

RIVEREAST

# News Bulletin

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**Wandering Beaver...** Four beavers, believed to be a family, spent about the past year and a half living behind Marlborough Elementary School, before being trapped and killed last month. The deadly trapping sparked backlash from residents on social media. One of the four beavers is seen here last March, as caught on resident Nina Shea's trail cam. See story, additional photos on page 21.

## Teen Vaping Worries Area School Officials

by Elizabeth Regan

Local school administrators had been under the impression nicotine use among students was virtually a thing of the past.

East Hampton Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith said this week that the numbers of students smoking cigarettes has gone down significantly over the course of his decades-long career.

"That's why it's unfortunate to see this coming along," he told the *RiverEast* this week.

He was talking about vaping.

The term refers to the inhalation of flavored vapor through battery-powered devices known as e-cigarettes and vape pens, among other names. They are marketed as a safer alternative to help wean existing smokers off the old-fashioned cigarette habit.

But the National Institute of Health says the vapor may include nicotine and cancer-causing toxins.

And critics say it's becoming increasingly popular among children.

Despite federal prohibitions on the sale of tobacco products to people under 18, a 2018 survey by the National Institute of Health found that roughly 1 in 5 12th grade students reported vaping nicotine at least once in the last 30 days. That's up from 11 percent in the previous year's survey.

Portland High School Principal Kathryn Lawson told a panel of educators, students and

social services employees on the town's *This is Us, Portland* podcast last month that vaping has introduced nicotine addiction to a new generation.

"As I look back across my career in public education, the problem of cigarette use seemed to have been on the decline for many years. It was not cool, it was not acceptable," Lawson said. "And now we seem to have a whole 'nother marketing plan targeted towards kids with these e-cigarette devices."

One of the largest and most well-known vaping manufacturers is JUUL, which produces cartridges that can be charged in a USB port. Critics say their similarity to ubiquitous flash drives makes it difficult for parents to notice their kids are actually carrying a nicotine product.

JUUL spokesman Ted Kwong this week emphasized the company's mission to "provide the world's one billion adults smokers with a true alternative to combustible cigarettes." He said the company shares federal health regulators' goal of preventing young people from using nicotine.

The company's action plan includes stopping the distribution of certain flavored cartridges to retail stores as of Nov. 17, 2018, strengthening the age verification function on its website, eliminating its Facebook and Instagram ac-

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## Andover Mother, Daughter Seek 'Justice'

by Sloan Brewster

After an Andover mother and daughter beseeched him for "justice," a Danielson judge Tuesday denied accelerated rehabilitation to a Brooklyn school administrator who allegedly "manhandled" the daughter and left her alone in a room where she harmed herself.

"Please do not grant Linda Baade accelerated rehabilitation," Emma McBride, 16, pleaded to Judge Jack Fischer. "Please let me have justice."

Linda Baade, 55, of Pomfret, an administrator at The Learning Clinic, a private special education center in Brooklyn, was arrested in September of last year, and charged with risk of injury to a minor and second-degree reckless endangerment.

Baade is currently on administrative leave from the school.

Fischer made the decision to move Baade's case forward Tuesday despite her attorney Paul Chinigo's conviction that she was an appropriate candidate for accelerated rehabilitation (AR) — a pretrial program that would have wiped her record clean.

"I was honestly worried for what the ruling could be but when I heard 'AR denied,' I could've just keeled over and died of happiness," Emma said after the ruling.

With Chinigo's request denied, Baade is next due in court Feb. 14. She has pled not

guilty to both charges, according to the state judicial website. Assistant State's Attorney Mark Stabile said Thursday the risk of injury charge carries a punishment of up to 10 years in prison, and reckless endangerment is punishable by up to six months in prison.

In her statement, Emma, who held her mother's hand while she stood before the judge, said she continues to be affected by the incident, which allegedly took place Oct. 27, 2017 when she attended The Learning Clinic.

It took weeks working with tutors and a social worker before she was able to get back into a classroom, said Emma, who is currently in a special program for students with anxiety at RHAM High School.

"Even with all that support I can only tolerate being at school for two hours every day," she told the court. "I see a trauma therapist every week. I have had to have medication changes, adding extra medications for my anxiety and to help me sleep at night. Ever since this incident with Linda Baade my anxiety has gotten to where I am scared to be home alone."

Bernadette Kasacek, Emma's mother, said in her statement to the court that Emma has autism and severe anxiety and was placed at the Learning Clinic in 2017 by RHAM officials.

"If Linda Baade is allowed to use AR she will have the charges of risk of injury to a mi-

See Seek 'Justice' page 2



**Bernadette Kasacek of Andover comforts her daughter Emma McBride, 16, after they appeared in Danielson Superior Court on Tuesday. The two were there looking for "justice" for a Brooklyn school administrator they say mistreated Emma.**

**Vaping Worries cont. from Front Page**

counts, and developing new technology to further limit youth access and use, according to Kwong.

“We are committed to working with lawmakers, the surgeon general, FDA, state attorneys general, local municipalities, and community organizations as a transparent and responsible partner in this effort,” he said.

The company states on its website that each cartridge is roughly equivalent to one pack of cigarettes in nicotine content. But Kwong said JUUL recently introduced an additional, lower-strength option that reduces the amount of nicotine by 40 percent.

**Raising the Age**

Smith is looking outside the East Hampton school buildings to address what he describes as a serious threat to developing brains.

According to the National Institute of Health, nicotine affects the development of parts of the teen and young adult brain devoted to attention and learning. The institute said nicotine can also lead to addiction, which primes the brain’s reward system for dependence on other drugs.

Smith said he hopes to start a conversation about the possibility of raising the legal age to buy tobacco products – including vaping products – from 18 to 21 within East Hampton’s borders.

He pointed to Hartford, which became the first municipality in the state to take such a step. According to the *Hartford Courant*, the city council voted unanimously to adopt an ordinance specifying the age change last October. The newspaper said at the time that California, Hawaii, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Oregon have enacted similar laws statewide.

The state legislature’s public health committee last year approved a bill to raise the legal age to purchase tobacco products to 21, but the measure was not brought up for a vote in either the Senate or the House.

“I don’t want to drive the local businesses out of business, but at the same time I’m not sure pushing [the legal age to buy] vaping products and tobacco products to 21 would dramatically impact any local business,” Smith said.

Licensing data from the Department of Revenue Services shows nine businesses authorized to sell tobacco products in East Hampton.

Acknowledging that the sale of tobacco products is already illegal to those under 18, Smith said he’s hopeful increasing the legal age will limit the “trickle down” effect on even younger demographics.

He referenced data from a survey of 1,000 12- to 17-year olds conducted by the non-profit tobacco control Truth Initiative organization that said 74 percent of the students said they’d obtained vaping products from a retailer, while 52 percent said they’d gotten them from a friend or family member.

“If [the legal age] is 21, an 18-year-old is probably still going to get their hands on it, but maybe it makes it a little more difficult to trickle down to middle school students or younger,” he said.

Smith said he will bring the idea to the school board at its Jan. 14 meeting. His hope is that the discussion will make it to the Town Council, where members are responsible for voting on ordinance changes.

“My whole intention is to call attention to the issue,” he said.

Kwong, the JUUL spokesman, said the company “strongly” supports raising the legal age

to purchase tobacco products to 21. The company in August 2017 raised the minimum purchase age on its own online retail website from 18 to 21, and this year it pledged “additional decisive action” to support state and federal initiatives to raise the minimum purchase age as part of a \$30 million investment in research, education, and community engagement over three years.

**Vaping in the Bathroom**

Several Portland parents late last year brought concerns about vaping in the school bathrooms to the Board of Education. According to November meeting minutes, three fathers expressed concerns that their children are not comfortable using school lavatories because of the rampant vaping going on inside. The parents’ ideas about how to deal with the problem included adding a school resource officer, an assistant high school principal or assigning additional staff to monitor bathrooms.

