

RIVEREAST

News Bulletin

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

Volume 42, Number 26

Published by The Glastonbury Citizen

April 6, 2018



A Visit with Mr. Rabbit... The Hebron Lions held their annual pancake breakfast fundraiser March 18 – which featured one of the highest turnouts ever for the event. The Easter Bunny also stopped by and visited with kids. He's shown here with Ryder Strumskas.

Dollar General Back On Belltown Table

by Elizabeth Regan

A plan to build a Dollar General store on Route 66 in East Hampton, near Lake Pocotopaug, is back on the table after the Planning and Zoning Commission conceded their original denial of a commercial zoning application for the site would likely be a loser in court.

The commission voted 3-3 last November to deny the zone change application submitted by Gary Eucalitto, of Harwinton-based Garrett Homes LLC, for the allegedly residential property on the corner of East High Street and Lake Road. Members had become aware just weeks prior that the site had been approved as a commercial zone in 1998, but had never been updated on the zoning map.

Property owner Walter Smith, of Portland, filed an appeal of the commission's decision with the state Superior Court in January. The suit alleged that denying the zone change despite evidence of the 1998 approval was "illegal" and "arbitrary."

According to Planning and Zoning Official Jeremy DeCarli, consultation with the town attorney revealed a judge would likely uphold the 1998 zoning commercial designation based on a "validating" act in state statute that cures certain errors and omissions.

"Instead of spending money fighting a fruitless fight, we said the '98 decision was made and we have to stand by that," DeCarli said.

Buoyed by approvals from the Conservation-

Lake Commission and the Design Review Board, the Dollar General project was presented by Matthew J. Bruton of the engineering firm BL Companies Inc. at a public hearing before the Planning and Zoning Commission Wednesday night.

The commission voted to continue the public hearing until May 2 to give members time to review the latest site plan and to officially approve the zoning map identifying the site as commercial.

The Dollar General plan would demolish the Route 66 Snak Shak and the red house that sit on the 1.38-acre property. In their place, the developer would construct a 7,500-square-foot building Bruton said would evoke a "colonial New England look" with a mansard roof, a cupola, engineered siding designed to look natural, and brick wainscoting on the front and sides.

Maple, cedar, pine, oak and arborvitae trees, as well as shrubs and groundcover, will line the property, according to the site plan.

Signage will be part of a separate application, Bruton said.

During Wednesday's public hearing, Jennifer Palma, who lives in the adjacent lakeside neighborhood, stood up to say Dollar General will "cheapen" the area.

"They are unfortunately a low-end store that brings nothing to a town," she said.

Bruton bristled at the idea, describing the

See Dollar General page 2

Snow Days Pile Up for School Systems

by Sloan Brewster

Snow days mean sleeping in, launching snowballs and building snowmen – but there eventually comes a reckoning.

With area districts faced with nine or more weather-related cancellations already this school year, some schools in the region held classes last Friday – Good Friday – in addition to hacking away at vacations and summer break, swapping professional development days for class days and cutting down to the minimum number of school days permitted by state law.

RHAM Superintendent of Schools Patricia Law said that, including two cancellations due to a wind storm at the end of October, the district has had 10 days off due to weather.

Despite so many unexpected days off, the state sent a letter to districts informing them it would not issue waivers to allow for less than 180 school days, Law said.

With that in mind, after the most recent snow days in March, the RHAM Board of Education scheduled a half day on Good Friday, which is normally a day off, Law said. Attendance among teachers and staff was good and while Law said she had not checked student attendance, it appeared decent.

"The building looked pretty full to me," she said.

The elementary school in Andover, one of

the three towns that send students to RHAM, was also in session. However, the other two school systems that feed into RHAM – Hebron and Marlborough – did not have school on Good Friday. While the Marlborough Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz did not return calls for comment for this story, Hebron schools superintendent Timothy Van Tassel said the Hebron school system has had 11 weather-related cancellations so far.

Over in Colchester, school board members also decided in mid-March, as the snow days piled up, to hold a half day of school on Good Friday, said interim schools superintendent Mary P. Conway.

"We have had 10 weather cancellation days and two of those were the last days of October when we had heavy winds and power outages all over town," Conway said. "So we have two before we've gotten into winter."

Attendance on Good Friday was not bad, she said. The absentee rate at the middle school was 11 percent; at the elementary and intermediate schools, it was 13.5 percent and at Bacon Academy it was the highest with 17 percent of students calling out.

"That's high, that 17 percent," Conway said. Still, overall school attendance was "not too bad, given that ... parents only had two weeks'

notice."

Only nine staff members were absent due to illness, which is not as bad as a typical school day, she added.

"I was pleased for our staff," she said. "I think people made every effort to be here."

In East Hampton, which has seen nine weather cancellation days, schools remained closed on Good Friday – but opening them was a contingency plan if necessary, said schools superintendent Paul Smith.

"I had sent a note to families in mid-March saying if we lost a day between March 19 and 29 they would have to go Good Friday," Smith said. "But they didn't."

However, the district did hold school on two days in March and February that had been planned as teacher professional development days; the development days were rescheduled for after the end of the school year.

"We try to avoid using the April vacation," Smith said.

If Mother Nature causes more cancellations – and with snow in the forecast for this weekend, it seems winter is hanging on – the district would push everything back one day and could bring the school day total down to 180 days for seniors.

The last day of school in East Hampton is

June 21 for students and June 25 for teachers, Smith said.

Other schools in *Rivereast-land* are going until June 22.

That is when RHAM seniors will graduate, Law said. The last day of school was originally June 12.

RHAM already has the number of days down to the state minimum so cutting into that would not be an option in the event of more days off, Law said. Like in East Hampton, RHAM held class on what was scheduled as a teacher professional development day in February, and instead moved that day to after the school year ended.

The district has no specific plans for how it will deal with any more cancellations.

"We deal with them as they happen," Law said.

Colchester's last day was also originally June 12, Conway said. The board did not want to go beyond June 22 because of the William J. Johnston Middle School renovation and expansion project. The schedule calls for construction work to continue as soon as school breaks for the summer.

"They're [already] almost a week behind in the summer construction," Conway said.

See Snow Days page 2

Dollar General cont. from Front Page

Dollar General designation as misleading. “It’s a horrible name,” he said. The store sells items ranging from diapers to dish soap, according to Bruton – “and not everything is a dollar.” Palma also questioned the wisdom of placing another business near Lake Pocotopaug, which has been bearing the brunt of pollution from stormwater runoff for decades. The lake suffers from annual and potentially toxic algae blooms. “The lake is already damaged,” she said. “I don’t think we want a big-box business doing any more damage than there already is.” Traffic engineer Fred Greenberg of BL Corporation objected to the term “big-box,” which refers to larger retail chains than Dollar General. He said the store would qualify as a “small-box” establishment. Greenberg said a traffic study by his firm found traffic would increase by 1-1.5 percent during peak periods if Dollar General moves in. Truck deliveries would be made once a week during off-peak business hours, according to Bruton. The project would need approval from the state DOT in order to get a driveway permit on Route 66. According to Bruton, the stormwater management plan for the site will result in less runoff than there is today. Ryan and Danielle Noir, of Sequonia Trail, spoke during the public hearing to say they would not have purchased their home in October if they knew it was so close to a commercial zone. Their research into the zoning map at the time indicated 197 East High St. was residential. “It never occurred to us that a Dollar General would go in on this property when we were buying our house,” Ryan Noir said.

Danielle said the couple chose the location because it was “a lakeside community with a lakeside vibe.” “When we were looking for somewhere to live, we had the option to choose Manchester, and there were lower taxes there, but we decided it was worth the additional taxes to live somewhere that was quiet and private and you could see the stars at night,” she said. She said she is concerned Dollar General won’t deliver the kind of grand list benefits touted by economic development proponents as a way to lower property taxes. Several residents said they believe the store will actually drive down property values. Not everyone was opposed to the idea, however. Jennifer Mikulski of Daly Road said she is a small-business and commercial property owner who finds it frightening that an otherwise-compliant business could be driven out of town for subjective reasons. “As unfortunate as it is for the neighboring residents, it is a commercially-zoned piece of property. If the business being proposed is within the allowable uses and within the existing building regulations, I don’t see how you can stop it,” Mikulski said. After continuing the public hearing to next month’s meeting, Planning and Zoning Commission members voted unanimously to update the zoning map to reflect the property’s commercial status as approved in 1998. The new zoning map will be effective April 20. Member Angelus Tamaro said he would not be comfortable voting on the Dollar General site plan application until the map makes it clear the property is commercial. The next Planning and Zoning Commission meeting will be held Wednesday, May 2, at 7 p.m., at Town Hall, 20 E. High St.

