

RIVEREAST

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Game Night... Congregation Ahavath Achim of Colchester held a game night Saturday, Jan. 12. Twenty five people enjoyed mahjong, ping pong, Pictionary, Nok Hockey and many other games. Pictured are Rabbi Ken Alter and Eddie and Jack Uscilla.

Lake Problems Spark Belltown Feud

by Elizabeth Regan

A feud between East Hampton Town Council member James "Pete" Brown and Conservation-Lake Commission member Wesley Jenks has prompted Jenks to elevate his political ambitions.

Jenks last Friday announced his intention to run for Town Council with this starkly worded promise: "I'm coming for your seat in the next election, James Brown!"

The message was part of Jenks' written rebuttal to public comments voiced by Brown at the council's Jan. 8 meeting. The situation goes back to allegations by Jenks over the past few months that the \$19 million town hall hub project is polluting the lake.

In a Jan. 4 letter distributed to various media outlets in the hope of generating a "public outcry," Jenks described his "losing battle" to protect the lake from those he said are not taking the necessary steps to prevent further pollution.

"The town, developers and residents are killing the lake," he wrote.

Town Council Chairman Melissa Engel broached the subject at last Tuesday's meeting when she told the audience – made up largely of Town Facilities Building Committee members who guided the town hall hub project through a close but successful referendum vote – that counselors had received a copy of Jenks' letter.

"We thought [Jenks] might be here tonight, and he is not," Engel said.

That was Brown's opening for an impas-

sioned, and sometimes personal, attack on Jenks.

"If Mr. Jenks was here, I would tell him to his face that he is not fighting the battle. We are fighting the battle, and I mean the town of East Hampton," Brown said.

The notoriously-impaired lake has been in decline since the late 1980s, when annual algae blooms first began to cloud the lake with potentially toxic organisms for several weeks each summer. Local officials and experts have described runoff from the construction of the Lake Vista condominiums in 1987 as a catalyst for the lake's ills. There is also speculation water quality issues were exacerbated by the sewer system, installed in the early 1980s, that deprived the area of natural spring water and left the lake vulnerable to pollution from surface runoff.

Brown said the town has been very supportive of the lake, citing the installation of catch basins to trap sediment and debris as an example of the town's stewardship of the lake.

"Mr. Jenks didn't do that. That came out of taxpayer dollars. We did that," Brown said.

According to data from Finance Director Jeff Jylkka, the town has spent \$162,658 on budget items related to the lake since 2013.

Brown said Jenks and other lakeside residents are only concerned about pollution when it suits them. He went on to allege that Jenks "clear-cut" his waterfront property to build a "nice,

See Lake Problems page 30

Marlborough, Teamsters Union Settle Complaint

by Allison Lazur

A settlement has been reached between Marlborough and Teamsters Local 559 on a complaint the town filed with the Department of Labor last September. While no formal ruling on the complaint was provided by the labor department, the town and union decided to come to a settlement on their own.

However, the issue appears to be far from over, as Marlborough Public Works employee James Foley lodged two more complaints with the labor department this week.

The settled complaint surrounds the approximate year and a half-long negotiations over a contract which would have been effective July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2019.

However, the Marlborough Public Works Department has been without union representation since Jan. 1 (see related story on page 30) – and, without union representation, the contract simply does not exist.

Department of Labor Communications Director Nancy Steffens said a formal ruling by the labor board is not provided without a formal hearing. A settlement agreed by the town and the union does not need to be approved by the labor department, she said.

"If the complaint could not be settled by discussion, the State Board of Labor Relations would continue its investigation of the presented facts and would recommend dismissal or a formal hearing," she said.

In response to the settlement and the union decision to forgo representing the Public Works Department, Public Works employee and prior Union Steward James Foley filed two complaints Tuesday with the Department of Labor.

One was against the town and the other against Teamsters Local 671.

Both complaints cite the belief Foley has that the town and Local 671 violated the Municipal Employee Retaliation Act (MERA).

The affairs of Local 559 have been handled

by Local 671 Secretary-Treasurer Dave Lucas since August 2018.

Lucas was appointed to serve as Trustee of Local 559 by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters general president until internal personnel and administrative issues can be remedied and the future of Local 559 can be determined.

The Town's Complaint

The complaint filed on behalf of the town by attorney Nick Grello on Sept. 6, 2018, specifically names Foley and Local 559 chief spokesperson John Lupacchino – who retired last March – as engaging in conduct that violates the ground rules agreed to by the town and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 559.

The complaint alleges that Foley and Lupacchino failed to recommend tentative agreements to the other seven people in the union on the overall contract reached between the town and union in September 2017 and again in February 2018. The complaint said this violated not just the ground rules agreed upon but also the Municipal Employee Retaliation Act and State Board of Labor Relations case law.

However, Lupacchino and Foley both said they didn't recommend a tentative agreement because there simply was no such agreement to recommend.

The ground rules state that tentative agreements must be "dated and initialed by the chief spokespersons" of the town and of the union.

In several emails included in Foley's counter-complaint – emails dated after the September 2017 date the tentative agreement was allegedly reached – there is discussion between Foley and Lupacchino over further contract issues Lupacchino would continue to negotiate.

Foley argued this week that this is proof no tentative agreement had been reached on the

overall contract.

Lupacchino this week called Grello a "well-versed attorney," adding, "I'm sure if he really had a tentative agreement he would've had that ... signed by both parties."

Grello said Tuesday all questions regarding this matter should be referred to First Selectman Amy Traversa.

Traversa said the need to initial and sign the tentative agreement is "just a formality that no one follows," adding "there are hundreds of emails proving agreement."

Lupacchino said this week every contract change was emailed to him by Grello and he would respond with whether that specific item needed further negotiating or "looked good."

But, he said, he never came to a tentative agreement on the overall contract with the town.

The contract eventually entered into arbitration in spring 2018 and outstanding issues were ruled on by the Department of Labor Board of Mediation and Arbitration on Oct. 28.

The panel ruled in favor of the town on seven of the eight issues.

In the introduction section of the arbitration award, there is mention of tentative contract agreements reached on Sept. 5, 2017 and Feb. 6, 2018.

Foley argues that information was provided to the arbitrators as background by Grello and not as a finding by the panel.

He said, because Lupacchino had retired, by the time the contract reached arbitration and a separate attorney was hired by the union to specifically handle the arbitration, "no one was left who knew there were no tentative agreements except for me."

The town's complaint requests Local 559 pay the town for "all costs incurred" in regards to the tentative agreement issue.

A second charge outlined in the complaint concerns an insurance waiver which was re-

voked as of January 1, 2018. Those who were receiving the insurance waiver would then have the option to enroll in the town's health insurance plan.

The complaint states Foley submitted a complaint in August 2018 to the State of Connecticut Wage and Hour Division arguing the waiver is supposed to stay in effect until the employee revokes it.

The previous July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2017 contract states the insurance waiver will continue until the employee is terminated or revokes the waiver. The contract also states the town may terminate the waiver, with six-month's notice, if it self-insures – which occurred in July 2017.

The complaint also states Foley attempted to "disregard, violate and circumvent the agreed to contract language."

Settlement

A settlement between the town and appointed Trustee of Local 559 Dave Lucas states the union violated the Municipal Employee Retaliation Act as outlined in the complaint.

Traversa said the settlement agreed upon was to be an admission of guilt by Local 559.

"I wanted an admission that the town had acted responsibly and it was the union that violated labor law," she said Tuesday.

The settlement specifically notes the tentative agreements were not recommended to the rest of the Public Works Department by Foley and Lupacchino, in turn violating the ground rules.

The settlement says Foley attempted to "enforce terms of the collective bargaining agreement that are no long in effect," as well as "pursuing meritless actions with federal and state agencies... and informing bargaining members that there was no collective bargaining agreement despite the issuance of the arbitration award."

Lake Problems cont. from Front Page
beautiful” house.

Prompted by a member of the Town Facilities Building Committee in the audience, Brown also brought up what he described as a cease-and-desist order issued for a property belonging to Jenks for “having machinery in the lake”

Members of the building committee joined councilors in laughing about Jenks’ alleged hypocrisy.

“I don’t want to make light of this, but it’s almost a joke sometimes when everybody in town is concerned about the lake until it infringes on what they want to do around the lake,” Brown said.

Jenks later told the *Rivereast* he was unable to attend the meeting due to work commitments. He is the vice president of Jenks Productions, an exhibition and trade show company.

He also rebutted Brown’s allegations last week in an open letter to the residents of East Hampton, which he posted on the popular Facebook discussion group “Let’s Talk East Hampton.”

Jenks first disputed Brown’s allegations of clear cutting. He said his family built their house in 1995, when he was 14 years old, on a lot that was not wooded in the first place. He said the family saved every tree they could and planted four maple trees to increase the tree coverage.

He called the allegations of machinery in the lake “ludicrous.”

Jenks himself lives at 45 Meeks Point Rd. in a house he purchased in 2011, according to assessor’s records. The house was constructed in 1960.

“I’m very proud of my home and its vegetation density,” Jenks said, describing eight oak trees, two maples, eight hemlocks and around 50 mountain laurel plants. “I keep no lawn, use zero fertilizers or pesticides; I have rain barrels and multiple gardens and no paving.”

