

RIVEREAST

# News Bulletin

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With more than 6,400 fifth-graders from across the state casting their votes, Ella Briggs, 10, of East Hampton was announced as the state's next Kid Governor. Ella, who described herself as "a proud member" of the LGBTQ community, plans to use her one-year term to make the world a safer place for those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, as well as those who are questioning their identity. Ella is seen here at the Nov. 21 announcement at Ana Grace Academy of the Arts Elementary Magnet School in Avon with her parents, Kendra Dickinson and Chris Briggs, and her sister, Riley Briggs.

## Girl Wins Kid Gov on LGBTQ Platform

by Elizabeth Regan

The election of East Hampton's own Ella Briggs as Connecticut's next Kid Governor has given the LGBTQ community hope for the future after more than 6,400 fifth-graders cast their ballots in the statewide civics program.

Ella, 10, campaigned on a "love is love" platform that emphasized safety and inclusion for those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender, as well as those who are questioning their identity.

Ella – who describes herself as a "proud member" of the LGBTQ community – won the support of peers through a vibrant campaign video with a rainbow flag as the backdrop.

Dressed in a Pride T-shirt, she told voters she is looking forward to their help in keeping LGBTQ students safe.

"I will fight for what I believe in, no matter how many people say 'no,'" she said. "No matter how many times people are mean to me, I will continue spreading the message of hope and acceptance and I will remind our teachers and classmates what it's like to respect one another."

A symbolic Nov. 21 announcement by Secretary of the State Denise Merrill, aired as part of a "breaking news" segment produced by the Connecticut Democracy Center, revealed the results of the seven-way race during an assembly at Ana Grace Academy of the Arts Elementary Magnet School in Avon. Ella began attending the magnet school this fall after starting out her elementary years in the East Hampton school system.

Ella walked into the Wednesday morning assembly with no idea whose name would be announced. She'd written both an acceptance and a concession speech, she said later.

The Connecticut Democracy Center's program is in its fourth year as a way to teach students about state government, voting, elections and making a difference in their communities.

YouTube footage from the ceremony shows

Ella receiving the news of her win alongside her friends with shock, screams and smiles.

In what her mom, Kendra Dickinson, described as a "whirlwind," the ukulele-accompanied sounds of the Hartford Gay Men's Chorus filled the room with "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" before state Rep. Jeffrey Currey, D-East Hartford, scooped Ella into a huge hug.

Currey, one of two openly gay state legislators, took to the podium to recognize the "fantastic moment" for members of the LGBTQ community and their allies as he lauded the Kid Governor-elect for her accomplishment.

"I can't imagine being a fifth-grader and having the strength that you have," he told Ella.

Capitol Region Education Council Superintendent of Schools Tim Sullivan said Ella's platform and support from her fellow students is going to help change society.

"The fifth-graders are coming up, and any adult who tries to stand in the way of 'love is love' – anybody who tries to stand in the way of accepting everyone – is going to get run over by loud, screaming fifth-graders," he said.

His lighthearted tone changed to choked-up as he referenced the impact on his own friends and family members in the LGBTQ community.

"I feel like today's a significant day in that community in Connecticut, and I thank Ella for making that possible," he said.

Ella will replace Meghan Kasperowski, of Portland, as Connecticut's Kid Governor during the Jan. 18 inauguration at the Old State House in Hartford.

### Ella's Platform

Ella's advocacy goes back to third grade, she told the *RiverEast* this week.

That's when she knew, she said: "I just knew that boys weren't my type."

She described a newfound commitment to safety and inclusion strengthened by the nega-

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## Council Member Wants Out of Chatham Health

by Elizabeth Regan

At least one East Hampton official this week is calling for the town to strike out on its own when it comes to local public health oversight.

Area residents looking for services ranging from flu shots to septic system permits currently go through the Chatham Health District, a regional organization that serves East Hampton, Colchester, Hebron, Marlborough, Portland and East Haddam. But East Hampton Town Council member Republican Mark Philhower on Tuesday told fellow members he wants to open up discussion about reinstating the independent health department in effect before the council

voted to join the regional health district in 2002.

Philhower's call comes despite promises of improved service from the health district through a reorganization already underway. The planned change will bring in a new director within the next few months and will leave the current director, Don Mitchell, to do much-needed testing and inspections in the field until his planned retirement in fall 2019.

The Town Council would need to vote to leave the health district by Dec. 31 in order to officially withdraw July 1, 2019, according to state municipal health statutes. There is no spe-

cific requirement in the statutes for a public hearing before a council vote.

Philhower told the *RiverEast* he's been against regionalization of public health services since he was on the council that rejected initial calls from neighboring towns to join in the creation of a new health district almost 20 years ago. It was the subsequent, Democrat-led council that ultimately approved the collaboration a year later.

Philhower, an HVAC contractor, said he has heard complaints from residents over the past six years related to rude service by health dis-

trict staff, failure to return calls and delayed service in septic system permitting and restaurant inspections.

The health district hit a low point in 2015 with the resignation of former director Thad King, who was forced out by the Connecticut Department of Public Health as part of a settlement agreement related to a conflict-of-interest investigation. That's when Mitchell stepped in as only the second director in the district's history.

Philhower told councilors on Tuesday that

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**Connecticut Kid Governor-Elect Ella Briggs, 10, who ran on a “love is love” platform, was congratulated by state Rep. Jeffrey Currey, D-East Hartford, at an announcement ceremony at Ana Grace Academy of Arts Elementary School in Avon last week. Currey, one of the state’s two openly gay legislators, has been advising the candidate since he first heard about her campaign focus on the LGBTQ community. Ella has described Currey as one of the best people in the world and “just a really good dude.”**

#### **Kid Gov cont. from Front Page**

tive reception she got from some students in her fourth grade class.

“Kids were really mean to me last year,” she said.

Her advocacy has also been strengthened by her parents’ positivity.

Dickinson said she and her husband, Chris Briggs, worked hard to educate themselves about the resources available to help their daughter. Chris added that a visit to last year’s PRIDE New Haven festival helped solidify Ella’s penchant for activism.

Now, the Kid Governor-Elect said she’s been invited to participate in the Hartford PrideFest and to sing in the Hartford Gay Men’s Chorus.

Next year is likely to be a busy one with some school absences, Ella acknowledged – but she said academics are pretty easy for her “so it’s not going to be so bad.”

Ella and her sister, Riley, who both landed professional roles in the 2015 Goodspeed Opera production of *It’s a Wonderful Life*, are no strangers to extended, excused absences for outside commitments.

As the new Kid Governor, Ella will be emphasizing three LGBTQ issues during her 2019 term: teacher training, support for homeless youth and the creation of a youth center.

Her platform was inspired by the first person to come up to her with a story about identifying as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender but being too afraid to tell anyone, Ella said.

Since she began campaigning for Kid Governor, more kids have been approaching her to talk about identity.

“What I say to them is, ‘It doesn’t matter to me who you are or who you love. It just matters that you’re safe and you’re happy and if there’s anything you don’t feel safe about, please tell me,’” Ella recounted.

Chris described his daughter as “a shining light” for members of the LGBTQ community and their allies.

“The fact that Ella is not shy about her platform, and that that platform won out amongst fifth-graders in this state, says a lot for the future of not just Connecticut but maybe where our country is headed,” he said.

Ella said her own future might include a professional “protesting” job such as president of the United States. Or she may become a zookeeper.

More immediate goals include writing a children’s book about inclusion and appearing on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*.

Riley, 13, said her sister deserves all the honors and opportunities she’s already received and will continue to strive for.

“I’m so proud of her every day for being who she is,” Riley said. “She inspires me every day to be myself, too.”

#### **Chatham Health cont. from Front Page**

“some could argue” customer service problems are getting worse.

