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Spanish Water Dog Best of Breed winner Kai was shown by handler Lisa Harper of Portland at the prestigious Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show in New York City last week. Photo courtesy of Diana Han, Nor Cal Bulldogger

Portland Dog Wins Best of Breed

by Elizabeth Regan

She's the most perfect representative of the Spanish Water Dog breed in the United States: Angel Kiss the S'Kai De Ariosa.

But you can call her Kai.

The Best of Breed honor was bestowed upon the 3-and-a-half-year-old dog with a distinctive curly coat at last week's 142nd Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show.

Thousands of breeders, owners and handlers converge on New York City each year for the nation's premiere dog show, which culminates in the Best in Show title for one pedigreed pup.

Handler Lisa Harper of Portland put Kai through the paces first at the Piers and then at Madison Square Garden amid cheering crowds, bright lights and the constant buzz of television commentators.

Harper said the decision to recognize Kai as Best of Breed was made by judge Peter Green, whose career she described as long and distinguished. Green is a four-time Westminster Best in Show winner and a seven-time Westminster judge.

"When he pointed at us, I couldn't believe it," Harper said.

While Kai was bred by Susan Deangelo of Pennsylvania, it was Harper who bred the dog's father many years ago.

"To show and win with a dog descended from my own line – well, that's every breeder's dream," Harper said.

Harper, born and raised in Glastonbury, went west for college, stayed, and made her career about dogs. Her connection to the breed began when she befriended a young, dangerously under-socialized Spanish Water Dog who was about to be put down. Harper took Tia, helped

her overcome her fears, and took her to champion levels.

Harper subsequently became an advocate for the breed, importing dogs from Spain and Finland and competing in herding, agility, rally obedience, barn hunt and water work.

As the breed expanded, she helped establish the Spanish Water Dog Club of America, and served as chairman for six years. She currently serves as vice president.

Dog clubs' missions are to establish standards for their breeds, and to educate judges, members and the public on the breeds' purposes and talents.

Harper's goal as chairman was to qualify the breed for recognition by the AKC, which took 15 years of expanding the population and meeting AKC criteria.

The Best of Breed designation during the first part of this year's Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show earned Kai a spot in the Herding Group competition at the vaunted Madison Square Garden venue, where she was evaluated against the other breeds that make up the class of loyal, intelligent and prey-driven canines.

The winning dog in each group goes on to compete for the Best in Show title.

"The judge's job is to decide if this Spanish Water Dog is a better Spanish Water Dog than that Border Collie is a Border Collie," Harper said.

First the judge examined physical features including Kai's bite, head structure, ears, chest and back end, Harper said. Then the handler walked Kai around to show off the dog's gait.

Harper said the judge went up and down the

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Three Vying for Ziobron's House Seat

by Elizabeth Regan

A lifetime Girl Scout, a labor attorney and a decorated Peace Corps alumnus are vying to take over the 34th District state House seat currently held by Republican state Rep. Melissa Ziobron.

East Haddam Republican Irene Haines and Democrats Kurt Comisky, of East Hampton, and Theresa Govert, of East Haddam, each announced their candidacy this month.

Ziobron is running for the state Senate seat belonging to Republican Art Linares. Linares isn't seeking re-election, as he's running for state treasurer.

Irene Haines, 56, is an insurance agent with AAA and the former owner of a silkscreen and embroidery business. In addition to her status as a longtime volunteer with the Girl Scouts of Connecticut, she was employed by the organization as its membership director for almost four years.

Haines' work history also boasts a Belltown connection forged more than a decade ago when she worked for about a year in the office at Bevin Bells.

Haines said that, despite the 2012 fire that destroyed the bell factory, the business survived and today continues to employ "a small force of dedicated people striving to compete in a global world."

She added, "This is the kind of small business that we need to protect against over regulation."

The 21-year resident of East Haddam is a past president of the East Haddam Business Association and serves as an alternate member of the East Haddam Economic Development Commission.

She is the founder of both the Colchester Civic Orchestra and *East Haddam News*, a weekly newspaper.

Haines received her bachelor's degree from Villanova University in Pennsylvania. She is married with two adult children.



Haines

"Melissa [Ziobron] actually approached me and asked me to run for her seat and I have to say that endorsement is an indicator I have what it takes to fill in for her," Haines said.

Haines was a petitioning candidate in last year's East Haddam first selectman's race. She received 39.76 percent of the vote but lost to Republican Emmett Lyman.

"I want to make this state a better place to live," she told the *RiverEast* this week. "Connecticut in itself is a beautiful place; I can't think of living anywhere else. But it's got a fiscal crisis going on right now. We have to work hard at repairing that."

She said the key ways to solve the state's financial situation involve improving the regulatory environment for businesses, prioritize



Comisky

roads and bridges that need attention, addressing decreasing levels of municipal aid to cities and towns, and reducing spending.

"Our budget woes have sent our state and its reputation into a tailspin," she said in her campaign announcement last week. "I am going to the capitol to look for ways to do the state's business much more cost-effectively, look for waste and come up with creative solutions to get the work done."

One idea she does not support is increasing the gasoline tax. She said increasing the burden on drivers "is not going to help small businesses" whose owners put many miles on their cars over the course of the work day.

Kurt Comisky, 59, is a practicing labor attorney in East Hampton who retired from the

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Govert

House Seat cont. from Front Page

Federal Aviation Administration after more than 20 years.

He worked in the FAA's Office of Labor and Employee Relations "on both sides of the table," he said. He was elected three times as a union representative for the northeast region and then, after earning his law degree from Western New England University, he represented FAA management.

He told the *Rivereast* this week that he retired from the federal agency last year partly because of his plans to become a candidate in this election.

While federal law prevented him from running for political office during his tenure with the FAA, he said he served in numerous appointed positions in East Hampton. He was a member of the Board of Finance, Conservation Commission and Ethics Commission. He currently serves on the Town Facilities Building Committee that oversees the construction of the new town hall complex.

Comisky, who considers himself "socially liberal and fiscally realistic," said his priorities revolve around structural reforms to the business environment and services provided by the state.

He also pointed to the need for a "comprehensive review of state statutes and regulations" affecting municipalities. He said many of them were written 50 years ago or more, which begs questions like "Is there still the same need" and "Does this [statute] address the need?"

"These goals will not be accomplished by sitting on the sidelines and throwing insults or displays of righteous indignation," he wrote in his campaign announcement. "Rather, to be successful, I have a clear vision, will build relationships across party lines, and will advocate for the necessary changes. Finally, I will follow through to administratively implement these necessary changes."

Comisky said one key solution to the overall state budget situation and its impact on municipalities involves coming up with a tax that is "more fair and equitable" than the local property tax.

"I do agree with the tolls and raising the gas tax," he said. "Basically, user fees."

Comisky lives with his wife on 24 rural acres in East Hampton. The couple has a dog, two cats, several horses and a small flock of poultry.

Theresa Govert, 25, was spurred to become a community activist in the days following the last presidential election.

That's when a progressive sign she put up in East Haddam was defaced with the spray-painted message "Trump 2016."

Before it was painted over, the sign bore a quote from activist and popular social media presence Shaun King: "Dear Muslims, Immigrants, Women, Disabled, and All People of Color, I love you – boldly and proudly. We will endure. We will not break."

The next week, 350 people gathered for a "Community Conversation" at the Two Wrasslin' Cats coffeehouse in East Haddam. She said the event included gay couples voicing their fears about the preservation of marriage protections and Muslim parents expressing their fears about sending their children to school.

Now, weekly vigils bring in anywhere from 40-80 people each time and have helped raise approximately \$30,000 for local and state causes, according to Govert.

Govert's résumé includes a three-year stint in the Peace Corps from 2013-16. Her service brought her to Botswana, where she ran the Campaign Against Gender Violence and helped start a beauty salon to provide work opportunities and safer options for sex workers.

