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The Hebron Maple Festival will return this weekend, offering its usual spate of maple-themed activities. Here, in a photo from 2014, Woodyacres Sugar House owner Russ Schaller explains the sweet process of turning sap into syrup to Jim Carroll and his son James. Photo by Julie Kristoff.

Maple Fest Returns This Weekend

by Sloan Brewster

The 28th annual Hebron Maple Festival returns this weekend – and while some folks who have been involved since the festival began said it hasn't been the same the past couple of years, others feel it's still a charming event and anticipate big crowds.

Ron Wenzel, owner of The Wenzel Sugarhouse on East Street, will open his operation to visitors. He'll give demonstrations on how to make maple syrup – an art form passed to colonists by Native Americans – and educate folks on how to draw the sap from trees and boil it down to sweet delicious syrup and show off some of the tools he uses.

The Gilead Congregational Church women's fellowship group will sell maple pudding cake out of his garage.

In addition, the employee of the year from Ned Ellis' Mapleleaf Farm will be on hand.

"His employee of the year is a cow," Wenzel quipped.

Russ Schaller, owner of Woodyacres Sugar House, will also be boiling down sap at his sugarhouse, demonstrating how to make maple syrup and selling maple products.

This year, the festival is dedicated to Schaller's wife, Denise, who passed away Dec. 24. They were married for 33 years.

"She used to, you know, make her own walnuts – maple-coated walnuts – every year," Schaller said. "That was her thing."

After a few tries, Schaller, with some help, made a couple batches of the locally-loved confection and will have supplies on hand during the festival.

"It took like three times at least before we got them perfect or close to her standards," Schaller said.

The Windham Region Chamber of Com-

merce runs the event, and Diane Nadeau, president and CEO of the chamber, said the fest gets people out after the long cold winter.

"What I think is most awesome is this is the first outdoor event to get people out over the winter," she said. "This is the first [festival] of the year. We've all been stuck in the house; it's cold and freezing."

Maple Festival Origins

The Hebron Maple Festival was started as a fundraiser for the library by Seldon Wells, who passed away in 2001.

Wells wanted to replicate a festival he went to in Vermont, Wenzel said. But, he lamented, the affair has changed since then.

"In the past, it was to highlight and showcase the town of Hebron and its product and people," Wenzel said.

Wenzel was part of the group of folks who organized and ran the festival for 25 years. In those years, the fest grew, starting with participation by four sugarhouses and ultimately growing to seven. Churches, schools and other local organizations joined the fun and a committee was formed to oversee the event.

The fun took place across town, with stops at the various sugarhouses, churches and other spots. The rules were simple.

"If you don't live in the town of Hebron, you can't participate," Wenzel said. "That's how it was done for years."

Even sugarhouses just over the border in Andover, such as Hurst Family Farm, were excluded.

"He missed being in Hebron by 1,000 feet," Wenzel said of Hurst.

Eventually, the organizers decided it was time to step aside.

See Maple Fest page 2

Portland Dog Attacks Lead to Proposed Bill

by Elizabeth Regan

A bill currently before the state legislature originated in Portland after separate dog attacks over the past two years left one man injured and a small dog dead.

State Rep. Christie Carpino, R-32, said she submitted the bill concept because of a constituent who reached out to her after a family pet was killed by another dog.

"[I] subsequently found out this issue is much larger and impacts folks across the state," Carpino said.

The bill would establish a working group to address weaknesses in current dog-related statutes that have resulted in complaints from both dog owners and dog attack victims. Many of the complaints revolve around the authority of animal control officers to order a dog to be killed in the aftermath of an attack and the length of time it takes dog owners to appeal the decision through the state.

The bill language said the work group will be charged with developing recommendations

to reduce the number of attacks by domestic animals that "result in the death or serious injury of another animal or person."

In addition to looking at shortening the process for appealing an animal control officer's decision to put down a dog, the group would also focus on reducing the financial burden on cities and towns associated with feeding and caring for accused canines that must be housed in municipal pounds while the appeals process drags out.

The language specifies shortening the appeals process be done "while ensuring due process for the animal owners."

Stephen Demarest, of Portland, was attacked in January 2016 by a dog near his Old Marlborough Turnpike home. His wife, Maria Demarest, spoke at a Board of Selectmen meeting late last year to say he received multiple injuries to his legs and groin area before he was able to deliver a "karate kick" to the dog's head and escape into a neighbor's car.

A report by Animal Control Officer Karen Perruccio said she ordered the 2-year-old pit bull's owner, Paul Bell, to bring the dog in to be quarantined after the attack. The dog has been held in the municipal pound since Feb. 1, 2016, at the town's expense.

According to Connecticut Department of Agriculture legal documents, Perruccio on Feb. 11 authorized the dog to be put down in what is known as a "disposal order." Bell appealed the decision to the agency's commissioner, Steven K. Reviczky.

Bell is being represented by Thompson G. Page of the Hartford-based Thompson Gould Page firm.

Page said in a Jan. 17 legal filing that "unconstitutionally vague" language in existing state statute violates Bell's property and due process rights.

The attorney said the statute leaves it up to animal control officers to hold dogs and issue disposal orders "with no adequate rules, regu-

lations, guidelines, policies or standards" for doing so.

More than 25 months after the attack, a final decision has not yet been released by the agriculture department. Once the commissioner's decision comes through, it may be appealed through the court system.

Maria Demarest said "something has to change."

She added that any dog deemed vicious by an animal control officer should be put down – "no questions asked."

Carpino said there are dozens of dogs across the state who have been awaiting a decision from the agriculture department for extended periods, which she described as unfair to the accused dogs, victims and their owners.

"It's a local issue that has a statewide impact and that's why it's important to me," she said.

In late November, a leashed, 4-pound Yorkshire Terrier was killed in front of a four-fam-

See Dog Attacks page 2

Maple Fest cont. from Front Page

“We got tired and we thought that it was time for new blood,” Wenzel said.

They had hoped the town would take it over, specifically the Parks & Recreation Department, but it was the Windham Region Chamber of Commerce that stepped up.

