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News Bulletin

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Volume 41, Number 21

Published by The Glastonbury Citizen

September 23, 2016



Who Could Ask for Anything More?... Larry Ruhl and Ellen Lovino, the husband-and-wife duo of We Got Rhythm!, will perform songs from the Great American Songbook at the opening reception of the Brownstone Arts exhibit at the Portland Library, 20 Freestone Ave., Portland, on Saturday, Oct. 1, from 2-4 p.m. This year's exhibit commemorates the town's 175th anniversary, and runs throughout October.

Elmcrest Project Appears Dead

by Elizabeth Regan

The developer for the former Elmcrest Hospital packed up his presentation and went home Wednesday night after the Board of Selectmen voted not to cede to his demand for a full, seven-year tax abatement.

Such a tax abatement – alternately referred to as a “deferral,” an “incentive,” and a “subsidy” – would have been worth between \$5 and \$7 million, according to officials. Dan Bertram of the Danbury-based BRT Corporation said approval of his tax abatement application would have proved the selectmen “had an appetite” for joining him at the table as community partners in the redevelopment of the property.

According to the language of the failed motion, the approval would have been subject to further discussion on the specifics of the agreement. The motion hinged on a pledge Bertram made to put up a \$30 million mixed-use development within five years.

He had publicly committed to preserving three historic, architecturally-significant homes on the property as part of his plan for a mix of high-end apartments on one side of the 15-acre property and businesses on the other.

Bertram had stated in no uncertain terms that he needed a full, seven-year tax assessment deferral on all improvements and new construction in order to proceed. The incentive would mitigate expenses related to the preservation of two homes, the relocation of another, and the risk inherent in building an upscale development in Portland, among

many others.

“Let us run with it or we’ve got to run somewhere else,” he told selectmen before they denied his request for a full tax abatement.

While he didn’t literally run out the door once the motion failed, he walked pretty fast.

“Thank you for your time,” he said as he passed them by. “I’m sorry we couldn’t do it.”

It was selectman Michael Pelton, a fresh face on the board and the Portland political scene, elected just last year, who made the ill-fated motion that would have paved the way for the redevelopment of the property that’s been vacant and vandalized for a decade now.

According to Pelton, what the selectmen needed to do was look 10 years into the future to see the ways in which the project could revitalize Portland.

“We’re kind of a sleepy little town waking up, and big things are happening,” he said.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield and selectman Fred Knous voted with Pelton. Selectmen Kitch Breen Czernicki, Brian Flood, Kathy Richards and Ben Srb voted against the motion.

Richards and Srb had disclosed at the beginning of the meeting that they were both minority members of the limited liability corporation behind Chris Cote’s Golf Shop, which received a tax abatement in 2013.

Srb has been a vocal opponent of Bertram’s plans, speaking as a taxpayer at meetings of the Planning and Zoning Commission and Eco-

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Colchester Gears Up for 57 Fest

by Julianna Roche

Autumn has officially arrived, and Colchester is ready to celebrate its biggest celebration of the fall this weekend – the 57 Fest. The 12th annual festival will be held Saturday, Sept. 24, from 4-8:30 p.m., at the Colchester Recreation Complex, located at 215 Old Hebron Rd.

According to the town’s recreation manager, Cheryl Preston, the festival’s name comes from recognition the town received back in July 2005, when *CNN/Money Magazine* ranked Colchester as the 57th best place to live in the country.

“They recognized that Colchester is a fantastic place to live, work, play and grow,” she said. “In honor of this designation, the town decided we needed to celebrate with a fall family festival. ... 57 Fest was born and the name has stuck through the years.”

According to Preston, in 2013 Colchester was also named by *CNN/Money Magazine* as the eighth best place to live in the “least crowded towns” category – giving the town even more reason to celebrate.

“We celebrate every year because it is really special to be listed two times and the recognitions are an indication of the vision and the hard work that happens in this town,” she said.

Once attendees arrive at the 57 Fest, they can

start by visiting a variety of community and sponsor booths on the concourse in the pavilion area. Some highlights this year, Preston said, will be Cragin Memorial Library’s featured Story Walk, Dime Bank handing out popcorn, the Dog Park Committee offering “doggy games and treats,” and S&S Worldwide providing games and hula hoops for children.

“57 Fest is a place for the community to come together to celebrate its accomplishments,” she added.

Preston said Colchester is “a tight-knit community” and the Parks and Recreation Department asks “for a lot of help for this event from other town offices, businesses in town, non-profit groups, and the schools” – and they all climb aboard.

“Many groups come out to sponsor, make donations, [and] volunteer their time and resources,” Preston said. “We all come together to put on the best event, concert, and fireworks show possible.”

This year, attendees can expect both familiar and new activities and entertainment, such as a Tomahawk Throw and an Archery and Orienteering station for children, which will be hosted by the Boy Scouts. Preston added there

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The annual Colchester 57 Fest makes its return Saturday. As always, the event will feature a myriad of fun activities for kids, such as spin art and Frisbee-making, shown here at the 2013 festival.

Elmcrest Project cont. from Front Page
 nomic Development Commission while railing against the project as a selectman whenever it came before the board.

Srb said he opposed the tax abatement because he doesn't believe tax incentives should be given for residential construction and that there should be an approved site plan before a tax incentive is considered.

Flood had more overarching, philosophical objections to any kind of tax "subsidy" that unfairly benefits one business in town over the others.

Richards – who is also Srb's mother-in-law – said she wanted more time to evaluate the tax abatement application.

"I don't want to be pushed to give you an answer tonight," she told Bertram.

Czernicki objected to what she perceived as Bertram's unwillingness to negotiate.

"What I've heard tonight is what's on the table is the only thing that can be on the table," she said.

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." It means the town may defer 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.

The selectmen's denial of the seven-year, 100-percent tax abatement sounded the death knell for the latest iteration of a plan that has been gasping for breath for the better part of a decade. Back in 2009, the Planning and Zoning Commission issued a special permit to developer Anthony Fonda of Rhode Island. The permit authorized a mixed-use development with 149,127 square feet of commercial space and 82 housing units. The project stalled due to the economic downturn.

Bertram came in almost two years ago with an evolving concept that had come to include

up to 240 small but luxurious apartments and 94,000 square feet of commercial space by the time he left town Wednesday night.

Bertram's venture had been touted by the Economic Development Commission, the Portland Historical Society and numerous individuals and community groups committed to a vision for a new town center outlined in a study funded by the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation.

Opponents said the plan had too many apartments and too many unknowns. They worried about the effect of the development's large-scale residential component on the school system, the volunteer fire department and the small police department, among other services.

Pelton's motion to approve the abatement subject to further discussion on the terms of the agreement was influenced by a suggestion from town attorney Kari Olsen of Murtha Cullina to consider the tax abatement as a committee before coming back to the full board with the ultimate recommendation, combined with Bertram's request for immediate assurance that he'd get the full tax abatement if he moves forward.

Selectmen voted down the motion despite emphatic support for the tax abatement application from Economic Development Chairman Elwin Guild and the town's economic development consultant, Mary Dickerson.

This is Bertram's second application for a tax abatement on the Elmcrest project.

The board in June rescinded a previous resolution from 2015 that authorized a tax abatement based on the fact that his development proposal had changed significantly since he came before the board the first time. Some members also cited concerns the resolution gave all the authority to Bransfield to execute the deal without a provision for the full board to either accept or reject the negotiated agreement.

Guild conveyed his commission's endorsement of the tax abatement application by emphasizing that even during the tax abatement

period, the developer would be paying more in taxes than is being paid currently for the vacant site.

The current property tax rate is \$94,000 per year. That amount would rise to \$141,000 per year during the second year of construction and would carry through the seven-year abatement period.

"The perception that the developer would pay no real estate property taxes for seven years is absolutely false," Guild read from the commission's letter of endorsement. "The EDC encourages the town of Portland to recognize the significant increase in annual tax revenues, and take action to approve the request, and secure the opportunity at hand for the betterment of our town."

Dickerson, a consultant to the Portland EDC for almost nine years, told selectmen she has extensive experience putting together financing packages for eight-figure and even nine-figure real estate development deals.

