



RIVEREAST

News Bulletin

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

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Meeting the Congresswoman... Andover resident Gerry Wright traveled to Washington, D.C., last week to see the State of the Union address in person, as a special guest of U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal. Wright was invited due to his ongoing quest to help fellow Vietnam War veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange. While in Washington, Wright met other elected officials from Connecticut, including U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro. See story on page 26.

Former Area Clergy On Sex Abuse List

by Elizabeth Regan and Allison Lazur

Roger M. Comtois and Salvatore L. Busca comprised two-thirds of the Diocese of Norwich's inaugural ordination class in 1955.

Comtois' first assignment took him to St. Patrick Church in East Hampton, according to published reports at the time. Busca went to St. Andrew Church in Colchester.

What happened after that remains unclear.

But the names of the two late priests were resurrected on Sunday when the diocese published a list of 43 members of clergy who have received "accusations of substance" involving the sexual abuse of a minor.

The Most Rev. Michael R. Cote, bishop of Norwich, released the list on Sunday afternoon.

The document included the names of accused clergy along with dates of ordination, removal or departure from ministry and, when applicable, death. The list indicates 33 out of the 43 members of clergy are dead.

Cote said no priest or deacon serving now has been substantively accused of sexually abusing a minor.

The list did not include the nature of the allegations. It did not specify which priests served at which churches – or when.

When the *Rivereast* asked current priests in towns belonging to the Norwich diocese if any of the clergymen on the list had ever served in Colchester, East Hampton, Hebron or Portland, they directed questions to the Diocese of Norwich's communications office.

The Rev. Paul Boudreau, pastor of St. Mary

Church in Portland, said he was instructed by the diocese to refer all inquiries to its spokesman.

Diocesan communications director Wayne Gignac said he does not have access to information about where and when the accused clergy served.

"The scope was to provide a list of names of clergy with allegations of substance of sexual abuse of minors," Gignac said. "It is our hope that the release of the names will bring some measure of healing, and acknowledgement to those who have been directly harmed."

The *Rivereast's* review of obituaries and historical news reports revealed some of the priests with ties to *Rivereast* communities: Comtois, Busca, Richard T. Buongiorno, R. Thomas McConaghy and Joseph P. Murphy. Felix Maguire has served in the Norwich diocese, but was accused of sexual abuse of a minor in the Archdiocese of Hartford.

According to a letter from Cote shared with parishioners and posted on the diocesan website, the list of accused priests was released "in the spirit of accountability and transparency" at the recommendation of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' National Review Board.

The list is based on a review of all clergy records by a team of volunteer lay people knowledgeable in law enforcement and the rules of the Catholic Church, according to Cote. The

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Hebron Residents 'Frightened' by Break-Ins

by Sloan Brewster

A recent rash of car break-ins and thefts has left Hebron residents "genuinely concerned and frightened" – and the town's Board of Selectmen will soon hold a forum to address the matter.

One of the most recent – and high-profile – incidents occurred last month, when a car was stolen from a home on Chesterfield Road and was recovered in North Stonington after a high-speed chase. The culprits who took it remain on the lam, Resident State Trooper Daniel Greenwood said at the Feb. 7 meeting of the Board of Selectmen – a meeting that was packed with residents concerned about the break-ins, and seeking a town-wide conversation about the break-ins.

"I'm astounded at how much people do not know what's going on in town," Claudia Riley, who lives in the Amston portion of town, said.

Board of Selectmen Chairman Daniel Larson assured the crowd selectmen would schedule a forum on the issue.

"I know there's concern with what's been going on in town and that [conversation] could take an entire evening," he said.

Riley also sent an email to state Sen. Catherine Osten (D-19), who made an appearance at the meeting.

"I am a resident of Amston and I am deeply concerned about the upward trend of break-ins, car thefts and other robberies in our town and surrounding ones," Riley wrote in the email. "Neighbors I have talked to are genuinely concerned and frightened. We need to do everything we can to keep the quality life great and to continue to encourage new and young families to move in to Hebron and keep it dynamic."

Osten said she had received calls from a few residents about increased crime in town, and that she was at the meeting to gather information. She said her office will keep track of what's going on and Osten will help Hebron in any way possible and provide resources, she said.

Chesterfield Road resident Paul Knutsen said his wife's car was the one stolen and later recovered in North Stonington. It was the second time the family was burglarized, he said. The first time their house was broken into.

While Knutsen said his family has diligently locked up since the first time the house was broken into, the night the car was stolen his wife had just come home from a trip and was unpacking the car and it was unlocked with the key fob still inside.

He said the family saw the thief from the window.

"We literally watched the man who stole our car walk down the driveway, get in and drive away with it," he said.

Knutsen – who said he had lost his sense of security – said he wants residents to do what they can to help one another out, including by setting up neighborhood watches and communicating when break-ins occur.

"We need to be loud," he said.

Resident Kathy Shea said there have been two burglaries in her neighborhood – including the Dec. 6 theft of Christmas presents and jewelry from the home of Senate Brook Drive resident Maria McKeon.

Shea said her neighborhood has an email system for spreading important news. She said she used the email system to let folks know that concerned residents would be coming to the meeting, but also said she wants a better way to communicate when there's going to be a meeting.

"I have concerns," she said. She added her home has "a security system now; we never had this issue."

Greenwood, who has been Hebron's resident state trooper for eight years, told the crowd there has been an increase in the number of larcenies in town. Since the start of the year, he said, there

have been seven – whereas there were 30 for all of 2018.

"Seven in one month is a little high," Greenwood said. "When we're looking at overall, am I seeing a trend that we've increased in larcenies and burglaries? I'd say yes."

He said he and local officers were increasing patrols.

Greenwood said the people looking to steal in Hebron and surrounding towns are a different demographic than they used to be.

Most crooks used to be individual locally-based addicts looking for small change, he said. Now the lawbreakers come in groups from different towns and scatter through small neighborhoods where they can get in and out of houses or rifle through unlocked cars without being detected. They do not, as a rule, smash windows and break into locked vehicles, although two vehicles were broken into, he said. They tend to go from car to car until they find one unlocked and then will open it and rummage for valuables.

"If a car is unlocked, they're going through it," he said.

The trooper advised folks to lock their cars, bring in their valuables, install surveillance

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names go back to the establishment of the diocese in 1953.

He said the list of 43 clergy represents 2.8 percent of all clergy associated with the diocese since it began.

Cote said the diocese has experienced a significant reduction of reported abuse cases since it enacted its first sexual misconduct policy in 1990 and implemented the nationwide Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People in 2002.