The chamber changed the rules, allowing participation from people outside town. For example, this year there will be maple syrup demonstrations at the River’s Edge Sugarhouse on Mansfield Road in Ashford.

Still, Nadeau said, the festival remains very local. She added that to pay for the insurance and mandated police coverage, including state troopers, which cost upwards of \$6,000, the chamber opened it to out of towners. Overall, the event costs between \$10,000 and \$12,000 and the chamber likes to have about \$15,000, to cover unforeseen expenses.

“We have the same local people participating,” she said. “As far as vendors go, there’s three times as many people and we have not kicked out any people.”

Nadeau added that, for vendors, the event is only opened to those outside Hebron the last three months before it takes place – and added it’s a staggered acceptance, with folks who were involved last year getting first dibs.

Hebron Town Manager Andy Tierney said the chamber was doing a professional job organizing the event.

“The whole reason she’s doing this is because she’s trying to promote Hebron,” he said. “She’s not the enemy in the room; she’s really trying.”

The festivities have shrunk, according to Wenzel. Only two local sugarhouses, Wenzel’s and Woodyacres, are taking part. The majority of what is scheduled is centered on the Town Green.

Over time, sugarhouses have dropped out of the event, Nadeau said, and some have even left town.

Schaller has also been participating since the beginnings of the fest – and also indicated his unhappiness with what the Chamber of Commerce had done with the festival.

“They sort of like commercialized it,” he said. “We just kept it sort of small, more towns-people.”

Food trucks and vendors selling products, such as windows and shingles, come from anywhere, he said.

“Now somebody from Timbuktu can come to the center and sell stuff as long as they can pay the vendor fee,” Schaller said. “It used to be about Hebron.”

And despite opening the way for vendors from near and far, the festival is smaller than it used to be, Schaller said.

“It’s cut down so much,” he said.

Nadeau reiterated that the festival has actually grown, but said most activities have been moved to one area.

“Spatially, it’s cut down because it’s not spread out all over town,” she said.

In surveying folks at past festivals, the chamber found people said it was difficult to find things.

“You can’t have a fest all over town and really find things,” she said. “It’s all now in one location for the most part.”

She added that local business can participate. FennAgains Irish Pub and Restaurant does, for example, and usually offers tastings of maple-flavored bourbon.

Schaller also lamented that there are out-of-towners selling maple products in the center, which means fewer people make the rounds to the local sugarhouses.

“They don’t promote the sugarhouses as much,” Schaller said. “You know, they can let anybody come in and sell maple syrup at the center of town because we don’t have time to

sell maple syrup in the center of town.”

Tierney said the chamber had offered to buy local syrup and sell it at the event, but none of the sugarhouses agreed.

Ray Pierce used to have a sugarhouse in town but is no longer making syrup. He stopped participating in the fest a couple of years ago, though he said it wasn’t due to its management by the chamber. It was more about other obligations and because the small-town politics got to him.

“It got to be where it was no fun anymore,” he said.

When he did participate, he would have thousands of visitors to his sugarhouse.

The current setting, while not his reason for pulling out, is not a plus, he said.

“It’s not the Hebron Maple Fest anymore; it’s just vendors,” he said.

He added he felt the festival was going downhill even before the chamber took it over. “I think its peak year was nine or 10 years ago,” he said.

Activities at the Fest

At this year’s festival, there will be vendors and food trucks offering a long list of goodies on the Town Green and in the library parking lot.

All food vendors are encouraged to have maple syrup in their offerings and must have at least one item with the gooey delight, Nadeau said.

Additional activities will include greyhound dog training, games, a scavenger hunt – and even a tractor parade. Tractors will be on display at Ted’s IGA on Sunday and at 1:30 p.m. a tractor parade will start at the IGA and go down Main Street.

“Anybody who wants to participate in that, they just have to get their tractor there,” Nadeau said.

Firetrucks and ambulances will be on display all weekend long at the Hebron Fire Department on 44 Main Street, where there will also be sugar on snow. Businesses will sell handmade and other wares – and there will be plenty of arts and crafts.

The Hebron Historical Society will hold its annual Quilt Show and a teacup auction at the Old Town Hall, said Mary-Ellen Gonici. There will be quilting demonstrations by the Quilts of Valor Foundation, which provides quilts for veterans.

“[A quilt] says thank you for your service in a way that traditional ceremonies don’t do it,” Gonici said. “It’s a more personal sort of thing.”

The show will include between 75 and 100 quilts and local quilter Paula Billard will also give quilting demos and tell how quilts are made. There will be quilted items for sale, such as table runners, small and possibly large quilts, potholders, table pads and “anything that you can make out of fabric,” Gonici said.

Gonici will show six of the quilts she has made.

“Once you start making a quilt there are so many different quilts that you can make that the colors and patterns change them all,” she said. “Designs are only limited by imagination.”

Gonici said one of her most interesting designs is in a quilt she made for her mother-in-law’s 100th birthday.

“I took fabrics that were popular in the 1920s and 30s and cut them and sewed them together,” she said.

She then made flowers, bunching fabric and embroidering it into the quilt to create petals and using buttons from the same time period as the fabric to form the center of the flowers.

“It’s the variation on the quilts [on display] that’s exciting and it changes every year,” she said.

Dog Attacks cont. from Front Page

ily home on Main Street in Portland when an unlicensed Rottweiler broke free from the front porch and attacked.

Perruccio issued tickets to the Rottweiler’s owner for not having a license and up-to-date rabies vaccine. The dog named was quarantined at his home for two weeks because of the rabies threat and is required to be leashed and muzzled for the rest of his life.

The Yorkie’s owners, Bill and Ann Barrows, favor stronger state laws regarding dog-on-dog attacks.

“In the state of Connecticut, [you] can get away with dog-killing-dog and there’s no repercussions. They don’t even have to be quarantined. And that’s what bothers us,” Ann Barrows told the *Rivereast* shortly after Lizzie’s death.