She said the financing aspect of the project represents one of the hurdles Bertram would have to overcome to bring the development to fruition. And with talk of rising interest rates from Federal Reserve Chairman Janet Yellen, time is of the essence.

"Take a project like this, [valued] at \$30 million," Dickerson explained. "You take a quarter point rise in the interest rate, your payment goes from \$161,046 a month to \$165,660. That's a rise of \$4,600 a month. Over a year, that's \$55,000. Over a 30-year term, we're talking \$1.661 million. This is the kind of financing he has to put together."

She said a tax abatement is a tool, not a hand-out. It's a set of fixed costs Bertram can present to investors to convince them the project is solid.

Dickerson has worked with three developers and had conversations with two others about possible projects in town, she told selectmen.

"Each of them walked away," she said, citing reasons ranging from poor access roads to a sense that the community is not business-friendly.

It's that kind of track record that opens up a town to the possibility of an affordable housing development, according to Dickerson. A developer proposing an affordable housing complex can appeal any rejection to the superior court, where presumptions are in favor of the development.

The affordable housing state statute, commonly known as 8-30g, makes it possible for developers to build a high number of apartments for which they might not otherwise get approval – but only if less than 10 percent of the housing stock in town is "affordable."

A unit is affordable when those residing in it don't spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent or mortgage payments.

A developer must ensure, via deed restrictions, that at least 30 percent of the units are affordable to households bringing in 80 percent of the median income or less. In Portland, that equates to a maximum of \$56,000 per year.

Dickerson said a developer looking at building affordable housing on a property the size of the Elmcrest site would likely present a plan for about 400 housing units.

That's more units than in Bertram's proposal, with no commercial component and no guarantees that the property's three most historic homes would be saved.

In the end, entreaties by First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield to ensure Bertram understood "how important this is to us" and how committed she was to remaining competitive in the realm of economic development were not enough to keep the developer at the table.

He left with members of his family and property owner Fred Hassan, who Bertram has said is like an uncle to him.

Bertram had no comment outside the meeting room. He had stated publicly at a previous meeting that he would be passing along the name of an affordable housing developer to Hassan if his own plan fell through.

Hassan was vague when asked how he'd be proceeding.

"On to the next thing," he said. "Stay tuned."

57 Fest cont. from Front Page

will also be hay rides and a "Touch a Truck" demonstration, which will feature town construction equipment, a SWAT vehicle, a state police roll over machine, and a canine demonstration from 4-7 p.m.

"We've [also] requested for the LifeStar helicopter to land at 5 p.m.," Preston said. "It's very exciting to have a helicopter land on the R3 field."

Children will also have a variety of other fun activities to choose from, including a rock-climbing wall, a bounce house, a laser tag course and remote control car racing on the Midway. There will also be an inflated obstacle course, where kids will have to climb to the top of a 15-foot-tall wall and slide down an inflated slide to the bottom.

Once attendees work up an appetite, they can head to the food court area where they'll find everything from Uncle D's Blazin' BBQ ribs, chicken and pulled pork sandwiches to Greekin' Out's chicken and pork gyros with Greek fries. Seafood lovers can stop by Szabo's Seafood for lobster rolls or lobster mac and cheese, and Celiac Epicurean offers up tasty gluten-free treats, like hamburgers, chicken sandwiches and truffle fries. Those with a sweet tooth will also be satisfied with a variety of dessert options, including Sugar Bakery's gourmet cupcakes, New England Soft Serve ice cream and sundaes, and Ben and Jerry's.

It wouldn't be a festival without live entertainment – and starting at 4 p.m. attendees can look forward to performances by several local dance groups on the main stage, as well as a new band this year, In Deep, who will perform from 6 to 8 p.m.

"In Deep is one of Southern New England's leading classic rock bands, covering the wide range of musical artists, both past and present, with many of the band members residing here in Colchester," Preston said, adding the band is known for their powerful sound and high-energy sets.

On the Midway, Preston said guests can capture their memories in the 57 Fest Photo Booth, and at 8 p.m., the skies over the Recreation Complex will be lit up with the "Fire in the Sky!" fireworks display show, produced by Zambelli Fireworks.

Due to the high volume of foot traffic, Preston said the town has also developed a plan to ensure an easy, safe and convenient way to get to and from the complex during the festival.

"Parking is tight up at the RecPlex, so we have a shuttle service that is quick and easy," said Preston. "With the large turnout expected for the event, the town has developed a parking and transportation plan to ensure all attendees have convenient and safe places to park for the festival."

According to Preston, attendees are encouraged to park in designated shuttle lots, which will be served by a free, "continuously looping" shuttle service throughout the day and continuing until "well after the completion of the fireworks."

"The festival is important because it is very beneficial when a town gets on these kinds of 'Top Town' lists," Preston said. "It shows we have an above-average quality of life here in Colchester and that attracts more residents and businesses, which makes the community greater in the long run."



The band In Deep, a classic rock cover band, will put on a high-energy show at the festival, from 6-8 p.m. on the main stage.

Preston added she is "particularly proud of my staff in Parks and Recreation, as summer is our busiest season with camps, programs and concerts, and summer festivals, and somehow, we pull this great event together."

The shuttle lots will be at Jack Jackter Intermediate School, 215 Halls Hill Rd., and, starting at 5 p.m., at St. Andrew Church, 128 Nor-

wich Ave. Limited parking will be available at the Recreation Complex, with handicapped parking in the "north lot" of the complex. Street parking will be available along one side of the street on both Old Hebron and Stollman roads. Parking will also be available along Old Hartford Road, including the commuter lot by the Colchester Highway Department.

RHAM Students Do Well on Standardized Tests

by Geeta S. Sandberg

RHAM middle and high school students once again did well on their standardized tests, the Board of Education learned at its meeting Monday.

The Board of Education was provided with an assessment update by Lauren Fierman, director of curriculum, instruction and assessment.

“We’re very happy with the performance of both our high school and middle school students,” Fierman stated. “Our scores reflect our having outperformed the state and the nation both by a wide margin.”

Of the SATs administered in March, 62 percent of RHAM high school students met the benchmark of 1010 for a total score; the College Board said meeting this benchmark means a student has a 75 percent chance of receiving a grade of C or better in a content-related first-semester college course.

That 62 percent is much higher than the state and national averages – 37 and 29 percent, respectively – of students meeting that benchmark.

Fierman added Region 8 students also outperformed those in surrounding districts on the

SATs including Bolton, Coventry, Lebanon and E.O. Smith.

“While everybody has respectable scores, we’re very pleased with how our students performed,” she stated.

In the middle school, students took Smarter Balanced English language arts and math tests and once again, students “outperformed the state by a wide margin.”

In grade seven, 71.4 percent of students scored proficient or exemplary in English language arts compared to 55.2 percent of students across the state. Meanwhile, 70.8 percent of grade eight students scored proficient or exemplary compared to 55.5 percent across the state.

As for math, 55.7 percent of students in grade seven and 62.1 percent of students in grade eight scored proficient or above, compared to 41.8 percent of seventh grade and 40.4 percent of eighth grade students across the state.

Although the state adopted Next Generation Science Standards a year ago and the district has already altered their curriculum accordingly, Fierman explained the state continues to mandate students take CMT and CAPT science

tests in grades eight and 10.

“That’s the only test that remains from the CMT and CAPT,” she stated. “So while our scores are good that means they’re good because we’re teaching students appropriate thinking skills; but the standards we’re teaching toward are different than the specifics that are on this test.”

At RHAM, 75.1 percent of students who took the CMT science test scored at or above goal, compared to 60.2 percent across the state; meanwhile, 68.3 percent of students who took the CAPT science test scored at or above goal, compared to 47.3 percent of students across the state.

Results of the 322 advanced placement exams administered in the high school were also shared, of which 95 percent of students scored a three or higher.

“We’re proud of our scores,” Fierman shared. “We’ve done very well. We are a high-performing school and we like to stress that we do that while spending near the bottom of the state in per pupil expenditure, so the area townspeople are getting a lot of bang for their buck.”

