

RIVEREAST

News Bulletin

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

Volume 40, Number 49

Published by The Glastonbury Citizen

April 8, 2016



Ravaged by Fire... One of East Hampton's plow trucks is a total loss after it caught fire in the public works garage Monday morning. The fire started after the truck had been returned to the garage following several hours on the road at the start of this week's surprise spring snowstorm. Foreman Dean Michelson sustained a hand injury in the blaze. See related story on page 12.

'Stunning' Price Hike for Belltown Hub

by Elizabeth Regan

The East Hampton Town Council continues to entertain the idea of turning Center School into a municipal hub – despite being told the project is likely to be much more expensive than originally anticipated.

Charles Warrington Jr., of the project management firm Colliers International, told councilors at a workshop last week that renovating Center School for use as a town hall and adding a 14,700-square-foot addition to Memorial School to accommodate the displaced students would cost \$36.22 million. The costs assume both the renovated Memorial School and the new town hall complex would be completed between the fall of 2019 and the beginning of 2020, respectively.

The plan includes school safety improvements and an addition to the Memorial School gym.

Warrington said numbers provided in a July 2015 report by Friar Associates, a Farmington-based architectural, engineering and design firm, indicate the same project would cost \$22.40 million. Friar Associates was hired last April to put a dollar amount to several different scenarios for addressing the town's aging town hall and police department.

Some councilors called the difference in the cost estimates "stunning."

Warrington also presented an estimate that included a 34,000-square-foot addition to Memorial School, a scenario not included in the Friar Associates report. Warrington said that option would cost \$44.40 million.

Another, slightly less expensive, alternative was raised by Warrington as a way to fast-track the completion of the new town hall setup. By renovating Center and Memorial schools at the same time, town hall employees would be able to move into their new offices by fall 2018.

But Warrington said that plan is based on an admittedly big assumption: That fourth-graders will be able to move to Memorial School and fifth-graders to the middle school before doors open for the 2017-18 school year. (Currently, Center School educates the town's fourth- and fifth-graders, while Memorial School is for kids in pre-kindergarten through third grade.)

In February, the town retained Colliers, the same firm managing the \$52 million high school renovation project, to oversee the Center School project. That's when Warrington began to go through the Friar reports to look at the recommendations and cost estimates.

"Frankly, we had concerns from our local experience," Warrington told the Town Council at last week's workshop.

He said the Friar numbers did not itemize
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What Happens to the Fourth- and Fifth-Graders?

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RHAM Senior Wins State Poetry Contest

by Geeta S. Sandberg

RHAM High School senior Emily Saunders was recently named Connecticut's 2016 Poetry Out Loud champion and the win, the Hebron resident shared this week, was something she wasn't expecting.

In fact, "I laughed when they called my name" announcing the win, she said.

Poetry Out Loud, supported by the Poetry Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, is a contest that encourages students to learn about poetry through memorization, performance and competition, according to a recent release on Saunders' win.

This was the second year RHAM participated in the contest; the Poetry Out Loud club was brought to the school by teachers Mary Rose Meade and Andrea Barton, who act as the club's advisors.

The program got underway with workshops that prepared students for poetry contests in the classroom and then school-wide, with the top performer from each school advancing to the regional competition.

Saunders was one of seven finalists at the regional competition, and after taking the top spot, she went on to compete at the state finals at Central Connecticut State University where

she outscored 14 other finalists.

Meade, who was at the March 15 state finals with Barton, said of the win, "It was incredibly exciting to be at the finals and see all of Emily's hard work translate into this statewide recognition." She added that for RHAM to have a state winner after just two years participating in the contest is "incredibly exciting."

For Saunders, the experience was a result of her decision to take a communications course because she enjoyed public speaking and making presentations.

"Our teacher [Meade] said we needed to participate," she explained this week, adding, "I was never into poetry."

Instead, Saunders has been active in the RHAM community in many other ways: she's president of the Leos Club, secretary of the senior class, played RHAM soccer for four years (as captain this year), as well as soccer for an outside team; she's in the wind ensemble, works with Habitat for Humanity, Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation, youth soccer clinics, and the Special Olympics. She's also active in the youth group at Church of the Holy Family.

But Meade, who made participation in the program count for a portion of the students' final, said that was one of the great things about

Poetry Out Loud: the way it gets students involved with poetry who might otherwise never do so.

Meade said she had "this class of students [for whom] this would be the last thing in the world they thought they would do — memorize poems and recite them."

But those same students, she furthered, found poems that spoke to them and reflected their ideas, and "were able to bring such a profound level of meaning and truth to them in their own recitation."

As for Saunders, while poetry wasn't on her list of interests or activities prior to Poetry Out Loud, she shared the experience allowed her to learn more about the craft and look at it in a new way.

"Now I pick up more because I know more [about poetry] and I appreciate it more," she shared.

For the program, Saunders had to select poems off the program website to memorize and recite during the competitions; she was then graded based on factors such as accuracy, dramatic appropriateness and overall performance.

Saunders chose "A Song in the Front Yard" by Gwendolyn Brooks, "The Children's Hour" by Gwendolyn Brooks, "The Children's Hour" by Gwendolyn Brooks, "The Children's Hour" by Gwendolyn Brooks
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Emily Saunders

Price Hike cont. from Front Page

“soft costs,” a term describing expenses not directly related to construction that include architectural, engineering, financing, and legal fees, as well as other pre- and post-construction expenses. According to Warrington, Friar’s method of budgeting rolled many of the soft costs into the unit price for direct construction expenses like materials and labor.

Since soft costs generally amount to 25-35 percent of the total project cost, according to Warrington, including them in the unit price means towns might have less to spend on construction than they think they do.

“The owners get to construction and they run out of money and then have to go back to referendum and taxpayers are upset because now we’re asking for more money,” Warrington said.

He called it a “fundamental error in creating a budget.”

But Michael Sorano, vice president of Friar Associates, said Tuesday his estimate was based on historical analysis and a good understanding of the scope of work required to do the project. He said the subcommittee of the prior town council tasked with exploring options for Center School had wanted to take the completed schematics a step further with detailed designs that would have rendered more accurate cost estimates in anticipation of a referendum – but the work would have required the town to go out to bid and the project was not taken to that level.

“Working with what we had, we solicited a double check with another professional cost estimator at Downes Construction,” Sorano said. “They walked the projects with us, and took the time to review our scope of work and estimate before we presented it to the town; they agreed that our estimates were in line with our assumptions.”

Sorano said the town notified him after the last workshop on the Center School concept,

which was held in February, that his firm would be taking direction from Colliers. But Friar Associates’ contract with the town was completed in the fall, with the presentation of its report.

While Sorano said he had agreed to make additional presentations into the new year at the council’s request, he said his firm suggested that any work under new project management should be put out to bid “and not done piecemeal.” He added that his firm did not offer additional fees to complete the work.

“We had previously worked directly with a subcommittee of the council tasked for this project, and not directly for the council,” he said.

The Center School subcommittee started over a year ago to examine different options for Center School. It had a few members to start with; now, every member of the Town Council is a member of the “subcommittee.”

“The purpose of our initial report was so the town can see in general what different scenarios cost in relation to each other, so they can move ahead and develop one of them,” Sorano said. “We stand by our estimates and report for what they are, and hope that the town uses them to move forward with a successful project.”

Town Council Chairwoman Patience Anderson expressed shock at the new price tag but said she doesn’t want to turn back yet.

“We keep kicking the can down the road,” Anderson said at the workshop, referring to discussions on the Center School conversion that have been taking place since at least 2005. “I think we need to accept that these are the costs that they are and have an honest discussion about whether this is something we as a council want to advance to the next step.”

The consensus among the Town Council was to move forward.

Poetry Contest cont. from Front Page

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and “The Way it Sometimes Is” by Henry Taylor.

Saunders said she was drawn to the poems because of how relatable they were.

“I’ve stayed in the front yard all my life. I want a peek at the back. Where it’s rough and untended and hungry weed grows. A girl gets sick of a rose,” it exclaims in the opening to “A Song in the Front Yard.”

Meanwhile, Longfellow’s prose asserts, “Between the dark and the daylight, when the night is beginning to lower, comes a pause in the day’s occupations, that is known as the Children’s Hour.”

Saunders shared there were times other students would say of the poems, “‘Oh that’s not a poem; it doesn’t rhyme,’ but it’s amazing how you can literally write about anything.”

She’s come to think of poetry, she added, as a representation of silence – that is, the thoughts that take place during that quiet.

“I think it’s kind of like that silence – that thought,” Saunders said. “Whatever you think, that’s poetry, and that’s what’s amazing. It can rhyme or not rhyme, it can take on any form or rhythm, and it’s that silence; it’s whatever you

have to share.”

As for whether her success with Poetry Out Loud means Saunders will take up a pen and start to write her own, or participate in more competitions, she said she wasn’t so sure.

“But I’ve already gone to bookstores and picked up poetry books,” she said.

* * *

As a result of her win, Saunders won \$500 for her school library to use to purchase poetry books; Meade said she already had her eye on the most recent Pulitzer Prize book for poetry and was interested in acquiring books from local poets, and having poetry readings at the school.

Meade concluded of the program, “It’s great we had a state winner, but on top of that, the bigger picture is this whole group of students, as my class and as a club, found so much meaning in these words and discerned things about art and poetry and literature, so it’s truly wonderful.”

Saunders will participate in the National Finals May 2-4 in Washington D.C.

To learn more about Poetry Out Loud, go to poetryoutloud.org.

Observations & Ruminations

by **Mike Thompson**

First off, I hope you all made it through Monday unscathed.

