

RIVEREAST

News Bulletin

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

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Kid Governor... On Jan. 19, Connecticut's Kid Governor for 2018, Megan Kasperowski of Portland, was officially sworn into office at the Old State House. Kasperowski was elected governor in November; she ran on a cancer awareness platform. The new governor is shown with her family, from left, Kevin (brother), Lauren (mother), Derrick (father) and Mary.

To Cancel or Not to Cancel?

by Elizabeth Regan

Determining whether to close schools when it snows is what one area superintendent calls a "two-coffee decision."

East Hampton Superintendent of Schools Paul K. Smith said the threat of snow usually means waking up at 4 a.m. to start the coffee maker and check the first weather report.

The process this week was complicated by a storm that dumped up to half a foot of snow in some eastern Connecticut towns Tuesday morning, after residents went to sleep expecting only a coating to one inch.

School openings in East Hampton and Portland were delayed by two hours. The rest of the districts in the *Rivereast* coverage area closed for the day.

Once the coffee is brewed and the forecast has been assessed, Smith said the flurry of phone calls begins.

The first call goes to the district's facilities director, Don Harwood. The key issue is making sure staff and students can get into the schools, which may mean sending out employees to clear the driveways and sidewalks in the pre-dawn hours.

His second point of contact is town Public Works Director Dean Michelson, who advises the school officials about road conditions.

Finally, Smith said he reaches out to area superintendents – including those from Portland, East Haddam, Cromwell, Middletown and the Durham/Middlefield regional district – to see how their towns are faring.

"Sometimes you don't want to be the only one going in if everyone else is closing, or the only one closing when everyone else is going in," Smith said.

But peer pressure is secondary to the information he receives from local advisors, he emphasized.

"If the public works director says they can't have the roads ready, I don't care what everyone else is doing. It's either a delay or a closing," Smith said.

Smith makes the final decision by roughly 5 p.m. so buses with early schedules to remote destinations, such as Vinal Technical High School, are able to plan accordingly.

He described the 5 a.m. hour as "the loneliest time" for a superintendent.

"Everybody's waiting for that decision. It's very easy at 9 a.m. to say 'that was a terrible decision' or 'that was a great decision,' but four hours earlier you have to make the best decision possible with the information you have."

Colchester's interim superintendent of schools, Mary Conway, described a process that starts at 4 a.m. as well. She said she speaks with the public works department, area superintendents and the bus company when weighing her decision.

"You always err on the side of safety," she said. "I would rather have parents complaining that we closed rather than having parents complain we did not close, [and then having] a bus

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New Colchester Middle School Coming Along

by Julianna Roche

When the 2018-19 school year starts in Colchester this fall, giant skylights, creative use of space and a modern, open layout plan will welcome William J. Jackter Middle School students to their new home.

Work is continuing on the \$48.66 million school renovation and construction project – which includes 72,000 square feet of new construction, over 49,000 square feet of renovations, and demolishing over 109,000 square feet of the old building on Norwich Avenue. While students will move into the new building this fall, the project won't be fully complete until the summer of 2019, when the last piece of the old WJMS is renovated.

Nicknamed "the big squeeze," WJMS Principal Chris Bennett said that in summer 2016, prior to the start of the building project, students, staff and other services were "squeezed" into about 40 percent of the building to allow for construction, while pupil services were relocated to Jack Jackter Intermediate School on Halls Hill Road.

That will change this fall, when students can finally move out of the "swing space" and into their new, state-of-the-art home.

An enthusiastic Bennett took the *Rivereast* on a tour this week of the new building – citing

the school staff, management and construction companies involved as the reason why the project has run smoothly and remains on schedule.

"This school has a phenomenal staff," he said. "As difficult as a project like this could have been – knock on wood – the entire thing from management working behind the scenes to the construction company have been incredible."

Addressing the deteriorating conditions of the middle school began nearly six years ago, Bennett explained, when the plan was part of a much larger, \$57 million proposal which included the construction of a new senior center and community space on school property.

However, that proposal was soundly rejected by voters at a 2013 referendum. A new, scaled-back plan, focusing on just the school's renovation, was later approved by voters at referendum in June 2015.

In addition to renovating several parts of the existing school and demolishing the older wing from the 1950s and '60s, the construction phase – which is currently underway – also features a new two-story glass tower at the front middle portion of the building, separate learning pods for each grade level with connecting class-

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The face of the new William J. Johnston Middle School in Colchester will feature an enclave of glass, shown above – which will be used by eighth grade students as a gathering space.

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accident.”

Conway said there’s “no magic formula” for choosing to stay open, delay the start of the day or close completely.

In the case of Tuesday’s snowfall, she said the roads were bad at 5 a.m. and officials did not anticipate them getting better, even with a delay.

She said there are times it would be nice if they could open more than two hours late – like at noon, for example – but students “really need to be in school for a minimum of four hours” for it to count as a school day.

Conway, who has worked as a schools superintendent for 17 years, said her decision has always been based on health and safety.

When asked if she’s seen a trend toward more snow days over the years, Conway acknowledged an increasingly litigious society could be having an impact.

“There probably have been some bad experiences out there that, luckily, I haven’t experienced,” she said.

Dattco Chief Operating Officer Cliff Gibson, whose buses serve Andover, East Hampton and Marlborough, said there are more school closings than there were 15 or 20 years ago.

He chalked up the increase to better weather forecasting technology and a commitment to safety shared by school leaders.

When school districts decide not to close or are unsure what to do, Gibson said officials usually turn to the bus company.

“There’s a lot of communication going on at 3:00, 4:00, 5:00 in morning,” he said.

Gibson said most of the company’s buses use anti-skid tires during the winter months and about half of the buses have drop chains that can be deployed in front of the rear tires to increase traction.

“Whatever decision the superintendent makes, it’s a hard one,” Gibson said. “In all cases, it’s made first about safety.”

RHAM Superintendent of Schools Pat Law said Hebron, Andover and Marlborough officials initially planned a two-hour delay on Tuesday morning, but changed course a short time later. Law was driving into school when she realized the rate of snowfall was getting worse instead of better.

She said she made her initial decision based, as usual, on consultation with public works departments in each sending town, officials from each elementary school and troopers from the Connecticut State Police. Follow-up conversa-

tions with the public works departments revealed there was “no way” the roads would be cleared in time for a delayed opening, according to Law.

“You make the best-informed decision you can based on student and faculty safety,” she said. “If things change and you can adapt, you do that. If not, you live with the decision and move on.”

Hebron Superintendent of Schools Timothy Van Tasel said school boards in the three sending towns “try to stay aligned as much as possible” with the RHAM superintendent’s decisions on whether or not to close school.

But he added that in some instances, like the October wind storm that affected some neighboring towns more than others, it’s not practical to keep the same schedule. In that case, elementary students in Andover were ready to go back to school before the Hebron, Marlborough or RHAM school districts were prepared to reopen.

“That’s kind of where we’re left to make decisions independently,” he said.

The total number of cancellations so far this year amount to five in East Hampton, six in Colchester, and six for the RHAM school district.

The last day of school in East Hampton has been extended from June 13 to June 18, according to Smith. The school board also shifted one professional day scheduled for March to the end of the year, making June 19 the last day for teachers.

Conway said Colchester’s last day has changed from June 12 to June 19.

RHAM’s school calendar, which ends June 21, was initially devised with room for six make-up days. Law said any additional closings that occur before February 28 will be made up during April vacation.

The Hebron school board next week will consider shifting two professional development days to the end of the year, according to Van Tasel. That would make June 19 the last day for students and June 21 the last day for teachers.

He added that more than seven snow days would force the board to consider shortening April vacation, which he said the district would like to avoid since so many families have already planned on the break.

“We do everything we can to keep April vacation intact,” he said. “However, there are always circumstances that [could] come up.”

