

RIVEREAST

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Pumpkin Memorials... Hebron resident Caleb Greenleaf memorializes departed celebrities in pumpkins. Here, he shows some techniques on the pumpkin he carved of Burt Reynolds last week. For a story about Greenleaf and his creations, see page 17.

Ziobron vs. Needleman in Bitter Senate Race

by Elizabeth Regan

An expensive and bitter campaign is being waged in the 33rd state Senate District as both parties try to wrest control of the evenly-divided Senate.

Essex First Selectman Norm Needleman is fighting state Rep. Melissa Ziobron, R-34, for the open seat. It's currently held by Art Linares, who gave up the chance for re-election as part of his unsuccessful bid for state treasurer.

Ziobron, 47, said she will bring to the Senate the same work ethic and acumen that defined her three terms in the House. The ranking Republican on the powerful Appropriations Committee, she helped craft the bipartisan state budget signed into law by Gov. Dannel P. Malloy late last year.

She credited the current tie in the Senate with helping Republicans push through a constitutional spending cap and a statutory borrowing cap to keep expenditures in check. It also allowed her party to block increases to the sales and income tax and prevent new taxes on things like cell phones and tires.

Needleman, 67, said he'll bring insight into local government gleaned from eight years as first selectman and business experience as founder and CEO of Tower Laboratories. The company manufactures effervescent products, lending him the nickname "Mr. Fizz."

Needleman's vision for the state involves managing spending, streamlining government, and making major investments in economic development.

The businessman, who spent about \$400,000 of his own money on the campaign so far, has paid for a blitz of television ads portraying Ziobron as hostile to women's issues.

Ziobron is running a grassroots campaign based on \$95,710 in public financing through the state Citizens' Election Program. State senate candidates are eligible for the funding when they raise \$15,300 from at least 300 individuals in their district.

A conservative, third-party special interest group that is not connected to the Ziobron campaign spent \$134,280 on mailers, digital ads and consulting services to fight Needleman as of Wednesday, according to the State Election Enforcement Commission's database. The commission's guidelines allow third-party special interest groups to support the success or defeat of any candidate as long as no candidates knowingly participate.

Ziobron said this week her publicly-funded campaign can't compete with the televised ads that run in programming spots like *Monday Night Football*.

"And the worst part of it all is he's spreading nasty, horrible misinformation about me in that venue and it's impossible for me to respond because I don't have those resources," she said.

Instead, she said she's attended 150 events throughout the district and has knocked on 16,000 doors with campaign volunteers.

Ziobron is a self-described fiscal conserva-

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Gas Station Project Moves Ahead Despite Concerns

by Allison Lazur

A gas station and convenience store proposed for Hebron Road in Marlborough is moving forward – but the station's would-be neighbors, as well as the Connecticut Water Company (CWC), have concerns about the potential risk to a nearby well system and Lyman Brook.

Marlborough One, LLC has proposed the station for 1.5 acres at 37 Hebron Rd., and the town's Conservation Commission has moved the project forward to the Zoning Commission. This is despite a Sept. 7 letter emailed to Town Planner Peter Hughes from CWC's Environmental and Regulatory Compliance Coordinator Jessica Demar, which states the proposed gas station "poses an unreasonable risk to the wells" and adds that the water company opposes the project.

The letter said the proposed site is approximately 230 feet "upgradient" from the Forest Homes System public water supply wells, a system that is the "sole source of public water for the Forest Homes residents."

The letter also notes a portion of the proposed project area "drains directly to Lyman Brook, which flows through the CWC parcel that contains the two wells," drawing concern from the company over the quality of water that the wells will receive both during and after construction.

struction.

A second letter was supposed to be sent to Hughes on Oct. 10, reiterating CWC's position, and addressing proposed revisions to the plan. However, Demar said the letter accidentally was not sent, and instead was forwarded to Hughes Tuesday. The letter states the same concerns noted in the Sept. 7 letter, along with comments on proposed plan revisions.

"The addition of a rain garden, while well-intended and beneficial, does not mitigate the potential impact the proposed subsurface storm water infiltration system may have on ground-water water quality," the letter states.

Both letters note if the project is approved, it should adhere to best practices for fueling stations detailed in Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) regulations.

The site plan addresses several of the best practices to prevent pollutants from coming in contact with storm water. The proposed plan implements features such as fuel nozzles with automatic shut-off capability, a canopy roof to prevent storm water runoff from washing away and storm water runoff collected in catch basins to be directed to an oil/grit separator to trap sediments and debris.

Demar told the *Rivereast* Tuesday that the

town is not required to obtain approval from CWC as the site is not considered an aquifer protected area (APA).

An APA is defined by DEEP as the land area that contributes ground water to active public water supply wells – typically set in sand and gravel – that serve more than 1,000 people and are determined by the state.

She explained that it is difficult and complicated to determine the specific contributing area to the well system.

"We want to protect that brook because of the sheer proximity flowing near our wells and we could make an assumption that it may affect groundwater," Demar said.

She explained, "It's very possible this gas station is not within the contributing area," but that CWC would prefer to "err on the safe side," which is why "we are recommending that this project be denied."

Emails obtained by the *Rivereast* reflect Hughes's acknowledgment of the Sept. 7 letter and confirmation that the CWC comments were forwarded to "the commission members," with no indication as to which commission.

Hickory Road resident Michelle Padilla told the *Rivereast* this week that she believes the letter was never provided to the commission

prior to approving the application.

"As members of the community, we are concerned that very important information was left out of the file," Padilla said.

Zoning Commission member Mark Merritt said he didn't receive the Sept. 7 letter until Wednesday. The October letter was forwarded to the Zoning Commission Tuesday night upon receipt from CWC. However, Zoning Commission Chairman Kevin Asklar questioned Hughes about the existence of the first letter referenced in the October letter. Asklar told the *Rivereast* he doesn't recall receiving the first letter.

The September letter was subsequently forwarded by Hughes to Zoning Commission members Wednesday.

There is indication that the Conservation Commission also did not see the Sept. 7 letter recommending the project be denied prior to unanimously approving the application at its Oct. 15 meeting.

Furthermore, when the *Rivereast* requested Monday to view all documents pertaining to the Marlborough One, LLC gas station project, no letter from CWC was included.

Hughes in an email to the *Rivereast* Tuesday said the letter "could have been misplaced,"

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tive and social liberal.

In press releases, ads and in several debates, Needleman has repeatedly referenced Ziobron's 'nay' vote on a 2016 affirmative consent bill. Now a law, the measure requires state colleges and universities to develop affirmative consent policies on campus to raise the bar for sexual consent from "no means no" to "yes means yes." Needleman was also critical of Ziobron's opposition to a bill to take away firearms from people who are served with a temporary restraining order in domestic violence situations.

"I think Melissa has a couple reasonable positions, but I think she is not broadly supportive of the issues that many women believe are important to them," Needleman said this week. "Although she has been known to be pro-choice, I think that on the other issues she hasn't been in their camp."

Ziobron said her vote on the affirmative consent bill was a response to a Democratic budget proposal at the time that would have reduced funding for rape crisis centers and shelters for domestic violence victims.

She described her vote as a way to stand up to "hypocrisy" at the capitol. She said she took a similarly-principled stand in voting against every judicial nominee put forth by Gov. Dannel P. Malloy this year due to what she described as severe under funding and staffing problems in the court system.

Ziobron became emotional when describing a video – which she said she cannot bring herself to watch – that she's been hearing about from friends and supporters.

One ad on the Needleman campaign's YouTube channel shows a group of women sitting around a table talking about Ziobron. One of them is a Colchester woman critical of Ziobron's vote on the affirmative consent bill.

"What she says to me with that vote is she could care less if my college-aged daughter is sexually assaulted, and I will not vote for anybody who could care less about my daughter," the woman said in the ad.

Ziobron has a 23-year-old daughter teaching English in China and a 19-year-old son studying at the University of Connecticut.

"To have someone say in a video that I don't care about young women when my daughter is in China by herself? It's a dagger in my heart," Ziobron said.

A former economic development coordinator in East Haddam, Ziobron has since devoted herself full time to the part-time state representative position. She's taken aim at Needleman for his plan to continue as first selectman in Essex if he wins election in the state Senate.

The first selectman job is "easily" a 60 or 70-hour-per-week job, according to Ziobron. Then there's his role as CEO of Tower Laboratories, which Needleman has said is now run day-to-day by his two sons.

"Someone's going to come out on the short end," Ziobron said. "It's either going to be the residents of Essex or it's going to be the state Senate district. It's impossible for him to do both jobs at 100 percent. And I am the only candidate who has clearly said I will be dedicated to that senate district 100 percent of the time. I just believe in my heart he can't do it."

Needleman said his management skills have allowed him to streamline operations at the town hall by empowering a key team of directors to be responsible for the different facets of local government.

"My goal in taking on the job of first selectman was restructuring the job to be more strategic, managerial," he said. "Over the last seven years, I've created a team of key people, so if Norman got run over by a truck tomorrow, or didn't want to do the job anymore, or lost an election, the town would function operationally seamlessly."

Needleman described himself as "probably the most-engaged first selectman," adding that he is in the office every day, attends events and

is on call at all times.

"And yet day to day, I don't have to do everything," he said. "And that's the way it should be. I made Essex a lot less vulnerable to the ups and downs of who gets elected."

He's also helped keep the Essex's mill rate among the lowest in the state, he said. It's currently at 21.85 mills.

In addition to emphasizing economic development as a cornerstone of his campaign platform, his other priorities include increasing the number of community colleges and trade schools and forgiving college loans for graduates who remain in the state workforce. He supports paid family leave and gender pay equality.

According to the Democratic candidate, it's going to take shared sacrifice to bring the state back from the fiscal cliff: "That means all the constituencies that the state serves need to have skin in the game. Everybody needs to sit at the table and understand we have a massive problem from years of neglect – and that the only way we're going to solve it is everybody's going to give up something, everybody that can." He cited careful spending, fair formulas for apportioning education aid to towns, and negotiating with labor unions as examples.