What an unexpected snow and ice mess. I mean, we knew it was going to snow. The weather forecasters began talking about that late last week and never backed away. Considering Monday was April 4, the news was unwelcome, though certainly not unprecedented. NBC Connecticut meteorologist Bob Maxon tweeted Sunday – when it also snowed – that 105 of the state past 113 Aprils have seen snow. Yes, April is spring, but it’s also Connecticut. Snow happens.

But what I was banking on – what most, I think, were banking on – was that Monday’s snow would be pretty much a non-issue as far as the roads were concerned, particularly as the day went on. After all, that was the case Sunday. As recently as Sunday evening, weathermen seemed, for the most part, to remain unconcerned. Due to the sun in April, they said, snow would have a tough time sticking during the day, and driving should be a non-issue.

That obviously was not the case. As the day went on, snow stuck, ice stuck, and by the time I left the office at around 5:30 Monday afternoon, roads in Glastonbury that were just wet a few hours earlier had become awash with snow and ice. And, with a few very welcome exceptions, the roads I took on the drive back to Manchester appeared to have been barely touched by plows. The snow and ice crunched away under my tires, and driving turned into a harrowing adventure.

That April sun, it turns out, didn’t mean a thing. It just couldn’t combat the extreme cold; Monday’s high at Bradley International Airport of 27 degrees was the lowest high for April 4 on record.

I got off lucky, I realize. In other parts of the state – I heard the Colchester area was particularly terrible – the road conditions had been bad all day, and there were accidents and spin-outs galore. I think probably the entire state was happy to see Monday put in the rear-view mirror.

Things were better Tuesday. Still incredibly cold for this time of year – highs were in the mid-30s, about 20 degrees below normal – but even with the chilly temperatures, there was bright, bright sunshine, and this is where that April sun made its presence felt. By the time I drove home Tuesday evening, I noticed a lot – not anywhere close to all of it, but a lot – of the snow had vanished.

After Monday, the grass and the clear pavement were most welcome sights indeed.

* * *

Some tough news for RHAM alum and current Arizona Diamondbacks star center fielder AJ Pollock. He’d been nursing a sore elbow all spring, and, after several weeks off, got into an exhibition game last Friday night. Slid-

ing into home plate, though, he broke his elbow. He had surgery on the elbow Tuesday, and will be out for months, potentially the whole season, although AJ has vowed to come back at some point this year.

I felt so bad for him when I heard the news. As I’ve written in the past, I’ve interviewed AJ a couple of times – including last season at Citi Field, just after he was named to the National League all-star team – and he’s a great guy. And it looked like, after setbacks by injuries earlier in his career, A.J. was blossoming into the superstar the Diamondbacks thought they were getting when they made him their first-round pick in the 2009 draft.

In my fantasy baseball league draft last month, I selected AJ in the third round. And it’s not because of his Hebron connection or that I’ve met the guy; after all, in the cold world of fantasy sports, you’ve got to put your emotions aside. No, it’s because ESPN had him ranked as one of the top 15 players in the game. And yes, folks, he’s that good.

AJ was off to fantastic start in 2014 when, at the end of May, he was hit by a pitch, breaking a bone in his right hand. He didn’t return to a big-league game until that September.

The following year, AJ was injury-free the whole season – and really showed what he could do. By the end of the season, he had compiled some terrific statistics. He hit .315 with a gaudy .368 on-base percentage, slugged 20 homers, and interestingly had as many doubles as stolen bases (39). How impressive are those stats? AJ finished the season ranked fifth in the National League in batting average (.315), second in runs (111), second in hits (192), fifth in total bases, fourth in doubles, eighth in triples (six) and fourth in stolen bases.

And on top of all that, he won a Gold Glove for his play in center field. Yep – he’s an excellent defender too.

Basically, it looked like he was well on his way to becoming a household name. And then this happens.

AJ is sadly no stranger to injury. In addition to breaking his hand in 2014, in 2010, he actually broke the same elbow he broke last Friday – in fact, he broke it in the very same spot. He wound up missing the whole season that year.

AJ, as I said earlier, sounds optimistic. He said he’s going to push to try to come back this season; I hope for his sake he can. But even if he has to wait until 2017, I’m confident he’ll pick up where he left off in 2015. AJ’s still got a great future ahead of them. His 2015 numbers proved what those following him have known for years – he’s got a world of talent. Get well soon, AJ.

* * *

See you next week.

Colchester Resident Publishes Book on Criminals

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

Resident Kenneth Passan almost hit delete.

With his finger sitting on the key, something stopped him from erasing years of work on his book, *Monsters Among Us: Man's Inhumanity: A Philosophical Treatise*.

Passan described the book as a non-fiction academic and is a "compilation of different subjects of the greatest atrocities men have done against other men."

The book gives a background into racism and the Nazis along with what drives some people to participate in cults. The book – including two case studies – focuses on violence against women, various violent crimes and modern day terrorism.

"The book has some details that are not common knowledge," Passan said. "It includes nuclear terrorism and the possibility of a terrorist getting their hands on nuclear weapons."

The purpose of the book is to raise awareness into crime around the world – and to let people know the world is not as safe as they might think.

"Crime has always happened since the beginning of time and there has been an increasing number of incidents everywhere," Passan said. "Terrorists are expanding and it's even more dangerous."



He quickly added as an assurance, though, that while crime may be on the rise, not everyone is a "bad guy."

Passan has long had an interest in criminology and forensics.

A former fingerprint examiner for the Federal Bureau of Investigations, Passan has a certificate in forensic nursing and is currently a psychiatric nurse at the Village in Hartford, helping children that are abused. He also obtained a master's in forensic science from National University in California in 2006.

An avid investigative television and Discovery Channel watcher, Passan said the crimes angered him and he wanted to do something about it.

"I needed to say something without making people think I'm crazy and put me in a strait-jacket," Passan said lightheartedly.

A Vietnam veteran, Passan started out working for the FBI before becoming a deputy sheriff and then a county corrections officer. For a year and a half, he also dabbled in teaching forensics for adult education in Waterford.

In 2003, Passan went for his certificate for forensic nursing – nursing specialized for victims of trauma – and in 2004, published his first article in *Forensic Nurse Magazine*. He said he understood it was a degree he could not use in Connecticut since he is not a police officer – but it was still something he felt he needed to do.

"I'm trained in major crime scene investigation, but am not a police officer so I can't work here," Passan said. "I knew I could not use it here so I use it to write about criminology."

A friend framed the magazine article for him

and he put it up on his wall; however, the article kept haunting him.

"Why not do something with it?" Passan said. "I used it as a reference for my first book."

That book, *Forensics and the Violent Criminal Mind*, was published in 2009 – but Passan was not satisfied with its marketing or editing. So with his next book, he tried something different.

In 2011, Passan began working on *Monsters*. He completed the book in 2013 – but let it sit for a year, when he began shopping the book around to literary agents. He was selling the book as a non-fiction narrative, but it wasn't really a narrative – so this made it difficult to find a literary agent.

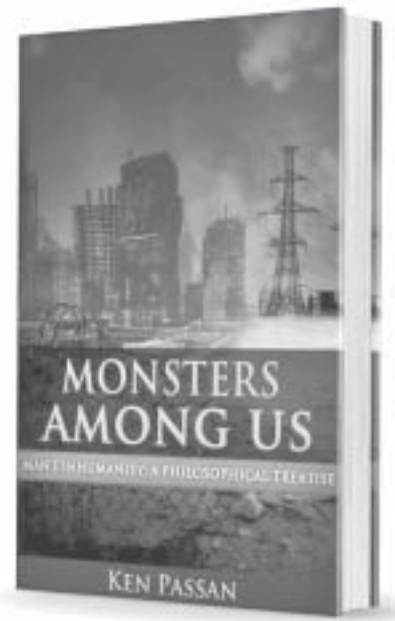
"I was one finger away [from deleting the book], but something bugged me," Passan said. He just couldn't give up.

So he opted to eschew the literary agent route altogether. "I sent it straight to the horse's mouth – the publishers," he said.

When he had nearly given up hope that *Monsters* would get published, he found Hibernian Publishing, a New Jersey-based publisher that specializes in academic non-fiction. In a few weeks, his book will become a reality, and hit bookstore shelves.

The book is geared toward college-aged people and up, because of disturbing material, Passan said. He imagines it would be good as a supplement for a criminology or police science college course as well.

Passan had a book reception in Mystic planned for later this month, but it was called off due to unforeseen circumstances, he said. However, Passan said he is sure there will be



Resident Ken Passan has a new non-fiction book focusing on crime.

future book signings and events.

A sequel to *Monsters* may be in the works if there is interest. Aside from the non-fiction academic, Hibernian Publishing is also publishing Passan's first supernatural thriller novel, *Elevator*, in the coming months.

"I'm excited about that, but patient," Passan said. "One book at a time."

More information on *Monsters* can be found at monstersamong.us and at kennethpassan.author.mozello.com.

\$36.29 Million Budget Sent to Hebron Public Hearing

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Following nearly two hours of public comment Tuesday night – most of it centered on the school budget – the Board of Finance Tuesday sent a proposed \$36.29 million spending package for the 2016-17 fiscal year to public hearing next week.

The proposal of \$36,291,449 is a decrease of \$90,352, or .25 percent, from the approved 2015-16 budget. Included in that number is \$9,224,224 in general government which is made up of \$7,209,425 for town government; a \$928,983 contribution to debt service; a \$770,911 contribution for capital improvement; a \$140,000 contribution for open space and land acquisition; a \$62,100 contribution for capital projects; a \$54,000 contribution to debt management; a \$50,000 contribution to revaluation; and an \$8,800 contribution for capital non-recurring projects.

The spending proposal also includes \$15,269,771 for Hebron's portion of the RHAM budget, and \$11,797,454 for the Hebron Board of Education budget. And it's the latter that received the most attention Tuesday.

The meeting room at the Douglas Library was filled, something Board of Finance Chairman Malcolm Leichter called "amazing."