“But, one act of abuse is too many and we must always remain vigilant in protecting children and young people,” he said.

The diocese reports all allegations of abuse of minors as required by law to the appropriate state and local authorities, according to Cote.

Cote’s letter defined an “allegation of substance” as any of the following: an allegation to which a member of clergy pleaded guilty or no contest or was found guilty of sexual misconduct with a minor; an allegation determined by investigators to be “reasonable, plausible, probable, and bearing the semblance of truth;” or an allegation that has been acknowledged or admitted by the accused.

He said all allegations with substance were addressed when reported.

Cote described himself as “grievously sorry for the horrific sins and crimes” against vulnerable children.

“I know that the release of these names will cause pain for some victims, families of the accused, friends and parishioners,” he wrote. “It is my hope and prayer that this effort to let the light shine on this dark chapter in the life of the Church will bring some measure of peace, healing, and acknowledgement to those who have been directly harmed and to all members of our faith community.”

The diocese has settled nine sexual assault cases totaling \$7.68 million from July 1, 1977 to January 31, 2019, according to Cote’s letter.

But New London attorney Kelly Reardon told the *Rivereast* this week her firm alone has been involved in sexual abuse settlements with the Diocese of Norwich totaling \$8.16 million.

She called the discrepancy in figures between her firm and those released by the diocese “troubling,” adding that she knows the diocese worked with other law firms in sexual abuse settlements

Reardon also pointed out the lack of information regarding the church each priest was associated with during the allegations.

“[The diocese] failed to provide the parish listing of where a particular priest was located when the molestations occurred, making it difficult for the public to determine if these priests were in their parishes,” she said.

Gail Howard, co-leader of the Connecticut chapter of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP), told the *Rivereast* her group has discovered about five names of clergy who have been accused of sexually abusing children but were not included on the list. She is also urging the diocese to release the whereabouts of the living clergymen on the list.

“There are a few people on the list who are still alive and we want to know where they are,” she said. “We want to alert parents to the possibility that there might be a sex offender living in their town.”

“Horrible Sins and Crimes”

Richard T. Buongiorno served for an indeterminate amount of time at St. Mary Church in Portland in the late 1980s. He was arrested by Connecticut State Police in June 1999 stemming from accusations of misconduct with a child years earlier, according to news reports at the time. He was charged with four counts of felony risk of injury to a minor.

The New London Superior Court criminal clerk’s office said there is no official record of the case.

State statute requires the erasure of criminal records when a criminal case is dismissed, a defendant is acquitted or granted an absolute pardon, or the offense for which the defendant was convicted is later decriminalized. It is unclear which circumstance applies in Buongiorno’s case.

More details about the alleged abuse emerged in civil court over the next few years. Documents from a 2002 civil case show Buongiorno was accused of sexually assaulting a victim he met when the 7-year-old was serving as an altar boy at St. Mary Church in 1987.

Buongiorno’s friendship with the victim and his family continued after Buongiorno was transferred to a parish in Ashford and then to Saint Matthias Church in East Lyme. That’s where, court documents allege, Buongiorno would sexually assault the victim while they were in bed together at the rectory when the victim was 9 and 10 years old.

The suit was brought against Buongiorno for the assault and the diocese for alleged carelessness and negligence.

According to *The Day* newspaper of New London, the diocese and Buongiorno settled the case for \$700,000 without admitting wrongdoing. Half the settlement would be paid by Buongiorno and half by the diocesan insurance carrier.

The diocese said Buongiorno was removed from ministry in 1998. He was laicized in 2005.

Buongiorno is not among the accused clergy listed as dead, but the diocese offered no information on his whereabouts.

R. Thomas McConaghy is another of the few priests on the list who appears to be alive. He served at St. Andrew Church in Colchester from 1981-83, according to *The Day*; allegations date back to his time as commandant at LaSalle Military Academy. McConaghy denied the allegations.

The diocese said McConaghy was removed from ministry in 2005. Officials did not disclose his current location.

Scant Details

Newspaper reports show Comtois, who was one of the first three priests ordained in the newly-formed diocese back in 1955, served at St. Patrick Church initially and then again from 1967 to 1978. The diocese said he was removed from ministry in 1998.

Yet a newspaper announcement shows he went on to officiate a wedding ceremony at St. Bernard Church in Vernon in October 1993. Addressed as “Rev. Roger M. Comtois” in his obituary, he was said to have been “in residence” at the Vernons church since 1992.

Multiple phone calls and emails to Gignac, the diocesan communications director, did not yield a definition for “removed from ministry” or context for Comtois’ apparently continuing association with the church.

Howard, the SNAP cofounder, questioned the meaning of the term in a phone conversation with the *Rivereast*.

“You and I would assume ‘removed from ministry’ means you’re not supposed to be doing any official [church] business in public,” she said.

Comtois died in 1998 at the age of 68 after a prolonged battle with cancer. A viewing was held at St. Bernard Church prior to his burial the next day at Sacred Heart Church in Norwich.

Busca, the priest ordained the same year as Comtois, moved on from St. Andrew Church in Colchester to become an assistant pastor at St. Patrick Church in East Hampton. He served there for an unspecified period of time circa 1956, based on news reports.

He was identified in a *Hartford Courant* article from September of that year as a grade seven religious education instructor. He moved to Sacred Heart Church in Groton in late 1957.

The diocese said Busca was removed from the ministry in 1961, just six years after his ordination. He was excardinated from the diocese in 1969 and transferred to the Servants of the Paraclete.

The international religious community was founded in 1947 “to serve fellow priests and brothers who are facing particular challenges in their vocations and lives,” according to the Servants of the Paraclete website.

The *Albuquerque Journal* has written that priests accused of sexually assaulting children were often sent to the New Mexico treatment center for rehabilitation, with the intent of returning them to their home diocese.

While the diocese said Busca was “perpetually professed” into the Servants of the Paraclete, it’s unclear what the term means.

Gignac again failed to provide substantive clarification, despite multiple calls and emails.

Howard, the SNAP cofounder, said this week she would like to think “perpetually professed” means accused clergy are going to reside under supervision at that facility for the rest of their lives.

But that’s not always the case, she said.

Howard said there have been cases when clergy who were not wanted by their home dioceses after receiving treatment would remain in New Mexico, find jobs, and abuse individuals there.

Busca died in 2006, according to the diocese. It’s unclear how long he remained with the Servants of the Paraclete.

Felix Maguire, another priest on the list, was ordained in the Archdiocese of Hartford. A former pastor of St. John Fisher Church in Marlborough – which is under archdiocesan jurisdiction – Maguire was included last month in the Hartford list of priests credibly accused

of sexually abusing minors. He has served in the Norwich diocese but has not been the subject of allegations of child abuse there, according to the Norwich list.