Middle School cont. from Front Page

rooms, giant skylights over the central hallway, an outdoor patio for students to eat lunch, an exterior courtyard, outdoor amphitheater, and a brick façade with modern-looking metal panels.

At the end of “Main Street” – a hallway dubbed for its central location – are the sixth- and seventh-grade pods, which mirror one another and each include English, social studies, math and science classrooms. Each classroom will also feature an 86-inch touch screen monitor designed to be interactive with student devices, such as Chromebooks – which, according to Bennett, will be given to every student in the 2018-19 school year.

Designed to be “a school within a school,” the principal added that a simple press of a button can lock the doors and secure the pods in the event of an emergency.

The eighth-grade pod, which is in a separate area from the sixth- and seventh-grade classrooms features a similar layout with one special surprise – an enclave encased in glass sitting in the front center portion of the school overlooking Norwich Avenue, which Bennett said students can use as a gathering space with couches and tables.

Down the “Broadway” wing of the new building are the chorus and band rooms – which were each acoustically designed with extra-thick walls, hollowed ceilings and additional space to house the school’s award-winning band.

The entire wing is southern-facing with oversized glass windows that draw in cascades of natural light so much so that “you get the feeling you’re actually outside,” Bennett said.

The cafeteria – which includes a wall of floor-to-ceiling glass overlooking an outdoor patio with seating and retention pond – is a bright and inviting space that sits directly next to the faculty lounge and a separate room for students who prefer not to eat with a bigger crowd.

“We haven’t picked out the furniture yet,”

Bennett said. “But we hope to make it close to a food court and if you don’t really want to sit at a table of 10, you and your friend can sit at stools at the high-top bar.”

The principal also added that there will be two serving bars and hopefully an update on lunch menu items.

“Right now the food follows the elementary school and we’re hoping to make it more like the high school, with deli lines and other things that are attractive to middle school kids,” he said.

The new building will also be a move to a more efficient and creative space, Bennett said, citing oversized hallways and locker areas in the old building as one example of a waste of space. Those will be replaced with nooks of “gathering spots” with couches and tables for students and smaller locker areas.

“You don’t want to waste space in a place you don’t spend much time in,” Bennett explained.

Even the restrooms will see major changes, moving from traditional closed-door bathrooms to open doorways, resembling those at airports or stadiums.

Currently, Bennett said, “bathrooms are the most unsafe place in the building. There’s no adult in there, there’s a door that can be locked in.”

But with the open doorways, Bennett said, if kids are doing things they shouldn’t, faculty can hear it simply by walking by.

Bennett added, “Our biggest priorities [with this project] were obviously getting a new school and a new space with modern technology.” He said he expects the new WJMS building will also keep more students in the school district rather than attend a magnet school.

“We want to be getting the kids excited about what they see,” Bennett said. “And it’s just incredible to see it all coming together.”

New Trails Coming to Andover

by Sloan Brewster

It’s time to tune up the mountain bike collecting dust in the garage, because some new trails are coming to town.

Andover town officials are working with local mountain bikers to create a network of trails on town owned property, including the 70-acre parcel behind Andover Elementary School.

“Basically, they’re developing trails and they’re developing walking paths and different ways to utilize the town,” Town Administrator Joe Higgins said. “Some [trails] along roads will be paved [and] there’s trails behind the school that they’re going to use for walking or biking.”

Bike Walk Andover, which formed about a year ago, is leading the effort, said Planning and Zoning Commission Chairman Eric Anderson, who is a part of the effort.

“One of the goals of the group, as well as the Andover Conservation Commission, is to begin to utilize town owned properties for recreational use,” Anderson said. “There are fairly large parcels of land that really have been underutilized.”

Members of Bike Walk Andover have been working with the Conservation Commission and lobbying the Board of Selectmen to develop trails in town and modify the town’s infrastructure to make the town more amenable to walking and biking.

“They’ve approved some steps,” Anderson said. “One of the things we’ve identified in holding an all board meeting is that outdoor recreation in town is kind of what people are looking for.”

The town’s Plan of Conservation and Devel-

opment also identifies the need to bring more outdoor recreation to town, he said.

The group is working on expanding trails and creating a trail network along the Hop River and on the property behind the school, Anderson said.

Trails on the property that begins near the pond on the corner of Hebron and School Roads, which is currently impassable due to flooding, date to the 1990s and connect to trails behind the school and town hall, Anderson said.

“The section [at the pond] has gotten beavers and they have dammed it up, the very front is under water,” Anderson said. “We’ve already extended that [trail system] to encompass the whole other property. The piece behind the school is a 70-acre parcel and the majority of the new trails are there.”

Anderson regularly takes advantage of local trails to walk his dog and said plans are in the works to get more folks out there.

Expo Wheelman Bicycle Club, a local bike/racing club, is working with the town to make even more new trails and organize a mountain bike racing series once a week on the property behind the school and town hall.

Jeff Murray, a member of Expo Wheelman, said they had started working on new trails, including a new three-mile loop, on the property behind the school and town hall, in the hopes of getting them finished over the winter.

“The weather hasn’t been too cooperative,” he said.

In the meantime, town staff are working on survey maps in order to get an exact location of the boundary and are planning to resume work on the trail in March.



A network of trails is being created in Andover, beginning with this trail, which is on the property at the corner of Hebron and School Roads and connects to trails behind the Andover Elementary School and town hall.

“We’re trying to make the trails kind of friendly,” he said. “There’s town employees who want to go for a hike at lunch.”

One issue with that is school officials don’t want folks on the portion of the property on school grounds during school hours, so they need to put up signs to let folks know how to get around the school and to mark out the loop.

Murray, who organized the Andover Lake Race last year, is also organizing the mountain bike racing series, which he said would take place in evenings in the fall and would be a

six-week fun run.

Children will ride laps around the three-mile loop and parents will be able to compete in more extreme training races, he said.

“We have a lot of members that have kids and are involved in junior cycling and junior races trying to get kids on bikes,” Murray said.

Murray has also been in contact with the organizers of the Bolton Summer XC Series to do a six-week series of fun runs over the summer in Bolton, making sure the dates of the two series don’t conflict.

20-Acre Parcel Donated to Hebron

by Sloan Brewster

A 20-acre property where seven city children used to run and play during bygone summers has been donated to town.

The land consists of two parcels and a small cottage in the Amston section of town between Church Street (Route 85) and the Colchester Spur of the Air Line Trail. The larger parcel is 15.7 acres and is just south of the Crouch Road and Church Street intersection. The smaller parcel, about 4.5 acres, sits to the north of the intersection.

"This land was originally my grandmother's," Cromwell resident Robert Goldstein said. "And my mother and aunts and uncles used to spend their childhoods on that land, spending a good part of the summer in that cottage."

In the 1930s, Goldstein's grandmother Eva Ostrager, a widow who lived in a small apartment the Bronx with her seven children, wanted to keep the kids off the New York City streets, especially during the summer, Goldstein said. Small-town life wasn't entirely new to the family – Ostrager's father, Joseph Weisner, had farmed in Hebron in the early 1900s – so she bought the little cottage in the Hebron countryside.

"She bought this land to escape the city with the children," Goldstein said "To have them run around and be kids."

When they grew up, those children, some of whom have passed away and others who are in their 80s and 90s, had always wanted to use the land to build a legacy, Goldstein said. Since much of the property contains wetlands, the town would not approve any additional buildings, so Goldstein, who was caretaker of the property, suggested donating it.

In explaining his idea to his mother and aunts, he first had to tell them what the Air Line Trail was, he said. He told them the idea was that the land would be for public use and accessible to residents who use the trail, and that he hoped the town would build a park there or simply add a few picnic tables.

"I have plenty of friends that do live along the Air Line Trail," he said. "The intent of the donation is that it be unbuildable in perpetuity."

Since the property serves as a buffer between the trail and Route 85, the Open Space/Land Acquisition Committee was interested in the gift, Town Planner Michael O'Leary said. The committee put together a report, detailing the description of the land and the benefits to its

preservation.