Snow Days cont. from Front Page

“There’s a small window in summer to do it. The board was very concerned about holding up a multi-million dollar building project, so they didn’t want to go past June 22.” The board combated the problem by reducing the school year to the state minimum of 180 days, she said. Originally, the district had a 181-day school year. If there are any additional cancellations, the district will hold school on April 16, the first day of April vacation, and the next step would be to take Memorial Day – something Conway said she had never heard of happening before. “This is an anomaly this year,” she said. “We’ve had quite a few snow days, but it is New England.” Going forward, Conway said she would ask the school board to specifically note in the 2018-19 academic calendar that inclement weather may alter vacation periods, so that parents and staff members “truly are aware that this could

happen,” she said. In Hebron, rather than extend the last day of school beyond June 22, the local school board knocked off two days from April vacation, Van Tassel said. “The Board of Education made the decision to keep our last day of school June 22, a Friday, meaning we had to make up two days,” he said. If there are any more unscheduled days off leading up to April vacation, the board will knock more out of the break. “We’re just going to keep taking away from April vacation,” Van Tassel said. The superintendents said it was unusual to have so many weather-related cancellations in one year. “Hopefully we’re done,” Smith said. “Last year, we had four snow days and the year before that, we had two – so nine snow days and five delays is pretty uncommon.”

Hebron Woman Charged with Attempted Murder

A woman from town has been charged with attempted murder, according to state police. Paula Christakos, 77, of 435 Old Colchester Rd., was arrested on March 26, according to a record of arrest from the State Police. The charges against her include disorderly conduct, attempted murder, first-degree assault, first-degree assault of an elderly person, first-degree threatening and first-degree reckless endangerment. Police reported that shortly before 4:30 a.m. March 26, they received a 911 call from an Old Colchester Road residence, reporting an assault with injuries. When they arrived on scene, police said, the alleged victim had face

and head injuries and had been assaulted with a firearm. The alleged victim was transported to the hospital for evaluation. Christakos was identified as the accused and charged with the above offenses. She was assigned a \$100,000 cash surety bond, which she could not post, and was transported to Rockville Superior Court for arraignment. According to the state judicial website, Christakos remains in custody, awaiting plea, and is next due in court April 13. The incident is under investigation by The Eastern District Major Crime CI Unit at Troop K.

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

I love watching the live musical productions that have sprung up on NBC and Fox in recent years, so of course I watched NBC’s live concert-styled show of *Jesus Christ Superstar* this past Sunday night. It was incredible! With a cast buoyed by pop stars John Legend as Jesus and Sara Bareilles as Mary Magdalene, and Broadway’s Brandon Victor Dixon as Judas, the singing performances were fantastic, the set designs captivating – and the whole show was just a powerful, even moving experience. I’d seen the 1970s movie version of the rock opera-turned-Broadway musical about six or so months ago, so the songs were still fairly fresh in my mind. By and large they’re terrific numbers, and they tell the story of Jesus’ last days in a way you don’t often hear. The excellent cast of Sunday’s performance certainly did the songs justice – and 10 minutes into the show I’d already decided to buy the soundtrack CD when it comes out (which, for the record, will be April 20). If you haven’t seen it yet, I’d highly recommend checking it out. It’s available online at nbc.com or on the NBC app, and, if you have cable, you could probably catch it on NBC On Demand. It was, in short, a fantastic show – and even Bill O’Reilly couldn’t ruin it, though he certainly tried. On Twitter Sunday night, O’Reilly wrote, in a poor attempt at humor, “Watching JC Superstar on NBC. Who knew Jesus of Nazareth ran a tattoo parlor? Geez.” He was referring, presumably, to the tattoos many in the cast sported. I’m pretty sure there wasn’t rock music in Jesus’ time either, Billy Boy. The dude’s a smug, unfunny jerk – and while he fortunately doesn’t have his show on Fox News anymore, that doesn’t stop him from finding ways to dispense his windbaggy to the masses. * * *

Tuesday, and I enjoyed them – the second one more than the first. The back-to-back episodes scored fantastic numbers in the ratings, a fact that was unfortunately seen as a victory for Donald Trump. I’m guessing it’s because star Roseanne Barr is a Trump supporter in real life and – big shock, for anyone familiar with Barr – hasn’t been shy about sharing that news. In fact, the fictional Roseanne Conner is written on the show as a Trump supporter. So when the ratings came in sky-high – it was the most-watched comedy on network TV in four years, and interestingly ratings climbed from the first episode to the second, indicating viewers must’ve liked what they’d seen – some read this as a sign that maybe this Donald Trump fellow is alright after all. It couldn’t have been the fact that the original *Roseanne* was one of TV’s biggest hits of the 1990s and folks were maybe curious to see what the Conners were up to after 20 years? In any event, Trump personally contacted Barr and offered his congratulations on the show’s success – I’m glad to know the president of the United States is keeping tabs on the Nielsen ratings – and now the show has become tinged by politics. Some are saying they enjoyed the show but can’t tune in now that it’s been seen as a victory for Trump Nation. Likewise, I’m sure there are Trumpeters out there who had no desire to watch but now will, since it seems to have The Donald’s stamp of approval. The whole thing is kind of a shame. I have no big attachment to *Roseanne* the show or Barr the actress, but the fact that the show’s success or failure is now tied up in politics is disappointing. It’s almost like there’s this sense now that conservatives can watch the show, but liberals should stay away. The show should be judged in terms of quality, not in terms of whether Donald Trump likes it. Hasn’t the man ruined enough already? * * *

Speaking of television, I caught the first two episodes of the *Roseanne* revival last

See you next week.

Police Investigate Gun ‘Utterances’ at Local Schools

by Elizabeth Regan

Two separate elementary school students last week made “utterances allegedly indicating they were planning to bring a gun to school,” according to a March 29 statement from acting East Hampton Police Department Chief Thomas Davoren. Davoren said the two unrelated cases occurred March 27 and 28 at Memorial School, the town’s K-3 elementary building. Police found no “actionable information” in their conversations with school officials, parents and children, according to Davoren. Superintendent of Schools Paul K. Smith this week provided a copy of the March 29 email he sent to all parents and guardians in the district to alert them to the situation. He said Memorial School Principal Andrew Gonzalez had been in contact with K-3 parents prior to the district-wide message being sent out. “No law enforcement action was taken and as a school district, we are addressing these matters internally,” Smith wrote. This week, Smith said people in general are

“under a lot of stress” from reports of school shootings that have led to events like the March 24 March For Our Lives rallies playing out across the country. “I think based on what’s happening in the news, everybody is hypersensitive over every comment, which they should be,” he said. Smith said while the district does not want to cause “undue stress” to parents, it is also committed to acting “quickly and appropriately for the safety of children and staff” when fears arise. “We’re going to investigate absolutely everything,” he said. In his letter, Smith urged parents to contact administrators promptly with any concerns about school safety. Both Smith and Davoren said the school district and police department “work closely to ensure the safety of our children and our schools.” Smith put it this way: “You just take nothing for granted anymore.”

Marlborough Students Advance to Invention Convention State Finals

by Allison Lazur

After being led to a victory in the regional competition by second grade teacher Mary Cochefski and third grade teacher Lynda Quigley, five students from Marlborough Elementary will compete in the Connecticut Invention Convention (CIC) finals event at the University of Connecticut's Gampel Pavilion on April 28.