Planning and Zoning Official Jeremy DeCarli said this week he is not aware of complaints of machinery in the lake on any Jenks property.

He said an issue related to unpermitted work done on a Bay Road property owned by Jenks’ father, Dennis Jenks, was addressed and quickly resolved in 2017.

Jenks in his letter said Brown’s comments at the public meeting were based on a “pure lack of information” and a lack of concern for the lake.

“You don’t care, and your comments prove it,” Jenks said. “You personally insult me and my family, when all I’m trying to do is bring to light the truth.”

Jenks, an unaffiliated voter, said he does not yet know which party’s banner he will run under.

Town Defends Hub

DeCarli contributed to the town’s defense with a presentation on recent efforts to stem the tide of sediment running into the lake from the town hall complex construction site.

While the project broke ground in late September, DeCarli told councilors he has been in discussion with project engineers about sediment control measures for more than a year because of longstanding concerns about the effect of development on the Baker Hill ridge along Route 66. That’s where the Lake Vista condominiums were erected on a hillside of unusually fine soil.

“We knew the history of Baker Hill, we knew the concerns, we know what took place in the ‘80s when the condos were built,” DeCarli said. “We knew there was a soil issue up there to begin with.”

The erosion and sediment control plan for the project was implemented in adherence to state guidelines, according to DeCarli. He said the site has been inspected by the project engineering firm Boundaries LLC as well as town staff members and that DeCarli himself visits the site almost every day. The town engineering firm, Anchor Engineering, also reviewed the plan during the permitting process.

After voters okayed funding for the town hall

hub project in November 2017, the proposal was approved by the Inland/Wetlands Watercourse Agency in a 4-0 vote last February and by the Planning and Zoning Commission in a unanimous vote last March.

DeCarli’s presentation showed the original erosion and sediment control plan included silt fences backed by hay bales around the entire site, water bars on the access road, diversion swales with check dams to slow the flow of runoff, temporary sediment traps and anti-tracking pads.

He said atypically-fine soil particles – which resist typical controls like silt fences and sediment traps – are the underlying problem on the hill. But officials thought they had it under control.

“Going into it, it looked like we weren’t going to have a problem. Everything was done as it was supposed to be,” he said.

Then came the rain.

“This was the second-wettest November on record. It’s the fifth-wettest year overall on record. We’ve had a tremendous amount of rain,” DeCarli said.

Complaints from residents like Jenks and fellow Conservation-Lake Commission member Joe Carbonell included photos revealing large areas of brown runoff in the lake near the bay side of Meeks Point Road and Hawthorne Road.

Adjustments were made to the original environmental controls after “the first heavy rainstorm,” according to DeCarli. They include additional rows of silt fence, sediment traps, check dams and a turbidity curtain. The yellow, plastic curtain acts like a coffee filter attached to the the outlet of a pond on the site to keep the sediment from making its way into the lake.

According to Town Manager Michael Maniscalco, conversations with officials from the Department of Energy and Environmental

Protection (DEEP) indicated there isn’t “anything additional” the town could do to address the erosion and sediment control issues.

Maniscalco said Chuck Lee, of DEEP’s bureau of water protection and land reuse, reached out to him after the agency received a complaint about the runoff. Conversations also occurred with representatives of the water permitting and enforcement division.

Karen Allen, a sanitary engineer in the DEEP water permitting section, told the *Rivereast* this week that she spoke with DeCarli in late December about the possibility of installing a “floculation agent” known as a Floc Log to address the problems with fine sediment. The product, which can be placed in drainage swales or detention basins, helps silty water clump together so the sediment settles out before reaching the lake.

She said nobody from her division has visited the site to evaluate the situation.

“If we continued to get complaints, we might send somebody out,” she said.

The project is too small to automatically trigger state oversight in the form of a registration with the water permitting division, according to Allen. She said a project must disturb at least five acres to require a permit from the state.

Construction of the town hall complex is disturbing roughly three to three and a half acres, according to DeCarli.

DeCarli on Thursday said the Floc Log suggestion was being evaluated by project managers Steve and Lisa Motto. But he said the turbidity curtain installed since his conversation with Allen “appears to be providing relief for most rain events.”

Allen indicated she was satisfied the town is working to address the problem, but didn’t rule out further DEEP involvement.

“It doesn’t sound like a situation where the town is ignoring the situation,” she said. “But it does sound like a difficult situation.”

Settle Complaint cont. from Front Page

But in the counter-complaints filed this week, Foley adamantly denies the statements outlined in the settlement – standing by the email thread as alleged proof of no tentative agreement and outright stating he never told anyone in Public Works there was no agreement.

Public Works employee Emil Haberern backed Foley up on Monday, saying he was never told by Foley there was no bargaining agreement.

Foley said he gave the labor department a “large packet of documents” that make it clear the accusations of Grello and Teamsters Local 671 “are completely false.”

“I’m confident that the Department of Labor will shuffle things out and find that myself and John Lupacchino did the right thing throughout the negotiating process and will prevail in the end,” Foley said.

The settlement document concludes by stating, “Foley required the town to incur unnecessary legal expenses to the detriment of the taxpayers of the town.”

Attorney John Fussell, who served as legal representation for the union during the settlement, said Wednesday the decision to settle with the town was based on the conduct of Foley, which he said posed a “potential, serious liability to the union.”

“All the evidence pointed to the fact that the union would be found liable for conduct Foley engaged in,” Fussell said.

He said an informal hearing with the department of labor on the town’s complaint resulted in an opinion from a state agent that viewed the evidence against Foley and the union as “very damaging.”

The informal hearing occurred on Nov. 29, 2018.

Fussell said the complaint filed this week by Foley against Local 671 is false and that Foley failed to provide evidence to the union to overcome the town’s evidence.

Although he said the tentative agreement issue occurred before he became involved, he said the *signed* tentative agreement is a “technicality” and that the agreements happened via email.

The reimbursement of attorney’s fees by the union – initially requested in the town’s complaint – was not requested in the settlement.

Traversa said last week “[Grello] is not aware of any attorney’s fees that have ever been awarded as part of a settlement and I don’t feel we should spend money to chase money we don’t have any guarantee of receiving.”

What Now?

At a Board of Selectmen meeting Tuesday, Traversa said she has plans to meet with the Public Works department to discuss what will happen moving forward.

She told the *Rivereast* last week, “This is unprecedented; at this time I suspect no substantial changes in the way the members are treated as far as wages or benefits go.”

Public Works Loses Union Representation

by Allison Lazur

The Marlborough Public Works Department is without union representation.

A disclaimer of interest letter was sent Dec. 21 notifying the eight-member department that Local 559 had decided to disclaim all interest in representing the group.

The disclaimer of interest letter was sent by Trustee of Teamsters Local 559 Dave Lucas.

Lucas, the Secretary-Treasurer of Local 671, was appointed by the General President of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters James Hoffa to manage the affairs of the Local 559.

A letter sent by Hoffa on Aug. 28 to the officers and members of Local Union 559, outlines personnel and administrative issues as rationale for appointing Local 671’s Lucas to run Local 559 until a decision can be made on the future of Local 559.

The Local 559 has continued to represent the custodians at Marlborough Elementary School.

Although Lucas did not return multiple calls and messages for comment from the *Rivereast*, a statement by Teamsters Local 559 and signed by Lucas on January 9, states the reason behind the decision to disclaim the Public Works Department is directly related to the conduct of Public Works employee and prior Union Steward James Foley.

But Foley says the union’s decision to forgo representing the Public Works Department is directly related to a complaint filed against Local 559 by the town last September. (A related story appears on the cover.)

This week, Foley filed a complaint with the Department of Labor against Local 671 in response to the disclaimer of interest, as well as a second complaint against the town.

The statement issued by Lucas says “the bargaining unit, under the leadership of Jim Foley, had embarked on a course of conduct that resulted in the town filing [September complaint] against Local 559.”

He states “a review of the evidence” resulted in a “reasonable conclusion” that the charges outlined in the town’s complaint violated the Municipal Employees Retaliation Act

(MERA), subjecting Local 559 to “unnecessary extraordinary legal expenses stemming from the misplaced tactics and/or bad faith bargaining conduct pursued by Foley.”

The statement concludes with Lucas stating, “I took the necessary disclaimer action to protect Local 559 and its membership from cost and attorney fees that stemmed from the persistent misconduct of the [Public Works Department.]”

But in Foley’s counter-complaint he accuses Local 671 of violating MERA by failing to provide fair representation “free from actual interference, restraint or coercion.”

The notice from Lucas that Local 559 would no longer be representing the Public Works Department was issued Dec. 21 and effective Jan. 1 – six days before a settlement between the town and union was reached on the complaint filed by the town.

Foley in his counter-complaint against the town states the town filed its “bogus complaints” to influence the Public Works Department’s union membership.

Foley calls the town’s complaint “false in nature and caused Teamsters Local 671 to disclaim our memberships.”

First Selectman Amy Traversa said the decision to disclaim the union came as a surprise to her, but in an email to the *Rivereast* called the conduct of Foley “pervasive” and “unlawful” because of the repeated violations of MERA.

