

RIVEREAST

News Bulletin

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Collecting for Food Bank... Symmetry Physical Therapy is collecting donations under its holiday tree, to benefit Portland Food Bank. Symmetry will take food, new unwrapped toys/clothes and/or money. Hours are 8 a.m.-5 p.m. The last day of the collection is Friday, Dec. 21. Pictured are Symmetry staff Keith Arcari, Makenna Lommori, Barbara Giove and John O'Driscoll.

Bringing a Killer To Justice

by Elizabeth Regan

A lot can happen in two decades. Young women grow wiser and more beautiful, like their mother.

Police officers follow leads and collect evidence. Prosecutors review cases. Some of them retire.

Technology advances.

Gertrude "Trudy" Ochankowski wasn't here to see any of that. In January 1998, she was strangled. Her body was dumped in a stream off Tartia Road in East Hampton. She was 60 years old.

The East Hampton community joined her family, including those two lovely daughters who were in their 20s at the time of their mother's death, in horror and mourning. Ochankowski was a lifelong and much-loved resident.

Twenty years. That's how long it took for science and the justice system to catch up with evidence that had been there almost all along.

There were five immediate suspects, retired East Hampton Police Department Sgt. Garritt Kelly said in an interview this week. Three of them had alibis. A fourth – an on-again, off-again love interest – could not be conclusively ruled out, but police believed the man when he said he didn't do it.

The fifth suspect, that's the one Kelly's been chasing ever since.

Gerald "Brian" Tuttle, 54, was sentenced last week at Middlesex Superior Court on charges of first-degree manslaughter and second-degree kidnapping. He'll serve 30 years of his 40-year sentence, if he doesn't die first.

Tuttle was the handyman in the building housing the laundromat from which Ochankowski first went missing. He was a convicted sex offender who'd served more than two years in jail for a 1989 sexual assault in East Haddam, Kelly said.

Tuttle pled guilty in September, right before his trial was set to begin, under the Alford Doctrine. That means he's not saying he's guilty but admits the state has enough evidence to convict him.

A tank in his lap fed Tuttle oxygen as he sat silently in a wheelchair at his sentencing hearing, according to reports.

Kelly said Cindy Ochankowski – whom he described as strong and composed, with "a very powerful demeanor" – stood up to address the damage Tuttle inflicted on her mother and her family. Another relative read a letter written by Ochankowski's older daughter, Sheri.

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Beloved Pastor Dies After Battling ALS

by Chris Seymour

Marlborough resident Nancy Butler was courageous in the face of a devastating ailment that took her ability to walk and talk – but couldn't claim her positive attitude or spirit.

Butler, 58, the founder and pastor of Riverfront Family Church – which up until recently held services in Glastonbury, but now holds them in Hartford – passed away last week, on Wednesday, Dec. 7 after a nearly two-year battle with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

"I have decided to go off my feeding tube and vent this week and ... how should I put it ... die," the pastor wrote in a recent letter to her church.

"I knew my suffering would reach this tipping point and caring for me would become impossibly demanding," she added. "What I didn't know was whether or not God would want me to suck it up for some unseen purpose or end my life this way."

Butler had the chance to see family over Thanksgiving and noted she got to savor some time in the sun.

"This feels like God's timing because family had already made plans to visit over Thanksgiving," she wrote. "I have been able to bask in the noon sun nearly every day this warm fall. Last Friday, I enjoyed an extra long time in the

sun and sensed this would be my last time communing with nature. Sure enough, I couldn't get out Saturday and the weather turned with my intentions on Sunday."

The *Rivereast* ran an article about Butler in the summer of 2015. At the time, Butler, who was diagnosed with ALS (also known as Lou Gehrig's disease) in February 2015, was already in a wheelchair – but she wouldn't let that slow her down.

She was working in the church's (now former) offices in Glastonbury, and attending its weekly gathering service.

Earlier this year, Butler's daughter Liza Arulampalam and two others took over the role of co-lead pastors.

Riverfront Family Church's slogan is "Church. Just different." And they deliver on that tagline with lively services that include a "worship band" and a church mascot.

"I really feel called by God to keep doing the church as long as I am able so I keep doing the church," said Butler in late August 2015. "I just feel spiritually like God wants me to keep doing it and the funny thing, a good thing about ALS, is people pay attention to what you say. They know you're going to die; they listen more carefully," she joked.

Despite her sense of humor, it was Butler's

strength and courage in the face of such a devastating neurological ailment – Butler noted most ALS patients die 2-5 years after diagnosis – that inspired the people around her.

"She has been so positive and nothing gets her down; it amazes me," said Riverfront Family Church administrator Ellen Cannon in 2015. "She isn't able to drive and is in a wheelchair but it just doesn't get her down and people are just flocking to be with her because she is just so positive and so inspirational; it is very moving."

According to the ALS Association, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord.

The progressive degeneration of the motor neurons in ALS eventually leads to death, according to the ALS Association; when the motor neurons die, the ability of the brain to initiate and control muscle movement is lost, continues the association, and with voluntary muscle action progressively affected, patients in the later stages of the disease may become totally paralyzed.

Butler first noticed something was wrong in October 2013, when she started tripping over her own toes.

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The Rev. Nancy Butler

Justice cont. from Front Page

But Tuttle was unmoved, Kelly said. “He said nothing,” Kelly recounted. “He sat there – the big, fat, amorphous blob that he is – and said nothing.”

The silence was more of the same for the investigator who’d been trailing Tuttle from the beginning.

“He never admitted it, even to the day of his sentence,” Kelly said. “Never said a word about it being him.”

Kelly, first hired as an East Hampton Police officer in 1987, was promoted to sergeant in 1993. He served as the department’s primary criminal investigator.

Kelly said the investigation was his singular focus for much of 1998 and has remained on his mind ever since.

Details of the case were outlined in the arrest warrant affidavit that came much later.

Within four days of the discovery of Ochankowski’s body, East Hampton police brought in detectives from the Connecticut State Police Major Crimes unit to search and collect evidence from a Volvo that Tuttle was said to have been driving around the time of the murder.

Detectives seized black-colored upholstery from the back of the front driver and passenger seats, the affidavit said. There was an unknown substance on both pieces of fabric. Forensic testing and analysis came back in July of that year identifying the substance as fecal matter belonging to Ochankowski.

On the day Ochankowski’s body was discovered, the state’s Chief State Medical Examiner had noted fecal matter on Ochankowski’s back and said it was likely excreted after her death.

On day eight of the investigation, officers cordoned off a remote apartment high atop the laundromat from which Ochankowski was abducted, so Major Crimes detectives could conduct a search. A small gold earring and a contact lens tied the victim to the room, which was under construction at the time of the murder.

In March, officers collected Tuttle’s DNA from cigarettes smoked during a second interview.

The genetic material, however, did not yield what they were hoping for: conclusive evidence tying Tuttle to the crime.

“We had all these items linking to [Ochankowski], but what now was the link to him?” Kelly explained, voicing the question that dogged him for the next decade.

He said leads were exhausted by late summer, but Ochankowski’s murder was never far from his mind.

“Other things do occur as time goes on and you have to shift focuses, but it was never a backburner thing, for lack of a better term,” he said. “We knew we had the foundation; it was just a matter of bringing the last piece together.”

The case was front and center again for Kelly by 2008, when he joined the state Division of Criminal Justice Cold Case unit. The group combined investigators from various cities and towns with unsolved homicides as well as personnel from state’s attorneys’ offices and the Department of Corrections.

That’s when Kelly said he resubmitted evidence to the state forensic laboratory “based

on advancements in forensic technology.” It took five more years, but the results eventually blew the case wide open.

DNA from both Ochankowski and Tuttle was identified on the non-adhesive side of duct tape found near Ochankowski’s body all those years ago, the arrest warrant affidavit said.

A DNA mixture was also discovered in the stains on the Volvo upholstery when analysis yielded human seminal fluid protein along with Ochankowski’s fecal material.

“So now we had the link between the two,” Kelly explained. “We had the link to the victim – it was clearly her fecal material – and we had the link to Tuttle because his DNA was mixed in with hers.”

The discovery, according to Kelly, was “the linchpin” that tied the entire investigation together.

“The science is what ultimately did him in,” he said.

Kelly’s retirement from the East Hampton Police Department preceded Tuttle’s arrest by just under a year. By then, Kelly had taken a job with the state judicial branch investigating complaints against lawyers.

An arrest warrant was signed by Middlesex County State’s Attorney Peter McShane in 2013. It was executed by inspectors from the Cold Case Unit on Dec. 10, 2013, at Tuttle’s home in Surfside Beach, S.C.

As Tuttle sat in the Bridgeport Correctional Center with a 30-year sentence on the books, Kelly viewed the long road that got him there with the same sense of patient practicality that guided the investigation.