Kindergartener William DeCesare, first-grader Nicolas Peach, second-grader Elle Boutilier, fifth-grader Trevor Hooker and sixth-grader Aaron Allocca all brainstormed problems in their lives and created inventions that offered a resolution to their chosen problem.

"This was totally on them," Assistant Principal Kim Kelly said of the students. "What makes these guys so fantastic is it was their own initiative; they did this totally outside of the classroom. It was something that spoke to them."

According to its website, the Connecticut Invention Convention was founded in 1983 as part of the Connecticut Educators Network for the Talented and Gifted, "designed to develop, encourage, and enhance creative problem-solving and critical thinking skills through invention, innovation and entrepreneurship." Each year more than 250 Connecticut schools participate, totaling over 17,000 inventors.

Quigley and Cochefski brought the program back this year after having children who participated in the convention several years ago.

"We were simply amazed at the number of students who were willing to participate given the amount of work involved; most of the work was completed at home. Inventors did check in with us during their recess time and we were able to support them as needed," Quigley and Cochefski said in a joint email.

The inventions, which draw primarily on the fields of science, technology, engineering and

mathematics (STEM) to develop their prototypes, provided solutions to dilemmas ranging from motion sickness while reading in the car to missing a loved one.

Allocca, inventor of the "Eye Sock-It," explained that extended wear of his eyeglasses meant discomfort for the back of his ears.

"I thought the Invention Convention would be a great opportunity to fix that [problem] so it's like a sock for your glasses that you can slide on to the back of your glasses; on the outside it's a stretchy, spandex-type of material and on the inside it's memory foam," he said.

Allocca went on to explain his process, which involved using the heat from an iron and an adhesive tape called PolyWeb. The heat helped the materials attach to one another, after discovering sewing through the memory foam was not possible.

DeCesare was inspired to create something that would help him cope with his mother being in the hospital for surgery.

"It's called the 'Miss You Doll,'" said DeCesare. "When you're missing somebody you can remember them because there's a printable face, which you can change with the Velcro on the back. There's also Velcro on the doll so you can dress it up."

Boutilier, the creator of "Car Sick No More," said she often experiences motion sickness while trying to read in the car.

"I tried to figure out something to keep the book up high so you don't have to look down, she said. "You put the top part around the head rest and then the other two clips attach to the back of the book."

Hooker, a trumpet player, had the idea to attach a microfiber towel to the inside of a folder with Velcro, to create the "Brass Spigot."

"When you play a brass instrument, you have to drain your spit [valve] on the ground, which is kind of gross and unsanitary; you could slip



After winning the regional competition at the end of March, William DeCesare, Nicolas Peach, Trevor Hooker, Elle Boutilier and Aaron Allocca (pictured from left) will attend the Invention Convention Finals Event at UConn on April 28.

and it could stain carpets," he said. "So I was thinking of something that would not only absorb it, but be better than current solutions like garbage cans or placing a towel down."

Peach combined his remote control car with a very adult predicament to create the "Remote Control Wall Painter."

The car "climbs the wall to paint because it's too much work to paint the wall by hand," Peach said.

Peach explained that with the help of his dad, and some putty, he was able to attach a small paint brush roller to the top of the car.

If the students win the finals, they could go home with not just recognition and awards – but a possible invitation to participate in the National Invention Convention and Entrepreneurship Expo (NICEE) scheduled to take place at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Mich., from May 31 to June 2.

Regardless of whether or not the students advance again was less of a concern to Quigley and Cochefski.

"We are so proud of all our talented inventors," they said in the email, "and can't wait to see what they come up with next year!"

Two-Car Hebron Crash Leaves One with Suspected Injuries

A two-vehicle collision on March 30 left one driver with suspected minor injuries, according to State Police.

Police said at approximately 6:45 p.m., Lee J. Lambert, 66, of Columbia, was driving a BMW west on Route 66, approximately 200 feet east of Stone House Road, when the vehicle collided with a Subaru Impreza Sport driven by Timothy Mcguire, 29, of 290 Foote Rd., South Glastonbury, who was traveling

east on Route 66 and crossed into the west-bound lane while trying to navigate a turn.

Lambert was transported to Marlborough Clinic, as a precaution and Mcguire was transported to Windham Hospital, after complaining of wrist and leg pain, police said.

Mcguire was issued an infraction for traveling too fast for road conditions, said police and both vehicles were towed by Evans Automotive.

Meet the New RHAM School Board Member

by Sloan Brewster

The RHAM Board of Education has a new member from Andover.

At a special town meeting in Andover last Thursday, resident Stephanie Bancroft was elected to represent the town on the education board. She replaces Danny Holtsclaw, who resigned from the board in March.

The three residents interested in the post were given time to discuss why they wanted it. After they had all spoken, folks in the audience asked questions.

Eric Shrevchenko, member of the Andover Board of Finance, who said he sat in on the latest round of teacher contract negotiations, was a candidate. He made it clear the RHAM board would be his priority. If elected, he said he would "ease off" the finance board.

Challenges Shrevchenko said he would address if elected included the diminishing student population at RHAM and the special education budget.

Neil Weathers, director of accountability, data and assessment for Windham Public Schools who said he has written math curriculum, also ran for the position.

"I have a lot of experience in curriculum," he said. "Having that background and knowledge, I think, would serve the position well."

Bancroft, who has been a music teacher for 20 years, said she was interested in the board because she has concerns with the budget and cuts that would affect the variety of available courses for students.

Her son, a 2012 RHAM graduate, explored many subjects in the quest to determine what he wanted to do, she said. The fewer topics at the high school, the greater the chance students will choose to study out of district.

"I believe we can provide for our students a wide range of subjects being financially responsible at the same time," she said. "I'm fearful of these cuts because if students don't have these subjects to explore, they may go off to VoAg and if they do, they take our tax dollars with them."

There are no plans to cut any classes, Superintendent of Schools Patricia Law said in a phone call Tuesday. While some positions are being reduced, class offerings will remain the same.

That said, Law added that if students don't sign up for classes, she would cease to offer them.

For the 2018-19 school year, RHAM's career offerings will include engineering classes in Project Lead The Way and technical, com-

puter science and medical career classes, Law said.

In answering questions from residents at the meeting, Bancroft said that while budgets can be consolidated and money can be saved on equipment by getting grants, curriculum should be thoroughly looked at before being cut.

"An overall cut without looking is the wrong way to go," she said. "Education is very fluid, there are trends and new technology and new ideas that come all the time."

Resident Jeff Ballard asked the candidates to speak about the arts.

"I've always been concerned about the programs being cut in creative arts," he said. "Speak to that."

Bancroft responded that cutting those programs is a mistake, as the arts require use of parts of the brain students do not use in academics.

"Sometimes music and art is the reason kids go to school," she said, adding that cutting them would be "a real travesty."

The other candidates concurred. "Cutting arts isn't saving a lot of money in a lot of instances" Shrevchenko said, while Weathers said such cuts "would be foolish."

David Gostanian, a RHAM Board of Educa-

tion member from Andover, was in the crowd and advised the candidates of the long hours required.

"I didn't realize just how much time was required of the position," he said. "In the past four years there's been a new makeup on the board, the monthly meetings run five hours and sometimes six hours, plus liaison meetings that can go two to three hours."

It was something Bancroft had addressed in her speech in the beginning of the meeting.

"I do understand the time demands for being on the Board of Ed," she said, adding she was willing to make the commitment. "I love the town and I do believe that RHAM is an excellent school and I'd like to keep it that way and I do believe we can do it by being smart with our money."

The vote was taken by ballot and counted during an intermission at the meeting. With 31 votes, Bancroft was declared the new Andover representative to the board and given a round of applause. Weathers took 23 votes and Shrevchenko received 16.

On Friday, Bancroft, after being sworn in, met with Law, who introduced her to residents at a public hearing on RHAM's budget on Monday.

Portland Selectmen Eye Town Budget Cuts

by Elizabeth Regan

Board of Selectmen budget deliberations Wednesday yielded \$455,955 in reductions to the 2018-19 budget proposed by First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield.