“Local 559’s extraordinary decision to disclaim interest in the bargaining unit clearly illustrates that Local 559 [under Lucas] could neither tolerate nor, more importantly, condone the actions of the local leadership,” Traversa said.

After learning Local 559 would be disclaiming interest in representing the Public Works Department, Foley submitted a petition to the Department of Labor.

He said the petition is requesting he represent the eight-person unit or be permitted to establish a new union organization for representation.

A hearing on the petition is scheduled for Jan. 25 in front of the labor department.

Officers Closer to Reality for Hebron Schools

by Sloan Brewster

Hebron Public Schools are a step closer to getting school resource officers.

At a meeting last Thursday – after a parent forum on the matter – the Board of Education decided to include funding for a school resource officer (SRO) program in the 2019-20 budget proposal. Adding the funds allows the board to look at the numbers over the next month while working out the final budget to submit to the town, according to schools superintendent Tim Van Tassel.

The school board “wanted to see how the overall cost of the program would factor into their current budget,” he said. “This does not mean that the program will remain in the budget, at this time it’s only in there for deliberation purposes.”

With the SRO inclusion and other tweaks the board has made since last month when Van Tassel made his initial budget presentation, the budget proposal now clocks in at \$11.64 million, a 1.45 percent increase over the current year.

The budget proposal is due to the town by Feb. 15.

The activity room at Gilead Hill School was packed during the forum with most residents there voicing support for the idea of hiring school resource officers and others asking questions about the proposal.

In a PowerPoint presentation before the floor was opened to speakers, Van Tassel said a survey administered by the board indicated that folks supported the notion. Of 246 respondents, 180 said they were in favor of bringing the officers on board while only 66 said no, the superintendent said.

“We did get more [responses] than we usually get on surveys,” he added.

As the proposal now stands, approximately \$76,000 would fund four part-time officers in the two schools in the district – Gilead Hill and

Hebron Elementary.

Included in the costs is about \$71,000 for the officers’ salaries, broken into an approximate \$18,000 for each. The officers would work just under four hours per day and make \$26 per hour. The price also includes \$4,000 in additional costs, such as \$256 per year for Medicare for each officer, funds for clothing allowances, and \$1,000 each for weapons – an expense that won’t be repeated after the first year.

Switching to two fulltime officers would increase the overall cost to \$122,631, Van Tassel said.

When asked by residents if that would be a better idea, Erica Bromley, school board chair, said bringing on four part-timers allows for flexibility and would offer a backup when an officer calls out.

“I think, obviously, we’re trying to balance what we feel are the needs with fiscal responsibility,” she said.

Van Tassel explained that the district would use an SRO versus a school safety officer (SSO).

SROs are sworn-in police officers, who are on retirement, while SSOs would work for board but be supported and facilitated by a local police department, which the town does not have, he said.

* * *

Following Van Tassel’s presentation, several residents spoke – and most seemed to be in favor of the officer proposal.

Dan Smith thanked the board for being proactive. Amanda Veneziano said children would feel safe and that it was a great idea – but added that SROs wouldn’t solve all problems at the schools.

She did say, though, that she hopes the board hires locally.

The hope is to hire from the local pool, Van Tassel said. The board has already reached out

to locals who may be interested. To Veneziano’s concern that the officers not be seen as a solution to all schools issues, he said the board does not see it that way and there are two psychologists and a social worker on staff.

Resident Keith Edle brought up the three part-time constables that work for the town already.

“We’re going to hire more on top of that?” he asked

Resident State Trooper Daniel Greenwood, who was also in attendance, pointed out that the constables work patrol for the town.

“SROs will be exclusively for the schools,” Bromley said. “They would be assigned to the school all day every day.”

Katie Peters asked where the money would come from – and Bromley specified the funds would be an addition to the budget, explaining, “we want to make sure that this [initiative] does not remove any programming.”

Van Tassel said that while there are indeed staff reductions in his proposed budget, they were not proposed in order to fund the SRO program – but rather are a response to an anticipated reduction in sixth-grade students.

Van Tassel’s budget recommendation includes cutting a classroom teacher, a special education teacher and a paraprofessional.

Resident Rolando Navarro asked if there was any particular reason or need for the officer, to which Van Tassel responded this was a proactive measure “based on what’s happening universally,” referring to school shootings that have taken place across the country in recent years.

Earlier in the conversation, the superintendent said it was a means to plan for “unthinkables.”

“There has been no incident that has happened in the Hebron Public Schools,” Van Tassel said. “We’re becoming more aware, becoming more understanding as to why this is happening, why districts are talking about this.”

Bromley, who said she works in juvenile justice, said there was “a whole host of other reasons” beyond protecting the school from violence. Included in her examples was making a connection between law enforcement and youth at a young age.

Trooper Ken Precourt, an SRO in Windsor Locks who attended the meeting at Bromley’s request described some of his day-to-day activities. He meets students as they come to school. In the event of a police matter involving one of the students or their family, Precourt said he gives teachers or the principal a “heads-up” without going into details.

“When so-and-so comes in, you may want to talk to them,” he said he tells teachers. “I know the teachers. I know most of the students; the bonds that I have with the students are phenomenal.”

Precourt said he is on hand for lock-down drills and critiques them for staff. He also deals with custodial issues, such as when a parent who has a restraining order comes to get a student or when a student expresses consternation about leaving with someone.

“A kid may say, ‘I really shouldn’t go with him. This is my uncle and I’m really not very close with him,’” Precourt said. “Then we’ll go to the office and work it all out.”

Resident Mary Holzer said SROs teach curriculum and asked to hear more about that.

Greenwood spoke about teaching Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) at the schools and said SROs also give Internet safety lessons.

* * *

The next regular Board of Education meeting is Thursday, Feb. 14, at 7 p.m., at Gilead Hill School. There is also a special budget meeting Thursday, Jan. 24, at 7 p.m., also at Gilead Hill School.

Audit Reveals \$724K Surplus in Marlborough

by Allison Lazur

The numbers are in, and they reveal another budget surplus for the town of Marlborough – this time even higher than the previous one.

The auditor’s report for the 2017-18 fiscal year showed an approximate \$724,000 excess of what was budgeted for the town, while the 2016-17 budget proved a \$663,000 surplus – a total of about \$1.4 million over two years.

The figure includes revenues that clocked in at approximately \$110,000 higher than what was budgeted, as well as expenditures which came in at about \$614,000 less than what was budgeted.

Real estate, property and vehicle taxes accounted for the additional revenues.

First Selectman Amy Traversa said unfilled positions such as a part-time social services coordinator at the senior center and two constable positions – which were budgeted for but not filled until last year – contributed to a lower-than-budgeted figure on the expenditures side.

A savings was also achieved by utilizing public works employees for certain projects, instead of contracting a portion of the work out, she said.

“The budget isn’t like balancing a check book,” she said. “A budget is a living, working document that assumes a lot of things; so some things are going to be greater than what was budgeted and others will be less than what was budgeted.”

Traversa also attributed the surplus to the town’s “conservative approach” fueled by uncertainty of the state budget.

She noted that when the state budget was approved in October 2017, it was after Marlborough’s town budget for 2017-18 had

been passed – so the town had to largely guess what, if any, financial aid would be provided by the state. However, the reality of the situation wasn’t as bad as the town had feared.

“We were expecting doom and gloom,” she said, “but they didn’t cut what they were threatening to cut and they didn’t add in the teacher pensions” – referring to the state exploring the possibility of having municipalities pay for teacher pensions instead of the state.

Traversa said Wednesday the surplus needs to stay in the undesignated fund balance, which, including the surplus, sits at \$3.48 million. Last year, the Board of Finance opted to use \$100,000 of the \$663,000 left over from the 2016-17 budget in order to offset the mill rate.

“This is actual savings that we need to keep,” she said of the \$724,000 surplus. “I will work with the Board of Finance to make sure that we keep a healthy fund balance and work on policies to keep that healthy balance from being diminished in the future.”

Board of Finance Chairman Doug Knowlton said a healthy fund balance is about 12 percent, or \$3 million of the town’s total \$24.63 million 2018-19 budget.

Therefore, Knowlton said he’s picturing the surplus as being \$480,000 – with the remaining \$244,000 applied to the undesignated fund balance to keep it at 12 percent.

Ultimately, although Knowlton said it’s “too early to tell” what will be presented for the RHAM, town and local school budgets, he did say the surplus could possibly be handled like the 2016-2017 surplus – with some going to offset the mill rate and the rest going into the undesignated fund balance.

Towns Awarded Funds for Trail Expansion

by Sloan Brewster

Hebron and Colchester have each been awarded state funding to enhance a vibrant and growing collection of trails east of the river.

Hebron was awarded \$228,000 to expand trails at Raymond Brook Preserve, a natural park on a former farm. Colchester's approximately \$48,000 grant will connect the Air Line Trail and the Richard Goodwin Trail.

Hebron and Colchester were among 19 towns to receive money from the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). In total, the department awarded \$3.174 million in grants for the projects to plan and design, build, expand, or enhance and improve multi-use trails and greenways across the state.