“Two years ago, we were sitting here and we were all well-assured that these problems were going to go away, they were going in a new direction, it was going to be straightened out,” he said. “And it hasn’t.”

Republican Town Council Chairman Melissa Engel acknowledged hearing numerous complaints of delays in service.

“When we sat here and became part of a health district, it was touted at the time as a cost-saver. I don’t know if I believe that’s true anymore,” she said.

But she also said she didn’t know if going independent again would save the town money.

“I’m not saying I don’t want to be a part of it anymore,” Engel said. “I’d like to see it be a better service-providing organization.”

Town Manager Michael Maniscalco, who serves as the town’s representative on the Chatham Health District Board of Health, balked at the idea of going back to a municipal health department.

He said the state public health department “has not been very fond” of towns reverting to independent health department status after having been part of a district.

According to state statute, a city or town with its own health department must have at least 50,000 residents to be considered for a state program that reimburses public health agencies for a portion of their expenses. Other stipulations require municipalities to set aside at least \$1 per resident for health services in a DPH-approved public health budget and to develop a basic program that incorporates the 10 state-identified essential health services. Among those services are disease monitoring, diagnosis of community health hazards, public health research, policy creation, and the promotion of partnerships with local organizations.

State Department of Public Health spokesman Maura Downes told the *Rivereast* a smaller, independent health department could still be eligible for other grants from the state even if they don’t qualify for reimbursement. Examples include preventative health and emergency preparedness grants.

East Hampton currently pays \$11.11 per resident to the health district, for a total of \$142,852 in the current health district budget.

The Chatham Health District’s 2018-19 budget includes \$104,045 in expected state reimbursements at a rate of \$1.18 for each person in the district. The state contribution makes up roughly 10 percent of the health district’s \$1.05 million budget.

Maniscalco said the health district provides important but often unrecognized services ranging from radon testing to the emergency alert system used to reach residents by phone in cases of extreme weather, fires, floods, unexpected road closures, or evacuation of buildings or neighborhoods.

Mitchell addressed councilors to say that some delays in the permitting process could be resolved through enhanced communication with the local land use department. According to Mitchell, the district on some occasions has only heard about pending applications once the East Hampton Planning and Zoning Commission has already approved them.

Mitchell said all relevant parties – including the building, planning and zoning department, wetlands official, fire marshal and health district – should be included in discussions with zoning applicants from the very beginning of the process.

Building, Planning and Zoning Official Jeremy DeCarli said he is working with the health district to streamline the communications process. He acknowledged some operational difficulties stemming from the lack of regular office hours in the land use department by the town’s assigned sanitarian and the fact that sewer and septic records are not kept in the department.

DeCarli said other towns in the health district have dedicated office space for the sanitarian and environmental health files in their land use departments; East Hampton, on the other hand, has not made that kind of space alongside building and zoning officials since the health district itself is headquartered only a few miles away in the town annex.

Mitchell also addressed customer service when he told councilors it’s possible an employee on occasion might display a bad attitude.

“But when such things happen, we want to know about it. I want to know about it,” he said.

Mitchell also placed some of the blame on food service businesses that have been told more than once they’re jeopardizing public health – and have refused to fix any problems.

“These business owners are essentially saying ‘nah, I’m not going to do it.’ Or, ‘I don’t want to do it,’” he said.

An outbreak of food-borne illness at a local establishment will “wipe out” a business financially in the current economy, according to Mitchell. He said the health district is trying to protect both businesses and customers from those kinds of hazards.

“We feel we are part of this community,” he said. “We are not trying to break apart the threads of this community. We do have some times that we have to do things that are protective of public health. And are those things sometimes unpopular? Absolutely.”

Town Councilor James “Pete” Brown told fellow members the constituent complaints he’s looked into himself have usually proven to be the result of miscommunication or a lack of information on the part of the applicant.

Those are problems that could be addressed without opting out of the health district, according to Brown.

“I don’t want anyone to leave here with the impression we have a dysfunctional health district, because it’s far from that in my opinion,” he said.

Hebron Town Manager and Chatham Health District Board of Health Chairman Andrew Tierney said Wednesday a lot of dissatisfaction in East Hampton is the result of district staff members strictly enforcing regulations as required by state law.

“Nobody likes a regulatory authority,” he said.

He referenced complaints in East Haddam, where the town’s Economic Development Commission recently asked First Selectman Emmett Lyman to consider signing on with a different health district in the area. But Lyman said last week the situation was resolved after Chatham Health Department staff and board members assured East Haddam officials their concerns were being addressed.

Tierney emphasized the reorganization, with a new director coming on board and Mitchell working out in the field, will allow the district to direct more resources toward environmental and food service inspections, plan reviews and training opportunities.

At Philhower’s request, Tierney will provide Town Council members with a written reorganization plan before the next meeting on Dec. 11.



# Whittler Makes Miniature Masterpieces in Colchester

by Allison Lazur

For the past 60 years, Ted Dubai has been whittling wood. He's carved everything from a wood creation of his childhood home in western Pennsylvania to a carving of him and his siblings as children. But what has gained Dubai significant recognition are his miniature masterpieces, currently on display in the Cragin Memorial Library.

The three-inch-or-less statues are tiny figures with impressive detail that beg the question "How is that even possible?"

"I wanted to see how small I could go and it turned out to be pretty small," Dubai said with a smile, as he shared with the *Rivereast* some of his most intricate creations.

The figurines range from a tiny snowman with an oversized belly fittingly titled the *Abdomenable Snowman* to a minute Steelers player with a mask made of wire that conjures thoughts of the movie *Honey I Shrunk the Kids*. However, in this case the player is created by delicate, careful craftsmanship and a pocket knife, instead of a science lab mishap.

Among a variety of tools, Dubai owns a particular favorite Buck pocket knife that has been in his possession for about 44 years.

A stint in the Navy from 1966-72 caused Dubai to take a break from whittling, but he began the timber undertakings once again after finishing in the service.

He worked as a Nuclear Technical Specialist III at the Millstone Power Station located in Waterford until retiring in July.

Dubai, 70, said Monday he "likes the challenge" behind whittling a miniature creation and

said the challenge is what makes the process enjoyable.

"It's a letdown when you're done," Dubai said. "I get more enjoyment doing it than when it's done."

In 2017, a snake coiled into a most realistic position was selected as Judges Choice in the International Woodcarvers Congress in Maquoketa, Iowa and during the 2018 competition a baby dragon emerging from its egg, won first in Miniatures and third Best in Group. An elaborate set of tiny knots won Best of all Whittled Classes at the International Woodcarving Exhibition, in Toronto.

While the designs look difficult, Dubai shared a simple approach he takes when tackling an intricate carving.

"The [snake] tail was the hardest, so you do it last," he said.

Dubai explained that he did attempt to sell his miniature masterpieces, but stopped because "it took all the fun out of it."

Hundreds of wood creations have been carved over the last six decades some from basswood which comes from linden trees and other pieces utilize toothpicks.

"The chess pieces were crafted from toothpicks," Dubai said.

Often times certain pieces take a month or more to complete, Dubai explained, but he clarified that he may only work for a few hours a day and not necessarily every day – which makes it difficult to put an exact time span on completion.

Dubai pulled an almost weightless ball and



A chessboard that measures less than two inches, left, and an elaborate set of tiny knots are just two of the many miniature masterpieces whittled by resident Ted Dubai and on display for the entire month of December at the Cragin Memorial Library.

chain creation from an illuminated cabinet positioned in the corner of a downstairs room in his home.

"The ball and chain were quite challenging because the link was so small, but that's part of the enjoyment," he said.

Dubai said ideas of what to carve next truly come from anywhere, and shared an alien and coffin project that is currently underway.