Fierman added of the scores, “It’s a lot of numbers which ultimately are only useful to us if we can take them to say what we are doing well and how do we make improvement. So they’re important not only for bragging rights – we appreciate that the numbers are excellent and show the strong performance of teachers and students – but we always want to do better, so we strive to do so next time.”

* * *

Also Monday, at a district meeting held prior to the Board of Education meeting, residents voted in favor of using surplus funds from the 2014-15 fiscal year to purchase a scoreboard for the athletic fields.

The Board of Education recommended appropriating \$13,004 from the surplus to the reserve fund for capital and non-recurring expenditures for the purchase.

Those in attendance voted in favor 43-3.

* * *

The next RHAM Board of Education meeting is scheduled for Monday, Oct. 17, at 6:30 p.m. in the chorus room at the high school, 85 Wall St.

Bifurcation Highlights Proposed Charter Changes for East Hampton

by Elizabeth Regan

For just the fourth time in more than 40 years, the Town Council has endorsed changes to the town charter that will ultimately be up to voters to decide.

The council earlier this month sent the series of changes recommended by the Charter Revision Commission to referendum. The five questions will be on the back of the general election ballot on Nov. 8, according to Registrar of Voters Jodi Brazal.

Residents registered to vote in East Hampton will be able to weigh in on the proposed changes to the charter. Because it is not a matter of authorizing an expenditure, those who pay taxes in town but do not live there will not be able to vote, Brazal said.

The charter is the town’s foundational document, outlining the roles and responsibilities of elected and appointed officials and providing the framework for how government operates.

The changes proposed by the Charter Revision Commission and endorsed by the Town Council would affect how taxpayers vote on budgets, who fills vacancies to elected offices, and when officials are sworn into office, among other issues.

The most contentious of the proposed revisions this time around involves bifurcation of the annual town budget. Currently, voters either approve or reject a budget that includes general government, education, debt service and capital expenses. Bifurcating the budget means voters would see two questions on the ballot: one amount for general government and a separate amount for education.

Members of the Charter Revision Commission said they recommended bifurcating the budget as a way to provide more transparency for voters by letting them know how much money is going toward general government expenses and how much is going toward the school system.

Critics argue that bifurcation creates an “us versus them” mentality between the town and the Board of Education.

The Charter Revision Commission, which disbanded once the Town Council sent its recommendations to referendum, was chaired by Town Council member Melissa Engel. She was joined by fellow councilor Pete Brown as well

as residents Lori Lanzi (the commission’s vice chairwoman), Diane Achenbach-Zatorski, Rolland Jackson, Anne McKinney and Michael Rose.

The commission had a March visit from Colchester Board of Education Chairman Ronald Goldstein, an attorney by profession, to explain how bifurcation works in that town.

Goldstein told East Hampton’s Charter Revision Commission members he did not feel there was a backlash against the education budget from seniors or people that don’t have children in the school system, meeting minutes said.

According to the meeting minutes, Goldstein said the Colchester boards of selectmen, finance and education present the proposed budget as a unified group in front of various audiences around town, including seniors, members of the business community and volunteer organizations.

“He stated that this works because the groups work well together,” the minutes said.

Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith said Monday he’s seen budgets handled both ways. In Griswold, where he served as superintendent before coming to East Hampton, the budget was bifurcated. In Bolton, where he took his first job as superintendent, it was not.

He said his concern about bifurcation is that people start to think “if we give this to the schools, we’re taking away from the town.”

In the 2015-16 approved budget, as outlined in the Board of Finance’s Citizen’s Guide the Budget, education comprised 70 percent of that year’s budget, while town operations made up 24 percent. Debt service and operating transfers, or capital expenses, both came in at 3 percent of the budget.

There is no mechanism in the language approved by the Charter Revision Commission and the Town Council to clarify how debt service and capital expenses would be divvied up among the town operations and education budgets on the ballot.

Some residents have expressed concern about the lack of specificity, fearing it leaves the council too much room to manipulate the process. Concerns have been voiced at multiple public hearings and meetings of the Town Council during which the charter revisions were dis-

cussed.

The Town Council is empowered by charter to make any changes to the finance board-approved annual budget proposal, barring an increase, and then send it on to town meeting. The council can also send the budget proposal back to the finance board for further consideration.

The council is also empowered to enact, amend or repeal ordinances, which are local laws.

According to resident Kurt Comiskey, who spoke during the public comment period of the council’s Sept. 8 meeting, the council – in the absence of specific charter language to the contrary – has the ultimate say where debt and capital expenditures show up in a bifurcated budget.

“Say we wanted the education budget to pass,” Comiskey said, using the hypothetical “we” to refer to the Town Council. “We could strip out the debt. We could strip out a lot of the questionable expenses to make it look like ‘education, well that’s not much money.’”

What was left unsaid was that the council could employ the same process to strip debt from the town operations side to make that budget look leaner.

But Engel said that “even if someone were to be silly enough to play that game,” the detailed budget fully explains the bottom-line figures that go to voters on the referendum ballot.

“As our budget exists today, it still has to be itemized,” she said. “It doesn’t really matter what house you put it under. It’s still going to say ‘high school renovation debt.’ It’s still going to say ‘road improvement projects.’ It’s still going to say ‘new hire at the pd.’ It’s still going to say ‘three new teachers.’ Those line items don’t disappear. They’re there.”

It was a conscious decision by the Charter Revision Commission not to include a provision for where debt and capital expenses would be applied, according to Engel.

“We left it less specific on purpose because there might be occasion when something that might seem to be more of an education responsibility should really fall under a town government side of the house and vice versa,” she said.

As an example, she said a council may de-

side that high school debt should be applied to the town operations side of the budget.

“I don’t know why they would, but they might. And so now they have the ability to do that because we have not specified [that they can’t],” Engel said.

Smith on Monday explained exactly why he believes the high school renovation debt should be applied to the town operation side of the budget.

“The town owns those buildings,” he said. “The Board of Education does not own those buildings. The board does not enter into debt agreements. The town enters into debt agreements. Debt is a responsibility of the town.”

Smith expressed shock about first hearing discussion at a meeting of the Charter Revision Commission when members talked about the possibility of applying school-related debt on the education side of the bifurcated budget. That’s simply not how it’s done, he said.

The town has just begun paying off its debt for the \$51 million high school renovation project. Construction is about 80 percent complete, according to officials. The renovation debt accounts for 1.44 mills of the 1.66 mill increase to the mill rate in the 2016-17 budget approved in June.

A review of Colchester’s town charter revealed a specific requirement that debt and capital expenditure budgets be included under the general government question on the referendum ballot.

Councilor Kevin Reich, a Democrat, said at the Sept. 8 meeting that perhaps town ordinance should be changed to clarify where debt appears on a bifurcated budget ballot.

“It shouldn’t be up to the whim of the council as to how it’s going to be,” he said.

Maniscalco said the charter revision, should it be approved, would automatically require an update of at least one existing ordinance to avoid any conflicts between the municipal code and the charter. He said his cursory reading revealed an ordinance related to the budget process specifies that the town manager presents one proposed budget to the finance board, while the proposed charter revision states the town manager and the superintendent of schools will each present their respective budgets.

Portland Police Get a Dog

by Elizabeth Regan

They call him Nero.

He's a 13-month-old German Shepherd in line to become the Portland Police Department's newest officer.

The name comes from the Latin word for "strong" and "vigorous." Its meaning in Italian – "black" or "dark" – reflects his sable coat.

"He's a good, hard worker. He's a strong dog," Sgt. James Kelly said Tuesday.

Kelly, a 22-year veteran of the force, will be Nero's partner on the force and his full-time caretaker. He welcomed Nero into his home last week and has been working with the puppy on basic obedience commands under the guidance of the non-profit North American Police Work Dog Association.

"He goes everywhere with me," Kelly said.

Nero will be fully-trained and certified for patrol duties and narcotics detection through the organization over the next several months. He will learn how to detect the presence of drugs, track fleeing suspects, locate missing people, search buildings or property, and take down dangerous criminals while protecting his partner.

Costs to purchase, train and equip the dog are estimated at \$15,000, according to Kelly.

While Lt. Ron Milardo said the money was paid up front by the Portland Police Union, the department has embarked upon a crowdsourcing effort to reimburse the union.