Accepting it would preserve the scenic forested buffer and retain the rural character of the trail, the report reads. Additionally, it would preserve wildlife habitat and protect native plants and wetlands on the parcels.

Also according to the report, the first parcel is adjacent to a 56-acre property designated for wildlife protection and thereby extends the area of protection. The second parcel could be used as a park or picnic area and for additional trail parking.

"Acquisition of these properties would extend an area of existing, connected town-owned open space," the report reads.

The second parcel abuts the Colchester spur of the Air Line Trail and the Amston Fire Station parcel that is adjacent to the town-owned 72.4-acre Grossman open space, according to the report. The parcel is also just southeast of the town-owned 91-acre former Mussman parcel that includes a portion of Raymond Brook Marsh, a wetland of state-wide special concern.

The land from Goldstein family is also marshy, with diverse wetlands, O'Leary said.

"It's a nice donation, nice piece of open space, good wetlands to protect wildlife habitat," he said.

In August, the committee recommended that the Board of Selectmen consider accepting the land and in December, at a special town meeting, residents voted in favor of accepting the gift.

As of Wednesday, the town had not yet closed on the property and Goldstein said the family's attorney was working on getting his elderly aunts to wrap up the final paperwork.

"I'm hoping he has everything now," Goldstein said.

In addition to adding parking for the trail and a picnic area, the town will install a plaque in memory of Goldstein's grandparents, Bernard and Eva Ostrager, O'Leary said.

Growing up, Goldstein heard many stories from his mother and aunts and uncles about summers at the cottage, where Ostrager kept a small farm with chickens, fresh eggs and vegetables and where blueberries and strawberries grew wild.

"If you can imagine seven kids running around in a small bungalow like that, or a cottage," he said.

There was no electricity and the only heat was generated by a little pot belly stove.

When it was bath time, the children would



A cottage, which sits on a parcel of land along the Air Line Trail that has been donated to the town of Hebron for open space, will be used for fire training before parking and picnic tables are put on the property for public use.

carry buckets of water from the well in the yard and fill a tub in the backyard, adding some boiling water to the mix. Still, by the time someone got in, the water was just lukewarm.

One of Goldstein's uncles, who was an inventor later in life, even managed to bring electricity and light to the cottage by connecting wires to a car battery and attaching some light fixtures.

There are also stories about one of the brothers, who – in the search for solitude – would hide out and read in the outhouse.

When the family decided it was time for indoor plumbing, they had to haul a toilet and sink up from New York because they couldn't find any in the area, Goldstein said.

The cottage on the property will be removed but not before it is put to a final use.

Hebron Fire Chief Nick Wallick said the department would use it for a training run, meaning it will burn down the structure, giving fire fighters some practice at putting out fires.

"It's a small facility so we'll do some evolu-

tions on it and on the last evolution, let it go," Wallick said.

Occasionally the department gets to use a structure for training purposes, he said. The last time, was about two years ago.

"There was a small building on the Lions fairgrounds in need of disappearing," Wallick said.

Using structures for fire training involves some planning, the chief said. The department must first do a thorough investigation of the property to be assured there are no hazards. Then members of the department look at the nearby area, checking for trees and the proximity to the road and any bridges and look closely for overhead wires.

Any dangers must be mitigated.

Exercises at the old cottage will likely begin with some non-fire training, such as search and rescue, Wallick said.

"We'll try to get as much training out of it as we can," he said.

Downed Utility Poles Close Route 17 in Portland

by Elizabeth Regan

A portion of Route 17 at Paley Farm Road was closed for roughly 17 hours on Monday after two utility poles were taken out by the driver of an allegedly stolen car, Portland police said.

The crash occurred at approximately 12:30 a.m. Monday, according to Officer Michael Fitzpatrick. He said the vehicle was traveling southbound on Route 17 when it drove off the right side of the road and struck the two poles.

The unidentified driver was taken to Hartford Hospital, he said.

A report that the car had been stolen from

Newington came in while officers were still at the scene, according to Fitzpatrick.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield added that the driver also hit a stone wall at the entrance to Paley Farms Road. There were no serious injuries, according to the first selectwoman.

Criminal charges are pending, Fitzpatrick said.

Bransfield cited 252 customers who were out of power for about an hour in the early morning hours, based on her conversations with officials from Eversource Energy.

East Hampton Police News

1/2: After an investigation into a one-car rollover motor vehicle accident on Summit Street, Jasmine Menard, 28, of 51 S. Main St., was issued a ticket for traveling too fast for conditions, East Hampton Police said. All occupants of the vehicle were transported by ambulance with non-life-threatening injuries.

1/20: Kim Sawicki, 41, of 163 Middle Haddam Rd., was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and interfering with police, police said.

1/21: Gregory Rose, 50, of 67 Flanders Rd., was taken into custody pursuant to an active warrant for his arrest stemming from a motor vehicle-vs.-tree accident that occurred in the area of Bear Swamp Road on Aug. 1, 2017. Rose was charged with speeding, failure to drive right, driving under the influence and operat-

ing a motor vehicle without minimum insurance, police said.

1/21: Colin Shirshac, 35, of 81 Clark Hill Rd., was arrested and charged with failure to drive right, operating a motor vehicle under suspension, possession of a controlled substance and possession of drug paraphernalia, police said.

1/24: Tyler Harris, 25, of 22 N. Main St., was arrested and charged with operating under the influence, failure to drive right, drinking while driving, possession of less than ½ ounce of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia, police said.

Also, from Jan. 15-21, officers responded to 15 medical calls, two motor vehicle crashes and six alarms, and made 22 traffic stops.

Colchester Police News

1/21: State Police said Jessica F. Feltovic, 33, of 21 Knox Rd., Manchester, was arrested and charged with failure to respond to an infraction.

1/23: Colchester Police said Christopher Smith, 35, of 466 West Main St., Waterbury, was arrested and charged with third-degree burglary, second-degree criminal mischief, and sixth-degree larceny.

1/23: Colchester Police said Ashley N. Plantz, 32, of 42 Shores Rd., East Haddam, was

arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol.

1/23: State Police said Christina L. Christian, 37, of 135 Lake Rd., turned herself in on an outstanding warrant for second-degree failure to appear.

1/27: State Police said Timothy M., Golubeff, 42, of 12 Esther Ln., was arrested and charged with third-degree assault and disorderly conduct.

Portland Police News

1/25: Michael Bankowski, 28, of 384 Main St., was charged with improper use of marker plate, insufficient insurance and failure to obey traffic signal, Portland Police said.

1/26: Jennifer Perez, 45, of 89 Julia Terrace, Middletown, was charged with operating a motor vehicle without insurance and operating a motor vehicle unregistered, police said.

1/27: Jashua Seda, 21, of 46 Harris circle, Waterbury, was charged with possession of half an ounce of marijuana and operating a motor vehicle without a license, police said.

CrossFit Breakdown to Mark Two Years in Hebron

by Sloan Brewster

CrossFit Breakdown will celebrate two years in Hebron in March.

Mack Mayo, of Hebron, who stopped in for an afternoon workout on Monday, Jan. 22, works out twice a day. He's competing for the first time in the CrossFit Games Opens Teenage Division.

With the hope of making it to regionals and then to the top five, he's putting in lots of hours of sweat.

To get to regionals, he will have to make the first cut, which narrows the competition to 200 athletes. From there, they compete in the online qualifier, sending in videos of their workouts, Mayo said. That brings it down to the top 20 competitors and then to the top five.

"So you have to train hard to make it to that stage," he said.

Mayo's specialty is cardio and longer workouts.

"My weakness is weights," he said. "That's one of the reasons I come in twice a day, so that I can get strong."

Tony Perreno, owner and head coach, said Mayo has been at it for about 10 months and has shown great improvement.