Dubai's wood creations can be viewed during the entire month of December at Cragin Memorial Library, 8 Linwood Ave.

# Hebron Resident Belatedly Receives Vietnam Medals

by Sloan Brewster

This week, a local Vietnam veteran received medals he was due decades ago.

In Vietnam, Thomas Southiere, a specialist in the U.S. Army from September 1968 to September 1970, earned a long list of medals, including the Purple Heart. On Monday, during a ceremony at the Russell Mercier Senior Center, Congressman Joe Courtney (D-2nd district) presented him with all 10.

In addition to the Purple Heart, he received an Air Medal, an Army Commendation Medal, a Meritorious Unit Commendation, a National Defense Medal, a Vietnam Service Medal with two Bronze service stars, a Combat Infantryman Badge, a Republic of Vietnam Campaign Ribbon with Device, a Sharpshooter Badge with Rifle Bar, and Marksman Badge with Auto Rifle Bar.

Southiere, his wife Carol Southiere and other members of their family went to the ceremony, which was also attended by residents, veterans from the American Legion, selectman Gail Richmond and Town Manager Andy Tierney.

"It was a full room of veterans to witness Joe Courtney hand out the metals to this gentleman it was very nice," Tierney said.

The Southieres were "overwhelmed" by the number of folks who showed up, Carol Southiere said.

"I was really surprised; it was overwhelming," she said.

Carol Southiere, who approached Courtney's office about the missing medals, said she was also surprised as how quickly the medals arrived.

"Vietnam was a crazy time," she said. "It was hard for guys that were over there, so it's nice to get the honor."

The medals will one day go to the Southieres' grandson, Benjamin Martyszczyk, who is 9, she said.

Thomas Southiere said he appreciated the ceremony and getting the medals. He didn't talk much about his time in Vietnam, saying only that his experiences were "pretty much the same as happened to everybody else."

There were a lot of protests in this country during the war, he said, adding that he was drafted right out of college.

"I just did what I had to do instead of going

to Canada like a lot of these guys did," he said.

Thomas Southiere said nowadays folks are more appreciative of veterans. He said he was surprised so many people showed up for the ceremony and that he only expected Courtney to be there.

"I was happy that our grandson was able to see this," he said. "He's starting to learn about this kind of stuff in school."

According to Manny Menses, veteran service representative for Courtney, Carol Southiere contacted the congressman's office in July requesting assistance in obtaining her husband's medals for his service in Vietnam.

It is not an uncommon request, he said. In the past two years, the office has presented close to 100 different veterans with medals they had not yet received. Many of the veterans who ask for the long overdue medals want to make sure they get them so they can pass them on to their children, Menses said.

"A lot of the vets, when they come of age, they want their medals," he said.

In particular, the office works with many Vietnam and Korean War veterans.

Courtney's district has the largest veteran population in the state, Menses said. There are more than 50,000 veterans in the Second Congressional District, 20,000 of which are Vietnam veterans.

"We have a lot of veterans here," he said.

The First Congressional District, which is represented by Democrat John Larson, has the next closest number of veterans – but still less than half the number of veterans as in Courtney's district.

"We spend a lot of time helping disabled veterans," Menses said. "We spend a lot of time getting aid for them."

The office gets medals for the veterans, helps them get coverage from the Veterans Administration and helps them get aid through other resources.

Neil McKiernan, Courtney's chief of staff, said there are a lot of instances where veterans have left the service, retired and moved and didn't get their medals, or simply weren't aware they were eligible for them.

"This happened a lot with Vietnam," he said. "A lot of people wanted to get the service behind them."



From left, Sandra Martyszczyk, Benjamin Martyszczyk, Thomas Southiere, Congressman Joe Courtney, Carol Southiere, Christine Tatro, Jamey Tatro pose after Thomas Southiere received medals he earned in the Vietnam War.

Around Veterans Day, the number of the requests tends to spike, he added.

When the office gets requests for medals, Menses talks to them about their service and they identify the branch they were in. He asks for any documents they have proving their military service and fills out an application to the National Personal Record Center in St. Louis, Mo., for the medals and citations they have earned.

Veterans can pursue the requests on their own, Menses said, but they do not come in a case of any kind.

"Basically, they send them in a paper bag," he said. "We mount them in a shadow box. We like to present them in a way that honors the veterans."

Carol Southiere said she enjoyed the presentation, and added that she didn't expect the medals to be displayed in a case.

Depending which branch the veteran served in, it can take between two to four months to get the medals, Menses said. A fire in the 1970s at the National Personal Record Center destroyed 18 million records, particularly between the letters H and Z.

In the cases where the records are gone, the center will have to do additional research, verifying the veterans' service through other means, rebuilding the records, he said.

"It's really cumbersome when a person is trying to get VA benefits," Menses said.

Menses said the ceremony for Southiere was "beautiful" and "awesome."

"These ceremonies are just a nice way to present these well-earned veterans and their families with these medals and give them a level of closure," McKiernan said. "They are nice events to do and shine a little light on these veterans."



# New Hebron Library Director to Focus on Digital

by Sloan Brewster

A new library director has come to Douglas Library – and has plans to make the library more digital-friendly.

Kevin Sullivan, 34, took the reins at the Douglas Library Nov. 13. On Monday he spoke to the *Rivereast*. He replaces Amanda Brouwer who left in August, after four and a half years in the position. Brouwer is now library director at the Acton Public Library in Old Saybrook.

Sullivan was branch manager at the Wilson branch of the Windsor Public Library and before that he worked at Enfield Public Library. He started out in Enfield as a volunteer and was eventually hired to run the government access channel, which was run by the library. He has also worked part-time at the University of Connecticut law library.

Sullivan attended the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts where he studied communications, journalism and film studies.

His first stint in a library was as a volunteer for a library in Westbrook, Mass.

Libraries were a natural fit for Sullivan, who said he always loved reading and was brought up reading instead of watching television. As a child, his favorite author was *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* writer Roald Dahl – and his favorite book was *The Pushcart War* by Jean Merrill,” he said.

Sullivan said he still enjoys reading, particularly literary fiction. He is currently reading *Berlin* by Jason Lute.

“I’m not as voracious of a reader I think as a lot of people expect me to be as a librarian,” he said. “I can’t live up to that standard.”

The library is of course known for its books, but there are other materials there as well, Sullivan said. These include e-books, audio books, DVDs, Blu-rays and specialty materials for young adults and children, as well as access to online databases for quality research. The library also offers programming and opens its doors to local and town activities in the community rooms. Folks can even stop into the library to learn how to set up cell phones or tablets.

“I want people to know that the library is about more than just the books on our shelf,” he said.

He said he plans to introduce more digital curriculum items to the library.

“I have a strong interest in technology,” he said.

Sullivan said in his first couple weeks the

community has been welcoming.

“It’s been great, everything is still very new and I’m still wrapping my head around the issues that we’re facing in this town [and] library,” he said. “I’m looking forward to catching up to the day-to-day stuff and meeting the public [and] improving services.”

As to the issues he mentioned, Sullivan said they were not serious and include building problems he and staff are working with the town to remediate, such as replacing some windows in the building and fixing the roof.

The newer part of the building was added 20 years ago so, “things are coming due,” he said.

Sullivan said he is getting up to speed on the day-to-day workflow and has met with the Library Board of Trustees, the Library Association and the Friends of the Library.

Sullivan said he approved of a measure implemented by his predecessor in January omitting overdue fines. Instead of a fine, there is a donation jar.

“I think it’s wonderful,” he said. “Late fees I think put a sour taste in a lot of potential library users’ mouths. Nobody likes to be reprimanded.”

The fines were not a “tremendous source of income” for the library or town and the jar has been pulling in about the same amount, he said.