How a Bill Becomes a Law

The bill, which incorporates several changes based on concerns expressed during a public hearing last week, was approved by the state legislature’s Environment Committee Wednesday.

“The substitute language is much closer to the intent of the bill,” Carpino said Wednesday afternoon. “It clearly states that we’re trying to protect due process rights for animal owners and balance it with the public safety needs of the individuals involved.”

The substitute bill is titled “An Act Establishing a Working Group to Study Ways to Prevent Domestic Dog Attacks.”

The original title, which underscored concerns by many animal advocates that the measure was aimed at killing dogs instead of preventing attacks, was “An Act Concerning the Disposition of Certain Biting and Attacking Dogs.”

Critics testified at a March 9 public hearing that the mission and suggested makeup of the working group represents biased interests, relies on terms that have no definition in state statute, and is duplicative of an existing workgroup.

Lee Greenwood, a legislative attorney with the national Best Friends Animal Sanctuary, said during the public hearing that calling out the “Certain Biting and Attacking Dogs” in the original title exemplified the bill’s bias and its fundamental misunderstandings about dogs.

“If we are going to promote public safety, the exact wrong place to begin is with the mindset that there are certain types of dogs that are inherently more prone to attack or bite,” Greenwood said. “The name of the bill displays the misunderstanding of dog behavior and perfectly captures why any future legislatively-formed working group must include a more diverse group of stakeholders.”

The original bill stated the working group must consist of the Department of Agriculture commissioner or his designee, the state veterinarian, a member of the American Kennel Club, and representatives from the following groups: animal control officers, dog bite victims, municipal leadership, the insurance industry, the office of the Attorney General, municipal police, and state police.

Numerous animal advocates testified the list

lacks representation from animal-focused groups such as local or national animal welfare organizations, animal shelters, veterinary groups and animal behaviorists. Victims’ advocates said the working group should include medical professionals like emergency room doctors or reconstructive surgeons.

The substitute bill language removed the American Kennel Club from the list of representatives, instead adding one representative selected by the Connecticut Humane Society and one selected by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The substitute bill also includes a trauma physician, a fire department or ambulance representative, and one additional municipal leader.

Another key concern at the hearing was voiced by American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals Senior State Legislative Director Debora M. Bresch.

“While we can applaud the notion of introducing efficiencies into this seemingly broken system, the objective should not be to further roll back owner rights or kill dogs sooner but rather to enact a constitutional law that delivers long-needed due process to dog owners, protects dogs from needless suffering, and focuses public resources on dogs who truly pose a threat to their communities,” Bresch testified.

Bell’s attorney Thompson Page, who represents other clients whose dogs have been impounded after biting people, was among those who submitted testimony at the public hearing. He said the existing statute as well as the bill lack definitions for fundamental terms like “vicious” and “attack.”

“There also needs to be a defined and developed process to fairly determine the circumstances surrounding an alleged bite incident which qualify the incident as an attack,” Page said. “The working group cannot examine ‘vicious dog attacks’ if they have no common direction and definition for understanding these terms.”

Commissioner Reviczky, who submitted testimony in support of the bill, said the agency submitted several recommendations to the legislature, including updating existing language and making it more specific. Examples include providing more direction for animal control officers when it comes to deciding if a dog should be restrained or killed; adding a new subsection to the statute to provide a “timelier process for resolving disputes”; and empowering cities and towns to engage in mediation before an appeal goes to the agriculture department.

Portland First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said this week she supports the bill as a way to address the “terrible anguish” that can result when a dog maims or kills a person or another pet.

She said she can’t thank Carpino enough for taking the lead on the issue.

“The responsibility of those who own dogs is great. We need to be vigilant that our owners are caring for animals properly,” she said. “The time is right for us to look at the humane treatment of animals and the humane treatment of humans as well.”

\$46.31M Budget Proposal Presented to East Hampton Finance Board

by Elizabeth Regan

Town Manager Michael Maniscalco and Superintendent of Schools Paul K. Smith laid their cards on the table Monday as they presented a \$46.31 million proposed budget to the Board of Finance.

The total budget proposal, which includes education, town operations, debt and capital, is a 4.63 percent increase over the current year's budget.

The \$31.17 million education budget proposal is an increase of \$1.12 million, or 3.73 percent, over the current budget. The increase is largely due to contractual and special education cost increases, according to school officials.

The \$15.14 million general government proposed budget comprising town operations, debt and capital projects is an increase of \$929,341, or 6.54 percent, over the current budget. Maniscalco attributed the increase to high school renovation debt and a significant loss of funding from the state.

Based on the Maniscalco and Smith's recommendations, the proposal could result in a mill rate of 33.62 mills. That's a 2.30 mill increase over the current year.

A mill is \$1 tax per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Under the new mill rate, taxes paid on a home assessed at \$200,000 for the 2018-19 fiscal year would be \$6,724. That's an increase of \$460 over the current year.

But the process is far from over, with plenty of chances for the budget proposal to change before it goes to voters this spring.

The budget recommendations from Maniscalco and Smith will be weighed by the finance board over the coming weeks as they hear from town departments and the public. The finance board will then approve its own budget proposal, which is set to be delivered to the Town Council by April 10. The council is then authorized by town charter to make any alterations it deems necessary – except for increasing the total amount of the proposal.

Maniscalco told the finance board his \$10.74 million town operations recommendation is \$132,709, or 1.25 percent, higher than the current budget.

The increase is dominated by \$111,570 in salary increases negotiated with town employee unions, according to Maniscalco. He said other increases include \$10,000 for road materials, \$11,324 in police department software maintenance, \$7,500 to replace old computers in various departments, and \$14,279 in rising electricity costs.

Maniscalco also proposed a \$1.07 million transfer from the general fund to the capital reserve fund, which is \$294,087 – or 37.8 percent – more than currently allocated. The fund is typically used for infrastructure improvements with a life expectancy of at least five years or the purchase of major equipment.

Major projects included in the 2018-19 capital improvement plan include road repair on North Main Street between Route 66 and Clark Hill Road, interior door locks at all schools, a

roof replacement at the community center, and police and fire vehicles.