While the typical Peace Corps term lasts two years, she received an extension to help get the salon off the ground.

In 2016, Govert received the John F. Kennedy Service Award for her efforts in the Peace Corps. The honor is given every five years to volunteers and staff members who have made "contributions beyond their duties to the agency and the nation."

Describing herself as a millennial and part of the "gig economy," Govert works as a full-time caregiver for her grandmother, a freelance graphic designer and a yoga instructor.

"I'm choosing to run because, as a millennial, I think we need new voices and fresh ideas in the Connecticut General Assembly," she said.

She pointed to wealth inequality as one of the major problems in the state.

"I think we need a tax structure where everyone pays their fair share," she said.

The Connecticut Campaign for Paid Family Leave is another issue she's excited about.

"When I'm talking to my friends about what would attract them to live in this state...one of the things they kept saying was really strong family policies," she said.

A bill to allow up to eight weeks of paid family and medical leave died in the legislature last year. It would have been paid for by employee contributions, with the state responsible for some of the cost of getting the program up and running.

"It makes sense for small businesses because it allows them to compete with large businesses that can offer [those benefits]," Govert said.

When it comes to transportation, she said the gasoline tax doesn't go as far as it used to now that cars are more fuel-efficient – "so we have to look at options."

One of those options is tolls, which she described as a viable alternative for generating revenue. She pointed to the fact that Connecticut is the only state on the northeast corridor without tolls.

"We can think of ways to creatively make sure that [the transportation] fund doesn't go insolvent, because that would be devastating for all of us," she said.

Democratic Contest

With two Democratic candidates in the running, a primary may be needed. This could be determined at the 34th District Democratic nominating convention is held on May 16.

Each town in the district is able to send a certain number of delegates to the convention based on population. According to the Connecticut Democratic Party, the delegate count in the 34th District shakes out to seven for East Hampton, five for East Haddam and two for Colchester.

A candidate needs at least 51 percent of the vote to become the party nominee.

If another candidate receives at least 15 percent of the vote, that person is automatically put on the primary ballot.

A candidate who does not receive 15 percent of the vote is still able to petition to get on the primary ballot by collecting signatures from at least 5 percent of registered Democrats in the district.

Primaries will be held June 12.

Best of Breed cont. from Front Page

line of herding dogs "about 800 times" after he had examined all of them individually.

She noted that some judges will "pull" out of the line a few of the dogs they really like.

"We didn't get a pull," she conceded. "Maybe next year."

The judge ultimately chose a Border Collie called Slick as the group winner, according to show results.

For Harper and Kai, being a part of the venerable Westminster Dog Show was what the handler described as a surreal experience.

"Kai's tail never stopped wagging the entire time we were there," Harper said.

Harper shares ownership of Kai with Colleen Nolan of West Virginia. Kai splits her time between the Harper and Nolan households.

"Colleen does most of the obedience training and I do the showing," Harper said. "It works out great."

Kai has called Portland home for the past year.

Harper described Kai as typical for the breed: loyal, easy to train and devoted.

Spanish Water Dogs are medium-sized with unique, curly coats that may form cords when long. They are rustic, multi-functional farm dogs, primarily used for herding goats and merino sheep in Spain for centuries. They are also useful for hunting, fishing and vermin control. The dogs excel in activities including agil-

ity, herding and obedience.

Harper added the breed has been put to work in Spain for bomb detection.

Spanish Water Dogs are perfect for an active person or family who likes to get out and do things, according to Harper.

"These dogs really like to have a job, even if it's something like 'go find my car keys.' [They need] something they can own. They're not hang-around dogs," she said.

She noted that people researching breeds often regard their size and shedless coats as ideal attributes in a dog. But there's so much more to any breed than what's written on the internet, she said.

Spanish Water Dogs need mental stimulation as well as physical stimulation, she emphasized.

Kai has channeled those attributes into her status as an AKC Bronze Grand Champion with titles in obedience, rally obedience, and coursing. She will begin competing in agility this year.

The Westminster Kennel Club invites the top five dogs of each breed to their annual show. Harper has been invited every year since the breed was introduced to the show in 2016.

"To win at the world's most prestigious show takes a great dog, a good handler, a judge who knows what he's looking for, and alignment of all the stars," Harper said.

*From the Editor's Desk***Observations & Ruminations**

by Mike Thompson

I'm not here to write about the latest mass shooting. I'm not here to write about the need for additional gun control. Mass shootings have become all too frequent in recent years, and I've made my feelings about them known.

What I am going to write about is our president's responses to the shooting.

As much as I bash Trump, he is still the president of the United States. It's the most powerful position in the country. It is the person expected to lead us, to guide us. The best presidents have a way of grabbing the country by the collective hand in times of tragedy, and letting us know that everything will be all right.

That, unfortunately, doesn't seem to be Donald Trump's forte.

Immediately after the Florida high school shooting happened last Wednesday, Trump said the right things. But then, on Twitter, the true him started to shine through.

The morning after the shooting – the *morning after* – Trump wrote on Twitter, "[The shooter's] neighbors and classmates knew he was a big problem. Must always report such instances to authorities, again and again!"

Really? The day after the shooting you're blaming the victims for not speaking out about this guy? That's the card you want to play?

Then on Friday, the horrible news came out that people had indeed reported the shooter to the FBI, and agents, tragically, had dropped the ball and not followed up. While the country was reeling from this news, Trump seized the moment and made it all about him:

"Very sad that the FBI missed all of the many signals sent out by the Florida school shooter. This is not acceptable. They are spending too much time trying to prove Russian collusion with the Trump campaign – there is no collusion. Get back to the basics and make us all proud!"

It is indeed very sad the reports to the FBI somehow slipped through the cracks. It's a huge failure and I'm sure everybody involved felt terrible. But to suggest it never would have happened had the bureau not been investigating the Russia situation is not what the victims' families, the survivors, indeed the whole country, needed to hear. He had no way of knowing if it was true or not, and to take that moment to yet again declare himself completely innocent in the Russia mess was disgraceful.

I'm starting to think the man really is mentally ill. The level of narcissism, the complete lack of empathy unless it's emblazoned across a teleprompter in front of him, suggests something is not quite right.

Since his inauguration, we've had crises and tragedies in this country, situations where a president really had to rise to the occasion and be our moral leader – and Trump has really failed in this regard. He is an utter, utter embarrassment.

* * *

Speaking of presidents: This past Monday, of course, was Presidents Day – and newspapers across the country celebrated by running some year-old news.

While the news wasn't particularly timely, it was certainly appropriate for the day: the stories were about a 2017 C-Span survey of 91 historians on the best former presidents of all time. The presidents were rated in 10 categories – including economic management, international relations, crisis leadership, public persuasion skills and moral authority – and were given an overall ranking based on the results.

This was the third year C-Span had conducted the survey; the prior occasions were in 2009 (George W. Bush's first year as a former president) and 2000 (ditto for Bill Clinton). And, as was the case with the two other surveys, Abraham Lincoln topped the list. Lincoln ranked either first or second in most of the categories, although he did score fourth in the "relations with Congress" category. Considering that a civil war was going on while he was president, that ranking is understandable.

The rest of the top 10 is, in order: George Washington, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Harry S. Truman, Thomas Jefferson, John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan and Lyndon B. Johnson.

Where did our most recent former president, Barack Obama, fall on the list? Sorry, haters: he came in at No. 12 overall. Broken down, Obama scored high marks in the categories of moral authority and economic management, and scored higher than just two other former presidents in the category of "pursued equal justice for all." What worked against him? A ho-hum ranking of 24th when it came to international relations, and a pretty lousy 39th place (out of 43 – for while Grover Cleveland had two separate stints as president, for the survey he was only counted once) in the area of "relations with Congress."