“Anything that can break down a barrier is a good thing in my opinion,” Sullivan said.

Sullivan said he’s a fan of the way the original 1899 library building flows with later additions, which came in 1957 and 2000.

He also spoke fondly about how engaged the community is with the library.

“There’s a play group that happens upstairs [in the children’s section] on Tuesday morning that is very well-attended; people are very excited about that,” he said. “I love how active the friends are and how many people seem to care about the library.”

Libraries mix well with Sullivan’s viewpoints.

“From like a philosophical point of view I love the idea of people having free and easy access to information. I think that’s tremendously important,” he said. “I don’t like to compromise on some of my core beliefs and [the library] is an organization where I can serve all parts of the community. I’m not turning anybody away because of financial issues, even levels of intellect. Our doors are open for absolutely anybody.”

He added that people should never stop learn-



**Kevin Sullivan is the new director of Douglas Library. He took over earlier this month and replaces Amanda Brouwer who left in August, after four and a half years in the position. Among things Sullivan plans to do is to introduce more digital curriculum items to the library.**

ing and the library is a place to continue on that path.

Clare Betz, head of adult services at the library, and Cheri LaBombard, children’s librarian, said things have been going smoothly since Sullivan took over.

“He’s got a lot of energy and it makes you feel good to work with somebody that’s rearing to go,” LaBombard said.

Town Manager Andy Tierney said Sullivan was selected for the job by a panel of individuals including a former state librarian and other librarians, town hall staff.

“I found him to be very appropriate for what we wanted him to do,” Tierney said.

\* \* \*

In other library news, the library will participate in the Hebron Holiday Festival on Saturday from 2-5 p.m. Magician Todd Migliacci will perform a Holiday Magic Show in the library community room at 2:30 p.m. At 3:30 p.m., there will be refreshments and cookie decorating.

The festival will also include a Jingle Run at 1 p.m., the one-mile run will start on Pendleton Drive and end at the library.

Santa Claus will arrive at 4 p.m. on a firetruck. At 4:30 p.m., there will be a tree-lighting and holiday singing by the RHAM chorus.

The Hebron Historical Society will open the Old Town Hall doors from 1:00 – 5:30 to display the Mohegan-Pequot Model Railroad and hopes to turn the model railroad show into an annual display.

The Old Town Hall will also be open Sunday from 11 a.m.-3 p.m., to give folks another chance to see the model railroad as it meanders through its village.

In addition to the model railroad, gingerbread houses will be on exhibit, and visitors may bid on them in a silent auction with proceeds going to the Hebron Historical Society. There will also be arts and crafts vendors with knitted items, doll clothes, license plate art, goat soap and lotions, etc.

All events are free and open to the public.

## Traversa Opens Door to Sweeping Board Changes in Marlborough

by Allison Lazur

The Board of Selectmen’s recent decision to hire a charter revision consultant has opened the door to the possibility of sweeping changes in how the town is run.

First Selectman Amy Traversa has maintained since she introduced the idea of a consultant last month that the first consideration in any charter revision process must revolve around the town’s government structure.

“Do we stay with a first selectmen and a Board of Selectmen? Do we go with a town manager? Do we go to a town administrator? Do we go to five selectmen? Do we go to three selectmen, or seven selectmen and no Board of Finance like Portland has?” she asked selectmen in October. “These are huge changes with a lot of options.”

Portland’s first selectman sits on a seven-member Board of Selectmen. The town has no finance board, instead employing a director of finance.

Traversa this week told the *Rivereast* she’s been looking into the way other towns structure their governments based on her concerns about the Marlborough Board of Finance, which she said lacks “practical, hands-on experience with the current rationale behind town expenses.”

She cited union negotiations as an example, stating the board only deals with the budget at their monthly meetings and not “day in and day out.”

Traversa said the finance board is “scrutinizing” just \$4 million, or 15 percent, of the total \$24 million budget during the last budget season.

“During the whole budget process, they hadn’t made any specific cuts – which is good – because they shouldn’t be making the decisions – they don’t have enough information to make those decisions,” she said.

Traversa also described some aspects of the finance board’s role as “unclear.” She wondered if the finance board has the power to question Board of Selectmen spending on individual line items throughout the year as long as the town stays within the total approved budget figure.

“I appreciate the fact that the Board of Finance is there, but if we continue to have a Board of Finance, we need to better define the role,” she said.

Board of Finance Chairman Doug Knowlton said this week that the finance board provides “checks and balances” to both the selectmen and the Board of Education. The three boards together create a budget “with a mill rate that is acceptable to voters,” he added.

Knowlton said selectmen, if left unchecked, could prioritize the town side of the budget and force the school board to make all the cuts.

“I understand the control it would transfer to the selectmen and I would be very concerned,” he said. “I’m not so sure her opinions of our understanding of the budget are valid.”

Traversa said any changes in the charter would have to be approved by residents at referendum.

According to state statute, a charter commission would be required to hold at least two public hearings on proposed revisions – one before the commission begins to draft a proposal

and another before it submits the draft to selectmen.

The selectmen would also be required to hold at least one separate public hearing.

### Outside Consultant

Selectmen voted unanimously on Nov. 6 to hire outside consultant Mark Pellegrini to facilitate the charter revision process.

Pellegrini served as the Director of Economic Development and Planning for the town of Manchester for over thirty years, until 2016. The private consultant will be paid \$70 an hour with no set number of hours, Traversa explained. There is \$20,000 in the current year budget for charter revision.

Traversa first proposed hiring Pellegrini at the selectmen’s Oct. 16 meeting.

“I want to take myself out of the running or at least not have any more importance than any other person [during charter revision] who is in a position of influence in the town,” she said at the time.

Pellegrini told the three members of the Board of Selectmen he will meet with each of them individually over the next few months. He will also ask chairmen of various boards, commissions and department heads “to take a look at the charter and make suggestions on what they feel would be appropriate or beneficial changes to the charter based on their area of responsibility,” he said.

From there, he will take the provided information and have discussions with the selectmen regarding which ideas they would like to include in a resolution specifying what the charter commission should look at, he explained.

Once and if a commission is selected, there would be extensive research that would go into making changes to the charter, Pellegrini said.

According to state statute, the commission would be responsible for considering the items set forth in a resolution, as well as any other additional items it deems necessary.

Pellegrini explained he would guide the commission and assist with the research, look at the pros and cons of any presented alternatives and ultimately “press everyone [involved] a little bit on why what they think is a good idea is a good idea.”

Traversa this week cautioned that a Charter Revision Commission may or many not be appointed. It will depend if enough potential changes are identified to make the process worthwhile, she said.

“There are a lot of things to be decided,” she said. “I don’t want to prejudice anything.”

The last charter revision occurred in June 2017, when the Board of Selectmen appointed nine residents – including three Democrats, three Republicans and three unaffiliated members – to a Charter Revision Commission.

The changes included an all-day voting referendum on the town budget rather than a town meeting, and automatic charter review intervals every 10 years. The revisions passed that November.

According to state statute, once a Charter Revision Commission is formed, it can work for no less than 90 days and no more than 18 months. The commission is later dissolved after submitting a final report of proposed changes to the Board of Selectmen.

# East Hampton Police Chief Seeks Up to \$800K in Radio Upgrades

by Elizabeth Regan

As much as 25 percent of East Hampton is a radio dead zone that endangers police officers and residents alike, according to Police Chief Dennis Woessner.

Woessner is asking for up to \$800,000 to upgrade the public safety radio system, which includes critical infrastructure described in an independent 2018 public safety communications analysis as “substandard” due to a lack of investment by town officials over the years.

