

The referendum will be Tuesday, June 16, from 6 a.m.-8 p.m., at Town Hall.

German Shepherd/Boxer Given Top Dog Title in Colchester

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

A rescue dog headed north to Connecticut three years ago – and now owns the town's coveted No. 1 Dog title.

Sophie, a German Shepherd/Boxer mix, received the title last week – fetching 28 votes, seven more than the closest competition. Voting took place last month; residents could pick their favorite pooches either in person at Town Hall, or via the town's website.

Sophie was a rescue puppy, living in Tennessee where she was with her littermates. While viewing the pictures from the litter separately, residents Zach and Emily McElroy picked eight-week-old Sophie as their number one choice.

Sophie was shipped up north by Rottweiler Rescue Ranch via an animal transportation truck, Zach McElroy said – and the journey was tough on the puppy.

"When we first got her, she was really sick," McElroy said. "She spent days at the veterinarian's for an upper respiratory infection."

Now around 3 years old, Sophie lives a happy life in Colchester.

"Her favorite toy is her squeaky skunk," McElroy said of Sophie. "She also likes digging and balls."

Sophie can often be found with a Busy Bone or a chicken meatball treat. She also loves Scottie's Frozen Custard, McElroy said.

Another pastime of Sophie's is cuddling with and spending time with her little brother, the McElroys' 3-month-old son, John. "Any chance she gets, she'll lick him," McElroy said.

Despite growing up into a 50-pound dog, Sophie is a bit of a chicken.

"She hates thunder and lightning," McElroy said. "She's very shy around people. Once you get to know her, she's very friendly."

Visitors should be warned, however, not to be necessarily fooled by the shyness.

"She will be shy around people and then lick them in the back," McElroy said.

She spends time at John Gagnon's Doggie Daycare in town and has a dog friend, McElroy's brother's dog, a mutt named Logan.

During the day, Sophie will sleep on the couch or behind it, but at night, McElroy said, she's found at the foot of their bed on her dog bed, protecting the family.

Sophie received her No. 1 tag last week and



Sophie (left), a German Shepherd/Boxer mix, was crowned Colchester's No. 1 dog last week after the Top Dog contest at Town Hall. Kramer (middle), a terrier mix, and Zeus (right), a Labradoodle, tied for second place.



will be sporting the tag for the next year. For winning, Sophie also received her 2015-16 dog license for free.

Sophie beat out 28 other dogs for the title. There was actually a tie for second place this year, with a terrier mix named Kramer and a Labradoodle named Zeus each collecting 21 votes.

However, there is only one No. 2 tag, and that one went to Kramer, a 2-and-a-half-year-old rescue, upon the request of his owner, Theresa Torres.

Although Kramer is new to the family (they got him in January), his personality has won over both of his owners and his dog sister, Fiona, a miniature Pinscher.

Adopted through Protectors of Animals, Torres, who owns Kramer with her husband Robert, said she was drawn to him and he is "smart as a button."

POA "had found him walking the streets of West Hartford," Torres said. "He didn't know how to climb stairs. He's come a long way and is really a good boy."

Some of Kramer's favorite things, Torres said, include squeaky toys, chew bones, and food in general.

Torres said she had to enter him into the Top Dog contest because "he's just so cute and I knew he would win."

Kramer also loves to lie out in the sun, going for walks, and jumping from the couch to the chair. He and his sister also enjoy going to John Gagnon's Doggie Daycare, Torres said, and go on days they get groomed.

Both Torres' pooches were entered in the contest; Fiona took 19th.

Zeus, a 6-month-old Labradoodle (half Labrador, half Poodle) tied Kramer for second.

His owner, Kirsten Crowell, entered Zeus in the Top Dog contest because she thought he may have a good chance of winning.

Zeus stole Crowell's heart after she met him in February at the Dog House, a dog seller and adoption center in Manchester. Crowell was drawn to Zeus' green eyes along with his chocolate fur and a blonde muzzle.

"He was very playful in his cage," Crowell said of meeting Zeus. "Everyone says he looks like a Muppet."

Crowell said Zeus loves bones and anything squeaky. He's also very bubbly and energetic and never stops.

"He's always going," Crowell said of the puppy. "He likes to go for rides in the car to the dog park."

Crowell cracked you always know when Zeus is coming – he bounces around and is not sneaky at all.

"He's basically like a bull in a china shop,"

Crowell said.

Zeus' human family includes Crowell, her parents Tammy and Robert, and her siblings Kaitlyn, Nicholas and Noah.

The Top Dog contest is held to remind residents that it's time to license their dogs. Dogs should be licensed by June 30.

Fee is \$8 for spayed or neutered dogs, and \$19 for unaltered dogs; in accordance with state law, there is a penalty of \$1 per month, starting July 1, if your dog is not registered.

Licenses can be purchased at the town clerk's office at Town Hall; office hours are Monday to Wednesday and Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Thursdays 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.

If you prefer to license by mail, mail a stamped, self-addressed envelope with proper documentation and a check made payable to "Town of Colchester" to: Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, 127 Norwich Ave., Colchester, CT 06415.

A rabies certificate as well as validation of being spayed or neutered is required at the time of initial licensing. If you are renewing a license, be sure a current rabies certificate is on file in the office.

For more information, contact the town clerk's office at 860-537-7215 or at townclerk@colchesterct.gov.

Colchester Board Scraps Plan to Continue with Special Ed Director

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

Following months of parents' complaints about her performance, the Board of Education Tuesday voted to scrap its plan to offer a new contract to pupil services and special education director Kathy Shaughnessy, who has announced plans to retire at the end of the month.

The board had planned to keep Shaughnessy employed for two years following her retirement. However, Monday's withdrawal from the contract negotiations means Shaughnessy, who has tenure, can either retire as originally planned, or rescind her retirement and stay in the district.

Parents of special education students began publicly lodging complaints against Shaughnessy in January, coming to school board meetings and speaking of misconduct and illegal activity. Among other things, the complaints alleged that Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) were being changed without parents' consent, and that Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings were being incorrectly held.

After hearing the complaints, the board hired Rosie Payne and Frank Stuart in March as part-time, temporary assistant directors of special education and pupil services; Payne to assist with PPTS and Stuart to conduct a review of the special education programs offered, as well as the concerns that the parents raised.

On Monday, Stuart gave his final report to the board, including his recommendations on moving forward. Stuart walked the board through each complaint.

In regards to the unprofessional conduct of the director, Stuart reported that Shaughnessy denied claims that she had told a parent that her child would only be good as a valet driver or a grocery bagger. Stuart also reported that staff members told him in interviews Shaughnessy "doesn't project a feeling of warmth" and is "not warm and fuzzy." Another staff member opined to Stuart that Shaughnessy doesn't mean to offend, but does so anyway, because of how the statements are delivered. Stuart recom-

mended Shaughnessy attend sensitivity training with a professional of her choosing.

Stuart also reported that when students advance from one school in town to another, some of their records don't necessarily make the trip. He recommended staff be required to sign off on documentation showing all records are received upon the student arriving at the school.

Stuart also investigated a complaint by parents alleging independent educational evaluations (IEEs) were ignored or not agreed to by Shaughnessy. Stuart said there was one case where a request for an IEE was denied, and another where the district declined to accept a diagnosis in an IEE, and identified the child as not needing special education services. Stuart recommended that the district needs to be more transparent regarding IEEs.

Also, some parents had complained the district had refused to identify if a child needed services unless they were at least 7 years old. After an investigation Stuart reported there was an instance where a parent requested a PPT meeting through the general education teacher, but there was no evidence of the request. Stuart recommended teachers be made aware such discussions with parents need to be reported to school administrators.

Stuart also said he investigated another case where parents and the school system had disagreed as to whether a student needed special education services. He said there was no clear answer in this case.

Ultimately, Stuart suggested the district review its policy for identifying students.

* * *

After the report was given, school board member Michael Voiland wondered aloud if any laws had indeed been broken. Stuart said the case of a service not being delivered would be a law violation. There was also an instance where proper accommodations were not provided for a student that had required them in a particular situation, and Stuart said this, too, may be a law violation, depending on how it

was interpreted.

Board member Don Kennedy said there should be a policy where the PPT chair is not also taking minutes during PPT meetings. Stuart had mentioned during his recommendations this was an area where problems in IEP changes arose – as parents would sometimes receive an IEP different from what had been talked about during the meetings.

Citizens also had a chance to comment on the report. While some spoke in favor of Shaughnessy, some expressed continuing concern with Stuart's report – saying its criticisms of the special education director didn't go far enough. Those that spoke against the report said the report is biased and does not reflect the reality of what many parents have experienced.

"The report purports virtually unanimous glowing staff feedback on the behalf of the director," resident and parent Mark McAuliffe said. "Personally I can't remember when I've ever seen such iron clad feedback. These results seem more fitting of an advertising campaign. Yet not one mention of the families' comments to counter them?"

"We are here because of conscience, because we know what we've seen, heard and endured," McAuliffe continued. "Unfortunately, based on this report, there are two sides to every story."

McAuliffe also expressed concerns about retaliation by Shaughnessy against the parents who had complained about her. But Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein announced no parent in the complaint process would have to have Shaughnessy chair their PPTs.

"We understand it may be uncomfortable to have the director involved," Goldstein said.

Frank Jackter, a former Board of Education member, warned the board that history was repeating itself.

"Where there's smoke, there's fire," Jackter said.

Twenty years ago, he explained, there was a similar incident regarding the then-special edu-

cation director, with parents lodging complaints to the board against the director. It took the board hiring an independent attorney – not the same one used by the administrators – to find out what was going on. (In this case, the board does have an attorney on call to consult with them on special education law, but it is a member of the firm Shipman & Goodwin, which also represents the school administrators.)

