

RIVEREAST

# News Bulletin

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**Championship Cardinals...** The Colchester Cardinals defeated the Pirates June 11 to win the Colchester Little League Majors Championship. Dillon Rakowski of the Cardinals bested Aidan Zimmitti of the Pirates in the 2-0 pitching duel with a complete game no-hitter. The Cardinals had key offensive and defensive contributions from all players throughout the season including the final game. Pictured are, kneeling (from left) Austin Doyle, Darren Nelson, Kyle Brogden, Jake Budnick, Mark Anselmo and Max Banelis; back row: Coach Paul Baldinger, Lucas Baldinger, Coach Steve Rakowski, Patrick Woble, Dillon Rakowski, Steven Laliberte, Michael Shoemaker and manager Tom Laliberte. (Not pictured is Aiden Mclaughlin.) Photo by Linda Akerman Shoemaker.

## Portland Fireworks Officially Cancelled

by Elizabeth Regan

The rockets' red glare won't be lighting up the Portland sky on July 30 now that the annual fireworks display has been cancelled due to lack of funds.

Portland Fireworks Committee Chairwoman Sharon Hoy announced the cancellation Tuesday after the committee was only able to raise about \$11,000 of its \$30,000 goal.

It's a lost opportunity for residents to express their heritage and patriotism as part of an event that brings in as many as 5,000 people each year, according to Hoy.

"Fireworks are as American as apple pie," she said.

The celebration of the nation's independence — and, this year, of the town's 175th anniversary — had been scheduled for late July in response to a request from the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to hold off on the fireworks so as not to disturb nesting herons and eagles along the Connecticut River.

Hoy said it's a shame to have to cancel in the midst of the town's 175th anniversary year — but it would be a bigger shame to have a show that's shorter than usual or "not the quality we're accustomed to."

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield echoed that sentiment Wednesday.

"The thing I wanted to emphasize [is] that, while the July 30 fireworks aren't going to be

held, they aren't going to be held because we hold a very high standard," she said. "We don't want to disappoint them by putting on a sub-standard show."

The show was to be put on by Ocean State Pyrotechnics of Rhode Island as it has over the past several years. The event began in the early 1990s under the direction of retired Sgt. Mike Dapkus of the Portland Police Department, a fireworks aficionado who provided the fireworks at cost and donated his time to carry out the display. Dapkus stepped back after almost 20 years with the show in 2008.

"We have a claim as one of the best, if not the best, fireworks in the state of Connecticut," Hoy said.

The committee has never missed a year because of funding problems. There have been lapses for other reasons, however. The event was cancelled in 2006 for flooding, 2011 due to inclement weather, and 2014 because of a bridge repair on Route 17A.

The Portland display is the latest victim of insufficient funding that has befallen municipalities including Hartford, East Hartford, Norwich and Meriden. In at least one of those cases, however, a last minute benefactor saved the day. Frontier Communications came through with a \$10,000 donation so the show could go on in Meriden, according to the *Meriden Record-Journal*.

See Portland Fireworks Page 2

## How Would Elmcrest Project Impact Portland?

by Elizabeth Regan

Portland officials have been weighing in on the impact of proposed zoning regulation changes to be discussed at a continued public hearing next Thursday that would allow for the construction of a neighborhood shopping center and up to 240 apartments in the town center.

Zoning regulations must be amended before the Planning and Zoning Commission may consider a plan by Dan Bertram, of the Danbury-based BRT Corporation, to put up two high-end, multi-level apartment buildings and a two-story mix of retail and office space on the former Elmcrest Hospital campus.

Members of the Board of Selectmen, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the public have asked for more information on the impact of such a development project on town infrastructure, services and taxes.

Rick Kelsey, director of public works, said in a June 22 memo to First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield that zoning regulations to allow for the construction of 16 residential units for every 5,000 square feet of commercial space do not appear to have "any detrimental impacts" on the town's water and sewer system.

Current regulations allow for three units for every 5,000 square feet of commercial space.

Kelsey said an existing Main Street water main serving the Elmcrest property and the

adjacent gas station on the east side of the street would need to be extended to allow for fire suppression. As part of a 2009 plan for the property under a different development company, the cost was to be borne by the developer.

That plan would have included 150,000 square feet of commercial space anchored by a supermarket, about 80 housing units and over 500 parking spaces. When the economy tanked, so did the development deal.

The special permit for the project issued by the zoning commission in 2009 is still in effect; it will expire in 2018.

Kelsey's memo noted a sanitary sewer on Main Street near the southwest corner of the Elmcrest site is in poor condition and should be replaced.

Fire Department Chief Robert Shea told Bransfield in a June 27 email that it is difficult to predict the impact of Bertram's proposal on the volunteer department.

"We have difficulty handling our daytime calls as it is, due to the majority of our volunteers working during this time," he said, citing a call volume of 1,200 service calls a year.

"The changes in our department's ability to cover the requests for emergency services based on population increases will need to be monitored and necessary changes made to secure the protection of our citizens. These changes may

result in additional cost for fire and EMS coverage to the taxpayers," he added.

In a July 1 letter to Bransfield, Superintendent of Schools Philip O'Reilly said a modest decline in enrollment is projected based on the town's birth rate, which is likely to be mitigated by increased enrollment of students from nearby towns participating in the state's Open Choice program.

Valley View School, which houses preschool through grade one, will be at or near classroom capacity in the coming school year. Gildersleeve School is using all its classroom space for second-, third- and fourth-grade classes and for small group instruction.

O'Reilly cited grade reconfiguration as a possibility going forward if enrollment increases. Some examples including making Valley View an "early childhood center" for preschool and kindergarten; putting grades one, two and three in Gildersleeve; and putting grades four, five and six in Brownstone Intermediate School. Alternatively, the district could house fourth- and fifth-graders in Brownstone Intermediate School while housing sixth, seventh and eighth graders at Portland Middle School.

O'Reilly said the high school can support more students, citing many underutilized classrooms. The school was renovated more than 10

years ago, based on increased enrollment projections that never materialized.