The "Portland CT Police Dept. K9 Unit" page on Gofundme.com brought in \$2,575 in its first week. Additional donations have been delivered to the police station the old fashioned way.

According to the police union contract, the town is responsible for providing equipment, training, food and veterinary care for the canine program.

Previous budgets have allocated about \$1,000 annually for the canine program.

Milardo said the modest figure is the result of a tremendous amount of longstanding community support for the 25-year old canine program – like veterinary care provided for free by Pieper-Olson Veterinary Hospital in

Middletown.

"They have been with us from day one, when we started this program," he said. "They've been very instrumental in making this program work."

The department also avoids some equipment expenses because much of the necessary gear has been passed down from handler to handler, Milardo said.

Ongoing training and recertification expenses for the police canine are absorbed in those sections of the budget devoted to officer training, he explained.

A look at the current year's budget, for example, showed there is \$6,000 set aside for conferences, meetings and dues while \$3,500 is reserved for examination services.

To help compensate for the obligations of caring for the dog at home, the police union contract also authorizes the canine handler to work a half hour less per day on his regular schedule and a half hour less per shift on an overtime schedule while being paid for a full shift.

Milardo credited First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield and a long line of selectmen with having supported the police canine program.

"They believe a canine is important in law enforcement, so we get their support," he said.

According to Bransfield, the value of a police canine "far outweighs the cost."

She said she got to see Nero on a recent visit to Town Hall as Kelly worked to socialize the newest recruit.

"He seemed to be very adaptable and a great addition to our police department," she observed.

Bransfield said she is not aware of any requirement for selectmen to formally authorize the purchase of a new dog.

The department has had several police canines since the program began. Most recently, the German Shepherd Jesse worked alongside Officer Peter Paranzino, who retired late last year.

The town has since relied on other towns with police canines when the need for their specialized services arose, Milardo said.



Meet Nero, a 13-month-old German Shepherd in line to become Portland's newest police officer. He's shown with his partner and full-time caretaker, Sgt. James Kelly.

With Nero, the force won't have to look outside its borders to better serve the residents of Portland.

"[Police canines] are an asset. You'd be surprised how many times you use them. The ability these dogs have is remarkable," Milardo said.

While they've only known each other for a few days, Kelly can already tell the partnership with Nero is working. He credited breeder Erich Grasso of the Fairfield County-based Grasso Shepherds with forging the connection.

"They don't just stick any dog with any police officer, or vice versa," Kelly said. "There

were a few meetings first to get to know me. I explained what type of town I work for, the community I live in, and what type of dog we were looking for. They do a good job of matching dogs with the police officers."

Donations may be made payable to "Portland Police Department/K9 Fund," and mailed to Portland Police, 265 Main St., Portland, CT 06480. Donations can also be made at gofundme.com/2xfuex5.

For more information about the fundraiser or the canine program, call Kelly at 860-342-6780 ext. 1303.

Colchester Charter Embarks on Revision Process

by Julianna Roche

The Charter Revision Commission (CRC) has begun drafting potential changes to the town charter, in the hope of getting the proposed revisions onto the ballot for the 2017 municipal elections.

And while everything's very preliminary at this point, commission members are considering proposing, among other changes, eliminating the town treasurer position, and making certain town positions appointed rather than elected.

"The last time [charter revision] was done was 2006," commission chair Gregg LePage said, noting that state statute says towns must revisit their charters at least once every 10 years, though they have the option to do so every year if they wanted.

The charter is the town's foundational document, outlining the roles and responsibilities of elected and appointed officials and providing the framework for how government operates.

According to LePage, a Charter Review Commission was established in 2014 and initially met for about a year with the goal of reviewing the current town charter thoroughly word for word and discussing possible recommendations. This past April, the commission expanded from five to seven members and became the CRC. Since, LePage says they have been going through the charter even more in depth and discussing potential revisions.

"What we're doing is coming up with actual changes that would be in the 2017 election," he said. "We're trying to finalize the questions that we want to bring forth."

LePage said the proposed changes would likely be broken into five or six questions to be

put on the ballot, rather than voted on in an all-or-nothing manner. He said the commission hopes to have everything finalized and submitted to the Board of Selectmen for review by June 2017, so the town "can have some kind of public forum [before the election] and get feedback."

One major change CRC members have discussed, LePage said, is potentially establishing one set term length which would be a standard for any of the town's elected positions.

"We have elected boards and elected positions right now where their terms are all different [lengths]," he said. "Some are two years, some are four, some are six... one item we've really been considering is having a standard number of years that members are on a certain board."

Additionally, LePage noted that the commission has discussed turning both the town clerk and tax collector positions from elected positions into appointed ones.

"There are a couple benefits with this," he explained. For starters, he said, "there would be a wider pool of candidates to select from... Right now, we're limited to someone who lives in the town of Colchester."

Another advantage, LePage said, "would be that there could be qualifications that would be necessary for the position... and along the same lines, there would be calls for removal of appointed positions, because with elected positions, there's not a real way of removing someone."

The commission has also discussed eliminating the town treasurer position completely.

"A lot of the duties of the treasurer are very

redundant of the chief financial officer's... The treasurer is really more of an oversight role," said LePage, a former town treasurer himself.

The treasurer is a paid position, with a current annual salary of \$4,500. "So there would be a small savings to the town" were the position cut, LePage said.

But a lot of the charter revision process includes smaller, technical changes that are just as important as the bigger ones. Among these is removing Article IX, which deals with the Police Commission and the Sewer and Water Commission. By doing this, the town can make small changes to the commissions – such as modifying the number of members – at any time, by taking it to town meeting, rather than waiting for a charter revision process. Board of Selectmen member Rosemary Coyle, the board's liaison to the CRC, said this switch would make sense for "practicality purposes."

At last week's Board of Selectmen meeting, Coyle shared that, when the CRC met Sept. 14, another issue it discussed was whether the Board of Selectmen should have the flexibility to set different times for referendums. She said the commission talked about last week's referendum regarding the town's purchase of the Colchester Senior Center and the lack of voter turnout.

With the added flexibility, Coyle said, the commission noted that the Board of Selectmen might have chosen to set referendums at different times, such as from 8 a.m.-8 p.m. or 10 a.m.-8 p.m., instead of the standard 6 a.m.-8 p.m. time period.

"This would save the town some money, was one of the reasons that [CRC members] cited,"

Coyle said.

Coyle noted, "State statute allows towns to set different times for referendums – not general elections." She said the concept "is something maybe we should discuss and get back to them."

First Selectman Art Shilosky agreed, and added that, at the Sept. 13 senior center referendum, from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m., only "about two people" showed up to vote.

Although the charter revision process is just beginning, LePage stressed the importance of the community getting involved with it even this early on, by attending their meetings which are open to the public.

"I think we've had maybe one member of the public [at our meetings], other than the first selectman," he said. "For me, the biggest thing that the town has [with its form of government] is its town meetings; it's how people get involved."

LePage said he wants people to understand "the charter is like [the town's] constitution, and really is the outline of how the town is operated, so it's really important that people understand any changes that will be made and how they're really going to impact the efficiency and the effectiveness of the town."

The Charter Revision Commission's next meeting is Wednesday, Sept. 28, at 7 p.m. in Town Hall. The commission holds meetings on the second and fourth Wednesdays of every month, which are open to the public. For more information, email charterreview@colchesterct.gov.

Fundraiser for Injured Colchester Fire Police Member

by Julianna Roche

Jeff Tucker never took sick days. As a working family man, member of the Colchester Hayward Volunteer Fire Department (CHVFD) and president of the Connecticut Fire Police Association, he knew how to stay busy.

On April 12, however, Jeff was involved in a life-altering accident while driving a tractor trailer for work late at night. According to his 25-year-old daughter Jessica, he began feeling nauseous and dizzy about an hour into the drive.

“Feeling like he was going to pass out, he did the best he could to get over to the side of the road, but while trying to pull over, he hit an exit sign and a concrete barrier, which the semi ended up driving up on,” she said. “Doctors said it was a miracle he survived.”