Lawson told the *Rivereast* this week that administrators noticed “an emerging problem with e-cigarette use” among students in the middle of the last school year. She said administrators’ heightened vigilance since then has resulted in increased monitoring in the bathrooms as well as throughout the school during “non-structured” times like lunch.

Vaping currently results in a two- to three-day suspension, according to Lawson.

In addition to discipline, Lawson said the school is addressing the problem with a focus on educating students, educating parents and involving the community.

The community element of the four-pronged approach involves taking a close look at where students are getting e-cigarettes. That includes working with law enforcement to ensure local businesses are asking for identification and not allowing one adult in a group of kids to buy multiple e-cigarettes, she said.

In the RHAM school district, which covers Hebron, Andover and Marlborough, a survey last year of 1,423 middle and high school students reinforced the idea that vaping is on the rise.

While 14 percent of students in grades nine through 12 reported vaping in 2016, the number was up to 22 percent in 2018. In middle school, about 4 percent of students reported using e-cigarettes in 2016 compared to 6 percent in 2018. About 73 percent of high school students perceived e-cigarettes as easy to obtain, with 39 percent of middle school students reporting the same perception.

Colchester Superintendent of Schools Jeffrey Burt this week referred to vaping as an “epidemic” among high school students all over the country. He said his own district will assess the local impact through a survey administered in cooperation with the Southeastern Regional Action Council, a drug prevention partnership. A majority of middle and high school students are set to take the survey in the next month or two, with the results expected to be released in the spring.

While the district has implemented vaping education into its curriculum and held events – such as a community workshop for middle school parents and students that was attended by roughly 200 people in November – educators in Colchester hope to learn more about why kids are vaping and where they’re getting the products so they can tailor future programming to the students’ unique needs.

**Seek ‘Justice’ cont. from Front Page**

nor – a felony – and second-degree child endangerment erased from her record. It will be as if it never happened,” she said. “Emma doesn’t get this chance. Emma doesn’t get to have it erased. Emma will carry the trauma caused by Linda Baade’s actions that day with her for life.”

Kasacek said she never sent her daughter back to the Brooklyn school.

“She needs me to tuck her in every day,” Kasacek said. “She has nightmares that she’s dead, nightmares that she’s being chased through the woods at [The Learning Clinic].”

Sometimes when she is at RHAM, Emma has to call her mother and one time when the school called, Kasacek said she could hear her child “wailing” in the background.

“I beseech you, your honor, please do not grant Linda Baade accelerated rehabilitation,” Kasacek implored the judge.

In court Tuesday, Stabile, who argued that Baade’s alleged crime was too serious for the program, described The Learning Clinic as a multi-building school on a rural property.

On Oct. 27, 2017, while getting ready for a Halloween party at the school, Emma “was having issues and was left unsupervised for quite some time,” Stabile said. He went on to say that the girl, who “was capable of self-harm,” was also allowed to wander outside on the wooded property, where there were hunters and where everyone else wore orange vests.

There are two different incidents captured on school video surveillance, in which Baade “manhandled the victim, who is of slight build,” Stabile said. In one, he said, the administrator grabbed and pushed her into an office. In another, he said, when Emma was sitting on the floor outside the office, the administrator used her feet to slide the seated girl back into the room – which locked from the inside – and closed the door, leaving the girl alone.

“It’s not even clear why she has to be inside the office,” Stabile said. “Additionally, I’m quite taken aback when I see this video.”

Stabile said the girl could be seen crying in the video.

In an interview with the *Rivereast* after the court hearing, Emma said she was put in the room because she was having a panic attack over her grades.

“I remember just being shoved into the room,” she said.

When she got there, she said, she pushed things over and broke the tip of a mechanical pencil, using the sharp edge to cut herself, scratching the words “Help me” into the skin on her forearm. She said she then went out of the room and attempted to show the cuts to Baade, which is when she was allegedly pushed.

Emma also said she thought about harming herself even more, and brought the broken edge of the pencil to her neck and considered making a deep cut.

“I pushed the pencil against the jugular vein,” she said. “I wanted to die in those moments.”

Her trips outside the building were also about causing herself harm, the girl said. Knowing there were hunters around and that everyone was supposed to wear an orange vest if they went outside, she snuck out when no one was

watching.

“I was planning on going to the forest to get shot,” she said.

When school was dismissed, Emma was able to leave the building, get on the bus and go home. She was concerned her mother would be mad at her because at one point during the incident, she had snapped her glasses, a measure she took because she said she felt like she was not being heard.

Kasacek said when Emma came home that day, she was “really, really sad.”

“She looked like she was crying,” Kasacek said. “She climbed on my lap. I was like, ‘What’s going on?’”

Kasacek said she checked her email and saw something from Baade, which stated that while Emma had a good morning she became “dysregulated” after lunch, had broken her glasses and there were some scratches on her arm.

Kasacek asked Emma to show her the cuts. “You could clearly see that she had etched the words ‘help me’ in her left forearm,” she said. “She had never done anything like that before.”

Right then, according to the mother, she replied to Baade’s email.

“I said, ‘Some scratches?’” she recalled. “My daughter has the words help me scratched into her arm. Maybe somebody wants to explain this.”

After hearing Emma’s story, Kasacek reported the incident to the Department of Children and Families [DCF].

Chinigo, in his statement to the judge, said Baade cooperated with DCF and that the agency had reported her cooperation.

“[DCF staff] have watched the entire video and they were more concerned with the self-harm aspect,” he said.

Still, Chinigo, said “there was no blood” and called the wounds “superficial.”

Emma came out of the room in the end and apologized to Baade and Baade did the same and “wishes she had handled it better,” the attorney said.

“[Baade] certainly regrets some of the way she handled it,” he said. “She certainly understands a mother being concerned about her child.”

Also at court Tuesday was Salem resident Tandy Acuna, whose son A.J. Acuna, 20, attended the school between the ages of 14 and 16.

“We are supportive of Emma and very happy with the results,” she said after the hearing.

Acuna said her son had actually organized a group of students to show up at Baade’s first court appearance in October to offer support to Emma and show “they believe her.”

In a statement Thursday, The Learning Clinic said, “The safety and success of our students are always our highest priorities.” It added, “We cannot comment on this case, and will trust the legal process.”

Kasacek said Thursday she hopes Baade’s case “continues to go forward and results in a positive outcome for my daughter.”

“I want to make sure that there is not another Emma at that school,” she said.

# Hebron Public Works Foreman Calls It a Day

by Sloan Brewster

After 25 years, William Standish has retired. Standish, who was foreman for the Public Works Department, worked his final day last Friday. He worked under Town Manager Andrew Tierney when Tierney headed Public Works.

“He’s been here longer than I,” Tierney said. “I’ve been here 23 years and he’s worked for me all those years. . . . He’s dedicated, honest and always available. All around good employee, he’s going to be missed.”

Tierney described Standish as knowledgeable and said in his role as foreman he ran the day to day operations, including overseeing the crew during snowstorms.

“He knew the town; all the nooks and crannies,” Tierney said. “He was a very valuable employee, very dedicated and loyal.”

Standish, 66, said he will likely do part-time work – but confessed he’s had his fill of snowplowing.

“I just don’t want to plow snow anymore,” he said. “I don’t want to get up in the middle of the night. . . . When you do snow work, you get burned out.”

Standish said he’s been plowing snow since he was 15 years old. Back then, he recalled, he didn’t have his driver’s license so he used to ride in the back of a dump truck shoveling snow into a chute as the plow picked it up.

“It was permissible back then, and I used to ride in the back of the dump truck,” he said.

A Colchester resident, Standish worked for Public Works in that town for 10 years before coming to Hebron. He’s happy he made the change.

“It’s been a great 25 years,” he said. “I’m going to miss working for the municipality.”

One thing Standish said he enjoyed was the hours in the summer, when he would get out by 2:30 p.m. and go home and work on the family farm.