Maguire emphatically denied accusations that he performed a sex act on a 15-year-old hitchhiker he met in Marlborough, according to the *Courant*. The victim alleged the relationship continued for several months.

The *Courant* said a police investigation was halted after detectives were “ordered by superiors” to drop the matter.

Joseph P. Murphy appears on the Diocese of Norwich’s list of accused clergy with no indication where he served between his 1988 ordination and his removal from ministry 10 years later. But his obituary shows he was raised in Portland and is buried in the St. Mary cemetery.

A July 1995 article in the *Courant* describes the first wedding held in the rebuilt St. Mary Church after the original 118-year-old structure was destroyed by fire. Murphy officiated the wedding for his niece and her groom.

“How fitting it is, the Murphys being one of many families that have been baptized, schooled and confirmed here, to return as a priest ordained to serve God, community and family,” he is quoted as saying at the time.

Murphy died in 2015 at the age of 72.

Murphy’s obituary does not refer to him by the honorific title “the Reverend,” nor does it make any mention of his time spent as a man of the cloth.

The diocese encourages sexual abuse victims to contact law enforcement, civil authorities and the diocesan reporting line. The Connecticut Department of Children and Families can be reached at 1-800-842-2288 and the hotline for the diocese is 1-800-624-7407.

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cameras and make their homes uninviting to would-be thieves.

“They’re usually coming here because usually there’s stuff in the cars,” Greenwood said. “It’s just that we’re a little more relaxed because we’re in the country.” He added surrounding communities are also getting hit by burglars.

In Hebron so far this year, there have been seven larcenies and three vehicle thefts, Greenwood said. The vehicles have been recovered – but none of the alleged burglars have been apprehended, Greenwood said at the meeting.

“We’re recovering [the cars] in Hartford; we’re recovering them in New Haven. They’re not consistent where they’re going,” he said. “Honestly, it seems like they’re just out there joy-riding.”

Town Manager Andrew Tierney said he and selectmen would get back to the residents with a date for the community discussion. He told the *Rivereast* Wednesday residents have also already scheduled a meeting with Greenwood in the hopes of developing a block-watch system.

Tierney advised residents at the meeting to lock their cars and remove valuables, keep their exterior lights on or use motion detector lights, and to call police if they see or hear anything

suspicious.

“Right now Hebron’s attractive,” he said. “That’s not a criticism; I think it’s attractive too.”

One of the audience members asked when people should dial 911 versus calling Greenwood’s office number.

If people need an immediate response or see something suspicious, they should use 911, Greenwood said.

“As adults, if you feel the hair on the back of your neck stand up because it doesn’t feel right that’s a 911 call,” he said. “If you’re unsure should I call 911, call 911.”

He also made it clear that people should not interfere with any burglars.

“If they are stealing your car, do not stand in front of it and think they’re going to stop,” he said. “They’re not going to stop.”

Greenwood advised people to be more aware of their surroundings and look out for their neighbors.

Anyone wishing to call the resident state trooper’s office should dial 860-228-3710. To get in touch with the state police Troop K barracks in Colchester, call 860-465-5400. Osten, meanwhile, stressed at the meeting that she can be reached at 860-240-0579.

Scant Grand List Increase May Be ‘New Normal’ in East Hampton

by Elizabeth Regan

East Hampton’s Grand List grew by \$6.24 million, or 0.84 percent, in 2018.

Town Manager Michael Maniscalco said the slight increase, which brings the Grand List to \$1.15 billion, is a positive sign as the town continues its efforts to recover from the financial crisis that shook the nation and the world just over ten years ago.

“Any growth is going to be good growth,” he said.

The total Grand List now amounts to \$1.15 billion, an increase of \$9.58 million over the previous year.

The increase would create approximately \$414,188 in new tax revenue based on the current 31.32 mill rate, according to Finance Director Jeff Jylkka.

The mill rate is the amount of taxes paid per \$1,000 of taxable property. That means someone with property in town must pay \$33.81 for every \$1,000 of taxable property – including real estate, motor vehicles and personal property used for business purposes.

Maniscalco recalled the years prior to the economic crisis when jumps in the grand list would completely cover increases in the oper-

ating budget.

That doesn’t happen anymore, according to Maniscalco.

“I hate to say it, but it seems like this is the new normal,” he said of the modest increases in tax revenue year over year.

“If we can stay flat with our revenues or even increase them a little bit, that’s great news for us,” he said.

Maniscalco hasn’t yet released his recommended 2019-20 budget. Education spending alone could amount to as much as \$785,200 over the current year if the Board of Education approves the \$31.42 million proposal recommended by Superintendent of Schools Paul K. Smith last month. The school board is set to vote on Feb. 25.

The 2018 Grand List includes \$1.01 billion in assessed value for real estate, \$36.75 million for personal property and \$104.99 million for motor vehicles.

Real estate – which is based on land and building improvements to residential, commercial and retail properties – grew by 0.62 percent over the previous year. That’s an increase of \$6.24 million.

Assessor Gail Gwiazdowski attributed the slight increase in real estate assessments to tax abatements that are phasing out combined with an increase in new homes and renovations.

Maniscalco said the only tax abatement agreement currently in effect belongs to the Edgewater Hill mixed-use development; the abatement runs for one more year.

The tax assessment agreement, signed in March 2014, is based on a 16,800-square foot commercial component and five 8-unit apartment buildings. The agreement gave the developer a five-year tax abatement that scaled back gradually.

The agreement specified that the property would be assessed at land value only for two years after the first certificate of occupancy was issued. The improved property would be assessed at 25 percent of its value in year three, 50 percent in year four, and 75 percent in year five.

The personal property part of the Grand List saw gains of 1.07 percent, or \$389,800, over the previous year.

Motor vehicles increased by 2.89 percent, or

\$9.58 million, over the previous year.

The motor vehicle assessment increase is attributable to an increase in the value of cars, according to Gwiazdowski. She said there are approximately the same number of cars on the list as there were on the last one.

The 2018 Top 10 list of taxpayers in East Hampton is: Eversource Energy (listed as Connecticut Light & Power Co.), with an assessment of \$18.54 million for personal property; Landmark East Hampton LLC, with a combined assessment of \$7.52 million; Connecticut Light & Power Co., with an assessment of \$4.21 million for real estate and motor vehicles; Hampton 66 LLC, with a combined assessment of \$3.50 million; Connecticut Natural Gas Corp., with a combined assessment of \$3.41 million; Global Self Storage LLC, with a combined assessment of \$2.48 million; East High St Realty LLC, with a combined assessment of \$2.39 million; American Equities I LLC, with a combined assessment of \$2.39 million; Paul’s & Sandy’s Too Inc., with a combined assessment of \$2.08 million; and Noslen Inc., with a combined assessment of \$1.83 million.