Five months later, Jeff’s conditions have improved, Jessica said, but doctors are still unsure if he will make a full recovery, and he still suffers from vertigo, extreme dizziness, eye twitches, severe migraines and a severely-injured knee, which has prevented him from working, volunteering as a firefighter, and even doing things he loves without pain – like riding his scooter or spending time outside with the family.

“The poor guy tries to talk and he’s trying to wrap his head around everything [that’s happening],” Jessica said. “It’s just really hard.”

With Jeff out of work, Jessica said it’s been difficult for the family to pay for his medical expenses and bills, as well as for her stay-at-home mom Ruthanne, who in addition to caring for Jeff, is also responsible for her autistic son, Jake.

On Saturday, Oct. 1, from 4 to 7 p.m., Jeff’s coworkers at the CHVFD will host a town-wide benefit dinner and fundraiser at the fire headquarters, 52 Old Hartford Rd., from 4 to 7 p.m. Tickets are \$10, and dinner includes pasta and meatballs, salad, bread, and a dessert. All proceeds will go directly to assist with Jeff’s medical expenses and bills.

“I’m really hoping that a lot of people show up,” Jessica said. “My dad has volunteered for the fire department for over 20 years. ... He is the kind of guy who puts everyone first, and he’s always caring and willing to help others.”

And now, she added, she hopes townspeople will do the same for him.

Tickets for the benefit dinner are available by calling CHVFD at 860-537-2512, and will also be available at the door.



The Colchester Hayward Volunteer Fire Department is hosting a town-wide benefit dinner for 20-year veteran volunteer firefighter Jeff Tucker, who was severely injured in a traffic accident in April. Pictured from left are Jeff Tucker and sons, Jake Tucker and John Church, and daughter Jessica Tucker in back.

Architects Introduce Plans, Specs for WJJMS in Colchester

by Julianna Roche

With the third phase of the \$48.66 million William J. Johnston Middle School renovation project approved and underway, details regarding what its interior specs may look like have been piquing the town’s interest.

At the Sept. 15 Board of Selectmen meeting, the project’s architectural firm, Tecton Architects, gave a detailed presentation on some of those features.

“Earlier this week [the Board of Education] did approve the plans and specs for the project, so that’s going to approve the next step on the timeline for the building,” said School Building Committee Chairman Thomas Tyler, adding that the selectmen do not actually vote and approve the plans and specs; rather the state requires the Board of Education and the Building Committee’s approval.

Jeff Wyszynski, principal at Tecton Architects, led the presentation, running through a series of renderings and floor plans for the school’s renovations as well as the new two-story addition to the building.

One area the team focused on was the drop-off and parking areas, Wyszynski said, where they added two exits and one entrance “to alleviate some of the traffic concerns that exist to-

day.”

Other improvements to be made to the building, he said, will be new sidewalks, landscaping and sitting areas, as well as the reworking of two new playgrounds on the left and right side of the building.

Wyszynski added that many portions of the original WJJMS building will be renovated, including the original gymnasium, lockers, toilets, and kitchen areas. Additionally, he said the administration and guidance offices will be moved to the front of the building “to meet today’s school safety and security standards and guidelines,” with added visibility out to the parking lot so administrators can see oncoming visitors.

During the presentation, a stacked floor plan was also introduced, which includes “pods” for the sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade classes. According to Wyszynski, each pod will have typical classrooms, toilets, and storage space for teachers. There will also be a multipurpose room, which he said can be used for lectures.

Tecton’s lead mechanical engineer, Derek Bride, followed Wyszynski with a brief explanation of some of the building’s mechanics, including its fire protection and lighting aspects.

“There’s really nothing fancy about fire protection, but it is very critical to the function of the facility,” said Bride, adding that the new building will have sprinkler heads in every space of the facility, as per National Fire Protection Association regulations.

“One of the things we [also] wanted to do was look at this in the long term and make sure that it’s something that’s going to be good for the facility for decades to come and energy-efficiency costs are going to stay low,” Bride added. “We came up with a good solution.”

Bride went on to explain there will be an updated energy-efficient lighting system throughout the building, which will include 100 percent LED lighting.

“You’re going to see a dramatic increase in the quality of light within the space,” he said, adding that lights throughout the new building will have occupancy sensors, which can sense whether or not there are people present in the room.

“So when you leave a classroom, they will shut off,” Bride explained.

The new lighting system will also have daylight sensors installed, which will sense the amount of light in the room at any given time

and then shift accordingly to give “even light throughout the space.” For example, he said, if sunlight filled only a certain portion of the classroom, some of the lights would dim, while others would completely shut off.

Another main focus of the plan, Bride added, was incorporating technology into all of the classrooms.

“With technology being an ever changing part of schools, we worked with principals and staff to make sure we had everything in there for them,” he said, including wireless access points, data drops, cables and fiber connections. “We put the backbone there for the facility, so you have everything there moving forward.”

As the presentation concluded, Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein, who was also present at the meeting, asked the boards of selectmen and education to join him in thanking the Tecton Architects team for a job well done, saying he thanked “the building committee and design team for what they’ve done. This is an extremely complicated project from demolition, renovation, to new construction – all wrapped in one, with a tight budget. ... They’ve done an extraordinary job to get to this phase.”

East Hampton Man Dies in Portland Crash

by Elizabeth Regan

An East Hampton man died after his motorcycle collided with a car on Route 66 in Portland Sunday afternoon.

Donald Smith, 34, was riding a 2015 Suzuki GSX-R600 eastbound near the intersection of Portland-Cobalt and Sand Hill roads around 12:53 p.m. when he collided with a 1991 Geo Prism coming out of a private driveway, according to the Portland Po-

lice Department.

The driver of the car, Pamela Tracy of Portland, was not injured, police said.

Smith was airlifted to Hartford Hospital, where he died the next day.

The investigation is ongoing. Anyone with information is asked to contact Officer Paul Liseo at 860-342-6780.

Portland Police News

9/3: Jacqueline Buchard, 22, of 1503 Portland Cobalt Rd., was charged with reckless driving, Portland Police said.

9/12: Patrick Turner, 19, of 165 South Main St., Middletown, was charged with third-degree assault and two counts of interfering/assault on a police officer, police said.

9/16: Daniel Winslow, 41, of 35 Plainfield Rd., Moosup, was charged with third-degree larceny, police said.

9/17: Elizabeth Lozada, 39, of 26 Franklin St., East Hartford, was charged with driving under the influence, police said.

9/18: Gregory Young, 59, of 326 Main St., Apt. 1, was charged with violation of protective order, police said.

9/19: Tammy Moreau, 46, of 177 Young St., Unit A, East Hampton, was charged with second-degree harassment and violation of civil protective order, police said.

Colchester Police News

9/13: State Police said Evelyn Velazquez, 54, of 223 W. Main St., Hebron turned herself in and was charged with first-degree failure to appear.

9/13: State Police said Tanisha M. Galarza, 24, of 117 Cameo Dr., Willimantic, was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear.

9/14: Colchester Police said Joseph Moran, 20, 77 Chestnut St. #2, Middletown, was arrested and charged with illegally operating a motor vehicle under suspension, failure to have head lamps, possession with intent to sell/dispense, and illegal possession of a narcotic.

9/15: Colchester Police said Monica Piette, 32, of 164 Norwich Ave., was arrested and charged with evasion of responsibility in oper-

ating a motor vehicle, operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol, failure to drive at a reasonable distance, possession of a narcotic outside its original container, and possession of a controlled substance.

9/15: Colchester Police said Joey Mestre, 31, of 409 Wethersfield Ave. Apt. #1, Hartford, was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle with a suspended registration/license, operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol, and failure to drive in the proper lane of a multiple lane highway.

9/16: State Police said Preston D. Roane, 29, of 115 Ridgefield St., Hartford, was arrested and charged with second degree failure to appear for an outstanding PRAWN warrant.

Marlborough Police News

9/13: State Police said Cody M. Houston, 19, of 59 Cannon Dr., Amston, was arrested and charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, first degree possession of less than half an ounce of cannabis, simple trespass, second-degree criminal mischief and breach of peace.

9/16: State Police said they were dispatched to a residence on East Hampton Road to investigate an alarm/attempted burglary around 2 p.m. There is no known suspect/vehicle at this time, police said. Anyone with information can contact Troop K at 860-465-5400.