Twenty years ago, "The overwhelming amount of parent complaints were valid," Jackter said. So for this case, Jackter advised the current board, "Bring the parents in and look at the allegations yourself."

* * *

After the meeting, parent Nancy McAuliffe – who has been outspoken against Shaughnessy in the past – offered her own take on the board's actions.

"If she is innocent of all complaints, why did they not extend her contract and keep her on? Now it's a wait and see," McAuliffe said. "This investigation spent more time collecting data on people who like [Shaughnessy] and think she's great than it did on investigating the things she did wrong to our kids and families. Instead of whitewashing and dismissing the parent complaints, the BOE should have hired a non-biased investigator and held those accountable."

The Board of Education will meet Monday, June 15, at 7 p.m., at the William J. Johnston Middle School media center to continue to discuss further recommendations from Stuart.

Goldstein also announced at the end of the meeting that, as per petition, the board will hold a public hearing to give parents another opportunity to address the current situation. The board had previously received a petition requesting that Shaughnessy not be given a two-year contract and that she be removed from chairing PPT meetings. Even though the board Tuesday had voted to scrap the new contract, state statute requires the hearing be held anyway, as the petition received more than 100 signatures.

Colchester School Board Agrees on Budget Reductions

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

Following the Board of Finance's decision last week to cut the proposed 2015-16 school budget by \$50,000, the school board met Tuesday and announced where those cuts will come from.

The \$50,000 trim left the budget at \$39,795,370 million, a 0.34 percent, or \$133,575, increase over current year spending.

During the meeting Tuesday, Superintendent of Schools Jeff Mathieu passed out a new list of reductions – which actually totaled \$65,575.

The board agreed to decide where that extra \$15,000 would go before the end of June. Board members said the money may wind up needing to go to certified salaries depending on the outcome of the investigation into Director of Pupil Services and Special Education Kathy Shaughnessy.

Among the reductions in the \$65,575 are: a 0.4 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) English teacher at Bacon Academy (this would cancel journalism and the school newspaper would become a club); a 0.2 FTE math teacher at Bacon Academy; eliminating middle school soccer; eliminating middle school basketball; and reducing the middle school athletic director. Also, after requests from some citizens, the board accepted a concession from the administrators. This \$14,280 comes from the administrators' cell phone stipends.

"It's not just the stipend, but expecting administrators to be on call on weekends and vacation," Mathieu said.

During the motion where the board accepted the cell phone concession, the board dedicated themselves to exploring another option for administrator cell phones so they would not lose the on-call feature.

"We recognize the need to have the administrators on call," board chair Ron Goldstein said. "Perhaps we'll be looking to restructure [how the phones are handled]. I don't think the district can do without."

Board members thanked the lacrosse parents for coming out to the Board of Finance meeting June 3. The finance board had been considering cutting the school budget by \$280,000, but, after parents spoke loudly against such a cut, the board ultimately decided on \$50,000 for the reduction, thus saving programs – such as lacrosse.

And people need to keep on doing this, school board member Mike Egan said.

"Show the district what we're spending is worth it," Egan said.

"It will be bloody the next time," member Don Kennedy said if the budget does not pass.

The next budget referendum will take place Tuesday, June 23, from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m., at Town Hall.

* * *

Also on Tuesday, the Board of Education approved a new strategic plan, which will serve as a guide for the school system for the next three to five years.

The process began last fall, when the board began working with LEARN, a regional education service center. The goal was to update the plan based on the current community and create a plan that can be used for the next few years along with annual reviews of the plan.

The strategic plan is based on the idea that the community "expressed a strong desire for an educational experience where learning extends beyond the classroom to meet student needs through personalized learning plans, innovative and relevant curricula and a focus on college and career readiness."

Other important areas of the plan include measuring achievements by setting goals beyond the state-mandated assessments, having students be responsible digital citizens, and for students to "embrace personal responsibility, have an appreciation for diversity and graduate with a strong sense of self." For teachers and staff, the plan is designed to help them continue their "pride in their careers and in providing high-quality instruction and support."

Other goals of the strategic plan are to make sure the vision and education of students is cohesive; extend learning beyond the classroom; have the community understand, support and appreciate the value of the education offered; have graduates and families express pride in the schools; and have families involved and supportive of the educational process from preschool through graduation.

The plan also mentioned declining enrollment and the vision of using declining enrollment to also enhance instruction.

"Planning for the future is critical," board member Michael Egan said of the strategic plan. "This shows up being proactive rather than reactive."

The board unanimously approved the strategic plan and it will go in effect in time for the July 1 deadline for the state.

* * *

Also at the board meeting Tuesday, the board accepted the intent to retire of Director of Teaching and Learning Barbara Gilbert. Gilbert will retire at the end of the 2015-16 school year.

* * *

The next regular Board of Education meeting will be July 14 at 7 p.m. at Town Hall.

Board Appoints New Superintendent in Andover

by Geeta Sandberg

The Board of Education appointed a new superintendent Wednesday, and it's a name that might be familiar to longtime *Rivereast* readers – former Portland schools superintendent Sally Doyen.

Doyen will start in July, taking over for the retiring Andy Maneggia, who has been in charge of the Andover school system for the past 11 years. Doyen served as superintendent of Portland Public Schools for nine years prior to her own retirement last summer. However, she said this week she soon realized she missed her work.

"I was involved this past year with other types of educational programs – one with [the University of Connecticut] and another with Hartford Public Schools and I realized how much I missed it," the Storrs resident said Wednesday.

"I'm really thrilled," she added of her new position, which, as was Maneggia's, is part-time. "I think Andover is a wonderful community."

Christina Tamburro, interim chairwoman of the school board, explained the search process following a brief executive session; a search committee made up of six people – three board members, a representative from the Parent Teacher Association and an administrator – looked at a number of candidates. The applicant pool was whittled down to six, and then two.

"Both were excellent, but Sally – you were our first choice by far," Tamburro stated. "We were just thrilled with Sally's background."

Before serving in Portland, Doyen spent four years helming Lebanon Public Schools as well as nine years serving as the assistant schools superintendent in Manchester, "which, as I understand, was a tremendous responsibility in that school" system, Tamburro said.

Tamburro added Doyen had "multiple certifications including one near and dear to my heart which is a library science degree."

Member Cathy Danielczuk meanwhile, was happy about Doyen's Applied Behavior Analysis certification.

Following her unanimous appointment, Doyen said "I feel right at home already."

"I'm very thrilled and pleased I'm going to join you all in Andover. I know I have a hard act to follow," she said. "I'm just very pleased to be able to come to a district like this that is in such wonderful shape and I know that Andy leaves with a great deal of respect and admiration from everybody in Andover – and including me."

Doyen thanked Maneggia for the job he'd done and added "I look forward to starting July 1 – which isn't very far off!"

Later in the evening Doyen added "I thought this was a great opportunity," and said she was looking forward "to getting to know everyone and learning more about the details of the community."

* * *

Also at the meeting, the board recognized two sixth-graders who received this year's Superintendent's Award.

Maneggia explained, "This is an award we feel is very special that we give out each year to two outstanding sixth-grade students; it was started many years ago, by superintendents, to recognize community service, leadership skills, academic achievements and citizenship in students."

Maneggia added the award is given out in sixth, eighth and 12th grades, and "came about because there was so much bad publicity about the things young people were doing and we wanted to counteract that by recognizing students who really go above and beyond."

And this year, those students were Maggie Tighe and Jakub Jandzinski.

Present at the meeting were the students' teachers, who shared some thoughts on each of the recipients.

Tighe's teacher Melissa Loteczka said Tighe

excelled in academics, was a positive role model, and was "always willing to help others."

She called her positive and mature and said on any given day Tighe could either be found "working diligently on the task at hand or helping others."

Loteczka said as part of the selection process other teachers and staff are asked for input, and from them Tighe was described as driven, highly-motivated, humble and thoughtful.

"Her strength of character and maturity is what made her a very qualified candidate," Loteczka concluded, thanking her parents for a job well done raising Tighe.

Meanwhile, Jandzinski's teacher, John Gasper, said that as soon as the teachers get word from the office about choosing an award winner, they go into research mode and start to think about which student to choose.

"There are students who do well academically but that's not the only thing this is about: it's about leadership and showing kindness for others," Gasper stated, adding Jandzinski met all of those qualifications.

"He works extremely hard for his grades," Gasper said. "He's not content with getting by – he strives for excellence" and consistently earned 90 percent or better on the math packet Gasper hands out each week.

In addition, at the end of lunch Gasper said he seeks out students to help wipe off the tables and Jandzinski would regularly volunteer to help.

"He sets a good example for others" he furthered, is always there to help, and balances school with his love of soccer.

"He plays with the team and still manages to be good in school."

Gasper said Jandzinski was "also devoted to church and the study of religion."

Like Loteczka, Gasper thanked the parents for teaching Jandzinski "to try his hardest and



Sally Doyen

be a good citizen."

He said they supported and encouraged him "to do his best and demonstrate his kindness toward others."

Jandzinski and Tighe will be recognized again at the school's Step-Up Ceremony next Friday, June 19, when they'll join the rest of the sixth grade for a ceremony marking the end of their tenure at Andover Elementary School, and the beginning of their journey as middle school students.

* * *

The next Board of Education meeting will be held Wednesday, July 8, at 7 p.m., in the Andover Elementary School library, 35 School Rd.

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KX Consolidation Falls Through

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

The dispatch consolidation efforts between Montville and Colchester Emergency Communications LLC, or KX, suddenly came to a stop Monday night after Montville withdrew from the partnership.