"I think that state employees and teachers have been hit and given back and I hope that we don't have to ask them for more, but we may. But they shouldn't be the only ones," he said.

And that may mean tax increases.

"I think that no matter what anybody tells you, they live in the land of wishful thinking if they don't believe somewhere down the line we're going to need some revenue to get us through the next ten years," he said.

Ziobron, touting a 100 percent voting record as state representative, said she has secured education funding for small towns, protected state parks, increased funding for retired teachers' health plans and restored the renter's rebate program. Her work in the district includes support of lake improvements, water infrastructure improvements and securing \$7 million in state funding for the East Hampton High School renovation projected after the state failed to fund the maximum reimbursement amount.

She pointed to the state's fiscal crisis as "the single greatest issue" facing the state.

Addressing the problem means establishing a Ways and Means Committee, instead of continuing to operate with separate Revenue and Appropriations committees.

"At the state capitol they decide how much they're going to spend and then figure out how much revenue they need to raise to meet that spending. That's the process I hope to change," she said at a debate at Bacon Academy earlier this month.

She also recommended a full debate in the legislature on a March report from the Commission on Fiscal Stability and Economic Growth. Among other things, the report recommended reducing the income tax, eliminating estate and gift taxes, raising sales, corporate and gas taxes, and removing state employee fringe benefits from collective bargaining.

"Either of these would be good start. Both would be a great leap forward," she said.

* * *

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 6. Polls are open from 6 a.m.-8 p.m. In East Hampton, voters can cast their ballots at East Hampton Middle School, 19 Childs Rd. Portland voting takes place at Portland Middle School, 93 High St. Colchester has four voting districts at three polling places in town: District 1 votes at town hall, 127 Norwich Ave.; District 3 votes at Bacon Academy, 611 Norwich Ave., and Districts 2 and 4 vote at Abundant Life of Assemblies of God Church, 85 Skinner Rd. Colchester residents who are unsure of their district can call town hall at 860-537-7200 or visit www.dir.ct.gov/sots/LookUp.aspx.

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and stated both commissions received the Sept. 7 letter from CWC.

Conservation Commission Chairman Yvonne Bolton did not return multiple calls for comment.

Project Details, History and Concerns

The March application was filed by Marlborough One, LLC, which is listed in the Secretary of the State's business database as a venture of prominent local developer Wayne Rand. The application was accompanied by a detailed project summary which addressed several aspects of the proposed site development.

The site would contain a 4,920-sq. ft. convenience store and eight self-serve fueling pumps positioned on four double-sided fuel dispensers under a roof canopy, the project summary states.

The summary explains that in regards to storm water run-off and in order to protect the brook which is a "tributary to Blackledge River and ultimately Salmon River," catch basins will be constructed to "trap coarse sediments."

The property, located at the northeast corner of Hebron Road, is bordered by the northbound Route 2 onramp and Route 66. The nearby local Connecticut Water-owned well system serves approximately 40 homes, according to the water company.

Since the application submission, public hearings have been regularly continued by both the Conservation and Zoning Commissions to hear concerns from residents and ask questions to project engineer Robert Baltramitis who prepared the site plan.

Baltramitis could not be reached for comment as of press time Thursday.

A public hearing by the Zoning Commission was scheduled last night and as of press time yesterday morning, there was indication the public hearing would likely be continued.

Hickory Road resident Lou Michaud told the *Rivereast* this week he is concerned about the contamination of Lyman Brook and well system.

"That brook does feed into that well," he said. "The whole thing seems like a great idea for prosperity, but [the town is] not taking public health into account; they have no regard for what anybody really says," Michaud said.

The town's plan of conservation and development states the commission must "review activities within 150 feet of wetlands and 200 feet from major watercourses and their associated wetlands."

The proposal meets both of those conditions. Hickory Road resident Shawn DeFelice told the *Rivereast* he has similar concerns with water contamination.

"The town may be thinking of the taxes these businesses will be paying, which is indeed good," DeFelice said. "However we cannot take the chance in making our Marlborough housing unsafe. In addition, we want to make sure that these decisions make buying homes in Marlborough desirable. If water becomes contaminated residents will leave and resale of homes will be difficult."

Padilla, the Hickory Road resident and member of both the Board of Education and Recre-

ation Commission member, stressed she was speaking as an individual when she articulated her concerns with the project.

"Besides water contamination, I'm worried about traffic," Padilla said.

She noted that the nonexistent traffic lights as you get on and off the highway would cause issues with the project's location.

Padilla said Hickory Road is "one way in and one way out" and if a propane tanker were to spill, "we would be trapped in our neighborhood."

She also said she felt the Sept. 7 letter was not provided to the Conservation Commission members prior to their approval.

"As members of the community we are concerned that very important info was left out of the file," Padilla said.

On Aug. 20, Baltramitis submitted a memo to Hughes noting the implemented project changes, after hearing comments from the Conservation and Zoning commissions, as well as the Chatham Health District.

These changes included items such as the addition of a water quality basin, an increase from 24 to 28 feet for the paved access aisle between the building and fueling area and a modified guard rail to be continuous along the east side of the property, the memo states.

The zoning application was later withdrawn on Sept. 6 and a new application resubmitted the same day due to reaching the "maximum allowable time extensions."

The withdrawal letter to Hughes from Baltramitis states the approval by the Conservation Commission must be obtained before the Zoning Commission can act on the application.

According to state statutes, the zoning commission has 35 days to keep a public hearing open and 65 days to make a decision once the hearing is closed. Only the applicant can request an extension of the public hearing timeframe.

Although the application was approved by the Conservation Commission, there were several stipulations set forth by the commission such as three years of water sampling on Lyman Brook, the following of Best Management Practices for Fueling Stations and no outside storage of deicing materials.

Another Gas Station

Another gas station and convenience store proposed by applicant Best Way Food & Fuel and property owners Joe and Carol Asklar is in the works for 2-4 Portland Rd.

The project would include a 4,500-sq. ft. convenience store and covered canopy gas pumps, according to conservation meeting minutes.

The property has two small wetland areas in the front and rear of the property, with installation plans for a rain garden to protect the front wetlands area, as the back will not be impacted by construction, the minutes state.

A site walk-through was scheduled by the Conservation Commission for Saturday, and the application will be continued to the commission's next meeting on Monday at 7 p.m. at Town Hall.

DeCaprio Challenging Orange for House Seat

by Allison Lazur

State Rep. Linda Orange, a Democrat, is hoping to maintain her seat and enter into a 12th term as representative for the 48th Assembly District as she faces off next week against Republican Mark DeCaprio.

DeCaprio, 60, is a Lebanon resident who said this week Orange has had long enough to work on the issues plaguing the state.

“My opponent has been in for 22 years and nearing the end of 11 terms already; she’s had ample opportunity to work on things – the people will decide what they want going forward,” he said.

The 48th District covers Colchester, Lebanon, Mansfield and Windham.

DeCaprio currently serves on Lebanon’s Zoning Board of Appeals, and also is the town’s emergency management director.

He has also worked as division director in the Emergency Response and Spill Prevention division of the state Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP), as well as serving as the state Emergency Response Commission (SERC) administrator.

DeCaprio believes his nearly two decades of managerial experience with DEEP will be beneficial if elected to the district’s seat.

“I have some 20 years as a middle manager,” he said. “I know about labor relations and unions, contracts and employees.”

DeCaprio also disclosed he is an advocate for environmental protection, state parks and a supporter of the farming and agricultural communities.

He explained if elected, he is also looking to help small businesses by “streamlining” the

permitting processes. “Maybe there’s some way,” he added.

“My opponent has some great ideas like paid sick leave, but if we mandate these things it’s gonna hurt our businesses [and] I think we need to be careful about what we are making law,” he said.

Orange had her own ideas when it came to helping the economy thrive.

“We need to keep our trade schools up to date and funded,” she said, adding doing so positively impacts the economy and keeps manufacturing jobs filled with trained individuals.

When DeCaprio spoke with the *Rivereast* this week he discussed how addressing the issues of addiction in the community were another concern of his, noting opioid addiction as a prevalent matter.

“I wouldn’t say I’m any kind of an expert as far as drug addiction is concerned, but I would encourage people to look at the root of the problem.”

He added that identifying why an individual becomes involved with drugs to begin with would be a place to start in addressing the problem.

Orange, 68, a Colchester resident, also discussed her concerns with the health field this week, noting her interest in improving so-called “affordable healthcare” programs.

“I’ve spoken to a lot of people this year and even though it’s ‘affordable healthcare,’ it’s not affordable to those who are paying high premiums and high deductibles,” she said, adding that often times people end up paying completely

out of pocket to meet their deductibles and premiums.

Orange’s plans include bringing the issue of affordable healthcare forward to the General Assembly “to see what we can do to help people who are not eligible for Husky C, but are having a hard time paying premiums. It’s not a one person job and it needs more work and I’m hoping it’s something the federal government could help us out with,” she said.

According to the news website *CTMirror*, “Husky C provides Medicaid coverage for people with disabilities, low-income seniors who also have Medicare, and people receiving long-term care. The bulk of the state’s Medicaid spending funds nursing home and home care for people in this program.”

Orange, who serves as Deputy Speaker of the House, has also served as on the Colchester Police Commission and as a member and chairman of the Colchester Board of Assessment Appeals.

Orange added it’s important to make sure towns are “getting our fair share” of Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) funds, which she said are crucial to the schools.

“We have to keep our schools funded through the ECS money,” she said. “If we don’t do that our property taxes are going to escalate and it’s important to keep that fiscal stability.”

Both Orange and DeCaprio agreed they don’t want the state’s taxes to increase.