Hebron Parks & Recreation will use the \$228,000 – the fourth-largest award of those presented last week – to extend current trails at the more than 100-acre Raymond Brook Preserve over Mill Stream, bringing a connection to Millstream Road, where there will be another parking lot, Parks & Recreation Director Rich Calarco said. The overall plan is to add an additional access from the Air Line Trail on Route 207 but that will be done in another phase of the project.

As part of the grant acceptance, the town will match 20 percent of the grant, using in-kind services and town-owned equipment.

Currently, the town is signing contracts for the grant with the state, Calarco said. Once that is done he will begin the permitting process for this part of the project, or Phase 2, installing a parking lot, expanding the stone dust trails and building a bridge over the brook. Plans are to have it completed by the spring of 2021.

In October, the Parks & Recreation Department completed Phase 1, a 1.9-mile loop at the preserve, Calarco said. That trail was made possible through a \$62,000 DEEP Trails Program grant.

The project is part of an initiative listed in the town's master plan to connect all the local

greenways to parks and to the downtown area, Calarco said. It is also part of the state's master plan for trail development.

As part of that master plan, the town will be running sidewalks on Church Street this spring, he said.

The sidewalks will start at the intersection of routes 66 and 85, and head south down Route 85 or Church Street to Sunny Side Plaza, Town Manager Andrew Tierney said.

"[The preserve] was initially a big farm," Calarco said. "As you walk the trail you can actually see corn fields, grassy areas where they cut grass for hay. You go around a pond; you go around actual farmland – corn fields and hayfields."

Two local farmers still farm the property, Calarco said.

"It's a great marriage between the town and (agriculture)," he said. "It's the perfect marriage."

The land was purchased in pieces over 15 years with the town's open space land acquisition funds, sometimes matched by state funds, Calarco said.

"The goal of my commission is to utilize this [land] and for people to see the fruits of their labor," he said.

There are entrances to the preserve on Kinney Road and beside Church of the Holy Family on Church Street. The flat stone dust trail meanders through wide open meadows lined by stonewalls and thick old trees with a bridge over a stream running into a pond.

Jeff and Lisa Butterfield of Marlborough took a jaunt on the loop with their black lab Shadow on Monday. It was their first time at the preserve, they said. Normally they walk the Air Line Trail but they noticed the parking lot on Church Street and decided to give the preserve a go.

"I like it because it's nice and level," Lisa Butterfield said. "It's not too up and down and it's sunny, it's not in a treed area."



An intersecting system of trails – lined by stone walls, trees and open meadows – at the Raymond Brook Preserve will be expanded over Mill Stream and end at a new parking lot on Mill Stream Road in Hebron.

She also said the parking lot was a positive.

* * *

Colchester also received one of the grants. That town was awarded approximately \$48,000 to construct a bike and pedestrian connection between the Air Line Trail and the Richard Goodwin Trail.

Wetlands Enforcement Agent Jay Gigliotti has said construction will begin this summer.

The link will result in a contiguous trail network running from East Lyme to the Massachusetts border, connecting the 60-plus miles of Air Line Trail to the 26-plus miles of Richard Goodwin Trail, a memo from Gigliotti to the Colchester Board of Selectmen states.

The grant will fund a connector via a crosswalk across Route 16 then through Cemetery Road and Church Street, followed by a crosswalk across Route 149, Gigliotti said.

Gigliotti said the 5,700 linear feet – or about one mile – it will take to link trails from East

Lyme to Massachusetts is most exciting.

The Air Line Trail begins in East Hampton and travels through Thompson and the Massachusetts border, passing through Colchester mainly in the Salmon River State Forest. There is also a portion of the trail that breaks from the main trail and brings users into the center of town, according to Gigliotti. The Richard Goodwin trail begins in East Lyme and concludes in Colchester within the limits of the Babcock Pond Wildlife Management Area.

Last fall, Gigliotti told the *Rivereast* the linked trail will most likely not be used by the daily walkers of the Air Line or Richard Goodwin Trails, but rather by "the enthusiast who wants to ride from East Lyme to the Massachusetts border."

The grant will pay for two crosswalks on Route 16 and Route 149, crosswalk signage, crosswalk and pedestrian pavement markings and pedestrian and link trail signage, he said.

Andover Superintendent Proposes Decrease in School Budget

by Sloan Brewster

The number of Andover Elementary School students is projected to remain about the same in the 2019-20 school year, but Schools Superintendent Sally Doyen is seeking fewer teachers to educate them.

Doyen last week presented a proposed \$4.07 million 2019-20 budget to the local Board of Education. The budget – a decrease of \$90,000, or 2.16 percent, from current year spending – calls for the elimination of two teaching positions. One has already resigned and one will be laid off, Doyen said.

Overall, enrollment is projected to be similar, at 191 total students, down from 193 this year. But numbers in different grade levels are shifting.

"We do have a couple grade levels that are going down next year; that's why we ended up with two [teaching] reductions," she told the board. "We have almost the same number of students next year but they're just in different grade levels."

This year there are two third grade classes with a combined enrollment of 22 students, Doyen said, and next year calls for just one class

with 17 students. Fifth grade also has two classes this year, with a combined 28 students, but next year will have just one class with 21 students.

After next year, though, the numbers are expected to crater, with Doyen projecting just 163 students in 2020-21 – a decline of nearly 30.

"Next year our numbers are pretty stable; the following year we really will drop off," she said.

At \$2.16 million, salaries are the biggest line item, she said. Still, with the reduction of two teachers, they will cost \$127,845 less than this year's \$2.29 million.

Employee benefits are going down by about \$50,000 bringing it to \$815,000 due to the staffing reductions and because insurance is going down by 10 percent since fewer employees will be using the plan.

Despite the overall reductions, some line items will increase.

The professional and contracted services line item is on the rise by approximately \$34,000 bringing it to about \$284,000 due to the addition of a pre-kindergarten consultant and a spe-

cial education consultant, Doyen said.

Property services, which include contracted maintenance HVAC, electrical and plumbing, are going up by approximately \$17,000. The "other purchased services" section is increasing by about \$18,000, as it includes the bus contract, which is going out to bid with the assumption the cost will rise, Doyen said. Supplies – which she described as a "very diverse" section of the budget as it includes heating oil, diesel fuel "and things that you don't normally think of as supplies" – is projected to increase by \$19,000.

Doyen said she realized about \$5,000 in savings in furniture, fixtures and equipment by acquiring items for free from the University of Connecticut when it closed its West Hartford campus last year.

"Things were free so we got a lot of very nice furniture from them," she said.

Pointing to specific lines under salaries, she said that administrative salaries will go down from about \$295,000 to \$288,000 due to a change in the contract that eliminates a stipend and a vacation buy-out.

Extracurricular, another line under salaries, is staying the same at \$10,000, Doyen said. The item increased this year from last year's \$6,900.

"In the last couple years we've really increased things we have after school and we do provide transportation home for the kids," she said.

Retirement payouts are going down from \$14,000 to \$2,000 because no one is planning to retire, Doyen said.

The list of capital improvements Doyen is recommending for 2019-2020 includes \$10,000 for a new water softener system, \$5,000 for new piping to the boilers, \$15,000 in HVAC fixes, \$12,000 in electrical systems fixes and \$10,000 to replace doors on the building and upgrade lockers.

The five-year Capital Improvement Plan "forces us to look ahead," Doyen said. That list includes a plan to replace boilers at the school for an estimated \$20,000 in 2022-23.

"It forces us to think ahead and also give us a planning tool," Doyen said of the five-year plan.

The board will discuss the budget at its meeting in February.

Proposed School Budget Jumps Nearly 4 Percent in Portland

by Elizabeth Regan

The local Board of Education on Tuesday whittled down a hefty budget request from Superintendent of Schools Philip O'Reilly.

The school board unanimously approved a \$21.46 million education budget proposal, which is \$781,951 – or 3.78 percent – higher than the current budget.

O'Reilly last week presented his initial request with a 4.95 percent jump. But he didn't appear surprised when the school board subsequently called for a more palatable increase.

"Even under my standards, I realize it's a high number for the taxpayers to swallow," he told the school board at Tuesday's meeting.

The education budget approved by the school board at an increase of 3.78 percent sustains most of O'Reilly's requests but moves several technology purchases from the education spending plan to the capital budget. With the added \$188,500 in technology needs – which included \$131,500 for the secondary school Wi-Fi system, \$35,000 for a new Science, Technology, Engineering and Math lab, \$10,000 for smart boards and \$6,500 for projectors – the school board's total request for capital funding comes in at \$230,000.

The other capital request is for \$41,500 to upgrade the heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems in the district. O'Reilly said this week it's not yet clear which school will receive the funding since all the HVAC systems

in all the schools need work.

In addition to moving the technology requests to the capital budget, operational savings were achieved through updated estimates for health and dental benefits, potential changes in overtime calculations in the recently settled custodian contract, and cuts to curriculum supplies, among other measures.

The school board during last year's budget planning process approved a flat budget that 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.

According to O'Reilly, one of the hallmarks of the proposed 2019-20 budget is its continued support of the district's efforts to address school adjustment issues, social and emotional needs, and behavioral challenges in middle and high school students, according to budget documents.