"I don't think I've ever seen a group this large," he said.

The majority of the audience was made up of concerned parents and educators who spoke about the importance of the town's education system, with many crediting the school system for their decision to move to the area.

Resident Margaret Clifton explained she was a RHAM teacher first, who then moved to Hebron "because of the schools."

Similarly, Sera Coppolino, who also teaches at RHAM, said, "The schools are why we moved, why we paid more for less house than surrounding towns and why we pay more in taxes."

She said the writing and comprehension skills

of her daughter, thanks to Hebron's preschool program, were "beyond what I thought possible as a 3-year-old."

Parents spoke to specific items such as teachers, media specialists, the music program and preschool – and implored the finance board to leave them alone.

"My family picked Hebron because of the community but also the great education – not an 'okay' education; a great education," said resident Sean Connolly.

The school board in January adopted a 2016-17 budget of \$11,990,454 – an amount that was flat with current year spending. And Connolly said he felt the proposed budget was actually a cut when inflation was taken into account.

"The dollar doesn't go as far," he stated. "We have a simple choice. Are we in favor of a great education that brings families to town? Or deprioritizing education as we have been?"

On April 1, an update on the budget was sent to parents through the school district's notification system that listed "proposed Board of Finance reductions" amounting to \$407,046, which the update said would result in the reduction of two classroom teachers, a library media specialist, a full day preschool section and health insurance funding.

In addition, the school board sent out a flyer that cried "SOS! Save our schools" and urged parents to attend Tuesday's meeting or send emails to the finance board telling them to leave the school budget as it was.

But Leichter noted as things got underway Tuesday this was the first time the finance board was deliberating on the education budget, and the board hadn't yet proposed any reductions. Indeed, the Board of Finance doesn't have the authority to cut specific items from either the town or education budget, he stressed; it has the ability to set the bottom line, but the changes made to reach that number, if necessary, are up to the education board and the Board of Select-

men.

"Our charge is to set the bottom line," Leichter stated. "We cannot cut individual items out of any budget."

Leichter added he applauded the school board for putting together information about the budget "but I wish it got to everyone," not just those signed up for the notification system.

Former Board of Education member Kathy Shea was present Tuesday and shared her thoughts on the information the board released this week, calling it "misleading."

"I really am disappointed with how this Board of Education and superintendent are handling this budget message, sending it only to parents of children at the school," she said in a phone interview this week. "The info was meant to scare and intimidate parents, and I think it's really tragic they're using this approach."

But whether in favor of the flyer or not, it served its purpose in bringing people to the meeting, resulting in a packed house; and selectman Brian O'Connell said Tuesday he was "pumped to see a room full of people."

He added the town was limited in terms of the resources that bring people to Hebron due to its out-of-the-way location, but one thing the town did have was "a classic, high-quality education."

O'Connell also championed the zero-percent spending proposal the Board of Education had adopted in January – and encouraged the finance board to largely leave it alone.

He furthered, "I think you were presented with a thoughtful budget... I don't believe you have to cut the budget anymore in that respect. The insurance number [reduction] I agree with, but that's just an adjustment: the numbers came down."

O'Connell was referring to a decrease in the amount needed for insurance next year. At the time the budget was crafted, the exact insurance costs for next year were unknown, so the

Board of Education used the same number as the current year as a placeholder. However, insurance has since come in \$193,000 less than the budgeted amount.

The board flyer states "the education health insurance fund is being unreasonably targeted and cutting it now could lead to being in the red mid-year," but this isn't the first time a placeholder was used until concrete insurance numbers were known. And, in the past, town officials asserted it was normal to adjust the budgeted amount accordingly.

Board of Education member Maryanne Leichter explained, "The insurance money really isn't ours; it's the town's. We budgeted at 12 percent and it's 8.6 percent; it's an adjustment more than a cut."

"That money must come back to the town," added Board of Selectmen Chairman Dan Larson.

And, after public comment came to an end, that's ultimately what the finance board decided to do, voting 4-1 to reduce the Board of Education budget by \$193,000, bringing it to \$11,797,454 for a 1.61 percent decrease from current year spending. (Ray Bieri, a former Board of Education member, was the one 'no' vote, feeling that even the \$193,000 was too much of a cut.)

The Board of Finance, deciding they wanted to give other residents the opportunity to share their thoughts on the spending package, then voted to forward the budget to public hearing. Following the hearing the board will deliberate again to decide if any further reductions are needed before sending the budget to district meeting, and referendum May 3.

The public hearing will take place Tuesday, April 12, at 7 p.m., in the RHAM High School auditorium. Information on the budget can be found by going to hebronct.com and clicking on "budget information."

Marlborough Resident Arrested on Drug Charges

by Geeta S. Sandberg

A Marlborough resident was arrested last week on several drug charges stemming from the raid of a Hebron home a year ago.

Scott Vashalifski, 32, of 17 Myrna Dr., Marlborough, turned himself in March 30 on charges of possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of a controlled substance, illegal sale of a controlled substance, and possession of drug paraphernalia in a drug factory. According to the arrest warrant affidavit, Vashalifski turned himself in March 30, following discoveries made at an Elizabeth Drive home last April.

On April 9, 2015, the affidavit states, state police troopers and Vernon police officers searched the home on a warrant for an investigation into Zaino Construction and its principal partners David Zaino and Wesley Zaino, who were later arrested for theft and home improvement fraud charges.

During the search of the house, police found drug paraphernalia in plain view in the main living room including several smoking devices and a Pop-Tart box with drying marijuana inside, the affidavit states.

Wesley Zaino, who was home at the time of the search, told police Vashalifski lived in the basement and had a medical marijuana card for the marijuana that was found in the house, according to the affidavit.

As police continued to search for items within the search warrant, which included paper documents related to Zaino Construction, computers and electronic storage devices, documents relating to a residence in Vernon and specific pieces of jewelry, the affidavit states they came across more paraphernalia including approximately 30-50 empty bottles that appeared to be prescription bottles for medical marijuana and "several loose pills and pill bottles with various prescriptions," including one labeled Hydrocodone with the name of the prescribed person ripped off.

Also located were more empty containers, scales, a smoking "bong" and a marijuana plant stalk "that appeared to be drying" inside a large garbage bag.

According to the affidavit, exposed wiring was also noticed from the ceiling, as were boarded-up walls, and windows covered with light-blocking plastic material.

The affidavit asserted "all these are indicators of a marijuana grow operation."

During the initial search, the affidavit states a large grow light commonly used to grow and cultivate marijuana was found, as well as heroin paraphernalia, including used and unused needles "and wax paper druggist folds."

As a result of that initial search, the affidavit states there was reason to believe there was "evidence of a marijuana cultivation and distribution operation" at the house, and a subsequent search warrant was executed to return to the residence later that day to continue looking for items "consistent with the growth, cultivation and sale of narcotics."

That second search resulted in the discovery of a number of glass jars with labels like "K," "Train Wreck," "White Russian," and "Sour Jack 2/23" all containing "a green-leafy plant-like material," according to the affidavit.

Other items discovered include, according to the affidavit, clear plastic bags containing a similar green-leafy plant-like material, a scale that also had the same plant-like material on it, a glass smoking pipe, and notes and paperwork "consistent with 'drug notes' with nicknames and amounts written on them."

The affidavit states "the amount of marijuana found in various types and stages is 174.8 grams."

At one point during the search, Zaino requested to go to his mother's but had no ride. The affidavit states Trooper Kyle Fitzgibbons agreed to bring Zaino and, during the trip, he told Fitzgibbons he had seen the woman who owns the house and his brother, who lives in the house with her, clip the buds off dried marijuana plants and write down names and numbers on sheets of paper on various occasions.

Zaino added the marijuana comes from other locations but is processed in the house.

After leaving the residence, the affidavit states evidence located in the home led police to another location in Andover "where the remnants of a marijuana grow along with marijuana plants being burnt outside in an open fire pit were located."

And "based upon the facts and circumstances," the affidavit concludes there is "probable cause" to believe Vashalifski violated Connecticut General Statutes.

* * *

Vashalifski was released on a \$5,000 bond and is scheduled to appear in court April 13.

RHAM Tennis Player Hit with Home Run Ball

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Last Thursday, the concerns of those pushing to have netting installed between the tennis courts and the baseball field at RHAM High School proved valid, when a member of the boys' tennis team was hit by a baseball after one of the varsity baseball players hit a home run during batting practice.

In an email sent to schools superintendent Bob Siminski and forwarded to school administrators and fellow board members, Board of Education member Joe O'Connor shared his concerns.

He explained he was in attendance at the RHAM varsity baseball game Thursday, March 31, when, in conversation with Coach Paul Steiner, he learned about the incident. O'Connor said after becoming aware of what happened he walked down to the tennis courts to talk with the boys' tennis coach to see if there were any injuries.

"I spoke to Coach [Carol] Fish and she was unaware that one of her players had been hit by a baseball, but the young man did [admit] to her that he was in fact hit."

O'Connor added other players also told him two baseballs had come close to hitting them last year during practice. In addition, after leaving the game once his son's JV baseball practice concluded, O'Connor said he received two text messages from parents who were still watching the game "and they stated that an Enfield High School player had just hit a homerun into the tennis courts."

This time, the RHAM girls' tennis team was holding practice but no one was hit.

The installation of 30-foot netting between the two fields was unanimously approved at a cost of \$45,000 during the March 2015 Board of Education meeting. However, the project has yet to move forward.

Siminski explained this week, "I know one of the concerns some of the board members had is placement of the poles for the meeting and the impact it may have on the baseball field, so I know that was part of the dis-

cussion."

In addition, during the March 21 meeting of the Board of Education, a motion was made to approve a contract for the netting project in the amount of \$38,500. However, the motion failed 5-2 with board members expressing a desire to see the plans to be clear about the project, and to invite Athletic Director Mark Logan to a meeting to share his thoughts.