"Absolutely," he said. "There are so many skills that he didn't have when he walked through the door and not only is he doing it now but he's proficient at it."

Not everyone at the gym is a competitor and those who are, are not necessarily at Mayo's level, according to Perreno.

"Of all our members he's probably the only one who's working on that goal and legitimately has a shot to get there," he said. "Most of our

members are just trying to get in better shape."

CrossFit can help folks improve mobility, remain injury-free, get in better cardiovascular shape and lose or gain weight, Perreno said.

"And that's what most people are after," he said.

Perreno, who coached gymnasts for 30 years, said he got hooked on CrossFit at a gym in Rocky Hill.

"I loved it," he said. "To me it is the most well-rounded fitness system that is out there today when it is done properly."

There are "two different animals" in CrossFit, Perreno explained. There's standard fitness and competition level.

"I think people when they walk in, well you know, you play a little bit of football on the weekend or you play for the NFL," he said. "Ninety percent of CrossFit is just normal people trying to get themselves in shape."

CrossFit workouts can be scaled and modified for each individual's ability level or age, Perreno said. At CrossFit Breakdown, there are children aged six or seven and adults up to 74.

Kids learn a basic workout, including proper squats and better movement, he said. Teens do more serious workouts but are learning to correctly lift weights and do a modified version of lifting.

CrossFit, according to Perreno, is defined as "constantly varied functional movements." It incorporates sports, including gymnastics. The gym in Hebron has large tires to use during workouts, sleds for dragging heavy weights, several sets of gymnastics rings and other equipment.

Coaches work with clients and a former gym-



Mack Mayo tosses a ball at the ceiling during a workout session at CrossFit Breakdown. The gym, located at 612 Church St. (Route 85), will celebrate its two-year anniversary in March.

nast who is now a physical therapist makes sure everything is done safely and scientifically, Perreno said.

The idea, according to Perreno, is to create well-rounded athletes and for "the average Joe" to improve his or her fitness level.

"It's just working out right," Perreno said. "A smarter way of getting in shape is just getting in shape, and I say smart because the actual idea of CrossFit was set up so anybody can do it."

Perreno called his gym CrossFit Breakdown because he wanted to fill a gap.

"I came up with that name because what I thought people were missing in CrossFit was coaches and programs who would break down the skills in very feasible and learnable [way]," he said. "We will literally break it down so anybody can figure it out and then build it up from there."

For Mayo going to CrossFit is also about something else.

"The community," he said.

CrossFit Breakdown is located at 612 Church St. (Route 85), in the Amston section of town. It can be reached at 860-729-2722.

Hebron Republicans, Democrats Select Members

by Sloan Brewster

More folks are showing interest in participating in local politics.

On Tuesday Jan. 16, Hebron's Democratic and Republican town committees held caucuses and elected members to serve for the next two years. Both committees' chairs reported solid turnout for the elections.

Republicans filled 35 out of the 36 possible slots, GOP chairwoman Catherine Marx said.

Democrats placed 26 new members, out of a possible 30, and Democratic Town Committee Chairman Ted Bromley said he has received inquiries for the four remaining spots.

When Bromley, who has been the Democratic Town Committee chairman for two terms or four years, joined the committee about ten years ago, there were only about 10 to 12 members, he said.

"Now we're topping off at 30," he said. "I think that really shows an interest in the town."

Bromley said he was excited more people are getting involved.

"I think there's an increased interest, you know, to get involved whether it's because of what's going on at the federal level or the state," he said.

The top priority for the next several weeks will be selecting delegates to go to various nominating conventions in March, Bromley said. After that, the next step will be the effort to elect a governor, state senator, state representative, and other statewide officers.

"We'll try to focus and assist the candidates that are running in the district and hope that they succeed," he said.

A couple new members to the Republican Town Committee, Peter Kasper and David Veschi, are on the Board of Finance, which is a plus, according to Marx. Additionally, Dan Larson, Gail Richmond and Clara O'Brien are on the Board of Selectmen.

"The discussion about budget and policy will be enhanced to have [the Board of Finance] members, as well as the members on the Board of Selectmen," she said. "So the fact that we have people who are currently serving on boards as well as those who are running again means that we will have good discussions."

Some new members were looking at participating in the upcoming nominating conventions, Marx said. There are also a couple of new members who joined because of an interest in

running for local offices, including Keith Petit, who is currently on the Capital Improvement Plan Committee and Amanda Veneziano, who would like to run for boards of education.

Members also look forward to attending the upcoming Connecticut Republican debates, she said. The committee has reached out to a number of the 2018 gubernatorial candidates who were at the debate in Hebron, she said.

"We're going to have a series of further discussions with them," Marx said. The first talk will take place at the next committee meeting on Monday Feb. 26. Connecticut Republican Party gubernatorial candidates Tim Herbst, Steve Obsitnik and Prasad Srinivasan will attend. The meeting will be in Douglas Library, 22 Main St., and begin at 7 p.m.

Hebron Republican Town Committee members who will serve in from 2018 to 2020 are: George Alden, Marilyn Alden, Joe Colleti, Vince Colonna, James Cordier, Val Dalton, June Danaher, Diane Del Rosso, Mark Falade, Gerrald Garfield, Marty Halloran, Mann Hasen, Dan Larson, Phil LoBianco, Amy Lynch-Gracias, Catherine Marx, Michael McCormack, Will Moorcroft, Clara O'Brien, Jardo

Opcensky, Keith Petit, Gail Richmond, John Richmond, Daniel Smith, Tom Tremont, Robert Warner, Kathy Williams, Kevin Williams, Merris Williams, Natalie Wood, Scott Wood, Amanda Veneziano, David Veschi, Peter Kasper and Jim Petrozza.

For more information on how to get involved, Hebron Republican electors are encouraged to contact Marx or RTC Vice Chairman Michael McCormack at HebronRepublicans@gmail.com.

New members of the Democratic Town Committee are: Ted Bromley, R. Wayne Christensen, John Collins, Carol Connolly, Amy D'Amaddio, Beth Fitzgerald, Bob Fitzgerald, Janet Fodaski, Bernie Furbush, Cindy Kelly, David King, Patricia King, Mal Leichter, Maryanne Leichter, Nicole Lotko, Rich Marzi, Claudia Natorski, Tony Novak, Brian O'Connell, Joe O'Connor, Heather Petit, Judy Podell, Marc Rubera, Brenda Shapiro, and Tiffany Ventura Thiele.

The next meeting of the Democratic Town Committee will be held in the lower level at Town Hall, 15 Gilead St., Tuesday, Feb. 20. For more information, visit hebrondems.com.

\$825K Reduction Impacting Colchester Schools

by Julianna Roche

In a variety of ways, the Colchester school system is feeling the impact of \$825,000 cut from the budget last summer – and none of those ways are good, according to Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Mary Conway.

The cuts were made to help First Selectman Art Shilosky reduce the overall town budget, due to municipal funding being held back by the state, as state lawmakers grappled over a budget.

At the start of the fiscal year last July, the Board of Education made the \$825,000 cut, but hoped it would be able to restore the funds later on when the state budget finally passed. However, Conway explained that hope evaporated in late October when Gov. Dannel Malloy okayed a 2017-18 state spending package that trimmed \$675,000 in Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant money from Colchester. So, the school system went into an immediate hard freeze – turning the potential damage done by the reductions into a reality.

This week, Conway told the *Rivereast* that Board of Education budget subcommittee officially approved the transfer of the \$825,000 to a contingency line item at its meeting last Tuesday – meaning the funds will be set aside and not spent this fiscal year.

With the hard freeze, Conway said, it became a reality that teaching positions left unfilled last summer would remain unfilled for the rest of the 2017-18 year. While this resulted in

\$524,123 in payroll cost savings, the impacts were “real,” Conway said.