Which president came in dead last in the survey? James Buchanan, the man roundly criticized for doing basically nothing to deter the Civil War from starting. The 15th president fared lousy in all 10 categories; his highest ranking was 41st, in the area of administrative skills. (Apparently Warren G. Harding and Andrew Johnson were even worse administrators.)

Where will Trump fall on this list when his time in office is through? Who knows – but I'm guessing it won't be in the top 10. But at the same time, barring him starting a nuclear war, it's tough to imagine him faring worse than Buchanan. After all, being unable to deal with a splintering union, and leaving office with your country on the brink of civil war, is a tough thing to live down.

* * *

See you next week.

Peters House Restoration Work Coming Along

by Sloan Brewster

Restoration at the Peters House is moving along, with insulation work on the oldest wing of the house planned for the coming months.

Mary Ann Foote, town historian and member of the Historic Properties Commission, gave the *Rivereast* a tour of the historic town-owned property Tuesday. The commission has been charged with guiding and assisting the town with the restoration project and future uses for the building.

The L-shaped wing in the back of the structure was the original house, and was built in 1745, Foote said. The larger part of the house, visible from the road was added to the older wing in 1795.

That older portion will be a museum and the rest of the house will be used for town meetings and local groups, Foote said.

As the L-wing will be a museum, Foote has advocated for restoring it with historic accuracy, she said. For example, she had wanted to keep the old hand-hewn joists intact and have the original wall panel at the back of the house visible.

On Tuesday, a wood frame was attached to the wall.

The paneling was previously covered in plaster and lath, and the framing will be filled with foam insulation, Jon Minard, also a member of the Historic Properties Commission, who has been doing the restoration work with volunteers and contractors, said.

"The walls had no void in them at all for insulation," he explained.

Once the insulation is in, they will build a wall in front of it, he said.

"We have some really nice wood paneling that we're going to put up there," he said.

As far as the ceiling joists, most of those were damaged, Minard said.

"There were only two that were intact," he said. "We've saved the good ones."

The L-wing was cut in half when the house was converted to a two-family by previous owners and the joists need to be replaced, he said.

"There was a stairway in the L, so they cut all the ceiling joists," Minard said. "We saved what lumber we could."

Throughout the restoration, Minard, contractors and volunteers have made an effort to save any useable materials.

The house, which sits at the entrance of Burnt Hill Park, was on approximately 100 acres. It was initially owned by the Peters family, who came to town in 1720 had 12 children and lived on the property for several generations. In 1882, the Peters sold it to the Posts, who occupied the home for two generations before selling it to poultry farmers.

The farmers were the ones who partitioned the home into two separate units.

The L-wing contains a dual fireplace facing two rooms, but the mantels around the fireplaces are distinctly different. One side is framed in red brick and stone rubble, the other side has a decorative metal frame, with a large hearthstone covering the floor.

A large Dutch oven can be accessed through a door to the left of the metal framed fireplace or via smaller oven doors in the passageway between the two rooms.

The room with the large hearthstone was wainscoted, Foote said, pointing out the lines in the wall where the wainscoting had been.

"We'll try to restore this the way it would have been," she said.

The first room of the 1795 addition is the keeping room or common room. The room contains the largest of the six fireplaces in the home.

The room will not be completely restored to its colonial roots, as it will be used for town functions, Foote said.

Foote pointed out the remnants of wainscoting in the keeping room and the chair rail the wall.

"They added a peg to hang the chairs for easier cleaning [and] sweeping," Foote said.

Off the keeping room, will be a bathroom in what was the "borning" or birthing room, Foote said.

The room would have been used for mothers giving birth or elderly people on the threshold of death.

"This room really shows the lath and the clapboard and the wide boards," Foote said.

She pointed to the ceiling and said it was likely painted with milk paint, a chalky white-wash used to paint ceilings in colonial times that can be difficult to paint over.

The next room is the formal, or fancy parlor.

"The Fancy parlor was the fanciest room," Foote said. "We can tell because of the fancy molding."

Minard said he has begun some of the restoration work in the fancy parlor.

"More recently, we've been doing more cosmetic stuff in the two downstairs bathrooms and in the fancy parlor," he said.

A hallway from the fancy parlor leads to a set of stairs and the informal parlor, which circles back to the keeping room. Foote refers to the informal parlor as the floorcloth room.

"If you look down at the floor, there are green areas not painted, that's where the floorcloth would have been," she said.

Floorcloth was an early cloth made of a coarse material such as canvas and then layers of paint were added over it and it was painted with a geometric design.

A temporary staircase in the L-wing will serve as the framing for permanent stairs, Minard said.

"The stairs will have balusters and posts," Foote said.

The top of the stair connects to the chamber, the only actual bedroom in the house. The rest of the upstairs is a ballroom stretching the full length of the house with vaulted ceilings and built in seats with cupboards for garments.

The town is "going to restore the full ballroom," Foote said. "This could be perfect for a chamber concert."

She envisions the room used for a variety of other purposes as well, including art shows or making Colonial crafts.

"It could be a very nice location for the arts and for projects," she said. "The house has wonderful potential when it gets done."

For now, work at the house has been paused while Minard tends to unexpected family matters.

"I'm hoping to get back over there in a week," he said.



The L-wing of the Peters House is being restored as a museum. Seen here is the metal framed mantel on one side of the dual fireplace, the other side has a distinctly different brick and rubble mantel.

The next step Minard plans will be covering the exposed beams and heating ducts in protective plastic coating before spraying the foam insulation.

Minard could not estimate when the project would be completed.

"There's still a lot of structural work to be done in addition to all the cosmetic work," he said.

So far, the outside envelope of the property has been done, structural issues have been addressed, water has been brought to the property, the bathrooms have been plumbed and some electrical work has been done.

"What we're trying to do is get some of the rooms finished off," Town Planner Mike O'Leary said. "Get the project completed basically a room at a time."

Funding the Peters House Project

by Sloan Brewster

Volunteers have worked with a tight budget in the restoration of the Peters House.

To date, the project has been done primarily with volunteers and through grants, some with matching town funds, said Town Manager Andy Tierney.

"Many hours have gone into the restoration," Tierney said.

Tierney offered great deals of gratitude to Jonathan Minard, who, he said, was skilled in restoration and has volunteered countless hours to the project.

"He is our rising star; he has put in many, many hours of expertise and time," Tierney said. "We can't thank him enough."

The town has received several grants for the project, according to Town Planner Mike O'Leary.

"We're begging and borrowing money everywhere," he said. "It's tough to get a big, big project like this completed on a budget that's tight."

The Hebron Historical Society applied to the 1772 Foundation on behalf of the town for the first grant, O'Leary said. The \$35,000 grant from the foundation helped with the restoration work on the L-wing, the original house built in 1745.

Next, the state's Small Town Economic Assistant Program (STEAP) provided the town with a \$200,000 grant for an exterior face lift.

"That was a major win there, because we pretty much did the whole outside envelope," O'Leary said.

The work, which was done in 2012, included replacing rotted siding, installing a new roof and old windows.

"It covered the skin," Mary Ann Foote, town historian, said. "It re-skinned it."

Walking around the house on Tuesday, Foote noticed areas where the paint was peeling and needs freshening up.

"How are we going to get money to keep this thing painted?" she said.

The next funding was \$30,000 in the town's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that allowed the town to apply for a grant from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), which required a town match.

With the combined \$60,000 from the town and SHPO, the HVAC system was put in. In addition, a rotted floor was rebuilt and the rest of the floors were strengthened by replacing posts in the basement, O'Leary said. The \$60,000 also covered materials to bring water to the property.

The town also received permission from the state to use \$23,000 left over from another STEAP grant for an entirely different project to pay for materials for electrical work, he said.

Dan Larson, chairman of the Board of Selectmen, is doing the electrical work and supplying labor at no cost, O'Leary said.