Kelly said the wait was difficult for the family members, who were forced to go on in their own lives without any resolution to Ochankowski’s death.

“But this is the way this one went, and here we are,” he added.

That’s not to say he never questioned the pace, however. He said there were points in the investigation when he thought the evidence would be enough for prosecution, despite continued resistance from now-retired Middlesex State Attorney Timothy J. Liston.

Liston retired in 2011 after 10 years as the state’s attorney. McShane was appointed to fill the remainder of Liston’s eight-year term.

But Kelly acknowledged ultimate effectiveness of what he described as Liston’s “conservative” approach. It was the difference between laying out a largely circumstantial case or waiting for technology to deliver the most conclusive DNA evidence possible.

“If you go to trial and got acquitted, you don’t get a second chance,” he said. “I mean, there’s no double jeopardy. You can’t go back and say, ‘Oh yeah, by the way, now we have DNA evidence that proves it was him so we’re going to try this again.’ It doesn’t work that way.”

Kelly is confident the prosecution would have won a conviction if Tuttle had not pleaded out on the eve of the trial. He figured the killer would’ve been sentenced to 60 years or more if a jury had their way.

“But I think no matter what, it’s a life sentence. He’s not healthy at all. I don’t think he’s long for the world,” Kelly said. “He’ll never see the light of day again.”

Beloved Pastor cont. from Front Page

“I would be walking and would just trip on my toes so [doctors] thought it was a disc and they did all these MRIs on my back,” she recalled last year. “Then I started limping and [was having] more trouble walking, and I started walking with a cane and then started walking with a walker.”

A trip to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., in February 2015 confirmed Butler had ALS, and by March 2015, she was in a wheelchair.

“It’s been going really scary fast,” Butler said last summer of the disease’s progression. While she said she was in no pain, and the ALS did not affect her brain, Butler said that “what kills you is the diaphragm; the diaphragm goes and you can’t breathe.”

Butler said last summer that her family was

“heartbroken” over her ALS diagnosis.

“My husband was my high school sweetheart so his heart is broken,” she said. “And my girls – you lose your mom, you don’t get another mom. I really do believe in an afterlife – I am not worried about death for myself – but when you love people, and we are a really close family, it’s sad.”

Butler is survived by her husband of 33 years and best friend, Gregory Butler, as well as her daughters Elizabeth “Liza” Butler Arulampalam (Arunan) and Sarah Butler, grandchildren Sahana (3), Theeran (2), Nivadita “Nivy” (1) and Dayanand Arulampalam (1).

Chris Seymour is a reporter for the Riverast’s sister newspaper, The Glastonbury Citizen.

*From the Editor’s Desk***Observations & Ruminations**

by Mike Thompson

I figured I might get some brushback for writing in my column last week about the fake news epidemic – specifically since I focused on fake news generated by right wingers – and I did. But let it be known it’s not a problem made up by leftists. I’ve seen plenty of fake news attacking Republicans as well.

Just last week, for example, snopes.com accurately debunked a story that had been going around alleging that Sarah Palin was boycotting the Mall of America in Minnesota as it this year is employing a black man to play Santa Claus. Santa, Palin is alleged to have said, was “always white in the Bible.”

While Mall of America did indeed hire a black Santa this year – and should be commended for it, frankly – Palin did not call for a boycott. Nor did she utter something as stupid as Santa being white in the Bible. But it was reported on a satirical “news” site, and people bought it. Sarah Palin has said plenty of stupid things over the years, and will continue to say plenty of stupid things; we don’t need to invent ones for her.

Likewise, over this past spring and summer, I saw a couple of friends share on Facebook a graphic depicting the following quote Donald Trump was alleged to have told *People* magazine in 1998: “If I were to run, I’d run as a Republican. They’re the dumbest group of voters in the country. They believe anything on Fox News. I could lie and they’d still eat it up. I bet my numbers would be terrific.”

If you’re a Trump hater, this sounds too good to be true, right? Well, that’s because it was. Not only did Trump never say that to *People* magazine, the magazine didn’t even interview him in 1998. Still, the quote spread like wildfire among folks who no doubt hoped it would bring The Donald down. (There’s plenty of real stuff Trump said and did that should have brought him down – and it’s rather shocking, and more than a little appalling, that none of it did.)

So, my point is: there is fake news generated by Democrats and other left-leaning folks. Is it as widespread as the fake news spread by the right? Frankly, no. But it’s happening.

* * *

The annual holiday potluck took place at work Tuesday. As always, there were goodies galore, including deviled eggs, various casseroles (such as corn and green bean ones), roasted veggies, delicious Indian food, meatballs, and even venison stew. Lots of delicious

desserts too, including pumpkin chocolate chip squares and a tradition: fabulous chocolate peanut butter balls made by Sandy, our receptionist.

Yes, the eating season, which started at Thanksgiving, is in full swing, and will continue through New Year’s. At that point, many of us will likely start thinking about shedding some of those holiday pounds we’ll no doubt have put on.

One way to start to lose the weight is to begin running – and, specifically, to start training for a half marathon. The 25th Colchester Half Marathon will return Saturday, Feb. 25.

The race will start at 10 a.m. at Bacon Academy, and will end there too. Along the way, runners will travel a clockwise route along sections of Norwich Avenue, Windham Avenue, Goshen Hill Road, McCall Road and Roger Foote Road. Many of the roads are paved, but three miles of it occurs on dirt roads – which can add an extra challenge, particularly if it’s icy out.

Interested? Registration fee is \$14 – though it’s \$20 if you wait and sign up the day of the race. So don’t be a slacker! Head over to mysportsfee.com and click on “upcoming events” to register.

* * *

I’ve been on a political humor kick lately – sometimes you’ve got to laugh to keep from crying, I guess – and recently came across some political observations by the great Will Rogers. Among them:

— Politics has become so expensive that it takes a lot of money even to be defeated.

— I don’t make jokes. I just watch the government and report the facts.

— I am not a member of any organized political party. I am a Democrat.

— Alexander Hamilton started the U.S. Treasury with nothing, and that was the closest our country has ever been to being even.

— About all I can say for the United States Senate is that it opens with a prayer and closes with an investigation.

— A fool and his money are soon elected.

— The only difference between death and taxes is that death doesn’t get worse every time Congress meets.

— This country has come to feel the same when Congress is in session as when the baby gets hold of a hammer.

* * *

See you next week.

EHHS Principal Briefly Bans ‘White’ Cheer

by Elizabeth Regan

Students at the first East Hampton girls basketball game Tuesday were met by a sign announcing the “suspension” of a popular cheer that some say has taken on racist overtones – but on Thursday morning, the principal met with the senior class to say he is instead leaving it up to them to use their best judgment as fans.

Cheerleaders chant the cheer to get the crowd going: “We say blue, you say white!” Blue! White! Blue! White!

The problem arose, according to Fidler, after students began using the “white” refrain to answer every call in the cheer.

“We say go, you say fight!”

Go! White! Go! White!

“We say East, you say Hampton!”

East! White! East! White!

“We say number, you say 1!”

Number! White! Number! White!”

A brief letter announcing the chant’s “suspension” was posted in multiple places at the entrance to the gym during Tuesday’s game.

“Given the current social climate across our country, our use of the ‘White’ cheer is under suspension,” Fidler wrote in the letter. “Please show your pride in our town and in our school through other means when cheering on our teams.”

But on Thursday, Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith said Fidler had just met with the senior class to let them know the cheer is not banned after all.

According to Smith, Fidler’s message to the students was that he would not tell them what they can or cannot say. But he did ask them to be sensitive to how and when the cheer is used.

Fidler said Wednesday the ban was not a response to complaints from other schools. Instead, it was teachers at East Hampton High School who first approached him to say they felt uncomfortable when the chant rang out at games.

Fidler said he does not believe East Hampton students are intentionally racist in the chant, but cited a lack of cultural understanding among some students.

“I don’t think everyone fully understands,” he said, though he acknowledged a growing consciousness among students as enrollment slowly becomes more diverse. “It’s not a very diverse community, but that’s changing.”

Makaila Cerrone, a 2015 graduate of the high school now studying at Northeastern University, agreed a majority of the people chanting the “white” refrain have innocent intentions – but she cited a “select few students who took it much farther than that and definitely made others uncomfortable.”

Cerrone said those few students would follow up the cheer with phrases like “if it ain’t white, it ain’t right” or “white is right.”

She supported the initial ban, adding the chant doesn’t seem appropriate or beneficial in today’s racially, socially and politically divided climate.

“I cheered the chant and had as much school spirit in high school as anyone,” Cerrone said. “However, all it takes is some empathy to realize the negative implications the chant can have.”

Some students, parents and alumni, however, were reluctant to break with a tradition they said was never meant to offend anybody.