An earlier memo on school impacts was submitted to the zoning commission by planning consultant Donald Poland, senior vice president of Goman + York of East Hartford, prior to the opening of the public hearing on the amendment to the zoning regulations in June. He told commissioners that increasing the ratio of housing units to commercial space in a mixed-use development is a way to achieve the preservation of the historic homes on the site and to make the development more profitable.

To qualify for a mixed-use development, a property must be in a design business, general business, central business district or planned industrial zone. It must be at least 10 acres with access to adequate sewer and water.

A more in-depth analysis by Poland about the fiscal impact of the zoning regulation change was on the table at Monday's meeting of the Board of Selectmen but was nixed once it came out that Goman + York, which also has a brokerage arm, is the listing agent for another large parcel in town.

A listing by Jon Cohn of Goman + York on [Loopnet.com](http://Loopnet.com) shows a proposed development on the corner of routes 66 and 17, marketed as Portland Commons.

See Elmcrest Project Page 2

**Portland fireworks cont. from Front Page**

Hoy went to the Board of Selectmen about two weeks ago with committee member Jill Deane to ask if the town could help fill in the gap, but was not successful.

Bransfield described the \$20,000 the committee would need to pull off the fireworks as “a lot of money.”

“It’s not in our budget, frankly, and this being the beginning of the [fiscal] year, selectmen are going to be very careful about making substantial commitments that aren’t in the budget,” she said.

One suggestion that arose from the selectmen’s discussion was to collaborate with the 175th Anniversary Committee by holding

the fireworks the same day as the town parade scheduled for Sept. 10.

But Hoy said it’s already too late for that. “There’s no way we can make \$20,000 by that date so it’s not even possible to consider - unless we find that pot of gold at the end of the rainbow,” she said.

Another option, Bransfield suggested Wednesday, would be to have fireworks every other year instead of annually. She pointed to one upside of the 2014 cancellation for bridge repair: “In some ways it was a blessing because they were able to utilize the dollars raised over two years to pay for the fireworks.”

Bransfield applauded the committee, which

only has about 15 members, for bringing in as much money as it did this time around.

“They started at zero, and to have raised \$10,000 in a year’s time I think is very good,” Bransfield said.

Both Hoy and Bransfield emphasized the committee doesn’t simply need more money – it also needs more volunteers.

“Each committee member has expertise in what they do and they work hard, but we could certainly use volunteers for fundraising and new ideas – and to carry those new ideas out,” Hoy said.

Meanwhile, the committee is continuing to accept donations, for next year’s show.

Fundraising events include holiday bake sales at Tri-Town Foods and a tent at the Portland Fair – and this year, two afternoon teas later this year.

An Edwardian Tea with a *Downton Abbey* theme will be held Sept. 25 and a Victorian Tea will be held Dec. 3. Both events are at 2 p.m. at the Quarry Ridge Golf Course. Tickets are available for \$25 each at the town clerk’s office and the police department.

Hoy said donations large and small are greatly appreciated. Checks should be made out to Portland Fireworks, c/o Portland Police, 265 Main St., Portland, CT 06480.

**Elmcrest Project cont. from Front Page**

The 13-acre site has 105,000 square feet of leasable space in the form of an anchor store, a strip mall and a community center, according to the listing.

Zoning for the property owned by Wal and Hedy Jarvis was changed in October 2015 from planned industrial to general business, according to the town’s land use office. At the Planning and Zoning Commission’s public hearing held in September, Cohn said the zoning should be changed because the lack of public water and sewer utilities means most industrial development isn’t a viable proposition.

The town’s Plan of Conservation and Development, revised in 2015, includes recommendations to evaluate the costs and benefits of extending water and sewer services to the area to promote economic development.

At a special meeting of the selectmen last Thursday – the board’s second meeting that week – selectman Brian Flood said Goman + York’s involvement in both a pending application of the Planning and Zoning Commission and a current real estate listing sounds like “an

obvious conflict of interest.”

“It seems like the Planning and Zoning Commission, who received the report from this gentleman, should be informed there’s a potential interest and his opinions and his report may very well be tainted,” Flood said.

Bransfield confirmed she would alert the commission. She said she is working on an alternate option for guidance on planning matters now that the position of town planner is vacant. Former planner Deanna Rhodes left Portland for the city of Norwich last Thursday.

Bransfield emphasized she is not currently seeking the services of a planning consultant and “there is no interim town planner.”

“I am working on an alternate plan,” she told selectmen. “And when that happens, I’ll be happy to share it with you.”

At the same meeting, Bransfield pointed to a grant-funded corridor study commissioned by the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments that will analyze the impact of development on Route 66 in East Hampton and Portland. The study was awarded in May,

but work has not yet begun.

“They will be looking at all kinds of traffic patterns and impacts of development that’s occurring in East Hampton and hopefully will be occurring in Portland as well,” she said. “These corridor studies go into a lot of detail about what’s present, what’s projected and how we can best manage safety for our state roads.”

A road safety audit by the state Department of Transportation is expected in six to eight weeks with recommendations for enhancements around the intersection of routes 66 and 17A, Bransfield said.

Bransfield said she is awaiting information from the assessor’s office and police department about potential impacts of changing zoning regulations to allow a higher density of residential construction as part of a mixed-use development.

Thursday’s public hearing on the proposed text amendment was continued from June 16. Once opened, the commission has 35 days to close the hearing, according to state statute. Members then have 65 days to make a deci-

sion.

There’s the opportunity for an extension of up to 65 additional days at the applicant’s request.

Bertram’s proposed change to the zoning regulations states the increased ratio of residential to commercial development applies only when it “incorporates the preservation of significant historic resources.” The total number of studio, one- and two-bedroom units is capped at 240, with two-bedroom units accounting for no more than 55 percent of the offerings.

An existing mixed-use zoning regulation – which still stands despite a previous text amendment application to eliminate it – specifies that construction of the residential and commercial portions of the project must be built concomitantly; that is, 50 percent of the commercial construction must be move-in ready before a certificate of occupancy can be issued for the residential portion.

**East Hampton Police News**

6/19: Adrian Kozikowski, 24, of 15 Cadwell Cr., Cromwell, was arrested and charged with illegal operation of a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, unsafe passing, operating an unregistered motor vehicle, possession of a hallucinogen, possession of less than half an ounce of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia. Kozikowski, East Hampton Police said.