He grew up on the farm and took it over after his parents passed away. Over the years, he has raised Hereford beef cattle, chickens and goats.

Standish also rides horses and has always had them. Currently, he has four and his son, Jeffrey, who’s building a house behind his, has three.

Standish has six grandchildren, who also ride.

A few years ago, Standish said, he and his son started growing hops and selling it to local breweries, including Fox Farm Brewery in Salem. He said he and his son are thinking about putting in a couple more acres of the grain.

Now that he has some time off, Standish said he is planning to go snowmobiling in Maine with his son. When the *Rivereast* talked to him on Tuesday, he was packing for the trip, which he said would begin the following day.

Public Works Director Kevin Kelly, who’s been Standish’s supervisor for the past six years, called Standish “probably the hardest worker I’ve ever known – just always going the extra

mile and always energetic.”

Kelly said Darren Norton, who has worked for the department for 12 years, is taking on the foreman role.

“He’s a good, hard worker and we are very optimistic that he’s going to succeed in his new venture here,” Kelly said, and added, “he knows he’s got big shoes to fill.”

Norton, who started his new position Monday, was amused by that comment.

“Big shoes? He’s an old goat,” he quipped about Standish.

Joking aside, Norton said Standish’s absence had already been noticed.

“He’s sadly missed,” he said. “He worked with the guys for 25 years, day in and day out. One day he’s here, the next day he’s not.”

Norton, who was crew leader before becoming foreman, said he knows what’s expected of him and has been working closely with the guys.

“It’s a good crew,” he said.

With snow in the forecast for the next morning, on Monday Norton was organizing plans to clear the roads and said the crew would start working at 4 a.m. Tuesday.

Standish will be honored for his service by the Board of Selectmen at its Jan. 17 meeting.

\* \* \*

While Standish is leaving, the town Parks and Recreation Department has a new hire.

Erica Santos started as the department’s

program supervisor on January 2.

Santos has a background in recreation. She worked in Manchester’s recreation department for 10 years and was in Windham’s before that for five years.

Santos said Wednesday her first week on the job in Hebron was “excellent.” So far, she has been getting to know co-workers, residents, parents, and the Parks & Recreation Enrichment Program [PREP], which she oversees.

Santos said PREP will be her “baby” and she is planning to start making some improvements to the program, including changing the structure and bringing in more games and activities. Children from kindergarten to sixth grade from Gilead Hill and Hebron Elementary schools attend the program, which runs in the mornings before school and in afternoons after school. They do sports, games, arts and crafts, go on field trips on half days and vacation days and get help with their homework.

Santos said she has ideas on adding different field trips, including going ice skating and visiting zoos, aquariums or science centers.

Parks and Recreation Director Richard Calarco said he was fortunate to get Santos in the position.

“She has a lot of experience working for a town and we’re very pleased with what she’s working on and very impressed with what she’s done so far,” he said.

## PHS Students Learning the Art of Podcasts

by Elizabeth Regan

Junior Adrian Reyes and sophomore Sage Watrous each pulled a pair of Sennheiser headphones over their ears as they sat down in front of professional recording microphones in the new podcast studio at Portland High School early this week.

Their producer, grade nine student Trevor Tewksbury, queued up Ariana Grande’s “Thank You, Next” as the intro song for the trio’s podcast on celebrity gossip.

Town Tech Educational Partnership founder and coordinator Dave Kuzminski nodded to the group.

“That’s our intro. We’re going live,” he said.

Adrian began the show in a whisper. It was a nod to Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response, a phenomenon popularized on YouTube that uses relaxing cues like whispering, tapping or slow movements to trigger “brain tingles” in viewers.

“ASMR is becoming a viral trend,” Adrian said in a hushed tone. “I don’t know if you’ve ever felt tingles when someone whispers in your ear, but it’s basically like that.”

From there, Adrian and Sage dished about celebrity “beefs” – like when Bhad Bhabie threw a drink in Iggy Azalea’s face or when Cardi B tossed a shoe at Nicki Minaj – and how Rihanna is teasing desperate fans with hints about the release of her first album in three years.

The studio session was part of the class’s unit on podcasts. By the end of the semester, each group of 3 to 4 students will record an episode of their own unique podcast. Other topics students are exploring include American cults and Trump haters vs. Trump supporters.

The Town Tech Partnership was started by Kuzminski more than 25 years ago as a venture between the town hall and school district to give students real world experience in technology. Students through the years have created annual reports for the town, digitized assessor’s maps, hosted websites for local businesses and organizations, and made promo-

tional videos.

The current high school class brings together students from all four grades. Kuzminski is joined by art teacher Stuart Noelte and assisted by Kevin Armstrong, the town’s assistant technology coordinator.

The podcast studio is the partnership’s latest technological advancement.

Podcasts are like radio programs, but they’re available online and they can be accessed at any time on a computer, smartphone or tablet. Podcasts are making it easier for people to communicate their messages across the social network through the spoken word in much the same way blogs helped people gain a following through writing.

“The way social media is working now, blogs are becoming passé and everybody’s doing a podcast,” Kuzminski said. “It’s just kind of where the trend is going.”

The podcast studio, which is nestled in between a conference area and a small photo studio, contains about \$5,000 of equipment. Some of it, like the set of \$500 microphones, was funded by proceeds from 25 websites the students host and maintain. The headphones were donated by Michael Cleary, the father of a student and a member of the popular, eponymous local band. The soundboard is on loan from Kuzminski, who runs his own music shop in town.

Students develop their own storyboards as they lay out intro music, topics of discussion, sponsor mentions and outro music. Then they learn the technical aspects of turning their ideas into a crisp, well-produced episode.

Sage said recording is the easy part. And when it goes smoothly, it makes editing easier, too.

“It’s kind of just sitting down and having a conversation,” he said. “If the partner that you’re working with is good at making conversation, it makes it a lot easier to edit down. There’s a lot less breaks and pauses that you have to cut out.”

Senior Devon Wilson chose to examine atti-



Sophomore Christopher Vargas sits in the producer’s chair in the new podcast studio at Portland High School. Students in the Town Tech Educational Partnership class are learning the process of producing a podcast all the way from storyboard to soundboard. Photo credit: Trevor Tewksbury

tudes toward the current president in his podcast with sophomore Christopher Vargas.

“We had a debate about Donald Trump,” Devon said. “He totally despises Donald Trump and I like Donald Trump.”

His podcast partner objected to the characterization, emphasizing he does not “despise” the president.

Devon explained his motivation in choosing the subject matter was to get a reaction from guests and from listeners.

“I just like to bait people and talk trash and piss them off,” he said. “That’s one thing that pisses a lot of people off.”

Kuzminski described the pair’s test recording as a “spirited debate.”

Businesses, groups or individuals who want to put out their own podcast can pay for session time in the new studio, according to Kuzminski. He said the proceeds will benefit the Town Tech Educational Partnership program.

The studio last month hosted an episode of the town *This Is Us, Portland* podcast devoted to the topic of vaping, which included several Town Tech students as guests.

“We’re trying to keep up with the trends,” Kuzminski said.

# Water Progress Too Slow for Belltown's Liking

by Elizabeth Regan

A proposal to bring water to East Hampton through Portland is not moving fast enough for Town Manager Michael Maniscalco.

The initial phase of the plan, which was first proposed by Maniscalco in August with an estimated price tag of \$32 million, would create a pipeline along Route 66 from Grove Street in Portland to the current East Hampton Town Hall so water from the quasi-public Metropolitan District Commission water utility could flow from Quarry Town into Belltown.

But Maniscalco this week informed members of the town council he is exploring other options now that Portland First Selectman Susan Bransfield said she wants to commission a study to investigate the impact of the partnership on her town as well as the wider Route 66 corridor.

Maniscalco said he is in discussion with Aquarion Water Company and Connecticut Water Company about constructing and operating a town-wide water system. Eversource Energy in 2017 acquired Aquarion for \$1.68 billion.