Citing a "general feeling that the dynamics have changed," Montville Mayor Ronald McDaniel said he was directed by the Town Council to withdraw.

"It's no longer what we thought we were getting into," McDaniel said. "I don't know if it's a sustainable financial model."

Currently, KX is stationed in a small room at the Troop K headquarters on Old Hartford Road. Founded in 1976, KX is governed by a Board of Directors and handles dispatch services for eight towns: Colchester, Marlborough, East Hampton, Haddam Neck, Bozrah, East Haddam, Lebanon and Salem along with dispatch services for Middlesex Memorial Hospital paramedics within the northern portion of Middlesex County and its northern service area.

KX's services include dispatching fire and ambulances. KX also currently dispatches East Hampton police.

Up until June 2012 Hebron had also been a KX member, however, at that time the town elected to transfer its services to Tolland County

Emergency Communications. With Hebron's departure, KX lost \$100,000 a year from Hebron and the state – a difference that had to be absorbed by the remaining towns.

With a need to become more financially stable and a need for capital improvements now at the forefront, the KX Board of Directors decided to look for ways to consolidate. They found Montville, a municipality with a new state-of-the-art public safety and dispatch facility, and decided to pursue the possibility; the consolidation included Montville joining KX and the operations moving from Colchester to Montville.

The consolidation efforts had been moving along for several months until KX dispatch workers voted to be represented by a union in April and negotiations began, bringing everything to a pause.

Now, with Montville out of the consolidation, the remaining towns are scrambling to consider their options. Along with Montville, Lebanon voted to leave KX and join Willimantic as of July 1, and Haddam reported the town would be moving the Haddam Neck section's coverage from KX to Valley Shore since they already handle Haddam.

The current contract between KX and the

towns run through June 30, 2016. Therefore under contract agreements, a town like Lebanon who chooses to leave will pay a penalty of \$50,050 for breaking the contract early.

Some of the benefits of the potential consolidation had been financial stability with future budgets being more predictable, the elimination of capital needs for improvements at the current location, providing a facility that could handle more towns, and strengthening police department dispatch operations for East Hampton.

Doug Knowlton, a member of the KX Board of Directors who has been working on the consolidation, had originally said he hoped the consolidation would be complete by July 2015. Now, a month before that date, everything has fallen apart.

"We're going to assess the situation and based on that assessment, come up with a plan of action with what we're going to do," Marlborough First Selectwoman Cathi Gaudinski said this week. "We have no set plans yet."

Gaudinski said town officials will see how it things work out, but the failed consolidation "is a concern."

"We thought it would be a good solution to

strengthening KX, but now it's a concern about how [KX] will be able to financially survive," Gaudinski said. "It was unfortunate because there was a lot of good work done and good conversations."

Gaudinski credited Knowlton with going the "extra mile" to work on the consolidation with the rest of the board of directors.

"It's an unfortunate event," Gaudinski said. East Hampton Town Manager Mike Maniscalco shared Gaudinski's view that the remaining towns would now have to consider all their options.

"All of our communities are considering all of our options," Maniscalco said. "We have to make sure we have a solid 911 service as well as a financially sound one."

Maniscalco said there are "so many" options now including potentially staying with KX.

"We're constantly meeting with the community CEOs to discuss what's available and what to do," Maniscalco said.

Knowlton, meanwhile, reiterated that – as with Hebron's departure – each town's decision will affect the other towns. But what those decisions and effects will be – along with what the future of KX looks like – remains to be seen.

Hebron School Board Makes Administration Changes, Budget Cuts

by Geeta Sandberg

Last Tuesday, the Board of Education held a special meeting where a number of changes took place that will impact staff structure at the two schools.

The changes began with the acceptance of the resignation of Josh Martin, Hebron Elementary School assistant principal and director of special services and pupil personnel services. He will be leaving the district at the end of the school year.

Martin's resignation follows the April resignation of the school system's curriculum director Vonda Tencza, and the resignation of Hebron Elementary School Principal Amy Campbell, who announced in March she'd be retiring at the end of the year.

However, while Campbell will be replaced, once Martin and Tencza depart, their positions will remain vacant; the board voted unanimously last week not to fill their roles.

School board member Erica Bromley shared her thoughts on the decision, saying, "Although a very tough decision, I think we made an effort over the past however many months to get feedback from a variety of places, including parents in the community, and I know that we heard some concerns about cuts such as this. It's hard to say you're pleased about making cuts and changes but I definitely think because we went and got feedback it's good to say we are using that."

She concluded, "I want to make sure people understand we do use feedback and information we get in – it's not just an exercise – to make changes not just based on what we think but what the constituents think."

Following the initial reductions, the board then voted to change the district's part-time director of special education position to a full-time director of educational services, a new

position whose primary function would be oversight of special education and related services as well as supporting curriculum and technology initiatives.

"The net result" of the proposed changes, explained interim schools superintendent Mark Winzler, "is there's one less administrator position next year. That's the important thing to understand," he stated. "In terms of dollars and bodies, it'll be one less administrative body in the Hebron Public School System."

By creating the new position and not directly replacing Martin and Tencza, the board will reduce administrative costs by nearly \$100,000.

Board member Carol Connolly said she was pleased with the position, which, about 80 percent of the time, is expected to be focused on special education. However, board member Abe Krisst expressed concern over the remaining 20 percent focused on curriculum and technology and urged the board to keep an eye on things moving forward.

"This is something that we have to do but it's an ongoing process," he stated. "This position is meant for our district and we have to do what's good for our kids. We can't just make this decision and let it go – whoever lands in this position, we have to work with them to make sure the job's getting done. And if we need to adjust, we'll adjust."

"This is a work in progress," added member Jeff Davis. "This is a really good start. We'll see how this will work out but we need to be able to keep a watchful eye to make sure everything is being covered."

In the end the board voted unanimously in favor of the position, then moved on to discuss changing one of the six special education teaching positions in the district to a district curriculum and technology specialist position.

Winzler explained the idea was for the director of educational services to handle the administrative aspects of curriculum and technology, while the curriculum and technology specialist would handle aspects that didn't require an administrator's certification.

"We have other specialists like language arts and math – now this is another specialist. So there's a lot of assisting, not leading," he explained. "This person would take direction from the director of educational services."

He added they're "kind of the conduit for teaching and learning, if you will, in the trenches" and would be a teacher interacting with another teacher. In addition, he shared "it is our desire to have someone internally" fill the position.

But Bromley and Davis expressed some concern over the change: Bromley said she was worried that "over the last few years, slowly but surely, a lot of things that made this district so amazing are being chipped away."

For example, she said she was worried about the loss of staff at the "direct service level."

"Direct service staff – people who are working in areas that sort of made us stand above and beyond – a lot are not here anymore and it really concerns me."

Davis felt similarly, saying one of his goals when joining the board "was to try to stay away from any cuts that would affect the direct service of students."

He added, "I do like the other part of this motion – having a teacher involved, going over that with staff, so that part I definitely like; I just don't want to see us losing a whole special education teacher."

But in the end, the motion carried 4-2 with Bromley and Davis against (Amy Lynch

Gracias was absent from the meeting).

Also at the meeting, the board decided which cuts to make to bring the 2015-16 budget down to the necessary zero percent increase the Board of Finance had mandated, and which was approved at the May 26 referendum.

The \$154,639 in cuts will include: \$99,639 from the administrative changes (\$60,793 from the assistant principal position at Hebron Elementary School and \$38,846 from the director of curriculum and technology position); \$40,000 from certified staff retirements and turnover; and \$15,000 from medical insurance.

The reductions passed unanimously.

Prior to voting, Connolly said the cuts came out of necessity.

"I did not want to make any cuts to this budget, and all of us worked very hard to provide what we thought was reasonable to the town," she stated. "Unfortunately, that failed at referendum and the Board of Finance made cuts for a zero percent increase and that's why we're sitting here today making this cut. Not because myself or anyone else wanted to make any cuts to this budget."

Board member Ramon Biere shared those sentiments.

"I appreciate the entire community coming out and voting for our revised budget. The cuts were unfortunate but necessary based on the public's voting record," he stated, adding "I appreciate the support of the staff and the administration for all they've done to help us out with this matter."

The next Board of Education budget was scheduled for Thursday, June 11, after press time.

Hebron Receives 11th Consecutive Finance Award

by Geeta Sandberg

For the 11th year in a row, Hebron has received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), a nonprofit professional association that serves approximately 17,500 government finance professionals in the United States and Canada.

The award, which was established in 1945, was given for the town's comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR) documenting the July 2013-June 2014 fiscal year.

The CAFR is an extensive document more than 100 pages long which details where the town is spending and receiving money.

In a press release sent by GFOA regarding the recognition, the certificate was described

as "the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management."

According to the release, the CAFR is judged by an impartial panel "to meet the high standards of the program including demonstrating a constructive 'spirit of full disclosure' to clearly communicate its financial story and motivate potential users and user groups to read the CAFR."

Along with the Certificate of Achievement awarded to the town, GFOA also presented an Award of Financial Reporting Achievement (AFRA) to Finance Director Elaine Griffin,

Accounting Clerk Susan Hushin, and Financial Administrator Kristy Merrifield, the individuals GFOA designated as primarily responsible for the town's recognition.

Griffin said this week she was "pretty ecstatic" about the award.

"We certainly work very hard to make sure that all the 'Is' are dotted and the 'Ts' are crossed," she said, and that the finance department is following the necessary accounting principles.

"So I'm pretty excited that we've gotten it for the 11th year in a row – it says we're doing our job."

Also speaking on the recognition this week, Board of Finance Chairman Mike Hazel said,

"I think it's a testament to the work of our finance department. Elaine has done a great job as has the entire finance office with our financial reporting and in the openness in our disclosures."