6/26: Lucas Wojick, 35, of 133 South Rd., Marlborough, was issued a summons for operating an unregistered and uninsured motor vehicle, police said.

**Portland Police News**

6/23: Joseph Moran, 20, of 77 Chestnut St., Middletown, was charged with tampering with a motor vehicle and second-degree criminal mischief, Portland Police said.

6/23: Robert Moran, 47, of 77 Chestnut St., Middletown, was charged with third-degree criminal trespass, second-degree criminal mischief and tampering with a motor vehicle, police said.

6/23: Brenda Latimore, 38, of 105 Grove St., Middletown, was charged with operating under the influence, two counts of risk of injury to a minor, and failure to drive right, police said.

6/25: Michael Loffredo, 22, of 2 Namonee Trail, was charged with driving under the influence, police said.

**Andover Police News**

7/1: State police said Kyle Faulkner, 27, of 20 Oakwood Lane, Columbia, was arrested and charged with interfering with an officer by simple assault, assault of a public safety/emergency medical personnel, breach of peace by threatening, and third-degree assault.

**Colchester Police News**

6/28: State police said Dylan Kermode, 23, of 51 Sashel Ln., turned himself in on an outstanding arrest warrant and was charged with second-degree larceny, as a result of an investigation into numerous construction tools reported stolen over the course of several months from a construction business located on Lebanon Avenue.

6/29: State police said Armando Soler, 23, of 164 Hollywood Ave., Hartford, turned himself in on an active warrant for operating an unregistered motor vehicle, illegal operation of a motor vehicle under suspicion, and failure to carry registration/insurance card. Soler was also charged with second-degree failure to appear.

6/30: State police said Christopher Millette, 29, of 35 Grist Mill Rd., Moodus, turned himself in on an active warrant stemming from a missing court date and was charged with second-degree failure to appear.

**Sklarz Gets 2.5 Percent Pay Raise**

by Julianna Roche

At its annual superintendent evaluation on June 23, the Board of Education unanimously voted to increase Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz’s salary by 2.5 percent.

Based on last year’s salary of \$68,547, the increase, which became effective July 1, brings his salary to \$70,261. The superintendent position in Marlborough is part-time.

Chairwoman Ruth Kelly and Vice Chairman Wesley Skorski, along with board members Betty O’Brien, Louise Concodello, Susan Rapelye, Dr. Judith Kaplan, Patrick Pabouet, and Theresa Brysgel were present at the meeting.

“His evaluation went very smoothly with very little discussion and no conflict at all,” said Kelly. “The board as a whole is extremely pleased with his educational leadership.”

“The board has the utmost confidence in Sklarz’s ability in leading the district along with the administrators and staff,” added Concodello.

Hired as the part-time Marlborough schools’ superintendent in July 2009, Sklarz has used his extensive superintendent experience in other school districts (including West Hartford Public Schools in Connecticut for 14 years and Santa Cruz Public Schools in California for four years) to bring strong leadership and positive change to the school system in the last seven years.

“I personally feel we are very lucky to have someone with his background as our superintendent,” Kelly said.

Board members agreed that Sklarz helped maneuver difficult situations – especially this past year.

Earlier this year, Kelly noted, the Board of Finance cut the Board of Education’s 2016-17 proposed budget. “We came in with the budget and were forced to cut \$200,000 from the Board of Finance,” Kelly said. “We had to make some very difficult decisions, but [Sklarz] led us through that process.”

She added, “It [wasn’t] an easy time, but he was very good and he did a great job maneuvering through,” she added.

While his schedule changes from year to year, Sklarz works at Marlborough Elementary School two to three days a week and attends every Board of Education meeting throughout the year.

“He’s fiscally responsible,” Kelly said. “And he’s found creative ways to improve our school; he has hired a wonderful leadership team, with both the current principal and vice principal hired under his watch.”

“The board is extremely pleased with David overall, with his performance and his great vision for our school system,” Concodello added.



Members of Westchester Congregational Church are asking for donations from the community to help raise \$30,000 to restore the building's exterior. The gazebo on the church's property, shown at right, also speaks to its historic roots, as the old church steeple was repurposed into the gazebo top.

## Westchester Congregational Raising Money for Restoration

by Julianna Roche

Sitting atop a sun-stricken grassy hill just off Route 149, the Westchester Congregational Church looks in decent shape, but pulling into the gravel lot, a closer look at peeling paint and spots of rotting exterior make it clear there is work to be done.

Despite its fading condition, however, the church is breathtaking. With a pure white and pillar-lined façade, its beauty lies in both its simplicity and the fact it's been standing there for nearly 170 years.

According to church pastor, the Rev. Ron Thompson, it is this historical legacy and importance to the community that led the congregation to begin raising money for a restoration of the church's exterior, which will cost them roughly \$44,000. They are seeking the community's help to make this happen and have already had several bidders, including an anonymous donor who for the months of July and August, will match any contribution up to \$10,000, which means a donation of \$10 would become \$20.

"Fall is quickly approaching, so we'd like to get it restored before the winter season," said Thompson. "We've chosen painters that are aware of the criteria for restoring such an old structure. So they have to be very careful. A couple of the bidders have done historic churches before, but when you do that type of level of expertise, the price goes way up. So going back to our congregational roots of community when this church was founded...we

would like to make it again a community project."

According to congregation member Judy Ladegard, the church's community roots date all the way back to 1728, when a group of 16 residents applied to the state assembly to establish a church in Westchester so they would no longer have to make the arduous trek to the congregational church in Colchester. In 1730, the church was then built at its original location at the bottom of Cemetery Road. The building, however, which villagers then called a "meeting house" was not only used for worship – it served a variety of needs in the community.

"It was used for social gatherings [and] town meetings, and Sundays were set aside for worship," Ladegard said – and that's not too different from how it's used today.

"We have Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, a quilting group, Al-Anon," said outreach committee and congregation member Mary Jane Slade. "Once in a while people, not necessarily even members, will rent the hall for weddings, showers, birthday parties, whatever, so it still serves the community in that way. We also have membership from East Haddam, East Hampton and Hebron. So it's not just Colchester."