Conversations with the water companies so far have revolved around building out the Oakum Dock wellfield in Cobalt and "cobbling together" smaller wells around town in order to create a water system that can deliver enough water to satisfy demand, according to Maniscalco. He said they've also talked about looking for new water sources.

A 2017 study and a 2018 update by the Tighe and Bond engineering firm – as well as the Water Development Task Force charged with making its own recommendation – all called for the town to consider putting the dormant Oakum Dock wellfield to use or piping in water from MDC.

East Hampton Water Pollution Control Authority chairman and environmental engineer Mark Barmasse said last spring that even with the relatively large yield from the Oakum Dock wellfield, it's "not enough" to supply the desired service area.

"You'd either have to get additional water from MDC through Portland, get it in Middletown or find a new wellfield," he said at the time.

Public utilities administrator Tim Smith said a full build-out of the Oakum Dock wells could serve 3,710 households.

The move to engage other private water companies in discussion is the latest in an effort going back 50 years to bring a reliable public water supply to town. Officials say three small, town-operated water systems currently in use have not gone far enough in solving water concerns that have disrupted the lives of residents

and hindered economic development throughout town.

"We've refocused our efforts at securing an appropriate provider of water for the town of East Hampton," Maniscalco told councilors. "We've already done a number of studies and, really, we're in a situation where we need a solution."

Bransfield this week agreed that East Hampton has done its own research.

"East Hampton did a study, and I presume they did the study based on their needs," she said. "But we need to be careful. We want to make sure that, as things proceed, they're done for the benefit of our community and, I would say, all our communities."

Bransfield said decisions about issues as critical as access to water must be made with all available information at hand and everyone's interest in mind.

"I just can't stress how important this is," she said.

The 2017 report estimated it would cost roughly \$81 million to fully outfit a new water system to bring MDC into East Hampton.

It would cost roughly the same amount if East Hampton instead decided to construct a water system around the two high-yielding wells on Oakum Dock Road, according to the report.

Voters in 2007 rejected a \$28 million proposal to build out the Oakum Dock wellfield in order to bring water to 490 homes and businesses in the Village Center.

Maniscalco told the *Riverast* this week he is hopeful the state legislature will authorize \$40 million in bond funding that's already been endorsed by the state Department of Health. He's also requested an \$80 million long-term, below-market-rate loan through the state.

The \$40 million in bond funding would be used to pay half of the loan, he said; The remainder of the loan would then be paid off by "whatever water company" is chosen to serve the town.

All bond funding must be approved by the state legislature's Bond Commission, according to Department of Public Health spokesman Maura Downes. She said the commission's chairman, newly-elected Gov. Ned Lamont, sets the agenda and decides which projects will be brought up for consideration.

"We do not know, now that there has been a change in administrations, if it will move forward," she said of East Hampton's funding request.

Bransfield emphasized she remains unclear how the water system project would be paid for and how Portland residents, including ex-

isting water customers, would be affected.

A letter to state Department of Public Health Commissioner Raul Pino from Bransfield outlined those concerns.

"We have a responsibility to ensure that this decision is made with the best interests of our citizens in mind, despite the immediate need of a neighboring community. We believe an in-depth study would accomplish this goal," Bransfield wrote.

Bransfield emphasized the importance of looking at the issue from a regional perspective in order to save money, maximize state investment and promote economic development along the Route 66 corridor from Portland through Hebron.

As part of her request for a grant or loan to fund the study, Bransfield said she scheduled a meeting later this month with the state public health department commissioner to take a long-term look at water infrastructure in the area. She said various local, regional and state officials will be asked to attend.

The invitation list for the meeting tentatively includes staff from the state health department, state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, MDC, Connecticut Water Company, Chatham Health District, the regional council of governments and the towns of Portland, East Hampton, Marlborough and Hebron.

"I think it's important that anything done in terms of a water extension or water improvements is done with the recognition we need to share resources and be very careful how resources are allocated," Bransfield said.

## The MDC Effect

Bringing MDC into East Hampton would require Portland to sign on as a "non-member" town, which means customers would pay MDC directly. That's because the company must own the utilities that will be used to transport the water to East Hampton.

Portland's 2,400 water customers currently pay the town for services. The town in turn buys water from MDC to supplement its well on Glastonbury Turnpike. Spurred at least in part by a 13 percent increase in the cost of water from MDC this year, Portland selectmen recently approved a 3-percent rate increase in January and another 3-percent increase in July.

East Hampton can choose to become an MDC non-member town or can retain control of its own water system by buying water from the utility company.

MDC charges customers in non-member towns for drinking water based upon monthly consumption, as well as monthly customer service, non-member town fees and capital im-

provement surcharge fees.

A document prepared for Bransfield by MDC based on 2018 rates shows an average single-family property owner would pay about \$12 more per month as an MDC customer than as a customer of the town.

Certain types of businesses would see a decrease in their rates, according to the document.

In addition to the impact on water customers in Portland, Bransfield also remains concerned about who would take care of the debt the town has on its books if MDC takes over and how MDC will address the need for improvements to the town's aging water infrastructure.

But according to Maniscalco, those are issues that could be addressed if Portland was willing to engage in conversations with MDC.

"I don't think they've been willing to step up to the table and negotiate," he said.

Maniscalco on Tuesday told councilors the relationship between Portland officials and MDC is "a little difficult."

"At least in my conversations with MDC, they've proposed being willing to pay off large amounts of debt for Portland in an effort to try to make something happen. I don't know if they just can't get to the table or what's going on between them," he said.

When Maniscalco's statement about the allegedly "difficult" relationship between MDC and Portland was brought to Bransfield's attention the next day, she called the allegation unfair.

"We have a healthy relationship with MDC," she said. "We've been a customer of theirs since 1996. I'm surprised that comment would be made."

She said she has heard nothing from MDC about paying off any of the town's debt.

MDC spokesman Kerry Martin said Thursday "there has been no detailed discussion of any project funding."

She described CEO Scott Jellison as unaware that Maniscalco was meeting with Aquarion or Connecticut Water.

It would be great if MDC can work with Portland and East Hampton to help the situation, she added - but "if that doesn't work out, it doesn't work out."

Town Council Chairman Melissa Engel on Tuesday night closed the council's discussion on the matter with characteristic bluntness.

"I guess the good news for us is that we're not held hostage by Portland," she said. "What's interesting is there are some other companies that are willing to talk to us. It's too bad we couldn't do a regional partnership, but if we can't, oh well. We've got to move on."

## Man Transported by Life Star in Colchester

Colchester Police said a Torrington man was airlifted to Hartford Hospital last week with non-life threatening injuries after his vehicle collided with a tree and telephone pole.

At approximately 8:11 p.m. Jan. 4, police said a Nissan driven by Thomas Cabral III, 28, of 171 Beechwood Ave., Torrington, was traveling in the area of 174 New London Rd. when the vehicle struck a tree and rolled over on its roof. The Nissan subsequently struck a telephone pole before landing back on three wheels.

Police said Cabral was initially found unresponsive in the backseat, but as the Colchester Fire Department was extricating him from the vehicle he regained consciousness.

Cabral was transported by the fire department to the Lake Hayward Commuter Lot where he was then transported by Life Star to Hartford Hospital to be treated for minor injuries, police said.

A portion of the road in the area of 174 New London Rd. was closed for almost an hour, the fire department said.

# Beaver Trapping Sparks Backlash in Marlborough

by Allison Lazur

Four beavers residing in a vernal pool behind Marlborough Elementary School were trapped and killed in early December, after a number of felled trees, areas of flooding and possible contamination of the public water supply led the town to bring in a volunteer state licensed trapper as a solution to the problem.

However, residents expressed outrage over the deadly trapping on a community Facebook page last weekend, after resident Emily Walker inquired about the rodents.

Walker this week lamented the beavers' deaths, saying that across the country a movement is afoot to "decriminalize the beaver."