According to documents provided by the school board, three full-time teachers and four part-time ones – including a library specialist at Bacon Academy and a reading specialist at Colchester Elementary School (CES) – were among those positions that remained unfilled.

Conway explained that continuing to go without a library specialist could put the high school’s accreditation with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges at risk – though she added the school board hopes to restore the position for the 2018-19 budget.

Another serious loss, she said, is the elementary school’s reading specialist.

“The reading specialist was supposed to be devoted to readers who were really struggling,” Conway explained, adding that of the 176 students currently reading below grade level at CES, assistance could only be provided to 56 percent of those students – leaving the remainder of students “still truly struggling.”

A family and consumer sciences (FCS) teacher was also among those cut, bringing the removal of seven different classes and an end to the Bobcat Preschool program at Bacon, which was previously run by FCS students.

“So parents found out the first week of school that they had no nursery school for their child,” Conway said, adding that it was the result of

bad timing, since the district had not yet filled the FCS teaching position when the hard freeze was implemented.

But payroll was only part of the story of the \$825,000 cut. The balance of the reductions – or about \$300,000 – were made across the board, and included delaying capital projects such as painting and carpeting by one year; not buying any new library books for any of the town’s four schools, as well as instructional supplies such as Chromebooks and textbooks; and cutting back on professional development for teachers.

“That’s my big bugaboo,” Conway said of the cutting professional development for teachers. “All of the things [like] textbooks and paper – they are not the one thing that will make a difference in a child’s education. It’s a teacher, so if you want to cut things, that’s the last thing you want to cut.”

She added that “ongoing learning” has always been a district-wide focus for teachers and administrators.

“It’s just what we do and we want all our kids to continuously learn the rest of their lives too,” Conway said. “It can’t be stagnated. You don’t want to go a doctor who stopped learning 10 years ago.”

While the reductions are not permanent, Conway said everything will continue to be reevaluated and “looked at closely” in the up-

coming budget season.

“With making these reductions, there is an effect,” Conway said. “Kids are being impacted.”

Also, at the regular Board of Education meeting that followed the budget subcommittee one last Tuesday, the school board provided an update regarding the search for a new permanent superintendent.

In a press release issued by the district, Board of Education Chairman Brad Bernier explained that the search – which had previously been put on pause – has since resumed with a new Superintendent Search Committee, including all seven of the current school board members.

With a second application period opening, seven additional applicants were received bringing the applicant pool to 25.

“We feel that we have a strong pool and are looking forward to meeting the candidates,” Bernier said in the release. “The new board is fully engaged in carrying on the work of their predecessors in finding a new leader that brings the highest level of integrity and commitment to cultivate and champion the Colchester Public Schools’ vision.”

The next Board of Education meeting will be held Tuesday, Feb. 13, at 7 p.m., in the media center at Bacon Academy.

New Nonprofit Invests in Children of Fallen Soldiers

by Julianna Roche

Jeffrey M. Epstein is using his experience as an Alaskan wilderness guide and Coast Guard license with a Master Credential to launch a mentorship program for children and teens who have lost parents in the military or law enforcement.

Epstein, founder and president of *Healing the Wounds*, said the nonprofit organization is in its formative stages as he works to secure an undisclosed amount of funding.

A Colchester native and Bacon Academy graduate, Epstein worked for 20 years in mortgage banking before launching the program.

Epstein has spent over 30 consecutive summers in the Alaskan wilderness as an outdoors guide for expert sportsmen and novices, families, teenagers and children.

“I met some really interesting people – families, kids mostly, who were so awe-inspired about what they saw up there [in Alaska],” Epstein said. “I think they really grew from it and I feel to this day, if I bumped into one of those teenagers from back then, they’d still be talking about it being the best experience.”

As part of *Healing the Wounds* – which is geared towards children aged 12 to 17 – Epstein explained that kids will have an opportunity to venture into the Alaskan wilderness through a summer program where they will receive survival training by seasoned professionals, learn seamanship, coastal navigation and safe-boat- ing skills, and build their self-confidence and leadership skills. They’ll also walk away with a first-aid and CPR certification.

“I’m a patriotic guy,” Epstein said. “I think a lot about our country [and] we all share an obligation to these children because they lost parents in service to America, so I felt it would be great to bring them up there and let them share in some of the experiences I’ve had.”

Beyond the summer program, Epstein said kids will also receive lifetime support from *Healing the Wounds* – including networking and exposure to a variety of career and internship opportunities in fields such as manufacturing, culinary arts, food processing, healthcare, aviation, maritime services, the armed forces, law enforcement, education, sustainable resource management and marine sciences.

Support will also be offered with access to a call-in center year-round, webinars and tutorials, and regional gatherings with other members.

“It’s not just about Alaska,” Epstein said, adding that the program’s goal is to help kids “build character, self-confidence, and leadership” and to “convince them that somebody believes in them.”

Among those who have already lent their backing to the program, according to Epstein, is the U.S. Army – who reached out to him after reading a news story about *Healing the Wounds* to say they were “very enthusiastic” and “optimistic” the program would garner enough funding to take off.

“They said they have thousands of teenagers that would be able to take advantage of this,” he added.

For that to happen however, a significant amount of funding is still needed – which Epstein explained will be raised through annual membership fees in a range of levels from bronze memberships for \$49 to platinum members for \$100,000.

Several distinguished military figures are already serving on the program board – including retired U.S. Army Lt. General William Boykin, retired U.S. Air Force Lt. General Thomas McInerney, Gold Star mother Karen Vaughn and retired U.S. Army Green Beret



Healing the Wounds – a new mentoring program for children of fallen military service members and law enforcement – will combine trips to the Alaskan wilderness (shown above) with career and leadership training. Photo by Jerry Epstein.

Captain Mykel Hawke.

“We’re bringing on members,” Epstein explained. “We want people to come aboard and understand they’re going to have a say in this. This is their contribution to these children and to our country.”

He added that the goal was “to make certain” 90 percent of those contributions made by members go directly to the cause.

“Once the bottom line is raised, on an an-

nual basis, this thing is going to be able to run on very little,” Epstein said. “Our society is so focused on what’s wrong today [that] we created this organization to focus on what’s possible to [these kids’] future and to help generate the next group of responsible citizens.”

For more information on *Healing the Wounds*, visit healingthewounds.org or facebook.com/healingthewounds.

Report Recommends Revisiting Water Issue in East Hampton

by Elizabeth Regan

In the 10 years since voters rejected a \$28.5 million public water system, efforts to come up with a lower-cost alternative have failed to yield achievable results.

Now, a report by engineering firm Tighe and Bond is recommending the town revisit that the 2007 proposal – which would cost an estimated \$46 million today – or consider buying water from the Metropolitan District (MDC).

Connecting to MDC through Portland would cost the town about as much as expanding its own water system, according to preliminary figures in the report.

The \$46 million present-day adjusted estimate for the town-operated system takes into account the first phase of the project only, which would have delivered water to approximately 490 downtown homes and businesses. The report said it would cost an estimated \$83 million in total to connect roughly 4,000 users throughout town.

Outfitting the water system to bring MDC into town would cost \$45 million for the first phase and \$81 million for the full, three-phase project, the report said.

Representatives from MDC told Tighe and Bond engineers that the water company has “excess supply” and can serve the downtown area through a metered interconnection in Portland, according to the report. Engineers have not yet had conversations with MDC about the possibility of supplying the whole town, the authors added.

In 2010, the town continued to work toward expanding its own water system when it paid Saint Clements Castle and Marina owner Edward Doherty, doing business as Saint Clements Marina LLC, \$673,000 for an easement to use two wells on his Oakum Dock Road property. The town also paid for the remediation of contaminated soil and building removal.

The town at the same time bought the Greer property, a 10.3-acre parcel located on Middle Haddam Road behind the Cobalt post office, to be used for a water treatment plant.