O'Leary said he has received some additional CIP funds that he and Foote are using to apply for another grant from SHPO.

"Trying to stretch the money as much as we can," O'Leary said. "It's a slow process."

O'Leary, Foote and Minard said more volunteers would be a great boon to the project.

Included on the wish list are carpenters, woodworkers, electrical workers, people to help with clean up, demo workers, floor repair and refinishing specialists, wall repairers, folks to do prep work and painting.

Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Foote at 860-944-3862 or footehillsfarm@juno.com.

Women's Rights Activist to Be Featured in Hebron Video

by Sloan Brewster

Hebron's Josephine Sophia White Griffing, an anti-slave and women's rights activist, will be featured in a new video commemorating Women's History Month.

On Monday, members of the Hebron Historical Society dusted, swept and cleaned the windows at the one-room Burrows Hill Schoolhouse in anticipation of a visit today by some of the staff of state Rep. Robin Green (R-55).

Green's outreach coordinator, Samantha Slade, contacted local historian Mary Ann Foote, asking if, in time for Women's History Month in March, the historical society would participate in a video about a famous woman from town and the work the society does.

It was all Green's idea, Slade said in a call Tuesday.

"Rep. Green wanted to highlight a famous woman in Hebron and the great things she did, and that's where she wanted to pull in the historical society" Slade said. "She just wanted to highlight the great things about the region and the great things women did in the history of the region."

Green isn't available to come for Friday's filming today, Slade said, but the crew will film folks from the Historical Society talking about Griffing's role in history, and about the old schoolhouse, which will serve as a backdrop for the video. Later, Green will talk on film about the historical woman's contributions.

Foote said that, when Slade approached her with the idea of the video, she immediately thought of Griffing and said the Burrows Hill Schoolhouse, which Griffing attended and which Foote feels is the society's best exhibit, would be a prime location.

Griffing was nationally-known during the abolition movement and was an organizer of the Freedman's Bureau after the Civil War,

Foote said. The bureau helped ex-slaves, who had little or no experience running their lives, navigate their newfound freedom.

"She was going to be the head of the Freedman's Bureau, but they gave it to a man," Foote said.

Griffing, who was born in 1814 in Hebron and died in 1872, was a member of the White family, who were early settlers of Burrows Hill in Hebron.

Though she died in Washington, D.C., her body was returned to her hometown and she is buried in Burrows Hill Cemetery.

On Griffing's headstone are these words:

"A friend to the slave / The poor and oppressed / With unswerving faith in / God's eternal justice / Her life was given in their service."

"After she was married, they moved to Ohio and that's where they became active in the abolitionist movement," Foote said.

Griffing eventually ended up in Washington, where she hobnobbed with the "in" crowd.

"She knew [President Abraham] Lincoln and [Secretary of War Edwin] Stanton," Maryellen Gonci, Historical Society vice president, said.

In the 1860s, Griffing took a keen interest in the plight of freed slaves, many of whom were living "wretchedly in overcrowded ramshackle tenements and huts," according to "Angel of Mercy in Washington Josephine Griffing and the Freedmen 1864 to 1872," a journal article written in 1963 by Keith E. Melder. A link to the article can be found on the Hebron Historical Society's website at hebronthistorical.org/josephine-griffing-articles-exhibits.html.

Griffing, according to Melder, was prepared to take part in the movement to elevate the freed slaves.

In Griffing's own words, "Slaves accustomed to constant supervision were rarely ready to



Bob Gonci and Peter Cassarella, members of the Hebron Historical Society, chat for a moment after scrubbing and cleaning the Burrows Hill Schoolhouse in anticipation of a visit by staff members from the office of state Rep. Robin Green.

fend for themselves."

In 1865, the Freedman's Bureau was created. Griffing joined and was appointed assistant to the assistant commissioner. In her role, she fought for more relief for freed people, claiming that her superiors were not doing enough. Eyewitnesses, in historical accounts Melder referenced, described Griffing going to railroads where freedmen were readying to travel north for work. Not only did she accompany them on the journeys, she gave them bread from her own pocket and paid for their baggage.

It is estimated that Griffing helped settle 3,000 to 5,000 former slaves in the north, according to the article.

In 1866, she was named a vice president of the American Equal Rights Association, a group dedicated to equal rights for men and women, regardless of race. In 1869, she joined the National Woman Suffrage Association and was chosen as its secretary.

According to Foote, Griffing was only just beginning her excursion into the suffrage movement when she died of illness in 1872, and surely would have taken her fight for equal rights much further had she lived longer.

The video is expected to be completed in March and, once finished, will be posted on Green's website, repgreen.com, and on social media.

Finding 'the Fun' in Vision Loss in Marlborough

by Julianna Roche

When 48-year-old Kevin McNally greets you at his front door and shakes your hand for the first time, he does it with a broad smile looking you square in the eye before leading you into his living room and gesturing towards a seat on the couch – just as any average person might do welcoming someone into their home.

You'd never guess McNally is legally blind.

Born in Hartford and raised in Simsbury, McNally attended Salve Regina University in Newport, R.I. and later Quinnipiac University School of Law. Eventually becoming a licensed Connecticut attorney, McNally also had a successful career in insurance sales, driving all over the state to meet with clients before settling in Marlborough, where he currently lives with his two daughters, girlfriend and her son.

Today, he no longer drives, but works from home as director of business development for an energy company started by his older brother, Bob.

As a newborn, McNally was diagnosed with Albi Punctate Dystrophy – an extremely rare degenerative retina disease – that Chris had also been diagnosed with several years before. The disease causes a slow deterioration of sight overtime with the eventual likelihood of complete loss of eyesight.

"We were the first two reported cases [of the disease] from birth," McNally explained, adding that being brothers made their case even rarer.

McNally explained that for he and his brother, the disease started off with just having poor night vision.

"We could still see during the day and move around," he said, adding that it was only when his mother came into Chris' bedroom at night to offer him a glass of water and he would never reach for it that she realized something was wrong.

McNally ultimately tested positive for the same disease when he was born.

With it, he explained the range of sight as what it would feel like "putting a large glazed doughnut up to your eye," so while you can still see a portion of an image through the doughnut hole, the rest of the doughnut becomes "dead space" which has been slowly "caving in" over-

time.

However, McNally said over the years, he has found ways to compensate for his deteriorating eyesight.

"The way the eye works is you're constantly scanning the room and pieces are brought in through the optic nerve to create a complete image," he said. "It's fascinating. The brain is smart enough that it puts the pieces together."

The third of five children, McNally said that his two younger sisters were adopted since his parents – who are both genetic carriers of the disease, but don't have it themselves – were worried about giving birth to more children who might also succumb to the same sort of vision problems.

Until he was 17, both McNally and Chris spent time visiting expert eye doctors in Massachusetts who studied their cases, developing research and attempting to find a cure, before the brothers finally decided they had enough.

"All it was was bad news," he said. "It was torturous. It was never good news, so we said, 'We're done. We're not coming back here anymore.'"

Not one to cower in the face of a challenge, McNally explained over the last 30 years, he stopped meeting with eye doctors and refused to let his deteriorating vision hinder him from living a normal life – until early last year, when he was diagnosed with glaucoma in his left eye.

"I'm tired of pretending. I'm coming clean," he said, adding that most people in town, for example, don't even realize the extent of his vision loss, because four years ago he would still be seen driving a car.

"I'm feeling myself change and that is one of the difficult parts of this where you might want to run and hide because you feel yourself changing, but I am going to go the opposite way," McNally said. "I'm going to grab the bull by the horns and push against it. I don't want to feel like I'm receding because that's not who I am."

Rather than downplay the disease, he decided to embrace it and has started speaking to various groups of people who are experiencing low or declining vision across the state.

"One of the reasons I'm really coming out with this now is that I have to," he said. "I have

to do it, not just for myself, but to help educate people. Most people don't understand visual loss."