Maniscalco pointed to an estimated \$1.20 million reduction in municipal aid from the state as a “significant driver” in the increased burden on residents in the coming year.

“Where did we make up the difference? In our property taxes. It's the way of the world at this point,” he said.

The revenue estimate in the recommended budget is based on preliminary state budget numbers proposed by Gov. Dannel P. Malloy in February. It's up to state lawmakers to approve the state budget later this spring.

During Smith's presentation on the Board of Education budget, the superintendent said about 1.5 percent of the 3.73 percent proposed budget increase comes from rising special education costs. It's the result of an unexpected increase in the number of students who require services outside the district this year.

The district is working to mitigate the increases in special education expenses with the expansion of a program designed to meet special education students' needs in the district so they can remain in – or return to – school with their East Hampton peers, while reducing expensive outplacement costs that average out to about \$100,000 per student.

Smith said the program has already helped the district bring back one special education student who had been placed outside the district in order to better meet the child's needs.

The program also made it possible to bring in a student from Portland, with the other school district paying \$40,000 in tuition as well as the cost of a full-time paraprofessional.

Fixed costs and contractual increases comprise 1.85 percent of the proposed budget, according to Smith. Budget documents show the salary line item for certified teachers is up 2.68 percent over the current year, based on a 2.25 percent salary increase for teachers and a 2.75 percent increase for administrators.

The administrators won a binding arbitration case in December 2016 after the Town Council rejected the contract negotiated between the Board of Education and the administrators' union. The arbitrators found the salary increases were in line with increases in comparable school districts as well as with increases for other town employees in East Hampton.

After the presentations, Board of Finance members briefly outlined their thoughts.

Republican Alannah Coshow said she would reserve judgment until the budget workshops with town and school departments finish up the next week.

“At first glance, I see room for reductions, but I want to give everybody a chance to give their input,” Coshow said.

Democrat Ted Turner reiterated the importance of the workshops, emphasizing his hope that the town “does not go backward” in funding positions, programs and services.

Hebron's Tierney Receives Two Percent Pay Bump

by Sloan Brewster

Starting this summer, Town Manager Andrew Tierney will see a little more money in his paycheck.

On March 1, the Board of Selectmen gave Tierney his annual review and granted him a two percent raise, said board vice chairwoman Gail Richmond.

Tierney's current salary is \$123,844; with the 2 percent increase, which will be effective July 1, he will get \$126,321.

The evaluation is a two-pronged process, with department heads weighing in first and then selectmen, Richmond said.

By all accounts, he's doing well.

“We're very pleased with Andy,” Richmond said. “We think he's doing a good job.”

Dan Larsen, chairman of the Board of Selectmen, concurred. He and Richmond pointed out some of the successful projects Tierney has completed over the past year, including bringing a gas line to the center of town.

“We are very, very pleased with his efforts and the fact that the efforts are bearing fruit with the gas line coming in under budget,” Larson said. “He spearheaded and oversaw that entire project.”

According to the town's website, in 2017, eight miles of natural gas mains were installed, bringing natural gas service down East Street to Route 85. From there, gas lines extend north to Gilead Hill School and south to the Town Center. Gas mains are now installed throughout the Main Street business district including John E. Horton Boulevard, and south on Route

85 to Hebron Elementary School.

The project not only brought natural gas to the center of town but converted buildings, including the RHAM, Gilead Hill and Hebron Elementary schools to natural gas, meaning oil tanks had to be removed and replaced, Tierney said. The project came in with very few problems, the bids were accurate and contingency funds were not tapped.

Tierney credited the success of the project with the fact that it was monitored and supported by town staff and said approvals through the building office went smoothly and expeditiously.

“It was due to my management of it and it was due to the contractors that I sought and picked,” Tierney said. “There were areas that could have exceeded the budget and that did not happen.”

According to town finance director Elaine Griffin, the original budget amount for the project was \$1.112 million. It ultimately cost \$953,914 and \$158,086 remains in surplus.

Another project the selectmen mentioned as a success was Colebrook Village, the under-construction assisted living community nestled in the Village Green District on John E. Horton Boulevard behind CVS.

Tierney, Town Planner Mike O'Leary and town staff worked hard to get that project running, Larson said.

The 113,630-square-foot building has been in the making for about two years with a groundbreaking last January. It sits on a 6.79-

acre parcel and will have 113 units.

It is scheduled to open in May.

“We're very pleased to have Colebrook Village in town,” Richmond said.

In the evaluation, Tierney said, selectmen also mentioned the Marjorie Circle Bridge project. The project replaced the bridge over the Jeromy River on Marjorie Circle, which runs between Routes 66 and 85 behind Town Hall.

The project came in under budget, using no taxpayer dollars, and finished early, Tierney said. The work was funded by a Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant and a Department of Transportation Local Bridge Program grant was budgeted for \$669,035, according to Griffin and cost \$605,263 with \$63,772 remaining in surplus.

Tierney's accomplishments also include assisting in implementing a self-funded medical insurance plan for workers in Hebron, Andover and Marlborough and AHM Youth and Family Services, Richmond said.

She also pointed out Tierney's general dedication to the town.

“All in all I think he does a great job reaching out to the community and responds to needs,” she said.

As proof of that, she noted how Tierney put in long hours over the weekend making the rounds to make sure things were getting done to get power up and running after many homes were in the dark due to last week's storm.

“He worked hours and hours over the week-

end, not caring he should be at home,” Richmond said. “He was out on the road making sure that things were being taken care of.”

As of Jan. 23, Tierney has worked for the town for 22 years. Before being named the permanent town manager in October 2012 – after several months as serving in the role in an interim capacity – Tierney had been director of public works in Hebron since 1996.

“He is dedicated to the town,” Richmond said. “We're fortunate to have continuity.”

Griffin said Tierney was an exemplary boss who treats his employees equitably.

“He's a great boss to work for,” she said. “I don't have any issues with him whatsoever. I think he's fair and does his job well.”