While there have not been outward signs of progress since then, the issue is again coming into focus based on the release of the new report and a commitment by the current Town Council to address the town’s water problems.

Tighe and Bond was commissioned by the Water Development Task Force last year to look into the possibility of consolidating the town’s disparate public water systems into “a larger interconnected system” to provide water to homes and businesses in and around the intersection of Main Street and Route 66, according to the report.

But there is not enough available water in the existing system to meet the demands of the downtown area, the firm found in its Dec. 13 report and a Jan. 9 addendum. The authors added that even if additional wells are located, “water quality will likely be poor and will require treatment.”

The report stated that options for the interconnected system would be roughly \$22 million, without taking into account the cost of acquiring approximately 10 additional wells necessary for a sufficient supply.

A \$22.51 million option would serve 312 more homes and businesses in the targeted area while a \$22.04 million option would add 95 customers.

The January update to the report threw another alternative into the mix. The document said the Water Development Task Force asked engineers to look at even cheaper options, focusing first on increasing the water supply for American Distilling & Manufacturing Co. and then on bringing water to “as many residential and business units in the Route 66/downtown

loop as possible.”

The report said American Distilling, a producer of witch hazel on Route 66, wants to expand operations and increase its water supply by 5,000 gallons per day. The company has its own wells but does not want to be responsible for water treatment, the report said.

The report found it would cost \$16.1 million to supply water to American Distilling and about 58 percent of businesses in the downtown area.

Public Utilities Administrator Tim Smith this week said representatives from American Distilling approached him about six to nine months ago asking for 20,000 gallons of water.

While the report said acquiring two more wells on South Main Street could meet the needs of American Distilling, the engineers reiterated their recommendation for further study of the larger-scale Cobalt landing wellfield or the MDC connection.

The report cautioned that \$16.1 million “may not be affordable” to the relatively small number of customers served in that plan.

“Additionally, it does not provide enough water for expansion or redevelopment of the downtown area, or water for existing residents and businesses located along the supply mains connecting the sources to the Route 66/downtown loop,” the authors wrote.

Ed Jackowitz, American Distilling CEO, confirmed this week he wants clean water and more of it.

“The water quality from most of the wells in East Hampton is terrible,” he said. “It’s extremely high in iron.”

Jackowitz described it as a “shame” that the town didn’t construct a water system back when it would have been “more or less funded by the federal government.”

According to meeting minutes from the 2009

town meeting during which taxpayers approved the purchase of the Greer property and the Oakum Dock Road easement, there was public discussion about a 1965 proposal for a water system that would have required the town to pay only 10 percent of the total project cost.

Smith said Thursday morning he has not been able to find supporting documentation for that claim.

According to Smith, the 2007 water system proposal that went to voters assumed the town would be responsible for 70-90 percent of cost.

“The federal and state grants have dried up except for very special cases. The town system does not qualify for any of those special cases,” Smith told the *Rivereast*.

At last week’s council meeting, Smith introduced the Tighe and Bond report to members as “the starting point of a conversation” about how to fix the town’s water problems.

He pointed to a variety of issues to consider.

One issue with connecting to MDC is the town’s loss of control in setting the rates for consumers.

“It’s going to go up on a regular basis and there’s nothing you can do but pay,” Smith said.

He also said the option to supply water to American Distilling and some downtown businesses – which the report describes as a “minimized service area” – has costly implications.

How are American Distilling and 58 percent of Village Center businesses going to be able to afford to pay for \$16.1 million, he wondered.

Town Council Chairwoman Melissa Engel asked members to take the next few weeks to review the documents and prepare questions for Smith before they meet again at the council’s regularly scheduled Feb. 13 meeting.

“Right now I think it’s a little overwhelming,” she said.

Oakley Appointed to East Hampton Board of Education

by Elizabeth Regan

The Board of Education, which is currently involved in the busiest part of its annual budget-planning process, has chosen a vocal advocate for education funding to fill a vacancy.

Nancy Oakley, a reinsurance broker and mother of two school-aged children, has been a fixture at school board meetings for at least the past few budget cycles.

The seat was vacated by Republican Erika Bonaccorso, who said side effects from multiple sclerosis treatment were making it difficult to sit through evening meetings.

The seven board members present at the Jan. 29 meeting voted in favor of the appointment. Amanda Amtmanis and Marc Lambert were out of the state at the time.

Oakley told the *Rivereast* this week that her familiarity with the process will allow her to “hit the ground running” at her first meeting on Feb. 5. Members will continue to discuss the \$31.05 million recommended budget presented in January by Superintendent of Schools Paul K. Smith, with a tentative vote set for Feb. 26.

Last year, Oakley spearheaded a grassroots campaign in support of the Board of Education

budget even as various proposals coming from Hartford threatened to cut millions in state funding for education. Her efforts included outreach on social media as well as a physical presence at many meetings of the school board, Board of Finance and Town Council.

The grassroots advocates had implored both the finance board and council to send the education and general government proposals to voters without changes so taxpayers could decide for themselves if further cuts needed to be made.

Both sides of the budget, which were included as separate questions in the town’s inaugural bifurcated referendum, passed on the first try.

Oakley said her involvement in the local education system has grown from her days helping in the classroom when her children, now 10 and 13, were starting out in school. Back then, she saw the direct effect of district policies and funding as it played out each day in the classroom. Subsequent experience on the PTO gave her more of an understanding about fundraising for items that fall through the bud-

get gap each year.

“Little by little, my experience in the school has expanded,” she said. “I started to see the district from a more macro standpoint.”

Following the budget planning process has become her self-described “hobby” in recent years.

“I like to keep learning, even as an adult,” she said.

School board Chairman Christopher Goff said the timing of the vacancy made it important to select someone who understands how the annual education budget is created.

Oakley is “at 90 percent of our meetings,” he said. “She fit in perfectly, having that background.”

Goff noted Oakley had applied to fill a previous vacancy resulting from the departure of former Chairman Kenneth Barber, a Democrat. The seat went to Democrat Lois Villa.

The Barber vacancy was the first to emerge since the end of a roughly \$68,000 lawsuit between the school board and the Town Council that sought to determine which entity had the power to make appointments. In November,

Superior Court Judge Edward Domnarski ruled the school board has “exclusive authority” to make its own appointments within 30 days of a vacancy.

The school board is now following a year-old provision in its bylaws, which was approved while the lawsuit was still ongoing, to expand its process for filling vacancies. It specifies the board “shall consider, but is not obligated to act upon, filling the vacancy with a person of the same political affiliation as the member who vacated the office.”

Goff said he did not hear from any members of the Republican Town Committee or Democratic Town Committee with candidate endorsements.

The other two candidates interviewed for the position were unaffiliated voter Bryan Shogren and registered Democrat David Caterisano.

Smith said all candidates had strong backgrounds.

“We had three candidates that would have all brought something different and special to the board,” he said.

Obituaries

Portland

Leontine Jane Hart

Jane Hart, 98, of Portland and Pelham, N.Y., widow of the late Stephen Hart, passed peacefully from this life Tuesday, Jan. 23. Born May 4, 1919, in Pelham, N.Y., she was the daughter of the late R. Frank and Leontine Kent Brooks.



As a resident of Pelham Manor, N.Y., her husband and four children always enjoyed spending their summers in Haddam Neck on the Brooks homestead. Eventually, Jane moved to Haddam Neck and then to Portland for her retirement years. She also enjoyed visiting her daughter and son-in-law, Barb and Mike, in their lake home in New Hampshire.

Jane was an active member of Christ Church in Pelham and then in Trinity Episcopal Church in Portland. She took pleasure in many activities including receptions, bake sales, church fairs, Thrift Shop, Bookstore and Altar Guild. Jane was also very proud of her service during World War II in the Ambulance Corps, receiving the injured into N.Y.C.

Jane is survived by her younger brother, William Brooks of Florida, and she was predeceased by brothers Donald Brooks, Philip Brooks and Ralph Brooks.