The budget proposal adds one special education teacher to the applied behavioral analysis initiative at Valley View School. The program started in 2017 to give students with autism and other developmental disabilities specific techniques and principles to help them learn, communicate and interact with peers more effectively.

The budget also continues a special educa-

tion program in collaboration with Wheeler Clinic, currently in its inaugural year, that provides counseling and a supportive educational environment for students in seventh through 12th grade with mental health and behavioral challenges.

The district pays \$107,000 for a counselor and supervisor from Wheeler Clinic, O'Reilly said this week. The program requires one full-time teacher and at least one paraeducator, according to Director of Student Services Dawn Davis.

Davis said no additional staff is being requested in the upcoming budget.

The 2019-20 budget also bolsters the district's initiative to make sure all students in grades five through 12 have a Chromebook to use during the school day.

The school rolled out 775 Chromebooks in 2016. The \$200,000 program was funded in part through a \$48,000 grant.

"While we received a generous implementation from the Gildersleeve Wheeler Educational Fund, we must now live up to our guarantee to continue the initiative with a sensible replacement cycle for new student devices in the next school year and in subsequent years to come," O'Reilly wrote in a letter to the school board introducing his budget recommendations.

The proposed education budget includes \$75,000 to begin the yearly replacement cycle.

School board members were largely supportive of the scaled-down, 3.78 percent increase. But member Tim Lavoy expressed reservations about the decision to move the technology items to the capital budget because of the town's history of failing to fully fund the school board's capital requests.

"Unfortunately, our experience of getting capital is pretty awful," Lavoy said. "I'd hate to put all our eggs in that basket."

The Board of Education line in the current capital budget includes \$230,000 to replace windows at Brownstone School. The board was allotted \$50,000 in 2017-18, \$112,000 in 2016-17, \$50,000 in 2015-16 and \$46,000 in 2014-15.

Despite Lavoy's concerns, he supported the 3.78 increase along with the rest of his fellow school board members.

Vice Chairman Meg Scata said the school board members now have a "sales job to do" in order to make sure the Board of Selectmen understands the budget is "bare bones."

The Board of Selectmen is charged with finalizing the total budget – including education, general government and capital – before it goes to a town meeting – and then a referendum in the spring.

O'Reilly emphasized any further reductions made by the selectmen to the education proposal will result in staffing cuts.

Long-Awaited Traffic Safety Fixes Closer to Fruition at RHAM

by Sloan Brewster

The latest public hearing on campus improvements at RHAM highlighted the plan to change traffic and parking on the campus almost five years after the death of a teacher who was struck by a car in the lot.

The Board of Education public hearing was held Monday and was the second one on the matter. The first time the improvements were hashed out was at a hearing in June when Luchs Consulting Engineering presented the preliminary plan.

Superintendent of Schools Pat Law said the school board will vote on the proposal at its Jan. 28 meeting.

The project is being funded by a state grant secured in 2015, following the death of Dawn Mallory, 65, a teacher at the middle school.

Mallory, 65, who had taught seventh and eighth grade math at the school, was walking through the parking lot around 7 a.m. the morning March 14, 2014, when she was struck by a vehicle. State police said the driver, Elizabeth Everett, 50, of Hebron, backed up and ran into

Mallory after she realized she had driven into the bus lane.

Everett was later found guilty of misconduct with a motor vehicle by criminal negligence and unsafe backing, and sentenced in February 2017 to 20 months in prison.

On Monday, Luchs project manager and principal Ron Dagan and senior traffic design engineer Jeff Hopper presented the most recently-chosen alternative and said the design was the result of discussions at the June meeting.

The plan proposes about a dozen improvements, including a one-way parent drop off loop to separate parking from moving traffic, Dagan said. The new driveway would bring parents exclusively to pick up and drop off locations with pavement markings to manage traffic flow. It will also provide longer lanes for dropping off and picking up children.

"The main purpose is to get parents to drop offs without crossing any parking lots," Dagan said.

Additionally, there will be a staff parking lot

where only staff can go.

The plan also includes fixes at the middle school and the main entrance.

"The main entrance is a challenge," Dagan said.

The design creates a "safer and more efficient main entrance by installing a rapid flashing beacon, removing a crossing on Wall Street – leaving a single cross walk – and incorporates a fence to make sure students go to the proper crossing location," according to the PowerPoint presentation.

Dagan said the engineers agree it is safest for the kids to cross at only one location.

The plan proposes the installation of an underground conduit to provide power so a traffic light can be added in the future, Dagan said. Since the pavement would already be torn up, it would be a good time to add the conduit.

The plan also proposes adding sidewalks from the main entrance toward Ridge Road, Dagan said. The sidewalk would be behind a stone wall to keep students further away from

traffic.

The plan provides for a handicapped accessible drop off at the entrances of the high school and middle school that will conform to the Americans with Disabilities Act, Dagan said.

Less than 15 people attended the meeting and there were very few comments or questions. One question was if school resource officers would direct traffic, to which Schools Superintendent Pat Law said she thinks the officers would be there to "support" traffic.

Another question was if there would still be speed bumps, to which Dagan said there would. The temporary speed bumps currently at the school would be made permanent.

Once the school board approves the design, permit applications will be submitted, Dagan said. The project will likely go to bid in mid-April and will be awarded in May.

"The plan is to start construction in June at some time," Dagan said. "That will give the contractor two months [before school begins] to construct it."

Man Arrested in Connection with East Hampton School Bus Crash

by Elizabeth Regan

East Hampton Police earlier this month arrested a Glastonbury man on a host of charges related to an Oct. 29 school bus crash on North Main Street that left multiple middle students with head injuries.

Scott Kaminski, 33, was charged Jan. 4 with first-degree reckless endangerment, reckless driving, evading responsibility, operating while under suspension, illegal passing and failure to drive right.

Kaminski is a known drug user and a suspect in multiple thefts in Glastonbury, according to the arrest warrant affidavit.

Kaminski also faces charges from the Connecticut State Police and West Hartford police stemming from the Oct. 29 incident, which began when Kaminski allegedly stole a Dodge Ram quad cab pickup truck from the Starbucks parking lot in Colchester and ended when he crashed an allegedly stolen Jeep in East Windsor.

Kaminski has been incarcerated at



Kaminski

MacDougall-Walker Correctional Institution in Suffield since the day of the incident, according to the Department of Correction website. The Judicial Branch website shows he was sentenced Nov. 1 to six months in prison on a second-degree failure to appear charge. East Hampton police served the warrant during an appearance at Middlesex Superior Court.

According to an arrest warrant affidavit, East Hampton police were dispatched to North Main Street near Angelico's Lake House at 7:39 a.m. for a report of a multi-vehicle accident, possibly involving the pickup that had only recently been stolen from Colchester.

Kaminski had already fled the scene in a white Grand Cherokee stolen from one of the accident witnesses by the time police arrived, the affidavit said.

DATTCO bus driver Samantha Bradley told police she was just finishing the last stop on her middle school run when the bus was hit head-on by the pickup truck, according to the affidavit. Bradley said the truck had been traveling north at a high rate of speed and had passed multiple cars that were stopped in front of her when the crash occurred.

Witness David Shulman, who had stopped to help, told police the driver was screaming when he got out of the truck after the crash, the

affidavit said. As Shulman walked around to the passenger side of his Jeep to get away from him, the man got into the open driver's side door of Shulman's vehicle and drove off.

Kaminski allegedly stole a shopping basket full of razors from Gardiner's Market in Glastonbury about a half hour after the school bus crash, the affidavit said.

State police involvement in the case began hours later when they were alerted by Waterbury police that the driver of a stolen Jeep engaged police in pursuit after an attempted traffic stop around 2:09 p.m., according to state police records. It was the same vehicle stolen from East Hampton.

State police said they saw the Jeep approximately nine minutes later speeding on I-84 eastbound in West Hartford near exit 39A before it got off the highway on Exit 42. The Jeep struck several cars in West Hartford and Hartford.

State police said the Jeep was spotted again a short time later near exit 48 on I-84 eastbound, where troopers tried to stop him but were unsuccessful. A chase ensued, taking troopers and the Jeep from I-91 to exit 42, where they continued north on South Main Street and then east on Route 140.

The chase ended when the Jeep crashed into

a dump truck and another vehicle, according to state police. The Jeep came to an uncontrolled stop on the drivers' side near the intersection of Route 140 and Shoham Road in East Windsor.

Superintendent of Schools Paul K. Smith, who was on the scene with East Hampton Middle School Principal Jason Lehmann, told the *RiverEast* after the crash that the students were loaded into a different bus and assessed by nurses when they got to the school. Those who showed signs of injuries were taken to their own doctors by their parents.

The affidavit said Kaminski, in an interview with Colchester police related to the theft of the pickup truck from the Starbucks parking lot, told an officer he remembered hitting a school bus and stealing the Jeep but did not remember what happened after that.

Kaminski initially agreed to give Colchester police a written statement before deciding he wanted to speak with an attorney, according to the affidavit. Colchester police described Kaminski as polite and apologetic.