Resident Jesse Bracken, whose son graduated two years ago, said Wednesday stifling students’ voices because of the way the chant may be perceived by others only creates more prejudice and social division.

“I don’t see how by taking away history and customs to protect some from being offended isn’t offending someone else in the process,” he said.

“Look at schools and the Pledge of Allegiance: People are offended by that? How about the flag: schools not flying it because it upsets some students? People don’t say ‘Merry Christmas’ because people are offended,” Bracken said. “Enough is enough. If we keep giving in,

we will lose everything that we stand for.”

Claire Pawlewitz, a 2016 graduate of East Hampton High School, said Wednesday she finds the focus on tradition over tolerance disheartening.

“The reason for this change is so that we don’t hurt anyone. It’s as simple as that. I’d like to think that in East Hampton, we try not to breed hostility, so even if the chant doesn’t bother you, think about those it may. We want people to feel included,” Pawlewitz said.

On Wednesday, Fidler said the idea of holding onto the cheer for the sake of tradition ignores the larger issue.

“It’s beyond the ‘White’ cheer,” he said. “It’s just yelling ‘white, white, white.’ Sometimes when we’re at away games and dressed in blue, we’re yelling ‘white.’”

On Thursday, the school superintendent said it’s important students use sensitivity, good judgment and respect in representing the school. Pointing to the recent success of a high school fundraiser through which students donated enough gifts for fifty children through the ABC Women’s Shelter in Middletown, Smith said it’s unfortunate that is not what is being talked about.

“Things like this overshadow the more positive news,” he said.

Ethics Complaint in Portland Against Tyler Dismissed

by Elizabeth Regan

The last in a string of ethics complaints lodged against some of the Portland officials involved in shaping the future of the former Elmcrest Hospital property was dismissed last week.

The Portland Ethics Commission determined that allegations by Portland Planning and Zoning Commission alternate Michael Woronoff against Planning and Zoning Chairman Bruce Tyler could not be substantiated because there was not enough information on which to base a decision.

Woronoff’s complaint alleged Tyler violated the ethics ordinance when he said, according to Woronoff, that he made up his mind two months ago on a vote related to development of the Elmcrest property months before any motion was made.

When Tyler presented his case at the beginning of the hearing, he denied ever having said he made his mind up two months ago.

“Mr. Woronoff did not supply any evidence for his allegation, nor did he provide any indication of what provision of the ethics ordinance he claimed I violated,” Tyler said.

It was for those reasons, Tyler explained, that he did not respond to the complaint within the prescribed 30 day timeframe when he was first notified it had been lodged against him.

“I thought it was a nuisance complaint,” he said.

With Tyler’s failure to respond, the commission voted during the probable cause hearing in November to send the complaint for a full public hearing.

There were four other complaints filed at the same time as Tyler’s, according to November Ethics Commission meeting minutes.

They were all dismissed.

Out of the five filings, only one portion of the allegations against Tyler made it to the public hearing stage of the process outlined in the town’s ethics ordinance. The process begins with a complaint, a 30-day period for a response from the accused, and a probable cause hearing. If probable cause is found, a public hearing is held.

But Woronoff was not present at last week’s Ethics Commission hearing. The fact troubled some members of the commission who felt he should have been there to answer questions about his complaint.

Ethics Commission secretary Marie T. Larson told commissioners that Woronoff called

her two days before to let her know he had to work on the night of the hearing.

Woronoff said this week he has been working nights for a year and a half. While he said he has taken many nights off for meetings, he could not attend all of them.

The complaint against Tyler revolved around a July public hearing and subsequent vote to amend zoning regulations. The change, requested by the developer who wants to build 240 apartments alongside a neighborhood shopping center, allowed for a higher number of apartments than had been authorized.

According to an audio recording of that meeting, Tyler outlined his thoughts on the text amendment application during the Planning and Zoning Commission’s deliberations. He said his position had not changed since he supported a previous, similar version of the text amendment that had been submitted by the commission itself months earlier. That proposal failed.

“My opinion in this situation is not new. It’s at least a couple of months old. That’s why I see no need to recuse myself. My opinion has been clear all along,” Tyler said at the time.

Selectman Ben Srb had stood up during the public hearing on the text amendment to demand Tyler recuse himself from the matter because Tyler’s “mind was made up before this application was even opened.”

The complex, legal definition for having one’s mind made no matter what evidence a land use applicant provides is “predetermination.” Predetermination is not prohibited in state statute or mentioned in the town ethics ordinance, but can come up in court in land use appeals cases.

A June 13 memo from town attorney Kari Olson, issued at Tyler’s request, said case law in Connecticut is “pretty clear” that those who “cannot be objective should not be hearing and voting on a zoning application.”

Olson’s June opinion specified that Planning and Zoning Commission members who know in their “heart of hearts” that they cannot approve a planning and zoning application even before they hear any evidence should recuse themselves from the process.

Woronoff also said in his complaint the fact Tyler requested a legal opinion on predetermination shows the chairman was “aware of potential issues.”

Tyler explained at last week’s Ethics Commission hearing that he requested a legal memo

on predetermination from Olson “to protect the integrity of the Planning and Zoning Commission.”

Woronoff’s complaint received often animated support from ethics commissioner Larson, who said she didn’t think it was fair to blame the complainant for not having provided as much information as they would have liked.

“I don’t think a private citizen should have to study the ordinance ad infinitum and decide from a legal standpoint what section was violated,” she said. “I find it hard to hold a private citizen to the point of having to render a legal opinion on a case.”

Ethics Commission Chairman George Law said the commission did not hold Woronoff to that kind of standard during the probable cause determination, which is why the issue was brought to a full public hearing.

“But we’re at a different stage now,” Law said. “[Woronoff] is not here telling us anything more than what’s alleged in the complaint.”

In support of Woronoff’s complaint, Larson cited a section of the ethics ordinance detailing the responsibility of town representatives “to act with integrity, avoiding any behavior, lawful or unlawful, which could call the integrity of town government into question.”

The same section specifies the duty of town representatives “to abide by the general laws of the state and town.”

When the discussion then got bogged down with procedural concerns and a possible continuance based on the commission’s acknowledgement it had unintentionally failed to notify Tyler of the public hearing within the proper timeframe, Tyler appeared to have had enough.

“I don’t want a continuance. I want a decision. You see, at my age, I have very little left except my reputation. I take my reputation very seriously and I do not want it to be harmed by the inability of you folks to make a decision, or unwillingness to make a decision. So I would like a decision tonight,” he said.

A motion by Larson to refer the complaint to the Board of Selectmen “and recommend that suitable remedial action be taken” did not receive a second.

That’s when Law motioned to dismiss the complaint due to a lack of evidence to support it. The motion was quickly seconded and then approved by Jim Probolus, Jay Swanson and

newly-appointed member Jeannette Hodge. Larson voted against the motion.

Woronoff said this week that the commission was looking for him to “attack this like an attorney,” when he thought it was enough to present the basic information about what he believed was an improperly conducted hearing so the commission could investigate the issue themselves.

He brought up Tyler’s willingness to allow proponents of the development plan, including the developer, to cite sections of a grant-funded report that fit their agenda while not allowing the project’s opponents to talk about information in the same report.

The town received a \$50,000 grant from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation to fund a 2015 Vibrant Communities Initiative (VCI) study compiled with input from members of the town’s municipal, business and volunteer community - including Elmcrest property owner Fred Hassan and developer Dan Bertram of Danbury-based BRT General Corp.

Touted as a community vision for the property, the study included various development scenarios that included a higher density of residential units than was allowed at the time the study was done.

“Nobody can say that report is tailor fit for the wants and needs of Portland,” Woronoff said. “That’s tailored for the wants and needs of the developer.”

To Woronoff, the Elmcrest property represents the possibility of “the largest potential development in Portland, ever.” He said the application and the hearing process didn’t go far enough in explaining how the project would be good for the town and did not examine the possible negative effects.

To Tyler and Economic Development Chairman Elwin Guild, the string of unsubstantiated allegations is a form of harassment.

Woronoff’s complaint against Guild was dismissed last month during the probable cause stage for lack of evidence.

“With all due respect, I find this evening reminiscent of *The Crucible*,” Guild said, referring to the play by Arthur Miller dramatizing the prosecution of accused witches in Salem, Mass., in the 1690s.

The details of the remaining three cases dismissed by the commission remain confidential per the town’s ethics ordinance.

NESDEC Presents Facilities Study in Hebron

by Geeta S. Sandberg

The student population in Hebron may be on the decline, but that doesn't mean it's a good idea to close one of the town's two elementary schools.

That's according to the New England School Development Council (NESDEC), which last week presented to the Board of Education the results of a feasibility study the council was contracted to conduct in September, in order to provide options for the district to consider in response to declining enrollment.