While there are no records that show what happened to the first church building – whether it burned down or was simply abandoned – a second one was built at its current site in 1791,

which sits on higher ground.

"Our former pastor, [the late] Ted Dole, used to say the grounds at the original site were too wet, so they had to move the church to higher ground," Ladegard said. "And they moved the whole thing up here. Whether that's true or not, I don't know... but it's a great story. They rebuilt the church and then it burned down in 1847, but the Westchester community as a whole came together to rebuild it again, whether they were members here or not, because they used it too."

The new Westchester church, which was dedicated in 1848, has been renovated several times since with more modern amenities, including an addition of a fellowship hall, which has helped draw in community groups since the 1970s.

Thompson said he hopes there will be similar community support with the current restoration, since the congregation, which currently only has 35-40 acting members, may have difficulty raising all the money on its own.

"Because we're a small congregation, there's only so much that we ourselves can donate," Ladegard agreed.

And this small congregation has proven to be a devoted one.

For example, the congregation's organist Betty Ouse, has been playing there for over 50 years. Lanegard, also a longtime church member, has been attending services for the last 25 years. She also married her husband in the

church in 1975 and baptized all of her children there.

Slade, who is originally from Massachusetts, has a similar story from when she and her husband moved to town.

"We hadn't found a church that we wanted to go to," she said. "We tried this one... and my son was married here, four of my eight grandchildren were baptized here, my husband was buried out of here. There are a lot of good connections here and I have to say the people are extremely nice and supportive, so it was a good reason to stay."

If all goes as planned, Thompson said the church will also look into starting the process of getting the church listed on the National Registry of Historical Places, with the hope of preserving not just the church's history, but the town's as well.

"It's very powerful to see the history and how many people in town connect to this church," he said. "I think that supports what we are doing here: reaching out to the community, which all goes back to its roots."

"There is a lot of history right here in Westchester," Thompson said. "And this church is part of that history."

*Donations for the church's restoration project may be sent by check to Jeanne Wickham, 12 Woodbine Rd., Colchester, CT 06415. Put "Historic Restoration" in the note section of the check.*

## Glastonbury-Belltown Dispatch Kicks Off in East Hampton

by Elizabeth Regan

A new municipal partnership was formed last week with the official launch of a \$1.2 million emergency dispatch arrangement between Glastonbury and East Hampton.

Efforts to move East Hampton's emergency communication operations to the dispatch center in the Glastonbury Police Department were six months in the making, though East Hampton Town Manager said such a large-scale undertaking typically takes 18-24 months.

The clock was set in December when East Hampton's former emergency dispatch provider, Colchester Emergency Communications (KX), announced it would be closing at the end of June.

Glastonbury took over dispatch operations for East Hampton at 11:45 p.m. on June 30.

"All of our systems are working as designed and developed and I am pleased to report not a single 911 call has been unanswered," Maniscalco said Wednesday.

According to Glastonbury Town Manager Richard Johnson, the regional dispatch center is off to a good start.

"It's a work in progress and so we will continue to work with East Hampton and Glastonbury personnel to move forward, work

on any glitches and improve the service," Johnson said Wednesday.

Glastonbury 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.

East Hampton Police Department Chief Sean Cox on Tuesday credited the new dispatch arrangement with a significant increase in efficiency. A key benefit is that Glastonbury's technology allows East Hampton officers to file reports remotely instead of having to return to the station to complete the paperwork.

"The greater I can reduce the time spent in the station doing data entry, the more time officers can be out in the road observing violations," Cox said.

East Hampton police officers are also able to see real-time dispatch information on their in-car computers, according to Cox. That means they get information on calls even before the information is conveyed verbally.

Cox said the technology is not new to Glastonbury or to most departments in the state – but it's finally bringing East Hampton's department into the 21st century.

The biggest challenge going forward is com-

binning two different police cultures into one dispatch center, according to Cox. He cited different radio codes as one obstacle to overcome.

"We've gone to a plain-speak format, so if it's a patrol check, that's what you call it. If it's a motor vehicle stop, that's what you call it," Cox said. "In the coming weeks, we'll come up with a vernacular that's more efficient."

The regional dispatch agreement specifies East Hampton will provide, maintain and repair the equipment necessary to communicate with Glastonbury at its own expense. East Hampton is also responsible for the wages, employee benefits, payroll costs, insurance, training, overtime and uniforms for the additional employees Glastonbury needs to provide dispatch services to East Hampton.

Johnson said three additional dispatchers were hired for the newly-regionalized communications center.

East Hampton will also be responsible for \$215,000 in operating costs in the first year, mostly for salaries and benefits. The costs in subsequent years will be determined based on collective bargaining agreements, since Glastonbury is unionized.

Johnson has said his town will pay about \$85,000 in start-up costs after grant funding comes through. Glastonbury's total contribution for infrastructure is \$710,000. To date, it has received a \$250,000 Transition Grant from the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection. A \$375,000 Inter-municipal Capital Equipment grant is pending approval by the State Bond Commission, according to Johnson.

In a state budget climate dominated by declining municipal aid and heightened discussions about regionalization, Glastonbury officials have said the dispatch arrangement allows the town to control its own destiny when it comes to whom it partners with and on what terms.

Whether the dispatch center grows to encompass other municipalities is an open question.

"Right now our focus is on providing the best possible service we can to our own public safety providers and then providing the same level of service to East Hampton," Johnson said. "If, down the road, there's an opportunity that makes sense for everybody, we would certainly explore that."

# Elmcrest Tax Abatement on Hold in Portland

by Elizabeth Regan

The developer of the former Elmcrest Hospital property will have to come back to the Board of Selectmen with a new tax abatement application now that the board has rescinded a resolution from last year authorizing the tax break.

The resolution was originally approved in February 2015 to empower First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield to execute a deal that would give Dan Bertram of the Danbury-based BRT Corporation a property tax break for up to seven years.

The 2015 resolution was based on a plan submitted by Bertram in 2012 to include 150,158 square feet of commercial space, 81 residential units and 813 parking spaces. He told selectmen in February that the improvements would cost more than \$20 million.