According to Nature Trails and Sidewalks Commission member Louise Concodello, the beavers have been an issue behind the school since the summer of 2017 – but significant damage was most evident this past summer.

Concodello said the commission's last discussion of the beaver damage was in October, after a trail walk revealed trees that had fallen across the trail behind the school.

She said the commission asked Town Planner Peter Hughes to inspect the damage, which was the last action taken by the commission.

Minutes from the Nov. 28 Nature Trails and Sidewalks Commission meeting show the beaver damage discussion was tabled.

When the *Rivereast* reached out to Walker for comment, she acknowledged the town faces "challenges" when "balancing the needs of the community and our environment with the concerns regarding available funding." However, she, along with a number of other residents, questioned whether alternatives were explored that would've kept the beavers alive.

Resident Jeri Taylor said Monday she understands beavers can be "destructive," but like Walker, emphasized there were other low- to no-cost options.

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) website states trapping should occur "in situations when the presence of beavers cannot be tolerated or the landowner wishes to control the number of beavers on his property."

Trapping can only occur from Dec. 1 to March 31. Outside of the trapping season, an authorization must be obtained from the state's wildlife division.

"The season dates are established to harvest beavers at a time of the year when the fur is of greatest value, thus managing the population as a renewable natural resource," DEEP states.

The website adds live trapping is not a "viable option," as relocated beavers continue to cause issues at a new site, or return to the prior site.

First Selectman Amy Traversa said this week the decision on how to remedy the beaver situation was not up to her, but "whenever possible I would seek to relocate any animal."



**Damage to 20 to 40 trees behind Marlborough Elementary School by four beavers led the town to make the decision to bring in a nuisance wildlife control officer to exterminate the four rodents. Residents took to Facebook last weekend to express their concerns over the deadly decision – and question whether alternatives that would've kept the beavers alive were considered.**

"We call in a nuisance wildlife control officer and it's up to them on how to deal with the situation that complies with state statutes," Traversa said.

She said because of the beavers, she was also concerned with the possible contamination of the town's public water supply by giardia parasites, which are sometimes found on dogs, cats and wild animals, including beavers, and can, according to the Mayo Clinic, lead to giardiasis, which causes intestinal problems in humans.

Traversa said bacteria from the ponds that feed the aquifers could potentially contaminate the town center public water supply.

When the decision is made to trap, there are two options.

Former beaver trapper-turned-independent consultant Skip Hiliker told the *Rivereast* Wednesday there are two types of traps that might be used – a leghold trap and Conibear trap. He said both traps are submerged underwater and kill the beaver.

In addition to trapping, DEEP outlines other options for dealing with beaver-related issues.

Trees and shrubs that have potential to be cut by beavers can be wrapped with "heavy-gauge fencing," DEEP states, adding, "Chicken wire will not deter the powerful chewing of beavers."

Public Works Director John Jones said wrapping the trees was "impractical" because of the

safety risk.

"The dangers of trying to wrap the trees far outweigh anything else; you don't want anyone to get stuck out there," he said.

For flooding issues caused by dams that plug culverts, DEEP recommends "exclusion fencing" which involves "staking a strong woven wire fence" 10 to 15 feet in front of the culvert, which "physically prevents the beavers from accessing and plugging the culvert. Ideally, the beavers build a new dam against the fence and the culvert remains open, draining water that spills over and through the fence and beaver dam."

DEEP also said people could place a device in a beaver dam to drain water, and can also breach the dam – though both solutions can still lead to flooding.

Ultimately, because beavers have little in the way of natural predators to control the population, DEEP states the annual trapping of beavers helps control population growth and maintain balance between humans and beavers.

But Walker argued the beaver has been discovered to have a positive impact on the country, referencing an NPR article which addresses the benefits of beaver dams including an improvement in water quality, trapping and storing carbon and storing ground water in dry climates.

"There's a whole push across the U.S. to decriminalize the beaver," Walker said. "There's



such a bad image even wildlife officials have to be reeducated. [Traversa] had a nuisance wildlife officer give the opinion a nuisance wildlife officer would give."

Neither Jones nor Traversa would provide the name of the trapper that was charged with the extermination of the beavers, but Jones did say the town had used him before.

He said in the past beavers were trapped on North Main Street and a number of times on Flood Road before the rodents caused "unbelievable devastation" to 20 to 40 trees behind the elementary school.

Principal Dan White said teachers at Marlborough Elementary utilize the trails behind the school for nature walks, but were advised not to because of the damage.

"We did ask that teachers not take students out on the trails as there were a number of trees that were teetering precariously," White said.

The trees posing a safety risk were cut down a couple weeks ago, White said.

Jones said currently there is flooding on South Stony Brook Drive caused by a beaver dam. However, the property is private and the town would need the owner's permission before trapping the beavers.

Jones said the property owners have not been contacted yet.

"It isn't bad yet, so we're not that concerned about [the flooding], but it will get worse," he said.

# Rand Vows to Appeal Marlborough Zoning Denial

by Allison Lazur

A Route 66 gas station and convenience store proposal has been halted by the Zoning Commission after the board unanimously denied a special permit application last Thursday.

The project has been criticized since the summer by residents on the nearby Forest Homes well system, who fear a gas station could potentially contaminate their wells and nearby Lyman Brook.

The project is a venture of prominent local developer Wayne Rand.

But Rand says this isn't the end of the project proposed for the 1.5 acre parcel at 37 Hebron Rd.

He said Wednesday in an email to the *Rivereast* that appealing the zoning board's decision to the state superior court is a "definite yes."

Rand said his engineering team "did a great job" on the site design, citing the project's unanimous approval in October by the town Conservation Commission as evidence of the well-vetted project.

A motion of denial drafted by Town Planner

Peter Hughes listed the reasons behind the decision, which included the proximity of the gas station to the Forest Homes well system.

The motion states the commission finds the parcel use "does not provide adequate protection to this public water system."

Safety concerns surrounding the site's single driveway was another reason for denial.

The commission also stated a property survey conducted by a state licensed land surveyor was not submitted and that the application lacked necessary local and state public health approvals as well as required information regarding inspections and maintenance.

The decision was a departure from the Oct. 15 decision by Conservation Commission members to approve the application with provisions such as three years of water testing of the Lyman Brook and adherence to the state's best management practices for gas stations.

Residents at the following meeting of the Conservation Commission requested a reconsideration of the approval, but were informed

by Chairman Yvonne Bolton such an action would not be possible.

The town's Plan of Conservation and Development states the commission must "review activities within 150 feet of wetlands and 200 feet from major watercourses and their associated wetlands."

The proposal meets both of those conditions.

At the Zoning Commission public hearing last month, project engineer Robert Baltramaitis outlined details including safeguards such as catch basins, a secondary containment around each pump's fill port to protect against overfilling, and double-walled tanks and pipelines with alarm systems to indicate any sort of leak.

However, over a dozen residents pleaded with the Zoning Commission to deny the proposal for reasons surrounding traffic, crime, contamination of the well system, and overall community safety.

The Zoning Commission closed the public hearing after speaking out against the proposal for a number of reasons that aligned with resi-

dents' concerns.

Rand said he wishes the public hearing was continued in order to give him an opportunity to address concerns voiced by residents and commissioners. Instead, he said the hearing was "closed abruptly."

When asked about the denial, Zoning Commission member Mark Merritt referenced two letters from Connecticut Water Company he said impacted the commission's decision to vote against the project.

Connecticut Water Company – the owner of the Forest Homes well system – submitted the letters in opposition of the proposal, stating the gas station "poses an unreasonable risk to the wells."

Resident Shawn DeFelice, one of many neighbors against the proposal, said Wednesday he was happy with the outcome – but acknowledged there is likely more to come.

"I think [Rand] is going to spend enough money until he can get [the gas station] in there."

# Architecture Firm Chosen for Andover School Wing Conversion

by Sloan Brewster

The Board of Education has chosen an architectural firm to repurpose the third- and fourth-grade wing of Andover Elementary School for use as a community center.