Portland Grand List Climbs Less Than One Percent

by Elizabeth Regan

The assessed value of property in town grew by 0.85 percent in 2018.

First Selectman Susan Bransfield described the increase as modest.

“We’re always happy when the Grand List increases,” she said.

The total Grand List now amounts to \$828.75 million, an increase of \$6.96 million over the previous year.

The increase would create approximately \$235,354 in new tax revenue based on the current 33.81 mill rate, according to assessor Richard Lasky Jr.

The mill rate is the amount of taxes paid per \$1,000 of taxable property. That means someone with property in town must pay \$33.81 for every \$1,000 of taxable property – including real estate, motor vehicles and personal prop-

erty used for business purposes.

The total includes \$711.09 million in assessed value for real estate, \$41.45 for personal property and \$76.22 million for motor vehicles.

Real estate – which is based on land and building improvements to residential, commercial and retail properties – grew by 0.52 percent over the previous year. That’s an increase of \$3.66 million.

Lasky attributed the increase to new building permits issued between 2017 and 2018. He said he’s been noticing an upward trend in both commercial and residential permits that he expects to continue.

The largest jump came in the personal property category, which is up 8.46 percent – or \$3.23 million – over the previous year. Lasky

pointed to improvements made either by or for commercial tenants as the driver for the increase.

He also cited increased personal property assessments from the town’s utility accounts.

Documents show the personal property assessment for Eversource Energy grew by \$1.3 million, or 7.4 percent, over the previous year. He said the Grand List benefits from regular upgrades to the energy infrastructure made by Eversource.

Motor vehicles grew by \$66,305. The 0.85-percent increase is attributable to an increase in the value of cars, Lasky said. That’s despite having 140 fewer registered vehicles on the current list compared to the previous one.

Lasky noted the final increase in assessment

won’t be known until the Board of Assessment Appeals concludes their review at the end of March.

The 2018 Top 10 list of taxpayers in Portland is: Eversource (listed as Connecticut Light & Power Co.), with an assessment of \$19.88 million; Saint Clements Foundation, Inc., \$4.34 million; Jarvis Airfoil Inc., \$2.71 million; Buckeye Cattle Company LLC, \$2.61 million; Woodgreen Portland Limited Partnership, \$2.54 million; Perry Portland Associates LLC (comprises most of the former Elmcrest Hospital property), \$2.49 million; Oakwood Sports Center of Glastonbury, Inc., \$1.69 million; Carroll Properties III LLC, \$1.62 million; Portland Care and Rehabilitation, \$1.61 million; and Standard Knapp Inc., \$1.57 million.

Portland Women Want to Welcome Those Who ‘Come on Over’

by Elizabeth Regan

Two local women are spearheading an initiative to welcome new residents to town.

Angela Aresco, a real estate agent, and Suzanne Kootz, a mortgage loan officer, recently launched a volunteer group inspired by the iconic message painted on brick overlooking the river that invites people to “Come On Over” from Middletown.

The Come On Over Committee is putting together a welcome packet of coupons, brochures and a directory of important phone numbers to pass out to anyone who moves to town.

Aresco and Kootz put it this way: “So you came on over, now what?”

The two like-minded professionals met at the Portland Fair, where they got to talking about their love for the town and their interest in supporting local businesses and the wider community.

The two discussed coupons – which could offer a free item or a free meal, for example – as a way to draw new residents out into the community and to help businesses thrive.

Aresco said a group of 15 eager and dedicated volunteers are reaching out to businesses on Main Street and beyond to let them know about the Come On Over initiative.

The committee is inviting all local businesses, including home businesses that might not be as well known as those with storefronts,

to submit coupons for the welcome packet.

Kootz described the Come On Over Committee as Aresco’s vision.

Aresco credited Kootz with motivating her to make it a reality.

“Suzanne pushed me on the day I needed to be pushed,” Aresco said. “And I think it’s going to be a success.”

Aresco has lived in Portland for 21 years; Kootz has been there for 16.

It was at a concert on the riverfront that Aresco first looked around and realized there was a whole group of new faces she hadn’t seen before, she recalled.

“We have so many new families, and I don’t know how they are,” she said. “That’s when my mind started working.”

Roughly 95-120 families move into Portland each year, according to Aresco.

The committee will be recruiting businesses to submit coupons through April 15. The first packet will be ready to deliver to new residents by June 1.

The committee envisions coupons that could include a variety of goods and services ranging from a dozen free eggs or small care package to a buy-one, get-one-free meal deal.

“It is an investment for the merchants in town, but to get [new residents] into their establishments early instead of later, I think is a win-win for everybody,” Aresco said.



Suzanne Kootz, left, and Angela Aresco have launched the Come On Over Committee to welcome new residents to town with a packet of information about the town and valuable coupons to get them shopping locally.

Marlborough Grand List Sees 1.06 Percent Increase

by Allison Lazur

Marlborough's 2018 Grand List saw an increase of 1.06 percent, or \$6.25 million, from 2017.

The increase equates to an additional \$228,290 in tax dollars to the town.

The Grand List, totaling \$587,662,210, represents the net value of assessed real estate, personal property and motor vehicles in town. The list saw an increase in all three categories.

According to Tax Assessor Marie Hall, the biggest and "expected" driver behind the real estate increase was the construction of the Big Y supermarket, which her documents reveal was 49 percent complete as of October 1.

Hall said taxes for the remaining 51 percent of the Big Y will be determined from the day the certificate of occupancy was issued.

The real estate increase was 1 percent over the 2017 Grand List, going from \$516.88 mil-

lion to \$522.07 million.

First Selectman Amy Traversa stressed the importance of commercial development, stating the reason the town's Grand List saw an increase was because of commercial growth, such as Big Y. She added that residential construction is "moving at a fraction of its pace."

Personal property, which Hall said "seems to go up every year due to new equipment or a new business opening," saw an increase of 1.33 percent, going from \$11.56 million in 2017 to \$11.71 million.

Motor Vehicles also increased by 1.71 percent from the previous year, bringing the total to \$53.88 million from \$52.97 million.

Hall said the increase is caused by the purchase of new vehicles or residents trading in older vehicles for newer ones.

The Grand List is used by the Board of Finance to help set the mill rate for the upcoming fiscal year, which runs July 1 to June 30. The mill rate is used to calculate a resident's taxes.