DeCaprio said he’s learned through campaigning that small businesses and individuals alike are struggling with the tax burden.

“There are challenges running small business because of the tax burden from what I’m hearing and it’s not easy,” DeCaprio said.

He added that ultimately he wants to “try and help reduce the tax burden,” explaining that people aren’t retiring in Connecticut and are instead moving out of state.

“I want families to stay together here,” he said. “A lot of people I talk to, when they retire they want to relocate to states with lower taxes”

But Orange argued young people are returning to the state.

“Our kids are coming back to our colleges and a portion of them are staying in our state to work,” she said.

DeCaprio and Orange said they both felt good about their chances of winning, but ultimately said they wouldn’t know for sure until the votes are counted.

“I’ve worked as a rep of the people and I listen to what people tell me so that I’m better informed and able to make decisions based on what the people want,” Orange said.

* * *

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 6 and voting takes place from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. The town is divided into four voting districts, designated to three different voting locations.

District 1 votes at Town Hall, 127 Norwich Ave.; District 3 votes at Bacon Academy, 611 Norwich Ave., and Districts 2 and 4 vote at Abundant Life of Assemblies of God Church, 85 Skinner Rd. Those who are unsure of their district can call Town Hall at 860-537-7200 or visit www.dir.ct.gov/sots/LookUp.aspx.

Tweedie Looks to Unseat Cassano in Senate Race

by Sloan Brewster

Democrat Steve Cassano is seeking his fifth term as state senator for the Fourth District – which covers Andover, Bolton, Glastonbury and Manchester – but Republican state Rep. Mark Tweedie hopes to unseat him at the polls on Election Day next week.

The two men are Manchester residents. Tweedie currently represents the 13th District in the state House of Representatives; that district includes Manchester and Glastonbury.

Cassano, 76, has served as state senator since first being elected in 2010. (At the time, the district included Marlborough instead of Andover; it was redrawn in 2012.) Prior to that, he taught sociology for 28 years at Manchester Community College, was mayor of Manchester for 14 years and deputy mayor for 12 years.

“I love what I do,” he said. “I’ve been doing it for a long time. I think the best thing I do is work with everybody – Republicans, Democrats, independents, [it] makes no difference to me.”

If re-elected, Cassano said he will work on resolving a variety of issues, starting with his highest priority, making sure there are resources for seniors and people of need. Next, he said he would work on funding for education, with an eye on restoring courses that have been largely reduced over the years – namely, shop class.

Pratt & Whitney, the Naval submarine base

in Groton, Electric Boat and Sikorsky will be doing multiple projects that will create thousands of potential jobs – and he wants more jobs created, Cassano said.

“The average machinist makes \$92,000 a year,” he said. “Those are the jobs I want.”

He said he wants students to come out of school with the necessary skills to fill those jobs, which would also provide an alternative to students who do not want to go to college.

Sikorski, for example, is building a new helicopter and will need workers to do it, he said. If the Connecticut workforce is not educated for manufacturing jobs, buses of out of state workers will be coming in to fill the positions.

“We’ve got to get the people in Connecticut working in these jobs,” Cassano said.

The economy will not be boosted by raising taxes but by creating jobs, he said.

For Tweedie, 62, his big issue is the budget. “We can’t take care of needy residents without a healthy budget,” he said.

The budget for people with developmental disabilities should not be cut and should not be something the governor is able to cut, Tweedie said.

Schools and towns have to be able to predict their budgets three years forward and need to count on state funding, including Education Cost Sharing and other forms of municipal aid, he said. If they pass their budgets and the state budget is passed later, with reductions in aid,

they are forced to raise property taxes.

Tweedie said he believes strongly in protecting adolescents from opioid addiction, and the first bill he put in as a representative allowed dispensing opioids to anyone under 18 in a hospital setting only. The bill also included a line that said dispensing of opioids to those under 18 could be done for no more than five days.

The adolescent brain is strongly affected by opioids and introducing them at too young an age, unless absolutely necessary, is bound to lead to problems, he said. In addition, dispensing opioids to adolescents leads to an overload of prescriptions and addiction.

“[They go] medicine cabinet shopping, they get addicted and when they run out they turn to heroin,” he said. “People are addicted to and dying of opioids, people are starting to change their thoughts on opioids.”

Talking about opioids brought him back to the budget.

“Restricting the dispensing of opioids doesn’t cost a thing,” he said. “This is an issue that doesn’t cost any money.”

Tweedie said he also wants to take a look at the state Department of Transportation (DOT), specifically its \$99,417 administrative budget compared with the national average of \$10,864. He also wants to get a look at the department’s per mile spending, which, he said, is the sixth-highest in the continental U.S.

“We’re not the Rocky Mountains, we’re not the hardest state to build roads and bridges in or maintain them, so why are we the sixth-highest?” he said.

When asked about the overall tone of the campaign, Cassano said he has gotten a positive response when going door-to-door – but said he has seen some negative mailers that they are being paid for by out-of-state groups.

“They’re trying to buy my seat,” he said. “The Fourth District is not for sale. I’m not going to sell it to some group from the Midwest.”

In his door-to-door visits, Tweedie said he has noticed people have become more partisan this year than in past years.

“Some say ‘What party are you?’ and they either like you or not,” he said.

He also said there was misinformation out there, including about his stance voting record on gun legislation and stance on how to prevent gun violence.

“One woman wrote a letter saying I support arming teachers in schools, which is absolutely ludicrous,” he said. “Teachers aren’t meant to hold guns. You couldn’t train people enough you have to be trained like the secret service.”

* * *

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 6. In Andover, voting takes place at the Town Hall community room at Town Hall, 17 School Dr. Polls are open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Two Challenging Green for State Rep Seat

by Allison Lazur

Voters will be faced next week with the option to re-elect Republican Robin Green for a second term or put a newcomer in the 55th district's seat by electing either Democrat Tiffany Thiele or Green Party candidate Rob Barstow.

Green, 52, is a Marlborough resident who started her first business – the Discovery Zone Learning Center in Columbia – 16 years ago, which led to additional openings in Marlborough and Hebron. She is also involved with the Marlborough Business Association, Audubon Society and Friends of Connecticut State Parks.

Thiele, 37, is a Hebron resident who currently works in public relations for Connecticut College and serves as a citizen-at-large on the town's Capital Improvement Plan Committee.

Barstow, 23, of Marlborough, is currently enrolled at Manchester Community College, with plans to transfer to Central Connecticut State University next year as a possible economics major.

The 55th District covers Marlborough, Hebron, Andover and Bolton.

While Green said she hasn't seen Barstow on the election trail much, she said the campaign with Thiele has taken a negative turn.

Green said she's been keeping a positive message based around "no more taxes and no more tolls and controlling our spending." However despite her attempts, Green says she has gotten the feel from her constituents that it has been "a long dirty campaign" that has "disappointed the district."

"I spoke with Pam Sawyer and Gayle Mulligan and they've never seen such an aggressive campaign come into the 55th district before," Green said.

Sawyer served the 55th district from 1993 to 2014 and Mulligan served from 2015 to 2016.

Green noted an incident last weekend where her sign positioned on Route 6 in Andover was the only sign in that area spray-painted.

Green said she remedied the situation by flipping the double-sided sign and filing a police report.

A mailer sent out by Thiele's campaign was brought to the attention of the *Rivereast* by Marlborough residents.

The mailer stated "Bump stocks fire nine bullets in one second. Robin Green voted to legalize them (and she's on the education committee!)"

The state's General Assembly website reveals Green did vote against Bill HB-5542 which states "no person, other than a licensed firearms manufacturer under 18 USC 923(i) fulfilling a military contract, may sell, offer to sell, otherwise transfer or offer to transfer, purchase, possess, use or manufacture any rate of fire enhancement."

The bill was passed by the House and Senate and signed into state law by Governor Dannel P. Malloy just last month.

When asked about the mailer and the perceived negativity of the campaign, Thiele, 37, told the *Rivereast* the goal was to keep the campaign on the issues.

"We are keeping [the campaign] very focused on the issues," Thiele said, adding, "a lot of people don't know her record on things and on the issues. People don't know how she voted."

Still, despite all this, both Thiele and Green said they've had positive and encouraging conversations with those in the 55th district and feel good about their chances of winning the election.

Green said her constituents have told her "don't let [the negative campaign] get to you," adding, "they all have said wonderful things; I have such a great district that is so supportive."

Thiele, told the *Rivereast* she has knocked on nearly 4,000 doors of her constituents resulting in "really great conversations with homeowners about issues that are really important to them."

Barstow said he got involved with the cam-

aign for a different reason and has "no chance of winning because I did not get in this election to win."

He explained while he has plans to run again in three to four years, this time around, the goal was to get his name out there with his "limited resources" and "learn the basics of the State Elections and Enforcement (SEEC) rules and the campaign process."

Although Barstow doesn't expect to be elected, he still shared what he believes to be crucial state issues he hopes the incoming elected representative will address.

He pushed for a "single transferable voting system" which would allow voters to "rank their choices for a given office," resulting in "an election system designed to make elected positions a better representative of constituents."

"This way people who vote for popular candidates aren't punished, people who vote for third parties aren't punished, and it provides better competition in our elections, which means that people are happier with their choices," Barstow said.

All three candidates voiced their concerns with education.

Barstow referred to the issue as an "education crisis" stating that "with increased tuition costs, it's harder for people to go to school and get an education that will help them succeed in the future."

Green and Thiele specifically discussed Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funds from the state.

"We have to maintain educational funding at the same level and not have huge cuts into our town," Green said. "It all goes back on the property tax."

Thiele also said she wants to "make sure we get our fair share of ECS funding," and noted her support of universal pre-kindergarten, "if the budget can support it."

Both candidates also addressed state spending and the approximate \$4.6 billion deficit that analysts say could loom over Connecticut in

the next budget cycle, according to the *CTMirror*.