Hazel added 11 years was "a pretty good run and I commend them on the effort they put forth to continue to get the CAFR."

Similarly, Town Manager Andrew Tierney said of the award, "I think it's wonderful."

He said Griffin, along with her staff, "does a great job year after year for the taxpayers of Hebron. She works well with all the department heads and has their respect" and that teamwork, he furthered, has helped the town "achieve this prestigious award" again and again.

Farmington Man Dies in Andover Crash

by Geeta Sandberg

A Farmington resident died last week following a police pursuit that started in Manchester and ended with a crash in Andover.

According to State Police, at around 1:25 p.m. last Thursday, June 4, a state trooper attempted to conduct a motor vehicle stop after he saw a vehicle enter a coned-off construction zone and strike several barrels on Interstate 384 in Manchester.

The trooper used the emergency lights and sirens on his cruiser to try and stop the driver, who was later identified as Ronald B. Utman, 64, of Farmington; however, he continued to drive through the construction zone and then eastbound on Route 6, police said.

According to a release from the state Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Utman continued traveling on the road until he came to the intersection of Route 6 and Burnap Brook Road in Andover, where he traveled off the right shoulder, struck an

embankment and landed in a brook.

Police were able to pull Utman from the water and he was found to have serious injuries. LifeStar was initially called to take him to the hospital, but it was too late; Utman was pronounced dead at the scene.

According to Trooper Kelly Grant of the state police's public information office, the pursuit was not high speed and Troopers remain unsure as to why Utman didn't stop.

"It could have been a lot of things," she said this week. "Once troopers are done with their investigation and the medical examiners are done, we will hopefully be able to know what the reason was that he drove through the construction zone, that he didn't stop and that he ultimately crashed."

The accident remains under investigation and any witnesses are asked to contact state police at 860-534-1006.

Fire Damages Coco Drive Home in Colchester

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

A home on Coco Drive sustained smoke damage last weekend after exercise equipment in the basement caught fire, according to Fire Department Chief Walter Cox.

The fire began at around 4 p.m. Saturday, June 6, at 19 Coco Dr. Neighbors noticed black smoke coming from the first and second floors, and called 911.

Cox said the home was vacant at the time of the fire; the homeowners were in Rhode Island at the time. The fire began in the basement with some exercise equipment smoldering and causing black smoke to travel up into the first and second floors.

"It was a lot of plastic giving off heavy black smoke," Cox said.

There was no structural damage, Cox said, but black soot covered multiple parts of the home.

"The fire was under control in 15 minutes," Cox said.

There was a cat inside, but it came out, and the firefighters found it.

"It was highly agitated, but okay and alive," Cox said. "We turned it over to the neighbors until the homeowners came home."

There was no electricity going to the equipment at the time, Cox said. Fire Marshal Sean Shoemaker said Thursday something – he would not say what – was sitting on top of the equipment and caught fire, causing the equipment to burn.

East Hampton Town Councilor's Budget Comments Discussed

by John Tyczkowski

Monday evening, Board of Education members addressed comments from town councilor Ted Hintz Jr. that had been published in both the *Rivereast* and the *Middletown Press*.

School board member Chris Goff said he took issue with Hintz's comments in both newspapers that the Board of Education "pads its budget."

"I was a little taken aback by that, and I wanted to make the board aware of those comments," he said. "I would like to invite Mr. Hintz in to discuss the Board of Education's budget with the finance subcommittee, the superintendent and the business manager," he said.

The board went through several iterations of finalizing the motion's language, ultimately agreeing to invite him to discuss the budget with the finance, transportation and grounds committee, the superintendent and the business manager.

Board member Scott Minnick was in support of the motion.

"I think that elected officials who make such uninformed and unproven comments in the newspapers [are] wrong, and this is a good way to hold someone accountable," he said. "When you're an elected official, you're not speaking for yourself. If there are concerns they need to be addressed formally."

Board member Jeff Carlson called the motion "playing politics to a degree," but said he found the motion was justified and hoped Hintz would accept the invitation.

Board member Emily Fahle said she would support an out-of-meeting clarification as well.

However, board member Josh Piteo called the motion censorship and an affront to free speech.

"You're being the thought police here, this is disgraceful," he said. "And also, this is a quote from a newspaper. How do you know it's an accurate quote?"

"And you're essentially saying, 'I don't like what you said, so I want you to come in here and explain yourself,'" Piteo added. "This quells free speech."

The board voted 8-1, with Piteo as the lone 'no' vote.

Student Board of Education representatives Erin Provost and Jacob Gagliastri were honored by board chair Ken Barber and Superintendent of Schools Dugas at the meeting as well.

The two students, who have been on the board for their entire senior year, will be graduating in just over a week.

Regular duties included delivering updates to the board about goings-on at the high school, from sports games to concerts and other student events.

"You guys both did a great job, we're certainly going to miss you," Barber said.

Dugas said she recognized both seniors "with great pride" as she read both of their accomplishments during their time at East Hampton High School.

"Both Erin and Jacob have exemplified what student leadership means," she said. "You've been active voices for all of the students you represent."

Dugas described Provost as "a leader in the school and community."

"Your academic accomplishments speak for themselves, but they're matched by your soulful compassion for others," she said to Provost. "You're a member of the National Honor Society and the Model UN, I could go on and on."

In addition, Provost served as a guidance ambassador for freshmen students incoming to the high school, and was active in Special Olympics as well.

When talking about Gagliastri, she called "leadership in the school and community an integral part of [his] DNA long before high school."

"In addition to being an outstanding scholar, you've also been actively involved in the Interact Club, Relay for Life and Special Olympics," Dugas said to Gagliastri.

Both students were also members of the track and cross-country teams for all four years, and received multiple scholarships for college.

Dugas and Barber presented the two with gifts, to applause from the board and those in attendance.

After the meeting, Provost and Gagliastri said they would look forward to future student representatives offering their opinions on the board's issues, something they had done for the first time that night.

"It was fun today to be involved, even though on certain subjects we may not have many comments to make," she said.

Gagliastri echoed her, saying he was "hop-

ing it'll become a regular thing next year."

Both said they thought their involvement in all aspects of the school and community enriched their years at EHHS, and were excited for that same level of involvement in college.

Next year, Provost will head to Northeastern University in Boston to study engineering, and Gagliastri will head to Allegheny College in Meadville, Pa., as a pre-med student with the goal of becoming a physician's assistant.

The board also accepted school business manager Karen Asetta's resignation that evening, on or about June 30.

Asetta said in her letter that she accepted "a compelling career growth opportunity in another district."

In that same letter, she described herself as "proudly having a near lifelong association with the schools in East Hampton."

During public remarks, former board member Bill Marshall offered his praise of Asetta.

Marshall said he wanted to publicly thank Asetta for her service to the community.

"I also wanted to personally let her know how much I've appreciated her help during my term on the board," he said. "I also wanted to acknowledge that her service goes far beyond Central Services. She was once a member of this board too."

"I don't know if people understand the scope of what you do, from transportation to food service to the budget. Thank you," Marshall said to her.

East Hampton School Board Eyes Dugas Investigation

by John Tyczkowski

The Board of Education met behind closed doors for more than two hours Tuesday night to discuss Superintendent of Schools Diane Dugas.

And when they emerged, board members agreed to table until next week a motion to hire an independent counsel to investigate Dugas' job performance.

The executive session took place in the East Hampton High School library, and was attended by all the members of the board, as well as attorney Susan L. Scott of Hartford-based Pullman & Conley.

Neither Dugas, nor an attorney representing her, attended the meeting. Her contract, renewed in June 2014, allows the board to discuss a personnel matter relating to her without her being present.

Upon open session, the board tabled a motion on the agenda to "employ an independent counsel to investigate superintendent's conduct."

However, board member Chris Goff did

make a motion for the board to change its original language of investigating "conduct" to "performance," which passed.

"That agenda item needs a reworking because 'conduct' has too many negative implications," board chair Ken Barber said.

The board made no further comment on why the motion was tabled, or on the evaluation, before adjourning.

The board will continue discussing Dugas' job performance on Monday, June 15, Board of Education Chairman Ken Barber said. The meeting will take place at 7 p.m., also in the EHHS library.

The town hired Dugas as superintendent in February 2013, and she started in July of that year. Before then, she had served as the curriculum director for Granby Public Schools, the assistant superintendent for Region 4 schools in Chester, Deep River and Essex, and had been a school principal in both Manchester and New Britain.

Future of Funding for EHHS Project Still Unclear

by John Tyczkowski

Last Thursday at its regular meeting, the high school building committee learned the state's General Assembly did not address a bill fully restoring East Hampton's high school renovation reimbursement before adjourning its session the night before.

Originally, the state committed to pay half of the \$51 million cost of renovating the high school. However, in February, the Department of Administrative Services opted to not fund the reimbursement, citing the school's size as too large for the town's declining student body.

If that decision is not reversed, East Hampton would have to pay another \$7 million in renovation costs.

Since then, state Rep. Melissa Ziobron and state Sen. Art Linares had worked to include East Hampton in an omnibus bill, with six other towns, which would restore full funding from the state.

The General Assembly's regular session ended last Wednesday at midnight without action on the omnibus bill. However, the bill should be addressed in a trailer session that addresses remaining bills before the June 30 deadline, committee chair Sharon Smith said.

"Trailer sessions are not unusual, that entire construction bill is in there," she said. "Melissa said the whole thing would probably take two weeks to set up and start."

Details of East Hampton Arrest Show Evidence of Impaired Driving

by John Tyczkowski

Police arrested Jennifer VanWycke, 35, of 14 Myrtle Road, two weeks ago in connection with a fatal accident in town last fall.