His current proposal is markedly different, coming in at 75,000 square feet of commercial space with 238 apartments.

Selectmen advocating to rescind the resolution last Thursday cited the revised plan as one reason the old agreement should be taken off the table.

Another key argument was that the resolution gave all the authority to Bransfield without a provision for the full board to either accept or reject the negotiated agreement.

State statute allows municipalities – “by affirmative vote of its legislative body” – to forgive up to 100 percent of the property tax on real estate developments valued at more than \$3 million.

It’s called “fixing the assessment.” As described by the state legislature’s Office of Legislative Research, it means the town may freeze a property’s taxable value for a certain period of time to allow the owner to develop the property without paying taxes on the improvements.

Bertram said Wednesday it makes sense to apply for the tax abatement based on the most

up-to-date project details. He said he will put in a new application once the Planning and Zoning Commission approves a change to zoning regulations that must be in place before he can get approval for all the apartments he wants to build.

The Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing on the zoning regulation application June 16 and continued to July 14.

“Zoning regulation change is step one; step two is tax abatement,” he said. “With both of those, we would be able to proceed with a site plan.”

The town currently receives \$94,000 a year in property tax from the vacant site, according to Bertram. The town would continue to receive that money during the construction and abatement period, combined with building and permit fees, motor vehicle property taxes, water and sewer fees, and taxes on commercial property within the new businesses in the shopping center.

Bertram has said he is looking for a freeze on 100 percent of the increased assessment for all seven years. He estimated the town would receive \$2.75 million in total revenue from the Brainerd Place development during the tax abatement period.

The town would receive an estimated \$1.24 million per year once the abatement period ends, according to Bertram.

He said anything less than a full abatement will compromise his ability to restore the key historic buildings on the site: the 1830 Hart-Jarvis House, the 1884 Sage House, and the development’s namesake, the 1852 Brainerd House.

“With a lesser agreement, there’s fewer funds for the historic preservation,” he said.

Bertram has committed to restoring all of the Brainerd House and the exterior of the Sage House.

Discussions with the town about moving the

Hart-Jarvis house to the southwest corner of the site are ongoing.

“To me, that’s the thing that needs to be worked on collectively,” he said, adding that such an exercise would require cash flow from the tax abatement.

To qualify for an abatement under state law, a development must fall into one of several categories: office; retail; permanent residential; transient residential; manufacturing; warehouse, storage, or distribution; structured multilevel parking connected to a mass transit system; information technology; recreation and transportation facilities; and mixed-use development.

Selectmen voted Thursday to amend the town’s own policy on fixing real property assessments, which included a list of qualifying developments similar to those outlined in state statute but did not address mixed-use development.

They decided unanimously to take out “permanent residential” as a category and replace it with “mixed-use development.”

Selectman Brian Flood said he is opposed to giving tax breaks for developments that include only residential housing.

“I think it’s fundamentally unfair to put in homes, whether they’re apartments or otherwise, and tell someone they don’t have to pay taxes on that for seven years where everyone else in town has to pay taxes on their homes,” Flood said.

Selectman Ben Srb, himself a developer who was a recipient of the town’s first tax abatement in 2013, was a vocal advocate for striking the permanent residential category from the policy.

“The number one way to keep taxes lower on all of our residents is to increase our industrial and our commercial uses appropriately,” Srb said. “If that means giving them tax incentives to do so, I’m okay with it.”

Residential incentives only dilute commercial development, according to Srb.

Srb was part of the development team behind Chris Cote’s Golf Shop on Route 66. Under the agreement, half of the improvements on the property would not be taxed for three years, according to the agreement signed in December 2013.

Selectmen approved a tax abatement for Connecticut Pharmaceutical Solutions, a medical marijuana producer, in November 2014. The agreement with developer Wayne Rand meant 50 percent of the improvements on the property would not be taxed for two years.

“I want to stay in harmony with what this board has done in the past, and they have sent a powerful message by approving commercial industrial type uses that I would argue are a clear benefit to the town,” Srb said.

Bransfield provided selectmen with a tax assessment agreement on a mixed-use development in East Hampton signed in March 2014. The agreement between Edgewater Hill Properties, which was based on a 16,800 square foot commercial component and five 8-unit apartment buildings, gave the developers a five-year tax abatement that scaled back gradually.

The agreement specified that the property would be assessed at land value only for two years after the first certificate of occupancy is issued. The improved property would be assessed at 25 percent of its value in year three, 50 percent in year four, and 75 percent in year five.

Bransfield said conversations with East Hampton Town Manager Michael Maniscalco indicated the agreement was the result of a careful, thorough process that Portland could learn from.

“The fact that this is a mixed-use development in our sister town could be very helpful to us as we contemplate any possible assessment fixing in our community,” she said.

## Big Y Gets Marlborough Talking

by Julianna Roche

The news of Big Y opening a location on 1 Independence Drive and Route 66 was met with majority support from residents when it was announced June 22; however, some locals still have concerns not only about how a big box supermarket will affect the town, but also how it came to fruition.

“People seem to think that we pick what stores are coming and we tell them where to put them,” said First Selectwoman Amy Traversa. “Nothing can be further from the truth.”

To set the record straight, Traversa reaffirmed town officials are not in the business of development, but rather, are there to provide developers with viable options that are worth investing in and also fit Marlborough’s zoning regulations.

For example, Big Y’s decision to develop a store in Marlborough, and the site they selected was private a business dealing between Big Y Foods, Inc. and Marlborough Development Partners LLC, the developer and marketer for the shopping center.

“With all of the options available to Big Y, we’re thrilled that our community was selected,” said Traversa. “We are here, the town of Marlborough and all of the officials, we are here to set the table, but they [developers] decide what they’re going to serve. ... We make sure everything is in its proper place and that we can help them best we can.”

In an ongoing discussion on the “Concerned

Citizens for Marlborough Development” Facebook page regarding the issue, several residents also questioned if the Big Y would affect the discussed plans for a grocery store to open in the 3-5 East Hampton Rd. plaza property owned by developer Allan Schwartz. Schwartz obtained the plaza – as well as four other properties in town – earlier this year, after they were foreclosed upon by Chelsea Groton Bank last December.