If approved by selectmen at a special meeting on April 11, the cuts would bring the potential tax impact for the total \$34.05 million budget proposal to a 4 percent increase over the current mill rate. That's down from the 6 percent increase signified by the original \$34.38 spending plan presented by Bransfield and Superintendent of Schools Philip O'Reilly last week.

The \$34.05 million 2018-19 budget proposal under consideration represents an increase of \$403,831 – or 1.2 percent – over the current budget.

The \$20.68 million proposed education budget is flat compared to the current year, and selectmen did not recommend any additional cuts.

The \$13.37 million general government numbers – including debt and capital expenses – represent an increase of 3.11 percent over the current town operating budget.

The majority of the reduction being considered by selectmen is the result of a plan created with town financial advisors to mitigate the budget impact on taxpayers by issuing bonds in July of this year instead of May.

The budgeting move will push \$416,400 of debt payments into the following fiscal year – at which time the bonds from other projects would be coming off the books, according to Bransfield.

The debt service expenses stem from a \$10 million bond package approved by voters to construct a Route 17 recreation park and to make infrastructure improvements.

Debt service in the budget proposal being considered comes to a total of \$2.06 million, a \$41,190 increase over the current year.

The revised spending plan also makes several adjustments to operating and capital expenditures.

Due to Chatham Health District budget adjustments resulting in a decrease to the per-resident fees the district had originally proposed, selectmen were able to decrease that line item by \$3,555.

Bransfield said she was told by Air Line Trail volunteers that \$10,000 in capital funds earmarked for construction would not be needed in the coming year. The town in 2016 received a \$685,932 state grant to allow construction of a trail from the East Hampton border to Camp Ingersoll.

Selectmen also expressed a willingness to cut \$10,000 allotted for boarding up windows of blighted properties; \$5,000 for the clean energy fund; and \$500 each for Middlesex County Substance Abuse Action Council and Middlesex Behavioral Health through the social services budget.

Members discussed energy savings opportunities, including the completion of an Eversource initiative to change over all street lights in town to LED lights, which they said they will continue to explore.

Bransfield said Thursday she's thrilled the board is moving "in a new direction where we are really, really going to make some energy savings improvements" to reduce both usage and expense.

'Rock Bottom' Education Budget

The education budget presented last week by O'Reilly and Board of Education Chairman MaryAnne Rode remains flat despite increased

medical insurance premiums and escalating special education costs.

"I've been in this business 36 years [or] 37 years, and I've never seen such an increase and such a rapid increase in the number of students of special needs that have moved into our district," O'Reilly said.

To mitigate those increases, the schools budget cut one teaching position each in kindergarten, first grade, third grade and fourth grade. A special education teaching position, a full-time custodian and a full-time library assistant position were eliminated through attrition.

O'Reilly said the elementary school teaching cuts will result in class sizes in the low 20s, with 16-17 students projected for each of the kindergarten classes.

The budget proposal reduces the technology department, athletic department and building budget line items by 10 percent each, while the 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.

Rode said the school board's effort to whittle down O'Reilly's original recommended budget, which came in at a 2.34 percent increase over the current year, has resulted in no "wobble room" in the spending plan for the schools.

"I kid you not, we are at rock bottom. There's no room. If we have further cuts, I don't really know where that's going to come from other than sacrificing our class sizes and the quality of our education," Rode said.

Rode expressed fear about the prospect of education aid from the state continuing to decline as the cost of educating the special needs population rises.

"Special education has been extremely volatile this year, so I have some real concerns

around whether or not we're going to be able to stay in budget on that. So that's just something I want to put out there. Not for us mis-managing, but because we keep having new students move into the town and more special needs being identified within our current population," she said.

Taxpayer Impact

The bulk of the tax burden associated with the 2018-19 budget proposal comes from an expected decline in education funding as state lawmakers grapple with Connecticut's fiscal woes. Portland officials are estimating a \$1.16 million loss in state revenue in the coming year.

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.

Based on the revised budget proposal under consideration by selectmen, the mill rate could rise to 34.42 mills. That's a 1.44 mill increase over the current year.

The anticipated reduction in municipal aid accounts for 1.42 mills of that total increase in the mill rate, according to officials.

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 \$6,884. That's an increase of \$288 over the current year.

Selectmen will meet Wednesday, April 11, to vote on the budget proposal. The approved budget will go to town meeting Monday, May 7, and then to referendum Monday, May 14.

Police Investigate Andover Break-Ins

State Police are investigating a pair of home break-ins that allegedly occurred Tuesday, March 27.

According to police, the first break-in occurred on Hebron Road between the hours of 7 a.m. and 2:15 p.m. The residence was entered without force and three items were stolen, totaling \$1,831.

Police said the second incident occurred at a residence on Route 6 later that afternoon, between 3:40 p.m. and 5:20 p.m. According to police, the residence was entered by force and a number of items were stolen with an estimated value of several thousand dollars.

Police said both incidents are currently under investigation.

East Hampton Police News

3/28: Brandon Yon, 25, of 98 Middletown Ave., was taken into custody pursuant to two warrants for his arrest stemming from two separate incidents, East Hampton Police said. Yon was charged with third-degree larceny in regard to the first incident, police said, and credit card fraud, fraudulent use of an ATM, identity theft, misapplication of property, third-degree larceny and criminal impersonation.

Also, from March 19-25, officers responded to nine medical calls, three motor vehicle crashes and four alarms, and made 14 traffic stops, police said.

Colchester Police News

3/28: State Police said that an unknown person(s) entered a building on Old Hartford Road and stole numerous clothing-related items. According to police, the investigation is active.

3/29: Colchester Police said Rhonda K. Lami, 45, of 66 Pinebrook Rd., was arrested and charged with violation of probation.

3/30: State Police said Dillon R. Haines, 29, of 766 Tobacco St., Lebanon, was arrested and charged with first-degree failure to appear.

Marlborough Police News

3/30: State Police said Francis Usher, 48, of 28 Laurel Heights Rd., Higganum, was arrested and charged with DUI and failure to obey a traffic control signal.

Tree-Trimming Plan Rankles Portland Residents

by Elizabeth Regan

An Eversource Energy plan to deal with encroaching flora around high-voltage power lines from the Glastonbury border to the Connecticut River is meeting with resistance from some locals.

The energy company last month sent a letter to 81 affected residents saying "routine vegetation maintenance" will occur on or near their property this year.

Eversource spokesman Frank Poirot said affected streets include portions of Thompson Hill Road, East Cotton Hill Road, Old Marlborough Turnpike, Cox Road, Penfield Hill Road, Jobs Pond Road and Breezy Corners Road.

The letter said contractors will trim tree branches, cut down tall-growing trees, and remove vegetation by cutting, mowing and spraying herbicides.

According to Poirot, the targeted approach to herbicide use is monitored by state and federal agencies and carried out by trained specialists. He said certain plant species identified as incompatible with the right-of-way are cut at the base, leaving the stump to be sprayed.

Stumps will be treated with herbicide in the early spring and actively-growing foliage will be sprayed selectively in the summer, the letter said.

Poirot said the work will cover approximately 300 feet of already-cleared space surrounding the transmission lines.

Resident Deb Goodrich, who owns 80 acres on Old Marlborough Turnpike, said the company undertook a "massive clearing" around the lines abutting her property as part of a separate, months-long project to replace wooden transmission lines that is currently finishing up.

She said she was able to work with the energy company to save some trees around one of the vernal pools on her property, but added that "a lot" of trees came down.

"There was a bobcat under my birdfeeder this morning," she said on Wednesday. "They're taking away their habitat; there's no food for them."

She described the area as home to birds, coyotes, foxes, deer and other animals.

Larry Cyrulik, a conservation committee chairman with the Mattabesek Audubon Society and Portland resident, said he is concerned about the ability of declining bird species to thrive if their habitat continues to be cut back.

He cited birds such as the Prairie Warbler, Blue Wing Warbler and the Rufous-Sided Towhee residing in the shrub-scrub wetlands characterized by low, woody plants. He said the

Eastern Red Cedar tree is particularly important to birds that spend their summers in Connecticut and others that live here all year long.