Hebron Police News

9/17: State Police said Ryan Ladd, 28, of 73 Old Colchester Rd., Amston, was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and third-degree assault.

East Hampton Police News

9/15: Daniel D. Winslow, 41, of 9 Elaine Dr., Moodus, was arrested and charged with third-degree larceny, East Hampton Police said. During the same incident, Winslow was arrested and charged with first-degree failure to appear and second-degree failure to appear, stemming from two active warrants for his arrest, police added.

9/16: Christine Parker, 47, of 12 Hayes Rd., was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct, criminal violation of a protective order and threatenin

WWII Cannon Finds New Home in Andover

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Amid sunshine and blue skies dotted with clouds, Andover residents and local and state officials gathered last weekend for the dedication of a World War II cannon that will now call Andover “home.”

The dedication took place Saturday, Sept. 17, at Veterans Memorial Park; the cannon and accompanying plaque stood shrouded in black cloth while a ceremony including speakers, prayers, music, and a musket and cannon salute took place as residents looked on.

The field cannon’s journey to Andover started when the weapon was taken from Japanese troops during the war by Tech. Sgt. “Duke” Baldwin of the 169th Regiment, 43rd division; Baldwin dismantled the cannon, packed it in a crate and had the Navy ship it to the United States, where it ended up at the home of Company Commander Capt. George Elliot in Manchester.

The cannon was then donated to Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2046 on East Center Street where it sat on the lawn since 1945. Earlier this year, however, the post closed due to declining membership and mounting bills.

But what would happen to the cannon? That was the question asked by retired Army First Sergeant and Andover resident Gerry Wright who drove by the closing post one day and noticed it. Indeed, it was also Wright who, since the sign for Veterans Memorial Park was unveiled in 2011, felt the town’s park was in need of a monument – and the 37mm anti-tank gun fit the bill.

Wright made the necessary inquiries, was put in contact with the United States Department of Defense Army Donations Program office, and worked out the logistics of acquiring the cannon for Andover. The cannon was relocated to Wright’s house in May, and since that time around \$5,000 has been raised from 50 donors who were thanked during the ceremony, and work has been done to restore the cannon, pour the concrete slab on which it now rests, and install an accompanying plaque. The cannon is property of the United States Department of Defense, but Andover is now considered custodian of the weapon.

As the ceremony got underway Saturday, the Rev. Mike Donnelly offered the invocation, saying, “It’s sobering how this whole icon of war is now a symbol of hard won peace and as such, is now among us here, hopefully for a long time to come.”

During the opening remarks that followed, Wright expressed a bit of disbelief that the cannon had actually made its way to town, sharing, “When we started the process a few years ago to bring a cannon to Andover, I never thought that it would actually happen, because there’s a waiting list of 10 years.”

But happen it did. And while those who spoke did so in appreciation of the cannon, they also honored Wright for his efforts.

First Selectman Bob Burbank called Wright “dedicated” and said, “I’m so proud of having special residents like Gerry as part of our town. I think it’s a fitting tribute that we have a cannon to symbolize the risks, dangers and daily things the veterans had to go through, constantly being under fire and day to day never knowing when an attack might come.”

He concluded, “Special thanks to all the veterans and all the people who served the community, and all the contributors to the veterans cannon fund.”

Congressman Joe Courtney was also present Saturday, and called it “quite a feat” bringing the cannon to town “to make sure this incredibly important war memorial is going to be here for generations to come.”

“It’s getting harder and harder to preserve these for future generations – this is a tremendous gift,” he said.

Courtney also spoke in appreciation of Wright’s efforts, calling them “unabashed, enthusiastic, and tireless” before presenting him a plaque for that work.

“It’s not easy,” he added of procuring war memorabilia such as the cannon. “There are not a lot of these left that are out there, but Gerry just never gave up and when the opportunity struck in Manchester, it’s just a great story to hear about how this all came together and the efforts of everyone involved.”

Sean Connolly, commissioner of the Department of Veterans Affairs, also expressed grati-



Members of Andover Boy Scout Troop and Cub Scout Pack 124 look on at the newly-unveiled World War II cannon installed at Veterans Memorial Park during a dedication ceremony last Saturday, Sept. 17, as smoke from the musket salute fills the air.

tude to Wright for his efforts.

“I want to thank Gerry Wright for all the tremendous work in getting this cannon, in restoring this cannon and preserving this cannon as a symbol of the great service and great legacy that our World War II vets, our veterans from Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Iraq, Afghanistan, and all those who serve have built upon of selfless service and sacrifice, courage and devotion to duty.”

State Rep. Gayle Mulligan was also present at the ceremony, and shared this week, “It was a perfect day and a great example of what can be done when people come together for a common cause.”

She called the event “a humbling ceremony and recognition of our World War II veterans

and all who serve our country so bravely.”

The cannon was unveiled following the remarks Saturday, as everyone looked on while Andover Elementary School music teacher Matthew Piros sang the songs of the five branches of the military.

Smoke then filled the air from the musket salute, followed by the thunderous echo of a nearby cannon. The sound of taps played by Frank Tamburro, and “Amazing Grace” by Tim Fogarty on bagpipe closed out the ceremony, after which those present wandered around the park, looking over the new installment which, as the plaque beside the cannon states, “remains as a reminder of a long, hard-fought war and a successful conquest.”

Andover Teachers Receive 1.23 Percent Raise

by Geeta S. Sandberg

The Board of Education last week voted unanimously to approve a four-year teachers’ contract that will give teachers a 1.23 percent raise each year of the agreement, amounting to a \$252,234 increase over the length of the contract.

Exactly what the raise will equate to will be different for each teacher depending on their step, which is determined by their education and the length of time they’ve been teaching. A teacher with a master’s degree on step four, for example, will receive \$55,834 during the first year of the contract, while a teacher with a master’s degree on the eighth step – which Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen shared is a majority of the 26.4 individuals who make up the certified staff bargaining unit – will earn \$66,449 in the contract’s debut year.

Doyen explained the document this week,

sharing the length of the contract was one of the changes.

“Everyone was on the same schedule so this particular summer we had three groups to negotiate with and it was really just way too much, so the intent was to stagger things,” she explained.

Along with certified staff, the non-certified staff contract is currently still in the works, and the board also had to work on the contract for the administrative unit, which is made up of the principal and assistant principal.

In addition, Doyen said the certified bargaining group accepted a change over to a high-deductible health insurance plan which she described as “more affordable plans for the Board of Education as well as for the employees, so we were happy to get that for the whole group.”

Doyen stated the contract also contained

some language changes, as well as some new dates teachers would have to abide by for notifying the board about upcoming retirements or receiving new degrees to help with the budget process.

“It had been set up so that they really didn’t need to notify the board of next year’s plans until it was too late to include in the budget,” she explained. “It doesn’t seem important but it is; it prohibits those last-minute surprise changes that might have a big impact on the budget that we didn’t predict.”

Doyen said the contract also included language that was “hopefully” clearer regarding the Family Medical Leave Act “so that everyone understands the relationship of their benefits to the FMLA which is confusing.”

Speaking to the overall process, Doyen stated, “We had good discussions about a lot of

things. I thought, being new, that it was very productive. It was helpful to me to interact and have discussion with the teachers on many different issues.”

Board of Education Chairwoman Shannon Loudon said the board was also pleased with the results, sharing this week, “We appreciate [the bargaining unit] going to the four years, and their reasonableness in negotiating a fair contract. We greatly appreciate their work and commitment to our students, and the Board of Education believes that the increases in this contract are an indication of that gratitude.”

The next Andover Board of Education meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Oct. 12 at 7 p.m. in the Andover Elementary School library, 35 School Rd.

Vehicle Rollover on Route 2 in Colchester

by Julianna Roche

A rollover on Route 2 last week sent three to the hospital, State Police said.

Police said they were called to a one-vehicle accident on Route 2, near Exit 20, at about 3:15 p.m. Sept. 13. According to police, a Ford Focus driven by Lakisha Nunez, 18, of 12 Garfield Ave., Norwich, was traveling westbound on Route 2 in the left lane of two lanes. Two passengers – Miaceli M. Ortiz, 18, of 6 E. Baltic St. Apt. D, Norwich, and Ashley M. Garcia, 17, of 142 Washington St., Norwich – were also in the vehicle, police said.