VanWycke was charged with second-degree manslaughter with a motor vehicle, risk of injury, operating an unregistered motor vehicle, failure to carry a license, failure to drive right, driving on a sidewalk, operating a motor vehicle under the influence, misconduct with a motor vehicle, possession of a narcotic substance, failure to keep a narcotic drug in the original container and possession of drug paraphernalia.

Second-degree manslaughter with a motor vehicle is a Class C felony, which carries a penalty of one to 10 years in prison, a one-year driver's license suspension and the installation of an ignition interlock device for two years after the reinstallation of driving privileges.

On the morning of Oct. 17, 2014, VanWycke's vehicle, traveling southbound, veered into the northbound lane of North Main Street and onto the sidewalk and struck Jim Morris, 79, which resulted in his death.

VanWycke's vehicle continued on the sidewalk, striking a stone wall, a newspaper box and a tree as well before coming to a complete stop "several hundred feet away," according to a sworn affidavit on file at Middletown Superior Court.

That same affidavit said officers obtained vials of VanWycke's blood, to be used as evi-

dence for the manslaughter charge. VanWycke had given consent to have blood drawn at Marlborough Medical Center following the accident.

Shortly before 10 a.m. that day, police responded to the area around 40 North Main Street in response to a call of a motor vehicle-pedestrian accident, the affidavit states. A bystander attempted resuscitative measures on Morris until police, and then fire and EMS personnel, arrived, according to the affidavit.

The document also noted that the day was clear and sunny, with no adverse road conditions.

Police ran VanWycke through standard field sobriety tests after police observed her staggering out of her vehicle, which she all failed. She was uninjured, and participated in the tests voluntarily, according to the affidavit.

The officer conducting the tests said he did not smell alcohol, and suspected VanWycke was "under the influence of something other than alcohol and was not fit to operate a motor vehicle."

After her examination at Marlborough Medical Center, police brought in a drug recognition expert from the Norwich Police Department, who said in his opinion that VanWycke was under influence of several drugs and unable to safely operate a motor vehicle, according to the affidavit.

VanWycke has pleaded not guilty to all charges, and is next due in Middletown Superior Court on June 16.

Police Searching for Portland Hit-and-Run Driver

by John Tyczkowski

Police are searching for the driver of an SUV involved in a hit-and-run Tuesday evening.

Around 6:40 p.m., Portland Police Department Sgt. Jim Kelly said a black SUV – possibly a Chevy Tahoe or a GMC model – struck a 16-year old male around 73 Middle Haddam Rd.

The 16-year-old was jogging east by the south shoulder of the road when he was struck

by the driver, who was also traveling eastbound.

Kelly said there was no debris left at the scene.

The jogger was transported to Connecticut Children's Medical Center and treated for non-life threatening injuries.

Police ask anyone with information to call Officer Ahlquist at 860-342-6780.

New, Lighter Budget Set for East Hampton Referendum

by John Tyczkowski

Following last week's referendum defeat, a series of adjustments were made to the proposed 2015-16 budget, bringing it to \$41.38 million.

The new proposed spending package is now a 2.71 percent increase over the current year's budget. The budget will head back to a third referendum later this month.

The June 2 budget defeat was by a mere 11 votes, 1,102-1,191. The Board of Finance met last Thursday and did not make any further cuts to the budget, and after debate, the Town Council Tuesday agreed.

However, on the school budget side, due to a few expenditures that came in lower than first expected, such as health insurance costs and transportation costs, and additional revenue from the state coming in when the state budget was passed last Wednesday, there is an overall net reduction to the budget of \$46,511. This left the bottom line of the East Hampton budget at \$41,377,510.

The new, slimmer spending package results in a proposed mill increase of 0.93 mills, which would bring the proposed mill rate to 28.07. This would be a 3.42 percent tax increase.

A mill is \$1 tax per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Under the proposed mill rate, if a house is assessed at \$200,000, then taxes paid on it for the 2015-16 fiscal year would be \$5,614.

Though ultimately deciding on no additional reductions, that didn't stop some Town Council members from trying Tuesday. Councilor Mark Philhower made a motion to reduce the Board of Education budget by another \$200,000, and to cut the half-year police officer position, saving \$47,000.

That would equate to a 0.73 mill increase, for a 27.87 mill rate.

Town Council Chairwoman Barbara Moore focused on the possible public safety issues which could come with a reduced police force.

"We have 30 private-duty jobs out there this summer because of all the work being done in town," she said. "We're short for people on for patrol, and there are not enough sergeants for supervision."

"There's just not a way you can say that it's a good thing to not put in a third officer," she added.

Councilors George Pfaffenbach and Phillip

Visintainer agreed, with Visintainer saying East Hampton Police Chief Sean Cox had "very well demonstrated" the need for additional officers to bring the police department back up to 2007-08 levels of 16 officers.

"I'm dead against cuts to the Board of Ed, and I'm dead against cutting the police officer," Pfaffenbach said. "We're growing, and you can't do more with less, we have to move forward."

Councilor Ted Hintz Jr. who joined the meeting via telephone, rebutted Moore's public safety points, citing Cox's increased interdepartmental cooperation as his counterexample.

"Sean Cox has been exceptional in building working relationships with the state police; we never had that. Our former chief never went and asked the state for help," he said. "We are so much further along thanks to Sean than we ever were in 2007-2008."

Hintz also reminded the council that the town had put mutual aid agreements in place with Portland, Middletown and Cromwell police to fill private duty jobs.

"They're all there to help, and we're getting the help we need," he said. "To build up the police force for something that is temporary [the private-duty jobs], I don't agree with."

Council vice chair Kevin Reich argued specifically against reducing the Board of Education budget by \$400,000.

"I have a problem with that large a cut from the Board of Ed. They've already taken a substantial reduction from the previous vote," he said. "I realize the vote went down, but it went down by 11 votes. Virtually 50 percent of the community were in acceptance of the budget, and 50 percent wanted a reduction of some sort."

"[The Board of Education is] already looking at cuts that are going to make decided changes to this district, even before this additional \$200,000 cut," he said.

Hintz also said he was "100 percent in favor" of removing the additional \$200,000 from the Board of Education's budget.

"We have a lot of things there in the admin department that are not trickling down to the students," he said. "I think the Board of Education is absolutely top-heavy, and needs the reduction, and they need to make due at the admin

level with what they're given, and they need to make sure our students are taken care of."

After the council defeated Philhower's proposal 4-3, along party lines, Reich made a motion to adopt the Board of Finance's proposal as-is, with no changes.

The council accepted that proposal 4-3, also along party lines.

Councilors also set the referendum date for Wednesday, June 24. It will take place at the middle school from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The day before, the council will hold a town meeting to present the budget as proposed to the voters at referendum.

This year marks the second year in a row when East Hampton has gone to the polls three times for its town budget.

* * *

However, before the council voted Tuesday not to cut the school budget, the school board met Monday to deliberate over possible areas to cut – just in case they were told to do so.

Monday evening, the Board of Education considered ways for the district to accommodate reductions in its 2015-16 budget.

These proposals were detailed in a two-page handout distributed among board members as well as attendees.

The sheet divided possible action into two avenues, which involved either changing non-instructional categories or changing instructional categories.

Examples of the former would include raising student activities fees, cutting a bus or instituting parking fees at the high school.

Examples of the latter would include eliminating a teaching position.

"This is all speculative until we have a number we need to work with," Board of Education Chairman Ken Barber said. "But it's an important exercise; we're already \$200,000 short of what we wanted."

Members talked about eliminating the new proposed summer school program, which would save \$40,692.

Also, eliminating a bus would save \$41,983, but would leave each bus to carry an average of 60 students.

That actual number could vary depending on parents driving their kids to school, and seniors who decided to take the bus, school business

manager Karen Asetta said.

Also, superintendent of schools Diane Dugas said, reorganizing the routes with one less bus could result in 45 minute or longer ride times for students who live in the more rural southern part of town, off main roads.

"That's an additional impact on students we need to consider," she said. "That's a very long day, especially for younger students, and we need to balance that concern as well."

"Keeping bus rides as short as possible has always been our goal," she said.

In addition, instituting a parking fee for seniors at the high school could raise \$14,400, with a \$100 per semester fee. And that number would go up in the future when the current number of 72 spaces increases to 105 spaces.

Eliminating a single teaching position could save around \$80,000 a year between salary and benefits, but would also increase class sizes by 3-4 students, depending on which grade the teacher was cut from.

The board also spent a lot of time discussing athletic participation fees at the middle school and high school. If raised, after subtracting a slight drop in participation from the increase, the schools could see a savings of about \$25,000.

However, board member Debra Devin suggested instead of a specific athletic fee, the school could institute a general extracurricular fee for all after-school activities to spread out the cost.

Board member Steven Kelly, Skyping in from Florida, took that a step further and suggested the idea of a college-style student activities fee.

"We could do something like a flat \$20 fee for all students for the whole year," he said. "It'd be interesting to see the numbers run."

Barber said that such a fee could offset stipend costs paid to those who supervise those employees, resulting in savings overall.

Board members did say overall that they would prefer to find a non-instructional solution rather than having to cut into instructional aspects.

"There's just no way we can cut a teacher without a large impact to students," acting chair Scott Minnick said. "If we have to make cuts, I'm leaning toward non-instructional areas."

Roundabout Proposed for Portland Park Entrance

by John Tyczkowski

Twenty five-year Portland resident Joe Balskus said while he was in support of the proposed Portland Town Park, most recently presented at the Board of Selectmen meeting last Wednesday June 3, he had a suggestion to make.

Balskus, a principal with CDM Smith, a roundabout expert and a certified traffic operations engineer, said he wanted to "make the project better, safer and to save the town money."