Kaminski is next slated to appear in court on Jan. 22 in the state police and West Hartford cases stemming from the police pursuit and on Jan. 31 in the East Hampton case.

Man Arrested for Robbing Store Near East Hampton Police Station

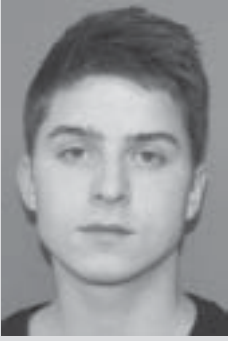
by Elizabeth Regan

An East Hampton man was arrested Monday night after allegedly showing an airsoft pellet gun during a robbery at Subway on Route 66 – just down the street from the town police station.

Daniel William Doherty, 19, of 82 Comstock Trail, was charged with first-degree robbery, sixth-degree larceny and having a weapon in a motor vehicle. East Hampton Police Chief Dennis Woessner said Doherty was held overnight at the police station on a \$250,000 bond but was released by a Middlesex Superior Court judge Tuesday morning on a promise to appear.

Woessner said the airsoft gun looked like a revolver.

First-degree robbery applies when the suspect is armed with “a dangerous weapon,” according to state statute. A dangerous weapon



Doherty

is defined as anything, loaded or unloaded, from which a shot may be fired.

“This actually fires airsoft pellets, so it’s classified as a gun,” Woessner said.

The charge of sixth-degree larceny indicates Doherty stole less than \$500 in the robbery, though Woessner declined to provide a specific amount.

Woessner said police responded “immediately” after receiving a 9:18 p.m. emergency call from the restaurant, which is only a few doors down from the police station. The call was made by a Subway employee right after the robbery, he said.

One officer went in to check on the well-being of the Subway employee while another officer found Doherty in a car attempting to leave an adjacent parking lot, Woessner said.

Doherty was arrested without incident, according to police. The money and the gun were recovered.

Woessner said he was not aware of any prior police involvement with Doherty.

Doherty is next scheduled to appear at Middlesex Superior Court on Jan. 29.

East Hampton Police News

1/1: John Moore III, 61, of 2 Bryon Rd., was arrested and charged with DUI and failure to drive right, East Hampton Police said.

1/2: Benjamin Deveran, 18, of 15 Seven Hills Crossing, turned himself in pursuant to an active warrant for his arrest and was charged with disorderly conduct and third-degree assault, police said.

1/4: Jason Phillip, 44, of 66 Comstock Trail, was issued a summons for speeding, police said.

1/8: Rosalyn Hine, 47, of 42 Wangonk Trail, was and charged with disorderly conduct and second-degree reckless endangerment, police said.

Also, from Dec. 31-Jan. 6, officers responded to 18 medical calls and six alarms, and made 16 traffic stops.

Portland Police News

1/10: Joseph Walden, 45, of 24 McKenzie St., Middletown, was charged with operating an unlicensed repair facility/garage, Portland Police said.

Andover Police News

1/8: State Police said Nathaniel McCann, 25, of 193 Lake Rd., was arrested and charged with DUI and improper turn/no signal.

Marlborough Police News

1/8: State Police said Jayvhen D. Hunter, 20, of 44 Brook St., New Britain, was arrested and charged with possession of drug paraphernalia and possession of greater than half an ounce of cannabis.

1/8: State Police said Kyshawn J. Gunn, 21, of 14 Liberty St., New Britain, was arrested and charged with possession of greater than half an ounce of cannabis.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

I was saddened to hear about the passing of Portland resident, and frequent contributor to the *Rivereast* letters to the editor, Shirley Olson. While I never met her, Shirley and I talked on the phone fairly often, usually whenever she’d send a letter in. We’d spar a bit over just how she wanted the letters to appear, but never heatedly; it was all in good fun, and by the end of the call chances are we’d have shared a laugh.

Shirley, as far as I knew, never served public office in town, but she was dedicated to Portland. She was a frequent attendee of town meetings, and would often share her two cents with the board or commission members gathered for the meeting. An animal-lover, she seemed particularly interested in the plight of poor Rocky the dog, who’s been confined to the Portland pound for nearly three years. Last year, she even wrote, with the help of Rocky’s owner Paul, a series of letters to the editor in the guise of Rocky himself. Unorthodox to be sure, and in hindsight I probably shouldn’t have allowed it, but Shirley was a hard person to say ‘no’ to. In the end, the letters were both funny and sweet, and definitely brought a smile to my face.

Shirley’s death came as a big surprise to me; I didn’t know she’d been sick. It had been a few months since she’d last sent a letter to the editor in, but that in itself wasn’t overly unusual. She’d often take a few months off in between letters, only to come back with one, followed frequently by a phone call – “Mike? This is Shirley” – asking me how the letter turned out and then sharing a tale about her beloved cat Señorita.

My condolences go out to Shirley’s family and friends. She’ll be missed.

* * *

Speaking of Portland, and on a happier note, congratulations are in order for state Rep. Christie Carpino who, earlier this month, was chosen by her fellow Republicans to be the new chair of the House Republican Caucus.

Carpino represents the 32nd District in the state House of Representatives. The district covers Portland and Cromwell. She was re-elected to a fifth term in office last November, and the new legislative session began earlier this month.

Carpino was also assigned to key roles on the Judiciary, Public Health and Regulation Review Committees for the 2019-20 legislative term, according to a press release issued by her office.

“The senior leadership role of the Caucus chair is an opportunity to help craft policy to move the state of Connecticut forward,” Carpino says in the press release. “I am also looking forward to guiding newer members so they can make positive impacts in their communities via the legislative process in Hartford.”

* * *

Hopefully by the time you read this on Fri-

day it will all be over, but the way things are going I’m not betting on it. I’m talking about the federal government shutdown, which now is the longest federal government work stoppage in history. Regardless of how you feel about the infamous “wall” – and I’m against it – shutting down the government until there’s funding for it is just plain wrong.

The impacts to you and me may seem minimal – although I admit to wondering just how attentive folks like TSA agents are when their next paycheck is who-knows-when. (The incident earlier this month where a flyer in Atlanta brought a loaded gun onto a plane, totally undetected, is a little unnerving.) But one thing I don’t need to wonder about is this: there are federal employees, spread across all 50 states, that are hurting and are in need of money. According to *USA Today*, some 800,000 federal employees are either working without pay or have been sent home altogether. And according to ABC News, on Tuesday members of the armed forces, for the first time ever, missed paychecks because of a government shutdown.

I was reading a story in the newspaper over the weekend about some federal workers who have taken second jobs – on top of their full-time ones they aren’t getting paid for – as, say, Uber drivers or something like that, just to make ends meet. For yes, while these workers will indeed receive back pay when this shutdown finally ends, many of them are hurting *now*. An awful lot of people live paycheck-to-paycheck these days, and I’m guessing “I can pay you when the shutdown ends” won’t fly at many grocery stores, or with many landlords when the rent comes due.

One of the more frustrating things about the shutdown is that President Trump had a Republican-controlled Congress his first two years in office. Two years. And yet now, with the Democrats in power, he’s saying “pay for the wall or I’ll shut down the government”? It’s not like the wall is a new idea of his; he campaigned on it throughout 2015 and 2016. So why now, when it would’ve been so much easier as recently as a few months ago? The logic in his timing is a little baffling.

Regardless, it’s time for President Trump to end the shutdown. And the onus really is on him at this point. Both sides of the aisle in Washington have tried to broker deals to get the government up and running, only to have Trump reject them.

In recent days Trump has tried shifting the blame for the shutdown to Democrats, but he himself said on live TV before the shutdown he’d gladly accept responsibility for it. The power is in his hands. Trump can open the government and continue to negotiate for wall funding. But he needs to open the government. People are hurting. Families are hurting.

* * *

See you next week.

East Hampton Schools Chief Recommends 2.5% Budget Increase

by Elizabeth Regan

Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith this week recommended a \$31.42 million 2019-20 budget, representing what he called a “modest” increase over the current budget, that includes several new staffing positions and makes significant advancements in science and technology programming.

The budget presented to the Board of Education Monday is a \$785,200, or 2.5 percent, increase over the current budget.

The request includes the “reshuffling” of several existing teachers and creates several new staffing positions that Smith said won’t cost any additional money.

According to Smith, a budget compromise forged last year is “providing an additional \$140,000” in the proposed budget for a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) coordinator and a sixth grade world language teacher. The cost of a new autism specialist for the district will be offset by tuition paid by out-of-district special education students.

Business manager Karen Asetta said this week there is currently one tuition-paying special education student at Memorial School; officials are “highly confident” another student will be soon be coming on board.

The budget proposal also includes a Memorial School psychologist to support the special education program, which is designed to provide a therapeutic environment and help to avoid costly outplacements. Smith said a psychologist was hired mid-year in the current budget at \$82,525 and will now need to be carried through into the next school year.

Smith’s budget request comes on the heels of a protracted 2018-19 budget season that didn’t end until October, when voters finally approved a total \$45.45 million budget at the fourth budget referendum of the year. The spending plan included \$30.50 for education and \$14.95 million for general government.