For example, he explained that only 10 to 15 percent of people that have vision loss are "truly blind as we might think of it," but the remaining 85 percent of people suffer from similar cases of vision loss as him where they can still see some things.

"That can cause some confusion to people," McNally said, explaining that it might be odd for people to see him using a blind cane when walking in an airport, but then be seen reading a book while sitting on the airplane.

"This is the education part that needs to happen," he said. "People need to feel they can use the white cane. ... Someone at one of my most recent talks said to me that she felt like she needed to act more blind and that's wrong."

And while his disease has had some serious implications, McNally said he prefers to put more emphasis on the positive aspects – something he carries into his "Kev Talks."

"My mom used to say that all I ever did as a kid was smile," he said. "I tend to have a really good attitude. It's not that I'm oblivious to bad things. I've had plenty of bad things happen, but I really believe life is 10 percent what happens to you and 90 percent how you react to it."

"There's humor in [vision loss]," he continued, pointing to his email address, kevin@visionlossisfun.com, as an example.

"I do that on purpose because is vision loss funny? No, not really. But are there funny sides to it? Yeah there are," he said.

One story that comes to mind, McNally recalled, was one summer when he was about 14 years old, he and his friends went to the movies. Back then, the theater would hand everyone in attendance a raffle ticket and read off the winning number just prior to the movie starting.

McNally won, he said, but by the time he had claimed his prize – free popcorn – and returned to the theater, all the lights were off and the movie had started.

"I had no idea where to go," he said with a laugh. "I ended up sitting on this young girl probably about the same age, and she was like,



Kevin McNally

'Um, excuse me? I don't think so.' Of course, my friends heard it and started yelling, 'Kevin, over here!'"

McNally shares similar humorous memories throughout his speeches.

"I always knew that that which gives me the most challenge was going to be that which sets me free," he said, explaining that he'd rather turn his vision loss into something positive that could help others. "I see that as my mission."

McNally's next "Kev Talk" will be held at the East Hartford Senior Center Wednesday, April 4, at 10 a.m. For more information or to have him speak to your group, contact him at kevin@visionlossisfun.com, 860-682-3588 or visionlossisfun.com.

Colchester Man Arrested for Shooting Threat Against Bacon

by Julianna Roche

Less than a week after the deadly school shooting in Florida, a former Bacon Academy student was arrested Tuesday after allegedly posting a comment on social media that implied the high school would be the target of an active shooter.



Nicolas Burtis

Colchester Police said Nicolas M. Burtis, 18, of 46 Skyview Dr., Colchester, was taken into custody Feb. 20 through an arrest warrant which states that the threat was posted on the social media app Instagram the day before and referenced the school specifically.

Police said the comment implied that Bacon Academy “was going to be like the school in Parkland, Florida,” referencing last week’s shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, which left 17 dead and became the deadliest school shooting since the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown.

According to Colchester Police, several witnesses and suspects believed to be involved in the incident were identified and spoken to before they received a confession from Burtis,

who admitted to posting the comments, but stated it “was only a prank.”

Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Mary Conway confirmed with the *RiverEast* Thursday morning that it was Burtis’ “own choosing” to drop out of school and that he had not been expelled prior to the incident.

According to the arrest warrant, Burtis was charged with second-degree breach of peace. Police said they determined he did not have any firearms in his possession and does not have access to any known firearms.

Though the threat occurred on Monday, Conway explained that she wasn’t informed of the incident until Wednesday morning, likely because the students were not in school either Monday, Feb. 19 or Tuesday, Feb. 20, when police were investigating the threat, due to President’s Day.

Around 10 a.m. Wednesday morning, Conway sent out a formal letter addressed to parents and the community stating that Burtis’ arrest is a reminder that the school district’s “number one priority” is “the health and safety of our students,” and asked that the community “be patient” as the school engages in its “strict school visitor procedures.”

The timing of the letter drew criticism on the Facebook pages “Keeping it All in Colchester” and “All Things Colchester,” with several residents and people who identified themselves as parents of Bacon students expressing frustra-

tion that many of them heard about the arrest on the news before being notified by the school and two days after the incident occurred.

However, Conway explained in a phone interview that by the time students were back in school on Wednesday, Burtis had already been arrested, posing “no imminent threat at that point.”

“As soon as we knew about it [the arrest], we sent out the letter,” she said, adding that had students been in school Monday or Tuesday, parents would have been notified immediately through the school’s messenger system, which sends emergency phone calls and texts to parents – rather than through a letter.

Conway added that she received multiple calls following the arrest from parents who indicated they actually knew Burtis and had been concerned reading various social media posts he’d written.

“My response was to them that you need to tell somebody. At that point, if you’re concerned, you need to tell the police [and] people don’t do that. They don’t want to make waves,” Conway said. “We want to assure parents that we take every concern seriously.”

In her letter, she wrote that the incident was “an example of how the message to us all: see something, say something, works in our community.”

Conway also explained that the school dis-

trict reviews its safety protocols and practice drills for a variety of situations often, which include those involving an active shooter or intruder. They then conduct after-action meetings discussing what procedures went well and what can be improved, and sometimes have first-responders observe the drills to provide constructive feedback.

“Colchester is a special place and yet, we are no different from any other community,” she wrote. “We have residents of all ages who, for a variety of reasons, struggle with making the right decisions for the greater good of our citizens.”

“If you see something, say something,” Conway urged. “Together we will keep all our children safe.”

Board of Education Chairman Brad Bernier reiterated the superintendent’s statements Wednesday, stating that while the phrase is “a bit of a cliché that people make light of sometimes, it really will make a difference” and this “is a good example.”

Anyone who has any concerns about possible threats against Bacon or any other schools in town is encouraged to contact the Colchester Police Department at 860-537-7270, State Police Troop K at 860-465-5400, the Colchester School District superintendent’s office at 860-537-7208, or a school administrator.

FedEx Driver Charged with Negligent Homicide in Colchester

by Julianna Roche

A 26-year-old FedEx driver has been charged with negligent homicide following a two-car crash which resulted in a motorcyclist’s death in Colchester last year.



Kendrick Marshall

According to police, at approximately 5:21 p.m. on May 26, 2017, Kendrick K. Marshall of 125 Putnam Ave. Apt. 727, Hamden, was driving a FedEx sprinter van heading southbound on Windham Avenue when he came to a stop in preparation of turning left into the driveway of a residence to make a delivery.

In a written statement to police, Marshall,

who had worked for FedEx for about a year, said he saw a motorcycle traveling toward him in the northbound lane, but believed that he “had adequate time and space” to make the turn, which he subsequently began to do.

According to police, Marshall said he could not remember if he used his turn signal or not, but said that as he began to turn into the driveway he witnessed Vincent P. Cormier, 64, of 1847 Exeter Rd., Lebanon – who was driving a Harley Davidson FLHTCU – attempting to brake to avoid hitting the FedEx van.

Marshall said he “froze” and “felt like time stood still” when the two vehicles collided, and immediately pulled his vehicle over following the crash to check on Cormier, who was laying in the southbound lane on his back wearing a helmet with no eye protection.

Police said Marshall, who suffered a minor scrape on the inside of his left knee, then called

911 to report the incident and later consented to a blood draw, which showed there was no alcohol or drugs in his system at the time of the crash.

According to the arrest warrant, a witness told police they had been passed by the motorcycle just prior to the crash while also traveling northbound on Windham Avenue, which is divided by a double yellow center line signifying a no-passing zone.

According to police, the witness said that as they drove over the top of a hill, they saw the aftermath of a crash involving the same motorcycle who passed them. The witness waited on scene until police arrived and confirmed they witnessed Marshall on the phone with emergency services and Cormier on the ground with serious injuries, but still breathing at the time.

Cormier was then transported by Colchester EMS to Hartford Hospital, where he remained

until June 5 at 12:35 p.m. when he was pronounced dead, according to police.