NESDEC presented multiple options at the school board's Dec. 8 meeting, including: closing the six portable classrooms used by fifth-graders at Hebron Elementary School and re-assigning third-graders to Gilead Hill School; keeping the current grade level alignment at the two schools but planning to replace the portables within the next three to five years; and having both schools serve a K-6 population, with Gilead Hill School also offering preschool.

What NESDEC did not recommend, however, was closing either Gilead Hill School or Hebron Elementary School, and having one building for all the town's children.

NESDEC consultant Elizabeth Osga explained at the meeting, "Both options we knew were on the minds of the people, [who were] saying 'Is it possible to close a school and put all students in one building?'"

But following NESDEC's work it was determined that closing either of the schools wouldn't align with the development council's "essential criteria," which stated that, to be considered viable, an option had to provide suffi-

cient capacity to accommodate projected student enrollments, and had to provide adequate space to meet program needs.

Moving all of the students to Hebron Elementary School, for example, would require 34 full-sized classrooms, additional space for art instruction, displaced small group instruction, expanded nursing and office needs, central office, the early childhood program and the before and after school program, and adequate space for and a schedule that could accommodate a larger number of physical education and lunch sections.

Meanwhile, only 24 full-sized classrooms are available at Hebron Elementary School assuming the portables remain, two small group instruction rooms are re-purposed, and the general music room is sacrificed. In addition, there are no additional spaces available to use for any of the other areas. Combining the two schools would also result in shortened times for lunch and physical education, because of the large number of students.

As a result, "We said Hebron Elementary School cannot accommodate all the students expected to be enrolled in the schools," Osga stated. She added if Hebron Elementary School were closed instead, "The space availability is a little closer, but not enough for us to say it's a viable option."

Osga said, "The aim is to maximize building efficiency and resources with the best use of space and provide a prudent cushion for unforeseen growth; NESDEC advises for long-term planning that districts maintain a 10 per-

cent capacity cushion to accommodate unanticipated growth."

The work NESDEC conducted took into consideration feedback from school staff, parents and community members and involved analyzing data from a number of sources including the town, the U.S. Census, and residential housing data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Warren Group.

The study also analyzed present and planned school programs and the facilities needed to provide that programming, as well as studying school documents and making visits to the schools while they were in session.

As a result of their study, NESDEC provided a demographic analysis, enrollment projections, and a capacity analysis of the two schools along with the different options.

One of the key points consultant John Kennedy shared during the presentation was the significant decline in births in the community, from an average of 117 per year between 2000 and 2006 to an average 74 births per year between 2007 and 2013.

However, while enrollment in the district is projected to decline over the next 10 years, the number won't decrease as significantly as it did in the previous ten years.

"Things are changing," Kennedy stated. "We see a projected decline in enrollments of 149 students over the next 10 years; that's a significant change in what the district experienced during the prior 10-year time" when student enrollment decreased by 624 students.

Overall, Kennedy told the school the board,

the results he and Osga presented "should be considered not as an end product. These are not recommendations; it's information on potential options. This should be the beginning point of future discussion."

And some of that discussion occurred immediately following the NESDEC presentation, when schools superintendent Tim Van Tassel recommended – and the school board approved – a project plan that focused on the second option, which would be to keep the grade levels the same but plan to discontinue use of the portables in the short term, since they've been in use for 11 years and have a life expectancy of 15-20 years.

"I would focus on looking at what I believe is going to be a viable option," Van Tassel said. "Yes, it's going to be tight at the school but in discussions, I do believe we can make things work and in January I will have a formal plan to bring before the board."

Board member Geoffrey Davis said of the proposal, "This is a great plan to move forward and present [the information] in a very clear manner to all the stakeholders."

Board member Kevin Williams added, "I said at the onset when we made the decision to have NESDEC come in that it's all about a 'measure twice, cut once' approach and having tangible data to move forward. So step one has been accomplished and gives us a great baseline."

And the superintendent's recommendation, Williams added, "gives us that second piece of measuring twice, and boiling it down to what's important for our district and students."

Hebron Superintendent Presents .97 Percent Budget Increase

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Schools Superintendent Tim Van Tassel last week presented a budget proposal for the 2017-18 school year that includes a .97 percent increase.

The proposal amounts to \$11,872,974, a \$114,020 increase over the current year's budget, and Van Tassel said of the number, "What you see here is our district's vision and mission in numbers."

In his budget transmittal to the Board of Education, Van Tassel, who started working in the district in July 2015, wrote, "Entering into my second year as your superintendent of schools, I have seen first-hand the tremendous efforts made by the entire Hebron community in support of its public school system."

He added in preparing the budget proposal, "careful consideration was made with regard to the fiscal status of the State of Connecticut. In addition, our entire district team reviewed current practices, reflected on the diverse needs of our students, and incorporated only those items which we believe are key initiatives worthy of consideration by the Board of Education."

Those initiatives include hiring a full-time Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM) teacher who will also support challenge and

enrichment at Gilead Hill School for \$87,974; and a technology lease purchase in the amount of \$62,307 which will be used for items such as 10 iPad minis, 10 document cameras, 42 projector replacements for SmartBoards, and 300 safety cases for the district's iPads and Chromebooks.

Funds are also included to bring a Leadership Development Program to Hebron Elementary School for \$7,000, and to update classroom libraries to support science instruction.

Van Tassel's proposal also includes negotiated wage increases of 4.22 percent for teachers, 3 percent for administrators, and up to 3 percent for both non-certified staff and non-affiliated staff.

The spending package also contains several personnel reductions in response to declining enrollment including a classroom teacher, a special education teacher, a part-time music teacher, .4 speech and language pathologist, .5 office secretary, .5 nurse paraprofessional, and one full-time paraprofessional.

Enrollment at the two schools is expected to drop by 40 students for the 2017-18 school year to 655.

Overall, the salaries line is expected to de-

crease by \$25,076 or .34 percent to \$7,350,230 – as always, the salary account makes up the largest portion of the budget.

Next in size is the benefits line, which is also expected to decrease by \$57,806 or 2.38 percent to \$2,373,884.

A decrease in professional and technical services, which are services that can only be performed by persons or firms with specialized skills and knowledge, is also projected, down \$6,422 or 1.59 percent to \$398,015.

Of the areas that saw increases, Van Tassel explained, "Some of the areas where there are increases we touched last year. I said we were going to see some artificially low numbers because they were offset to help bring the budget to zero percent; we had really eliminated certain things to reduce them and now we need to make sure to address some of those for next year."

Purchased property services, which are services to "operate, repair, maintain, and rent property owned or used by the school district" according to the budget by object document, is expected to rise \$39,382 or 9.34 percent to \$460,983; and other purchased services, which are amounts paid for services rendered by or-

ganizations or personnel not on the school district payroll, is budgeted as increasing \$34,732 or 4.70 percent to \$772,950.

Meanwhile, supplies and materials is listed as increasing \$95,962 or 25.75 percent to \$468,565; property and equipment is calculated to increase \$31,881 or 1969.18 percent to \$33,500; and dues and fees is budgeted as increasing \$1,368 or 10.13 percent to \$14,868.

"To arrive at next year's proposed increase has been a lengthy and detail oriented process," Van Tassel concluded in his transmittal to the board. "Both formal and informal discussions have been occurring at all levels, which gives me great confidence that the request is in alignment with the needs of the district."

Now that the superintendent's recommended budget has been presented, the Board of Education will deliberate on the spending package throughout the month of January, and will ultimately have a recommendation ready to submit to Town Manager Andrew Tierney Feb. 15.

Budget deliberations will take place every Thursday in January at 6 p.m. (with the exception of the regular monthly meeting on Jan. 12 which will begin at 7 p.m.) in the music room at Gilead Hill School, 580 Gilead St.

Finance Chair Discusses Budget with Marlborough School Administrators

by Julianna Roche

About a week ago, Board of Finance Chairman Doug Knowlton sat down with Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz and Board of Education Chairwoman Ruth Kelly to discuss school budget matters for the upcoming year. First Selectwoman Amy Traversa was also present.

And on Wednesday, Knowlton discussed how the session went with the rest of the finance board, saying he thought it “was a pretty good meeting” and that they were all “reasonably on the same page.”

According to the chairman, Kelly had asked Knowlton to sit down with she and Sklarz “to have some discussions about budget matters,” with an emphasis on school maintenance.

“[Sklarz] is looking for some guidance, particularly in absence of having a facilities person to make assessments on what needs to be done in the school,” Knowlton said, adding that prior to that meeting, both the superintendent and Kelly were “very concerned that the town had not yet hired anybody,” but had not yet been informed that the Facilities and Grounds Foreman position was recently filled by Tony Gallicchio who officially started Dec. 12.

(Craig Johnson, who formerly worked in

Bloomfield, was hired as the Highway and Fleet Foreman and will begin Dec. 19.)