According to police, just west of Exit 20,

the Ford suddenly went off the roadway onto the grassy shoulder of the road and up the embankment, where it spun around, struck a tree on its passenger side, and rolled over.

Both the driver and passengers were transported by Colchester Fire Department to Backus Hospital for suspected minor injuries, police said. The vehicle was totaled as a result of the accident and was towed from the scene.

According to police, Nunez was found to be at fault for the crash and was issued an infraction for failure to maintain the proper lane.

Obituaries

Hebron

Mary J. Lukas

Mary J. Lukas of Hebron, affectionately known as Julie, went to be with the Lord Wednesday evening, Sept. 14, at the age of 93. Her loving husband of 55 years, Stanley, and their son, Mark, were by her side at home as she passed. The daughter of the late John and Mary (Woods) Guay, she was born Oct. 16, 1922, in Fitchburg, Mass., and raised in Laconia, N.H.



Julie was a graduate of St. Elizabeth Hospital School of Nursing in Brighton, Mass., and went on to earn her bachelor's degree in nursing from Boston College and later her master's degree from UConn in 1976.

During World War II, she was appointed to the rank of Lieutenant in the U.S. Naval Reserves in Sampson, N.Y. Stanley was in the service as well during the war, and the two attended many reunions together over the years.

Stanley and Julie met at the Newington Ski Club and were married at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford on Apr. 29, 1961. Stanley and Julie resided in New Britain for many years before moving to Hebron.

Early on, she worked as an instructor for the Hartford Hospital School of Nursing Practical Nurse program; then went to Tunxis Community College in Farmington to serve as acting director of nursing, where she was awarded the Distinguished Service Award. From Tunxis, Julie went on to the Greater Hartford Community College as an assistant professor with a rating of Superior. Finally, she worked at Msgr. Bojnowski Manor in New Britain before her retirement.

Every year, Julie and Stanley loved their trips to East Beach in Rhode Island along with their dear friends from New Britain. She was also active with the Russell Mercier Senior Center in Hebron.

In addition to her husband and son, she leaves her daughter-in-law, Alisa; four grandchildren, Margaret, Ryan, Kathryn and Colleen; her sister, Nancy Spencer of Portland, Ore.; as well as extended family members including Mary and Joe Moynihan of Milton, Mass.; Michael and Ann O'Leary of Tolland and Jerry and Jane Woods of Plymouth, Mass. She was predeceased by her brother and sister-in-law Jack and Fran Guay.

The family would like to thank all those who helped through Julie's lengthy illness, especially her nurse Holly and Lillian Brown of Companions and Homemakers.

Visitation was Friday, Sept. 16, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral liturgy was celebrated Saturday, Sept. 17, at the Church of the Holy Family, 185 Church St. (Route 85), Hebron. Interment followed in the Lukasiewicz family plot in Sacred Heart Cemetery, New Britain.

Donations in her memory may be made to Msgr. Bojnowski Manor, 50 Nash St., New Britain, CT 06053.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Ernest Newton Rowland

Ernest Newton Rowland, 67, of Colchester, passed away Monday, Sept. 19, at Yale-New Haven Hospital in New Haven. Born April 17, 1949, in Hartford, he was the son of the late Robert and Jean (Davidson) Rowland.

Mr. Rowland had worked as a computer operations specialist for CT Mutual and Mass Mutual Insurance companies.

He leaves two children, Shaun and his wife Jen of Nashua, N.H., and Erin of Berlin; four grandchildren, Danniell, Emma, Will and Kyle; two great-grandchildren, Jeremiah and Reilly; five siblings, Duane, Trudy, Sharon, Thelma and Jeri; and numerous extended family and friends.

In addition to his parents, he was predeceased by his son, Mark; and two brothers, Earl and Frederick.

The family received guests Thursday, Sept. 22, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, before a chapel service that morning. Burial followed in the Rowland family plot in the Moodus Cemetery.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Cobalt

David W. Kneeland

David W. Kneeland, 83, of Cobalt, beloved husband of Joanne (Giles) Kneeland, died Tuesday, Sept. 13, at Middlesex Hospital. Born Sept. 26, 1932, in Cooksville, Mo., he was the son of the late Gerald and Harriet (Swain) Kneeland.

David was retired after 28 years from the former Hartford National Bank where he was an assistant vice president. He also worked for eight years for the former United Bank in Essex where he was a branch manager. David was the past president of the East Hampton Rotary, a member of the East Hampton Board of Finance, a member of the East Hampton building committee for the library and senior center, past treasurer of the East Hampton Congregational Church for 10 years, and former treasurer of the Camp Bethel Association in Haddam for 10 years.

David is survived by his wife, Joanne; his two sons, John P. Kneeland and his wife Julia Marsh of East Hampton, Paul D. Kneeland and his wife Sabina of New York; a daughter, Kathryn Nichols and husband Nick of Maine; three sisters, Rachael Carignan of Arizona, Harriet Kneeland of Missouri, Deborah McKim of Missouri; 12 grandchildren, Elizabeth, Blake, Phoebe, Shannon, Mark, Bryan, Kelly, Stella, Sam, Matthew, Ryan, Kelsey; and six great-grandchildren.

He was predeceased by his sister, Susan Barrett.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, Sept. 24, at 11 a.m., in East Hampton Congregational Church. Burial will follow in Union Hill Cemetery in Cobalt.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Camp Bethel Association c/o Dorathea Kendall, 246 Trumbull Highway, Lebanon, CT 06249.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Portland

Nicholas A. Powers

Nicholas A. Powers, 29, beloved son, brother and friend, passed away unexpectedly Wednesday Sept. 14. Born June 17, 1987, in New Britain, he is the son of Donald N. and Jennifer (Fredell) Powers.

Nick attended Portland High School and played on the soccer, baseball and golf teams. He received his bachelor's degree from Johnson and Wales University in food and beverage management. After graduating, he followed his passion for cooking amazing food and worked at several restaurants in Providence including Aspire, Centro, and D'Vine on the Hill. Most recently he worked at OC Restaurant in Rocky Hill.

Nick was a kindhearted person who loved life and had the gift of making people laugh. When you met him, you'd be forever friends. Nick loved music, playing the guitar and jamming out with Mike and Ant, spending time with the crew at the beach house, "crabbing, crabbing, crabbing," fishing, diving, snowboarding, reading about and discussing the universe and its many possibilities, dad and sons annual Christmas morning Lego building, but most of all spending time with family and his many, many dear friends.

Nick leaves behind his parents, Donald and Jennifer Powers; his brother, Ryan Powers; his canine nephew, Cooper; and many aunts, uncles and cousins. Besides his family, he also leaves his lifelong friends ... Travis, Justin, Steve, Johnny, Mike, Bubba, Nick J., Greg, Lindsay, Nick Q., his one true love, Ania, and countless others impossible to mention.

He was predeceased by his grandparents, Art and Gina Fredell, and Ted and Jean Powers.

Family and friends paid their respects Thursday, Sept. 22, in the Portland Memorial Funeral Home. His memorial service will be held today, Sept. 23, at 11 a.m., in the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland followed by a celebration of his life directly after the service at the Portland Fire Department Company No. 2 picnic grounds on Indian Hill Avenue. Burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations in memory of Nick Powers may be made to the Connecticut Humane Society, 701 Russell Rd., Newington, CT 06111.

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

May Nick's unbridled passion for life and unconditional love for others live on through each of us.

East Hampton

Donald Edward Smith

Donald Edward Smith, 34, of East Hampton, beloved son of Gary and Rosemarie (Floris) Smith, died Monday, Sept. 19, at Hartford Hospital, surrounded by his loving family. Born June 18, 1982, in Middletown, Don was raised in East Hampton and was a graduate of East Hampton High School.