"I think the biggest issue is the budget," Green said. "We need to pull in our spending [and] look at where we are spending our money because the budget is going to eventually drip down to each of the towns."

While Thiele explained spending needs to be prioritized and ways of cutting spending need to be identified.

"I think the first thing that has to be tackled is the state of our economy. We need to look at ways to cut spending where we can [and] look at places where we can prioritize spending, making sure towns are supported and fully funding ECS, healthcare and social services," Thiele said.

Thiele – an Access Health CT supporter – said she believes the state should fund AHM [youth and family services], community health centers, while making sure the "pricing of prescription drugs is more transparent."

Access Health CT was established to meet the requirements of the federal Affordable Care Act, passed in March 2010.

Green and Thiele both expressed their enthusiasm of the possibility of being elected as state representative for the 55th District.

Thiele promised to "be accessible and present and put the district first."

Green voiced her enjoyment with her last session stating "If I'm lucky enough to get back in I will continue serving; I have the best district."

* * *

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 6; polls are open from 6 a.m.-8 p.m.

In Hebron, voting is done at the Hebron Elementary School gymnasium, 92 Church St.; in Andover, residents can vote at the Town Hall community room, 17 School Dr.; and in Marlborough, ballots can be cast at the Marlborough Elementary School community room, 25 School Dr.

Two Newcomers Vie for House Seat

by Sloan Brewster

Republican Irene Haines and Democrat Theresa Govert are each hoping to take on the 34th House District.

Both are new to state politics.

Haines, 57, has the endorsement of the representative currently in the seat, which represents East Haddam, East Hampton and a portion of Colchester.

"Melissa Ziobron thought I'd be a good candidate so she could move on in confidence to run for the Senate," Haines said.

One of Haines' top concerns is making Connecticut affordable and boosting the economy.

"I want to help create policies that retain and attract business," she said. "Everyone is complaining that [Connecticut is] too expensive."

The \$250 business entity tax and \$300 building permit fee for businesses and small contractors are examples of charges that hurt businesses, according to Haines.

She said she wants to look at state revenues and figure out where they are being spent.

She would also like the state to invest in education and align vocational and technical programs with manufacturing to help fill jobs in that sector, she said. Doing so will also bring hope to young people and give them reasons to remain in the state.

Haines sees tourism as another way to boost the economy, starting with the reopening of the state's welcome centers on I-95.

"We are so beautiful. We are so close to the beach, the mountains, Boston, New York," she said. "Because our welcome centers are closed down, we are a pass through state."

Haines is working with East Haddam's Economic Development Commission and the towns of Essex, Deep River and Haddam to collaborate on festivals to draw people to the Connecticut River Valley.

"Every dollar that is spent on tourism brings \$14 back to the state," she said. "It is an absolute no brainer why we should do more economic development in terms of tourism."

Theresa Govert, 27, is running precisely because she is so young.

"I decided to run because I am a young adult that lives in this community," she said. "The average age of state representatives is 69; As someone who is under the age of 40, I think that we have different concerns with the state."

Govert believes in the importance of diversity in age and gender and wants people to know that there are young people who are invested and who need a voice in the long term planning of the state.

One of her ideas is to create a fairer tax structure for the middle class.

Another thing she wants to look at is healthcare affordability and the availability of prescription drugs.

"From a moral standpoint, I believe that everyone deserves affordable healthcare," she said.

A fulltime caregiver for her grandmother, Govert said prescription drug cost is important.

In addition, she wants to make sure social services for the most vulnerable populations are protected.

Another issue of import to Govert, who has worked with people in recovery, is the opioid crisis. She said there should be more funding at the state level so people can access recovery.

"In the state of Connecticut you're more likely to die from a drug overdose than a car accident," she said.

Govert organized the Foliage Folk Festival in Lyme, which took place in early October, with parents who lost children to overdoses or who are dealing with addiction.

"As a millennial, I think this epidemic is our generation's responsibility to address," she said.

Govert also wants to boost economic development and does not agree with the practice of giving large corporations handouts, she said.

"When we give \$100 million, what does that give back to our workforce?" she mused.

Rather, she wants to give more small and mid-sized businesses the help.

Govert described investing in clean energy as another way to boost the economy, while at

the same time protecting the environment.

She wants to bring more shared solar projects to the state, she said. With shared solar, people unable to put solar panels on their homes due to a lack of light or other reasons can buy into a community solar project.

When asked about the tone on the campaigns this year, Haines said it was a difficult time to run because of divisiveness, but close to home people are willing to work together.

"I think we're united to do hard work for Connecticut," she said.

Govert said she and Haines knew one another before the campaign began and had agreed to keep it positive and focus on the issues.

"People overwhelmingly love the towns that they live in and love our area," she said.

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 6. Polls are open from 6 a.m.-8 p.m. In East Hampton, voting takes place at East Hampton Middle School at 19 Childs Road. Colchester has four voting districts at three polling places in town: District 1 votes at town hall, 127 Norwich Ave.; District 3 votes at Bacon Academy, 611 Norwich Ave., and Districts 2 and 4 vote at Abundant Life of Assemblies of God Church, 85 Skinner Rd. Colchester residents who are unsure of their district can call town hall at 860-537-7200 or visit www.dir.ct.gov/sots/LookUp.aspx.

Gay Hopes to Join Voter Registrars' Office

by Elizabeth Regan

Only two towns in Connecticut currently have a third-party registrar of voters – a scenario East Hampton resident Brian Gay hopes to change.

Gay, 29, is running on the Connecticut Green Party ticket to be a registrar of voters in East Hampton.

"I think the fact that I am not a Democrat or Republican is beneficial for the general public insofar as the majority of voters tend to be independent or unaffiliated, and I would hope to be able to represent them as well," Gay said.

Numbers from the town clerk's office show third-party and unaffiliated voters comprise approximately 48 percent of registered voters.

Westbrook and New Canaan currently have a third-party registrar of voters, according to Secretary of the State spokesman Gabe Rosenberg. The first third-party registrar took office in Hartford in 2009.

State law mandates each municipality must elect one Republican and one Democratic registrar. For an additional party to be represented, a candidate must receive more votes than either the Republican or Democratic nominee.

Town Manager Michael Maniscalco said he still has to consult with Finance Director Jeff Jylkka, but it appears the cost of an additional registrar would likely cause the department's current budget to run over, which would lead to an end of the year transfer from unexpended line items in the budget. The position would have to be added to future budgets as its own line item.

According to state statute, each registrar of voters must appoint a deputy registrar immediately after being elected. The deputy registrar fills in as needed. Deputy registrars are paid from \$14.79 to \$15.09 per hour.

Gay said he'd be looking to appoint a third-party or unaffiliated voter – not necessarily a member of the Green Party.

And he has a different idea for funding a third registrar.

"Essentially, it would be three for the price of two," he said, suggesting all three registrars share the existing salary budget.

Human Resources Director Lisa Seymour said current Registrars of Voters Lori Wilcox, R, and Stephanie Lee, D, make \$7,946 and \$7,619, respectively.

Wilcox, who is running for re-election, scoffed at the idea.

"So he'd like me to take a pay cut," she said. "No."

She said she only earns about \$15 per hour when all her time is added up.

Registrars of voters, who are elected every two years in East Hampton, are responsible for administering elections, registering voters and appointing and training election officials in accordance with state election laws.

Wilcox said there were 10 large-scale events for the registrars over the past year, including multiple elections, recounts, referendums, and a random audit by the Secretary of the State's office.

"You'd be heading into below-minimum-wage territory right there," she said of Gay's funding solution.

Other cost implications include the mandated certification program each registrar must complete within two years of election. The certification costs \$1,600 per registrar, according to a press release from the Secretary of the State's office.

Space is an issue too, according to Wilcox.

"We can only have two people working at one time," she said. "There isn't even space in here for two people, let alone three. So somebody would be stuck coming in another day."

Charlene Marquis-O'Brien, the Democratic candidate running to replace Lee, said she doesn't have any thoughts on the possibility of a third registrar. But she said she doesn't think Gay is the one who gets to decide how the funding issue will be handled.

Gay said he understands the concerns, but stands by his suggestion.

"From my perspective, in terms of the financial crunch the town is in and given the budget concerns, it makes more sense to use what's already allocated," he said. "I just think it's more practical to split it three ways, get an additional set of hands and not allocate additional funds."

If splitting the existing salary budget isn't possible, he said he would like to keep the cost as low as possible for the town.

"Whether that's applying for a grant, whether that's self-funding, I'd want to explore what the options are," he said.

When it comes to office space, he said he'd be willing to work wherever or whenever is convenient for the team.

"With an extra set of hands, we could have more office hours," he said.

Gay, who earned a degree in humanities from Providence College, is a quality assurance supervisor at Advanced Behavioral Health in Middletown. He moved to East Hampton three years ago.

He said database skills and a flexible work schedule complement his desire to learn more about democracy.

"I'm kind of a news junkie and I like follow-

ing politics," he said. "I want to have a better understanding of how the electoral process works," he said.

Wilcox, 61, has served as the Republican registrar for four years. She's lived in town for three decades.

Wilcox worked for 30 years at United Technologies before retiring in 2013 from her financial role in the Information Technology department.

She said the job honed her organizational skills and her attention to detail.

Wilcox counts the day to day aspects of the job – such as updating the voter registration list – as something she thrives on. She said Election Day or various referendums can be stressful, but she views it as an important way to give back to the community.

Marquis-O'Brien, 63, is a semi-retired sales associate who has lived in East Hampton for 15 years.

She worked as a poll worker at last week's budget referendum for the first time.

"I thought it would be interesting for me to be involved in what goes on in an election and the electoral process," she said.

Marquis-O'Brien worked for 30 years in the administrative field for education, insurance, legal and financial services. Her job experience includes time as a legal secretary and paralegal at a major law firm in Hartford.