“Sklarz was really quite pleased,” Knowlton said of Gallicchio’s hiring. “Now he has a name to work with.”

Previously, Chris Corsa, the former superintendent of operations for the Public Works Department who resigned in October, had begun making assessments of maintenance needs in the school, and they’d “made some progress,” but there is more to be done, according to Knowlton.

Alternate Riva Clark, who sat in for finance board member Dieter Zimmer during the meeting, stated that she thought the issue was a lack of “continuity of personnel or documentation” of assessments done.

“It’s hard in this town when you have so few employees with so much to do,” she said.

Board of Selectman member Dick Shea, who was also present at the meeting, added however, that he felt due to Gallicchio’s prior experience in Colchester overseeing the town’s school buildings, “he is probably familiar with the ins and outs of what the school needs.”

Knowlton furthered that while he didn’t yet

know what Sklarz was “going to do in terms of the budget,” there had been discussion of “possibly building up a fund, such as a future maintenance fund” where reserves would likely be placed in at the start of each school year.

However, he added that “they don’t have a good handle on what exactly needs to be done yet,” so the fund may not start this year.

Vice Chairman Cliff Denniss expressed concern with the idea, however.

“That never seems to work – putting aside money for maintenance,” he said. “It hasn’t worked since I’ve been on the board... [it’s] always the first thing that’s cut.”

Denniss continued that another “concern with maintenance” was defining what exactly falls under the maintenance category.

“I think it’s great there’s a discussion going on with the school,” he said, but “what is maintenance? Is school furniture? Is fixing the furnace or the roof maintenance? Is painting? Is a new desk for the superintendent maintenance?”

Knowlton agreed.

“Here you have to split hairs between... furniture and the roof falling in,” Knowlton said, adding, however, that the school “is [ultimately]

responsible for both.”

“Every year this happens. Is it town budget or education budget? I’m tired of hearing that,” the chairman continued, adding that he felt the “first thing [to do] is get a plan together and get some numbers around it, so we can get some kind of plan going.”

Finance board member Ken Hjulstrom agreed, stating he’d like to have a “plan of attack” rather than wait until major issues, such as the roof caving in, happen and then they’re stuck.

“We’re trying to move forward on this,” Knowlton said, adding that “some of this will probably be reflected in the budget that’s brought forth this spring.”

Knowlton said a second meeting with Sklarz and Kelly was already scheduled for this week and “the question now is [determining] what techniques are available to either put money aside or plan for [the school’s] future needs.”

* * *

At the Board of Education meeting last night, Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz presented a first draft of the proposed FY 2017-18 school budget. A story on the proposal will appear in next week’s *Rivereast*.

District Residents to Vote on RHAM Natural Gas Proposal

by Julianna Roche

Next week, Marlborough residents will have the opportunity to vote on whether to support the district moving forward with a proposal that will switch the RHAM middle and high schools over to natural gas.

The district meeting on Monday, Dec. 19 – which Andover and Hebron residents will also vote in – follows the RHAM Board of Education’s unanimous vote late last month to move forward with the plan by Connecticut Natural Gas (CNG).

During their Nov. 21 meeting, CNG project manager Tony Sherman explained that there were many economic benefits to switching to natural gas, in addition to being sustainable and reliable. As the most abundant fuel source in the U.S., he also added it was the cleanest fossil fuel available.

The CNG plan includes the installation of eight miles of gas main from East Street in Hebron to the town’s center, as well as to their two elementary schools. However, all the town buildings and schools along the expansion route – which includes RHAM – will need to make the switch to natural gas as well.

Though Hebron has spearheaded the conversion, one of Marlborough’s RHAM Board members Carole Shea said this week it “benefits all three towns because there are cost savings on the budget in the future” and “that’s why our board voted unanimously to support it.”

The conversion to natural gas is expected to cost the district approximately \$264,000, with the town of Hebron looking to finance the cost.

According to RHAM Superintendent of Schools Bob Siminski, the school system would then “pay back the town with their cost savings.” Siminski added this will take about two years.

Included in the total price is changing the oil burners to gas burners, converting hot water tanks, the kitchens and the science labs, cleaning out the old oil-fired equipment and removing underground tanks.

Currently, approximately \$197,394 is spent on fuel, with the district utilizing approximately 100,200 gallons of oil at \$1.97 per gallon. Switching to natural gas however, would provide an annual savings of approximately \$101,000, with annual usage costs estimated at \$96,036, according to the CNG plan.

“In the long run, at about \$101,000 a year in savings with natural gas over oil means we can pay off our loan in about 2.5 years,” Shea explained, adding that after that point, there will “just be ongoing cost savings.”

“We wouldn’t be spending any more money than we would have been on oil,” she continued, adding it was “very important” to the board that the conversion to natural gas “not take away from [our] budget.”

Shea also said this week that the RHAM board was “only going to commit” to the proposal if it “was budget neutral” and “saved money down the road.”

“And that’s what we’ve been told it’ll do,” she added.

If the project proceeds following the district meeting, CNG is hoping for contracts to be signed by the end of January 2017, with construction expected to last from April through June 2017. RHAM and other town buildings along the route are expected to be operating on natural gas by the end of September 2017.

* * *

The district meeting will be held Monday, Dec. 19, at 6 p.m., in the chorus room at RHAM High School, 85 Wall St., Hebron.

East Hampton Police News

11/30: Elizabeth Marschat, 37, of 33 Mathieu Ln., was issued a summons for operating an unregistered motor vehicle and operating while under suspension, East Hampton Police said.

12/1: Bernice Amponsah, 34, of 256 Richard St., Newington, was issued a summons for driving while suspended, failure to obey a traffic signal and operating an unregistered motor vehicle, police said.

12/2: Michael Sentell, 32, of 10 Colchester Ave., was arrested and charged with driving under the influence, failure to maintain lane and failure to carry a driver’s license, police said.

Colchester Police News

12/6: Colchester Police said Shane Scarratt, 31, of 178 Meetinghouse Lane, Apt. 3, Oakdale, was arrested and charged with possession with intent to sell, illegal possession of a narcotic, and possession of a controlled substance.

12/6: State Police said Theodore James, 21, of 191 New London Rd., Salem, was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear.

12/7: State Police said Richard P. Challinor, 26, of 639 Riverside Dr., Apt. 2, Thompson, was arrested and charged with violation of probation/conditional discharge.

12/7: Colchester Police said William B.

Hebron Police News

12/7: State Police said Harold G. Thoma, 40, of 1425 Exeter Rd., Lebanon, was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol and failure to drive in right hand lane.

Roberge, 55, of 124 Hammond Court, Apt. 2, was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and third-degree assault.

12/7: State Police said Chelsea Klein, 26, of 30 Walnut Ave., East Hampton, was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear.

12/9: State Police said Michael Vanase, 51, of 204 West Rd., was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear.

12/10: State Police said Christopher H. Allen, 32, of 12 Balaban Rd., Apt. 211, was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear.

Marlborough Music Festival Funds Go to ‘Bread Box’

by Julianna Roche

This Sunday, Dec. 18, Marlborough Congregational Church will host its annual Christmas Music Festival in the church meetinghouse, which will be decked out for the holidays.

Pastor Bob Faulhaber described the event as “two hours of nothing but Christmas and holiday music designed to get people in the true spirit of the season, which from the church’s perspective “is to help those in need.”

According to Faulhaber, each year, the proceeds from the event (free will offering) go to a “worthy cause – and this year, the funds are going to The Bread Box, an organization in Willimantic.

The Bread Box is a music venue that is solely dedicated to collecting food and revenue for The Covenant Soup Kitchen and Emergency Food Pantry in Willimantic.

Sunday’s music festival will feature two former Connecticut State Troubadours and four Connecticut-based musicians. The festival will also celebrate the release of a special holiday compilation CD, *Peace, Love, & Bread*.

The CD was produced by Marlborough resident Carolyn Brodinski to raise money for The Bread Box. The artists featured on the CD are regular performers on the Bread Box Stage – and include Brodinski’s band, Seat Of Our Pants.

Seven of the 15 holiday-themed recordings on the CD are original pieces written specifi-

cally for the album. The six performers featured at this year’s festival all appear on the CD. The lineup includes former Connecticut State Troubadours, Hugh Blumenfeld and Lara Herscovitch, Seat Of Our Pants singer/songwriter Curtis Brand, Steve Dedman (Plywood Cowboy), and the founder of the Bread Box, Bruce John.

According to its mission statement, The Bread Box (which is currently in its eighth year) has raised over \$48,000 for the soup kitchen by bringing both local and national musical acts to their stage.

Copies of *Peace, Love & Bread* will be sold during intermission at Sunday’s festival, with proceeds also going to The Bread Box. And as a bonus, festival attendees who make a donation of \$10 or more will also get a copy of the CD for free. Contributing artists will also be available to sign CDs for those interested.