Residents can figure out their own tax bill by multiplying the mill rate by their total assessments. One mill is equal to \$1 in tax per \$1,000 of assessed property. Under the current mill rate of 36.52, a resident with a home assessed at \$250,000 would pay \$9,130 in taxes.

The top 15 assessments in the 2018 Grand List included Schwartz Properties at \$7.74 million; Eversource Energy (listed as Connecticut Light & Power Co.) at \$5.67 million; Both LLC at \$3.22 million; Marlborough Health Care Realty Co. at \$2.80 million; Bridle Brook Estates LLC at \$2.08 million; Leandra Knes at \$1.82 million; C&B Marlborough Assoc. LLC

at \$1.17 million; Country Barn Properties at \$1.16 million; Nathalie D. Thibodeau at \$883,190; TKS Holdings LLC at \$880,390; Tamara M. & Bryan T. Morytko at \$820,720; Toyota Lease Trust at \$809,120; Richard R. McMahon at \$771,470; Meadowbrook Farm LLC at \$755,730; and 17 East Hampton Rd. LLC at \$753,310.

Any taxpayer interested in appealing their appraisal can do so in front of the Board of Assessment Appeals. The deadline to apply for an appeal is Wednesday, Feb. 20. Appeal forms can be found online at <https://tinyurl.com/y2979kzx> or in the assessor's office at Town Hall. Applications should be sent to Board of Assessment Appeals, P.O. Box 29, 26 N. Main St., Marlborough, CT 06447.

Four Men Go Freezin' for a Reason in Colchester

by Allison Lazur

The Colchester Town Green annually hosts holiday events, the Scarecrow Decorating Contest, a farmers' market – and for the past several years, four men camping in the cold for a weekend.

Huddled around an impressively large bonfire last weekend were Fred Brown, School Resource Officer Rob Suchecki, Fire Chief Walter Cox and newcomer to the event Greg Cordova. The four slept in a tent, ate and conversed on the green from last Friday at noon to Sunday at noon to raise money for the Colchester Fuel Bank.

The Colchester Fuel Bank, funded entirely by donations, allows residents to receive small oil deliveries during the winter months to cover the gap between other heating delivery programs, the town website states.

The ninth annual Freezin' for a Reason event allowed people the opportunity to visit the men on the green and donate.

"We don't really set a goal," Suchecki said. "Anything we raise is more than what the fuel bank had and we never count until the end, so we are always surprised as well."

Over the past eight years, the event has raised over \$80,000, but ultimately Suchecki said "what we do doesn't matter, it's really what the people do that come to see us."

Brown and Suchecki sat in front of an oversized \$5,525 check from Gano's Power Equipment, Reliable Auto, Family Pizza and John Gagnon's Pet Resort.

In addition to making donations, Brown said members from the community and local businesses such as Colchester Pizza bring the four

food, coffee and anything they need.

"This town is good that way – they take care of us," Brown said.

When the event began nine years ago, Suchecki said there was initially no fundraising for the Fuel Bank, despite the definite need.

"We get to go home to a nice warm house," Suchecki said. "How many people don't have that option? And then you have to think how many paychecks is really anyone away from needing help themselves?"

Brown chimed in, stating there are "a lot of people who are forced to choose between heat and medicine or heat and groceries."

Despite the cold and rain this year, the four men were still smiling last Saturday with nearly 24 hours to go before the conclusion of the event.

Suchecki said through chuckles that, aside from their families being happy to get rid of them for the weekend, those back at home also feel a "sense of pride" that their loved one is involved in such an event.

"I think it adds to their sense of community as well that they have a loved one who's willing to do this," he said.

Brown said that although the members have changed over the years, he sees the event continuing for many years to come. Suchecki added that he would continue to be involved as long as he is physically able to do so.

"I love seeing the parents come with little kids and teaching them that giving back to the community is the right thing to do and I think that's the most heartwarming lesson," Suchecki said.



Greg Cordova, Rob Suchecki, Fred Brown and Walter Cox (pictured from left) kept the Freezin' for a Reason yearly tradition going by camping in the cold and rain on the Town Green to raise money for the Fuel Bank.

Colchester Grand List Sees Less Than 1 Percent Increase

by Allison Lazur

Colchester's Grand List saw a slight increase of 0.8 percent, or \$10.2 million from last year totaling \$1,244,866,800.

The additional \$10.2 million equates to \$330,000 in tax dollars, Tax Assessor John Chaponis said last week.

The Grand List represents the net value of assessed real estate, personal property and motor vehicles in town with all three categories reflecting an increase from 2017.

Real estate saw a .68 percent increase over 2017 from \$1,037,094,800 to \$1,044,162,100, while motor vehicles increased .13 percent from \$127,875,900 to \$128,046,900 and personal property saw a 6.6 percent increase from \$47,687,300 to \$50,857,800.

Chaponis this week called the real estate increase "typical," as the 2017 Grand List also saw an approximate \$7 million increase in real estate.

"Real estate goes up every year as new prop-

erties are constructed or improved. Our office visits every property that took out a building permit and if the work performed increases the overall value of the property, [then] we re-appraise the property," he said.

First Selectman Art Shilosky said a "couple of big manufacturers" are expanding, including Alpha Q Inc., which contributed to the increase, calling the slight increase "a trend over the last few years."

Chaponis said motor vehicles are pretty "flat" and said that "does seem to happen once every three to four years."

Overall he called the Grand List results "not a huge increase by any stretch."

The Grand List is used by the Board of Finance to help set the mill rate for the upcoming fiscal year which runs July 1 to June 30 and determines a resident's taxes. Residents can calculate their taxes by multiplying the mill rate by their total assessments. One mill is equal to

\$1 in tax per \$1,000 of assessed property. Under the current mill rate of 32.28, a resident with a home assessed at \$250,000 would pay approximately \$8,070 in taxes.

Chaponis said this week he sent out 700 increase notices to property owners who have until February 20 to file an appeal.

The top 10 real estate property taxpayers paid a total of \$48.04 million in taxes and included Country Place of Colchester Ltd. Partners at \$9.90 million; SS1 Colchester LLC at \$8.34 million; City of Norwich at \$4.84 million; Gaia Colchester LLC at \$4.07 million; Sharr Realty LLC at \$3.80 million; Genesis Health Ventures of Bloomfield Inc. at \$3.57; GND Too of Colchester LLC at \$3.55 million; S&S Worldwide Inc. at \$3.53 million; Park Place Holdings LLC at \$3.37 million; and Keystone Shoppes LLC at \$3.08 million.