"We understand the power has to be delivered; it just has to be a balanced approach," Cyrulik said. "If we can get the folks involved to look at the thousands of acres underneath these power lines as a habitat rather than as a clear-cut industrial zone, we can make some progress on that front."

According to Poirot, a balanced approach is what the energy company provides.

"We have looked at the acreage along our transmission lines as a very special habitat," he said. "It's one that birds rely on, as well as turtles and other species of special concern."

The environmental needs are balanced with federal mandates for system reliability, he said. Those mandates guide the company's vegetation management when it comes to how close or far certain trees can come to the lines and what is allowed to grow beneath the wires, he said.

Poirot listed maples, white pines and red cedar as tree species that aren't compatible with the company's responsibility to provide power due to height and proximity to power lines.

"We take our responsibility as an environ-

mental steward of these shrubland habitats very seriously," he said. "Not only do the overhead lines deliver energy to tens of thousands of customers, but the land beneath the lines play a key role in the lives of threatened and endangered insects, migratory songbirds, turtles and plants."

Goodrich and Cyrulik plan to meet with an arborist, a chemical manager, and representatives from Eversource and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection in the coming week.

Poirot said vegetation management work in Glastonbury and Portland has been reviewed and approved by both the DEEP and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"Our compliance with these approvals reflects a careful balance between maintaining electric reliability and the environmental stewardship of sensitive areas," he said.

According to the *Hartford Courant*, a similar plan in Glastonbury was scaled back due to citizen response. The proposal went from clearing an 150-foot expanse surrounding the transmission lines to clearing only 100 feet around the wires – "except for trees that have a potential to grow 80 feet and higher within the 150-foot zone," the *Courant* said.

School, Town Budgets Presented to Colchester Finance Board

by Allison Lazur

On Tuesday, interim schools superintendent Mary Conway and First Selectman Art Shilosky presented the proposed school and town budgets to the Board of Finance during a public hearing.

The proposed budgets – which will be voted on separately at referendum – total \$55.48 million, an increase of \$137,427 over the current budget.

The school spending proposal is actually seeing a decrease of \$87,061, clocking in at \$40.55 million – whereas the town operations budget is proposed to climb \$224,488, coming to \$14.93 million.

Shilosky highlighted several aspects of the budget proposal that had driven the increase. Among these is the town having to fund 100 percent of the town's resident state trooper position starting in the 2018-19 fiscal year, whereas currently the town is paying 85 percent of the amount, with the state picking up the rest. This results in an \$18,482 increase, he said.

Shilosky added that the fire marshal position is slated to increase from 32.5 to 40 hours, meaning an additional \$14,790. The first selectman attributed this to a lack of volunteers in the fire marshal office.

"In the past we've had volunteers, which we don't have anymore," he said. "We are trying to get other volunteers to come in and do the training, but right now we aren't successful."

Highway road improvements were a priority for Shilosky. He explained that each year going forward, he will continue to put aside an extra \$50,000 for improvements, as he did in this year's proposed budget, "until the roads of Colchester are up to par."

But the town budget proposal wasn't all in-

creases. Among the proposed decreases were the elimination of a part-time department clerk in planning and code administration, saving \$17,171, as well as a part-time administrative assistant in the recreation department, which resulted in a reduction of \$16,098.

The amount for Town Hall repairs was reduced by \$15,000, along with other minor public works decreases like an estimated \$5,100 drop in the cost of ice melt, and a reduction in the hours of a part-time custodian at the Senior & Youth Services Center, yielding \$4,626 in savings.

Shilosky said he was excited to share a new program, People Finder Search, to help increase the town's revenue by collecting back taxes. The new program would add \$1,200 to the budget – but he said it would be money well-spent.

"This is a new program that finds people for us; in other words, they're no longer here – they own a car – they disappeared and went to a different town; this program will find them for us. If they owe back taxes, we can get the back taxes," said Shilosky. "This will pay for itself."

The town budget also allotted \$75,000 to be used towards the Paper Mill Road Bridge as the town had done last year to satisfy a two year funding program.

"That's what the grant people told us to put in, but we believe it's [the cost of the bridge project] going to come in at less, said Shilosky."

School Budget Sees Decrease

The proposed 2018-19 school budget of \$40.55 million reflects a decrease of 21 percent from the 2017-18 budget – a figure Conway said she was satisfied with.

She added that school administration initially came in with a budget calling for a 1 percent increase over current year spending.

"Any other time I would've run with 1 percent," Conway said. "This is a very thoughtful budget. However, knowing the hit that we got here in Colchester from the state government, I said we have to come in as near to zero as possible, to provide the town with at least that relief."

Conway emphasized that there were three priorities to the school budget: social-emotional learning – which "helps our children grow in the world," Conway said, adding, "we are partners with all of our parents" – Research-Based Intervention and using technology to support personalized learning.

"Research-Based Intervention is the way we need to identify children for special education across the nation," said Conway. "We need to be working with our children continuously to make sure what we are doing is working."

Technology concluded Conway's top three budget priorities. She stressed that "we all need to be thoughtfully planning for our infrastructure for the future."

Technology expenses for the 2018-19 year include replacement projectors, adding iPads and Chromebooks at Jack Jackter Intermediate School and replacing both business labs at Bacon Academy, which are extremely dated, according to Conway.

"Technology is an area we are looking to build a plan to make sure we have the funding going forward" said Conway. "We have a lot of technology coming into our middle school; it would be devastating if we couldn't keep up on that technology."

This helped Conway justify the \$25,000 set aside as "seed money" to continue building upon.

The budget proposal saw a 1.70 percent in-

crease, or \$426,177, to salaries, including adding two new special educators at the elementary school. However, other positions saw their hours reduced, including teachers in health, speech and language, Spanish and physical education.

Conway also explained that a full-time occupational therapist was added to the district – although that still wouldn't bring Colchester to where it needed to be in that department, she said.

"A good preschool program will keep kids graduating and on the right track," Conway said. "Also these types of services [added position of occupational therapist] keep our children from having problems later."

Overall employee benefits were reduced by 3.99 percent or \$266,150 which Conway explained was the result of moving contracted employees from a PPO insurance plan to a high-deductible plan, as well as excluding the Incurred But Not Reported (IBNR) incidents in health insurance.

IBNR exclusion "was a bit of a gamble," Conway said. "This would be things that happened that we haven't gotten the bill for yet or things that may happen."

Instructional supplies saw a decrease of \$14.57 percent, or \$152,884, in areas like textbooks, library books and software licensing and support because of the start of an IT director who was hired in July 2017.

A decrease in overall tuition by 9.53 percent, or \$264,465, was a number dependent upon the students who move in and out, said Conway.

The Board of Education is scheduled to present a five-year technology plan to the Board of Finance next Tuesday, April 10, at 7 p.m., at Bacon Academy.

Colchester Diner Thrives Under New Management

By Allison Lazur

After being owned by Jane Bittman for 35 years, Herman's Diner, located at 23 New London Road was bought in July 2017 by Jodie Burstein. The diner has seen generations of customers and has continued to grow under Burstein's new management.

"I'm all about taking it to the next level," said Burstein, who has grown the staff from three to seven since taking ownership. "My employees always brag about how great it is to work here and how much fun we have."

With experience supervising 10 Dunkin' Donuts' franchises in the UConn area, Burstein is more than familiar with how a successful kitchen operates. She emphasized that because of her background, building a successful team was not an issue.

"We work really hard, but we are all laughing and having a really good time," she said.

Burstein continued to emphasize how her staff members are "the heartbeat of Herman's."

Kathy Rota, who was an employee when Bittman owned the diner, is who Burstein attributes to her success from the very beginning.

"I remember on the first day [after I bought the business] I said to Kathy, 'Just grab ahold of me and drag me through whatever I need to know and I promise each day will get better,'" Burstein said.

It was only after a longtime Dunkin' Donuts customer encouraged her to leave her "cushy corporate job" – as she referred to it – and pursue something greater that Burstein inquired about the purchase of Herman's Diner. Burstein lives in Longmeadow, Mass., and makes the daily commute to Colchester as she continues to develop her presence in town.