In February, Schwartz, of Schwartz Realty, asked the Zoning Commission asked to increase the maximum ground floor square footage of a property in the zone from 40,000 square feet to 55,000 in order to attract more quality clients, many of whom, he said, would not do anything with less than that amount.

Schwartz is known for his developing success in Glastonbury, including developments like Eric Town Square, a plaza at 41 Hebron Ave. (which includes Ben & Jerry’s and Noodles and Co.), and a larger Hebron Avenue plaza which includes several quality tenants, including Plan B Burger Bar.

At the February Zoning Commission meeting, Schwartz stressed the importance of having a large-size tenant, like a grocery store or pharmacy, move in to the plaza – saying it’s key to the future of the whole development.

“With us, it’s very important we get an anchor tenant, because no one else will follow if we do not get a good anchor tenant,” he said.

When asked this week if a grocery store was

still in the works for the property after the Big Y announcement, Schwartz declined to comment.

Traversa also declined to comment, but said she was “confident with all the development that [Schwartz] has done in Glastonbury; I have no doubt that when he’s ready, he will develop accordingly, but those are his plans.”

Whether the town could even support two grocery stores, however, is another question left unanswered, but town officials say it’s best left to developers to decide.

“I would leave it to developers to determine if Marlborough can support more than one grocery store,” said Board of Finance member Ken Hjulstrom. “But whatever happens, I am confident that other property owners will be able to attract businesses to their properties. Also, the development of the Big Y shopping center will bring customers to our town and increase the customer base for other retail businesses and restaurants in town.”

Traversa said she also believed the water and sewer system will continue to be a draw for new businesses.

“As soon as the water and the sewer was available in the center of town, it became an attractive site, not just for the community of Marlborough, but for what any developer would be looking for,” she said.

“Development of this sort is the culmination of over 15 years of preparation,” Hjulstrom agreed. “The Town Center Plan, along with the

construction of the sewer and water systems, has made projects such as this, feasible and has made Marlborough more attractive to developers.”

Resident concerns about the Big Y damaging the small-town Marlborough feel are also still circulating, but town officials say bringing in more business is good and even necessary for the town.

“Understandably, there are those who are concerned about Marlborough losing its ‘country feel,’” said Hjulstrom, “but we need a stronger commercial tax base in order to keep our community affordable, continue funding for our quality school system and enable our town to provide the services that our residents need and deserve.”

“I’m on the Board of Finance and the only thing I can say is that obviously anything like this helps,” agreed Board of Finance Chairman Doug Knowlton.

Among discussion on the “Concerned Citizens” page, one resident perhaps said it best: “We can’t have it both ways. We either get the accommodation of a higher quality grocery store or settle for none and the town stays status quo. We need to stop complaining and understand that with this big change, we will have to make other small sacrifices. I’ve never, frankly, been burdened by shopping in neighboring towns. But the decision is made and I will adjust.”

## Obituaries

### Colchester

#### Robert A. Crane

Robert A. Crane, 76, of Colchester, died unexpectedly Friday, June 24. He was born Dec. 15, 1939, in Hartford, to the late Anthony and Emma (Krieger) Crane.

Robert served in the Air National Guard and retired from Connecticut Natural Gas. An avid outdoorsman, he enjoyed hunting, fishing and daily walks on the beach.

He is survived by his brother, Richard Crane and his wife Sandra of Vernon; his sister, Carol Nichols of Hollis Center, Maine; his nieces, Laura Crane of Vernon, Susan Sheehan, her husband Alan and their children Lauren and Trevor of Marshfield, Mass.; his nephew, Richard J. Crane, his wife Lynn and their daughter Emma of Ellington. He also leaves many lifelong friends.

All services will be private at the convenience of the family.

Memorial donations in Robert's name may be made to the donor's choice.

For online condolences, visit [pietrasfuneralhome.com](http://pietrasfuneralhome.com).

### Portland

#### Sebastiana Santapaola

Sebastiana "Nella" (Mazzotta) Santapaola, 80, of Portland, formerly of Middletown, passed away peacefully after a long illness Saturday, July 2, at the Portland Care and Rehab Center. Nella was born Aug. 22, 1935, in Melilli, Sicily, daughter of the late Mario and Rosaria (Giardina) Mazzotta.



She is survived by a son, Sebastiano Santapaola of Sicily and a daughter, Filomena Santapaola Prokop and her husband Joseph of Portland; a brother, Gino Mazzotta and his wife Rosetta of Middletown, six grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her parents and her sister, Maria Mazzotta Fazzino of Middletown.

Nella emigrated with her family from Sicily in 1975 and joined her brother and sister living in Middletown. She was a person with a deep belief in her faith and her family. She was a dedicated worker and retired from the State of Connecticut Veterans Home in Rocky Hill to spend more time with her family and especially her grandkids. She loved to cook, spend time in the garden, crochet and embroider linens, and read the Bible.

Funeral services were held Thursday, July 7, from the D'Angelo Funeral Home, 22 South Main St., Middletown, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial that morning at Saint Sebastian Church. Burial was at Saint Sebastian Cemetery in Middlefield. Relatives and friends called at the funeral home Wednesday, July 6.

Memorial donations may be made to St. Mary's Church, 45 Freestone Ave., Portland, CT 06480

The family wishes to thank Portland Care and Rehab Center and their staff for the many years of care and devotion to our family member.

### Portland

#### Irving W. Chappell

Irving W. Chappell (Bud), 88, of Portland, passed away peacefully on the evening of Friday, July 1, in Middletown, after a long illness. Bud was born in Kennebunk, Maine, son of the late Homer J. Chappell and Ruth Chappell.

He served in the Army as an aircraft technician in Germany from 1946-48 and after his tour of duty returned to Kennebunk to marry his high school sweetheart, Lois Snelling. He was employed in Kennebunk as an auto mechanic. He and his wife built a house there and had two children, Wayne and Lois.

Bud moved the family to Connecticut in 1954 for a better job opportunity. He and his wife had a third child, Scott, born in Middletown. Bud built a second house and eventually a third house in Portland, where he lived all but the last few years of his life. Bud owned and operated Chappell Auto Body on Marlborough Street in Portland for 27 years. He then worked as an inspector for the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles for five years and then the Department of Transportation for an additional five years, from which he retired.