"Working in all those different fields, I feel I have a lot of administrative experience working with confidential information. And I do consider everything to be confidential," she said.

The election will be held Tuesday, Nov. 6 from 6 a.m.-8 p.m. at East Hampton Middle School, 19 Childs Rd.

Single-Vehicle Collision in Colchester with Tree, Two Injured

State Police said a single-vehicle collision with a tree left the driver and passenger with minor injuries.

At approximately 4:59 p.m. on Oct. 24, a Subaru Legacy driven by Michael V. Dunn, 25, of 39 Monroe Ave., Jewett City, was traveling eastbound on Route 2 near exit 21 when

the vehicle traveled off the road, striking a tree.

Dunn was transported by Lifestar to Hartford Hospital with minor injuries and his passenger Cheyenne De Lillo, 22, of 60 Sunny Hill Dr., Uncasville, was also transported to Hartford Hospital by Colchester Ambulance, also with minor injuries, police said.

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Osten and Lounsbury At It Again

by Sloan Brewster

Retired Norwich police detective Mark Lounsbury is running against incumbent Democrat Cathy Osten in the 19th state Senate District – and it's not the first time the opponents have squared off.

Last year, Lounsbury launched an unsuccessful bid for Osten's first selectman seat. He is now vying for her 19th District Senate seat, which covers the *Rivereast* towns of Hebron and Marlborough, as well as Columbia, Franklin, Lebanon, Ledyard, Lisbon, Montville, Norwich and Sprague.

Osten, 63, of Sprague, who has served three terms in the state Senate, said it really doesn't matter who her opponent is.

"To me, my campaign is always about running for my constituents in the 19th district and that's what I always focus on," she said. "I focus on what I'm planning to do next."

Lounsbury, 57, also of Sprague, said he was having fun getting to know people in the district but made no bones about his expectations.

"Is this going to happen? No," he said of winning. "It would be a miracle. Change takes time; I'm realistic. Should I get the job? Yeah... We'll see what happens on Nov. 6 and we'll see where we're going from there."

Osten said her campaign was focused on five basic things.

Mental health will be her key areas of focus this time around, she said.

"That's always been one of my top priorities and it's notched up top to number one," she said.

Her concern is that there is an increasing

number of people with mental illness in prisons, she said. From 1989 to 2010, Osten worked for the Department of Corrections and at that time only about 5-6 percent of inmates were chronically mentally ill, she said. Now, between 35 to 45 percent of them have chronic mental illness.

As far as she is concerned, the mentally ill should be housed elsewhere – not in prison.

She said that when state hospitals were closed in accordance with federal law, the money that was spent on the hospitals should have been put toward private housing and supportive services.

While some of the funds have been funneled to housing and services, more need to go in that direction, she said.

Budget is near the top of the list of priorities, she said, explaining that she wants to hone in on what the state is spending taxpayer money on.

Education is the next issue on which Osten's campaign is focused. Specifically, she wants to make sure rural communities get enough state aid.

Developmental disability issues are also important to the senator. She wants to make sure individuals and groups who work with clients with disabilities get appropriate resources from the state.

Transportation is the last of the five basic issues on which her campaign is focused. Namely, she wants to make sure the state has the correct resources to fix bridges and keep

infrastructure in shape.

Lounsbury worries about where the state is headed politically.

He said the state has been on the "road to socialism" for three decades.

"It's the state versus individuals, and the individuals have the rights."

Despite that, he said laws are being passed that infringe on those individual rights. Government has transitioned from being a job of service to one of power, he added.

A possible resolution is term limits, according to Lounsbury. He'd like to see four-year terms with a maximum of three terms.

Lounsbury is also concerned about the state budget, which he called a "huge financial mess."

The state is on the verge of defaulting on its bonds, he said. If that happens, the federal government would step in.

One big problem he wants to fix is the teachers' pension fund.

According to the *CTMirror*, the fund only has enough assets to cover 56 percent of its longterm obligations due to inadequate state contributions from 1939 to 2008.

Lounsbury said teacher pensions are not the only problem.

"There are at least two bargaining units in state that contribute nothing to their retirement," he said. "Who's putting money in to pay for their health benefits when they retire? The taxpayers."

That needs to be addressed through union negotiations, he said. Other issues that need to

be hashed out with state employees include the prohibition on layoffs in the current contract.

"Nobody can get laid off, but we don't have any money, but they can't get laid off," he said.

Like his opponent, Lounsbury is concerned about Eastern Connecticut.

"We're just forgotten out here," he said. "We're ignored."

When asked about the tone of the campaign, Lounsbury said he hasn't been flinging any mud, but he said Osten has.

Responding to accusations from Osten's campaign that he has misidentified himself a military veteran, he said he never made any such claim. Rather, he volunteers with veterans and hangs out with them.

Osten, who is a veteran, said there was a group of veterans concerned that Lounsbury was posturing that he was a veteran, but that she has not talked about it and neither has anyone in her campaign.

"I have little to no time to spend on personal grudges with Mr. Lounsbury," she said. "We've got so much to do."

Osten said she has noticed an overall negative tone in this election, but that she tries to ignore it and focus on the issues.

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 6. Polls are open from 6 a.m.-8 p.m. Voters in Hebron cast their ballots at the Hebron Elementary School Gymnasium, 92 Church Street. In Marlborough, voting takes place at the Elmer Thienes/Mary Hall Elementary School Community Room on 25 School Drive.

Hebron Resident Memorializes Dead Celebrities with Pumpkins

by Sloan Brewster

Memories are fleeting, as are pumpkin memorials carved by local artist and musician Caleb Greenleaf.

Each fall, Greenleaf spends four to six hours each creating carvings of deceased celebrities in pumpkins. After displaying them for a few days on his deck, he happily chucks them into the woods as fodder for possums and other creatures of the night.

"It's funny because this is disposable art," Greenleaf said.

There's a pattern of that in his life. Greenleaf, who also paints, said when he was younger he sold every painting he did, so they too were disposable – in a metaphorical sense.

He said he can appreciate Buddhism and the practice of creating mandalas in the sand and then ritualistically destroying them. A tattoo artist, he gave his wife a tattoo of a mandala.

He sees art as a way to keep busy and value happiness in a given moment.

"I think a lot of people are stressed out," he said. "They have a hard time appreciating that they are happy and healthy at that moment."

His more recent art lives on in the afterlife. That is to say in photos, which Greenleaf posts on Facebook.

"A few years ago I created a Facebook page; [I'm] just putting art up there," Greenleaf said. "I figured some people would like to see some of the things I like to do."

Other pictures on the page include paintings, tattoos, wood carvings and even an intricately-latticed pie.

Despite the obvious level of artistic achievement in his creations, Greenleaf considers himself a hobbyist first and foremost.

"It's just one of my hobbies," he said about carving pumpkins.

Each fall, Greenleaf embraces the morbid nature of Halloween and memorializes departed A-list celebs.

"It's like my thing," he said. "If you think about a pumpkin, it kind of has a short life too so you bring [that person] back for a little bit."

Preparation of the pumpkin is key. Greenleaf takes advantage of a tattooing technique to copy

a picture on the face of a pumpkin. First, he copies the picture on carbon paper then he rubs deodorant on the print. Finally, he adheres the paper to the pumpkin; when he removes it, the image has been transferred.

Once the ink dries, Greenleaf carves the picture into the pumpkin using various tools, including classic linoleum cutting tools, X-Acto knives, clay-carving tools, which he sharpens so they'll cut into the skin, and clay-cutting tools.

He sculpts entirely by hand.

"Some people use electric tools," he said.

He scrapes off the skin to get the depth. Then he carves down to the thickness he likes. Every line and stroke of the carving tool has significance, he said. Losing just one line means losing the person he is depicting.

To make the carving appear lifelike he slips a flashlight inside the pumpkin and then takes a photo. If someone who looks at the photo sees the person, it means Greenleaf has done his job, he said.

"The thinnest parts are going to show the most light," he said. "The deepest part shows as the farthest out so it's a trick, it tricks your eyes ... It looks neat like that but when you shut off the light [in the room] it just illuminates really well ... The skin of it will block the camera from seeing the light shining through."

Greenleaf has been creating the pumpkin sculptures for four years. His first one was of singer Amy Winehouse.

This year he has done actor Burt Reynolds, which marked his 20th one, as well as singer Aretha Franklin, actors Verne Troyer and R. Lee Ermey, physicist Stephen Hawking, and rapper Mac Miller.

Greenleaf said his last pumpkin of the season will be Vinnie Paul, the longtime drummer for rock band Pantera. He said Paul was an important musical influence.

"I played drums in a band for over 10 years and he was a giant inspiration because he's the drummer in Pantera," he said. "I grew up listening to that kind of music – heavy metal."

Earlier this year, one of Greenleaf's carvings

was of Paul's brother and Pantera guitarist Dimebag Darrel, who was fatally shot while onstage in 2004.

Greenleaf said that, if he has time, he'll also try to fit in Cranberries lead singer Dolores O'Riordan, who died in January, before doing Paul.

Another musician who influenced him and was memorialized in orange was Soundgarden lead singer Chris Cornell, who died by suicide in 2017.

"That was a huge one for me," he said of Cornell. "That was one that broke my heart."

Alice in Chains lead singer Layne Staley, who died in 2002 before Greenleaf began his yearly tradition and who was also an influence, may one day become a piece of pumpkin art too, if Greenleaf gets the chance, he said.

Halloween does not necessarily mark the close of pumpkin carving season for Greenleaf; he keeps going until he can't find anymore ripe pumpkins.

"We've had a frost already, so we're starting to lose pumpkins," he said.

He gets pumpkins from Savitsky Farm, in Colchester, though he said he hopes one year someone will sponsor him and give him a stash of the orange squash. In the meantime, he has found a species of pumpkins with an ultra-flat face and is planning to cultivate some of the seeds and plant them in the spring to become a bit more self-sufficient.