"When I started I sat back for a while because the customers were really afraid of change, but I befriended them one at a time,

and about nine months later [after shadowing Bittman at the diner during that time] bought the business," Burstein said.

The diner – with a square footage of, as Burstein put it, "extra small" – seats 36 and is open from 6 a.m.-3 p.m., seven days a week. Upon taking ownership, Burstein leveled the driveway and upgraded some of the equipment, but emphasized that every aspect loved by the customers is the same.

"I used to joke for the first few months when I started that I'm not changing a thing; not the sausage, not the home fries – I'm not even wiping the coffee stain off the wall," Burstein said.

Burstein boasted about not only having the best home fries in town, but also the best sausage, which she said uses a special, homemade blend made just for the restaurant. This continues a tradition of sausage importance that stretches back to the diner's earliest days.

"In the old days Herman [Reffel] would grind the sausage in the basement of his house," Burstein said.

In addition to its meat and potatoes, Herman's is also known for its muffins—so much so that the diner calls itself the "over-the-top muffin stop."

"If you've never had one of Herman's muffins, you're really missing out because they're about the size of a softball," said Burstein. "We make blueberry, cinnamon swirl, cranberry white chocolate, chocolate chip, cherry chocolate, apple cinnamon, pumpkin as it's in season, banana walnut, corn – the flavors are endless. People come and eat their breakfast at Herman's and then leave with one to four muffins."

While Burstein's staff is an integral part of the business, her customers are hugely significant.

"The thing that makes Herman's is its cus-



The staff of Herman's Diner in Colchester, which underwent a change in management last summer.

tomers – they embraced us," said Burstein. "If a customer doesn't come in for a while, we'll call them to check up and see if they need anything. That's the hard part about owning a small business like this; you get really attached to your customers."

Burstein went on to explain that all the waitresses and customers know each other by name, as well as who their extended families are. She even referenced a situation where a regular customer and a town resident – who had access to a generator – collaborated to get power back to

the diner after a storm.

"We really are the *Cheers* of Colchester," she said.

Burstein said her plans for the future involve moving towards branding and selling her own mugs and T-shirts, as well as revealing a new, secret signature sandwich by the start of camp season.

"Keeping up with the growth has been my biggest challenge since taking over Herman's Diner," she said. "Every month is a new adventure."

Andover is Over Budget in Legal Expenses

by Sloan Brewster

Due to a variety of reasons – including sexual harassment allegations against former town employee Jay Linddy – the town has so far exceeded the \$10,000 budgeted for legal fees by more than \$12,000 in the current fiscal year.

So, last week the Board of Finance agreed to a \$15,000 supplemental appropriation to cover these expenses, which are projected to be ongoing, board chairman Dan Warren said.

At the same March 28 meeting, the finance board rejected a proposal for a supplemental appropriation of \$5,000 to cover legal counsel services incurred by the assessor's office to deal with assessment appeals as part of the 2016 revaluation, Warren said in a phone call Monday. The board did not agree to the expense because the town did not have a contract with the lawyer before he was paid.

"The town has been cited in audits that we do not have adequate internal control," Warren explained. "It was uncovered that there was no contract with this law firm and no budget appropriation and no purchase order and we were over budget."

The attorney is identified in town records as Lloyd L. Langhammer of New London.

The finance board has established a purchase policy for services and steps that should be followed before checks can be cut, he said.

"The town needs to be doing a better job of contracting," Warren said. "I do a lot of work in my career for municipalities and governments and I know that we're a small town but there are essential things."

The second issue the finance board had was that the Board of Selectmen had not budgeted

enough for the legal fees, Warren said.

"Even though the Board of Selectmen [is] aware of these situations, they did not make any provisions for the budget," he said.

At Wednesday night's Board of Selectmen meeting, Town Administrator Joseph Higgins shared a letter he'd received earlier that day from Langhammer. Six years ago, the town had an agreement to work with the same firm.

"He wants the same agreement with the same \$120 fee for the same services," Higgins said.

The board also discussed the overexpenditures.

After the 2012 revaluation, there were a few individual appeals of assessments, but nothing that ran up so much, First Selectman Robert Burbank said. This year, there were four appeals at once – two that have been settled and two that are going to court.

"We never had a situation come in where there were four at the same time," he said.

The board approved a motion to authorize Higgins to sign the engagement.

Jeff Maguire, vice first selectman, opposed the motion – and took issue with the choice of law firm.

"This is not a firm; this is an individual attorney," he said. "I would ask the question, have you ever met him?"

Burbank said he had not met the attorney, who specializes in issues related to assessments, but had seen his credentials and that other municipalities worked with him.

* * *

Selectmen did not specifically discuss any of the legal matters, but Linddy's name was briefly mentioned.

Higgins said he had received a letter from Linddy requesting his employment records with the town from 1972 to 2017.

"This is my second request," Linddy wrote in the letter, which Higgins read to the board.

Higgins said he had sent back a letter saying he would check into the matter, he said.

"[Records] may not go back as long as '72," he told selectmen, explaining that the state only requires the town to keep records for 10 years.

In October, after a two-month investigation into sexual harassment complaints filed in August against Linddy, the Board of Selectmen unanimously agreed to fire him from his town jobs. He had been removed from his office in Town Hall in August but during the investigation retained his animal control and transfer station positions.

Linddy also holds seats on the boards of education and selectmen, as well as the Recreation Commission. He has not attended meetings for either the Board of Education or the Board of Selectmen since last summer, but has been a regular attendee at Recreation Commission meetings, according to Maguire and school board chairwoman Shannon Loudon.

In a phone call Wednesday, Linddy said he was planning to retire and would likely resign from both boards, as well as the commission, in July.

When asked why he was still attending Recreation Commission meetings but was a no-show to the boards, he said he had been on the commission for 30 years and that he feels the town's recreation programs are in trouble – as there are currently not enough programs for

older children and young adults.

"Our recreation programs have been in trouble the last five years, for many reasons; more people [have] got to get involved," he said. "We need more than ever to come up with programs for the high school kids and the young adults."

Linddy said he was not attending Board of Selectmen meetings because of the ongoing legal matter. As far as why he continues to be missing from the Board of Education, he said he would go if he were asked but stays away to prevent a scene.

"It'd be fruitless for me to go because it would be a disruption because all the members on there, I don't get along with," Linddy said. "It doesn't make the board look good and it's not healthy for the town."

At the end of the meeting Wednesday, Burbank and selectwoman Julia Haverl said Linddy had not approached the board about the possibility of resigning and that they have no authority to ask for his resignation.

"Being an elected office, he has to make that decision," Burbank said.

Maguire has said he was frustrated about Linddy's continued absence – but conceded "there is very little as a board we can do to ask him to attend," he said.

Loudon said Linddy's absence was "troubling."

"It is troubling that Mr. Linddy has not attended a Board of Education meeting since last June, without having provided any reason or notice about his prolonged absence, especially in light of his attendance at meetings of the Recreation Commission that immediately preceded Board of Education meetings," she said.

Pool Named for Accomplished Andover Swimmer

by Sloan Brewster

Marcella MacDonald, an Andover resident known for multiple swims of the English Channel, is getting a pool named for her in Manchester.

In June, the West Side Pool will become the Marcy MacDonald Pool, Christopher Silver, director of the department of leisure, family and recreation in Manchester, said. New signage and a placard are currently being made.

MacDonald was inducted in the Manchester Hall of Fame for her swimming successes, according to her good friend Barbara 'Chickey' Barrera.

MacDonald was born and raised in the town and moved to Andover in 1995. She has practiced podiatry in Manchester since 1992.

Silver, who is a few years younger than the 54 year old MacDonald, knew her and her twin sister Elizabeth Collins growing up.

"I've known Marcy my whole life, we grew up on the same side of town," he said.

With no pool at that time on the west side of town, children from the area would swim at Globe Hollow Swimming Area, Silver said. The West Side Pool, one of the town's newest, was built about 15 years ago.

The idea to name a pool after MacDonald was first raised by Barrera.

"I've known Marcy, oh God, 30 years, 35 years," Barrera said. "She's an English Channel swimmer, she's crossed 15 times plus she's done a double, there and back again."