The top 10 personal property taxpayers were

assessed at a total of \$32.44 million and included Eversource Energy (listed as Connecticut Light & Power Co.) at \$20.22 million; Alpha Q Inc. at \$3.26 million; Stop & Shop Supermarket Co. at \$2.21 million; S&S Worldwide Inc. at \$1.57 million; Celco partnership at \$1.11 million; Hillandale Farms Conn. LLC at \$984,160; Richard P. Baldi Jr. at \$844,480; Daniel R. Zawisa at \$831,250; International Cordage East Ltd. at \$717,050; and Michael J. Beebe at \$687,290.

Property owners who wish to appeal their assessment must file a written appeal to the Board of Assessment Appeals on the prescribed Board of Assessment Appeals application. The application can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/y3nyf2g5> and must be in the assessor's office at Town Hall at 127 Norwich Ave., Colchester, CT 06417 on or by Wednesday, Feb. 20.

Mr. Wright Goes to Washington

by Sloan Brewster

Vietnam veteran Gerry Wright was the guest of Senator Richard Blumenthal at the State of the Union address last Tuesday.

When Blumenthal invited him to the address, Wright said he wondered “why me?”

When he approached Blumenthal with that question, the senator explained he wanted someone who was very proactive in the quest to do something to help veterans with Agent Orange exposure.

Agent Orange is a herbicide or defoliant that contains the contaminant dioxin and was sprayed over Vietnam by the U.S. military.

Wright was exposed to the toxin during two tours in Vietnam – and has health issues because of it. Last May, he went on a six-week, 10,357-mile motorcycle journey to 32 states seeking signatures on a petition to get medical coverage for veterans exposed to the contaminant, but whose ailments have been all but ignored. Wright returned home in June.

In July, Rep. Joe Courtney (D-2nd District) introduced the Agent Orange Exposure Fairness Act to the House of Representatives to remove a stipulation in the law that prevented Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange from being classified as disabled and receiving treatment.

Then, in August, Blumenthal introduced the bill to the Senate.

With a new Congress sworn in in January, Courtney and Blumenthal have reintroduced the bill and, according to Wright, Blumenthal wanted him there to help gain support for it.

“Blumenthal introduced [the bill] to the Senate last Tuesday before the State of the Union,” Wright said. “When Congressman Courtney introduced it on January 15, [John Larson (D-1st District)] signed on as co-sponsor, which I thought was very nice.”

Rep. Don Young (R-Alaska) also co-sponsored the bill, Wright said.

“That’s my job now, to get cosponsors,” he said. “We need to get 300 in the House and 60 in the Senate.”

Wright said he stayed out of politics during his visit, adding that when asked what party he was in, he replied he was an American: “an American vet that’s here trying to make a wrong a right.”

Still, he wasn’t shy about making positive statements about President Donald J. Trump.

“Well, as I sat there about 100 feet from the president and his family, I felt that he has the best interests of this country at heart,” Wright said. “He’s very proud of this country and it comes across that way; he knows there are

changes that need to be made.”

Wright said he noticed the body language between some of the politicians, namely Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Trump.

“My golly... just watch,” Wright said.

After the State of the Union address, Wright spent the next three days in Washington hobnobbing with senators and representatives, including at a dinner with 100 of them. He personally met about 30.

“I did get to meet some very influential people,” Wright said.

The list of folks he met includes Senators Mitt Romney (R-Utah), Mark Rubio (R-FL), Johnny Isakson (R-GA) and Jon Tester (D-MT).

Wright said he was also introduced to Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), a veteran who lost both her legs in Iraq and whom he had wanted to meet.

“I admire her,” he said. “I went over to her I said ‘you know, I admire you.’”

In turn, Duckworth told him, “Anything you need Gerry, contact my office,” he said.

Blumenthal was unable to speak to the *Rivereast* before this story went to press, but he sent a statement.

“Gerry is a powerful face and voice for simple fairness and justice for our veterans. His relentless advocacy is honest and moving, drawn from his personal experiences and passion for supporting his fellow veterans,” Blumenthal said. “I was proud to bring him as my guest to this year’s State of the Union and look forward to continuing to work alongside Gerry on legislation to help Vietnam veterans who were exposed to toxic substances during their service to our country.”

Wright also got to meet some of the guests of other senators, including Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, who was the guest of Arizona Sen. Tom Udall. Nez was wearing a pin depicting 50 arrows in a circle with the words “Great Seal of the Navajo Nation” that Wright admired. Nez explained that the arrows symbolize the Navajo Nation’s protection within the 50 states.

“He takes the pin off his lapel and he gives it to me,” Wright recalled.

Wright said the gesture was very meaningful.

“We weren’t very good to Indians,” he said. “Here he is giving me something that means a very lot to him and he’s giving it to me as a white boy, it was like forgiveness. Why can’t we compromise a little bit? ... We need to be more forgiving.”

As he schmoozed with the politicians, Wright



Vietnam veteran Gerry Wright gives Senator Richard Blumenthal an Agent Orange patch, which now sits on Blumenthal’s desk in DC. Wright, an advocate for enhanced health insurance coverage, was Blumenthal’s guest at the State of the Union address.

spread the word about the Agent Orange Exposure Fairness Act, asking for sponsors. He also travelled from office to office, passing out hundreds of business cards.

One thing he advised senators to do was to take the time to call veterans known to be sick from Agent Orange.

Wright and Blumenthal called four sick vets. In the calls, Blumenthal apprised them of the efforts in Washington to pass the Agent Orange Fairness Act and a bill sometimes referred to as the Blue Water bill.

“One (veteran) started to cry (and said) ‘I can’t believe I’m talking to a sitting senator,’” Wright said. “Blumenthal said ‘We are trying so hard here to get the Blue Water bill passed.’”

East Hampton Police News

2/1: Edward Stolarz, 63, of 19 Champion Hill Rd., was arrested and charged with DUI, failure to drive right and failure to stop at a stop sign, East Hampton Police said.

2/2: Trevor Foster, 24, of 7 Main St., was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and third-degree assault, police said.

2/3: Kellsie Phillips, 26, of 46 South Cherry St., Wallingford, was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and third-degree criminal mischief, police said.

2/3: Trevor Foster, 24, of 7 Main St., was

arrested and charged with violations of conditions of release, police said.

2/3: Lisa Hutt, 40, of 45 Burnbrook Rd., East Hartford, was arrested and charged with DUI and failure to drive right, police said.

2/6: Lisa Loffredo, 49, of 85 N. Main St., was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and third-degree criminal mischief, police said.

Also, from Jan. 28-Feb. 3, officers responded to 18 medical calls, two motor vehicle crashes and eight alarms, and made 25 traffic stops.