Woessner made his pitch to members of the Town Council earlier this month. The funding request will go to the Capital Improvement Committee to be considered for inclusion in the 2019-20 general government budget.

The request prompted one Town Council member to say he was “incredibly disappointed” the radio system had not been adequately maintained over the years.

Woessner told councilors on Nov. 13 that a representative of Hamden-based Utility Communications Inc. estimated police department radios are effective in about 70-75 percent of the town.

“Industry standard is 90 percent coverage, 95 percent of the time,” Woessner told town councilors earlier this month. “So for 20-25 percent of the town, we’re dead. We can’t talk in and we can’t talk out.”

The spottiest reception occurs in the southern portion of town, according to Woessner.

Radio systems used by the fire department, EMS and public works department also have coverage issues, officials said.

Officer Hardie Burgin, the police department’s union president, stood in front of councilors to describe the impact of the deficient system.

He said the situation has “worsened dramatically” over his last nine and a half years with the department.

“I can say with certainty that at one point or another, every officer at this department has been in need of backup or other first responder

assistance and has clicked their radio to call for help only to hear silence or static,” he said.

Burgin referenced his own 2016 injury when he described law enforcement as an “inherently dangerous” profession.

Burgin was struck by a car while directing traffic on Route 66. He underwent several surgeries to address injuries including multiple arm and shoulder fractures and a torn ACL. He returned to full duty in August of this year.

Burgin said officers hit the streets every day in “absolute adversity” caused by a radio system that’s been neglected by the very town that officers “swore to serve and protect.”

Two estimates for the project include upgrades to equipment already in use on a privately-owned telecommunications towers on Baker Hill, which is the former site of a World War II navigation beacon off Lake Vista Drive, and in Cobalt near the public works department offices. The estimates include the addition of a third public safety communications site on a Young Street tower owned by the wireless infrastructure company Crown Castle.

Woessner said he is hopeful Crown Castle will honor an agreement with former tower owner AT&T that gave the town the right to use the tower for radio communications free of charge.

A \$797,000 estimate from Utility Communications recommends a new digital system that could be encrypted when law enforcement officials deem it necessary to prevent public access to the communications, according to Woessner. It also includes the replacement of all mobile handheld radios, in-car portable radios and pagers based on a 52-percent discount currently being offered through Motorola.

The \$749,000 estimate from the town’s current communications vendor, NorcomCT of Naugatuck, recommends a more expensive GPS-enabled communications system and does not include any new pagers, mobile radios or handheld radios.

Woessner emphasized the findings of the April 2018 report by Paul Zito of New England Radio Consultants LLC.

“In the past, little money has been spent on supporting or upgrading” the radio system’s infrastructure, according to the report.

Woessner said the situation affects officers’ ability to respond to violent encounters, traffic crashes, medical calls and routine calls for service.

“The risk for someone getting hurt is high, unfortunately,” he said. “Dispatch can’t hear us and we can’t hear dispatch.”

Public Works Department Director Dean Michelson said his department also “drastically” needs upgrades.

“I’ve walked personally from Hurd Park when a truck broke down, back toward the garage, and hitched a ride because we couldn’t talk to anybody,” Michelson said.

## ‘Incredibly Disappointed’

Despite the council’s Jan. 9 authorization of \$60,000 in emergency repairs to the radio system and two sheds housing the equipment, Town Council member Mark Philhower said he had not been aware of the extent of the infrastructure issues.

Philhower said the concerns about inadequate infrastructure should have been brought to the council’s attention when they approved a \$1.2 million emergency dispatch arrangement between Glastonbury and East Hampton in 2016. The new partnership was born after East Hampton’s former emergency dispatch provider, Colchester Emergency Communications, announced it would be closing that summer.

Philhower said councilors were assured the infrastructure was adequate at the time of the dispatch transition.

“Now two years later, [we’re hearing] ‘no, no, it all has to go,’” he said. “I’m incredibly disappointed. It’s frustrating as somebody who sits here spending the taxpayers’ money, that

we’re told something’s okay when in fact it’s not.”

Town Manager Michael Maniscalco had said at the beginning of the meeting that the radio system upgrades have been discussed for “a little over a year, maybe more.”

He has said the upgrade discussions began under former Police Chief Sean Cox and was a key area of focus when interim Chief Thomas Davoren, a former Connecticut State Police commanding officer, took over at the beginning of the year. They remained a priority when Woessner was sworn in at the end of April.

Maniscalco this week failed to respond over multiple days to repeated *Rivereast* requests to find out when the Zito report was commissioned, by whom, and how much it cost. There was no answer by press time.

Philhower emphasized a plan needs to be put in place to make sure the system is maintained going forward.

“Not once has this council, in the last six-plus years I’ve been sitting here, said ‘no’ to a repair. We get them done,” Philhower said. “So now, because they weren’t done and they weren’t upgraded properly, we’ve got to hand the taxpayers a huge, three-quarters-of-a-million [dollar] bill. And it’s something we’re going to do. We have to do it.”

Woessner after the meeting told the *Rivereast* there are methods in place to help protect officers in radio dead zones until a new radio system is implemented. A software program through Glastonbury dispatch allows dispatchers to track police cars so they can see where they are at all times; it also allows officers to keep track of each other from their in-car computers.

He said officers also know where the dead spots are, so they will inform fellow officers as well as dispatchers when they know they’re rolling into a one of those areas and will back each other up as necessary.

## East Hampton Police News

11/15: Marcy White, 49, of 225 W. High St., was arrested and charged with third-degree burglary, sixth-degree larceny and third-degree criminal trespass, East Hampton Police said.

11/15: Kyle Cone, 57, of 94 Abbey Rd., was arrested and charged with second-degree stalking, disorderly conduct and criminal trespass, police said.

11/15: Torrie Derisi, 33, of 12 Mark Twain Dr., was issued a summons for operating an unregistered motor vehicle, passing in a no passing zone, operating a motor vehicle without a license and operating an uninsured motor vehicle, police said.

11/16: A 15-year-old juvenile of East Hampton was issued a summons for first-degree criminal mischief, second-degree threatening and second-degree breach of peace, police said.

From Nov. 12-18, officers responded to nine medical calls, three motor vehicle crashes and five alarms, and made six traffic stops, police said.

## Portland Police News

11/14: Fikret Cecunjanin, 31, of 12 Fairview St., was charged with fourth-degree sexual assault, Portland Police said.

11/20: Todd Bower, 29, of 230 Old West High St., East Hampton, was charged with violation of a protective order, police said.

## Andover Police News

11/21: State Police said Anthony J. Robinson, 22, of 16 Boston Hill Rd., was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and third-degree assault.

## Collision with Deer Causes Colchester Car Fire

State Police said a collision with a deer is to blame for a vehicle becoming completely engulfed in flames on Route 2 last week.

At around 5 p.m. Nov. 21, a Suzuki driven by Alexander M. Chaiken, 35, of 233 Middle Bay Rd., Brunswick, Maine, was traveling westbound on Route 2 near Exit 20 when a deer ran into the roadway from the right shoulder.

Chaiken told police he was unable to avoid colliding with the deer and pulled off on the left shoulder after the impact.

According to police, a short time after striking the deer the car began to smolder and subsequently became completely engulfed in flames.

Chaiken and his passenger were able to exit the vehicle and did not sustain any injuries, police said.

According to the Colchester Hayward Fire Department Route 2 westbound was shut down for about an hour between exits 20 and 21.



# Hebron Sues Contractor Over Paving Problems

by Sloan Brewster

The town and a New York road construction company are suing each other over what the town feels was a poor job repaving some local roads.

The lawsuit the town filed in October against the Albany, N.Y.-based Gorman Group does not state how much the town is seeking and the town's attorney, Frederick Hedberg of Halloran & Sage, did not return calls before press time. However, Town Manager Andy Tierney said the town would be seeking about \$205,000.