On Wednesday, Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen introduced William Silver, architect and principal at Hamden-based Silver/Petrucci and Associates, and Amanda Cleveland, the firm's lead interior designer, to the boards of selectmen and education.

Silver is already familiar with the building, having completed a roof replacement project, Doyen told the boards, with whom she met at their back-to-back meetings.

The education board approved a motion to recommend that selectmen hire the firm. Selectmen, however, decided to wait before doing so to find out from the Board of Finance exactly which line item the \$9,500 architectural fee would come from in the town budget.

Both boards decided to hold off on signing a memorandum of understanding while the wording is tweaked to answer a few detail questions, including defining the exact use of the space.

"It's really up to the town to really define what that program is going to be," Shannon Loudon, Board of Education chairman, said. "To my mind, that was the biggest lacking [in the memorandum of understanding]."

In the meantime, Silver told the boards he would be paying attention to folks who speak next Thursday at a public hearing, when residents will have an opportunity to offer input into how the space will be used.

"How do people perceive the space being used?" he said. "We will size the spaces based on the feedback."

One question to be answered is how the firm will set up the fire separation and secondary egress between the two sections of the building, Silver said. He suggested to the education board that linking the community center to an egress at the school via an emergency lever was one way to keep costs down and change the architecture as little as possible.

Seniors would pull down the lever to gain access to the exit only in an emergency, he said.

Vice First Selectmen Jeff Maguire, who chaired the selectmen's meeting in the absence of First Selectman Robert Burbank, told Silver of the need to keep the changes to a minimum as in the future the wing could be changed back to school space.

"We can do some great interior decorating," Maguire said. "We're not trying to tear the interior of this building down and rebuild it."

The town has proposed for the wing at the school to be converted into a community center, in light of the Board of Selectmen's decision last year to ban the use of the Old Firehouse on Center Street, which was previously used as a meeting space for seniors and other members of the community. In October, selectmen officially closed down the firehouse after air quality tests confirmed what folks around town have said they have known for decades – it is infested with mold.

The education board offered the wing, which is largely vacant due to declining enrollment, and selectmen gave Doyen the go-ahead to move forward with getting architectural drawings for repurposing it.

The public hearing will take place next Thursday at 7 p.m. in the school gym.

## East Hampton Police News

1/4: State Police said Shawn W. Barrows, 23, of 41 Golden St., Norwich, was arrested and charged with second-degree breach of peace and third-degree assault.

## Portland Police News

12/27: Todd Wallace, 53, whose last known address was 69 Gillette St., Hartford, was charged with sixth-degree larceny, second-degree forgery, criminal impersonation and identity theft, Portland Police said.

## Marlborough Police News

1/4: State Police said Shawn W. Barrows, 23, of 41 Golden St., Norwich, was arrested and charged with second-degree breach of peace and third-degree assault.

## Former Marlborough Candidate Arrested

Rob Barstow, 23, of 9 Hemlock Dr. who last year ran as a Green Party candidate for the 55th Assembly District seat, was arrested and charged with sixth-degree larceny on Dec. 28.

Barstow, an employee of the Dunkin' Donuts at 164 Linwood Ave. in Colchester, was allegedly placing money received from doughnut and coffee orders directly in his tip jar and subsequently canceling the orders, police said.

Barstow did not return a request for comment from the *Rivereast*.

## Andover Police News

1/1: State Police said Katelyn S. Michaud, 23, of 33 Jordan Rd., Willimantic was arrested and charged with drug paraphernalia, possession of one-half ounce of cannabis and conspiracy.

## Hebron Police News

12/26: Colchester Police said Kathleen L. Jorinscay, 37, of 162 Wall St., Apt. A2, was arrested and charged with DUI and failure to display lights.

## One Injured in Two-Car Crash in Colchester

State Police a two-vehicle collision Monday evening left one woman with minor injuries.

At approximately 6:01 p.m. Jan. 7, a Honda CR-V driven by Jill M. Vanwey, 49, of 65 Comstock Trail, East Hampton, was traveling eastbound on Route 16 through the intersection with Route 149, and had a green light, police said.

A Subaru Crosstrek driven by a 17-year-

old East Haddam female was traveling westbound on Route 16 attempting to turn left onto Route 149, police said.

According to police, the Subaru turned left in front of the Honda and the vehicle's collided head-on in the intersection.

Vanwey was transported by the Colchester Fire Department to Middlesex Hospital Marlborough Medical Center with minor injuries, police said.

## Single-Vehicle Collision, Woman Injured in Andover

State Police said a vehicle's collision with a guardrail left one woman with suspected minor injuries.

At approximately 8:50 p.m. on Jan. 4, a Jeep Renegade driven by Lori Edberg, 55, of 68 Bear Swamp Rd., was traveling westbound

on Route 6 near the intersection with Route 87 when the vehicle traveled off the left side of the road, striking a guardrail.

Edberg was transported by Andover Fire Department to Windham Hospital for suspected minor injuries.

*From the Editor's Desk*

## Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

A very belated happy new year to you all. I took last week off from writing my column, but I'm back now. I hope you all had a nice close to 2018, and that your year is off to a great start. At the very least, I hope it's a less rancorous one than the one we just endured.

I was reminded of this on New Year's Eve. A friend of mine shared with me that, earlier that day he'd been at a coffee shop, getting his morning brew, when the man ahead of him in line said to the woman behind the counter making his coffee, "Happy new year!"

"Happy new year!" the woman replied. "See, I know I can say that, and it's not gonna offend anyone," the man said. "Cause everyone celebrates the same New Year's Day."

Ah yes. Nothing closes out the year on a positive note like bringing up the "War on Christmas," which was never a thing until Fox News demanded that people be offended when others wish them "happy holidays." Nevermind the fact that the word "holiday" literally comes from "holy day." Nevermind the fact that there's frequently more than one religious holiday celebrated around Dec. 25. No no no....let's be offended by it. Let's be offended by someone wishing you seasonal cheer, hoping that your holiday season – no matter what it may be – is a pleasant one.

Being miffed because someone has the gall to wish you "happy holidays" – or "Merry Christmas" for that matter – is just stupid. Accept the greeting in the spirit in which it was given, say "thank you" or "you too" or something like that, and move on. Ninety-nine percent of the time there is no hidden agenda. Nobody's out to offend or belittle you. It's wishing you well. Imagine that.

\* \* \*

You may spot on the "Reader Forum" pages this week a very wise letter to the editor by Dan Hatch in Colchester. Hatch says he was hoping for "a little more civility to political discussions" in the letters pages. I must say I agree. As you may have surmised from this column over the years, I love a good political discussion – but I must say the constant insults and name-calling among a few people in these pages gets to wear on me after a while.

I know for a fact, not just from monitoring these letters pages for the past several years but also from seeing discourse – or what passes for it – on the internet, that if you just personally attack the person you disagree with, you're never going to win them over to

your side. You're just going to make them angry.

Dan also touches on something that's been irking me for a while, when he writes, "Conservatives have no business making assumptions about the intelligence level of liberals, nor should liberals make gross assumptions about those whose views are more conservative." I agree 100 percent. In fact, as a liberal, it always bugs me when I see a letter from a conservative explaining – usually quite dismissively and, frankly, incorrectly – what liberals supposedly believe. If you're not a liberal, I don't think you can say what they believe. Ditto for liberals who do the same thing for conservatives.

When you do this, not only are you starting from an ill-informed base (for example: I'm not conservative, I've never been a conservative, and while I certainly know many of them, I'm not going to sit here and pretend I can get in their heads), but you're also painting with too broad a brush. You're assuming that all liberals must think alike, or that all conservatives must think alike. I can assure you that's not the case.