Bud was a hands-on skilled craftsman known for building cars, boats, houses and model aircraft. He earned his student pilot's license in 1945, a private pilot's license in 1967 and a commercial pilot's license in 1975. He was an avid model aircraft builder and flyer. Bud had numerous articles of his innovations and original design plans published in the world's largest model aircraft magazines. He was a charter member of Middlesex Aero Modelers Club, a member of the Prop Busters Club of Salem, a member of the First Congregational Church of Cromwell and The Elks Lodge 771 of Middletown.

Bud was a self-taught musician who played by ear. He used his musical skills with guitar, keyboard and harmonica to entertain senior citizens and social groups. He enjoyed dancing, camping, traveling, bowling and writing.

Bud is survived by his beloved fiancée, Doreen Pratt and children, Wayne Chappell and his wife Barbara, Lois Copeland and her husband Chan, and Scott Chappell and his wife Deborah; his nine grandchildren, 12 great-grandchildren and his sister, Janet Chappell.

He was predeceased by his wife, Lois Chappell; his sister, Virginia Wilton; and her husband Harold.

Bud was a strong believer that death is merely a temporary separation and we will all gather again in God's House above.

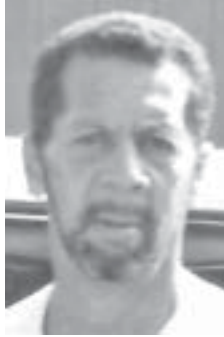
A funeral service will be held Saturday, July 9, at 1 p.m. at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St. Portland. Burial will be in the Swedish Cemetery, High Street, Portland. Friends may call on Saturday prior to the service, from noon-1 p.m., at Portland Memorial Funeral Home.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to a charity of the donor's choice.

### Colchester

#### Robert James Webster

Robert James Webster, 80, beloved husband of Edith M. Ladd-Webster, of Lebanon, formerly of Colchester, passed away Tuesday, July 5, at Hartford Hospital. Born in Lebanon July 24, 1935, he was a son of the late Charles and Josephine (Murawski) Webster.



Robert was a graduate of Bacon Academy and went on to serve with the U.S. Army during the Korean War. He returned home to make his name as a true entrepreneur in his home town. Some of the businesses he owned and operated included the Colchester Fish Market, Drop Anchor Restaurant, Colchester Inn, and R&B Poultry, for which he was fondly known as "The Chicken Man." He was also a professional truck driver.

Robert was very involved and active with several clubs in Colchester. He was a member of the Farmers Club, the Colchester Fish and Game Club and he was a charter member of St. Joseph's Polish Society. Robert loved fishing, bowling and antique cars, most of which he enjoyed in recent years with his best buddy and sidekick, Johnathan Avery.

Robert will be sadly missed but always remembered as a happy-go-lucky man who loved to make people laugh. He loved life, work, family and friends.

In addition to his wife of 29 years, survivors include his children, Robert Webster, Jr. of Colchester, Cheryl Harris of Florida, Karen Webster of Montville, Leslie Webster of Florida, Brian Webster of Colchester, William Avery and Dennis Avery, both of Lebanon; three sisters, Gladys Peay of Montville, Nancy Sullivan of New London, Linda Niedojadlo of Colchester; and numerous grandchildren, extended family members and friends.

Calling hours will be held Friday, July 8, from 5-7 p.m., at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral service will be held Saturday morning, July 9, beginning at 9:30 a.m., followed by a funeral home chapel service at 10 a.m. Burial will follow in the Linwood Cemetery in Colchester.

### Colchester

#### Hershel D. Keller Sr.

Hershel D. Keller Sr., 82, of Colchester and Palmetto, Fla., passed into God's Heaven Monday, June 6. He was born Aug. 3, 1933, in Henryetta, Okla., to Alvin and Lydia Keller.



Hershel enlisted in the U.S. Coast Guard during the Korean Conflict, and was stationed in Groton, then graduated from Oklahoma A&M as a diesel mechanic. He retired from H.O. Penn in Newington after 40 years of service. He loved to golf, play billiards, horseshoes, and was an avid bowler. During the 1950s and '60s, he was one of the premier fast-pitch softball pitchers in the state playing for the Hartford Brass Rail, E. Hartford Dovelettes and other area teams. He had a passion for UConn sports and watched when televised in Florida.

Hershel summered at Pachaug Marina and Campground in Jewett City, enjoying boating and fishing with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

He is survived by his wife Lesley of Palmetto, Fla.; his son, Hershel Dale Jr. and wife Eleanor Keller of Colchester; son, Ronnie Keller of Palmetto, Fla.; son, Ricky and wife Tammy of Colchester; and granddaughter, Melissa and husband Josh Couch, grandson Michael and wife Krystan Keller, grandson Tyler Keller, great-granddaughter Kaylie Couch, great-grandsons Gavin and Tommy Keller, all of Colchester; brother, Murl Keller of Buffalo, Minn.; and brother Jack Keller of Henryetta, Okla.

Hershel was predeceased by parents, three brothers, and two sisters, his wife of 59 years Agnes, and one grandchild.

A memorial service will be celebrated Saturday, July 9, at 11 a.m., at Colchester Federated Church, Main Street, Colchester. Burial will follow in Linwood Cemetery with refreshments back at CFC gym.

Donations can be made for the American Lung Association or to Tidewell Hospice, 4151 37th Street East, Ellenton, FL 34221.

### East Hampton

#### Josephine Boutillier

Josephine "Pippie" Prete Boutillier, 84, of East Hampton, passed away peacefully at Middlesex Hospital surrounded by her family on July 2. She was the beloved wife of 60 years to Howard Boutillier. Josephine was born in Hartford Feb. 18, 1932, to the late Joseph Prete and Elizabeth Giordano Prete.



Pippie loved celebrating life and cooking "food of love" for her family, Italian music, especially Sergio Franchi and Pavarotti.