His death certificate, provided by the city of Hartford, lists blunt injury to the head as the cause of death and a toxicology report confirmed that there was no alcohol or drugs in his system at the time of the crash either.

In a reconstruction of the accident, police said they determined that Cormier had been driving at least 30-35 mph while heading northbound on Windham Avenue – which is in a 25-mph zone – and that if he had been driving the speed limit, he could have stopped his motorcycle in time to avoid crashing into Marshall’s FedEx van.

On Feb. 7, Marshall was arrested and charged with negligent homicide with a motor vehicle and failure to grant right of way, police said.

He is scheduled to appear in court in Norwich on March 27.

Portland Selectmen Approve Sidewalk Plan

by Elizabeth Regan

The Board of Selectmen has approved a plan to spend \$1 million to repair sidewalks on one side of several downtown streets and to fix smaller sections of the area’s most deteriorated sidewalks.

A committee of residents and town staff has been working for more than a year to come up with a plan for how to spend the \$1 million approved in 2016 as part of a \$10 million bonding package to fund the Route 17 recreation park and to address infrastructure needs in town. A subcommittee of the Board of Selectmen was established last December to address policy issues related to sidewalks.

A joint recommendation from the two committees was presented to selectmen at their Feb. 7 meeting. It was approved unanimously.

Selectman Jim Tripp, a member of the sidewalk ordinance subcommittee, introduced the plan. He said the goal is to put the project out to bid for repairs for specific sections of several streets within a half-mile radius of the town’s schools: Fairview Street, Waverly Avenue, East Main Street, Main Street and Freestone Avenue.

The approved plan also eliminates the previously discussed idea of making abutting homeowners responsible for half of the replacement cost, which had been roundly panned by

residents.

The draft sidewalk improvement document shows the streets going out to bid include:

- North side of Fairview from Main Street to East Main Street
- South side of Waverly from Main to East Main
- Both sides of East Main from Freestone to the Town Hall
- Both sides of Freestone from Main to East Main
- The south side of Freestone from Cross to High Street
- The north side of Spring Street west of East Main (repairs to sidewalks on the south side of the street between High and East Main will be funded through bond money reserved for sewer and road improvements)
- East side of Main from Fairview to Spring.

If there’s enough money left over, the following streets will be incorporated in the following order of importance:

- North side of Waverly from Main to East Main
- About 750 feet of spot repairs to the west side of Main
- South side of Fairview from Main to East Main
- North side of Freestone from East Main to

Cross

Tripp described the spot repairs as ones that would be done in areas “where there simply isn’t enough money to do the whole section, but where we can do a little bit of work and make that section of sidewalk safer.”

Selectman Ben Srb applauded the decision to move toward repairing only one side of some streets.

“One path is better than no path,” Srb said. “Yeah, in a perfect world, it’d be great to have both sides – but we don’t live in a perfect world and we’re in financial trouble.”

But Srb maintained there are lingering issues related to the town’s sidewalk ordinance, which states residents are responsible for maintenance and repairs to their own sidewalks.

He pointed to a Jan. 26 email from town attorney Kari Olson of Murtha Cullina to Bransfield that indicated the town may be found liable for trips, falls and injuries sustained on sidewalks.

“[W]here a municipality is aware of a defect and fails to remedy it within a reasonable period of time, there is (and always has been) a risk of liability to the Town. If you cannot fix defects promptly, warning the public of defective conditions or even closing sidewalks that are dangerous while waiting to repair may be

wise,” Olson wrote in the email.

Srb said that if the town is responsible for repairing sidewalks, then spending the allotted \$1 million to fix dangerous “trip hazards” should be the priority. Only after all the smaller, known hazards are repaired should the town look to replacing whole sections of sidewalk, he added.

Selectman Lou Pear acknowledged several recent lawsuits filed after people fell on sidewalks in town, but said he believes approving the plan would show the courts that the town is actively working to make sidewalks safer.

Town Clerk Ryan Curley confirmed Thursday there were three trip-and-fall lawsuits filed in 2017.

Srb maintained the town must proceed carefully on the issue of sidewalk repair.

“If we are liable for the repairs and we chose not to [make them], then it’s gross negligence on the town’s part,” Srb said.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield argued the project is the first phase of many that will have to occur in order to repair all the town’s sidewalks.

“For us to not proceed with the hours and hours of work and analysis that’s been done by the sidewalk committee would be negligent on our part,” Bransfield said.

Traffic, Muddy Conditions Spark Complaints in Portland

by Elizabeth Regan

A wet winter season has brought attention to site work on Route 66 near the Riverdale Inn & Suites as a parade of dump trucks carry in a mixture of gravel and common fill from Middletown.

The heavy truck traffic has yielded complaints from travelers regarding the tracking of dirt onto Route 66, unsafe driving and noise.

Prominent local developer Wayne Rand, who received a special permit from the Planning and Zoning Commission in October to haul in 63,000 cubic yards of material, is filling 2.4 acres of his 9.39-acre property between the Riverdale and Payne Boulevard so the site is visible from Route 66.

The fill is coming from the site of the old Aetna building in Middletown, which is being turned into a FedEx distribution hub.

Site work is authorized from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, according to land use department documents. No filling is allowed on weekends or holidays.

Two projects have been proposed for the site over the past 15 years, but neither got off the ground and the approvals for both have expired. Land use documents show the first project was approved in 2004 as a 5-lot subdivision with a special permit on one of the lots for four, two-story mini warehouses. In 2010, a gas station got the go-ahead.

Rand said this week he is working to create “a nice piece of property” on land that lacks good topography.

He said he has no immediate plans for the site.

“When it gets done it’s going to be really

nice frontage property on 66, which should be good for some kind of decent commercial,” he said.

A gas station remains on the table, he said – but he was noncommittal when asked if storage units were still being considered as a potential use for the site.

He said the previous approval for storage units applied to a different portion of the property than the one currently being filled.

The fill application was reviewed in September by Wetland Enforcement Officer James Sipperly, who said he visited the site previously and found “no inland wetland and/or watercourse within the jurisdictional area of the Portland Wetland Commission.” The application was also forwarded by the land use department to the town engineer, Chatham Health District, public works department, Conservation Commission and Economic Development Commission for their review.

The EDC wrote an October letter to the Planning and Zoning Commission to say they concluded the application deserves careful review by the wetlands commission “in light of potential negative effects” on the Connecticut River watershed.

Land Use Department staff said a handful of verbal complaints regarding the site work have come in to the office. Three emailed complaints were received, according to documents provided in response to a Freedom of Information request from the *RiverEast*.

One Jan. 22 complaint referred to road conditions near the site as “a total mud bath with at least an inch of wet mud being carried sev-

eral hundred feet down the road.”

Despite assurances from the land use department that work should only be occurring on dry days and that more trap rock had been installed at the entrance, the same complainant wrote on Jan. 29 to say the road “was a mess again” that morning.

A Feb. 14 email from Connecticut Department of Transportation Special Services Manager Andrew S. Morrill to First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said the agency had been monitoring the area daily since it first heard about the complaints.

“At this time it appears they have mitigated the tracking issue and are working within the confines of their permit,” Morrill said.

Rand said he is doing his best to control the tracking of material onto the state road, but added the task is difficult when there are so many trucks going in and out of the site. He said there are typically two street sweepers from the site development firm Manafort Brothers Inc. on the job at all times.

“We do what we have to do to keep it clean,” Rand said.

The work is expected to last another three weeks if the weather cooperates, according to Rand.

A project narrative submitted by Rand as part of the application specifies he will hire a qualified inspector to inspect disturbed areas of construction, structural control measures and entrance/exit locations at least once every seven days and within 24 hours of a storm that produces 0.1 inches of precipitation or more.

The narrative did not, however, specify that the reports must be submitted to the land use department.