At the meeting, Balskus, a member of the Institute of Transportation Engineers' national roundabout committee, presented the benefits of using a roundabout for the park entrance instead of a stop sign and a T-intersection as is currently proposed.

"This would be an un-signalized intersection converted into a roundabout," he said. "It would slow traffic from 50 mph or more on Route 17 to 25 mph. It would eliminate left turns and you'd only be looking in one direction, and entering the roundabout you'd have the right of way."

"They're really the safest intersection type to use," he said.

While Balskus said the T-intersection isn't a bad design, he said "it could be safer," stressing the elimination of left turns, and citing a 70 percent reduction in accidents at intersections that are redesigned to use roundabouts to eliminate turning left.

Also, the roundabout would literally come at no cost to Portland, he said.

"You can get LOTCIP (Local Transportation Council Improvement Program) funding, available to towns for capital projects at intersections," Balskus said. "As a state road intersection leading to a town park, you can apply for funding and the state would pay 100 percent."

By contrast, the town would have to spend money to create an extension to Strickland Street for the T-intersection, in addition to the

park's \$5 million estimated price tag.

Balskus also said he would design the roundabout for the town as his gift to Portland, which could be three-legged and connect only Route 17 to the park, or four-legged, with Strickland Street.

"And then, you can take the money you saved and use that for maintenance," he said, referring to Public Works Director Rick Kelsey's concern over funding and staffing for maintaining the proposed park.

In a phone interview Tuesday morning, Balskus also laid out the differences between a roundabout and a rotary, a similar traffic construction common in Massachusetts.

"A rotary is larger, with a higher allowed speed and has no deflection on the approaches," he said, referring to lane-splitting islands. "You come into the rotary and just keep on going; cars that enter have to yield to those already there."

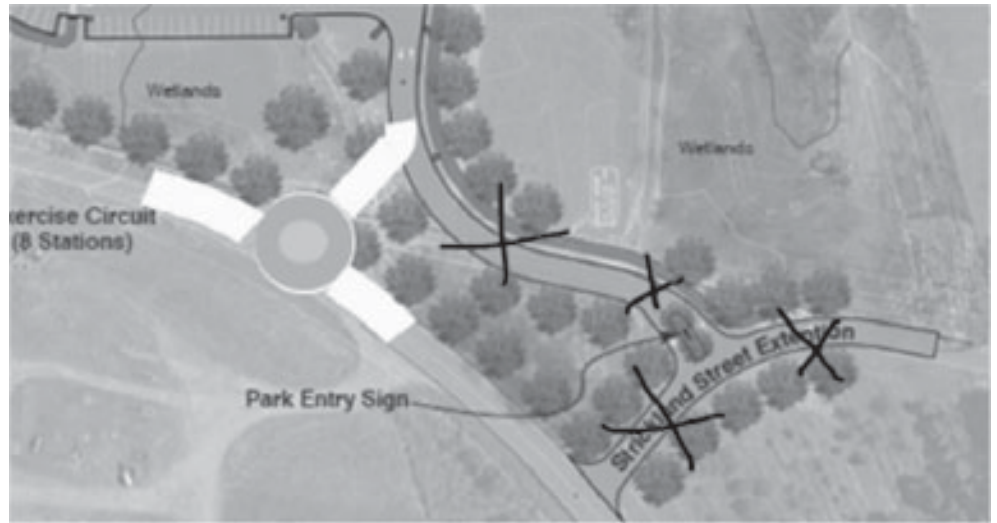
Modern roundabouts are much smaller, about half the size of a rotary, Balskus continued, and are yield-on-entry, which means cars in the roundabout must yield to those that are entering. This makes drivers maintain a low speed once inside.

While peoples' minds may jump instantly to the Salem Four Corners roundabout, Balskus said a much more apt comparison would be a roundabout under construction in Monroe on Route 188.

"The Salem roundabout is for an intersection which was previously signalized; you can't compare the two," he said. "What they're doing [in Monroe] and what we could do here is put in a roundabout in a higher-speed, rural area where there were no traffic signals."

Another good comparison is the roundabout leading to Look Park in Northampton, MA, in almost exactly the same traffic situation as the proposed Town Park, he said.

Balskus also said putting in aprons, which create more room for larger vehicles to turn, on



A roundabout has been suggested in place of a T-intersection at the entrance to the new park proposed for the corner of Route 17 and Strickland Street.

the center of the roundabout would allow for trucks to continue to use Route 17; however, fire trucks and school buses are small enough that they could navigate the roundabout without such accommodation.

And while maintaining a roundabout will cost more than maintaining a stop sign, though less than a traffic signal, Balskus said the safety benefits are well worth it.

"There's a cliché in traffic engineering: with an accident in a roundabout, you need first aid, but with an accident in a signal or stop sign, you need an ambulance," he said. "It's due to the overall slower speed in the roundabout, the traffic calming effect and no left turns."

In addition, Balskus has been working with students at his alma mater, Central Connecticut State University, to help create a concrete plan for creating such a roundabout.

Balskus has been on the Civil Engineering Advisory Board in the School of Engineering at CCSU for about 15 years, and has been a

senior project student adviser for about five years on civil and transportation engineering projects. This year, he offered his students the chance to design the Town Park roundabout.

"I had students clamoring to do this project, which made me very optimistic," he said. "They're even willing to come in and do a presentation to the selectmen in the future if there's a need."

As part of the project, with his guidance, two students fully engineered and designed three- and four-legged roundabout plans for the proposed park, the results of which were given to the selectmen last Wednesday.

Balskus says he hopes the town seriously considers the roundabout plan.

"You have grandma and grandpa coming to the park and you don't want them turning left; and you want safer access for everyone who comes to use the park," he said. "And the key to greater safety really is to use a roundabout."

Discussion Held on Portland Fire Museum's Future

by John Tyczkowski

Two Portland non-profit groups turned out last Thursday evening to offer their support to the Connecticut Cellar Savers.

At a Board of Selectmen meeting last month, Cellar Savers president Mike Tierney stated the fire museum on Main Street was in danger of closing due to declining active membership and financial woes.

The total active membership of Cellar Savers is fewer than 10, and there are 27 due paying members, down from a high of nearly 100 several years ago, Tierney said.

The museum is perhaps best known in town for being the base of operations for the Cellar Savers' Christmas toy train display, which has been running for 11 years. The holiday fixture routinely draws over 1,000 visitors each season, from Thanksgiving to early January, from all over the state and country. It has even drawn international visitors.

However, during the remaining 10 months of the year, the fire museum is home to antique firefighting equipment and apparatus from around the state, and helps to preserve and honor the memories of firefighters in town.

The Cellar Savers rent the building from the town, which once served as a fire station and police station, for \$1 annually. But the group is responsible for building upkeep.

The Portland chapter of the Cellar Savers is one of two in the state; the other is based in Milford. The local chapter draws members not only from Portland but also from Middletown, Cromwell, Deep River, Chester and even Watertown.

During the meeting June 4, the Cellar Savers debated how, if possible, to keep the fire museum open - and whether or not to disband.

Claire Frisbee of the Portland Historical Society attended, as did representatives from the local Knights of Columbus chapter.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield was also in attendance.

Both Frisbee and Jerry Poulin of KoC Chapter 7 stressed the importance of networking with other non-profits in order to reinvigorate the Cellar Savers.

"All volunteer groups have problems finding members these days," Frisbee said. "But we're all always looking for partnerships."

As an example, she said the historical society has worked with the Portland Public Library to set up a "Talks on Tuesdays" series on various facets of Portland's history.

Poulin said he had first-hand experience with the Cellar Savers' problem as well.

"We went through the very same thing. A few years ago we were down to nothing, and now we have 130 members," he said. "So it's possible."

The Cellar Savers also stressed membership is open to anyone; being a firefighter, or former firefighter, or owning an antique fire truck, is not a requirement.

Cellar Savers member Joe Dinegar, who also owns the Musterdogs food truck in town, urged the group to invest in social media outreach.

"There are those people out there who are locked into an electronic society who live there, and reside there," he said. "This is the way to reach them."

Specifically, Dinegar called for the group to look into creating a cause on GoFundMe, a crowdfunding site where people can raise money via online donations for almost any cause or reason.

"People [receive] money for all sorts of stuff on there," he said. "It would help us reach a part of society who don't want to own a fire truck, but would love to be a part of something like [the Cellar Savers]."

"You might find that after a year or two of doing this, that you sell 300 calendars as gag gifts in Singapore, but it's 300 calendars," Dinegar added.

Dinegar also suggested greater activity on the group's Facebook page, possibly emailing out a digital newsletter as opposed to the group's current snail mail-only publication, and encouraging online memberships.

Frisbie agreed, citing her experience with the Portland Historical Society's social media reach.

"Our Facebook page is where all of the

people get their news about us," she said.

Cellar Savers members also talked about reaching out to the Fire Explorers, a group of under-18 prospective firefighters, for their help, as well as making appeals to each of the state's 315 fire departments for assistance.

Bransfield, who had been corresponding with Fire Chief Bob Shea on the matter, said she would set up a meeting with Shea "as soon as possible" to help address the issues.

Shea, Bransfield and Cellar Savers trustee Bob Currier met Tuesday evening to do exactly that.

In an interview Wednesday afternoon, Shea said the meeting largely focused on reducing the Cellar Savers' costs in order to help them maintain their building.

"They have to deal with upkeep, power and heat, and they have a very old oil boiler which isn't very efficient," he said. "And we just had a very rough winter. Heat is one of the biggest obstacles right now and is a burden on their operating budget."

The Cellar Savers' annual budget is between \$5,000 and \$6,000, and "they really don't have that many expenses at all," Shea said.