Tierney said he is pleased with his evaluation and while admitting the raise was low, he pointed out that it's been a difficult year financially for everyone in the state and said selectmen are appreciative of his hard work.

“They're very appreciative,” he said. “My kudos [are] that Hebron is still in good fiscal shape, but it took months and months. I'm very happy they seem to want to keep me around.”

Richmond said selectmen were being prudent and fiscally conservative by giving Tierney a 2 percent raise – and said big business isn't doling out big raises at this time either.

“This is a budget crisis; we've lost a lot of money from the state, we're trying to keep the mill rate down,” she said. “We're very pleased. His ratings were very good and we're being fiscally conservative.”

Ransomware Holds Portland Town Hall Files Hostage

by Elizabeth Regan

Computer files in the Town Hall were held hostage late last week when a malware program demanding a \$2,000 ransom infiltrated the computer system.

A press release issued two days later said the town would be able to resume operations the Monday after the most recent attack “with minimal interruption and data loss without having to pay the ransom.”

No personal information was involved or affected, according to the officials.

The ransomware attack was the second in two weeks, according to Technology Coordinator Dave Kuzminski.

The Gand Crab ransomware program encrypted the affected data, which means the files were locked.

“They give you a ransom note and say ‘hey, if you want to get your files back, you can pay us,’” Kuzminski said.

The malicious software indicated the town would have to pay \$2,000 to get access to its files again, according to Kuzminski. The threat went up to \$4,000 if they didn’t pay within the first two days, and \$8,000 after that.

Kuzminski said the first attack occurred on Feb. 23, but was quickly dealt with when the IT team was able to restore the files from backup and install a patch to protect the system from that particular vulnerability.

Kuzminski was alerted to the most recent attack on March 9 when some town employees could not get into their files, he said. He described that version as “much more aggressive” because it went after backed up files as well.

According to the business technology website ZDNet, Gand Crab represents a new kind of scheme that gives the original developers a cut of the profits every time their toolkit is used by another hacker to deploy the ransomware.

A Feb. 28 article on ZDNet said the ransomware has been advertised on Russian hacking forums “with the authors specifically instructing those who become a part of the partnership scheme not to target Russia or any other country in the Commonwealth of Independent States of former Soviet republics.”

Experts urge computer users to be wary of suspicious email attachments and malicious

links, which is how the ransomware gets onto computers.

Kuzminski said the ransomware infiltrated the town system through a single workstation, affecting four servers through a shared file system.

He said he took all town servers offline immediately after the attack was discovered: “We went dark until we could establish where the threat was.”

Email was up and running again on Saturday morning, he said.

A team including assistant technology coordinator Kevin Armstrong, Portland-based IT support company Decian and a computer forensics consulting firm out of Shelton determined the program was simply locking the files instead of downloading them, according to Kuzminski.

He said the town was able to access important tax-related files that were backed up at an off-site location through the town’s tax assessment software provider.

Lingering effects related to shutting down all the servers in the aftermath of the attack in-

cluded some printing and scanning issues in the town hall. It also impeded access to the assessor’s database. Kuzminski said the assessor’s database was back up on Wednesday.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said she doesn’t yet know how much the cyberattack cost the town, but hopes that any expenses will be reimbursed through the Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency (CIRMA).

“What I’m grateful for is that we have insurance and we have elected to take a rider because we’ve been told this is a very real possibility,” she said.

Bransfield said the town will be making improvements to the computer system, including a new firewall. She also emphasized the importance of educational outreach to make sure employees understand the security risks that are out there.

She said she’d like to see educational opportunities expanded into the community, as well.

“I think we all need to be aware of the hazards, whether it is a home computer or business,” she said.

Portland Student’s Perspective on High School Walkout

by Portland High School Student Senate President Bridget Reddington

It is difficult to sit back and watch a horrific event unfold, especially one that hits so close to home. Although we are 1,348 miles apart, Portland – as a community – felt the devastating effects of the tragedy in Parkland, Fla.

Members of the school and community learned about the event at different times and places; however, we recognized something had to be done. Rebecca Tripp, Senate Vice President, presented to Portland High School’s Student Senate the idea of a walkout to show solidarity with the victims and those affected as well as intolerance for these types of tragedies. Senate Secretary Mark Matera and I, as Senate president, began working collaboratively with Tripp to make the idea a reality.

With the guidance and full support of Student Senate Advisor Michelle Stotler and PHS Principal Kathryn Lawson, the leaders of Student Senate began to construct the framework of the program.

It was understood that the #ENOUGH national movement would hold walkouts on Wednesday, March 14, in response to the political aspect of the tragedy. Although students agreed that there is a persistent problem threatening the safety of schools that needs to be addressed to prevent future acts of violence, there were varying opinions among the student body as to how to solve this issue. For this reason, Senate leaders decided to organize a rally for Remembrance to honor the lives of the 17 vic-

tims of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. We chose to emphasize the unity and strength of the Portland community as we grieve together and send our hearts out to the families in Parkland. It is the sense of unity and collective respect that allows us to work toward a better tomorrow.

Mark Matera presented the idea for the Rally for Remembrance to the Board of Education. The board expressed positive feedback in regard to the event. Moreover, we extended an invitation for Board of Education and Board of Selectmen members as well as our first responders to join us at the rally. As a statement of unity, we also felt it was important to invite all members of the community to share their grief in this moment of reflection.

As the movement started to take shape, students began posting on social media about the rally to express their enthusiasm and passion for the issue and to convince classmates to join in the Rally for Remembrance.

On Wednesday at 9:55 a.m., students at Portland High School and Middle School left classes to meet in front of the Sandy Hook Memorial tree, symbolic for the occasion.

I opened the rally by thanking those who attended and stated, “These victims, our brothers and sisters, were taken abruptly. We are sharing their stories today to honor their bravery and lives on this earth.”