Last winter, residents of Joel Drive, Charles Lane and a few other roads on the north end of town, which had been sealed the previous summer, reported problems. In May, Tierney reported the problems to the Board of Selectmen and spoke to the *Rivereast* about it as well.

This week, since litigation is now pending, Tierney said he could not comment much more.

When he reported the issue to the board, Tierney – who described the problem as unlike any he had seen before – said the Gorman Group has done work for the town for many years.

Public Works Director Kevin Kelly said in May that the oil in the asphalt had seeped out and caused particles to loosen. The oil and loose dirt were being tracked into peoples' yards and homes.

"We've been sweeping it up," he said then. "We've been keeping after it and keeping it clean."

Last week, Tierney said the loose dirt had also ended up in catch basins.

"We were constantly cleaning the road and sweeping the catch basins," he said.

According to the lawsuit, in October 2017 the town paid the Gorman Group \$134,922 for the paving work. Shortly after the job was done defects were noticed and the complaints started rolling in.

In a March email to Kelly, Charles Lane resident Mark Young complained of the problems the road has caused him and his neighbors.

"The immediate and ongoing deterioration of this material has contaminated our properties," he wrote. "Simply driving into our driveways or walking to retrieve the mail results in the tracking of the contaminants onto our properties. Our neighborhood looks forward to a prompt, comprehensive and lasting remedy to the problem."

The town went back and forth with the Gorman Group about how to fix the problem, according to Tierney. Town officials wanted the road repaved, and the contractor wanted to come back and use the same process it had used initially to seal the roads.

In his town manager's report on May 3, Tierney said the roads were sealed via a process called cape sealing. The application

failed, he wrote.

"It didn't adhere to the road causing problems particularly on Joel Drive and Charles Lane," he wrote. "People on these roads would like new asphalt and not a treatment."

On Monday, Tierney explained that in the cape seal process, the oil is supposed to become glue, but that did not happen.

"Something broke down in the process and it didn't work," he said

Early this past summer, the town had Joel Drive and Charles Lane paved by Massachusetts-based All States Materials Group (ASMG) for \$110,405, according to the lawsuit. The town also incurred costs for remediation work prior to doing the repaving work, according to the suit.

Also according to the suit, the Gorman Group "refuses to properly remedy the defective cape seal surfaces to Ridge Road, Village Lane and Cottage Lane."

The suit states ASMG submitted a proposal to the town in June to do remedial work on Ridge Road, Village Lane and Cottage Lane, at a cost of \$81,740, exclusive of mobilization costs.

The 14-page suit lists four complaints, each with pages of allegations – breach of contract, unjust enrichment, negligence and bad faith.

\* \* \*

In August, the Gorman Group filed its own lawsuit against the town, alleging that the town denied it the opportunity to remediate before taking the job on itself and thus, was in breach of contract.

According to the suit, the Gorman Group had offered to reapply the second step in the cape seal process – the micro-paving – but the town refused the offer, as well as Gorman's alternative proposal to pay the town \$50,000 to offset other repair work.

The lawsuit isn't seeking a specific dollar amount, but instead asks Rockville Superior Court in Vernon to rule that Gorman Group is not obligated to reimburse the town for any paving work it has done, or will have done, on the affected roads.

Attorney Peter Zarella of Hartford-based firm McElroy, Deutsch, Mulvaney & Carpenter, which filed the lawsuit, said this week he could not comment on the suit.

However, Tierney said Monday reapplying the second step in the cape seal process wouldn't have worked – and furthermore, the people living on the affected roads did not want that type of treatment.

Last month, after the town filed its lawsuit, the two parties filed a motion to consolidate the two suits.

On Wednesday, Young said neighbors were pleased with how the town resolved the problems with the road.

"As a community we're very happy with how they handled it," he said. "They did what we think was the right thing."

# Public to Speak on Third Gas Station in Marlborough

by Allison Lazur

Residents concerned over a proposed gas station and convenience store on Route 66 will have another opportunity to voice their opinions at a Zoning Commission public hearing Thursday.

The Marlborough One, LLC project is listed in the Secretary of the State's business database as a venture of prominent local project developer William Wayne Rand.

The 1.5 acre parcel on 37 Hebron Rd. is currently zoned as a Designed Business/Industrial Zone, District 1 (DBIZ1) which permits a number of land uses including banks, medical offices and retail sales, according to zoning regulations.

The application was approved by the Conservation Commission on Oct. 15.

A gas station would be considered retail sales, said Town Planner Peter Hughes.

Discussion on social media among residents has led some to question why a gas station is permitted at the site, when "bulk fuel storage" is not permitted in the DBIZ1.

Zoning Board Chairman Kevin Asklar explained Monday that a gas station is not considered bulk fuel storage.

According to zoning regulations, bulk storage refers to more than 30,000 gallons of fuel.

When asked about the potential for groundwater contamination a gas station could cause, Hughes explained "any use in the DBIZ and village center requires a special permit."

Asklar concurred, reiterating that every special permit goes through a process before being approved.

Special permit applications, which come with more oversight than typical site plan applications, require a public hearing. The Zoning Commission may also place conditions on approval.

Concerns expressed online and at previous commission meetings include an increase in traffic and possible contamination of the Forest Homes well system – owned by the Connecticut Water Company – which serves approximately 40 homes.

The water company also submitted a letter to the town in opposition of the project because of the site's location to the nearby well system and Lyman Brook which, according to the project summary, runs through the east side of

the property.

Hickory Road residents Shawn DeFelice and Kathy Griswold, who reside within the Forest Homes well system, have been spearheading the efforts against the gas station, rallying support from other residents and following the progress of the project closely.

Griswold created an online petition for residents to sign, which as of press time Thursday had collected 118 signatures.

"I feel like stopping the gas station is preventative for a lot of reasons – traffic, air pollution, water pollution," Griswold said Tuesday.

Griswold, DeFelice and eight other residents this week attended an online informational session conducted by Toxics Action Center, an environmental advocacy group with offices throughout the northeast that provides citizens and community groups with skills and resources to prevent or clean up pollution.

Griswold explained the session discussed how to prepare for a public hearing, incidents of gas station pollution in the northeast and how to successfully rally support.

"Our campaign goal is no gas station in that area at all," DeFelice said. "There is no reason to have it. It's not just the water. Water [contamination] is the major issue because it affects our health, but if there's an accident somewhere in that area and traffic can't get by we are all stuck in our neighborhood. If a tanker spills on Route 66, we are trapped in the neighborhood."

DeFelice said efforts should be put into updating the existing gas station in the center of town instead of constructing new ones. There is currently one gas station on Route 66 and another on North Main Street.

"We don't need four gas stations in town," he said.

DeFelice was referring to another proposed project, still in the early stages, in the vicinity of the existing North Main Street gas station.

A Best Way Food & Fuel on the Portland Reservoir Road property owned by Joe and Carol Asklar would include a 4,500-sq. ft. convenience store and covered canopy gas pumps. The site includes two small wetland areas.

\* \* \*

The Zoning Commission public hearing is scheduled for Dec. 6 at 7 p.m. at town hall.

# Obituaries

## Colchester

### Margaret N. Nolan-Thibault

Margaret M. Nolan-Thibault (Peggi, Maggie) beloved wife and soulmate of Alan A. Thibault, passed into eternal life Wednesday, Nov. 21. She was born in Hartford to the late Dan and Nora (Canny) Nolan and was raised in Windsor.



Under the impeccable care of her devoted parents, she overcame a significant health challenge from birth to enjoy a full and healthy life. She graduated in 1977 from Windsor High School. In 1990, while volunteering in the playroom at Hartford Hospital, she met three remarkable children who changed her career path from business to social work. She obtained her bachelor's degree in social work from the University of St. Joseph in 1997 and her master's degree from Southern Connecticut State University in 2006.