A special meeting was scheduled for Tuesday to address the issue, however it was cancelled due to a lack of quorum.

Siminski added he was going to see about scheduling the architecture for the regular meeting on March 25.

And, in the meantime, Siminski said "spotters" had been put in place.

"Right now what we've done is we put somebody out supervising" who would be able to call out and warn players if a ball heads into the court.

In his email, O'Connor had said Fish told him "having someone outside the tennis court watching the baseball game and yelling 'four' or 'heads up' to the tennis players would be a more cost effective way of combating the problem."

He furthered the administration and some board members continue "to roll the dice when it comes to the safety of our community and our students. Is it going to take another tragedy before this administration takes action instead of dragging their feet with a well-known safety risk? I would be willing to bet it is cheaper to install the safety netting system than to pay the premium increase after our insurance company sees the risk they are insuring."

O'Connor added, "I will continue to voice my concerns until something is done to correct them."

And Siminski concluded, "The board voted to do it so I did all the things I need to get it done; it's a policy point at this point to get it done" since the project needs the board to approve a contract to move forward.

East Hampton Finance Board Restores School Budget Funding

by Elizabeth Regan

The Board of Finance has restored most of the Board of Education's request for a \$559,396 budget increase after the proposal was slashed by Town Manager Michael Maniscalco.

The finance board voted at its meeting Monday night to put back \$500,000 on the education side, bringing the school spending plan for 2016-17 to \$29.28 million, a 1.72 percent increase over current year spending. The school board had approved a 1.9 percent increase, but Maniscalco flatlined the budget proposal before handing it over to the finance board along with his own general government budget recommendations. He has said he was relying on an edict from the Republican-led Town Council for the school board to "maintain current spending levels."

In addition to the \$29.28 million for education, the finance board's budget proposal allocates \$10.32 million for general government, \$942,045 in capital expenses and \$2.86 million for debt service.

The \$43.43 million spending plan represents an increase of 5.82 percent over the current budget. Maniscalco's proposal - which included the flat funding for the school budget - originally came in at a 5 percent increase.

The finance board's proposal would bring the mill rate to 29.55, an increase of 1.77 mills over the current year, according to Finance Director Jeff Jylkka. Of that increase, 1.57 mills comes from debt incurred through the \$52 million high school renovation project.

A mill is \$1 per \$1,000 of assessed property

value. Under the proposed mill rate, a taxpayer with a house assessed at \$200,000 would owe \$5,910 in property taxes on the home. That's \$354 more than such a homeowner pays now, though the recently completed town-wide revaluation has changed the assessed value of homes since last year.

The finance board's revised spending plan is an increase of 0.07 mills over Maniscalco's original proposal, and would cost the same hypothetical homeowner \$14 more in property taxes.

Also at Monday's meeting, the finance board made a recommendation to the Town Council to consider leasing the fire truck currently slated for a cash purchase. Only Republican finance board member Alannah Coshow, who was appointed by the Town Council after November's municipal election created a vacancy, voted against the motion.

If the Town Council does not heed the finance board's recommendation to lease the ladder truck, the mill rate increase will rise to 1.92 mills. The same hypothetical resident with a home assessed at \$200,000 would owe \$30 more to cover the fire truck purchase.

The council originally pursued the cash purchase against advice from Jylkka and a unanimous Board of Finance to finance the truck over 10 years. Instead, councilors voted along party lines in November to purchase the \$800,000 ladder truck outright by using more than half of the town's debt sinking fund. The account was established to offset mill rate increases

from large-scale projects like the high school renovation.

The next month, voters at a town meeting supported the purchase in a resounding voice vote with no audible dissent.

The idea of revisiting the leasing option as a way to open up more funds for education was broached during public comment at a Board of Finance meeting last month by Councilor Kevin Reich, a Democrat.

Education proponents spoke in large numbers at several recent finance board meetings to protest the staffing and programming cuts that would result from a flat budget. Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith has said reductions would include the elimination of four teaching positions, all middle school sports, and volleyball and golf at the high school.

After Monday's vote, Smith said the finance board's proposal to restore all but \$59,000 of the Board of Education's budget proposal is "certainly in the ballpark of what we had hoped for."

Now, the spending plan goes to the council. Town charter gives councilors the authority to make any changes or reductions they choose, but they cannot increase the total proposed budget.

"If the Town Council deliberates as seriously as the Board of Finance did, that's all I can ask at this point," Smith said. "I think that the Board of Finance took the time to listen to people and talked amongst themselves and found they could support it. I hope the Town Council can,

too."

Changes in the finance board's budget proposal include leasing two plow trucks instead of purchasing them. Finance board members appropriated \$62,000 for lease payments.

Finance board members also authorized \$25,000 for the purchase of a piece of public works equipment, known as a cold planer, to help patch potholes by grinding the old asphalt before a new layer can be put down.

The finance board cut about \$35,000 in small increments from about 20 line items in Maniscalco's general government recommendation.

Republican finance board chairwoman Allison Tokarz said after the meeting that the finance board's proposal represents a fair amount to send to taxpayers at referendum.

"If they vote it down, then we know it needs to be cut more," Tokarz said.

Finance board member Marc Lambert, a Republican, cited the teachers' contract approved by the Town Council as a significant factor in his deliberations. School board members have said the contract accounts for the majority of the proposed 1.72 percent increase in the education budget.

"Given the contracts we're committed to, to say we're not going to have any increase in the budget just moves us backward too far," Lambert said. "I believe, from a municipal budget standpoint, education should be the highest priority. It's that simple."

Where Will East Hampton Fourth- and Fifth-Graders Go?

by Elizabeth Regan

The Town Council is now enlisting cooperation from the Board of Education to answer the next big question in the effort to repurpose Center School as a municipal hub: Where will the town put the fourth and fifth grades currently housed at Center School?

At a workshop last week presented by Charles Warrington Jr. of the newly-selected project management firm Colliers International (a related story appears on the cover of this week's *Rivereast*), he laid out options to either renovate Center School and Memorial School one at a time or to run the upgrades concurrently. Memorial School educates students in pre-kindergarten through grade three.

Renovating Memorial School first and then Center School could allow the fourth- and fifth-graders to move into Memorial School by fall of 2019, Warrington said. The new town hall and police department would be ready by early 2020.

A concurrent approach could get staff into the new town hall and officers into their new police station by 2018 – but it would require fourth-graders to relocate to Memorial School and fifth-graders to move into East Hampton Middle School before doors open for the 2017-18 school year.

After the meeting, Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith vacillated between using “impos-

sible” and “highly unlikely” to describe the chances that the concurrent approach would work. He said an analysis of when and how classrooms are used in Memorial School and the middle school, conducted last month by school administrators, showed there is no room for another grade level in either building.

Smith cited preschool and full-day kindergarten classes as the reason why Memorial School is filling up. At the middle school, there are not enough open classrooms to accommodate another grade.

“The issue is when you move a new grade in, you can’t just stick a few in each room; you’ve got to have dedicated rooms for fifth grade,” Smith said. “And it would take six or seven rooms just for fifth grade. There’s just not six or seven empty classrooms that they could use.”

According to Smith, one guiding principle in any transition revolves around maintaining the intermediate culture that permeates Center School. He said grouping the fourth- and fifth-graders together fosters a sense of community, promotes full participation in endeavors like the drama program and student newspaper, and bridges the unique developmental space between the lower elementary grades and the middle school.

“It did not take me long as superintendent to

realize how much parents value that experience for their kids,” he said, adding he believes the culture can survive a move to Memorial School.

“The addition, if it’s done well, will feel like the Center School experience the kids and families look forward to; it would just be in a different setting,” he said.

Another concern about the proposals presented last week revolves around the size of the Memorial School addition. Colliers put forth cost estimates for a 14,000-square-foot addition and a 34,000-square-foot addition.

Smith told council members during the meeting that a 14,000-square-foot addition to Memorial School would not be sufficient to accommodate both fourth and fifth graders. He said he is not sure exactly how big the addition would need to be, nor has he been asked to provide that information.

“I don’t feel we had a fair chance to say, ‘this is the square footage we actually need,’” Smith said. “I can tell you it’s not 14,000 square feet.”

Discussion by members of the council emphasized the need to work closely with Smith and the Board of Education if the plan is to become a reality.

According to Democrat Town Council member James “Pete” Brown, the next step is to decide where to put the town’s fourth- and fifth-graders – despite daunting cost estimates that

put the Center School renovation at \$24.68 million and the Memorial School renovation at \$11.55 million to \$19.72 million.

“Am I comfortable with \$24 million for the Center School [renovation]? I’m not comfortable. But it doesn’t matter what I want,” Brown said. “When I put it before the voters, they’re going to decide what’s comfortable. And I’m willing to take the next step to get to that point. I don’t want to get to that point in ten years, because we know where the costs are going to go in ten years.”

Republican Town Council member Josh Piteo addressed the importance of employing a thoughtful, thorough approach to changing the town’s ingrained elementary structure, which separates preschool through third grade from the fourth and fifth graders.

Piteo said he has been researching grade configurations in other towns and has come to the conclusion that there’s no special formula or definitive study about the best way to group grades at the elementary level.

“We have to discuss with the Board of Education what the various elements are, costs involved, what’s best for the students, what’s best for our community,” he said. “Put those things together and then you have a template to go forward for our town, what works for us.”

East Hampton Voters Pass Dispatch Deal, Road Work

by Elizabeth Regan

About a dozen people showed up at a town meeting Tuesday and gave the go-ahead to almost a million dollars in expenditures related to public safety and road maintenance.

Both measures passed in a voice vote with no opposition. There was no public comment.