Portland Police News

2/9: Jessica Monarca, 29, of 883 Long Hill Rd., Middletown, was charged with driving under the influence and failure to drive right, Portland Police said.

Colchester Police News

2/10: State Police said Minh Inthisane, 53, of 236 Belden St., New Britain, was arrested and charged with speeding up to 85 mph, DUI and failure to drive in proper lane.

Marlborough Police News

2/9: State Police said Jayson W. Martin, 48, of 371 Woodford Ave., Apt. 43, Plainville, was arrested and charged with DUI and failure to drive in proper lane.

Andover School Board Holds Off on Wing Conversion

by Sloan Brewster

The Board of Education is postponing action on the possible conversion of a wing of Andover Elementary School into a community or senior center, saying that entering into any agreement with the town is premature before a feasibility study is completed.

The school board Wednesday opted not to authorize Chairman Shannon Loudon to sign a memorandum of understanding between it and the Board of Selectmen on shared use of the third- and fourth-grade wing at Andover Elementary School. The Board of Selectmen on Monday had already given First Selectman Robert Burbank the go-ahead to sign the document.

However, school board members Wednesday pointed out several holes they perceived were in the agreement – including that it does not specify what exactly will take place in the converted wing.

“It doesn’t outline what the programs are going to be that we’re authorizing,” Loudon said.

“I wasn’t able to get that information from the town,” Schools Superintendent Sally Doyen replied.

Board member Michael Russo asked if signing the document before the feasibility study was completed was a necessary move. The selectmen earlier this month hired the architect Silver/Petrucelli and Associates to complete the feasibility study, at a cost not exceeding \$10,000. The money will come from the school improvement fund, which has about \$117,000, selectmen said.

Doyen stressed Wednesday that what the school board would be signing was a memo-

randum of understanding (MOU) and not a contract, and that residents would still need to approve the conversion and the funding for it in a town meeting. Still, she said, the board was not required to sign the document yet.

“I think if the board does want to approve it tonight, you could come back at a future point and do so,” she said. “This MOU is not going to dictate that this is going to happen. ... This is not a final step; it is a step to say that the Board of Ed is willing to consider this.”

Doyen said that some concerns raised by residents and members of the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) in a public forum last month were dealt with in the memorandum, and that fears the building would have an open-door policy were unfounded.

There would be rules and the board would perform background checks on employees using the facility and disruptive users would be removed, she said.

“I know that there’s been concern and questions from the PTA about people coming and going in that space, but that’s not going to be the case,” she said. “There will be a calendar; things will be planned.”

The possible conversion of the school wing – which is available due to declining enrollment – has been discussed since last fall, when selectmen closed the Old Firehouse on Center Street, after air quality tests confirmed it was infested with mold. The building had been used as a senior center for the town since the early 1990s, and was also a meeting spot for various boards and commissions.

Andover 13-Year-Old Excels at Weight-Lifting

by Sloan Brewster

Lifting 303 pounds at the Youth National Powerlifting competition earlier this month, Jessica Fagnoli of Andover took home the gold – and out-lifted not just the other girls in her division, but the boys as well.

On Feb. 2, the 13-year-old broke all American records in her 72-kilo – or approximately 159-pound – weight class in the 12- and 13-year-olds division at the USA Powerlifting Federation Youth Nationals in Lafayette, La.

She broke the squat, bench, deadlift and total records, lifting more than everyone in her weight class and below.

“With her weight class at that meet, she out totaled not only the girls but the boys too,” said her father Michael Fagnoli. “Only boys at 84 kilos and above beat her.”

It was a sweet victory.

“I feel powerful,” Jessica said.

As Jessica deadlifted 303 pounds, her heaviest lift ever, the crowd roared. Depending on the level of effort the lift takes, she either tunes the ruckus out or zones in on the screaming.

“If it’s a quick lift and it’s heavy, you kind of just space everybody out,” she said. “But if it takes a while you kind of just listen to everybody. It makes you smile.”

In her age division, Jessica broke 21 state records and four national records, her parents said, explaining that she also broke all American records in the two age groups above hers – the 14- and 15-year-olds and the 16- and 17-year-olds.

In addition, she came in fifth overall.

“At the whole meet, she had the highest lifting total,” Michael said. “Even for the weight classes above her.”

Leading up the youth nationals, Jessica competed at regionals and did a few other competitions.

Last March, she started lifting with Michael, who works out in a gym in the family’s garage.

“She came out in the garage one day and said she wanted to do it,” he said.

From there, he began training her.

When Jessica started out, she deadlifted 135 pounds; now she can do 305 pounds.

She trains on Saturdays and Tuesdays, doing squats, bench press and dead lift on Saturdays and the smaller body parts on Tuesdays.

Michael uses a couple different training methods to get those high numbers out of his daughter.

In the basic program they do, week one entails five single lifts of barbells Jessica can lift while retaining good form, with a one-minute rest in between lifts, he said. The following week, she will do 10 single lifts and, of course, she still has to have good form.

“We started off with that [basic program] for

almost six months,” he said. “She just started going up five pounds every single week, pretty much.”

The other training method they employ is periodization, in which Jessica does three weeks of five repetitions, Michael said. For example, if her max is 200 pounds, Jessica lifts 75 percent of that, or 150 pounds. The following week she does 90 percent, or 180 pounds. The third week, she lifts the full 200 pounds.

“When you have that hard week you adapt to that and get a little better,” Michael said. “You’re always getting rest so you don’t over train.”

Bench press-training is more complex, he said.

Going forward, Michael plans to return to the basic program, with the intention of ultimately increasing Jessica’s reps to 15 with more recovery time between.

In May, Jessica will compete at the Connecticut State Championships. Then in October, after she turns 14, she’ll go to Raw Nationals. In March of next year, she’ll hit the Junior Varsity Nationals.

Jessica works her training schedule around crew, which she does in the spring and fall at Riverfront Park in Hartford.

Active since she was a baby, Jessica had her first taste of gymnastics in a Mommy and Me class, when she was a toddler. The class included music and jumping.

As she grew, she continued to pursue gymnastics until last June, when she decided to make room for other endeavors – including not just weight-lifting, but also crew.

“She’s very strong, she always gives 100 percent,” Michael said. “The [gymnastic] coaches would say stuff to us, same with crew. Her work ethic is very strong.”

As far as Jessica is concerned, it’s all about follow through.

“If you ever set a goal you want to achieve, you do everything you can to get there,” she said.

Michael and Jessica’s mother, Lynn, are each athletic and have always been into sports, Lynn said. She thinks it’s great that Jessica is following in their athletic shoes and taking on physical challenges.