She enjoyed many jobs in the field of social work, but especially enjoyed working as a youth development worker at Windsor Public Schools Family Resource Center. Her most profound work was while working at United Way of Connecticut - 211 Infoline as a 9/11 family caseworker. She also worked as a foster care coordinator and play therapist at Waterford Country School and was recently working at Project Genesis, Inc.

Maggie was very proud of her Irish heritage, and her parents instilled the value of helping others in her. Her volunteer activities included, but are not limited to serving as a Girl Scout leader, a catechism teacher, a "cuddler" in Hartford Hospital's NICU, and as a volunteer in their playroom. She organized a bike-a-thon for muscular dystrophy, Easter Seals softball tournaments, and helped raise \$350,000 for the Joey Rodgers Transplant Fund. She worked as a children's CASA (court-appointed special advocate) volunteer and marched on Washington for children's rights. Additionally, she helped on Habitat for Humanity builds and was a newsletter editor for both Children's Constitutional Rights and the Hartford Wolfpack. She taught Sunday School and served on the Prudential Committee at Westchester Congregational Church.

She became a Colchester Lion in 2002, serving as President in 2009. She was currently a Leos advisor and youth exchange chair for the District 23C Cabinet. She was awarded the Lions' highest honor when she was named a Melvin Jones Fellow in 2016. As a member of Gilead Congregational Church, she served as a Sunday School teacher. She served on the mission committee and was blessed to share the experience of mission trips to Biloxi, Miss., and New Orleans, La., with her son, William Thibault. After her mother passed away from cancer, she joined the Relay for Life Team.

Her hobbies included photography, scrapbooking and reading. She was an avid Red Sox fan and so very pleased with their World Series championship wins, although she never forgot the heartbreak of game 6 in 1986.

In addition to her beloved husband, she leaves to mourn her passing her children Liz (Dave) Touger and Lt. William Thibault, USN; siblings Noreen, Claire, Danny (Jill), John (Sue), and Patsy Nolan; nieces and nephews Ashley, Melissa and John Nolan, Erin, Angela and Olivia (goddaughter) D'Agata; Brandon (Nina) and Justin (Kristen) Thibault; Devin, Chase, Colin, Jaden and Riley (godson) Mack, Cheyenna Fournier and Daniel Hubblitz; parents-in-law Art Thibault, MaryAnn and Bill Pilotte; sister-in-law Susan Mack; brothers-in-law Rob and Gary (Page) Thibault; aunts Margaret Whitman (godmother), Margaret Cunnane, Bridget O'Meara, and Mary Kelly; goddaughter Kallie Arbour and her family; and many cousins and close friends.

She was predeceased by her parents Dan and Nora (Canny) Nolan.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Gilead Congregational Church (672 Gilead St. Hebron, CT, 06248) or to Jesse Rees Foundation Joy Jars ([www.negu.org/donate](http://www.negu.org/donate) or P.O. Box 80667, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688) Please also consider doing acts of kindness to honor Maggie's memory.

Friends may call from 5-8 p.m. today, Nov. 30, at the Farley Sullivan Funeral Home, 34 Beaver St., Wethersfield. Funeral services will be at Gilead Congregational Church, 672 Gilead St., Hebron, at 11 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 1. Please meet at the church.

To extend online condolences, visit [farleysullivan.com](http://farleysullivan.com).

## Colchester

### Minnette Standish

Minnette (Nelkin) Standish of Colchester, widow of the late Arthur D. Standish, passed away Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 22, at the age of 94. Born July 7, 1924, on the family farm in Colchester, she was the daughter of the late John and Eleanore (Niemi) Nelkin.



For 68 years of marriage and beyond, she was devoted to her husband and best friend Art, who passed away in 2010.

Minnette found her true calling and greatest contentment in the nurturing and guidance of her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Her nieces and nephews held a very special place in her heart, as did she in theirs. They and many others affectionately referred to her as "Aunt Tootsie." She enjoyed reading, watching birds, and having long calls full of reminiscences and laughter with family and friends. Countless knitted, quilted or crocheted gifts will be warm reminders of her talent and care; generations of children were welcomed to her family with lovingly crafted sweaters or blankets. Her cooking was the centerpiece of holiday and birthday celebrations with her grandchildren. Minnette's legendary chocolate chip cookies will be missed by all.

She leaves three children, Bob and wife Judy Standish of North Carolina, Jean and husband Bill Brainard of Vermont and Bruce Williams of Connecticut; her grandchildren, Lori Standish and Lynn Mancini, both of Colchester, Kate Rogers of Tennessee, and Amanda Frencl and Alan Orth, both of Indiana; her great-grandchildren Alexa, Devyn, Aubrey, Mallorie, Trey, Lauren and Michael; and her sister, Esther Starkweather of Colchester.

She will be remembered with gratitude and deep, abiding love for being an extraordinary mother, grandmother, sister, daughter and aunt.

In addition to her beloved husband Art, she was predeceased by a daughter, Kathy Williams; and siblings, Maxine Snell, Sylvalea Ralph, Helen Brown and Frank Nelkin.

The family will receive guests starting at 9:30 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 1, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, before a chapel service at 11 a.m. Burial will follow in Linwood Cemetery, Colchester.

Donations in her memory may be made to the Colchester-Hayward Vol. Fire Co., 18-54 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, CT 06415.

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

## Marlborough

### Francis Paul Zaino Sr.

Francis Paul Zaino Sr. (Frank), 74, passed away Friday, Nov. 9, in St. James City, Fla.

Frank was born in Hartford to parents Francis Paul Zaino and Lucille (Girouard) Zaino. He grew up in Marlborough, where he graduated from RHAM High School, married and raised his family.

He leaves behind his loving wife Janet (Nowsch) Zaino, son Wesley Zaino and daughter Virginia Zaino; sister, Debbie (Zaino) Mund and brother-in-law Gary; brother Gregory Zaino; six grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews.

He is predeceased by his son, Francis Zaino Jr., and sister, Carol (Zaino) Cappa.

Francis enjoyed his retirement years in Pine Island, Fla., fishing and gardening. He was a member of the Fellowship Bible Chapel, in Cape Coral, Florida, where he shared and celebrated his love of the Lord.

Services will be private at the convenience of the family.

## Portland

### Nancy Saunders Curtin

Nancy Saunders Curtin, 81, of South Main Street, Middletown, (formerly from Portland, Palmer, Mass., and Naples, Fla.), beloved wife of Robert J. Curtin, who predeceased her (7/02/2010), passed away in the early hours of Saturday, Nov. 24, at Portland Care and Rehabilitation Center in Portland, surrounded by her family. She was born in Pittsburgh, Pa., daughter of William and Dorothy (Lockwood) O'Brien and adoptive daughter of Ruth O'Brien.



Nancy graduated from New York University in design and shared her talent for home and floral design for many years. Her family will also cherish the beautiful paintings she created over the years. She hosted many wonderful gatherings for family, friends and her husband's business associates (Insurance and Real Estate Center, Middletown). We will all remember the July 4th parties!

Nancy also volunteered and served on many committees over the years, including garden clubs, painting clubs, Middlesex Hospital, and the YMCA. Most recently, Nancy was a Eucharistic minister and a valuable bereavement committee member at St. Mary Church in Portland. Above all, Nancy was a loving daughter, wife, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, and friend to all. An avid golfer, painter and bridge player, Nancy loved life and enjoyed travel. She will be deeply missed by the lives she touched.