The contentious season was marked by complaints from education supporters who decried

the failure of the Board of Finance and Town Council to restore several lost teaching positions despite about \$700,000 in unexpected funds from the state, combined with a higher than anticipated 2017-18 budget surplus. A compromise forged prior to the fourth and final referendum, which was approved by voters as a separate question on the ballot, ultimately restored three out of eight teaching positions to the education budget.

Smith told the school board that the planning process for the 2019-20 budget began several months ago - before the 2018-19 spending plan was even approved.

Now, he said, he’s hoping the district “can make some bold moves forward.”

The STEM coordinator position for grades four through eight is one part of a district-wide focus on the sciences evident in proposed advanced placement classes in physics, computer science and forensics at the high school, a new robotics team at the middle school, and a technology-centered “makerspace” at Center School.

He said the new STEM coordinator will be tasked with introducing science, technology, engineering and math “to the absolute max” at Center School and East Hampton Middle School. The coordinator will support teachers in delivering the STEM curriculum, coordinate hands-on activities and bring in speakers from the technology, manufacturing and engineering sectors.

According to Smith, making a world language teacher available to sixth graders for a full year will better prepare them for high school courses in Spanish and French. The position was eliminated last year.

Smith said the STEM and world language positions cost a total of \$140,000 - the same amount approved in last year’s budget compromise.

The supplemental appropriation resulting

from the compromise was used in the current budget for a math and language arts remedial teacher in Memorial School, a middle school special education teacher and a high school English teacher. The teachers were hired to start this month.

According to Smith, receiving the \$140,000 supplemental appropriation last year means he can apply the same amount to new hires in the 2019-20 spending plan without increasing the budget’s bottom line.

“It wasn’t meant to be a half-year solution,” Smith said. “It was meant to restore funding that several members of the community felt was due the school [because of] the additional ECS funding we saw from the state.”

The superintendent’s recommended budget includes the reshuffling of several teachers – at no additional cost – in order to carry over the high school English and middle school special education positions restored in the current budget and to add a literacy specialist at the middle school and a special education teacher at Memorial School.

Smith said the “realignment” is possible because of a change to the middle school schedule that provides children with one English Language Arts class every day of the week instead of splitting one period between English and reading. The change freed up the four reading teachers to take positions elsewhere in the district, he said.

Smith requested the literacy specialist at the middle school to support struggling readers now that the reading classes have been removed from the schedule.

Smith also addressed what he described as the most-requested budget change parents have asked for: increasing popular choral teacher Ehren Brown’s position from part-time to full-time. At a cost of \$22,000, the additional hours in the music department enable the addition of an advanced placement music theory class and

new courses in theater arts.

Smith cited a vibrant theater scene in town – evident in the high school theater program, the Young People’s Center for Performing Arts and the Podium Players – that will be bolstered by academic study of the arts.

The focus isn’t necessary because students aren’t exposed to the arts, he said – “but because they are.”

One of the largest budget drivers for the 2.5 percent increase is an estimated 6 percent health insurance hike, according to Smith. The district in 2017 switched to the Connecticut Partnership Plan, which allows municipal employees to become part of the same plan offered to state employees.

Smith emphasized the three-year teachers’ contract negotiated in the fall is helping to keep down costs related to salaries and benefits. The contract includes a 1.75 percent raise for the coming year and adds another rung to the salary ladder so it takes educators another year to reach the highest-paying step.

The contract also includes a one-year freeze of the salary schedule so none of the teachers will rise to a higher-paying step in the 2019-20 budget year. According to Smith, the administrators’ union has agreed to the same step freeze “in solidarity” with the teachers’ union.

Salaries and benefits for all 350 employees of the school district comprise 77 percent of the proposed budget, according to budget documents presented by Smith.

The documents laid out the bottom line budget figures along with a message that the Board of Education is grateful for the teachers’ willingness to make concessions that allow the district to introduce new programming and courses with the goal of moving the district forward.

“The children of East Hampton are well-served by the proposed budget and the community is well-served by an increase that is very reasonable,” the document stated.

Obituaries continued

Portland

William J. Francesco

William J. Francesco, 95, of Portland, husband of the late wife Faye L. Francesco, passed away peacefully Saturday, Jan. 12, at Middlesex Hospital Hospice. He was the son of the late Louis and Agnes (Rockinger) Notarfrancesco. Born on June 10, 1923 in New York, N.Y., he served in the United States Navy during World War II.

Bill was a Portland resident for over 50 years and worked for Raymond Engineering for many years until his retirement. He was a member of the Church of St. Mary.

He leaves a son, Michael Francesco and his wife Kelley of Portland; a daughter, Linda McGirr and her husband John of Ivoryton; and grandchildren, Brendan and Cassidy McGirr and Nicholas and Lucas Francesco.

The funeral was held Thursday, Jan. 17, from the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial in St. Mary Church, Portland, later that morning. Burial was in the family plot in St. Mary Cemetery, Portland, with full military honors. Friends called at the funeral home Wednesday, Jan. 16.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Middlesex Hospice Unit c/o Development Office, 55 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457 or to the Portland Food Bank, 7 Waverly Ave., Portland, CT 06480.

Obituaries

Hebron

Ira M. Goldberg

Ira M. Goldberg, 77, passed away peacefully at home Monday, Dec. 24, with his beloved wife Carol (King) and devoted dog Kayley by his side.

Born in Hartford, he was the son of William and Lillian (Gersten) Goldberg. He was raised in Colchester, graduating from Bacon Academy in 1959. Ira interrupted his college studies to join the Merchant Marine to see the world. Subsequently he was drafted into the Army in 1965 and served his country in Vietnam. He completed his Bachelor of Science degree in business administration at Central Connecticut State College in 1972. During his college years he worked for GMAC as a "repo man."

After graduation, Ira joined the government Defense Contract Administration Service (DCAS) district office in Hartford as a quality assurance specialist. He became a Contract Specialist Trainee in 1974 and in 1983 he joined the Air Force Plant Representative Office (AFPRO) at Pratt & Whitney as an Administrative Contracting Officer, retiring in 1996 from the Defense Logistics Agency - Defense Contract Management Command.

Ira and Carol married in 1984 and made their home in Hebron. He loved nature and simple country life, enjoying walks in the woods, gathering and splitting wood maintaining the wood stove to keep us comfy in cold winter months, and fearlessly taking on all kinds of projects around the house. Ira also enjoyed escaping New England weather with trips to Florida and the Caribbean. He was an avid poker player, enjoyed technical analysis of stock trends and took delight in the hunt for the perfect convertible sports car.

Ira was predeceased by his parents, his brother Eugene Goldberg and sister Joan Dartnell.

He leaves behind his loving wife Carol; his brother Bruce Grayson and dear friend Sandi Wilson; sister-in-law Holly Peterson and husband Darrell; brother-in-law Gary King and wife Dianne; his much-loved nephew Rian Dartnell and wife Sabine and much-loved niece Ashley Dartnell-Steinberg and husband Bruce; his nephew, Devon Dartnell and wife Maryann; his niece, Jill Granville and husband Carson; nephews, Marcus, Eric (Felicia) and Ben (Aga) Peterson and Keith Gouin; along with many grandnieces and nephews.

In keeping with Ira's wishes there will be no services. A celebration of his life will be held with family in the spring.

In lieu of flowers, please donate to the American Lung Association, American Cancer Society, or the charity of your choice in his memory.

Arrangements are in the care of Luddy Cremation Care. To share a memory of Ira, visit luddyandpetersonfh.com.



Portland

Richard A. Smith

Richard Arthur Smith, 77, of Portland, husband of Elizabeth (White) Smith of 42 years, passed away at his home Wednesday, Jan. 9. Born in Barre, Vt., he was the son of the late Ernest A. and Maude I. (Bailey) Smith.

Dick, or Smitty as he was also known, had been employed at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft for over 25 years and EDAC for 12 years, retiring in 1997. His family was very important to him, especially his grandson Chris Terio. Dick had a passion for anything mechanical or automotive. He would say if he couldn't fix it then it wasn't broken. Dick was helpful and always there to help everyone.

Besides his wife, Dick is survived by three sons, Donald Denette Jr. of Sherwood, Ark., Robert Denette of Surprise, Ariz., and David Denette of East Haddam; five daughters, Robin Smith of Woodinville, Wash., Ingrid Smith of Torrington, Wendy Morgan of Moulton, Ala., Heidi Geores of Middletown and Leslie Ficket of Mayberry, Fla.; one brother, Kenneth Smith of North Granby; 16 grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

Funeral services were held Thursday, Jan. 17, at the Doolittle Funeral Home, 14 Old Church St., Middletown. Interment will be private at the request of the family.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Dick's memory may be made to mikeroweworks.org.

Messages of condolence may be sent to the family at doolittlefuneralservice.com.



Colchester

David J. Zaccaro

David J. Zaccaro, 63, of Colchester, adored husband of Audrey (Burdick) Zaccaro, passed away Wednesday, Jan. 9. Born Dec. 23, 1955, in Stafford Springs, he was the son of Joseph Zaccaro Sr. of Enfield and the late Beverly (Yost) Zaccaro.