He was employed at NAPA Auto Parts in East Hampton and also worked at the Cadillac Ranch in Southington on weekends. He was a lifelong New York Yankees fan and Pittsburgh Steelers fan. Donald enjoyed fixing up older motorcycles and tinkering with motors. He enjoyed the outdoors and would be there to help anyone. To know him was to have a friend for life. Even in death, Donald gave life to others as an organ and tissue donor.

Besides his parents, he is survived by his brother, Thomas Smith of East Hampton; his beloved niece, Katrina Smith; his girlfriend, Elisha Krewson of Bristol; and a large extended family from Pennsylvania.

Friends may call at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, Saturday Sept. 24, from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. A funeral service will be held at 1 p.m., with the Rev. Gerald Kirby officiating. Burial will be private.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

East Hampton

Gloria Moisuk

Gloria "Cissy" (Hurlburt) Moisuk, 72, of Old Middletown Avenue, East Hampton, passed away Saturday, Sept. 17, after a brief illness. Born June 16, 1944, in Hartford, she was the daughter of the late Edward F. Hurlburt and Gertrude (Fontaine) Tyler.

Gloria was an alumnus of Middlesex Community College and was retired from Connecticut Valley Hospital, where she worked as a mental health worker. She is survived by her beloved son, Shawn Hawkes of Colchester, and stepdaughter, Cheryl Hawkes of Maine. Gloria is also survived by her stepmother, Frances Rollish of Cromwell.

She is survived by her siblings and their families, Edward T. Hurlburt of Arizona, Richard and Terri Hurlburt of Michigan, Jeffrey Hurlburt Sr. and Michael Hurlburt of Cromwell, Nancy and Ted Doyle of Mystic, Karen Gardner of Texas, Susan and Sid Bloemhof of California, Denise and Art Ebert of Florida, Maryjane and Tommy Martin of Nevada and Reggie Levasseur of Colorado.

She is survived by her brother-in-law, Robert and Nancy Moisuk of Enfield, and sister-in-law, Maryann and Doug Vickers of Florida.

She was predeceased by her husband, Stephen T. Moisuk Jr., and siblings, Barbara Levasseur and Carol Ann Bill.

Gloria was a kind aunt who loved all her many nieces and nephews and family members. She kept in touch with all relatives, no matter the time or the distance.

There will be a memorial service for Gloria Saturday, Sept. 24, at 10 a.m., at Hope Church, 230 East High St., East Hampton. Family and friends are invited to attend. Burial will be at the convenience of the family.

Colchester

Kathleen Fill

Kathleen (Martin) Fill, 90, of Colchester, formerly of Amston, widow of the late Joseph J. Fill, passed away Saturday, Sept. 17, at the Wm. W. Backus Hospital in Norwich. Born June 6, 1926, in Nathitoches, La., she was the daughter of the late Horace and Nellie (Plummer) Martin.



Mrs. Fill had worked as a school nurse for Colchester Public Schools as well as RHAM High School in Hebron. She is survived by three sons, Ted and wife Susan of Falmouth Cape Cod, MA; Tom Fill of Colchester, and Kevin Fill; two siblings, Dwight Martin and Sylvia Zimmerman; and numerous extended family and friends.

A memorial service will be observed and announced in mid-October. Burial will be private in St. Peter's Cemetery, Hebron.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 30 Church St., Hebron, CT 06248.

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

Andover

Elizabeth Hatem King

Elizabeth Hatem King, 64, of Andover, passed away Sunday, Sept. 18, surrounded by her loving family, after a 16-month battle with ovarian cancer. She was born Aug. 4, 1952, daughter of the late Alma and Edward Hatem.



Elizabeth's passion and life was her family.

She was a strong, vibrant, funny, and compassionate woman. She was always welcoming of people into her home and life, and always making sure they were well fed and loved. She took the most pride in being the most loving grandmother, mother, wife, sister, aunt and friend. Elizabeth will be missed by everyone who knew her and knew of her.

She is survived by her husband, Joseph King; her two daughters, Michelle Lorentz and Katelynn King; and her grandson, Hudson Lorentz; as well as her brothers and sisters, George Hatem, Kathleen Cataldi, Edward Hatem, Alma Theresa Hatem and Bertha Hatem, and many other family members and friends.

We are asking in lieu of flowers to the family that individuals make donations to their choice of: The Jimmy Fund (jimmyfundwalk.org/2016/justin), Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, or the New Britain Hospital for Special Care Foundation.

A Mass will be celebrated Saturday, Sept. 24, at 10 a.m., at St. Maurice Church in Bolton. The family will receive friends one hour prior. The burial will follow at Townsend Cemetery in Andover.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

The news this month has featured many 9/11 remembrances. It often does whenever the anniversary of that dreadful day comes around; plus, this year was the 15th anniversary, which made it stand out even more. As you may have seen in last week's paper, Marlborough had a special ceremony to mark the day, honoring first responders as well as the memory of Jim Hobin, a resident who passed away in the attacks.

And while most, by far, of the 9/11 stories you'll see are steeped in immense sadness — and understandably so — I came across one recently in the *New York Post* that had a happier ending; an ending of hope, which underscored just how precious life is.

It's a story that's centered around a home run hit at New Britain Stadium.

In September 2001, the New Britain Rock Cats faced the Norwich Navigators in the Northern Division playoffs of the AA Eastern League. But before the playoffs were to start, each player had to make their own travel arrangements home, in case their team didn't advance.

So Brad Thomas, a pitcher for the Rock Cats and a native of Australia, booked two seats — for him and his girlfriend Kylie — on American Airlines Flight 11, departing Boston for Los Angeles on Sept. 11. From L.A., he'd have flown to Australia.

Once the playoffs started, it looked as if Thomas was going to need that flight. The first round was a best-of-five series, meaning the first team to three wins takes the series. In Game One of the series, New Britain was down by a run in the bottom of the ninth, with two out. On a 3-2 pitch, hitter Michael Cuddyer crushed a game-winning homer, flipping the Rock Cats from being down in the series to being ahead.

A few days later, in Game Four, with the Rock Cats up two games to one, Cuddyer again came through, slugging the go-ahead homer in that seventh inning. So, thanks to Cuddyer's heroics, New Britain advanced to the championship series.....and Thomas didn't need his plane ticket after all.

Then Sept. 11 happened. The team gathered at New Britain Stadium that morning, as the tragedy sunk in. Thomas sat there, clutching his plane ticket, knowing he had literally escaped death.

"If we had lost [the series], we were out of there first thing," Thomas told the *Post*. "We

had our bags packed and we're ready to roll out the door. Mikey saved my life. Incredible. Just incredible."

Thomas would go on to play five seasons with the Minnesota Twins and Detroit Tigers, and currently lives in Sydney with his now-wife Kylie and two young children.

"There's probably not a day that goes by that I don't think about it and think how lucky I am," he said.

As for Cuddyer, he went on to play for well over a decade in the Major Leagues, and along the way, club 197 homers. Yet, for him, his most important homer is the one that he hit in that fateful Game One at New Britain Stadium some 15 years ago — the one that saved his teammate's life.

"You don't want to say the minor leagues was the biggest home run of my life, but obviously that was the biggest home run I ever hit," Cuddyer told the *Post*.

* * *

I've been pretty clear in this column I'm no fan of Donald Trump. I can't stand the guy. Yet I do follow him on Twitter. Why? Because his tweets are completely ridiculous. Not only does the dude play very fast and loose with the truth (I've heard several people say Hillary Clinton's "such a liar." Well, you can't overlook the fact Trump lies almost incessantly, both in tweet and non-tweet form), but he can just make the most ridiculous statements.

And, when you read the comments on Trump's tweets, you'll see that while many of those following and commenting are his supporters (his "Trumpeteers," as Sarah Palin has called them), there are plenty of them who, like me, don't support him at all but follow him because, well, it's tough to look away.

One of the more famous anti-Trump folks who offered a comment on a recent tweet is George Takei — and he offered a nice little zinger. Last week, Trump tweeted, "Why isn't President Obama working instead of campaigning for Hillary Clinton?" (In Trump's defense, a sitting president actively campaigning for a successor is a rarity in American politics.)

Takei had a nice little rebuttal: "As Commander-in-Chief, he is sworn to protect us from threats both foreign and domestic. You, sir, are the latter."

* * *

See you next week.