She is survived by her son, William J. Curtin and grandsons Evan, Dylan, Liam and their mother Ellen Curtin of Portland; her daughter, Erin Curtin-Johnson and partner John Gousy and granddaughters Lauren and Hayley of Monson, Mass.; her brother, David O'Brien and wife Elise of Portland; as well as several nieces and nephews.

She is predeceased by her brother Peter O'Brien and sister Mary O'Brien.

In addition, Nancy leaves fond memories to many, including her bridge group, St. Mary's friends, Florida friends, and lunch bunch.

Friends may call at Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown, today, Nov. 30, from 9-10 a.m., prior to the service. Funeral services will be held immediately following calling hours at 10:30 a.m. at St. Mary Church, Freestone Avenue, Portland. Burial will be in St. Mary Cemetery, Portland.

The family would like to express deep appreciation and thanks to the extraordinary care given to Nancy in her stay at Portland Care and Rehab and Middlesex Hospice and Palliative care.

Memorial contributions can be made to Middlesex Hospice and Palliative Care, c/o Dept. of Philanthropy, 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457.

To share memories or express condolences online, visit [biegafuneralhome.com](http://biegafuneralhome.com).

## Portland

### Lawrence Harder

Lawrence Harder, 86, died in his home with his loving wife of 54 years, Dru, and his rescue dog, Schuyler, at his side. Born in Brooklyn, N.Y., he attended Adelphi Academy, UNH, and graduated from Paier School of Art. He served in the U.S. Army during the Korean Conflict.



After retiring from a career in the graphic arts, he continued his interest in collecting and restoring antique cars, travelled throughout Europe, Canada, and the U.S., and supported the performing arts. He was a member of a mineral club and two antique car clubs.

A humanitarian who respected all living beings, Larry supported humane and environmental organizations throughout his lifetime. He was one of the founders of Protectors of Animals, for which he supplied the name and early advertising copy.

In addition to his wife and rescue dog, Schuyler, he is survived by his sister-in-law, a niece, and two nephews.

As per his wishes, all arrangements were private.

Donations in his memory can be sent to Protectors of Animals, 144 Main St., East Hartford, CT 06118, or to a charity of one's choosing.

Much appreciation is given to Middlesex Hospital Homecare personnel for their support and care.

## East Hampton

### Donna Lynne Scott

Donna Lynne Scott, 65, of East Hampton, passed away peacefully at home Saturday, Nov. 24. She was the daughter of the late Louis "Mappie" Chalko and Ann "Jerry" Chalko of Newington.



Donna was born Jan. 10, 1953, in New Britain, and was raised in Newington. She graduated from Newington High School in 1971, and Southern Connecticut State University in 1975. She moved to East Hampton in 1984, where she lived for the rest of her life. She had been a paraprofessional in the Portland school system before retiring in January. She was also an active nurse, and spent many years caring for the elderly. She loved living in East Hampton, and was very active in giving back to her community, working as an EMT and delivering Meals-on-Wheels for many years.

She lived life passionately, and loved laughing and spending time with family and her many close friends. She was always cheerful, outgoing and made the lives of everyone around her brighter, warmer and filled with joy. She loved golf and spending time on the beach, especially on Cape Cod. She loved her children unconditionally and with great patience and compassion.

She was predeceased by her brother Dennis, and her son Brandon.

She is survived by her son Bryant and her daughter-in-law Annie, who were very blessed to spend the Thanksgiving holiday with her in Florida in a cottage on the beach where she spent her time doing what she loved most: laughing with family and sunbathing on the beach. She is survived also by her three nieces, Denise, Heather, and Brittany, her nephew, Andrew, and many aunts, uncles and cousins who loved her dearly.

Friends may call at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, today, Nov. 30, from 6-8 p.m. A funeral service will be held in the funeral home on Saturday, Dec. 1, at 11 a.m. Burial will be private at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to The Benny Fund at [bennyfund.org](http://bennyfund.org).

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



*From the Editor's Desk*

# Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

This week on the news website *CT News Junkie*, Susan Bigelow had an interesting column about the possibility – well, likelihood, frankly – of tolls coming to this state. And she makes a good point: They might not be a bad thing.

Yes, I know to a lot of you tolls are a terrible idea. And I'm not looking forward to paying them myself – certainly not to the extreme outlined in the report the state Department of Transportation put forth last week. That report proposed a tolling system that would affect just about every highway in the state, including Route 2, Route 9, and even tiny little Interstate 291.

But here's the thing: If we implement the tolls at the rate, and price point, the DOT included in its report, the state could see more than \$1.086 billion in gross annual revenue. And we'd still have lower tolls than a whole bunch of other states, including Pennsylvania and New York.

"A whole bunch of other states" is a key phrase here. Let's face it: we've been pretty lucky, and unusual, in not having any toll roads in the state for the past 30 years. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 33 states and Puerto Rico have either state or regional tolling facilities. And here in the Nutmeg State, we're frankly surrounded; New York, Massachusetts and Rhode Island all collect tolls. (Granted, Rhode Island only does tractor-trailers.)

Tolls in Connecticut would be nothing new either, really. It wasn't until the 1980s that the state did away with them. The toll booth removals started in the early part of the decade, after that horrific crash in Stratford that killed seven, but it was a gradual process. The final toll in this state was collected on the Charter Oak Bridge in 1989, according to [ConnecticutHistory.org](http://ConnecticutHistory.org).

Would the tolls, if implemented at the rate the DOT included in its report, add up? You bet. As Bigelow points out, driving from New Haven to Hartford would cost between \$1.67 and \$2.09 per trip, depending on the time of day, as, much like the train, "peak" times would be more expensive. Extrapolated over a work week of round trips, that's \$16.70 to \$20.90 per week and, Bigelow adds, based on the national average of 46.8 weeks worked yearly, \$781.56 to \$978.12 per year.

That's hefty – I freely admit.

But, as Bigelow also points out, if the state uses the toll revenue wisely – i.e., in the manner in which it would be intended – it could

be a boon to all of us.

"One of the many reasons our roads are so miserable to drive on is that they're badly in need of repair," Bigelow writes. "Money from tolls would go toward actually fixing them, not just patching them, so that traffic can move more freely."

She's not wrong about the state of our roads; they're often pretty terrible, and relatively few, it seems, get fixed to the level they should be fixed. They really are patch jobs more often than not – and that's because the money simply isn't there. Well, with toll revenue, the money would be there.

A second benefit Bigelow notes: "Another reason the highways are parking lots of doom is that they were designed by well-meaning buffoons in the 1950s and 1960s who thought slapping a four-lane divided expressway onto a narrow bridge through the middle of a city was a great idea. Not only was this destructive to the cities, but it made for narrower lanes, tighter turns and little space to improve. Pretty much all of I-95 in Fairfield County is like this, as is I-84 through Hartford and Waterbury. Money from tolls would allow us to actually fix these problems."

Bigelow also suggests adding tolls might encourage more people to take mass transit – busses wouldn't be subject to tolls, under the DOT report – and this would benefit the transit system, making it in turn more efficient and cost-effective. And while she didn't mention it in her column, if more people took mass transit to avoid the tolls there'd also be the added environmental benefit of fewer cars being on the road – and let's face it, in light of the recent dreadful climate change news, anything we can do to benefit the environment would be good.

Granted, most of the benefits of tolls are predicated on the state doing the right thing with the toll revenue – using it to maintain and improve our lousy roads, and not funnel it off for other uses. I know the cynical response to this is to ask why we should assume the state will do the right thing. But, with \$1.086 billion in revenue potentially on the line, we can't afford to be cynical.

In the end, I agree with Bigelow: in the short term, tolls will sting – no doubt. But in the long run, this could be a good thing: it could make for smoother roads, less highway congestion, and just a more pleasant driving experience overall.

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See you next week.