Over the course of 17 minutes, 17 student volunteers read the names and biographies of the 17 victims to a silent crowd. Michelle Stotler



More than 400 middle and high school students in Portland walked out of class on Wednesday morning as part of the Rally for Remembrance. The student-run event was held in memory of the 17 victims of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla. Organizers described the rally as a chance to show solidarity with the victims and “intolerance for these types of tragedies.”

observed about three-quarters of the 600 combined middle and high school students chose to brave the cold and come out in support. On their way back to class, these students signed a poster pledging to work toward a world without violence and hatred. The rally received posi-

tive feedback as students appreciated the opportunity to give voice to such an important issue.

We are thankful for the student participants and grateful to the administration, especially Principal Kathryn Lawson, Principal Scott

Portland \$34.38M Budget Heads to Public Hearing

by Elizabeth Regan

Taxpayers will get their chance to weigh in on the \$34.38 million proposed budget – with an anticipated \$1.16 million loss in revenue from the state – at a public hearing on March 27.

The amount of municipal aid the state has given to a majority of cities and towns over the past few years is on the decline as lawmakers and officials continue to grapple with the state’s fiscal woes. While it’s uncertain how much Portland will ultimately receive in state funding for the coming year, revenue estimates in Portland’s budget proposal are based on preliminary numbers announced by Gov. Dannel P. Malloy in February. The exact extent of the damage won’t be known until lawmakers approve the state budget and Malloy signs it into law later this spring.

Portland’s 2018-19 proposed budget is made up of a \$20.68 million education spending plan approved by the Board of Education in January and a \$13.70 million general government budget recommended by First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield at the beginning of this month. While the education budget is flat compared to the current year, the general government numbers represent an increase of \$733,786, or 5.66 percent, over the current budget.

The general government budget proposal shakes out to \$9.97 million in operating expenditures – a \$167,786 increase over the current year; \$2.37 million in debt service – a \$270,210 increase over the current year; and \$1.36 million in capital improvements, special revenue transfers and contingencies – a \$295,790 increase over the current year.

Based on the proposal, the mill rate could rise to 34.96 mills. That’s a 1.98 mill increase over the current year.

The anticipated reduction in municipal aid accounts for 1.4 mills of that total increase in the mill rate.

A mill is \$1 tax per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Based on the potential mill rate associated with the proposed budget, taxes paid on a home assessed at \$200,000 for the 2017-18 fiscal year would be \$6,992. That’s an increase of \$396 over the current year.

But the proposal must be approved by the Board of Selectmen before it goes to voters.

Bransfield said this week she suspects selectmen will make further reductions to the general government budget.

“It’s my responsibility to present to them what the current program services would require,” she said. “We’ll look forward to working in our workshops and seeing how they can amend the budget.”

Bransfield has said she encouraged a level-funded budget for the school system in her conversations with O’Reilly earlier this year. She said at the time she expected “the same thing” on the general government side of the budget.

Based on that directive, Board of Education members reluctantly lowered Superintendent of Schools Philip O’Reilly’s original recommended 2.34 percent budget increase down to no increase at all.

The Board of Education’s spending plan eliminates nine staff positions. The cuts are composed of three elementary school teachers, one secondary school teacher, one special education teacher, and one teaching position that hasn’t been identified yet. The proposal also cuts two paraeducator positions as well as one assistant library position left vacant through a retirement.

The budget proposal reduces the technology department, athletic department and building budget lines by 10 percent each, while special education is cut by \$12,000. A plan to purchase an \$18,000 floor scrubber that has been requested for years was scrapped again.

The general government side of the budget includes \$9.97 million in operating expenses, an increase of \$167,786 over the current year. Employee benefits costs are estimated to be about 8 percent higher in the coming year. The increase is driven by an anticipated increase in health insurance costs through Cigna, which was selected through the competitive bid process last year.

The proposed capital budget, which is up \$288,500 over the current year, funds the third phase of a window project at Brownstone Elementary School, a dump truck body and a new reporting system for the police department.

The \$2.37 million debt service line item is an increase of \$270,210 due to the bond package approved in 2016 to fund the recreational park and infrastructure improvements.

“Other than that, as you scrutinize, you’ll see there’s not too many increases,” Bransfield said.

From the Editor’s Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

High school kids in towns across the country walked out of their schools this past Wednesday, in a show of solidarity in the fight against gun violence.

And I applaud them for this – big time.

The kids are taking a stand for something they believe in, and while I happen to be right on board with their cause, beyond that I think it’s very cool that they’re getting involved – involved politically, involved socially. In many cases, the kids’ schools are supporting them, saying they won’t penalize the students for walking out. That’s a big move on the part of the school administrations, who I’m sure recognize how politically-charged this subject is, on both sides.

I mean, sure, it’s a little disgusting that the idea of a child being SHOT TO DEATH INSIDE HIS OWN CLASSROOM has become a political issue, but, here we are.

Since I’m writing this Tuesday night, I have no idea how the walk-outs went, but I hope they went smoothly and without interruption – and certainly without any counterprotesting.

Over the weekend I read several comments, both on Facebook and in newspapers, from people opposed to the walkout for the most asinine of reasons. The one that made me say “oh, give me a break” the loudest was the thought that this is somehow a big waste of taxpayer money. These are public schools these kids are walking out of, after all; they should be inside learning, and if not, the taxpayer should get their money back for the learning time lost.

I saw this argued enough times, apparently with a straight face, that it made me wonder just what these students’ teachers had planned for the 45 minutes or so that the kids were going to be in absentia from the classroom. Had all of high school – heck, all of a child’s educational career – been a build-up to 45 minutes in the middle of the day on a Wednesday in March? What secrets were going to be distilled? Were they going to be told the meaning of life?

I mean, if it’s a waste of taxpayer money, shouldn’t us citizens then be consulted before a superintendent schedules a snow day, or an early dismissal? Heck, why have kids

eat lunch in the cafeteria? Why not in the classroom, while they’re learning?

I’m pissing you off, aren’t I? Well imagine my thoughts when I read those ludicrous arguments. These are kids getting involved, standing up for a cause they believe in, a cause that’s not driven by hate and fear but out of simply a desire to see them and their classmates be able to go to school without fear that they may not make it to the final bell alive. If it means delaying for a little bit finding out whether Washington really does cross the Potomac, then so be it. (And spoiler alert: he does.)