“[This event] is a blessing to those who struggle finding enough to eat,” Faulhaber said, “And especially so during the holidays.”

* * *

The annual Christmas Music Festival will take place from 5-7 p.m. at Marlborough Congregational Church, located at 35 S. Main St. The Bread Box is located in the sanctuary of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church at 220 Valley St., Willimantic. For more information, visit breadboxfolk.org.



Proceeds from this Sunday’s Christmas Music Festival at Marlborough Congregational Church will go to support The Bread Box, a Willimantic folk music venue that collects food and revenue for The Covenant Soup Kitchen and Emergency Food Pantry. Pictured is a group of regular Bread Box performers.

Colchester Finance Board Postpones Vacancy Decision

by Julianna Roche

For the Board of Finance, appointing a replacement to former board member James McNair’s seat has been nothing short of a contentious, confusing process.

McNair’s resignation took effect Nov. 1, which, per the town charter, meant the board had 60 days, or until Jan. 1, to find a replacement.

But confusion and consternation have arisen over how to fill McNair’s seat – and now it looks like the board won’t meet that deadline. Board chairman Rob Tarlov said last week there “likely” won’t be a decision on the replacement until the finance board’s Jan. 18 meeting.

“There was so much disagreement [and] emotions flying,” he said of the Dec. 7 Board of Finance meeting – at which the board interviewed four more potential candidates for the seat in addition to one interviewed last month – that “in fairness” to the five candidates, the board would wait to make a final decision until they had “a little more clarity” on who is eligible.

McNair sat on the Board of Finance as a member of the Colchester Independent Party (CIP), and since his resignation there has been debate over whether his slot should be filled by another member of the CIP, or by a Democrat. A Republican cannot be seated, as per minority representation rules.

The board interviewed former Board of Education member Mike Egan, a Democrat, last month – and four more candidates last week. Tarlov said he felt all of the candidates were “very good in terms of their interviews.”

Originally, only three candidates were slated to be interviewed at last week’s meeting, including Scott Boyden (unaffiliated), Democrat Michael Hayes and Colchester Independent Party (CIP) member Stefani Lowe.

The fourth, Tearice Peters, wasn’t added until after the public comments portion of the meeting, making it clear that the haze surrounding who is eligible to take the seat has not yet cleared.

Peters started to express her disappointment

in having to rescind her application for the open seat during public comment, stating that “in a conversation” with First Selectman Art Shilosky, he had informed her she was “under a 90-day hold as a member of the CIP” as she only just enrolled in the CIP on Dec. 5, hoping to transfer from the Democratic party, and therefore “would not be eligible for appointment consideration to the board.”

Shilosky, who was also present during the meeting, then interrupted her to say “we called” to inform her she was eligible, but a surprised Peters responded that she “did not get that call” and coming into the meeting had still been “under the impression” she was on a hold.

According to state statute, Peters is considered a member of the Democratic Party until her 90-day transfer enrollment period ends in March. As of Wednesday afternoon, however, Tarlov said “new information” says she will not be eligible for the seat as a CIP member after all, but there are still “discussions” as to whether the board may consider her as a Democrat candidate for the vacancy instead.

Peters’ confusion stemmed from a seven-page memorandum which was issued Nov. 2, after Shilosky sought guidance from town attorneys Bruce Chudwick and Matthew Ritter of Shipman & Goodwin LLP and the Secretary of State to clarify who was eligible for the seat.

Though McNair is registered as a Democrat, he won election as a CIP candidate. And while the town charter states his vacancy must be filled by another CIP member, state statute asserts that the vacancy can be filled with a member of any party except the Republican Party since the board has reached its maximum of four Republican members.

The memorandum ruled that town charter would trump state statute in this case – meaning the seat should be filled by another CIP member. However, if there are no enrolled CIP members at the time of an appointment, the board can appoint anyone so long as they are not an enrolled member of the Republican Party.

Furthermore, the memorandum reads that as

of Nov. 2, it was to the attorneys’ “understanding” that only one person in town had recently enrolled in the CIP, making them the only possible candidate for the seat.

With the 90-day hold, however, that candidate – Peters – would not be eligible to fill the vacancy at the time of appointment. Therefore, the attorneys ruled the board could abide by state statute instead.

As evidenced in the meeting, however, Lowe was considered by the board as an eligible and enrolled CIP member – at least at the time of her interview.

“We were getting too much conflicting information in terms of who’s eligible and who’s not,” Tarlov said, adding he thought “the way the legal opinion was written was somewhat grey.”

“Some people look at it and think part of it [assumed] that there were no eligible candidates,” he continued, “[but] if you say it has to be a CIP person, I think the only one eligible is Stefani Lowe.”

According to Tarlov, Shilosky informed him of the changes to the ruling on Tuesday afternoon before the meeting and that the board “would interview all the applicants,” including Peters.

“We just follow advice. We don’t get involved with legal stuff,” Tarlov said, adding he plans to speak to town attorneys to get “some final clarifications” on eligibility prior to the board deciding on a candidate.

CIP Chairwoman Deanna Bouchard, who spoke in support of Lowe at the meeting, argued that if the board appointed anyone but the qualified CIP enrolled member (Lowe), “it would amount to disenfranchising the 1,713 voters who decisively chose [McNair].”

Bouchard added it would also “call into question the ethics and political partisanship of the board in not upholding the legal decision” made in the memorandum on Nov. 2.

“Ethics” were even further called into question when she then hinted that a board member, who turned out to be Tarlov, had “ongoing financial dealings” with one of the candidates,

before asking that he recuse himself from the decision process as it violated the finance board’s code of conduct.

According to Bouchard, their bylaws state that a board member must disqualify himself from discussion or action on an issue if they are to receive some form of “financial gain or loss” from it.

It became obvious when Boyden was interviewed that he was who Bouchard referenced once he gave “full disclosure” that he knew Tarlov after serving with him on the Water and Sewer Commission for seven years.

Following the meeting, Bouchard told the *RiverEast* that Boyden’s real estate company, Boyden Co. Real Estate, is also in the process of selling Tarlov’s home on 120 Nelkin Rd. which is still listed on their website as sale pending.

Tarlov (who did not recuse himself at the meeting) said last week however that he didn’t “see how [he] gained anything” from the relationship with Boyden and added his house “already sold” prior to the Dec. 7 meeting with plans to close Dec. 12.

* * *

The ongoing eligibility debacle also resulted in some residents questioning if it is a maneuver by town officials to circumvent appointing a CIP member to the board.

“What bothers me as a taxpayer is I have seen firsthand on display the extent to which some of our elected officials have gone to try to prevent this from happening, instead of embracing it,” resident Jim Kelly said at the Dec. 7 meeting.

“Enough of the backroom politics. We have better things to talk about than worrying about this position, that should have been cut and dried,” he continued, adding the board should instead “start concentrating on what’s going to be a very, very tough budget year.”

* * *

Next week’s Board of Finance meeting has been canceled. The next meeting will be held Wednesday, Jan. 4, 2017, in Town Hall at 7 p.m.

Obituaries

East Hampton

John Harry Pratt

John Harry Pratt, 85, of East Hampton, beloved husband of his true love Nancy (Strong) Pratt of 64 years, passed away Thursday, Dec. 8, at his home. Born Aug. 8, 1931, in Brooklyn, N.Y., he was the son of the late Dora Lillian (Strong) Pratt Parker and Sherold Gladding Pratt, and had resided in East Hampton for most of his life.



John was in the Air Force, stationed in San Huron, Arabia, from 1951-55 as a senior aircraft mechanic. After the Air Force, John was employed by Pratt & Whitney. From there, he went on to own numerous businesses (United Rental/ Rent it, Inc.) lastly being the East Hartford Power Equipment before his retirement.

John was known by many to be a master mechanic the "guru of small engines," along with his passion for radio-controlled model airplanes, his love for his family and having a positive impact on all who knew and loved him. He was truly a humble and kind man.

John is survived by his wife, Nancy Strong Pratt; four sons, Ronald J. Pratt and his wife Colleen (Hall) of East Hampton, Steven G. Pratt of Thatcher, Ariz., Craig J. Pratt and his wife Colleen (Connelly) of East Hampton, Chris R. Pratt of East Hampton; one sister, Jeanne (Pratt) Bixby of Virginia; eight grandchildren, Christen, Craig, Elliot, Garret, Sheryl Beth, Jeffrey, Gregory and Haley, and three great-grandchildren, Craig, Abigail and Marjorie; and special love and thanks to neighbors Dianne and Randy Rushin.

John was predeceased by his son Richard S. Pratt.

Friends may call at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, Tuesday, Dec. 13. Burial will be private at the convenience of the family.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

Betty Joyce Patch

Betty Joyce (Martin) Patch, 81, of Colchester, passed away peacefully Friday, Dec. 9, with her loving family by her side.