When asked why she thought MacDonald was deserving of the honor, she said she was kind, had made the community proud through her accomplishments and was an inspirational mentor to young men and women to swim and play safe in the water.

"Because of the type of person that she is, she's very passionate, she's a great coach, swimming the channel," Barrera said. "Who else is going to swim the channel 15 times?"

MacDonald said she was surprised by the honor.

"I'm so honored and truly still kind of amazed that the town is doing this," she said.

When Barrera first mentioned she was looking into having a pool named for her a few months back, she didn't think anything would

come of it, MacDonald said. But her friend kept at it until it happened.

"I can't believe that (Chickey's) been doing this for so long," MacDonald said.

As a kid, Macdonald, who was on the Manchester Recreation Team, said she did most of her training at Globe Hollow but, had there been a pool on the west side of town, likely would have gone there.

Still, Globe Hollow, which is a manmade cement pond, is ideal for training.

"It had a shallow area and a giant raft and a swimming area with lane lines," she said.

Nowadays, MacDonald trains at Mansfield Community Center and, in warm weather, she and some fellow swimmers go to Hammonasset State Park and brave the ocean waters.

"We actually have a lot of people from Connecticut who have swum the channel," MacDonald said. "We are a great swimming state and Manchester is a great swimming town."

MacDonald was also the oldest person and first American to swim Scotland's Loch Ness, she said. It is a swim she has no plans to replicate any time soon, or ever.

"It was a monster to swim, they are monster swims," she said.

Loch Ness was 51 degrees when she swam it. To get herself to the finish, she repeatedly told herself that it was a one-time deal.

"I just had to tell myself that I won't go back there again," she said. "I was so glad that I made it because if I hadn't made it I would have had to give it another try."

Swimming in cold water is a mental challenge and requires focus, according to MacDonald.

"You have to get your body and mind used to the cold water," she said.

The body starts to break down after six hours and the mind starts to pipe in and argue.

"It's your mind that tells you, 'What are you doing to me?'" she said. "You have to switch part of your mind off for a little while."

MacDonald swims almost every day.

"If we have a snowstorm and I just can't get to the pool, it's okay," she said.

MacDonald swims – and always has – as a personal challenge.



Marcella MacDonald swims the English Channel, a swim she has completed 15 times and which she plans to do again in August.

"I've learned to actually like it," she said. "Yes, I still challenge myself but I've learned to actually cherish that challenge and make the most of it."

She is planning her next Channel swim in August.

It takes her about 11 and a half hours to get across and she credits her success to the efforts of the people who organize Channel swims and the pilots that accompany swimmers. They make it a safe swim.

"It's one of the hardest swims, but it's safe," she said.

MacDonald said she enjoys training and constantly tricks her mind to get through to the end.

"I take one swim at a time. I test my body; if it can get across, it gets across. If not, it's okay, I don't beat myself up anymore," she said. "Just get across, I never have to do that again, that's one of the tricks I play."

One thing she said she was not in favor of was seeing her sister, a former competitive swimmer, take the plunge in the Channel.

"We were talking about doing something at the Channel," she said. "You know what, I really don't want her to go through what I go through. I don't know if I could watch it. I don't want her to go through the pain."

MacDonald noted that she is coming to the end of her career and said she hopes to teach adults to swim when she retires. She currently coaches East Hartford youth, something she has done for 25 years.

A ceremony to officially name the Marcy MacDonald Pool is tentatively scheduled for June 27 at 5:30 p.m. at the pool in conjunction with Family Noodle Night, when folks come to the pool to swim and play with water noodles, Silver said. Refreshments will be served.

Obituaries

Hebron

Richard Wallace Leach

Richard Wallace Leach, "Dick," 71, of Hebron, widower of the late Betty Carol (Montgomery) Leach, passed away Thursday, March 29, after a long, courageous battle with prostate cancer. Born June 15, 1946, in Lynn, Mass., he was the son of the late Edmond and Iva (Holbrook) Leach.



He was a 1965 graduate of RHAM High School in Hebron. In August of that year, he enlisted in the Navy, serving proudly during the Vietnam War and was a life member of the VFW for his service. During his enlistment, he and Betty were married in June 1968 and shared 34 years together before she predeceased him Oct. 11, 2002.

Mr. Leach had worked as a draftsman for many years – early on at Electric Boat and then for Computer Science Corp. until his retirement. Dick was an avid genealogy buff as well as a collector of a wide variety of items, from coins, stamps and model planes to name a few. He was also a diehard fan of the Boston Red Sox, New England Patriots and UConn women's basketball.

He leaves four children (and their spouses), Carrie-Ann and Jeffrey Kaylor, Cynthia and Leon Moore, James Leach and Liz Deleon and Patric and Robbie Corbeil; eight grandchildren, Jourdon Wucik, Andrew and Lucas Kaylor, Kelsey Weaver, Landon and Logan Moore, Anthony and Gavin Leach and Rufio Corbeil; five siblings, Linda Scavetta, Bill, Steve and Bob Leach and Terry Scott; and numerous nieces, nephews, extended family members and friends.

In addition to his wife and parents, he was predeceased by a sister, Sandy Corey.

Services will be held Saturday, April 7, with visitation from 9:30-11 a.m. at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, before an 11:30 a.m. graveside service with military honors at the New Hebron Cemetery, Wall Street (Route 316), Hebron.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to the Relay for Life SECT "Betty Boopers" team online at tinyurl.com/y7nsl5fw.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

John R. Henley

John R. Henley, a resident of Avon, N.C., died peacefully Tuesday, March 27, after battling a long-term illness. John was born in Boston, Mass., Feb. 15 1965. He was the son of the late Robert and Joan (Fitzgerald) Henley.

Prior to his moving to North Carolina John was a longtime resident of Colchester. John worked as a systems analyst for various insurance companies in Connecticut for his career. He loved more his time away from work, especially when on one of his boats or enjoying the many dogs he owned over the years.

John held a passion for the environment, as evidenced by his being a founding member of the Colchester Land Trust. He was also a gifted photographer. Throughout the years he produced a collection of photographs that capture the beauty of the outdoors with images from the woods of New England, the Cape and the Outer Banks of North Carolina. An avid storyteller, he was always in search of an audience and possessed a lengthy repertoire of corny jokes.

Most of all John loved his children and was so very proud of each of them. He always looked forward to time spent with his children and would plan their days together fishing boating and working with tools.

John leaves his three children, Connor, Brenna and Quintin, all of Colchester. John also leaves his former wife, Amy, of Colchester; his siblings, Karen Lidman of Barrington, R.I., Anne Cain of Lafayette, Calif., and Joe Henley of Longmeadow, Mass.

It was John's wish to not have any service or memorial, but the family requests you join them in remembering John in the fondest of ways.

Portland

Wanda M. Newsome

Wanda "Ida" M. (Homiski) Newsome, 89, of Storrs, passed away peacefully Friday, March 30. She was born in Bozrah to the late Peter and Anna (Brodjek) Homiski Dec. 14, 1928.

Wanda married William Newsome May 4, 1950 and celebrated 65 years of marriage before his death in 2015. She is also predeceased by her son, Billy; sister, Stella and brothers Frank and Alfred.

Wanda is survived by her four daughters and sons-in-law, Lisa and Jeff Ward, Cindy and Don Hartley, Nancy Newsome, Shirley and Mike Surette; seven grandchildren, Kendra, Brittany, Meghan, Nicholas, Jessica, Jimmy and Michael; seven great-grandchildren, Charlotte, Julia, Jennah, Christopher, Brittany, Jack and Allison; two sisters, Genevieve Hill and Theresa Kane; two brothers and sisters-in-law, Joe and Helen Hominski and John and Terri Homiski; many nieces, nephews and treasured friends.

Wanda enjoyed a full life. She was one of four daughters to Polish immigrants, a sister to seven siblings, an aunt, godmother, wife, homemaker, mother, mother-in-law, "Botchie," Den Mother, 10-pin bowler and friend. Wanda lived her entire life in Connecticut, including 47 summers at the log cabin on Amston Lake and 20 years as a snowbird in Fort Pierce, Fla., where she and her husband enjoyed the warm weather, walks on the beach, arts and crafts, bingo, shuffle board, and potluck dinners with fellow retirees.