Known by his loved ones and friends as "Dave," "The Wave" and "Papa" he met the love of his life, Audrey, at Southern Connecticut State College, New Haven while earning his B.S. in business administration. Prior to his studies, he proudly served his country as an Air Force Medic stationed in Albuquerque, N.M. He was employed by the Veterans Administration in West Haven and Hartford and the Department of the Navy, Groton. He returned to school to become a licensed practical nurse, where he served Eastern Connecticut, caring for individuals with disabilities for the State of Connecticut, Department of Developmental Services and Pediatric Services of America up until his retirement in 2018.

A fiercely-loved man, his bear hugs, goofy dancing, incredible sense of humor, random outbursts and big moustache smile will be missed dearly by his family - to which he was fully devoted. Dave coached his children's sports teams. He loved his daily pots of coffee, Audrey's cooking, big breakfast platters, going out for pizza at Rossini's and beating up on his sons and nephews in fantasy football.

A legendary bargain hunter, his greatest joy was traveling with family - especially when it was a "great freaking deal." His travels included fun getaways to the Caribbean with the kids, romantic trips to Europe with his wife and, more recently, vacations in Florida, where he would build sand castles, walk the beach, swim in the ocean with his pride and joy, Maddie.

In addition to his loving wife of 35 years, David (the original Mr. Mom) leaves three children: Christopher David Zaccaro and his fiancée Kirsten Spear of East Hartford, Daniel Zaccaro of Colchester and Chelsea Zaccaro of Colchester. Papa leaves his "favorite" granddaughter, Madelynn "Maddie" Zaccaro, daughter of Chelsea. He is survived by his father Joseph Sr.; sister and brother-in-law (x2) Lee-Etta and Matthew Burdick of Enfield; his mother and father-in-law, Dolores and David Burdick of Uncasville; numerous extended family members; his dearly loved co-workers, clients and friends.

He was predeceased by his mother, Beverly, and his brother, Joseph Jr.

The family will receive guests from noon-3 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 19, with a Celebration of Life service offered at 2:30 p.m. at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. Burial will be private.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.



Colchester

Ellen Carfi

Ellen (Hustis) Carfi, 68, of Colchester, beloved and devoted wife of Jack, passed away Friday, Jan. 11, surrounded by loved ones at Middlesex Hospital in Middletown, after a courageous battle with cancer. Born March 17, 1950, in White Plains, N.Y., she was the daughter of the late Philip and Elizabeth (Eyster) Hustis.

Ellen earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in fashion design from Endicott College in Beverly, Mass. She was a talented seamstress and custom designer throughout her life. For the past 22 years, together with her husband Ellen owned and operated NuNu's Bistro in Colchester, where she was a gracious host and made countless friendships over the years.

In addition to her loving husband of 37 years, she leaves two brothers, Philip "Skip" Hustis of Hillsboro, N.H., and Peter Hustis of White Plains, N.Y.; and several nieces, nephews and friends.

The family will receive guests from 10 a.m.-noon Monday, Jan. 21, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, with a time of reflection at noon. A repass will follow the service at NuNu's Bistro. Burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to the American Cancer Society, 825 Brook St., I-91 Tech Ctr., Rocky Hill, CT 06067 (cancer.org).

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.



Colchester

Yolande B. Dube

Yolande B. Dube, 94, of Colchester, formerly of Cromwell, passed away peacefully with family by her side at Harrington Court in Colchester Tuesday, Jan. 8. She was born in Lewiston, Maine, on Feb. 5, 1924, a daughter of the late Odilon and Rose Bernard.

She was predeceased by her beloved husband of 58 years, Patrick M. Dube, on Jan. 1, 2001. Together they used to love to go on summer vacations in Maine visiting family and friends.

Known as Grammy to all that loved her, she was a family person first. She loved family get-togethers and functions, playing cards and games with family members, and visits from anyone in the family at any time. She would love to sit and talk for hours, had a soothing smile, an infectious laugh, and when it came time to leave would always want "just one more kiss," and always say "bye-bye dear."

She also loved music and dancing, as she would dance for hours at a time. She danced in the nursing home every time she heard music, whether at a function, in the lobby, or just in the hallway. If she heard the music, her body had to move.

Yolande leaves behind a son, Patrick Dube, a.k.a. Larry, of Portland; a son, Robert Dube of Portland; a daughter, Joan Brule of Norwich; a son, David Dube and his wife Denise of Salem; a grandson, Joseph Brule and his wife Melanie of Yantic; a granddaughter, Sandra Brule and her dear friend Tony Gargano of Colchester; a grandson Richard Dube of Olympia, Wash.; a granddaughter Jeanette Bingley of Tacoma, Wash.; a granddaughter, Danielle Aldrich and her husband Tobias of Cranston, R.I.; a granddaughter, Nicole Lewis and her husband Aaron of Natick, Mass.; a granddaughter, Michelle Dube of West Hartford; a great-granddaughter, Katie Brule of Pawcatuck; a great-grandson, Christopher Brule, stationed at Beale AFB in California; great-granddaughters, Katelyn and Amanda Weichert of Washington; a great-granddaughter, Danielle Bingley of Washington; a great-granddaughter, Noa Lewis of Natick, Mass.; a sister-in-law, Irene Pomerleau of Lewiston, Maine; a sister-in-law, Mary Dube of Rocky Hill; and many nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by brothers Leo Bernard, Laureat Bernard, and Richard Bernard; sisters Doris Peseckis, Cecile Evenson; and son-in-law Gerald Brule.

Visitation of family and friends was held Friday, Jan. 11, with the funeral service Saturday, Jan. 12, at Rose Hill Cemetery in Rocky Hill.

Special thanks to all the nurses at Harrington Court in Colchester who cared for her, and made her stay there easier on her, and the family. Thanks for the special videos of her dancing and other pictures you forwarded as well.

Portland

Lorraine Dube

Lorraine "Noreen" Dube, 87, of Portland, wife of the late Eusebe Dube, died Friday, Dec. 28, at her residence, surrounded by her family. Born June 12, 1931, in Grandfalls, NB, Canada, she was the daughter of the late Thomas and Evelyn (LaPointe) Perreault.

Lorraine had been a resident of Portland for 58 years, a member of St. Mary Church and she had been retired from the Airex Rubber Co. Lorraine most of all enjoyed being around her family and cooking.

She is survived by her loving family: a son and daughter-in-law, Robert and Nancy Dube of Portland; two daughters, Diane Morneau of Portland, Patricia and son-in-law Cesar Tamayo of Quebec, Canada, Roy Perreault of Montreal, Canada; two sisters, Jackie Simmons of Essex, Julliette Buchanan of Portland; five grandchildren, Michael, Leslie, Lisa, Ashley, Robert Jr.; great-grandchildren, Mariah, Shawn, Justin, Destiny, Kaden, Noah, Cora, Alex; also, several nieces and nephews.

She is predeceased by a great-granddaughter, Alina; brothers, Louis, Maurice, Alvin; and a sister, Marie Mae.

The family would give special thanks to the Home Hospice Care for their compassion and care.

A Mass of Christian Burial was held at St. Mary's Church, Portland. Burial will be in the Swedish Cemetery at a later date.

The Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland was in charge of arrangements.



Colchester

Heather Lise Norris



Heather Lise Norris, 22, of Colchester, went home to the loving arms of the Lord Saturday, Jan. 12. Born June 12, 1996, she was the beloved daughter of Robert and Francine (Lareau) Norris Jr.

In addition to her loving parents, she leaves two siblings, Sean and Kristyn; grandparents, Camille and Lise Lareau and Robert and Mary Norris Sr.; her fiancé, Kameron Klima; and many aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.

Heather was a 2014 graduate of Bacon Academy in Colchester. She loved the outdoors, especially spending time at the beach or taking long walks in the woods, where she found peace.

The family received guests Wednesday, Jan. 16, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral liturgy was celebrated Thursday, Jan. 17, directly at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave., Colchester, with a repass following. Burial was private.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to Catholic Charities, 331 Main St., Norwich, CT 06360 to help others in the diocese struggling with addiction (ccfn.org).

Marlborough

Janet Harlan

Feb. 26, 1934 - Jan. 11, 2019

Janet "Sue" Harlan, 84, passed away peacefully Friday, Jan. 11, at her home in Torrance, Calif. he was born Feb. 26, 1934, in Hartford, to Robert and Mildred Chapman.

Sue spent her early years in Marlborough, attending a one-room grade school. Upon completion of school, she drove across country to California in a VW bug to San Bernardino, Calif., where she later met and married Herb Harlan in 1962. She worked as a retail clerk for 15 years at Alpha Beta Markets, performing book-keeping duties and overseeing the bread aisle.

Sue lived life to the fullest, known for her love of family, a strong independent work ethic, bringing humor to a situation through storytelling and joke-sharing.

Sue was preceded in death by her parents and her husband Herb.

She will be lovingly remembered by her son Craig and his wife Cheryl; daughter Diane and her husband Ron; grandchildren, Johnathan, Justin, Allison; and great-grandchildren, Jackson, Kaia, Bria and Luke.

Please go to Rice Mortuary's website, LAFuneral.com, to send the family messages and to share memories.