Greenleaf, who works in the purchasing department at Bell Power Systems, the northeast distributor of John Deere and Yanmar Industrial Engines, attended Middlesex Community College for a semester but for the most part is self-taught.

Recently, he decided it was time to take art more seriously and is currently working on building his portfolio. After pumpkin season he'll paint portraits for a while.

He still takes time for music too, jamming with musicians he knows and meeting up with a fellow guitarist every six months or so to pack about 100 songs into four hours. A tribute artist, he performs pieces from musicians such as



Greenleaf memorialized late singer Aretha Franklin in one of his pumpkins. Photo by Caleb Greenleaf

John Frusciante, the former lead guitarist for Red Hot Chili Peppers, and Elliot Smith, a folk artist who passed in 2003.

Greenleaf's priority, however, is family. He is teaching his 8-year-old daughter Lyric Greenleaf to play guitar and she has caught the pumpkin-carving bug as well.

Last year, Lyric carved DC Comic character Harley Quinn, whom she also dressed as for Halloween.

"I mean, it was pretty hard," she said of carving the pumpkin.

This year, she is planning to do Draco Malfoy, a character from J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series.

As far as her father's creations are concerned, Lyric is all praise.

"I think they're amazing," she said. "I mean all the time he spends on them, everything is awesome."

Colchester Man Charged with Murder After Fatal Stabbing

by Allison Lazur

A local man was arrested Tuesday in the fatal stabbing of another man, state police said.

According to a press release, at about 8 p.m. Tuesday, police received reports of a man down in the parking lot of the apartment building at 55 Renee Drive.

Colchester Police and troopers from State Police Troop K responded to the scene to discover a man unresponsive and with a stab wound to his abdomen. The man was later pronounced dead at the scene.

The victim's identity had not been released as of press time.

Police arrested Elmar Baker, 38, in connection with the stabbing. While police listed Baker's address as 55 Renee Dr., Apt. 4, the property manager for the building, Ronald Goldstein, said Wednesday Baker is not a tenant there.

Police told the *Rivereast* Thursday that while the specifics in this case are unclear, it's possible Baker did not have a license to prove a place of residence and gave his last known address instead.

Baker was charged with murder and held on a \$2 million bond. He appeared in court Wednesday, at which time the bond was reduced to \$1 million and the case continued to Nov. 19. According to the state corrections website, as of Thursday Baker is still an inmate at Corrigan-Radgowski Correctional Center in Montville.

The case is under investigation by Eastern District Major Crime Squad and police have



Elmar Baker

said this is an isolated incident with no threat to the public.

According to the state judicial website, Baker was found guilty of possession of narcotics in October 2013 and sentenced to two years in prison.

According to Colchester Resident Trooper Supervisor Sergeant Martin Martinez, the last homicide to occur in Colchester was in May when 36-year-old James E. Stone was found with gunshot wounds at his residence on Stanavage Road located on the Golden Hill Paugussett Reservation. That case is still under investigation, Martinez said.

Police Trying to Piece Together East Hampton School Bus Crash

by Elizabeth Regan

Police are working to determine if the man arrested in East Windsor Monday afternoon is the same one who drove a stolen truck into an East Hampton School bus that morning, leaving multiple middle school students with head injuries.



Scott Kaminski

Scott Kaminski, 32, of Hartford, was arrested by state police at approximately 2:57 p.m. in the same white Jeep stolen from East Hampton after the bus crash. He was charged with a host of charges ranging from larceny to driving under the influence.

East Hampton Police Chief Dennis Woessner said Kaminski is a "person of interest" in the investigation into the Monday morning crash on North Main Street near Angelico's Lakehouse. He emphasized police "are not ready to make the jump" that he was the same person who hit the school bus head-on.

Woessner said a man driving a Dodge 2500 pickup truck, stolen from the Starbucks parking lot in Colchester, drove into the East Hampton school bus on its morning route after the truck crossed over into the other lane to avoid some stopped cars.

Woessner said no injuries were reported at the scene, but a couple students were later diagnosed with concussions.

The driver of the stolen truck got out of the stalled vehicle and jumped into a Jeep owned by a Good Samaritan who had stopped to help the kids, Woessner said. Then he got away.

State police involvement in the case began hours later when they were alerted by Water-

bury police that the driver of a stolen Jeep engaged police in pursuit after an attempted traffic stop around 2:09 p.m., according to state police records. It was the same vehicle stolen from East Hampton.

State police said they saw the Jeep approximately nine minutes later speeding on I-84 eastbound in West Hartford near Exit 39A before it got off the highway on Exit 42. The Jeep struck several cars in West Hartford and Hartford.

State police said the Jeep was spotted again a short time later near exit 48 on I-84 eastbound, where troopers tried to stop him but were unsuccessful. A chase ensued, taking troopers and the Jeep from I-91 to Exit 42, where they continued north on South Main Street and then east on Route 140.

The chase ended when the Jeep crashed into a dump truck and another vehicle, according to state police. The Jeep came to an uncontrolled stop on the driver's side near the intersection of Route 140 and Shoham Road.

In addition to driving under the influence, Kaminski was charged with reckless driving, engaging police in pursuit, possession of drug paraphernalia, first-degree larceny and resisting arrest.

Woessner said East Hampton police are trying to get surveillance footage from Colchester and Waterbury to see if they can tie Kaminski to the school bus crash. He said it will likely be a few weeks until an arrest is made if they are able to make a connection.

Superintendent of Schools Paul K. Smith, who was on the scene with East Hampton Middle School Principal Jason Lehmann, said the students were loaded into a different bus and assessed by nurses when they got to the school. Those who showed signs of injuries were taken to their own doctors by their parents.

Steinhauser Seeks to Unseat Carpino

by Elizabeth Regan

The campaign for the 32nd State House District seat is a tale of two mothers.

One is a four-term Republican lawmaker, lawyer and soccer mom, while the other is a Democratic, baby-wearing doula hoping to ride the blue wave to Hartford.

Incumbent state Rep. Christie Carpino, a Republican from Cromwell, got her start in the legislature when she unseated 10-term incumbent Democrat James O'Rourke in 2010. She said her priorities remain the same as they were then: working for a healthy economy, protecting public safety and making sure local issues are heard in Hartford.

Carpino, 43, is married with two school-aged children and a stepson.

Challenger Laurel Steinhauser, a Democrat from Portland, said when she announced her candidacy that the social and political climate has been primed for a change since the election of President Donald J. Trump in 2016. Now, she said knocking on thousands of doors in Cromwell and Portland and hearing the personal stories of the people who live behind them has reinforced and clarified her reasons for running.

A birth doula and massage therapist, Steinhauser said her experience advocating for women and families gives her "a different kind of perspective that is much needed" in Hartford. The Wesleyan graduate has also taught children with speech and behavioral disorders in low income communities.

"I think it really comes down to values," she said. "Do people want to continue down this path where our state prioritizes handouts for massive corporations over investing in people? I believe the way forward for us as a state, the way we grow the economy, is by investing in strengthening our middle class."

Steinhauser, 35, is married with three children under six years old.

Both Carpino and Steinhauser identify affordability as one of the main keywords they hear when they're talking to residents in the district. But that word means different things to each candidate.

For Steinhauser, making the state affordable

means addressing high property taxes, high healthcare costs and a lack of job opportunity.

"I think our state has been a pretty poor partner in working with our towns toward property tax relief," she said. "As a state, we need to be incentivizing our towns to work together to figure out where we can share services and how we can spend money more efficiently so we can bring down property taxes in our communities."

It's also critical that the state "hold up its end of the bargain" when it comes to funding public education, according to Steinhauser. Over the past few years, there's been downward trend in the amount of education aid given to small towns by the state. The education cost sharing program is intended to help make up the difference between what taxpayers in a given municipality can afford to pay and what education actually costs.

But Carpino said it's not high property taxes she hears about when she's knocking on doors or listening to residents' concerns at events.

"No. They're talking about how many new taxes there are," she said. "They're very much aware that under the past administration, the taxes went up. New taxes. And people don't want to see any more new taxes."

According to the *Connecticut Mirror*, Gov. Dannel P. Malloy and the Democratic majority raised income, sales and corporation taxes and started a new tax on hospitals during his first term. Shortly after his re-election, with Democrats still in the majority, the budget saw an increase in income tax rates on the wealthy, a cut to income tax credits for the middle class, and increased taxes on corporations and cigarette sales.

Carpino said she hears people complaining about state-imposed taxes wherever she goes, from her kids' soccer games to the town-wide Trick or Treat event on Main Street in Portland.

"It's the same concerns: 'How much more can I give?'" Carpino recounted.

The Republican said keeping communities affordable means blocking tax increases at the state level and promoting economic development.

Steinhauser shares concerns about the state

income tax, but they revolve around its effect on the middle class.

"Our middle class is paying a larger percentage in the income tax than the folks who make the very, very most in our state, and I think that's backwards. We need to ask the people who make the very most to pay their fair share," she said.

Other priorities for Steinhauser include a public healthcare option in the state and a cap on prescription drug costs. She believes in universal preschool education and investing in community colleges and the state university system. She is also an advocate for paid family and medical leave.

A proposal that has not yet made it into law would require all private sector employees to put 0.5 percent of their salary toward a fund they could access if they needed to take time off to care for themselves or a loved one. The program would cover up to 12 weeks off and amount would be capped at up to \$1,000 per week.

Steinhauser identified the United States as the only industrialized country without a paid family leave program.

"It could be a long time till we see a national policy address paid family leave, so I'd really like to work toward making Connecticut a state that adopts it," Steinhauser said.

In Carpino's campaign, public health issues as a key area of focus. A member of the legislature's Public Health Committee, she has been instrumental in bills to address the opioid epidemic and to prevent the kind of treatment that came to light in a highly-publicized abuse case at Whiting Forensic Hospital in Middletown.