I do wish the gun lobby would just pipe down for a bit. I’m especially angry with them this week after seeing that the White House has backed down from President Trump’s earlier suggestion to raise the age limit on guns to 21. It was one of the best things Trump has suggested. But the NRA threw a fit, and the White House caved.

Why shouldn’t the legal age for owning a gun be increased from 18 to 21? It’s become commonly accepted in this country people shouldn’t drink until they turn 21 – so why should we let them own a gun before then?

Donald Trump appeared to briefly see it that way. And then he backed off – and decided instead more guns were the answer. Give teachers guns. We’ll give them the best training, and everything will be fine. Really, I thought that perhaps that Parkland police officer – who had a gun and was trained – standing outside the school and doing nothing as 17 people were slaughtered might have opened some people’s eyes to the fact that arming teachers probably won’t make a difference.

Will the students’ walk-out make a difference? Who knows – but it’s certainly drawing attention to their cause. And it’s worth noting all these kids will turn 18 before too long. They’ll be able to do their talking at the voting booth – and maybe they’ll install some politicians that, unlike the folks currently in the White House, don’t mind standing up to the NRA.

* * *

See you next week.

Colchester Police News

3/8: Colchester police said John Manning, 43, of 113 Sharp Hill Rd., Uncasville, was arrested and charged with sixth-degree larceny.

3/10: State police said Christopher B. O’Connor, 36, of 70 Brown Ave. Unit 19, Jewett City, was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under suspension and possession of more than a half-ounce of cannabis.

Marlborough Police News

3/9: State police said Diego Velasquez, 21, 274 Forest St., East Hartford, was arrested and charged with DUI and failure to drive in the proper lane.

3/10: State police said Jenna Autumn Moreau, 19, of 215 Long Hill Rd., Andover, was arrested and charged with DUI and improper parking.

Obituaries

Hebron

Richard A. Keefe

Richard A. Keefe, 85, of Hebron, passed away in Bonita Springs, Fla., with his loving wife and family by his side, after a brief illness with cancer, Wednesday, March 7.

Richard is survived by his wife, Linda Lyon-Keefe; his brother, Darrell Keefe and wife Marlene of Connecticut; his sister Louise McFerran of Pennsylvania; his five sons, Danny, Ricky II and Jeffrey Keefe of Connecticut, James and Todd Keefe of Florida; his eight grandchildren, Melanie Marcaurel of California, Jennifer Marcaurel of Connecticut, Charlene, Tommy, Josh and William Winston of Connecticut, Ricky Keefe III of Florida, and Dylan Keefe of Connecticut; his two great-grandchildren, Trevor and Tayler Foster of Connecticut; his great-great-granddaughter Caydence Foster of Texas; and many nieces and nephews.

Richard was predeceased by his brothers, Arthur and Dennis Keefe; his daughter, Cheryl Marcaurel; and his sister, Josephine Korwin. Richard also leaves three stepdaughters, Aubin and husband John Haestad and children Jace, Jamie Jessie and Sara of Florida; Jennifer Hebert and husband Richard and children Lea and Danielle; and Fayne Sears and significant other, Fritz Reichle and her children Bryce and Trevor.

Richard served his country in the Korean War as a staff sergeant, serving as instructor flight engineer with over 1,000 flying hours in the USAF. After he received an honorable discharge, he went on to become an engine tester for Pratt & Whitney, where he was so proud to have never missed a day of work in the time he worked there.

Following that employment, he became a legislator and chief of building and grounds for the state of Connecticut as well as the building inspector, zoning agent and sanitarian for the town of Hebron. After retiring from the State of Connecticut, he started his own construction company, Richard's Construction. After falling from a roof, he and his wife Linda retired to Florida. They visited family and friends in Connecticut during the summers.

Richard was a lifetime member of the Democratic party of Hebron, having made the deciding vote for the late Governor O'Neil. He was one of the founding members and a past president of the Lions Club. He was instrumental in furthering the growth of the Hebron Harvest Fair and volunteered every year. Richard was also a member of the American Legion for many years. He enjoyed marching in the Memorial Day Parade. Richard also served as a Justice of the Peace, officiating at many weddings. He enjoyed spending time with all his family and friends. Richard was a quiet man with a big heart. He will be greatly missed.

A celebration of his life will be held at the Hebron Lions Club Saturday, April 14, from 4-7 p.m., followed by a gathering at the Greenleaf in Hebron. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Hebron Lions Club.



East Hampton

John William Lane

John William Lane of East Hampton passed away in the early morning hours Saturday, March 3, at Backus Hospital in Norwich, at the age of 79. He was born to John and Lelia Lane May 12, 1938, in Gate City, Va.

John was an only child and grew up exploring the Virginia countryside. Growing up on a rural tobacco farm instilled in John both a strong work ethic and a desire to explore the wider world.

In the fall of 1956, John enrolled in the nuclear engineering program at the University of Tennessee and graduated in 1962.

John then began a lifetime career at Pratt & Whitney and United Technologies working in Middletown, East Hartford and Windsor over the next 32 years. John worked on innovating technology developing fuel cells. During his years there, he earned many patents for his employer. John also had the privilege of visiting many off-site locations including a particularly memorable visit to Osaka, Japan in 1972. John retired in 1994 but continued working as an independent contractor for United Technologies, training new engineers about fuel cells. He visited with his daughter in California on one trip to consult on a plan to utilize waste from cattle as a power source.

In March of 1967, John met his future wife, Carol Ward, in Killington, Vt., whom he married just as the leaves began to change color that fall. The couple settled in East Hampton and soon became the parents of two children, Laurie and John Jr.

John was an avid outdoorsman who enjoyed hunting for pheasant, turkey and deer, and fishing off his boat or from land with friends, family, by himself or with one of his dogs. He was a strong snow skier and water skier in his younger years and enjoyed teaching those skills to his children. John was a devoted family man who enjoyed summer visits to Virginia to see his family, spending time with Carol's family at their home in New Jersey and vacationing in Cape Cod, Mass.