Taxpayers appropriated \$439,710 toward the town’s portion of \$1.2 million in infrastructure expenses for a dispatch arrangement with Glastonbury that will provide East Hampton with police, fire and EMS dispatch on a 24-hour basis and provide tactical radio contact and support while personnel are on call.

Of the total dispatch appropriation, \$250,000 will come from the general fund, \$136,214 from the capital reserve fund, and \$53,496 from a special services account for police.

The amount does not include \$115,000 for a computer software program that will instead be financed, according to Town Manager Michael Maniscalco.

Glastonbury Town Manager Richard Johnson has said his town will pay about \$85,000 in start-up costs after grant funding comes through. Glastonbury’s total contribution for in-

frastructure is \$710,000.

The change was spurred by an announcement at the end of December from East Hampton’s current dispatch provider, Colchester Emergency Communications, that it will be ceasing operations on June 30.

That left East Hampton approximately six months to set up an inter-town dispatch arrangement that typically takes 18-24 months, according to Maniscalco.

At a Board of Finance meeting the previous night, Councilor Kevin Reich stood up from the audience during public comment to let others know about the dispatch situation and the critical nature of getting the program running on time.

“We need to have that 911 system in place,” he said. “We have a wonderful police chief and police force; we have a wonderful fire department and ambulance association. They all need 911 working on July 1.”

Maniscalco said after the town meeting that the vote was a “big hurdle we were able to accomplish.”

The Town Council will consider a Memorandum of Agreement with Glastonbury at its next meeting to formalize the arrangement.

Meanwhile, town staff on both sides are working together on the nuts and bolts of the project.

“I know that they’ve done some radio tests and I know that we can, at this point right now, talk between Glastonbury and East Hampton,” he said. “So the real question becomes, can we get the other pieces in place so that they can actually do dispatch?”

The town councils in both East Hampton and Glastonbury had already approved about \$20,000 to begin purchasing some equipment in case KX is unable to maintain operations through the end of June.

Voters also approved the addition of \$405,000 to a \$3.32 million roadwork bond taken out in 2011. The funds were requested in order to address issues with the Christopher Brook culvert at North Main Street and on Brewer Road.

According to the resolution approved by the town council, the money may be spent for design, construction, materials, equipment, engineering and other consulting fees, legal fees, net interest on borrowings and other financing costs, and other expenses related to the project or its financing.

The proposed construction project on the Christopher Brook culvert, as discussed by the former town council in late 2014, deals with three 24-inch corrugated metal pipes under North Main Street between Sears Park and Lake Boulevard. The pipes are deteriorating and are on track to be replaced with two concrete box culverts. In addition, the existing wooden pedestrian bridge would be replaced with a sidewalk.

Maniscalco said the current town council is committed to keeping at least one lane open at all times and maintaining pedestrian traffic throughout construction. He said construction could start next month and should be finished by the end of the 2016 construction season this fall.

East Hampton Truck Blaze Leads to Money Talk

by Elizabeth Regan

A truck fire inside the East Hampton public works garage has sparked a conversation about financing vehicles instead of paying cash.

A 2005 International plow truck went up in flames around 8 a.m. on Monday after crews had returned to the garage following an early morning road-treating excursion in the snow, according to public works Foreman Dean Michelson. The truck was a total loss. An adjacent truck sustained minor damage from the heat.

“The fire department did a great job of saving what we had down there,” Michelson told members of the Town Council at a special meeting Tuesday night to discuss the depleted fleet. “Otherwise we’d be looking at two trucks.”

Firefighters from Portland, Marlborough, Colchester and Haddam Neck also responded, according to East Hampton Fire Department Chief Greg Voelker.

Michelson received second-degree burns on the fingers of his right hand when he tried to open the truck door after he arrived at the garage to find it ablaze, he said.

Town Manager Michael Maniscalco described structural damage affecting a steel beam over the truck, the roof, and the garage door wiring system. He said building repairs will be covered by insurance after a \$10,000 deductible.

Repairs will begin as soon as a structural engineer and the insurance adjuster give the go-ahead, Maniscalco said.

According to Michelson, the Office of the State Fire Marshal was on hand and has pointed to the electrical system in the engine compartment as the likely source of the fire.

Maniscalco and Michelson presented councilors with specifications for a \$182,486 re-

placement truck that matches the existing fleet and is ready for service.

The truck is offered through Hine Bros. Inc., a sales and repair company with locations in Southbury and Bridgeport. Maniscalco said the truck is sitting on a lot in Bridgeport.

“Usually there’s a build time associated with these vehicles, so the opportunity to grab one of these and get it back online pretty fast is good,” Maniscalco said.

According to Michelson, a search for other demonstration models for immediate purchase failed to yield more options. He said ordering a truck would likely take six to nine months.

Finance Director Jeff Jylkka recommended financing the truck over seven years, which would add about \$1,500 a year in interest based on a 1.82-percent interest rate. He said there are unused funds in the current budget to cover this year’s lease payment while the insurance money from the burned truck – expected to come in at \$30,000 to \$40,000 – will cover the payment the following year.

Councilors were not asked to act on the recommendation at Tuesday’s meeting.

Maniscalco said getting the truck will likely require the council to consider a waiver to the town’s competitive bidding ordinance.

During discussion on the possible lease, council member Mark Philhower, a Republican, said he’s leery of taking on too much debt.

“I’m still not in favor of the lease programs and I would much rather outright pay for it, even if we had to take it out of fund balance,” he said.

But Jylkka said depleting the fund balance, currently at about 11.6 percent of the total budget, could jeopardize the town’s highly-prized AAA bond rating with Standard & Poor’s.

Bond rating agencies look at unassigned fund balances as a reflection of the financial strength of a municipality and they can get concerned when fund balances decrease.

Jylkka said maintaining a strong fund balance will put the town in a better position to maintain its rating and secure optimal interest rates on big projects the town is considering, such as the possible conversion of Center School to a town hall and police station.

Maniscalco, too, invoked the Center School project. Early estimates for renovations to Center and Memorial schools come in at roughly \$35 to \$45 million.

He said the prospect of such significant borrowing makes it critical to keep interest rates low.

“I think we have a responsibility to use our dollars as efficiently as possible because we definitely don’t have enough cash in the general fund to be able to pay for all of it,” Maniscalco said.

According to Jylkka, the fund balance should be reserved for expenses that can’t be leased, such as those related to the pending public safety dispatch arrangement between East Hampton and Glastonbury. Voters at a town meeting earlier that night approved \$439,710 for the regionalization effort, \$250,000 of which came out of the fund balance.

“Right now [interest] rates are at historical lows. I don’t think we’re going to see it any less than what we’ve seen it. If we want to have any type of robust capital plan, financing these vehicles has to be part of it,” Jylkka said.

Both Maniscalco and Jylkka reinforced the importance of setting aside revenue for future purchases or repairs.

“In addition to financing some of these

things, we’re making a concerted effort to start putting money aside in sinking funds to then have adequate cash in capital to start purchasing some of these items going forward,” Jylkka said.

Maniscalco pointed to the 2016-17 proposed capital budget forwarded by the finance board, which includes several new “sinking funds” to build up cash reserves for specific departments.

The recommended budget appropriates \$75,000 each for the fire department and public works department to save for vehicle purchases.

“Financing offers an intermediate step that will allow the town to get to a place where we can purchase vehicle with cash,” Maniscalco said.

There are also sinking funds totaling \$125,000 for fire department maintenance and repair, senior center and library upgrades, playscape replacement at Memorial School, track resurfacing at the high school, and school maintenance.

The subject of financing the public works truck came up just a day after the Board of Finance expressed their support for reversing a Town Council decision, approved by voters at a town meeting in December, to pay cash for an \$800,000 ladder truck for the fire department.

The finance board Monday made a formal recommendation that the council pursue the leasing option instead. (A related story appears in this week’s issue).

If the council doesn’t lease the firetruck, Jylkka has said the mill rate will rise an additional 0.15 mills over the finance board’s proposed 1.77-mill increase.

Marlborough Finance Board Reduces Town Budget

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

After cutting \$90,000 from the proposed town operations budget last Thursday, the budgets may be reduced further, due to possible reductions at the state level.

Assistant Treasurer Hayley Wagner told the finance board at the end of its meeting there is \$188,000 in revenue from the state that the town now may not be able to count on.

According to Wagner, \$188,000 less in state revenue would bring up the proposed tax increase from a 3.34 percent to a 4.44 percent.

Following the March 24 cut of \$200,000 from the proposed local Board of Education budget and last week's \$90,000 cut to town operations, the proposed 2016-17 town budget comes to \$23.66 million, a 2.58 percent increase over 2015-16.

The spending plan is composed of: \$8.55 million for Marlborough's portion of the RHAM budget; \$7.22 million for the local school board; \$4.77 for town operations; \$20,000 in contingency; \$853,926 in capital items; and \$2.24 million in debt.

This would increase the mill rate from 32.89 to 33.99, an increase of 1.10 mills.

The Board of Finance also consented to giving a bottom line number to the Board of Selectmen for the town operations budget, rather than cutting line-by-line items.

Finance board member Ken Hjulstrom opened the meeting by asking the board whether reducing the line item for the town's legal costs was possible. In the proposed 2016-17 fiscal year budget, legal fees were set by First Selectwoman Amy Traversa at \$75,000.

Wagner replied that there is one union con-

tract going into negotiations that has cost the town between \$20,000 and \$30,000 previously. Traversa said the \$75,000 was an estimate since legal fees have gone as low as \$34,000 in previous years and as high as \$108,000.

Board vice chair Cliff Denniss said he wasn't in support of reducing the legal fees line since the number is a guess. He said legal fee reductions, like reductions to the snow-removal budget, are "feel-good cuts."

"You just don't know," he said. "You're going to spend it anyway [if costs go over.]"