A bill proposed by Carpino, which became law this year, is an effort to reform state-run mental health care facilities by requiring mandatory reporting of suspected patient abuse and establishing a task force to evaluate existing conditions in the system. The bill also requires the Department of Public Health to conduct an extensive, on-site review of administrative records and patient complaints at Whiting Forensic Hospital by the end of the year.

Carpino said it didn't matter to her that Middletown is not in her district.

"The treatment of individuals up there was inhumane," she said. "They are human beings who deserve to be treated with respect and dignity, and that could be any of us."

Both candidates said the response from people in the district has been positive.

Steinhauser said the main focus of her campaign has been knocking on doors.

"There are just so many wonderful surprises, joyful moments that have come out of that," she said.

She recounted the story of a man putting up Halloween decorations one day as she walked by his house. Stopping to say hello, she found he was a registered Republican with vastly different views on national policy but some similar views on what needs to happen to strengthen the community.

"And I so strongly believe that's how we move forward as a community, that's how we move forward as a state. We have to find places where we can agree and work together and kind of remind ourselves we're all human, we're all people who care about our communities," she said.

Carpino – working with a group of volunteers that includes "a tremendous group of 10-year-olds, and some six-year-olds as well" – said she's been well received by the Cromwell and Portland communities this campaign season.

That's because she doesn't vote the party line and doesn't engage in political bickering, she said.

"Constituents have recognized the dedication I put into the district during my term. And we still have a lot more to do," she said. "I voted for pay equity. I voted to protect victims who are suffering from domestic violence. I voted to maintain essential health benefits for moms and newborns because that's what was important to my district."

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 6. Polls are open from 6 a.m.-8 p.m. at Portland Middle School, 93 High St.

East Hampton Police News

10/24: David Sweet, 46, of 440 Amston Rd., Colchester, was arrested and charged with traveling unreasonably fast, engaging in pursuit, improper use of registration, operating a motor vehicle without a license and operating an unregistered motor vehicle, East Hampton Police said.

11/1: A 17-year-old juvenile of East Hampton was issued a summons for improper marker plates, operating a motor vehicle without a license and operating an unregistered and uninsured motor vehicle, police said.

Also, from Oct. 29-Nov. 4, officers responded to nine medical calls, five motor vehicle crashes and five alarms, and made 15 traffic stops.

Portland Police News

10/22: Monica Brockett, 40, of 1503 Portland Cobalt Rd., was charged with failure to appear, Portland Police said.

10/22: Jordan Miazga, 23, of 181 River Rd., Killingworth, was charged with engaging an officer in pursuit, disobeying an officer's signal, operating under suspension, traveling unreasonably fast and use of cell phone while operating a motor vehicle, police said.

Colchester Police News

10/21: Colchester Police said Sara N. Stephansky, 23, of 39 Stoneybrook Dr., Apt. 6, Millis, Mass., was arrested and charged with DUI and failure to drive in proper lane.

10/28: State Police said Terry L. Hicks, 34, of 5 Bittersweet Dr., Ledyard, was arrested and charged with DUI and improper turns.

Portland Crashes Close Route 17 – Twice

by Elizabeth Regan

Two one-car crashes on the same stretch of Route 17 took out utility poles and closed the road for several hours this week.

Portland Fire Chief Robert Shea said the first crash occurred Tuesday at approximately 6:30 a.m. when a car crashed into a pole just north of Overlook Court and Appletree Lane, bringing down a utility pole and wires. The road was closed and cars were detoured from Appletree Lane to Thompson Hill Road until about 1 p.m.

The driver was able to get out of the car himself and was taken to a local hospital for observation, Shea said.

An early-morning crash on Thursday occurred just north of the earlier downed pole in the area of Paley Farm Road, according to

Shea. Portland Police Department responded around 1:04 a.m.

Shea said the crash once again brought down a pole and wires. Both occupants of the vehicle were brought to an area hospital for evaluation. Shea did not know the extent of the injuries.

The road was closed until about 9 a.m., according to Shea.

He acknowledged the area is prone to accidents but said he did not know why.

"They're usually single-car accidents, they're usually off the road, and they're usually into a pole," he said.

Portland police could not be reached by press time.

Hebron Single-Vehicle Collision with Guardrail and Tree

State Police said a single-vehicle collision with a guardrail and a tree left one woman with possible injuries.

At approximately 1:25 p.m. on Oct. 24, a Toyota Rav4, driven by Kathleen Setaro, 57, of 111 Old Colchester Rd., Amston, was traveling south on Route 85 near the intersection with Martin Rd., when the vehicle crossed the double yellow line, police said.

The vehicle subsequently struck the guardrail on the northbound shoulder and continued approximately one-tenth of a mile, striking a tree, police said.

Police said Setaro was transported by the Hebron Fire Department to Middlesex Hospital Marlborough Medical Center with possible injuries.

Single-Vehicle Collision in Marlborough, Leaves One with Minor Injuries

State Police said a single-vehicle collision with a fence, house number, Halloween decorations and a tree left one man with minor injuries.

At approximately 12:13 p.m. on Oct 23, a Hyundai Sonata driven by Patrick Dyer, 33, of 5 Silver Meadow Dr., Colchester, was traveling north on South Main Street near the intersection with Wilhenger Drive when the vehicle traveled east off the roadway.

Police said the vehicle subsequently struck a split rail fence, a house number, Halloween

decorations and then a tree before coming to a final rest.

According to police, Dyer stated there was an animal in the roadway and he swerved to avoid it.

Dyer was transported to Middlesex Hospital Marlborough Medical Center by the Roy B. Pettengill Ambulance with lacerations to his face from striking the windshield, police said. Dyer was issued a written warning for failure to maintain proper lane and failure to wear seatbelt.

East Hampton Police News

10/17: Stephen Naud, 48, of 33 Colchester Ave., was arrested and charged with DUI, East Hampton Police said.

10/19: Louis Agli, 62, of 135 Butternut St., Middletown, was arrested and charged with DUI, police said.

10/20: Melanie Sharp, 18, of 35 West Point Rd., was arrested and charged with DUI and failure to drive right, police said.

10/22: Patrick McGuigan, 47, of 24 Walnut

Ave., was arrested for DUI, operating an unregistered motor vehicle and misuse of plates, police said.

10/23: Janet Dellafiore, 68, of 116 Comstock Trail, was arrested and charged with third-degree assault and disorderly conduct, police said.

From Oct. 15-21, officers responded to 12 medical calls, five motor vehicle crashes and nine alarms, and made 14 traffic stops, police said.

Obituaries

Colchester

Patricia Ann LaGrega

Patricia Ann LaGrega, 79, of Colchester, widow of the late Richard A. LaGrega, passed away Friday, Oct. 26, at home. Born March 17, 1939, in Boston, she was the daughter of the late John and Adelaide (Benedetti) Tedesco.

Only second to that of her family, Pat had an incredible love for the community of Colchester. After her children started school, she first took a position with Social Services and later ran and won the election for town clerk /tax collector (at that time it was a joint position) in January 1978. The posts eventually became separate and she retired as town clerk in November 1999 after serving tirelessly for 22 years. Mrs. LaGrega was also a very active member of the Colchester Democratic Town Committee.

She leaves three children, Richard LaGrega and his fiancée, Kathy Ciopryna of Colchester, Diane LaGrega of Colchester and Cheryl Stanton and her husband, William of Richmond, Va.; eight grandchildren (and their spouses), Jayme (Jamie), Richard (Kim), Nicole (Josh), Taylor (Steven), Shannon (Evan), Anthony, Sophia and James; nine great grandchildren, Tommy, Blake, Camden, Evangeline, Anwyn, Luca, Finn, Mia, and Gianna; and her sister, Rita Piccone of Burlington, Mass.

In addition to her beloved husband of nearly 50 years, who predeceased her in 2005, and her parents, she was predeceased by a grandson, Daniel; and four siblings, John, Sonny, Ted, and Dorothy.

The memorial liturgy was celebrated Wednesday, Oct. 31, directly at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave., Colchester. There were no calling hours and burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, in recognition of their unflinching support to Pat, her family and the community, the family suggests that donations in her memory be made to the Colchester-Hayward Vol. Fire Co., 18-54 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, CT 06415.

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

Portland

Eleanor Smith

Eleanor Smith, 90, of Portland, passed away Wednesday, Oct. 24, at the Cobalt Healthcare Lodge in Cobalt. She was predeceased by her loving husband Frank and son Mark. She was the beloved daughter of the late Edward and Bertha Mackiewicz of Milford.

Eleanor was born in Milford May 2, 1928, and graduated from Lauralton Hall, an all-girls Roman Catholic high school in 1946. She was a 1949 graduate of the nursing program at the Hospital of St. Raphael in New Haven and received her Connecticut State Certificate as a registered nurse in 1950. Eleanor worked as a Registered Nurse in surgery for many years at the Connecticut Valley Hospital in Middletown, later working at the Portland Convalescent Home where she took great pride in ensuring excellent care for their residents.

She is survived by Mark's wife, Pamela Trailsmith of Mystic and their son, Matthew Trailsmith and his wife Sydney of Durham, N.C., and their daughter Larisa Jack, her husband Donaven and their children Lihne, Jonatan and Darius of East Hampton. She is also survived by her son Craig Smith and his wife Terry of Lebanon, and their two daughters, Rebecca and Emily, and her son David Smith, his wife Paula, and their children Kathryn and Andrew of Sea Cliff, N.Y.

Her funeral liturgy will be held Friday, Nov. 16, at 10 a.m., at St. Mary Church, 51 Freestone Ave., Portland. Burial will be in the State Veterans' Cemetery, Middletown. There are no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers, Eleanor would have wished for a donation to the Connecticut Humane Society, 701 Russell Rd., Newington, CT 06111.