She is survived by her sisters, Tilly and Rosemary, and her five children, Howie, Lisa, Johnny, Linda and Joey and her daughters-in-law, Tricia, Sheila, Ginnene, Beverly, Maria and her grandchildren, Sarah, Alyssa, Bryan, Marina, Joey, Thomas, Dana, Chris, Michael, Deanna, Dylan, Vanessa, and many nieces and nephews and cousins.

Pippie was predeceased by her brothers, Thomas Prete and Augustine Prete, and her sister, Janet Prete Spicer.

Josephine's family would like to thank the hospice unit of Middlesex Hospital for the loving care that they gave to "Pippie" and kindness and compassion they gave to her family. Thank you to all the wonderful doctors and nurses at Hartford Hospital, Middlesex Hospital and Apple Rehab in Middletown. A very special heartfelt "thank you" to her wonderful caregivers Heather and Amelia for their tender loving care of "Pippie." We love you.

Family and friends may call at Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, Monday, July 11, from 6-8 p.m. Funeral services will be held Tuesday, July 12, at 10:30 a.m. at St. Patrick's Church, 47 West High St., East Hampton. Burial will follow at St. Patrick's Cemetery.

To leave online condolences, visit [spencerfuneralhomeinc.com](http://spencerfuneralhomeinc.com).

### Portland

#### Lucy Mazzotta Watkins

Lucy Mazzotta Watkins, 92, of Portland, died peacefully Tuesday, July 5, surrounded by her family. Born in 1923 in Middletown, she was the daughter of immigrant parents from Sicily. She had three brothers and three sisters, with brother Joe being the last survivor.

She raised four children, mostly on her own, and if there was a medal of honor for such a feat she would surely have earned it. During World War II, she was a welder in a defense plant.

After the war, she married Quentin Paul Watkins, who passed away in 1987.

In 1968, she was employed by the Whitmore and Behm Tool Company as a tool grinder, making specialty tools for Electric Boat and others. She retired in 1985 and traveled.

Everyone that knew her loved her, for she was a sweet and gentle nature.

Lucy enjoyed many hobbies in her long life. She was an avid reader, devouring books. She liked puzzles of all kinds, movies, girls' basketball, baseball, but the big one was baking. She baked wedding cakes for dozens of people - for that matter, cakes for all occasions. She loved to bake.

Lucy leaves behind Marilyn Pitruzzello, Robert P. Watkins, Donna Laskin and Jim Watkins as her immediate family, plus seven grandkids and five great-grandkids.

Calling hours are from 10 a.m.-noon Thursday, July 14, at D'Angelo Funeral Home, 22 South Main St., Middletown.

# Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Tax season is well behind us at this point, but the IRS phone scam is, sadly, still going strong. Several residents in the *Rivereast* towns have been hit by the callers, and have let their local police departments know what's going on.

What's the IRS phone scam? Well, for the past few months, police have been receiving several calls from residents that an automated phone system has been leaving messages demanding people call a phone number with an out of state area code, claiming to be the IRS.

But, police warn, it's not.

Police said the recorded message sounds official and states that the victim owes back taxes. According to the IRS, however, if there is an issue with your federal taxes, you'll first receive a letter or notice in the mail from the agency. Also, real IRS employees have badge numbers; ask the caller for their badge number, then call 800-829-1040 to confirm it, police advised. Sometimes the caller may volunteer a fake badge number before even asked for one; still verify it.

Victims may be told they owe money to the IRS, police said, and if they don't cooperate, they may be threatened with arrest, deportation or suspension of a business or driver's license. In many cases, the caller becomes aggressive and insulting, police said.

If you get a phone call claiming to be from the IRS and you know you owe taxes or think you might, call the IRS at 800-829-1040, police said. If there is really is a payment issue, the IRS employees at that line can help you.

However, if you know you don't owe taxes or have no reason to think that you do owe, report the incident to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration at 800-366-4484.

Anyone who's been targeted by this scam should also contact the Federal Trade Commission at [ftc.gov](http://ftc.gov) and use its "FTC Complaint Assistant." Add "IRS Telephone Scam" to the comments of your complaint.

The IRS does not initiate contact with taxpayers by email, text message or social media channels to request personal or financial information, police said; nor does the agency ask for PINs, passwords or similar confidential access information for credit card, bank or other financial accounts. Recipients should not open any attachments or click on any links contained in the message, and instead forward the email to [phishing@irs.gov](mailto:phishing@irs.gov). More infor-

mation on how to report phishing scams is at [irs.gov](http://irs.gov).

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It's hard to believe, but it's been nearly two years since the great Robin Williams took his own life. The man was one of the funniest people to ever walk the planet, and provided me and I'm sure many, many others countless hours of entertainment over the years. Occasionally I'll come across a movie of his or an old *Mork & Mindy* repeat and he'll of course make me laugh – sometimes an awful lot – but I'll also feel a tinge of sadness, both at the fact he's gone and *why* he's gone. The fact that a man who gave so many so much joy killed himself is just tragic.

But, I always try to push that sadness away, and focus instead on Williams' brilliance. He was so good at what he did, it's certainly an easy enough feat. And on that note, I recently came across a list of great Robin Williams quotes. Here are some highlights:

"Reality – what a concept."

"You're only given a little spark of madness; you mustn't lose it."

"If it's the Psychic Network why do they need a phone number?"

"You know, you get that tattoo of barbed wire when you're 18, but by the time you're 80, it's a picket fence."

"Cocaine is God's way of saying you're making too much money."

"The Second Amendment says we have the right to bear arms, not to bear artillery."

"Why do they call it rush hour when nothing moves?"

"Carpe per diem – seize the check."

"Cricket is basically baseball on valium."

"In England, if you commit a crime, the police don't have a gun and you don't have a gun. If you commit a crime, the police will say, 'Stop, or I'll say stop again.'"

"Jack Nicholson once was with me at a benefit and leaned over and said in a very intense voice: 'Even oysters have enemies.' I responded with, 'Increase your dosage.'"

"I went to rehab in wine country, just to keep my options open."

"Canada is like a loft apartment over a really great party."

And lastly, one of my favorites: "Comedy is acting out optimism."

Like I said, he was a brilliant man. He'll continue to be missed.

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See you next week.