Although Hjulstrom motioned to reduce the legal fees by \$10,000, the board was confused about whether it was reducing the line item or making a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen about where to cut.

"I know I don't know how much [in legal fees] it is to do a bond closing," board member Susan Leser said. "It's hard to make a judgment. That's why I hesitate to make line item cuts. I don't know the details."

Member Erik Young told the board he was having trouble because if the board did not go line by line through the budget, he did not know how to come up with a reasonable bottom line.

"We need to look at the overall," Leser replied to Young. "How much can we really afford to spend and make baby steps to improve?"

Hjulstrom's motion to reduce the line by \$10,000 failed by a 2-3 vote. (Leser, Denniss and board chair Doug Knowlton were against.) However, Young countered and said he would like to recommend the selectmen decrease legal. The board then came to a conclusion that

it would not make motions on reductions, but simply come to a consensus about recommendations.

* * *

After deciding to give recommendations about where to cut and to set a bottom line, the board discussed various items to cut in the budget. By the end of the meeting, the board "compromised" and voted to reduce the proposed 2016-17 town operations budget by \$90,000.

Hjulstrom suggested as one of the reductions that the elected officials should not receive a 2.5 percent salary increase. This reduction would affect Traversa, the two other selectmen, the town clerk, the treasurer and the tax collector, for a total savings of approximately \$5,000. Hjulstrom had said he would not include the registrars in that reduction since the registrars' salaries have been frozen since 2013-14 and are in need of an increase.

Leser balked at the idea, stating, "What would it do to morale?"

The other employees at Town Hall receive a salary increase based on the employees' union contracts at approximately 2.5 percent.

Traversa was strongly opposed to the suggestion, calling it a "political request." Knowlton then shut down the dialogue, saying the board was getting off the topic of the budget.

The board also discussed the resident state trooper position – a cut that was then approved by the Board of Selectmen Tuesday night. A related story also appears in this week's *Rivereast*.

Removing one of the two troopers and adding funds for more constable hours would save the town approximately \$82,000.

Leser questioned why the town would need to add funds for more constable hours if the town was to remove Dodge and Traversa replied it is not feasible.

"I'm asked on a daily basis about police presence and trooper visibility," Traversa said. "We need coverage."

The finance board came to consensus that reducing by a trooper and replacing with constable hours would be a good reduction.

* * *

After the discussion, the board began voting on the potential reductions for the proposed town operations budget. At first, Denniss motioned to reduce the budget by \$80,000; however that failed with a 3-2 vote with Hjulstrom and Young against. (The board needed four votes to pass a motion.)

Hjulstrom then motioned to reduce the budget by \$100,000 and that motion failed 2-3 with Denniss, Leser, and Knowlton against. The board then compromised, and Hjulstrom motioned for a \$90,000 reduction which was approved 4-1 with Leser against.

After the motions, the board agreed to pick budget discussions back up Thursday after press time once it heard about the uncertainty around the \$188,000 from the state.

"At this point, we need to step back," Leser said last week. "If we put in zero [for that revenue], we may need to cut more in education and town operations."

Marlborough Tavern May Rise Again

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

The Marlborough Tavern may live again – at least some day.

The landmark building's new owner, Allan Schwartz, recently filed a Change of Use request with the town, switching it from a restaurant space to an office space; the request is to be considered by the Water Pollution Control Authority in June.

But Schwartz cautioned against reading too much into this proposed use change. He said he did it solely for some temporary reprieve from sewer costs. He said he'd like to eventually turn the property back into what it initially was – a tavern.

"At this time, we have in our plans to revitalize the Marlborough Tavern to its original status as a tavern," Schwartz said Wednesday to the *Rivereast*. "However, since taking over the property in February, our focus is on stabilizing the property and tenants."

In 2011, the Tavern – then run by Jim Bradley and John Spellman, with the building owned by Robert Elliott – closed its doors; the pair had run the eatery for more than 25 years. At the time, Spellman and Bradley cited the sewer fees passed onto them by Elliott as part of the reason the restaurant closed.

In 2013, two brothers – Scott and Marc Digoalbo – eyed reopening the Tavern as the New Marlborough Tavern. Still under Elliott's ownership, the Tavern building was set to undergo

numerous renovations. By mid-2014, the renovations had crawled to a close, leaving the iconic landmark looking like a construction zone.

Since the brothers left the project, the Tavern has sat vacant.

The building, located at the corner of South Main Street and Route 66, dates back to 1740. According to a 1978 letter nominating it for the National Register of Historic Places – a nomination that proved successful – the tavern at one point was "a major stopping point along the turnpike from Hartford to New London." Militia men celebrated the end of the Revolutionary War in the tavern's taproom. The town's activities centered around the taproom, the form states; in the early 19th century, meetings for the town's incorporation were found there.

Owned by the Buell family until 1898, the building changed hands multiple times over the years, and was owned by Elliott until this past February. The property, along with four others Elliott owned in the town center, were foreclosed upon in the past year, with ownership going over to Chelsea Groton Bank in February. Schwartz, a Glastonbury-based developer, purchased the properties from the bank and has been managing them since.

Under its original sewer classification as a restaurant, the property was being charged for

18.8 Equivalent Dwelling Units (EDUs) based on the number of seats in the building even as the building stands vacant. First Selectwoman Amy Traversa explained under the office space classification – which Schwartz has filed for with the WPCA – the building would be 2.6 EDUs for the EDU Usage Allocation for the 2016-17 fiscal year.

As an entire property at 3-5 East Hampton Rd. (the Tavern is connected to the plaza), the change of classification would bring the total EDUs from 41.5 to 25.3 EDUs.

At approximately \$500 per EDU in operating and maintenance costs, this change of classification would mean an approximate savings of \$8,100 for Schwartz per year. He would still pay the benefit assessment (approximately \$12,000 per EDU) based on the full 41.5 EDUs for 3-5 East Hampton Rd. (The benefit assessments are paid over a 20-year period.)

Traversa explained that, during the year, due to the regulations of the WPCA, the EDUs cannot be reduced; however, it can be raised. Therefore, if the WPCA approves Schwartz's application in June and he gets another restaurant or tavern tenant before the following June, the EDUs would go back up at that time.

Citizens recently began voicing their concerns on social media that Schwartz was officially making the Tavern property office space.

Traversa said she has been working to "quell" those rumors.

"It's not anything that people think it is," Traversa said. "The developer has said, 'Listen, since they're not being used, we don't need to be paying the user charge of x amount of dollars.'"

While Schwartz is "shopping" the property around looking for a tenant, Traversa explained, he can realize some savings since there is no one in the building creating waste.

"If/when the developer locates a suitable tenant – restaurant, office or circus – and decides on the use for the building, the WPCA will again consider a Change of Use to the appropriate category and corresponding charges," Traversa said.

She added that to have Schwartz pay the high number of EDUs on a vacant building is "kind of crazy" and that she believes it is a "really smart decision on his part."

"It's going to take a while [for something to happen]," Traversa said. "He didn't come in here with plans. He is now assessing the condition and seeing who might be interested."

The Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) will hold the public meeting on its yearly fees and EDU allocation in June. At that meeting, the WPCA will vote on the change for the Tavern property.

Marlborough Selectmen Vote to Reduce Resident Trooper

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

Faced with how to meet a \$90,000 cut to the proposed town operations budget, the Board of Selectmen voted Tuesday to reduce by one resident state trooper and add money to the constable line items.

The selectmen also reduced the town operations budget by \$5,000 in legal and \$3,000 in snow supplies.

The Board of Finance last week voted to cut \$90,000 from the town operations budget; a related story appears in this week's issue.

In the 2015-16 budget, the two troopers – Trooper Jeff Dunshee and Trooper Benjamin Dodge – cost the town a total of \$240,283. But for the proposed 2016-17 budget, First Selectwoman Amy Traversa budgeted the line item at \$363,623 – which is 100 percent of the troopers' salaries and benefits. Currently, the town pays 85 percent of their salaries and benefits, with the state contributing the other 15 percent, but Traversa has said she put in the full 100 percent due to uncertainty from the state.

Dunshee – the more senior trooper – would cost \$163,371 in 2016-17, while Dodge would

cost \$200,251. But, due to contractual reasons, the trooper with less seniority as a Marlborough resident state trooper would be the one cut, Traversa explained – and in this case, that would be Dodge.

Dodge could not be reached by press time for comment.

It should be noted that all this is proposed – the 2016-17 budget would ultimately have to be approved at town meeting – and that, even if Dodge's position were cut, it would not affect his overall employment with the Connecticut State Police.

Removing Dodge and adding in money for constables would save the town approximately \$82,000. Originally the savings was closer to \$73,000; however \$9,000 of additional savings was found in contributions to a retirement account.

Traversa said it has been tough to have control over the resident troopers over state training such as SWAT or motorcycle training. The training causes the troopers not to be in Marlborough on patrol.

"There is so much training we are subsidiz-

ing the state for and it should be the state subsidizing us," Traversa said Thursday at the Board of Finance meeting.

By voting to approve the change, the board added \$118,000 toward the constable lines while removing \$200,251 from the resident state trooper line for Dodge's salary and benefits. The \$118,000 went to multiple constable lines in the town operations budget, Traversa explained, because the money covers equipment, vehicle, salary and benefits. The motion passed unanimously.

The hours for the constable – whether it ends up being one full-time constable or multiple part-time constables – will be posted. Traversa said Tuesday there is no guarantee that the current part-time constable will receive a full-time position.

"We are maintaining or enhancing police presence while simultaneously reducing by \$82,000 in cost," Traversa said.

However Traversa said there can be no more cuts from the finance board, calling further cuts "irresponsible."

"Town operations have reached its limits of

cuts we can make," she said. "We long ago cut the fat, eliminated the muscle. We've torn to the bone and we are now chiseling away at the bone."