No such reports have been received by the department, according to Land Use Administrator Ashley Majorowski.

Portland Building Official Lincoln White and Connecticut Department of Transportation spokesman Kevin Nursick both said Rand has been doing everything he can to address problems exacerbated by rain.

“He’s been compliant,” Nursick said. “He’s trying very hard.”

Nursick said separate complaints about dangerous driving habits displayed by dump truck drivers and street sweepers is a local concern.

An email sent to Bransfield on Feb. 9 complained of street sweepers making “crazy u-turns” in front of traffic and dump trucks defying stop signs and traffic lights.

Bransfield said she has gotten about a half-dozen complaints about unsafe driving and the tracking of mud over the past several weeks.

While the tracking on the road is the state’s concern, she said it is the town’s responsibility to address the traffic issues.

The Portland Police Department has been patrolling the area and will continue to do so, according to Bransfield.

“My concern is definitely the unsafe driving. We will not tolerate that,” she said.

There have been no traffic citations or violations issued to dump truck drivers or street sweepers in the last month, according to the Portland Police Department.

Portland Speaks Out

Here’s what some residents had to say at Wednesday’s packed public hearing and in written testimony on the latest proposal in the town’s continuing efforts to revitalize the riverfront.

Michael Cannata: “I can smell the oil from my house. If it is contaminated, why do you gotta build down there?”

Larry McHugh, Middlesex Chamber president: “These properties have been vacant and abandoned for over ten years and there is currently no path to a viable commercial or other productive use for any of them. A municipal purchase of these properties would allow for a comprehensive cleanup of the area and the best opportunity for economic development in a critical section of town.”

Linda Purple: “What happens if [the cost of remediation] exceeds \$750,000? Is it a guarantee we can get more money? A 100 percent guarantee? We don’t know that. It’s merely an assumption...It’s not a guarantee \$750,000 is going to cover it and we’re going to have more money.”

Tom and Marilyn White: “Glastonbury’s also a fine example of publically redeveloping its riverfront and giving access to its citizens.

Another example of a successful public/private partnership is Harbor Park and the Canoe Club restaurant owned by the city of Middletown and leased to preserve the riverfront.”

Ed Baillargeon: “Has anyone spoken to Buckeye Pipeline?”

Rick Kelsey: “I’m concerned, basically, where’s all the dough coming from? Back when I first became public works director 23 years ago, it was rare that we bonded. Big water projects, that’s it. Now we lease, we bond. I guess it’s the American way. You always hear interest rates are great. [But] when I was raised, if you didn’t have the dough to get it, you didn’t get it. You didn’t borrow for it.

You got a million [dollars] in debt in water and sewer. You’ve got \$15 million that an en-

gineering study says you need to put into your water and sewer system. You’ve got \$2.2 million if you want to continue the sidewalk program. It’s all coming at you. I’m not sure where the dough is coming from.”

Mary Dickerson, Economic Development consultant: “Essentially, if you could lease any one of those parcels for \$3,350 a month, you would cover your cost of carry: you would cover bonding cost and then you would cover your taxes. So anything above that would be revenue to the town.

We haven’t made any decisions. Some of those parcels could be sold and then one of those parcels could be maintained for lease. Our initial investment could be made back or exceeded through the sale.”

Elwin Guild, Economic Development Commission Chairman: “It’s called an opportunity. It’s not called a danger. Everyone who’s worried about the what-ifs, think about it for a second. What if we go for this and decide it’s something we don’t really want to pursue? ... For \$300,000, you can sell it for a million. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.”

Sean Hayes, Brownstone Exploration & Discovery Park: “If anyone knows me, I am for smaller government. This is not something I as a business executive would endorse in any way, form or fashion. The only reason it gets my endorsement is because of the Brownfields grant: because no developer can put this package together in a viable business sense.

Look at your neighbors. No disrespect to our neighbors. But you have a liquid asphalt plant next door. You’re not getting the viable property values in this market today. It is going to take a redevelopment plan that only the town can implement.”

Bob Morse: “I think this will be an expensive parking lot.

“This has become a crisis. We have seven days to take this information, do our homework and then vote.”

Bill Petzold: “I too do not like this thing being rammed down my throat.”

Public Hearing on Portland Property Purchase Looms

by Elizabeth Regan

The Mary Flood Room at the Portland Public Library was filled to capacity Wednesday night as residents came out to speak for and against a plan to spend a total of \$410,000 on several vacant and contaminated pieces of land on the riverfront.

The proposal is set to go to town meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 28 at 7 p.m. at the Portland Public Library.

Environmental engineer Amy Vaillancourt of Tighe & Bond introduced the former petroleum storage distribution site as one that hadn’t found a buyer for many years because of contamination: “The site is blighted, abandoned, surrounded by chain-link ‘no trespassing’ signs, but it’s still continually vandalized.”

She said the town has been approved for a \$750,000 clean-up grant from the Department of Economic and Community Development, but the clock is ticking on the funds. In order to access the money and begin remediation, voters must vote to purchase the parcels and then they must determine the “highest and best use” for the property.

Possibilities include a waterfront restaurant operated as part of a public/private partnership.

An example of a similar model is the Brownstone Exploration & Discovery Park, which officials say has paid the town \$2.75 million in lease fees since the park opened in 2005.

A question raised during the public hearing about who controls the Buckeye Partners oil pipeline running through the property yielded no immediate answers, leading some residents and selectmen to suggest holding off on next week’s public vote at town meeting.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said Vaillancourt would reach out to the oil pipeline company the following morning to address the jurisdictional questions and see if the issue needs more discussion before officials go through with the town meeting.

But Bransfield emphasized selectmen would not close on the sale until details like this were ironed out, regardless of whether the questions arise before the town meeting vote or after.

“There are many contingencies that are built into the purchase and sale agreement. Part of the due diligence would certainly be a title search and other matters,” she said.

There was no answer to the pipeline questions by press time Thursday.

Obituaries

East Hampton

William John Rempe

William John Rempe, 55, of East Hampton, beloved husband of Jodi (Pandisher) Rempe, died Wednesday, Feb. 14, at Hartford Hospital. Born Nov. 30, 1962, in Greenport, L.I., he was the son of Stacia (Januick) Rempe and the late John E. Rempe.



Bill grew up in Long Island and was a graduate of Greenport High School and then Florida Institute of Technology where he trained to become an airline pilot. Bill earned his pilot's license in 1985 and first worked for East Hampton Air in Long Island, then Business Express where he became captain. Bill then worked for Northwest Airlines, which later became Delta Airlines. At the time of Bill's passing he was a first officer for Delta Airlines.

Bill loved music and guitar playing, Cuban Cigars, traveling the world, entertaining family and friends and sharing his chicken wings. Bill was always the life of the party and would light up a room.

Bill is survived by his mother, Stacia Rempe of Greenport, L.I.; his wife, Jodi Rempe of East Hampton; his two sons, John Rempe of Los Angeles, Luke Rempe of East Hampton; a sister, Lori Dibble and fiancé Michael Crosby of New York; his niece and goddaughter Michele Dell Croce (John); sisters-in-law Geri Lynne Carnelli (Raymond), Gina Scelza, GiGi Fox (Bill), Jacki Baranowski (Peter); nieces and nephews Jeremiah (Dana), Jordan Marie, Jacob, Blaire, Hailey; and great-nephew Austin.

He was predeceased by his father John and his infant son Scott.

A funeral liturgy was celebrated Monday, Feb. 19, in St. Patrick Church, East Hampton. Burial will follow in St. Patrick Cemetery.

Bill's wishes were that memorial donations be made to the Go Fund Me page set up for Basrep Inc. which has been operated by Jodi for 26 years.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

"Rempe 55 flying west, final destination, I Love You."