Everybody is unique; very few people subscribe to the exact same set of beliefs on everything. For example again: while I identify as a liberal, there are some things some liberals do that drive me up the wall, and some beliefs that I hold that, if they were known, might very well cost me my liberal membership card. We all have brains, and all can think for ourselves. Assuming that we don't – that we just go along with whatever the liberal or conservative line might be – is insulting, and isn't productive.

Maybe insults are what the letter-writers want. Maybe they just want to snipe at each other, call each other things like "Mr. Ed" and say they should seek therapy, and not really try to bring the other person into their line of thinking. And if that's all they want, then fine. But I think we can be better than this.

"We are mostly decent people, caring for our country, with differing views as to how to make America live up to its promise," Dan writes. "It should be possible to present your point of view without attacking someone who disagrees with you."

Again: I agree 100 percent. I believe the intentions of the letter-writers are good. And a lot of times, they have good things to say. But let's leave the insults behind.

\* \* \*

See you next week.

## Colchester Police News

12/30: Colchester Police said Lynne Spencer, 54, of 51 Settlers Ln., was arrested and charged with evading responsibility injury/property damage, DUI and failure to drive in proper lane.

1/3: State Police said Max Whitehead, 33, of 415 Round Hill Rd., Salem, was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear, possession of greater than half an ounce of cannabis, failure to use seatbelt, criminal impersonation and interfering with officer/resisting

arrest.

1/3: State Police said Andrew J. Morrison, 21, of 585 Jerusalem Rd., Windham, was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear.

1/4: Colchester Police said Tyler J. Emerick, 21, of 8 Buchalter Way, was arrested and charged with DUI, following too closely, failure to obey traffic control signals, disorderly conduct, drinking while driving and violation of protective order.

## Marlborough Three-Vehicle Collision, One Injured

A local man who police said was driving the wrong way on Route 2, while intoxicated, is to blame for a three-car crash that sent one man to the hospital, State Police said.

Lucas S. Rheume, 21, of 77 Keirstead Circle, was driving a Subaru Legacy east in the westbound lanes in the area of Exit 13 at about 1 a.m. Jan. 4.

Travelling west on the road were a Hyundai Elantra driven by Thomas A. Hood, 54, of 24 Webster Ct., Newington, and, two vehicles behind, a Nissan Versa driven by Carlos A. Alva, 24, of 28 Chauncey Rd., Wethersfield.

The Subaru struck the Hyundai head-on, causing it to come to a final rest in the left lane. The Nissan Versa subsequently struck

debris from the collision causing the vehicle to come to a final rest partially in the right lane and right shoulder.

The Subaru veered across the travel lanes, police said, and entered the center median ditch where it came to a final rest and subsequently engulfed in flames.

Hood was transported to Middlesex Hospital Marlborough Medical Center with minor injuries, police said.

Alva and Rheume reported no injuries. However, Rheume was determined to have been operating under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs and was arrested for reckless driving, DUI, wrong way driving and first-degree reckless endangerment, police said.

# Obituaries

## Colchester

### Philip W. Kurze

Philip W. Kurze, 69, of Colchester, beloved son, husband, father, grandfather and friend, passed away peacefully after a long and courageous battle with cancer Wednesday, Dec. 12. He was born on July 29, 1949, in Middletown, to John and Doris (Heft) Kurze.

He married Jo-Ann Robbins July 6, 1974, and settled in Colchester, where they raised their daughter. They were married for 44 years. He worked at Whelen Engineering for over 25 years. During that time, he grew a love for emergency warning systems and became the vice president of Motorsports. He was a devoted supporter and fan of short track racing and got so much joy from being a part of the Whelen Modified Tour family. He was a proud supporter of Central Connecticut State University and their athletic department. Phil was also a past president of the Bo-Dyn Bobsled Project, and was so incredibly proud to see the Night Train win their first Olympic gold medal in 2010.

He was predeceased by his father, John, and his brother John Jr. He is survived by mother Doris, his wife Jo-Ann, his daughter Katharine Ahlgren and her husband Christopher, and his three grandchildren Ryan, Hadley and Bode.

Visitation was held Sunday, Dec. 16, at the Robinson, Wright & Weymer Funeral Home, 34 Main St., Centerbrook. Funeral services were Monday, Dec. 17, at The First Congregational Church of Deep River, 1 Church St. in Deep River. Interment services were privately held by the Kurze family in the Fountain Hill Cemetery in Deep River.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Shriners Children's Hospital Burn Care Unit, 51 Blossom St., Boston, MA 02114 or to the Wounded Warrior Project, P.O. Box 758517, Topeka, KS. 66675-8517.

To share a memory of Phil or leave a condolence for his family, visit [www.fwh.com](http://www.fwh.com).



## Colchester

### James Vincent Demeo

James Vincent Demeo, 79, of Colchester, passed away peacefully in his sleep Saturday, Dec. 22, at Harrington Court Health Care Center, where he was residing. Born April 20, 1939, in Bridgeport, he was the son of the late Vincent and Loretta (Weir) Demeo.

James lived in Colchester for over 30 years and he was a member of the Colchester Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. James went to college to become an accountant, which he pursued for 15 years. He loved numbers and he enjoyed balancing out the books. James was a diehard Giants and Yankees fan, he loved sports. James had the privilege of watching in person, such legends as Yogi Berra, Mickey Mantle and Phil Rizzuto play. James loved old western movies and country music. James loved to paint; he had an art studio in his home in Colchester. His painting was very important for James, because he could use his art to express himself, due to the fact that he suffered from cerebral palsy and spent most of his life in pain. James loved to play chess and go for long scenic drives in the car.

James studied the Bible and got baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1971. He had the privilege of serving as a full-time pioneer and as a ministerial servant in the congregation. James also served as an account servant helping to manage the congregation accounts. James was a kind appreciative man who always had a smile on his face, he loved to laugh and he will be greatly missed by his family and friends.

He is survived by his sisters, Ann Marie and Loretta Jean Demeo, and many spiritual brothers and sisters.

A memorial talk was held Saturday, Jan. 5, at the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 297 Westchester Rd., Colchester.

The family and friends of James would like to thank the staff of Harrington Court of Colchester and Backus Hospital (E-4) of Norwich, for their loving care and support.

The Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester has been entrusted with care of funeral arrangements. For online condolences, visit [auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com](http://auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com).



## Hebron

### Debra Ann Olbrias

Debra "Debbie" Ann Olbrias, 43, of Hebron, beloved wife of David Olbrias, passed away suddenly Friday, Dec. 21, at Hartford Hospital, with her family by her side. She was born Sept. 16, 1975, in Hartford, daughter of Elaine (Labbe) Horne and the late Richard Sheridan.

Debbie was a graduate of East Catholic High School, Class of 1993. She obtained her bachelor's degree in 1997 from Assumption College and continued her education at St. Joseph University, where she received her Master of Education.

Debbie was a dedicated teacher in the Portland School District for close to 20 years. Through her passion for teaching, she influenced and touched the hearts of many students, especially those at the Brownstone Intermediate School, where she taught fifth grade for many years. Debbie was drawn to the beach, especially Point O' Woods in Old Lyme, and she enjoyed relaxing and spending time with friends at Andover Lake during her summer break.

Above all, Debbie was a loving wife, mother, daughter, sister, aunt and friend. Her compassion and giving spirit will be deeply missed by all who knew her, but she will never be forgotten.

In addition to her loving husband Dave, she is survived by her two sons, Jack and Ben Olbrias; her mother, Elaine Horne and her husband Steve of Mashpee, Mass.; her twin brother, Michael Sheridan and his wife Deanna of Framingham, Mass.; her sister, Laura Nadolski and her husband Dave of Upton, Mass.; her stepmother, Gail Sheridan of Avon; her stepsisters, Kim Silverman and her husband Adam of Simsbury and Kim Paradise and her husband John of Raleigh, N.C.; her stepbrothers, Jeff Hanelius and his wife Dyanne of Granby and Philip Horne and his husband Joe of San Francisco, Calif.; her father-in-law and mother-in-law, Joseph and Jean Olbrias of Andover; her brothers-in-law, Michael Olbrias and his wife Kim of Colchester and Joseph Olbrias of Andover; and many aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews, as well as countless friends and colleagues.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations in Debbie's memory may be made to a legacy fund set up to benefit Jack and Ben, at [gofundme.com/debra-olbrias-memorial-fund](http://gofundme.com/debra-olbrias-memorial-fund).