* * *

At the selectmen meeting Tuesday, the board also approved spending \$5,000 to aid 15 North Main St. and future development.

Traversa explained the owners of the new China Sea building asked the town to help cover the costs of bringing the electrical power cord under the road and to a transformer pad on the west side of North Main Street. Although it is a cosmetic issue, Traversa said the lines under the road will help future development; not just China Sea.

At this time, Traversa said she does not know whether there will need to be a small trench across the road or if the work can be done without removing any pavement.

* * *

The next Board of Selectmen meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 19, at 7 p.m., at Town Hall.

Bransfield Concerned About State Cuts

by Elizabeth Regan

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield is very worried about the potential effect of the state's deteriorating fiscal situation on the town's bottom line.

The Board of Selectmen last week reached consensus on a \$32.69 million combined budget, including almost \$5 million in expected revenue from the state. They were scheduled to formally vote on the spending plan Wednesday, but the meeting was cancelled due to lack of quorum.

The same day, word came out of Hartford that the Appropriations Committee of the General Assembly approved \$570 million in cuts to the 2017 state budget, according to *CT News Junkie*. The number falls short of the estimated \$900 million budget deficit.

Gov. Dannel P. Malloy will be putting out a new budget next week to close the gap, *CT News Junkie* reported.

Portland's proposed budget relies on \$4.46 million in state funding for education and \$386,896 in state funding for town operations. Total revenue estimates come in at \$32.46 million.

In a phone interview Thursday morning, Bransfield said the municipal aid estimates were based on a budget proposed by Malloy in early February. She said the legislature has historically tweaked the governor's proposal upward,

but "this year it's indicating they're going to be tweaking those numbers down."

Final budget numbers for the state likely won't be available until the legislature adjourns on May 4. But Bransfield said the new budget plan expected to be released next week by Malloy and the anticipated revenue package from the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee will help her see the state budget picture more clearly.

"I am very concerned and I will not recommend to the selectmen the final resolution until I have a better understanding what the state will be doing in terms of their budget," she said.

Charter requires a town meeting on the budget to be held the first Monday in May; taxpayers must be notified at least five days prior. She said the selectmen's regular meeting scheduled for April 20 will probably be their last chance to vote on the budget.

"I'm waiting as long as we can," she said.

The budget selectmen have informally agreed upon includes \$12.72 million for town operations and \$19.97 million for the Board of Education budget. It is a 1.78 percent increase over the current year's budget.

If the budget is approved, the mill rate of 32.34 would rise by 0.32 mills to a total mill rate of 32.66 mills.

A mill is \$1 tax per \$1,000 of assessed prop-

erty value. Under the proposed mill rate, taxes paid on a home assessed at \$200,000 for the 2016-17 fiscal year would be \$6,532. That's an increase of \$64 over the current year.

Selectmen have agreed to reduce Bransfield's recommended budget by about \$30,000 on the general government side and \$70,000 on the education side.

The budget proposal for town operations saw a \$15,000 decrease from the amount originally allocated for health insurance costs based on final numbers from the town's insurance broker. The education budget was reduced by \$40,000 for the same reason.

Some of the savings was achieved by reducing the amount appropriated for heating fuel in various departments. Bransfield said the price of natural gas has held steady or gone down over the past year and that selectmen expect the trend to continue.

The budget proposal includes funding for a 12th police officer to start in January and a new, entry-level position for the highway department. It does not replace retiring Supervisor of Public Works Operations Donald Powers, however.

The proposed education budget supports the district's emphasis on technology by eliminating the current technology assistant position and replacing it with two full-time positions: an Information Technology Specialist and a Tech

Integration Specialist. The proposal adds two full-time, certified library media specialists so that there will be a librarian with teaching credentials in each of the three elementary schools. It also eliminates three non-certified library positions to avoid redundancy and alleviate the cost increase, two of those through attrition.

The proposal also adds a preschool classroom for three- and four-year-old students with and without disabilities in support of the district's special education program.

At last week's budget workshop, Democrat selectman Fred Knous called the revised proposal "reasonable." But he presaged the developments that would unfold over the coming days when he said state funding could be in jeopardy as the legislature and Malloy figure out how to balance the state budget.

"I suspect municipalities will be facing some changes and reductions; at least that's a pretty good probability," he said.

Any significant changes in municipal aid will force selectmen to take another look at town-level spending, according to Bransfield.

She said she is monitoring the situation closely.

"Our residents expect us to be very careful and prudent in our budgeting, which we always are and will continue to be," she said.

East Hampton Police News

3/17: Russell Collin, 56, of 124 Mott Hill Rd., was arrested and charged with driving under the influence, East Hampton Police said.

3/17: Jason Anglis, 22, of 17 Summit St., was arrested and charged with failure to drive right and driving under the influence, police said.

3/24: Scott Jackson, 24, of 242 East High St., was issued a summons for operating a motor vehicle without a license, failure to drive right and failure to give proper signal, police said.

3/25: Elizabeth Warzecha, 24, of 35 Rosewood Ln., Berlin, was issued a summons for third-degree assault, disorderly conduct and interfering/resisting, police said.

3/27: Angelo S. Capparella, 33, of 130 Lewis Ave., Meriden, was arrested and charged with violation of a protective order and second-degree threatening, police said.

3/27: James J. Marino, 49, of 41 Smith St., was issued a summons for disorderly conduct and third-degree assault, police said.

East Hampton PD Use Naloxone for Second Time

by Elizabeth Regan

For the second time in as many months, an East Hampton police officer has used naloxone – better known as Narcan – to reverse the effects of an overdose from heroin or other opioids.

Senior Patrolman Michael Salafia responded Sunday evening to Bear Swamp Road for a possible overdose on prescription painkillers, according to a press release. The victim's breathing was slow and shallow.

Police said the victim wasn't responding to stimuli when Salafia arrived, but that changed immediately after naloxone was administered. The patient was turned over to the East Hampton Ambulance Service for continued care, according to police.

The first East Hampton officer to save a life with naloxone was Officer Maciej Bankowski. He responded to a Main Street overdose on

Feb. 25, two weeks after the department was equipped with the drug.

Police warn of the following signs of an opioid overdose: vomiting; loss of consciousness; failure to respond to outside stimulus; inability to speak; pale or clammy face; blue or purplish-black fingernails and lips; slow, shallow, erratic or stopped breathing; and a slow, erratic or stopped pulse.

Police also identified a choking or "snore-like gurgling" noise as a possible sign of an overdose. They cautioned the sound is often mistaken for snoring.

"Remember, in an overdose situation, time is of the essence. The sooner we can counteract the effects of an opioid overdose, the better chance we have at saving a life," police said.

Portland Police News

3/25: Nicholas Hetzel, 21, of 391 Foote Rd., South Glastonbury, was charged with driving under the influence, Portland Police said.

3/28: Jeffrey Wright, 47, of 100 Edgewater Circle, East Hampton, was charged with driving under the influence and failure to drive in proper lane, police said.

3/30: Nathaniel Hardesty, 20, of 130 Newfield St., Middletown, was charged with driving under the influence and failure to drive right, police said.

3/31: Dana Roccapriore, 32, of 35 Clayton Court, New Britain, was charged with possession of narcotics and possession of drug paraphernalia, police said.

One Injured After Hitting Pole in Marlborough

A Marlborough man sustained minor injuries when he crashed into a utility pole during Monday's snow and ice storm, according to state police.

Police said Michael Marone, 45, of 37 Millstone Dr., was transported to the Marlborough Clinic with minor injuries after the crash. Po-

lice reported Marone, driving a Chevy Silverado, was traveling north on South Main Street at approximately 3:46 p.m. near South Road when he veered off the right shoulder of the road and hit a utility pole.

Marone was issued an infraction for operating too fast for road conditions, police said.

Colchester Police News

3/30: State Police said Janet Hurle, 35, of 89 Collie Brook Rd., East Hampton, was arrested and charged with DUI, speeding and failure to notify change of registrant's address.

3/30: State Police said Michelle Niesyn, 44, of 28 Grimes Rd., Rocky Hill, was arrested and charged with failure to appear.

3/31: State Police said Joshua Kunkel, 25, of 22 Kendall Rd., Lisbon, was arrested and charged with reckless driving, speeding, engaging in a pursuit and failure to drive right. Police said he was also charged with violation of probation.

4/2: Colchester Police said Dylan Kermodé,

23, of 51 Sashel Ln., was arrested and charged with drug paraphernalia, possession of narcotics, third-degree burglary and third-degree criminal mischief. Police said Kermodé was arrested after an active burglary on Scott Hill Road.

4/2: Colchester Police said they are investigating after a resident on Balaban Road had their lug nuts loosened on the front tire of their car. Police said the person was worried the car had been tampered with. Anyone with information can call Officer Cyril Green at 860-537-7270.

Hebron Police News

3/30: State Police said William Smith, 46, of 303 Mohegan Park Rd., Norwich, was arrested and charged with DUI.

Obituaries

East Hampton

Agnes Madeline Boucher

Agnes Madeline Boucher, 84, of East Hampton, beloved wife of Norman Boucher died Monday, April 4, at her home. Born Dec. 21, 1931, in Wilmington, Mass., to the late John and Florence Richards she lived in East Hampton since 1991.

Aggie was a proud wife and mother of six children.

She was predeceased by her daughter Jan. Besides her sons and husband, she is survived by 11 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

A funeral liturgy will be celebrated Saturday, April 9, at 11 a.m., in St. Patrick Church. Burial will be in St. Patrick Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Middlesex Hospital Hospice and Palliative Care 28 Crescent St. Middletown, CT 06457.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.



East Hampton

Kathleen Ann Lawton

Kathleen Ann Lawton, 57, of East Hampton, formerly a resident of Hamden since 1985, died Monday, April 4, at Hartford Hospital. Born Nov. 18, 1958, in Middletown, she was the daughter of Shirley (Gifford) Lawton Brooks and the late Donald W. Lawton.