In her passing, she was reunited with her best friend and beloved husband, Wilbur DeForest Patch, with whom she shared nearly 63 years of marriage before he predeceased her on Sept. 17, 2014.

She leaves to mourn her passing but cherish her memory their four children, to whom she was ever-devoted – sons, Wayne and Jerry, both of Colchester; daughters and sons-in-law, Darlene and Mark Goodwin of Colchester and Cheryl and Joseph Carroll of Lebanon; seven grandchildren, Jennifer; Joey (wife, Amanda) and Nicholas (and companion, Margaret "Meg" Carey); Melissa (husband, Nick) and Sabrina (husband, Mike); and Joey and Michael; six great-grandchildren, Bradley, Emerson, Harper, Eric, Kyle and Jessica; one great-great grandson, Marcello; a sister, Marion Bradshaw of Colchester; dear friends, Debbie Garrison (her "third daughter"), Linda Kneeland, Bernice Rouleau and Mike Weinkoff; and numerous extended family members and friends.

She was predeceased by her parents, Lyman and Frances (Lackey) Martin; and her brother, Lyman Martin Jr.

The eternal "social butterfly," Betty enjoyed waitressing and later working at her daughter's business, Quality Consignments in Colchester. She loved spending time with family and friends – especially outdoors. In her spare time, Betty loved to crochet and those handmade items will be cherished for years to come. She will be remembered lovingly as a beautiful woman, both inside and out.

The family received guests Thursday, Dec. 15, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A chapel service was observed during the visitation. She will be laid to rest privately with her husband in the Linwood Cemetery, Colchester.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to Duke Children's, Office of Development, 710 W. Main St., Durham, NC 27701 (gifts.duke.edu/dch) to aid in finding a cure for Pompe Disease, which afflicts her great-granddaughter.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Gerry Labb

Gerald Labb, 75 of Colchester, beloved husband of Barbara Ann Hall-Labb, passed away Monday, Dec. 5, at his home.

Born in Springfield, Mass., the son of the late Jacob and Lillian (Gitson) Labb, he grew up and lived in Massachusetts before finally settling in Colchester. He retired from the Vernon Public School System, where he taught history and social studies. He was loved and respected by all of his students and colleagues.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by his stepdaughter, Lisa Ezold of Middletown; four grandsons, Peter J. Ezold Jr. (P.J.) of Branford, Christopher Ezold and wife Kelly of Colchester, Evan Ezold and girlfriend Angela of Lebanon, and Scott Ezold of Marlborough. He is also survived by a great-grandson, Cole.

Gerry enjoyed working outside in his vegetable and flower gardens. He planted and nurtured beautiful plants and flowers. He had a deep love for history and his knowledge seemed to be unlimited. He enjoyed sharing this knowledge with family and friends.

A memorial celebration will be held at 1 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 27, at North Woods of Colchester (at 351 Lebanon Ave./Route 16). Meet at the clubhouse on Center Court.

Memorial donations may be made to the American Diabetes Association, by phone at 1-800-342-2383, or at diabetes.org/donate/other-ways-to-give/donate-by-mail.html.

Hebron

Stephen Sluyter Dunlap

Stephen Sluyter Dunlap was born developmentally disabled to parents Ralph and Dorothy Dunlap at Wesson Memorial Hospital in Springfield, Mass., May 26, 1948. He was named partly in memory of the Rev. Richard Sluyter, his triple great-grandfather who preached at and evangelized from the Dutch Reformed Church of Claverack, Claverack, N.Y. during the early 1800s.



Deprived from birth of living a "normal" (self-actualizing) life, he was fortunate to be surrounded by family who recognized what "potential" he had and developed it. His love of music originated from the attention lavished upon him at an early age by his great aunt Carrie. She spent endless hours playing nursery rhymes for him on the piano. It now seems that she provided that "extra spark" that shattered his autistic shell that might otherwise have isolated him for the rest of his life.

The severity of his mental disability might have condemned him to a life of obscurity had it not been for a significant change in his living arrangement back in 1987. At that time, he was placed in a state group home managed by Whole Life Inc. There, in the company of group home staff, "day program" staff and two other clients (including his beloved "Jane"), he reached his full potential. He "thrived" until "old age" when attendant medical problems overtook him. He died Sunday, Dec. 11, in Colchester.

He will be best remembered by "care"/"day program" staff, family and friends for his friendly ("cheery") demeanor. He eagerly embraced his role as the group home "greeter". He was a warm, "kind soul" who will be missed by all those who came in contact with him but most keenly by his brother, Roger, Roger's wife, Angie, and long-time program aide, "Allen" who was practically a brother to him.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to: Corporation for Public Management, 75 Summit St., Manchester, CT 06040 which provides support services for the developmentally disabled (partnersforcommunity.org) or 860-643-0355. Stephen benefited directly from the "Day Program" which so enriched his life. Please specify that your donation be used to benefit the "Day Program for the Physical and Developmentally Disabled. Thank you!

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

Haddam Neck

Mary Nilsen

Mary (Haidet) Nilsen, 84, of Haddam Neck, beloved wife of Harold W. Nilsen, died Monday, Dec. 12, at Middlesex Hospital. Born Sept. 17, 1932, in Carrollton, Ohio, she was the daughter of the late Russell and Grace Haidet.



Mary graduated from Deep River High School and had lived in Haddam Neck for 65 years. She was an active member of the Haddam Neck Congregational Church for 63 years and had been a member of the Ladies Aid Society. Mary had also volunteered at the Middle Haddam Post Office. She was an avid Red Sox fan and a fan of the UConn women's basketball team.

Besides her husband Harry, she is survived by her son, Russell Nilsen and his wife Mary Ann of Haddam Neck, and her granddaughter Christina Magnano. She was predeceased by her brother, Peter Haidet, and her sister, Dorothy Mockel.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, Dec. 17, at 11 a.m., in the Haddam Neck Congregational Church. Burial will be private in Rock Landing Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Haddam Neck Congregational Church, c/o Sue Olsen, 11 Injun Hollow Rd., East Hampton, CT 06424.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

Peter Jan Reenstra

Peter Jan Reenstra of Colchester, formerly of Lebanon, went to his rest in Heaven after a long and courageous battle with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) Wednesday, Dec. 14, at the age of 74.



He leaves his beloved wife of 38 years, Donna (Parzero) Reenstra; three children, Michael, Jeffrey and Lydia Reenstra; two siblings, Victoria Jones of Long Island and Stephen Reenstra of New Jersey; and numerous extended family members and friends.

Born Feb. 20, 1942 in Passaic, N.J., he was the son of the late Raymond and Carolyn (Davidson) Reenstra.

Mr. Reenstra served proudly with the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War. He was a founding member and past president of the American Amphibious Force Association.

For 29 years, he had worked as a pipefitter for Pratt & Whitney and went on to work in the IT department at Capital Community College before his retirement in 2012. Mr. Reenstra had been an active member of the Republican Town Committee in Lebanon and served as secretary for many years.

Peter was an active communicant of St. Andrew Church in Colchester, where he was active with the ACTS Men's Retreat League as well as a member and past grand knight of Francis Cardinal Spellman Council 6107 Knights of Columbus at the parish.

The family will receive guests from 4-7 p.m. today, Dec. 16, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral liturgy will be celebrated at 11 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 17, directly at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave., Colchester. The rendering of military honors will follow Mass, as he will be laid to rest privately at the State Veterans Cemetery, Middletown.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to the ALS Association, Gift Processing Center, P.O. Box 6051, Albert Lea, MN 56007 (alsa.org/donate), St. Andrew Church or the Knights of Columbus.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Edward G. Foreman

Edward G. Foreman, 68, beloved husband of Patti (Durgan), passed away suddenly Wednesday, Dec. 7, at his home in Colchester, and now is with his Lord and Savior.



Ed was born to Edward and Laura Foreman (Trombley) in Hartford, but spent most of his life in Broad Brook, Manchester, Bolton and most recently Colchester.

He is survived by his three sons, Erik Foreman, Matthew Hatfield and his wife Jessica, and Seth Hatfield; as well as his siblings, James Foreman, Sharon Wall, Laurie Fournier and Mary Ried. He is also survived by his adored grandchildren, Neishawn Carrion, Leeana Pault, Erik Foreman Jr., Aleah Foreman, Julianna Kingsbury, Adalyn Hatfield and Brendan Hatfield; his father-in-law Ronald Durgan; brother-in-law Glenn Durgan and his wife Debra; nephew Kyle Foreman; and niece Michelle Durgan.

Ed was very active at Trinity Covenant Church, where he worked for 15 years. He was known as an avid sports fan who also enjoyed playing an active role in his boys youth sports.