She is survived by her four children, Stephen Tyler Hart and his wife Cynthia, Lee Hart and her husband Charles Bayha, Philip Hart and his wife Beth, and Barbara Hyer and her husband Michael. She is also survived by seven grandchildren, Leslie, Jennifer, Christopher, Adam, Andrew, Molly and Katelyn. Great-grandchildren include Mackenzie, Sydney, Zoe, Colton, Bentley and Kent.

Funeral Services will be held at Trinity Church in Portland, Saturday, Feb. 3, at 11 a.m. A private burial will be held in New York at a future date. There will be no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Alzheimer's Association of CT, 200 Executive Blvd., Suite 4B, Southington, CT 06489 or online at ACT.LAZ.org or to Compassionate Care, 18 Orchard View Dr., Londonderry, NH 03053.

East Hampton

Richard D. Mooney Jr.

Following a brief illness, Richard D. Mooney Jr. (Rich), of Williston, Vt., formerly of East Hampton, passed away peacefully Thursday, Jan. 25, at home, with his wife and beloved Samoyeds by his side. Rich was 49.



Rich leaves his wife of 24 years, Cindi Hines; his parents, Richard and Sandra Mooney of East Hampton; a brother, Christopher (Jude) Mooney of Jackson, Wyo.; a sister, Susan (Todd) Winkler of Barkhamsted; and many close family members and friends.

Family and friends are invited to celebrate Rich's life at an informal gathering Saturday, Feb. 10, between 1 and 4 p.m., at Stephen C. Gregory and Son Cremation Service, 472 Meadowland Drive., South Burlington, Vt.

In lieu of flowers, Rich asked that remembrances be sent to either the Williston Community Food Shelf (P.O. Box 1065, Williston, VT 05495) or Therapy Dogs of Vermont (P.O. Box 1271, Williston, VT 05495).

Heartfelt thanks to Rich's VNA Palliative Care Team, for all their support during this time.

"If love could have saved Rich, he would have lived forever."

Portland

Raymond Henry Poet

Raymond Henry Poet of Portland died Saturday, Jan. 27, at home. He was 74.

He and his wife, Janet Kathryn Poet (née Burkel), celebrated 50 years of marriage last year. He loved his grandchildren, the Patriots and making lists – roughly in that order. He was generous with his time and enjoyed nothing more than helping other people solve their problems. He also loved to travel: to the beaches of Cape Cod, New Jersey and Florida; to the American West; and to Europe. He was a student of history, was a lifelong learner and loved movies and books.



Born in New York City on Dec. 11, 1943, he spent most of his youth in New Jersey and graduated from Marietta College in Ohio. He found law school not to his liking, so he went on to a long career at the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration in Boston, Mass. He was a longtime resident of Randolph, Mass., before moving in 2006 to Portland.

He was a natural public speaker and had a passion for public service, becoming involved in civic and community endeavors his entire life. He was a town meeting member in Randolph, an officeholder in the Randolph Youth Soccer Association, a member of the Randolph public schools scholarship advisory board and a member of the First Congregational Church of Randolph. In Portland, he held multiple leadership roles in the Bartlett Hill Homeowners Association and the First Congregational Church of Portland. He also held administrative positions within the Connecticut chapter of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Associations, most recently as its secretary.

In addition to wife Janet, originally from Wrentham, Mass., he is survived by his sister, Renee Poet of Prospect; son Matthew Poet and daughter-in-law Tina Poet of Wallingford; son Jonathan Poet and daughter-in-law Dana Dorman of Philadelphia; and grandchildren Dylan, Jake and Margot.

He was preceded by his parents, Raymond B. Poet and Ruth. D. Poet.

A memorial service was held Thursday, Feb. 1, at the First Congregational Church of Portland, 554 Main St., Portland. His ashes will be scattered later in a private service.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to the First Congregational Church of Portland, 554 Main St., Portland, CT 06480, or the Portland Library, 20 Freestone Ave., Portland, CT 06480.

Glastonbury Funeral Home, 450 New London Tpke., Glastonbury, is assisting with arrangements. To leave an online condolence, visit glastonburyfuneral.com.

Colchester

Doris Ann Webster

Doris Ann Webster, 81, loving wife of Lawrence "Larry" Webster for nearly 56 years, passed away peacefully Sunday, Jan. 28. Born Oct. 1, 1936, in Pulaski, Va., and raised in Wilmington, De., she was the daughter of the late Guy and Rosalie (Grigger) Manuel.



Doris started her career in law in Delaware as a legal secretary. After settling in Connecticut, she continued in the field and eventually became a paralegal, working for nearly 50 years for the same Hartford firm – now known as DanaherLagnese, PC.

Graveside services will be observed at 1 p.m. today, Feb. 2, at Linwood Cemetery, Colchester. There are no calling hours.

As Doris was an avid reader, those who wish may make a donation in her memory to the Friends of Cragin Library, P.O. Box 68, Colchester, CT 06415.

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

Colchester

Robert Daniel Fletcher

Robert D. "Bob" Fletcher died Friday, Jan. 5, in Colchester, from Alzheimer's disease. He was predeceased in 2011 by Marian, his wife of 28 years.



He is survived by daughters Deborah Barry of Michigan and Patricia MacLaughlin of South Carolina; five step-children, Francis Lerzo of New Hampshire, Timothy Lerzo of Connecticut, Pamela DePizzol of Florida, Robert Lerzo of Georgia, and Alison Nelson of Connecticut; and numerous grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren. He and Marian hosted high school exchange student "Ai" Chakarita Nukoolkit from Thailand in 87-88; she remained a strong presence in their lives.

The son of Allen and Zoa Fletcher Jr. of Ludlow, Vt., he graduated 1944 from Cushing Academy, Ashburnham, Mass.; he attended Middlebury College in Vermont and Williams College in Massachusetts. He served in the U.S. Army during WWII and the Korean War. He worked in various positions including Stanley Tools and A. Brown Co. in Vermont. After retiring, he drove for SEVCA in Vermont until 1998.

He was an active member in his churches and their choirs at North Bennington Congregational Church, UCC, Vermont, United Church of Ludlow, Vt., and Colchester Federated Church. He was made master mason in Black River-Lafayette Lodge 85 F&AM in 1991; he was senior steward from 1992-96 and junior deacon from 1997-98. He was a member of Keystone Chapter 5 OES from 1992-97, and Mizpah Chapter 40 OES from 2003. He was chaplain 1993-94, and worthy patron 1995-97. A member of the Bennington Lions Club and the Ludlow Lions Club, 1984-2004, he held various offices. He was in the Boy Scouts in the 60s-70s, and a member of American Legion Post 36, Ludlow, Vt., and Post 54, Colchester. For many years he was historian for Fletcher Farms in Ludlow, Vt.

Burial will be at Pleasant View Cemetery, Ludlow, Vt., in June.

Memorial contributions may be made through the Masonic Grand Lodge of Vermont to C.A.R.E., c/o Grand Lodge of Vermont, 49 East Rd., Barre, VT 05641-5390.

Colchester

Antonio Morelli

Antonio "Tony" Morelli, 64, of Colchester, beloved husband of Carmela (Marando) Morelli, passed away unexpectedly from natural causes Tuesday, Jan. 30. Born Apr. 17, 1953 in Focà, Calabria, Italy, he was the son of the late Giuseppe and Rosa (DeMarco) Morelli.



For nearly 40 years, Tony had worked as a professional civil engineer for numerous firms and was currently employed by BL Companies of Hartford. He was a devoted family man, both to his immediate family in the States as well as his extended family in Italy, whom he loved to visit as often as possible.