Hebron

Frances Megson

Frances Blackiston (Cummins) Megson of Hebron, known as "Blax" to her family and friends, passed away Monday, Feb. 12, at the age of 92. She was the widow of the late Harry K. Megson, to whom she was married for 59 years.



Frances was born March 7, 1925, to Dr. and Mrs. C.R. Cummins of Dover, De. She attended public schools in Dover through 10th grade and then completed high school at Linden Hall in Lititz, Pa., establishing friendships that she retained throughout her life. Following a year at Moore College of Art & Design in Philadelphia, Frances enrolled at the University of Delaware in 1943. She completed her coursework three years later, in 1946, becoming the first woman to obtain a degree in electrical engineering from the university.

Upon graduation, Frances moved to Connecticut to work in the research department of United Aircraft, later known as Pratt and Whitney Aircraft. She and Harry met in South Glastonbury and married in June 1949, after his graduation from UConn. Together they raised five children, first in South Glastonbury and then in Hebron. She was a devoted wife and mother, as well as an accomplished gardener, seamstress, baker, fixer-of-anything-electrical, wordsmith, woodworker and sly practical joker. She is remembered for her love of flowers and chocolate, her competitive spirit, her thoughtfulness and most of all, her love of being with family.

Frances was active in several organizations in Hebron but her one love was the Douglas Library. She was a member of the Douglas Library Board of Trustees and served as its president. She was head of the committee responsible for the 1999 addition to the library and was named Citizen of the Year in 2000 by the Board of Trustees, for her work in seeing the project through to completion. Frances was instrumental in assisting Seldon Wells with the first Hebron Maple Fest, and often served "Sugar on Snow" in Seldon's Sugar House. More than once she drove north, as far as necessary, to procure snow for the Maple Fest when the weather in Connecticut did not cooperate.

Frances was predeceased by her beloved husband, Harry. She is survived by their five children and their spouses, Thomas and Patricia Megson of Stamford, Sarah Megson of Manchester, Ann and Marc Baribault of Hebron, Richard and Jane Megson of South Glastonbury, and James and Tracey Megson of Lebanon. She is also survived by her 16 grandchildren, Sarah, Callie, Tommy, Katie, Marc, Will, Lizzie, Greg, Julia, Annie, Peter, Maureen, Nate, Jesse, Marina and Helen; and her five great-grandchildren, Jack, Stella, Theo, Wyatt and Freddie.

Visiting hours will be held from 4-7 p.m. today, Feb. 23, at the Mulryan Funeral Home, 735 Hebron Ave. in Glastonbury, and a memorial service will be held in her honor at 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 24, at The Congregational Church in South Glastonbury, 949 South Main St. A private burial has been planned.

For online condolences, visit mulryafh.com.

Colchester

John W. Lennon

John W. Lennon, 73, of Colchester, passed away after a long illness Thursday, Feb. 15, at Middlesex Hospital Hospice. He was born in Bridgeport June 18, 1944. John was the only child of the late John and Barbara (Brodacki) Lennon.

John retired several years ago after being self-employed, owning and operating Lennon's Grocery Store in Monroe for many years. John loved to play cribbage. He fancied himself a ladies' man, charming and charismatic, always the gentleman, especially to his companion of 24 years, Louise Curri, with whom he made his home and who will remember him with love.

Per John's wishes, funeral services will be held privately. The Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester has been entrusted with these services.

East Hampton

Robert P. Banning Jr.

Robert P. Banning Jr., 57, of East Hampton, born March 31, 1960, son of the late Robert P. and Judith (Staplins) Banning Sr., passed away Sunday, Feb. 11, at Hartford Hospital.

Robert is survived by his brothers John, Paul and Edwin Banning of East Hampton, several nieces and nephews, great nieces and nephews and close friends.

He was predeceased by a brother, Franklin Banning, and a sister, Alice (Banning) Forbes.

The funeral will be private. Robert's family would like to thank everyone for the outpouring of love and support and will be hosting a memorial picnic in the spring; date to follow.

Portland

Lawrence A. Glover

Lawrence Alexander Glover, 82, of Portland, beloved husband of Susan (Kay) Glover for 57 years, passed away Thursday, Feb. 15, at Portland Care & Rehab Center. Born in Beverly, Mass., he was the son of the late Lawrence and Hilda (Armistead) Glover.

Larry lived in Deep River for many years before moving to Portland in 2004. He was a member of First Congregational Church of Deep River and First Congregational Church of Portland. He was employed at the L.C. Doane Company in Ivoryton for 48 years and was a member of the Deep River Board of Education. Larry enjoyed golf and was an avid Boston Red Sox fan.

Along with his wife, Larry is survived by his brother, Norman Glover of Sebring, Fla.; his sister, Phyllis Koeller of Southington; two grandchildren; a brother-in-law, Edward L. Kay and his wife Sara of East Haddam; a sister-in-law, Jane Aronson and her husband, Robert of Westbrook; and several nieces and nephews, including a very special niece, Kathryn Kay of East Haddam.

Besides his parents, Larry was predeceased by his son, Eric Glover.

Funeral services will be held today, Feb. 23, at 10 a.m., at First Congregational Church of Portland, 554 Main St., Portland. Burial will be at the convenience of the family in River Bend Cemetery in Westerly, R.I.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Larry's memory may be made to the American Cancer Society, 825 Brook St., I-91 Tech Center, Rocky Hill, CT 06067.

To share memories or send condolences to the family, visit doolittlefuneralservice.com.

Marlborough Police News

2/14: State Police said Agustin Lugo Jr., 45, of 76 Clantoy St., second floor, Springfield, Mass., was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol and speeding over 70 mph.

2/15: State Police said Pamela L. Cheney, 33, of 40 Hobart Ave., Norwich, was arrested and charged with interfering with an officer: non-assaultive.

2/17: State Police said Yanquee B. Rodriguez, 21, of 114 Vanderbilt Ave., West Hartford, was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol and operating a motor vehicle with a suspended registration or license.

Colchester Police News

2/18: Colchester Police said Joshua Taylor, 21, of 272 Prospect Hill Rd., was arrested and charged with criminal violation of a protective order.

Hebron Police News

2/14: State Police said Mario S. Scalise, 38, of 251 Reidy Hill Rd., Hebron, was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol, making an improper turn, and failure to carry a certificate of registration/insurance.

2/16: State Police said at approximately 12:21 p.m., they received a report from RHAM assistant principal Penny Bryzgel, who led an officer to the second floor of the school building, where a 17-year-old male student was locked in a bathroom with a 14-year-old student. Once confronted by the officer, the male student damaged school property and threatened school staff with physical harm before being detained, charged with the respective charges, and released to his biological mother.

Portland Police News

2/13: Dominique Cyr, 37, of Lakeside, Ariz., was charged with operating under the influence and failure to drive in proper lane, Portland Police said.

2/14: Jonas Smith, 41, of Nehatic Drive, Niantic, was charged with operating under the influences and operating under suspension, police said.

2/15: Kate Gartner, 33, of 72 Summer St., Portland, was charged with operating motor vehicle under suspension and traveling unreasonably fast, police said.

Car Overtakes on Route 2 in Colchester

by Julianna Roche

A Fairfield man sustained serious injuries after allegedly driving too fast during a heavy rainstorm early in the morning of Feb. 11, according to police.

At approximately 7:45 a.m. Sunday, Feb. 11, Nicolo Decaro, 25, of 307 Glen Ridge Rd., was driving a Volkswagen Passat G traveling westbound on Route 2 when he lost control of the vehicle near Exit 21 and drove off the

left side of the roadway, police said.

Police said the vehicle subsequently collided head-on with a rock hillside in the center median, causing it to launch in the air, overturn, and land in the left travel lane.

Decaro was transported to Hartford Hospital by Colchester EMS for suspected serious injuries and his vehicle was towed from the scene by Evan's Automobile Repair, police said.