John was preceded in death by his parents, John and Lelia Lane. He is survived by his children, Laurie Lane Mann of Jamul, Calif., and John W. Lane Jr. of Baltimore, Md.; his ex-wife, Carol Lane of East Hampton; and his faithful Black Labrador, Oakley.

John made many friends during his years spent in East Hampton, in the Sportsman's Club, working at United Technologies, and around town at his favorite local eateries.

A memorial for John with family is planned for late June in Chatham, Mass.

If you wish to honor John's memory, the family suggests you make a donation in his name to either your local Humane Society or The Humane Society of the United States: secure.humane.society.org.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.



Hebron

Kathryn Jean Guidone

Kathryn Jean (Blackburn) Guidone of Hebron courageously completed her final marathon Tuesday, March 6, at Hartford Hospital. Due to complications associated with cancer, Katy now runs freely among the angels.

Born in West Allis, Wis., to Peg and Douglas Blackburn on March 20, 1970, Katy was the youngest of five siblings. She graduated from Staples High School in Westport in 1988, received a bachelor's degree in English from UConn in 1992 and earned her master's in education from Sacred Heart University.

Katy began her career as a teacher in her 30s, and was cherished by her students as much as they were inspired by her. Katy loved being a middle school teacher in Madison and Hartford, most recently at the Noah Webster Micro Society, where she also established the school's first running club. Katy was a student favorite with her warmth and dynamic teaching style, passion and enthusiasm for reading and writing. You could always count on Katy having a candy treat in her desk and she came in early and stayed late almost every day.

An avid runner since her senior year of high school, Katy completed 35 marathons in less than 30 years. She even completed the Dopey Challenge at Disney World, which involves running a 5k, 10k, half marathon and full marathon over four consecutive days. Rain or shine, Katy would be running on local country roads before heading off to school.

Katy was a warm and generous soul with a smile that made all who met her feel instantly welcome and loved. Katy is survived by her loving husband, Jason Guidone; mother, Peg Blackburn; sister, Wendy Ward (Gregory); brothers, Doug, Christopher (Isabel), and Jonathan (Anna) Blackburn; stepmother, Wendy Weinberg; father-in-law, Raymond Guidone and wife Elizabeth; brother-in-law, Ray Guidone (Annie); sister-in-law, Winifred Turgeon (Sam); 16 beloved nieces and nephews; and countless friends who loved and adored her.

She was preceded in death by her father, Douglas Blackburn.

There will be a celebration of life planned for the spring.

In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to your favorite local charity in Katy's name.

Portland

Lorraine F. Polombo

Lorraine F. (Rich) Polombo, 89, of Portland, passed away Friday, March 2, at Middlesex Hospital, following complications from surgery. She was the widow of Anthony "Mike" Polombo.

Lorraine was born in Boston, Mass., the daughter of the late Frank and Catherine (Burke) Rich. She was predeceased by her brothers Francis and Paul.

Raised in West Roxbury, Mass., she graduated from St. Thomas Aquinas High School, attended Emerson College and began working for the telephone company. She left the company to raise her children and returned once the children were older. She retired from the telephone company in 1992. In retirement, she enjoyed activities with the Portland Senior Center.

She is survived by her three children, Diane (David), Jerry (Kim) and David (Maura), and four grandsons, Dane, Sean, Joshua and Owen, who live throughout New England. She is also survived by numerous nieces and nephews and their families.

The funeral was held Thursday, March 8, from the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial in St. Mary Church Portland. Burial was Friday, March 9, in St. Joseph Cemetery West Roxbury, Mass. Friends called at the funeral home Thursday morning.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Lorraine's memory may be made to ORTV at ortv.org/donate.html.



Hebron

Yolanda Ross

Yolanda (Barrasso) Ross, 91, of Glastonbury, formerly of Hebron, passed away Tuesday, March 13, at her home in Glastonbury. Born in the Gilead section of Hebron Oct. 25, 1926, she was the daughter of the late Joseph and Frances (Cianflone) Barrasso.

Yolanda married her beloved husband Marvin in 1953. The couple made their home and raised their family in Hebron. Upon retirement, they moved to New Mexico, Manchester, Florida, Glastonbury, Vernon and then back to Hebron to spend their final years close to their family. Yola and Ross celebrated 60 years of marriage together, emulating the virtues of love and commitment. She was predeceased by her husband Aug. 31, 2013.

Through the years, Yola touched the lives of so many people as a physical education teacher in East Hartford. After retirement, she volunteered for the American Cancer Society by providing transportation to those in need as well as canvassing for the charity for many years.

Family was always the foundation of Yola's life. She was happiest when she was surrounded by family and friends. Yola's greatest hobby was her family. She enjoyed cooking and entertaining. Sunday dinners were a tradition.

Yola will be sadly missed but always remembered with love by her children and their families, Jonathan and Sandra Ross of Colchester, Marlene Kisner of Amston; four grandchildren and their spouses, Jocelyn and husband Fotios Anastasiou, Jonathan Jr. and wife Whitney Ross, Brian and wife Supatida Kisner, and Tyler Kisner; seven great-grandchildren, Gabby and Jacob Kisner, Lukas, Adrianna and Kosta Anastasiou, Paul and Wyatt Kisner; a sister-in-law, Bernice Barrasso of Hebron, and her many beloved nieces, along with family members throughout the Midwest and Europe.

In addition to her husband and parents, she was predeceased by her siblings, Joseph R. Barrasso, Dorothy Barrasso Colgan, Gloria Barrasso Malecky and Charles A. Barrasso.

Yola will always be remembered for her beautiful smile and for the love and devotion toward her family and friends.

Calling hours will be held Monday, March 19, from 5-7 p.m., at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral liturgy will be celebrated Tuesday, March 20, at 10 a.m., directly at the Church of the Holy Family, 185 Church St., Hebron. Burial will follow in Rose Hill Memorial Park Cemetery.

Donations in her memory may be made to the Alzheimer's Association: alz.org.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