In addition to his loving wife of 36 years, he leaves four children, Marco (and wife Kate) of Silver Spring, Md., Rosa of Philadelphia, Pa., Antonello of Huntington Beach, Calif., and Daniele of Colchester; a grandson, Lucas; five siblings (and their spouses) Alberto (Linda), Vincenzo (Emilia), Alfredo (Franca), Maria (Enzo) and Pasqualina (Cosimo), all of Italy; a brother-in-law, Antonio of Italy; a sister-in-law, Lina of Italy; his father-in-law, Vincenzo Marando of Italy; and numerous extended family and friends.

In addition to his parents, he was predeceased by two siblings, Franco and Carmela; and his mother-in-law, Rosa Marando.

The family will receive guests from 4-7 p.m. today, Feb. 2, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral liturgy will be celebrated at 10 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 3, directly at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave., Colchester.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to St. Andrew Church or to the American Heart Association, P.O. Box 417005, Boston, MA 02241-7005 (heart.org).

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

East Hampton

Edmund Lowell Banker

Edmund Lowell "Buddy" Banker peacefully passed away Sunday, Jan. 21, surrounded by his loved ones. Buddy was born May 11, 1933, in Penacook, N.H., the son of Ray and N. Jane (French) Banker. He was a longtime resident of East Hampton.



Buddy was larger-than-life with a charismatic personality. He left a lasting impression on all who met him. He honorably served his country during the Korean Conflict in the Navy on the U.S.S. Ashland (LSD-1). He later worked as a truck driver and a warehouse manager. Buddy was a lover of family, animals, his Native American heritage, and a good slice of warm apple pie with milk, sugar, and ice cream. He was also a proud member of VFW Post 1631 and a lifetime member of American Legion Post 31 in Penacook, N.H.

He is survived by Arlene Lodge; his children, Gary Banker, Ronny Banker, Judy Luckern, Jody Brissette, Sherri DiStefano, John Connelly, and Danielle Murphy; seven grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; niece; and nephew.

He is predeceased by his granddaughter, Jennifer Azzara, and his sister, Sylvia Lodge.

A private family service will be held in honor of his life.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the New Hampshire Veterans Home in Tilton, N.H.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Even though I don't publish them, as East Haddam is just outside the *Rivereast* circulation area, I do get notices occasionally from the folks at the Goodspeed Opera House, letting me know what plays are coming up. Being something of a theater buff, I usually give them a look, and see what's coming up.

Late last week, I got an email sent to me from Goodspeed announcing the play *Bullets Over Broadway*, which was due to be performed at the legendary theater later this year, was being replaced on the schedule by *The Drowsy Chaperone*. I figured it was probably a rights issue or something like that.

I clicked on the email and – yeah, I was mistaken. Turns out the play is being bumped because of Woody Allen.

Allen, who adapted the musical version of *Bullets Over Broadway* from his own 1994 movie of the same name, has been back in the news as of late with allegations resurfacing from the 1990s that claim Allen molested his daughter, Dylan Farrow, when she was just 7 years old.

The allegations first made headlines 25 years ago, but let's face it, they're pretty horrendous, and in the current climate, with claims of harassment and molestation affecting the careers of everyone from Kevin Spacey to Garrison Keillor, Goodspeed apparently doesn't want to take any chances.

“After careful consideration and conversations with community members, trustees, staff and artists, we have decided to cancel our production of *Bullets Over Broadway*,” explained Goodspeed Executive Director Michael Gennaro. “In light of the current dialogue on sexual harassment and misconduct, the author of *Bullets Over Broadway*, Woody Allen, has come under increasing scrutiny. Ongoing reports in the media have made this situation even more difficult and complicated and this led us to reconsider the appropriateness of producing the show.”

In its place, Goodspeed will now mount a production of *The Drowsy Chaperone*. I've heard good things about this play, which was nominated for and won a bunch of Tonys when it came out in the late '90s, so those in the area might want to check it out.

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In my 10-plus years of editing the *Rivereast*, I've handled a lot of obituaries – and some of them can be real gut-punchers: tragic stories about people lost too soon, or whose lives were eaten away by illness, or whose passing will leave an incredible void that you can just tell may never be filled.

So it was frankly a delight to come across the obituary of Indiana resident Terry Wayne Ward earlier this week. Ward, 71, died Jan. 23, and his daughter wanted to memorialize her fun-loving, one-of-a-kind dad in a manner she felt he'd truly enjoy – and fit his personality perfectly. And so she did, and the result is a tribute that sometimes made me laugh out loud, even though I never met the man or indeed even heard of him. The words “funny” and “obituary” don't often go together, but they do in this case. Here's the full obituary, from the website of Indiana-based Geisen Funeral Home:

Terry Wayne Ward, age 71, of DeMotte, Ind., escaped this mortal realm Tuesday, Jan. 23, leaving behind 32 jars of Miracle Whip, 17 boxes of Hamburger Helper and multitudes of other random items that would prove helpful in the event of a zombie apocalypse.

Terry is survived by his overly-patient and accepting wife Kathy, who was the love of his life (a fact she gladly accepted sympathy for during their 48 years of marriage). He is

also survived by daughters Rebecca (William) Hines and Jean (Jeff) Lahm; sister, Linda; brother, Phil; grandchildren, Alexander and Hannah Hines (The Mesopotamians), Daphne and Erin Pistello (The Daffer and Peanut), Brendan and Owen Lahm (Phineas and Ferb) and Tessa McMurry (Smiley).

He is preceded in death by his parents Paul and Bernice Ward, daughter Laura Pistello, grandson Vincent Pistello, brother Kenneth Ward, a 1972 Rambler and a hip.

Terry graduated from Thornridge High School in South Holland, Ill., where only three of his teachers took an early retirement after having had him as a student. He met the love of his life, Kathy, by telling her he was a lineman – he didn't specify early on that he was a lineman for the phone company, not the NFL. Still, Kathy and Terry wed in the fall of 1969, perfectly between the Summer of Love and the Winter of Regret.

Terry volunteered his service in the United States Army and was an active combat veteran in the Vietnam War.

He retired from AT&T (formerly Ameritech, formerly formerly Indiana Bell) after 39 years of begrudging service, where he accumulated roughly 3,000 rolls of black electrical tape during the course of his career (which he used for everything from open wounds to “Don't use this button” covers).

He enjoyed many, many things. Among those things were hunting, fishing, golfing, snorkeling, ABBA, hiking Turkey Run, chopping wood, shooting guns, Bed Bath & Beyond, starlight mints, cold beer, free beer, The History Channel, CCR, war movies, discussing who makes the best pizza, the Chicago White Sox, old Buicks, and above all, his family.

He was a renowned distributor of popsicles and ice cream sandwiches to his grandchildren. He also turned on programs such as “Phineas and Ferb” for his grand-youngins, usually when they were actually there.

He despised “uppity foods” like hummus, which his family lovingly called “bean dip” for his benefit, which he loved consequently. He couldn't give a damn about most material things, and automobiles were never to be purchased new. He never owned a personal cell phone and he had zero working knowledge of the Kardashians.

Terry died knowing that “The Blues Brothers” was the best movie ever, (young) Clint Eastwood was the baddest-ass man on the planet, and hot sauce can be added to absolutely any food.

Tremendous and heartfelt thanks go to the truly exceptional nurses at Southlake Methodist Hospital Neuro-Intensive Care Unit, who provided much more than nursing care for Terry, but also provided a peaceful and compassionate environment during his transition from this life to the next.

Friends can visit with the family on Saturday, Jan. 27, from noon until the time of the funeral service at 4 p.m., with Pastor Mark Wilkins officiating, at Geisen Funeral, Cremation & Receptions Centre, 606 E. 113th Ave., Crown Point, IN. Services will conclude at the funeral home.

Memorial donations in Terry's name can be made to your favorite charity or your favorite watering hole, where you are instructed to tie a few on and tell a few stories of the great Terry Ward.

Like I said, a delightful tribute. I feel almost like I knew the guy – and I'm sure he'll be missed by a bunch of people.

* * *

See you next week.