Kathleen was a 1976 graduate of East Hampton High School and the Ona M. Wilcox School of Nursing at Middlesex Hospital. She was employed for more than 30 years at Yale New Haven Hospital where she was a Neuro-Intensive Care Nurse.

Besides her mother, she is survived by her stepfather, John Brooks of East Hampton; a brother, Kevin Lawton and his wife Martha of East Hampton; a sister, Marilyn Drenzo and her husband Robert of Creamery, Pa., and a nephew Benjamin Lawton.

Friends may call at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, today, April 8, from 6-8 p.m. Burial will be private in Pine Grove Cemetery in Middletown.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Yale New Haven Hospital at givetoynhh.org.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

Grace A. Moran

Grace A. (Patrick) Moran, 88, of Scotland Road, Norwich, died Monday morning, April 4, at Harrington Court in Colchester. She was married to the late Robert W. Moran with whom they had four children. Born in Bogota, N.J., in 1927, her family moved to Norwich when she was two months old and she became a "true" Connecticut woman.

She was the daughter of the late Arthur M. and Grace (Shelley) Patrick. Grace was a graduate of the Norwich Free Academy Class of 1945 and attended Edgewood Park College in New York in 1946.

Mrs. Moran worked for over 30 years at the William W. Backus Hospital. She retired in 1996 as the manager of the purchasing department.

Grace is survived by a daughter Kathryn Hyde of North Franklin, three sons Richard Moran and Robert Moran both of Santa Cruz, Calif., and Philip Moran of Waterbury; seven grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

She was predeceased by a brother Robert Patrick.

Grace's family wishes to extend their sincere appreciation to the staff of Harrington Court for the care and respect that they showed to Grace during her time there.

Grace lived a life full of grace.

A private graveside burial will take place in Maplewood Cemetery.

Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to the Cummings-Gagne Funeral Home, 82 Cliff St., Norwich. For memorial guestbook, visit cummings-gagnefh.com.

Colchester

John Frederick Sellick

John Frederick Sellick, 67, of Lebanon and Colchester, passed away peacefully Monday, April 4, at home, surrounded by the love of his family and friends. Born Jan. 29, 1949 in Willimantic and raised in Lebanon, he was the son of the late John and Margaret (Murphy) Sellick.

John was the beloved husband of Karen Anne Sellick; loving father of John F. Sellick Jr., Elaine Miller and Sheila Fowler; best friend and "buddy" of Myles Davis; and loving grandfather of Samantha Fowler and Micayla and Ryan Yorski. He also leaves behind several cousins, extended family members and dear friends.

John was an extraordinary man, volunteering for service during the Vietnam War as an MPC, returning home to Lebanon to become a Connecticut State Trooper, working out of Troops K & E. He eventually retired to his farm in Lebanon. John was a Master Pyrotechnician and most of Lebanon spent their Fourth of July at his farm while he hosted a party and fireworks celebration that surpassed all others. He was multi-talented and also sandblasted and restored antique cars. John had the great gift of celebrating the last few months of his life, as his good friends and family surrounded him with much love, laughter and memories. He was a man well-loved with a life well lived.

A Celebration of John's life will be observed at 11 a.m. Saturday, April 9, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. Attendees may gather at the funeral home starting at 10:30 a.m. Burial with full military and state police honors will follow in the New Lebanon Cemetery.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Allen Shedroff

Allen Shedroff, 93, of Norwich, passed away Saturday, April 2. Born March 11, 1923, he was the son of Edward and Rose Shedroff of Colchester.

Allen grew up in Colchester attending public schools and graduating from Bacon Academy. He was a proud World War II veteran, serving in the U.S. Navy.

In the decades that followed he owned and operated the Norwich Packing Company (NORPACO). Allen was a devoted husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather. In his leisure time he enjoyed carving ships and animals of the sea.

He was predeceased by his wives, Esther Zelinsky Shedroff and Bella Schuman Shedroff, and a brother, Leon Shedroff.

He is survived by his children, Susan Seeman and her husband Chuck of Norwich, Steven and his wife Elissa of Allentown, Pa., and Alan Schuman and his wife Gail of Baltimore, Md.; seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. He is also survived by a brother, Herbert Shedroff and his wife Harriet of West Hartford, and his sister-in-law, Sylvia Shedroff of San Diego, Calif., and his devoted friend, Mary Sweeney of Bozrah.

We would like to thank Harrington Court in Colchester for the excellent care given to Allen.

Services were held at the Norwich Hebrew Benevolent Cemetery at 62 Middle Rd., Preston, Tuesday, April 5. Donations in honor of Allen can be made to the Parkinson Foundation or a charity of your choice.

To leave an online tribute or condolence, visit churchandallen.com.

Marlborough

Mildred Stella Weiner

Mildred Stella (Kaufman) Weiner, 94, passed away Friday, April 1, at Marlborough Health Care Center. She was the youngest of four children, born to Michael and Dora Kaufman. She spent most of her life in Connecticut, with a 20-year "vacation" in Colorado.

Mildred defied conventional wisdom by excelling with both sides of her brain. She was naturally gifted with an amazing voice and artistic sense and ability. In her early years, she was a prolific sewer and knitter. She satisfied her scientific interests with a successful and fulfilling career as a laboratory technician. She did nothing halfway.

Mildred leaves behind her daughters, Diane Weiner, of Denver, Colo., and Laurel Morrison and her husband, Robert, of Glastonbury; her grandchildren, Michael Weiner and his wife Ashley, of Seattle, Wash., David Weiner, of New York City, and Jessica Morrison and her husband Paul Theriault, of Newton, Mass. She also leaves behind her two great-grandchildren, Jackson and Libbie Theriault.

Glastonbury Funeral Home is serving the family. Funeral services will be private.

Portland

Rose M. Johnson

Rose M. (DiFrancesco) Johnson was the daughter of immigrants from Italy to the United States. Born in Hartford, she was raised by her loving parents in New Britain. She met her future husband, Charles Graham Johnson, before the start of World War II and they corresponded for the duration.

After Graham was released from service, they married in 1946. Their son, Thomas, arrived in 1948 and daughter, Nancy, came along in 1949. They all lived happily on the second floor at 321 Main St., Portland, until 1965 when they built a home at 2 Spruce Terrace, Portland.

In 1981, they had the golden opportunity to leave (not without some regrets!) New England and move to the little village of Fallbrook, in San Diego County, Calif., where Tom had found them a home. They enjoyed an idyllic 20 years until Graham passed away in 2002. Rose then went to live with Nancy in an attractive small city in Los Angeles County, Sierra Madre. She never missed the harsh climate back east and thoroughly took pleasure in the California weather and lifestyle.

Her favorite song was "Stardust," from which I quote: "Sometimes I wonder why I spend the lonely nights, dreaming of a song- The melody haunts my reverie and I am once again with you, when our love was new and each kiss an inspiration-Oh, but that was long ago, now my consolation is in the stardust of a song..." ~Hoagy Carmichael.

Rest in peace, sweet mom of mine.

Andover

Virginia Carol Davis

Virginia Carol (Backus) Davis died Nov. 11, 2015, at her home in Avery Heights in Hartford. She was 101 years old. Virginia was born Nov. 2, 1914, in Andover, to Horace J. Backus Sr. and Laura Gertrude Pond.

Her father died when she was 4 years old, shortly before her younger brother, Horace, was born. Although the family moved several times as her mother struggled to raise two children, Virginia's memories of her childhood were warm ones-including sledding with Horace in Keeney Park and times spent at the shore in Branford. The family lived in Norwich, where Virginia graduated from Norwich Free Academy, winning the history prize. Following high school, she attended Hartford Hospital School of Nursing, graduated as a Registered Nurse and began her career in New Britain General Hospital. Years later, she continued her nursing career at Hartford Hospital in the Pediatric Nursery.

She married Wallace A. Davis in 1938. They lived several years in New Britain, close to many relatives, where Wallace had grown up. Family gatherings were frequent. Their first two children, Stephen and Deborah, were both born there and grew up with many cousins. In 1949 the family moved to Newington, where their third child, Jeffrey, was born. The neighborhoods were wonderful for children and adults with many lifelong friendships formed. Their homes always had cats, dogs and other pets.

Virginia was a loving, caring wife and mother. She had a passion for reading which she instilled in her children, along with love for nature, especially birds. She was an active member of the League of Women Voters and the First Congregational Church in Newington. She and Wallace loved square dancing and bowling. Wallace and Virginia bought a cottage at West Hill Lake in New Hartford, where many wonderful summers were spent with friends and family. Wallace and Virginia traveled in Europe, China and Alaska. Virginia traveled with her daughter on a Bridges for Peace Exchange to Russia and the Caucasus. In later life they moved to Avery Heights and spent many happy years with old and new friends.

Not long after Wallace's death in 2005, Virginia moved from their apartment to a room of her own in the skilled nursing unit where the many wonderful caregivers assisted her in her remaining years.

Her ashes were interred near Wallace's in the memorial garden at the Congregational Church in Newington.

In addition to her parents and her husband, she was predeceased by her brother, Horace J. Backus Jr; her son-in-law, Edward A. Everts; her grandson, Christopher C. Davis; and her infant granddaughter, Marriah N. Davis.

She is survived by her son, Stephen A. Davis and wife Suzanne of Bloomfield; daughter, Deborah C. Davis of Vermont; son, Jeffrey P. Davis and wife Gail of Coventry; grandson, Scott A. Davis of Agawam, Mass.; grandson, Eric A. Davis of Middletown; great-grandson, Cedric A. Davis of Agawam, Mass.; and many nieces and nephews.

Family and friends will share memories and celebrate Virginia's life at a later date.