However, Shea added the Portland Volunteer Fire Department was committed to helping the museum stay open.

"The museum means an awful lot to the department," he said. "It deals with every aspect of our history that you can imagine. We've lost many firefighters over the years, and the history of them is there."

He furthered, "We have a vested interest to work with the Cellar Savers to make sure the museum stays open."

In addition, Shea said he wanted to be more public in town, perhaps partnering with the historical society to let people learn the history of the town through the fire department.

Using social media, per Dinegar's suggestions, was on the table, Shea said, but not an immediate focus.

"Members of the public who work in the tech field have wanted to donate their time for tech programs in the fire department in the past, so I

figure I'll reach out to them about the museum," he said. "We certainly want to explore that avenue."

Other ways of reducing the costs of operating the museum include conducting an energy audit to avoid losing money through inefficiencies, as well as possibly converting to a gas boiler.

Bransfield is looking into those possibilities as well as into grants that could help in those areas, Shea said.

Finally, another option is to open up the building to other organizations to use for their meetings, for donations.

"If the building isn't occupied the town will maintain it anyway," Shea said. "But it'll be much more useful staying occupied."

Shea also emphasized the strong connection between the fire department and the Cellar Savers' fire museum.

"It's critically important to carry on the legacy of those members who are gone and to never forget them. All the memorabilia on display to honor those who have passed and who have served greatly for the town of Portland over the years," he said. "The museum really is the best way to honor them."

To that end, Shea said after the Cellar Savers voted in March whether or not to close the museum, he urged them to consider alternatives first.

"I didn't want them to do something that we couldn't reverse. I wanted to try to come up with a game plan," he said. "Our department is more than willing to assist in any way they can for the sake of our memories. I think we can do this as a team."

The next phase of discussions between the Cellar Savers, the fire department and the town will begin in mid-July, and anyone interested is urged to get involved, Shea said.

More information about the Cellar Savers is available on their website, ctcellarsavers.org, and their Facebook page, [facebook.com/ConnecticutCellarSaversInc](https://www.facebook.com/ConnecticutCellarSaversInc).

East Hampton Woman Gets Five Years for Real Estate Appraisal Scheme

Ann Hills, 55, of East Hampton, was sentenced this week to 63 months of imprisonment, followed by five years of supervised release, for operating a real estate appraisal scheme, Deirdre M. Daly, United States attorney for the District of Connecticut, announced in a press release.

According to court documents and statements made in court, Hills was not a provisional or certified real estate appraiser in the state of Connecticut at any time. Between approximately December 2006 and March 2008, Hills conspired with her daughter, Brandy Gomez, to obtain more than \$47,000 in real estate appraisal fees, to which they were not entitled, Daly said. As part of the scheme, she said, Hills and Gomez knowingly submitted falsified work logs to the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection purporting to show Gomez, a provisional appraiser, completed dozens of real estate appraisals under the supervision of a certified appraiser when, in fact, Gomez had not performed such work and was not entitled to such appraisal fees.

Hills also used the individual names, certified appraiser license numbers, business names, and, in some instances, signatures, of

three certified appraisers without their authorization in dozens of fraudulent real estate appraisals, the press release stated. Hills submitted the appraisals to co-conspirators who used the appraisals in support of obtaining fraudulent mortgages for straw borrowers, the release said - and the appraisals contributed to more than \$2.5 million in actual or intended losses to various mortgage lenders.

Hills was ordered to pay \$47,908 in restitution.

On Aug. 22, 2014, Hills pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit mail and bank fraud.

On March 19, 2014, Gomez pleaded guilty to the same charge. Last month, she was sentenced to one day of imprisonment and five years of supervised release, and was ordered to pay \$47,908 in restitution.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development - Office of Inspector General, Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation Division and U.S. Postal Inspection Service. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney David T. Huang.

Hebron Police News

6/6: State Police said they are investigating after a criminal mischief and larceny complaint at the Air Line Trail parking lot on Route 85. Anyone with information can call Trooper Thomas Kelo at 860-465-5400.

East Hampton Police News

5/28: Ryan Holzmagel, 28, of 51 Jodi Dr., Wallingford, was issued a summons for failure to have tail lamps, illegal operation of a motor vehicle with a suspended license and illegal operation of a motor vehicle without minimum insurance, East Hampton Police said.

6/3: Kate M. Begin, 19, of 43 Viola Dr., was issued a ticket for possession of less than half an ounce of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia, police said. In the same incident, Garret A. Maynard, 23, of 4 Watrous St., was issued a ticket for possession of less than half an ounce of marijuana.

6/4: Alan A. Greco, 58, of 35 Mathieu Ln., was charged with disorderly conduct and third-degree assault, police said.

Various Tools Taken from Colchester Home

A variety of tools and lawn equipment were taken from a Middletown Road residence Tuesday, June 2, on Middletown Road, Colchester Police said.

Police said numerous wrenches, air tools, a chainsaw, a welder, a jump pack, weed whacker, leaf blower, compact drill, battery packs and a charger were stolen from a detached garage on the property. Police said entry was made through a door on the garage. While the door itself was locked, police said, there was a dead bolt on the door, and this was not locked.

Due to the large size and quantity of items taken, police said they suspect the burglar had a vehicle.

Colchester Police News

6/1: Colchester Police said Melissa Gamache, 39, of 72 Windham Ave., was arrested and charged with DUI and interfering with an officer.

6/3: State Police said Howard Duffy, 39, of 32 Waterhole Rd., was arrested and charged with third-degree assault and disorderly conduct.

6/4: State Police said Christopher Stone, 19, of 132 Stollman Rd., was arrested and charged with reckless driving and risk of injury to a child.

6/6: Colchester Police said Eric Januszewski, 47, of 108 Hagen Rd., Salem, was arrested and charged with DUI, failure to drive in the proper lane, operating a motor vehicle while on a

handheld device, and operating without a license. During a neighborhood canvass, a neighbor reported seeing a suspicious newer-model white Ford F150 pickup truck with side steps on the bed and an aluminum ladder rack, police said. Neighbors told police the truck was seen traveling east on Route 16 in Colchester around 3 p.m. on June 2, then spotted later that day traveling west on Route 16 toward East Hampton.

Colchester Police issued a reminder to residents to utilize all locks, including dead bolts. Police said there has been a recent trend of burglaries in town, and they have been through unlocked or unsecured exterior doors.

Anyone with information can call Officer Bryan Kowalsky at 860-537-7270.

6/6: State Police said Laura Bollard, 51, of 65 Broad St., East Hartford, was arrested and charged with speeding, DUI and failure to drive in the proper lane.

6/7: Colchester Police said Gina Goodrow, 52, of 780 Goodwin St., East Hartford, was arrested and charged with fourth-degree criminal mischief, disorderly conduct, third-degree assault, and third-degree assault on a pregnant woman.

6/7: State Police said Kimberly Butler, 54, of 203 Mack Rd., Lebanon, was arrested and charged with DUI and failure to drive right.

Obituaries

Portland

Anita P. Bump

Anita P. Bump, 74, of Middletown, formerly of Portland and Rockfall, wife of John F. Bump, passed away Wednesday, June 3, at Middlesex Hospital. She was the daughter of the late Joseph and Sarah (Long) Piatti.

Born Jan. 31, 1941, in Middletown, she lived in Portland for most of her life, before moving to Rockfall and then to Middletown. She worked for Durham Manufacturing for many years and was a member of the Church of St. Mary in Portland.

Besides her husband, she leaves her sons, William J. Warner of Durham, Robert Warner and his wife, Amanda of East Hampton and Dean T. Warner of Middletown; daughter, Sherilyn D'Erocle of Bradenton, Fla.; stepdaughters, Anne and Debra; brothers, Joseph Piatti Jr. and James Piatti and his wife, Rose, both of Portland; seven grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins.

She was predeceased by a brother, Thomas Piatti and by a stepdaughter, Mary.

Funeral services were held Monday, June 8, from Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, followed by a Mass that morning at the Church of St. Mary, 51 Freestone Ave., Portland. Burial was in St. Mary Cemetery, Portland. Relative and friends called Sunday, June 7, at the funeral home.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Wadsworth Glen Resident Activity Fund, 30 Boston Rd., Middletown, CT 06457.

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

The family would like to thank Dr. Pace, Middlesex Hospital and Wadsworth Glen for their care and support.



Portland

Lois E. Berndtson

Lois E. Berndtson, 72, of Portland, passed away Friday, June 5, at Middlesex Hospital. She was the daughter of the late J. Everett and Marjorie (Swanson) Berndtson.

Born Aug. 1, 1942, in Middletown, she was a lifelong resident of Portland, graduating from Portland High School, Class of 1960. She worked as a nurse at Hartford Hospital for 28 years, Middlesex Medical Group in Cromwell for 10 years, and Shoreline Surgical Associates in Middletown, retiring in 2014.

Lois was a loving, caring and compassionate person and touched the lives of many during her nursing career. She was a member of the Portland Historical Society and a lifelong active member of Zion Lutheran Church.

She leaves her loving brothers and sister, William Berndtson and his wife, Nancy of Lee, N.H., Donna Berndtson of Portland and David Berndtson and his wife, Mary of East Haddam; nieces and nephews, Sara Nadeau (Al), Charlotte Noon (David), Jeffrey Berndtson (Amy), Jason Berndtson, Gregory Berndtson (Melanie), Timothy Berndtson; several greatnieces, greatnephews and cousins.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, June 13, at 11 a.m., at Zion Lutheran Church, 183 William St., Portland. Burial will be in the Swedish Cemetery, Portland. Relatives and friends may call today, June 12, from 5-7 p.m., at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Zion Lutheran Church Building Fund, P.O. Box 202, Portland, CT 06480.