Amston

Steven Francis Whalen

Steven Francis Whalen of Amston passed away Sunday, Oct. 28, surrounded by family members, after a brave fight against the cancer ravaging his body. Steve was born in Waterbury June 16, 1959, the second child and son of Richard and Louise (Laurelli) Whalen.

The family moved to South Windsor where Steve spent his childhood and graduated from South Windsor High School in 1977. He spent four years in the Air Force, learning what became his trade of radio communications.

Steven had many interests, among them scuba diving, fishing and cycling. After many years with SBC, Sprint and AT&T, he retired as a network engineer in 2016 to pursue his passion of cycling around the country and the world. Steven was working toward becoming a leader of his own group cycling tours.

Steven leaves behind his parents, Richard and Louise; his brothers, Richard (Iris) and Andrew (Mary Claire) and sisters Lisa Schiffer (Jim) and Christine; eight nieces and nephews; his aunt and uncles, Antoinette and Salvatore Bica and Francis "Bud" Whalen; and cousins and many friends.

His family will receive friends today, Nov. 2, from 5-7 p.m., at the Samsel & Carmon Funeral Home, 419 Buckland Rd., South Windsor. A Mass of Christian Burial will be held Saturday, Nov. 3, at 11:30 a.m., at St. Margaret Mary Church, 80 Hayes Rd., South Windsor. Burial will be private at the request of his family.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Appalachian Mountain Bike Club, 123 South Gay St., Knoxville, TN 37902 and/or American Cancer Society, 825 Brook St., I-91 Tech Ctr., Rocky Hill, CT 06067.

Visit carmonfuneralhome.com for online condolences.



Colchester

Ginger Tullai

Ginger Tullai, 55, of Colchester, passed away Wednesday, Oct. 17, after a courageous battle with cancer. Her family was by her side.

Born in Manchester June 26, 1963, she was a daughter of Curtiss G. and Barbara A. (Ritter) Howard of Ridgeway, S.C. Ginger had a career as a dental hygienist, working for several dental offices in the area. She was an avid horse enthusiast. Her love of horses kept her highly involved with several equine rescue groups, including Steed Reed. She was also a member of the Connecticut Horse Council, Connecticut Trail Rides Association and Friends of Machimoodus.

Ginger was a phenomenal gardener and a great cook. She will be remembered most fondly for her hardy, infectious laugh and her warm and wonderful smile. Her loss will be mourned by many, including her son, Jarred Borges of North Carolina; a sister, Kristine Hunniford of South Carolina; a brother, Curtiss G. Howard II of Stafford; dear friends, Kate Herlihy of Hebron, Waneta Lenk of Colchester, Ingrid Houle of Columbia and numerous extended family members and friends.

Calling hours were held Sunday, Oct. 28, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A memorial service followed at the funeral home.

Donations in her memory may be made to Friends of Sunrise – Machimoodus State Parks: friendsctstateparks.org.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.



Marlborough

Francisca Roche

Francisca Roche, 94, of Marlborough, passed away Sunday, Oct. 28, at Marlborough Health & Rehabilitation Center in Marlborough. Born Nov. 16, 1923, in San Juan, PR, she was the daughter of the late Narcisa Medina Cruz and Susano Lopez Pesante.

She was ever-devoted to her family and leaves her two sons, Eliseo Roche of New Jersey and William Roche of Marlborough; three granddaughters, Cindy, Linette and Mariaantonia; six great-grandchildren, Devyn, Ella, Brianna, Jayden, Sethos and Antonia.

Throughout her life, Francisca enjoyed crafting in her spare time and had a warm smile and strong character, thriving independently even in her last days.

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



Portland

Nelson Goodrich

Gentle, loving Nelson Goodrich died Thursday, Oct. 25, at home. He leaves his beloved, temprous wife, Nancy, as well as his son, super Scott; daughter-in-law, admirable Amy Wang, and their two children; little Buddha, Alex, and voracious reader, Amelia, denizens of Dragon World, N.C.

Services will be private.



From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

I knew you had it in you, readers.

As I've mentioned before, I've gotten more angry letters, attacking candidates, this election season than ever before. But here at the *Rivereast* we have a strict endorsements-only letters policy for the week before election. I admit, I wondered a bit if this year, people could write a straight-up endorsement letter.

I needn't have doubted you.

As you'll see, these next several pages are still full of political-minded letters to the editor. Are they as plentiful as they were last week? No – but there's an additional reason for that. Up until now, I'd been taking letters from outside the *Rivereast* circulation area as long as they pertained to candidates in races that were in our circulation area. For example, the 32nd Assembly District covers Portland and Cromwell, so I'd been running letters from Cromwell if they were about Christie Carpino and Laurel Steinhauser. Ditto with the 34th Assembly District (which includes East Haddam) and the 33rd Senate District (which actually includes a bunch of non-*Rivereast* towns).

But you'll note that, starting this week, that practice is no more. Frankly, it had gotten out of hand. The letters from readers in non-*Rivereast* towns were nearly starting to outnumber those from readers who actually get the paper. And while I understand wanting to speak up for your candidate, we have space limitations. You regular letter writers who have so dutifully kept your thoughts to 300 words or less all these years are very much aware of this fact.

So, starting this week, no more letters from non-*Rivereast* towns. You'll only see letters from folks in the six towns we go to: Andover, Colchester, East Hampton, Hebron, Marlborough and Portland. (Though I did make exceptions if the letter writers were the candidates or office-holders themselves – i.e., East Haddam resident Melissa Ziobron.)

As you'll see, we've still got plenty of letters anyway.

* * *

Also, hats off to Elizabeth Regan for stepping in last week and taking the reins as editor last week while I was on vacation. I'd never taken a vacation this close to Election Day, but I see Elizabeth did a great job. I had a trip opportunity I just couldn't pass up: going to Ireland. It was my first time over there – first time overseas at all, really – and I just loved it. Beautiful scenery, great food and extremely friendly, welcoming people.

And I spent the week delightfully free of American news. You really have to go out of your way to find it over there – which was fine by me. I was on vacation after all. A handful of times I logged onto Twitter or Facebook, usually to share photos, and would almost instantly be greeted by various lousy developments from the States – pipe bombs, transgender protections possibly being rolled back, Megyn Kelly idiotically defending blackface – and that was more than enough for me. I was more than happy to just share my photo and get back to enjoying the many wonderful things Ireland had to offer.

Sadly, my plane had just landed on Saturday when I got news of the very worst development of all of last week: the horrific massacre at the Pittsburgh synagogue. And while normally I'd shake my head and long for better gun control in this country, this shooting had a different, especially heinous element to it: It was fueled by nothing but pure anti-Semitism.

I remember as a child, when I first learned anti-Semitism was a thing, I was absolutely baffled. I grew up in a middle-class neighborhood of a middle-class town, and went to public school with kids of similar circumstances. I was exposed to a wide variety of races, ethnicities and religions – and that included Jewish people. So when I learned of anti-Semitism – and particularly of the hor-

rors of the Holocaust – it blew my mind. Why would anyone possibly be hated because of their religion?

All these years later, I'm more learned, have done more reading into history, and.....well, if you expect me to say I understand it, I don't. There's no excuse for it. It's repugnant, and there is absolutely no need for it. Public displays of anti-Semitism are on the rise across the country, as people I think feel more validated to publicly show their hate, and Saturday in Pittsburgh was the worst of the worst. One of the victims was 97. To live that long and then to die like that.....just unimaginable.

There is so much hate in this country, more than I've ever seen before. It needs to end. And frankly, things are so ugly right now, sometimes I wonder if it will.

* * *

Dan Haar had an interesting column in the *Middletown Press* this week about soon-to-be-former Gov. Dannel Malloy – and the wild notion that maybe things under him weren't as bad as a lot of us think.

Malloy's popularity has never been lower. Polls repeatedly show he's got the lowest approval rating of any governor in this country, and even a lower approval rating in Connecticut than Donald Trump. Republicans and Republican PACs have pounced on this – my Manchester mailbox has been full these past few weeks of anti-Steve Cassano flyers picturing him palling around with Malloy, and in other districts images have been Photoshopped to make it appear the candidate in question is besties with the governor. The most-repeated criticism of Ned Lamont seems to be that he'd be “a third term of Dan Malloy.”

Democrat candidates for office, meanwhile, are staying away from any mention of the governor, it appears – as if any association with him would sink their chances. Sadly, they're probably right. But, as Haar mentions, it doesn't have to be this way.

Haar points out that “state spending on regular state government actually declined by 4 percent between 2011, when Malloy took over, and this fiscal year, his last of eight annual budgets.” During Malloy's eight years in office, Haar adds, government agencies saw their total spending drop by \$250 million. When adjusted for inflation, that's a drop of 16 percent, or \$1.3 billion, from the government Malloy inherited when he first took office.

Malloy's cut jobs too, as Haar points out, writing: “As of May, Malloy had eliminated 3,925 full-time, executive branch positions, or 13 percent of the 29,500 who were on the job when he took over. That doesn't include cuts in the part-time ranks, or in the judicial branch, the colleges and universities and the legislature.”

And while we're speaking of state workers, Haar notes that they've actually seen pay freezes in five of Malloy's eight years in office – and that they pay more for their pensions than they used to.

Haar notes something that doesn't get noted enough, frankly: That many of the problems associated with Malloy he inherited from the administrations of previous governors John Rowland and M. Jodi Rell.

Now, there are plenty of legitimate gripes you can have with Malloy. The man is no public speaker, and manages to anger a lot of people. Plus, as Haar writes, he's failed to work with lawmakers and failed “to persuade companies and people to stick it out.”

Malloy hasn't been a perfect governor; far from it. But he's been a lot better than his approval rating suggests – and what Republicans would have you believe.

* * *

See you next week – and don't forget to vote next Tuesday.