Recently, Wanda celebrated her 89th birthday with a wonderful gathering of over 40 family members and friends sharing countless memories and laughs.

Wanda's family is extremely grateful for the compassion and quality of care their mother received from the EMTs of the Mansfield Fire Department, who were called upon on numerous occasions. In Wanda's memory, donations may be made to The Mansfield Fire Fighters Association, P.O. Box 122, Storrs, CT 06268.

There are no calling hours. A graveside service will take place at noon Friday, May 4, at the St. Joseph's Cemetery in Windham.

For an online memorial guestbook, visit potterfuneralhome.com

East Hampton

Sandra A. Kalosky

Sandra A. Kalosky, 56, of Moodus, formerly of East Hampton and East Hartford, wife of Robert Kalosky, passed away Friday, March 23. Born March 15, 1962, in Hartford, she was the daughter of the late Peter and Frances (Kryla) Kaluza.

Sandra had been employed as a claims specialist for Zurich North America Insurance Company. Sandra enjoyed camping, cooking and traveling, especially to Phoenix, Ariz., to visit their son Phillip.

Besides her husband Bob, she is survived by her loving son, Phillip Kalosky; two sisters, Barbara of East Granby and Janet of Glastonbury; four nephews; several great-nephews, aunts and uncles; and her close friends Sue Angelo and Janine Boisvert.

She was predeceased by her brother, James.

Friends may call at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, today, April 6, from 9-11 a.m. A memorial service will follow at 11 a.m. Burial will be private at the convenience of the family.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Hebron

Clyde Washburne

Coach Clyde Washburne, 87, of Hebron, passed away at his home, surrounded by his wife and children, Monday, April 2. Clyde was born July 26, 1930, in the Bronx, to Edna Mae Canvin and Arthur Lewis Washburne.

He is survived by his loving wife, Cynthia; his three children, Leslie Wight Hilary Dorris and Jim Washburne; six grandchildren, Nicole Michael Jillian Justin Brian and Sarah; great-grandson, Josiah; and his brother, Bryant. His wife's mother, siblings and numerous nieces and nephews all feel his absence as well.

Clyde grew up in Willimantic. At a very early age his prowess as an athlete emerged. He graduated from Windham High in 1948, where he played football baseball and basketball and was class president his senior year. Clyde was known for his outstanding athletic abilities and his modest character. He served in the Coast Guard until 1954 and returned to his academic studies at the University of Connecticut, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in 1957 and a master's degree in 1964.

Clyde started his coaching career in 1957 at RHAM High. Ten years later he started his 23-year head coaching career at Eastern Connecticut State University that involved three sports. Washburne touched the lives of hundreds of young men and women from a wide range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds developing them into champions on and off the field.

Clyde was voted Coach of the Year multiple times at Eastern and was inducted into Eastern's Hall of Fame and the Connecticut Scholastic and Collegiate Softball Hall of Fame. In 2006, Clyde was inducted as a pioneer in women's softball into the National Fastpitch Coaches' Association Hall of Fame. In 1972 federal legislation enacted Title IX which forbade discrimination on the basis of sex. He became a very vocal and determined supporter of equality for women's athletics. His persistence over time produced results.

Clyde was a unique individual – gutsy and determined, he was "all in" and strived for the improvement of everything for which he had a passion. He often spoke his thoughts and philosophies about life through in what became known as Clyde-isms. As Clyde would say, "Don't thank me; just pass it on." While he will be missed dearly by family, friends, colleagues and athletes, he will always be admired as a man who lived an extraordinary life and thought more about others than he did himself.

A celebration of a life well-lived will be held at 1 p.m. Sunday, April 22 (Earth Day), at Eastern Connecticut State University in the Francis Geissler Gymnasium.

In lieu of flowers, make donations to Covenant Soup Kitchen, 220 Valley St. in Willimantic, or the Eastern Connecticut State University Softball Endowment Fund in his name.

For an online memorial guestbook, visit potterfuneralhome.com

Portland

Asunta L. Green

Asunta L. Green, 82, of Portland, wife of the late Frank Green, died Saturday, March 31, surrounded by her family. Born May 21, 1935, in Middletown, she was the daughter of the late Guri and Pasqualina (DeRita) Rossitto.

Asunta had been a resident of Rocky Hill most of her life and a member of St. Mary's Church, Portland. Asunta and her husband were the former owners of the Brownstone Restaurant for 15 years.

She is survived by her loving family: two sons, Frank and daughter-in-law Bernadette Green of Rocky Hill, Thomas Green and his partner Mark Drapeau of Bristol; two sisters, Pam Cox of Oakdale and Mary Esposito of Portland. She is also survived by a granddaughter, Susan Green, and honorary grandson, Kyle Drapeau, as well as several nieces and nephews.

The funeral was held Wednesday, April 4, at the Portland Memorial Funeral Home 231 Main St., Portland, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial in St. Mary's Church, Portland. Burial was in the family plot in St. Mary's Cemetery Portland. Friends called at the funeral home Wednesday morning, before the service.

Marlborough

Anna (LaPira) Doner

Anna (LaPira) Doner, 87, of Marlborough, passed away peacefully Friday, March 30, with her family by her side. Anna was born in Hartford June 7, 1930, and was the daughter of the late Corrado and Pauline (Scirpo) LaPira.

Anna worked for Dun and Bradstreet, retiring after 37 years of service. Anna leaves behind her son, Alfred Doner and his wife Kathy of Marlborough and her beloved grandchildren Stacy Ann Tewari and Frank Andrew Doner, as well as many nieces and nephews.

In addition to her parents, Anna was predeceased by her brothers, Paul LaPira and Peter LaPira, and her sisters, Mary Smith and Mildred Dickey.

The family will receive relatives and friends today, April 6, from 9:30-11:30 a.m., followed by an 11:30 a.m. memorial service at the D'Esopo Funeral Chapel, 277 Folly Brook Blvd., Wethersfield. Burial will immediately follow in Mt. St. Benedict Cemetery Bloomfield.

For online expressions of sympathy to the family, visit desopo.com

Marlborough

Dolores L. Firmin

Dolores L. Firmin, 82, of Marlborough, passed away Tuesday, April 3, at Hartford Hospital. Born in Honolulu, Hawaii, May 18, 1935, she was the daughter of the late James and Alma (Blatchley) Bradley.

Dolores graduated from the Robert E. Fitch High School in Groton, where she enjoyed being a majorette for the marching band. She later attended the New London Business College.

Dolores married her beloved husband Warren Aug. 15, 1959. The couple moved to Marlborough where they made their home and raised their family. Dolores worked as an Administrative Assistant in several capacities including the Department of Higher Education, State of Connecticut and the Capital Community College. She retired in July 1997.

Dolores was very involved in her community. While her children were young, she served with the Marlborough PTA and helped with the local Cub Scouts. She also worked on the Hall Park Beach Committee, serving as secretary for a time. Dolores attended the Christ Church in Middle Haddam, where she served as secretary for them as well. She was passionate about sewing, quilting and gardening.

Dolores will be remembered by her family as a woman who never rested from taking care of anything that needed attending to within her community, her home, her church, and most importantly her family.

She will be sadly missed but always remembered with love by her husband, Warren of 59 years; her children and their spouses, Kevin and his wife Cindy Firmin of Maryland, Felise and her husband Greg of Georgia, Sandra and her husband Edward Godbolt of Connecticut; a brother, Clarence Bradley; grandchildren, Michelle Firmin, Tyler and Jordan Peck, Austin and Marielle Godbolt; and numerous extended family and friends.

Calling hours will be held Sunday, April 8, from 3-5 p.m., at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A memorial service will be held Monday, April 9, beginning at 10 a.m., at the funeral home with a memorial service at 10:30 a.m. Burial will follow in the Marlboro Cemetery.

Donations in her memory may be made to the Richmond Memorial Library, 15 School Dr., Marlborough CT 06447.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