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

The family would like to give a special thanks to her co-workers at Shoreline Surgical Associates, her home health caregivers, Homecare Hospice, the Weiss Hospice Unit at Middlesex Hospital, and her many friends and family members for their prayers and support throughout her illness. She will be greatly missed.



Colchester

Theodore Stanley Paszek

Theodore Stanley Paszek, 80, of Colchester and formerly of Meriden, beloved husband of Greta (Gardner) Paszek, passed away at home surrounded by his loving family Monday, June 1.

Born April 11, 1935 in Meriden, he was a son of the late Theodore and Lorraine (Trzecienski) Paszek.

Mr. Paszek served proudly during the Korean and Vietnam War with the U.S. Navy before his retirement at the rank of Petty Officer 1st Class. Following his service, he worked for Allegheny Ludlum Tech.

In addition to his loving wife of 58 years, he leaves two children, Theodore and his wife Tamie Paszek of Southington and Lee Ann Stagon of Sterling; three grandchildren, Randy, Tyler and Dustin; a sister, Gale Reynolds of Bristol; and numerous extended family members and friends.

He was predeceased by his brother, Philip.

Private services and burial in the State Veterans Cemetery, Middletown, were observed Monday, June 8.

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

Colchester

Margaret Curtis Funeral Services

Services for the late Margaret "Marge" Curtis, 95, of North Westchester, who passed Sunday, April 26, are as follows:

Visitation, 6-8 p.m. Friday, June 12, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral liturgy will be celebrated at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, June 13, directly at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave., Colchester.

Burial will follow in the Ponemah Cemetery, No. Westchester.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.



Colchester

Jadwiga Regina Nastalczyk

Jadwiga Regina Nastalczyk, "Heidi," 82, of East Hartford, formerly of Colchester, peacefully went home to Our Lord Sunday, June 7. Born Aug. 8, 1932, in Aódz', Poland, she was a daughter of the late Zenon and Broniswawa (Duszynska) Cieslik. She emigrated to the United States in January of 1957 with her children and husband, settling in Colchester to raise her family. She was proud to become a citizen in 1968.

While living in Colchester, Heidi was a communicant of St. Andrew Church, where she also sang in the choir. Proud of her Polish heritage, Heidi was also active with the Ladies' Auxiliary of St. Joseph's Polish Society. She had worked for Beauty Enterprises and then for Brownell before her retirement. In later years, after moving to East Hartford, she attended the East Hartford Senior Center, where she crocheted countless lap blankets for the less fortunate at Christmastime.

Her talents were many - from cooking to needlework and singing and dancing. She will be remembered fondly for her willingness to help anyone in need and for her wonderful sense of humor; always enjoying a good laugh. She will be greatly missed.

She leaves four children, Zdzislaw "Stan" Nastalczyk, Bozena "Bo" Gardner, Marion Nastalczyk and Elizabeth Ungire; eight grandchildren, Ashley, John, Sarina, Christopher Jr., Heather, David, Nathan and Tyler; two great-grandchildren, Trinity and Kaley Rae; two sisters, Josefa Wróbel of England and Zenobinia Junczyk of Poland; her former husband, Wacław "Walter" Nastalczyk; and numerous extended family members and friends.

The family will receive guests starting at 11 a.m. today, June 12, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, before a chapel service at noon. Burial will follow in the New Lebanon Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to the Heidi Nastalczyk Memorial Fund, c/o Savings Institute, 63 Norwich Ave., Colchester, CT 06415.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Brooks Michael DiBenedetto

Brooks Michael DiBenedetto, 22, passed away Sunday, May 31, as a result of a motor vehicle accident.

Brooks was born and raised in Colchester, and more recently lived in Mansfield. He was a graduate of Eastern Connecticut State University, where he earned an agricultural degree.

Brooks leaves behind his cherished wife Marie; his loving parents, Donna and William; his two beloved sisters, Heather DiBenedetto and Amber DiBenedetto, both of Colchester; and a large extended family and numerous close friends.

Services will be private.

Hebron

Virginia Limbacher

Virginia Dare "Ginny" Limbacher of Hebron, formerly of Plant Road in Clifton Park, N.Y., and Hyde Street in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., died Sunday, June 7, at Apple Rehab in Colchester. She was 91.

Ginny was born in Oakfield, Maine, to Geneva Shorey Crandall. Her father, Abel Crandall, died 24 days before she was born. She wed Howard Limbacher in 1950 and enjoyed 62 years of marriage before his death in 2012. She worked at Montgomery Ward in Menands, N.Y., and later served as a bus driver for the Shenendehowa School District, for which she received recognition for her dedication and careful driving.

There was never a more avid New York Yankees fan than Ginny. "Win or lose, that's my team," she said. She also enjoyed gardening, league bowling, playing cards, and the family's yearly vacation to Maine. She is remembered as a particularly excellent baker. She never lost her childlike delight in snow and adored cats and horses. In her later years, she participated in equine-facilitated therapy.

Ginny was predeceased by her husband Howard, her parents, her beloved step-father Paul F. Sherman, sisters Goldie Parker and Jean Dorris, brothers William Crandall and Darrell Crandall, granddaughters Nicole and Leslie Cootware and great-grandson Quinn Cootware.

Survivors include daughters Cheryl Colby of Danby, Vt., Rhonda Shore of Minneapolis, Minn., and Melissa Crandall-Everett (Ed) of Hebron; grandchildren Michelle Perkins, Joshua Cootware (Nichole), Zachary Kretchmer, Eliza Conrad (Kevin), Alex Kretchmer (Kelly), Sharon Watson (Jason), Theresa Dupont and Anthony Everett; great-grandchildren Tony Perkins, Lucas Perkins, Ellery Cootware, Michael, Zoe, and Sam Kretchmer, Madeleine and Daphne Conrad, Maddox Kretchmer and Ana Watson; younger brother Paul Sherman (Doris); numerous nieces and nephews (in particular Ellen Martin, Patric Sherman, Rebecca Graham, Claire Crandall and Cindy Brawn); and special friends Rosemary Hopps, Charles LaGue, Jo Valente, Monique Allaire, Ryan Twomey, and Gene Hersey.

Ginny's family would like to express their thanks to Dawn Anderson and the staff of the memory care unit at Emeritus at Mountain Laurel in Glastonbury, to the staff at Apple Rehab in Colchester, and to Masonicare Home Health and Hospice.

A closed casket funeral service was held Thursday, June 11, at Tunison Funeral Home, 105 Lake Ave., Saratoga Springs, N.Y., during which family and friends shared their memories of Ginny. Burial followed the service, at the Gerald B.H. Solomon-Saratoga National Cemetery in Schuylerville, N.Y.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Ginny's memory may be made to the Alzheimer's Association (alz.org), Masonicare Home Health & Hospice (masonicare.org/mef) or SPIRIT Open Equestrian Program, 2705 West Ox Road, Herndon, VA 20171 (spiritequestrian.org).

Online remembrances may be made at tunisonfuneralhome.com.

courant

Marlborough

William H. Nelson

William H. Nelson, formerly of Marlborough, died Friday, June 5. Born June 13, 1922, in Port Richmond, Staten Island, New York, his parents were Henry Bacon Nelson of Middletown, N.Y., and Carolyn Mary Green of Shepton Mallet, England and Westtown, N.Y.

In June of 1943, at the age of 21, Bill received his Bachelor of Aeronautical Engineering degree from the Polytechnic University of Brooklyn, N.Y., and his commission as 2nd Lieutenant in the US Army Air Corps at Yale University OCS. He was then stationed at Pueblo, Colo., to train for service with B24 Bombers. Part of his training included attending the P&WA engine school in East Hartford from December 1943 to February 1944.

On Jan. 15, 1944, Bill married his childhood sweetheart, Ruth Mary Finch of Middletown, N.Y. Their marriage at St. Thomas Cathedral in New York City was the beginning of a 71-year loving life together.

In June of 1944, Bill was sent to Europe where he was assigned to the 394th Fighter Squadron, for which he served as engineering officer in France and Germany until the end of World War II. In November 1945, Bill began his career with P&WA, first as experimental test engineer, then as flight test engineer, running tests at altitude on the new J-57 jet engines. When flight test was discontinued at Rentschler Field, he joined flight operations engineering, flying worldwide with various airlines, observing and advising flight crews regarding the operation of P&WA engines for optimum efficiency.

In 1950 the Nelsons built their home on the shore of Lake Terramuggus in Marlborough, where they lived for 33 happy years. After retirement from P&WA in 1983, Bill and Ruth moved to Hawaii to be near their son and his wife and two grandsons... and to enjoy several years in the Paradise of the Pacific. In 1995, they returned to Connecticut, settling in Simsbury and spending the winters in Hawaii.

Bill was predeceased by all of his generation except one younger cousin, Lydia Nelson Knob of Goshen, N.Y. Besides his wife, Ruth, he also leaves his son, Gary and his wife Ingrid of Sparks, Nev.; his grandson, Chris and his wife Lisa and 2 great-grandchildren, Malia and Micah of Colorado Springs, Colo.; and grandson Andrew and his wife Elizabeth of Boise, Idaho. He also leaves a great host of nieces and nephews, cousins of various degrees, in-laws, and other "shirt-tail" relatives of the Nelson family.

Uncle Bill will be remembered with love and remembrance of all the happy times... family picnics, golf tournaments, holiday dinners, wedding and anniversary celebrations shared by his family and friends.

There will be no calling hours nor service in Simsbury. At the convenience of the family, there will be a graveside service and burial of ashes at the Nelson-Green family plot, Wallkill Cemetery, Middletown, N.Y.