A funeral service will be held Saturday, Dec. 17, at Trinity Covenant Church, 302 Hackmatack St., Manchester, at 11 a.m. Friends and family may call at the John F. Tierney Funeral Home, 219 West Center St., Manchester, today, Dec. 16, from 5-8 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Building Healthy Families Inc. or Trinity Covenant Church Youth at 302 Hackmatack St., Manchester, CT 06040.

For online condolences, visit tierneyfuneralhome.com.

Marlborough

Brian D. Secord

Brian D. Secord, 73, of Hartford, formerly of Marlborough, loving brother and uncle, peacefully passed away Sunday, Dec. 11, at his home, with his family by his side. Born in Hartford, he was the son of the late Douglas Henry and Eldoretta Baker (Hartling) Secord.



Brian was an honorary member of the Marlborough Volunteer Fire Department, Marlborough Lions Club; as well as a parishioner of St. Patrick-St. Anthony Church, Hartford.

Brian will be dearly missed and fondly remembered by his brother and sister-in-law, Gregory and Judy Secord of Hartford (with whom Brian made his residence); a sister, Elizabeth Secord RSM of Vermont; nephew Ian Secord and his wife Maria, of Wallingford; niece Heidi Secord and her husband Gary Bloss, of Pennsylvania; as well as two cherished great nephews, Mason and Logan Secord.

The Secord family extends a special thank you to the staff of Vitas Hospice for all the wonderful care and consideration they extended to Brian.

Friends and relatives paid their respects to the family Wednesday, Dec. 14, at St. Patrick-St. Anthony Church, 285 Church St., Hartford. A Mass of Christian Burial celebrating Brian's life was held Thursday, Dec. 15, at St. Patrick-St. Anthony Church, 285 Church St., Hartford. Burial followed the Mass in Marlboro Cemetery, Route 66, Marlborough.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial donations be made to the Marlborough Volunteer Fire Department, 7 Hebron Rd., Marlborough, CT 06447, or the Office of Radio & Television of the Archdiocese of Hartford, 15 Peach Orchard Rd., Prospect, CT 06712-1052.

The Farley-Sullivan Funeral Home has been entrusted with Brian's funeral arrangements. To extend online condolences, visit farleysullivan.com.

Portland

Mary L. Bastura

Mary L. (Atkinson) Bastura, 96, beloved wife of the late Frederick Bastura, died Tuesday, Dec. 6, at Portland Care and Rehabilitation. Born Feb. 13, 1920, in Middletown, she was the daughter of the late William and Mary (Foley) Atkinson.

Mary was a longtime resident of Portland and parishioner of St. Mary Church, Portland. She worked as an office manager at Remington Rand of Middletown for over 20 years.

Mrs. Bastura is survived by her sons, Frederick "Butch" Bastura and his wife Jeannie of Portland, Kenneth Bastura and his wife Kristine of Colchester; two grandchildren, James Bastura and his wife Sheri, Susan Capello and her husband Jim; and two great-granddaughters, Kaitlin and Julia Capello.

She was predeceased by her three brothers, John, Wesley and James Atkinson, and two sisters, Virginia Christiana and Norbetine Galcia.

Her funeral is private.

The Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, has been entrusted with her funeral arrangements. To send an online expression of sympathy, visit portlandmemorialfh.net.

Portland

Raymond S. Genovesio

Raymond S. Genovesio, of Portland, passed away Saturday, Dec. 10, at Middlesex Hospital Hospice, after a brief illness. Born in Middletown Aug. 31, 1927, Raymond resided in Portland since 1957, and was a veteran of the U.S. Army, a member of the Knights of Columbus Council No. 3, and a longtime communicant of St Mary Church in Portland.

He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Jean Laczak Genovesio; his son, Mark Genovesio of Portland; his daughter, Lori Harris and her husband Louis of East Hampton; and his daughter, Lisa O'Connor and her husband William of East Haddam; as well as his granddaughter, Julie Freel and her husband Timothy of Wethersfield. He is also survived by his sister, Erma Heidtmann and her husband William of Vermont, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Raymond was predeceased by his mother, Giovanna Ferraris Genovesio; sisters, Esther Leary, Olga Marchese, Marguerite Russo, Jeanie Paonessa; and brothers, John and Kenneth Genovesio.

Funeral services were held Wednesday, Dec. 14, at Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown. Burial was held at the State Veterans Cemetery, with military honors. Friends gathered before the service at Biega Funeral Home.

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

Portland

Glenn Moore McKinnon

Mrs. Glenn Moore McKinnon, 87, a dedicated wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and friend to many, passed away Monday, Dec. 12, at Middlesex Hospital in Middletown.

Glenn was born Oct. 5, 1929, in Littleton, N.H. Her childhood years were spent on her family farm, where her love of basketball developed. She graduated from Elliot School of Nursing in Manchester, N.H., and worked as a registered nurse for over 40 years.

Glenn and her husband, Gerald, of 58 years, raised their family of four sons in Goffstown, N.H. Glenn and Gerald retired to Palm Harbor, Fla., until they moved to Stokesdale, N.C., where they were active residents for 12 years. Glenn spent her last seven years in Portland, where she was an active member of The Waverly Senior Center and the Grace and Truth Bible Chapel.

Glenn enjoyed many activities including quilting, cooking, and particularly playing golf, where she distinguished herself at the club and state golf levels. Her love of golf was shared with many members of her family, including, most recently, three of her great-grandchildren. Glenn's sense of competitiveness and determination were evident throughout her life.

Glenn was predeceased by her husband, Gerald McKinnon, brother, Ralph Moore, sister, Priscilla Lull, and grandson, Gregory McKinnon. She is survived by her four sons, Robert J. McKinnon and wife Terri of Goffstown, N.H., William P. McKinnon and wife Kathleen of Haddam, Timothy N. McKinnon and wife Kerry of Portland, and Peter S. McKinnon and spouse Christopher of Reidsville, N.C. Glenn's family also included eight grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren, as well as sister, Geneva French, and numerous nieces and nephews and their families.

Family and friends are all invited to a Celebration of Life service to be held Saturday, Dec. 17, at 1 p.m., at the Inn at Middletown in Middletown. Memorials may be directed to The Waverly Center, 7 Waverly St., Portland, CT 06480.

Colchester

Julio Gerardo Vivero

Julio Gerardo Vivero, 91, of Colchester, died peacefully at home with his family by his side Sunday, Dec. 11. He was born in Quito, Ecuador Sept. 26, 1925, to the late Jose and Maria Diaz de Vivero.

Julio is survived by his wife of 67 years, Beatriz Jaramillo. They were wed in Ecuador in 1949. When he was young, he lied about his name and age in order to serve in Ecuador's Army as an artillery soldier, where he fought in the Peru vs. Ecuador border war in 1944.

Julio was a great and generous man; he would open up his home to anyone who needed help. He was always happy, especially when he was with his grandchildren. He loved adventure, music, storytelling, puzzles, reading, writing, geography, and making up stories and languages. Julio was a very hard worker who was committed and determined to achieve any goal he set for himself. He was always impeccably dressed from his shined shoes to his perfectly combed hair. At 4'11", he may have been short in stature, but was a 10' giant in spirit.

On Dec. 23, 1963, Julio emigrated from Ecuador to the United States to create a better life for his family; with little money and big dreams, he worked hard. He was a tailor by trade, specializing in custom men's suits working at a variety of men's clothing stores. In the '70s he worked at the Executive Shoppe, owned by Meadowlark Lemon.

In his early days in the U.S., he worked for a variety of companies as a machinist and assembler. After saving enough, he was able to bring his wife Beatriz to the U.S. in 1965 and the children followed in 1966, where they settled in Stamford before moving to Colchester.

Julio is survived by his loving wife, Beatriz Vivero of Colchester; his children, Consuelo (Dennis) Usky of New Haven, Hugo (Kimberly) of Colchester, Patrick (Elaine) of Killingworth, Fernando (Denise) of Thousand Oaks, Calif., and Lucia (Michael) Hathaway of Lake Bluff, Ill.; his brother, Anibal (Lupe) of Quito, Ecuador; Margo Vivero; nine grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; and a large extensive family around the globe.

In addition to his parents, Jose and Maria Vivero, he was preceded by his brothers, Luis, Guillermo and Bolivar Vivero.

There are no calling hours and a private service will be held at the discretion of the family. In lieu of flowers, donations in Julio's name may be made to the Alzheimer's Association or Middlesex Hospice.

The Belmont Funeral Home has been entrusted with Julio's care. Visit belmontfh.com to leave condolences.

East Hampton

Jewel Arlene Schluntz Celebration of Life

A Celebration of Life ceremony for Jewel Arlene Schluntz of East Hampton will be held Saturday, Dec. 17, at 2 p.m., at the Congregational Church of East Hampton, 59 Main St., East Hampton.

Schluntz, 82, died Friday, Nov. 26. To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.