Samsel and Carmon Funeral Home has care of the arrangements.



## Portland

### Thomas R. Law

Thomas R. Law, 82, of Springville, Pa., formerly of Portland, passed away Sunday, Jan. 6, at Allied Hospice Center in Scranton, Pa. He was preceded in death by his wife Jean Preziosi Law on March 13, 2008.

Born in Roxbury, N.J., Tom was the son of the late Horace and Harriet Nolan Law. A 1955 graduate of Roxbury High School, Tom served his country in the Army National Guard. He was a resident of Portland from 1979-92.

Later in life, he moved to the Endless Mountains region of Pennsylvania. Tom loved being outdoors and found joy in fishing and camping. He was a skilled carpenter who had lots of happiness when spending time with his family especially during the holidays.

Tom was a member of the Lake Walter Association and enjoyed being there with all of his neighbors. He was also a number one fan of the Yankees.

He is survived by a son, Roger Law Jr. and wife Diane of Cobalt; daughter, Sabina Kneeland and husband Paul of Ithaca, N.Y.; six grandchildren, Thomas Roger III, Shannon Elizabeth, and Joseph Lawrence John Law, all of Cobalt; Matt, Ryan, and Kelsey Kneeland all of Ithaca, N.Y.; his beloved cat, Buddy.

In addition to his wife he was preceded in death by four brothers, Robert, Gerald, Horace Jr., and David Law.

The family wishes to extend great gratitude to Dr. Mattei and his staff as well as Debbie Russo his case manager and all who have provided care to him.

Family and friends are invited to attend Tom's funeral service which will be held Saturday, Jan. 12, at noon, from the Sheldon-Kukuchka Funeral Home, Inc., 73 W. Tioga St., Tunkhannock, Pa., to be officiated by Tom's son-in-law Paul Kneeland from the Reach Out for Christ Church. Interment will follow in Lynn Cemetery, Springville, Pa. A viewing will be held from 11 a.m. until the time of service on Saturday.

In celebrating Tom's life, the family asks that those attending wear bright colors.

Visit [sheldonkukuchkafuneralhome.com](http://sheldonkukuchkafuneralhome.com) to share memories or extend condolences.



## Marlborough

### Ralph Ron Gosselin

Ralph Ron Gosselin (1947-2019) of Marlborough, passed away peacefully Thursday, Jan. 3, with his family and his loving and devoted wife of 52 years, Barbara, by his side. He was born Aug. 7, 1947, in Springfield, Mass. He graduated from Technical High School in 1965 and Springfield Technical College in 1990.

Ron served in the U.S. Air Force achieving staff sergeant as a nuclear and conventional weapons specialist. He then decided to pursue a career in the field of power plant operation and maintenance. Ron achieved a Massachusetts second class stationary steam engineer's license, a Massachusetts master pipefitter license, a NIULPE Chief Engineer license, and a NIULPE technical instructor and examining engineer license.

Ron was formerly chief power plant engineer for 12 years at Texon, Inc. in Russell, Mass., and then worked 27 years for Northeast Utilities of Berlin, where he served in many positions, such as senior training coordinator and operations and maintenance supervisor. He taught power plant operation and maintenance and OSHA safety programs.

Ron was a longtime member of the National Association of Power Engineers Massachusetts Chapter 4 where he was a past president and instructor for the fireman and engineer licensing program. Ron was also an instructor at Springfield Technical Community College in the heat and power technology program.

He enjoyed fishing, hunting and archery, but most of all spending time with his family. To his family and circle of friends, Ron was regarded as a reliable, thorough and professional person whose legacy will be carried on due to Ron dedicating his career to the training of others who will enhance the field of power generation.

He is survived by his wife, Barbara A. Gosselin (Judd), and two daughters, Tammy J. Cross and Becky A. Gosselin (Bush), and two granddaughters, Holly Gosselin (Vignone) and Toni Cross (Savage).

He was predeceased by his son, David R. Gosselin; sister, Lorraine Lemelin; and parents, Ralph F. Gosselin and Mildred H. Gosselin (Nichols).

Memorials can be made to St. Judge Children's Hospital at 262 Danny Thomas Drive, Memphis, TN 38105. Phone number 800-822-6344.

A celebration of life service will be held at a later date. An invitation will be sent out in advance to all who would like to attend.

## Portland

### Dolores Smithwick

Dolores (Eckersley) Smithwick, 95, wife of the late Arthur T. Smithwick, married 68 years, passed away Saturday, Jan. 5, at the Portland Care and Rehabilitation Center. Born in Middletown Feb. 22, 1923, daughter of the late Alfred Eckersley and Hazel (Loretta) Crosley. Dolores was a parishioner of Church of St. Mary, and a member of the Mother's Circle and Ladies Guild.

A true family matriarch, she hosted countless holidays and Sunday dinners. She was happiest surrounded by her large and extended family and was always there to help us all. Having a lifelong love of music and dance, she studied piano in her later years. She was a fabulous dancer and enjoyed dancing with friends at the Portland Senior Center well into her 80s. She had an impeccable style. Her quick wit, wonderful sly Irish sense of humor and gracious spirit will be missed by all who loved her.

The family would like to thank the staff at Portland Convalescent Home for their loving care during her stay.

Dolores is survived by daughters, Debra Freitag (Russell) of Glastonbury, Christine DiPatre (John) of Jacksonville, Fla.; her sons, Thomas Smithwick (Eile) of Shippensburg, Pa.; Gary Smithwick (Phyllis) of Portland, Brian Smithwick (Anita) of Advance, N.C., and Philip Smithwick (Katherine) of Wallingford; 16 grandchildren, 20 great-grandchildren; stepsisters Sally Eckersley, Willa Eckersley of Cromwell, and Ellen Ronger of Vermont and several nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by her daughter, Janet Smithwick; her brother, Herbert Eckersley; sister, Genevieve Fowler; nephew, Jay Fowler.

The funeral will be held today, Jan. 11, at 10 a.m., at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial in St. Mary Church, Portland, at 11 a.m. Friends may call at the funeral home this morning from 10-10:45 a.m.

Those who wish may make memorial contributions to St. Mary Church, 51 Freestone Ave., Portland, CT 06480.

## East Hampton

### Ruth Mae Gustafson

It is with great sadness that the family of Ruth Mae (Boucher) Gustafson, 79, of East Hampton, announces her passing Tuesday, Jan. 1, after a long but dignified battle with dementia. She will forever be loved and cherished by her husband and best friend of 49 years, Carl.

Ruthie leaves behind two children, Butch Kromish of Moodus, Kellie Gosselin of East Hampton and her husband Jeffrey; four grandchildren, Miranda, Lindsay, Monica and Ana; as well as four great-grandchildren, Emma, Jaxson, Cole and Kylie.

She was predeceased by her baby son, her father, her grandson Nicholas and two brothers, Raymond Boucher and Robert Boucher.

Ruth worked at Cobalt Lodge Convalescent Home as an LPN and was proud of the care she provided. But most of all, she was a dedicated wife and mother first and foremost. She will be fondly remembered for cooking the best barbecue ribs, her love of shopping, singlehandedly keeping Build-a-Bear Workshop in business, and the casino slot machines with her husband and partner in crime. She lit up a room with her beautiful smile and her envious sense of style and sense of humor.

With a huge heart, she took care of her friends and loved ones. She is the kind of wife and mother that every family should be lucky enough to have and all who knew her dearly will never forget her tenacity, wit and charm. Her beauty was both inside and out and she will be sorely missed by the ones who love her most.

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