“She likes the grit too; it’s sweating it out,” Lynn said. “It’s tough to get in there and work out but she enjoys it.”

Jessica’s parents shared stories of her fearlessness at Six Flags last year, when she went on every single ride and of her trip to The Adventure Park at Storrs, with her Girl Scouts troop. Watching her daughter climb and balance on challenges stretching from treetop to treetop, Lynn said she “was scared to death.”



Jessica Fagnoli, 13, of Andover, lifted 303 pounds at the USA Powerlifting Federation Youth Nationals in Lafayette, La., earlier this month. Jessica took home the gold and out-lifted girls and boys in her division at the event.

Jessica has also proven her daring nature on the water in Maine, waterskiing, knee-boarding and tubing. “She has no fear,” her father reiterated.

She also loves running and was on cross country and track last year but when she started to experience knee pain her father cut that out. Now that her knees are stronger, he said he is planning to work running back into her training regimen.

Jessica enjoys working out with her dad.

“It’s kind of like a little bonding experience with my dad, and I just find it fun,” she said.

There’s another benefit to the workouts as well.

“If you’re angry, you go in the gym and you get the anger out,” she said.

Jessica said she wants to pursue lifting through high school and up to the college level and will decide if she wants to take it further once she’s in college. With a little prying, she admitted that she already has plans for what she wants to do in college – go to med school and become a surgeon, possibly a cardiothoracic surgeon, though she said her specialty may change.

State Wants Water Supply Plan for Hebron

by Sloan Brewster

Following last year’s water shortage in the center of town, the state Department of Public Health (DPH) has requested that Connecticut Water create a water supply plan for the town of Hebron.

In a letter to David Connors of the Connecticut Water Company, Lori Mathieu, DPH’s drinking water section chief, gave the water company until March of next year to submit the plan.

“Given that Connecticut Water Company holds the exclusive service area for the entire town of Hebron, we encourage you to work with town officials as you draft and finalize the water supply plan,” Mathieu wrote.

Town Manager Andrew Tierney said the plan would be drafted in conjunction with the town’s Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).

Dan Meaney, director of corporate communications for the water company, said DPH requested the water company look at the POCD in developing the plan and that the company

was working closely with the town.

“The real purpose of a water supply plan is long-range planning, to look out 50 years,” he said “How we’ll bring resources in and meet demand in the future.”

The water company only recently began to review the POCD, which is the first step, Meaney said in a phone call Wednesday.

“It’s a lot of data that needs to be input and crunched,” he said. “We’re at the early start.”

One way the town would take advantage of the plan was as information to give developers interested in building in town, Tierney said.

Tierney admitted economic development in town was affected last year when a well that supplied water to the center of town began yielding insufficient amounts, prompting the state to declare a public drinking water emergency, as well as Connecticut Water Company to reject any new hook-ups to the well.

Tierney said two developers nearly walked away from proposed projects. However, after the water issue was resolved last fall, one of

the developers has moved his project forward and the other is in negotiations to purchase a property in town, Tierney said.

At a Board of Selectmen meeting in October, the board expressed frustration that the shortage was getting in the way of development.

“We cannot allow this to deter economic development,” Board of Selectmen Chairman Dan Larson said at the time. “We need the town to move forward.”

With a water supply plan in place, that sort of thing can be avoided, Tierney said.

In January, after the well that had been coming up short since May had begun producing water at a stabilized rate, Tierney met with officials from DPH, Connecticut Water Company, and the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority. The request for the water supply plan was a result of that meeting, he said.

The reason the water company does not already have a water supply plan in place, according to Meaney, is because the systems it owns in town are small and service less than

1,000 customers.

“Water supply plans have historically been required of water systems that serve more than 1,000 people,” he said.

Connecticut Water acquired the town water systems in 2008 from Birmingham Utilities.

“Our understanding is that prior to our acquiring them, Birmingham Utilities had done a water supply plan for these systems,” Meaney said.

That water supply plan should already be filed with DPH and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

While the water supply shortage has been dealt with and a subsequent ban on outside water usage has been lifted, Connecticut Water Company said it is looking for additional supplies and is working with the town on getting easements to wells on Wall Street and Ridge Road.

“It would be a joint effort between the water company and the town,” Tierney said. “If we need expansion or additional water the town has to play a role.”

Obituaries

East Hampton

John L. Morrissette Jr.

John (Jack) L. Morrissette Jr., 64, of East Hampton, formerly of Rocky Hill, Wethersfield and East Hartford, passed away peacefully at his home Friday, Feb. 8.

John enlisted to serve in the United States Marine Corps after high school. After successful basic training at Paris Island he served in Camp Pendleton, Camp Lejeune, Okinawa and Puerto Rico, feeding the troops as a kitchen supervisor until he was honorably discharged as a sergeant. He received the National Defense Service Medal and Good Conduct Medal.

Jack returned home to Connecticut and continued cooking for the elderly in nursing homes for his entire career, which included Wintonbury Manor, Cedarcrest Hospital and then retiring from Wethersfield Healthcare Center. He supported his co-workers and brought them cookies from the kitchen. Many remain in touch and good friends.

By then he had moved to East Hampton to be closer to family. Jack nurtured his yard and we quickly found out he had a green thumb. His flowers, deck and birdhouses were beautiful and enjoyed by his neighbors. He loved driving his dad's pickup around town and searching for a good cup of coffee and the elusive perfect home fries. He had a very generous heart and didn't miss a birthday, wedding, holiday or stag party. Being in town meant he was able to attend Blake and Ally's community theater productions, applaud loudly and support the concession stand. He enjoyed living by Lake Pocotopaug and would sit at the beach reading, sometimes kayak and often go for a swim in the evening to cool down.

John is survived by his mother, Eleanor Morrissette, 92, of Niantic, his sister, Christine and her husband Gene Brooks of Virginia Beach; his brother, Paul and his wife Karen Morrissette of Colchester; and his sister, Lynn and her husband Edward Szkoda of East Hampton. He was a loving, gift-bearing uncle to Keri and Dan Barcus, Michael and Sarah Brooks, Keith and Jessica Morrissette, Tyler and Kalie Morrissette, Thomas and Kimberly Morrissette, Blake Szkoda and Allyse Szkoda; and great uncle to all the littles: Kaylee, Ashley, Ben, John, Logan, Luke, Beth, Matthew, Grace, Isla and Sawyer. Much love also to all of his cousins, friends and neighbors.

He was predeceased by his father, John L. Morrissette and his niece, Shawn Marie Brooks.

A memorial service is being planned for March 2, in the afternoon. Burial will be at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, contributions in his name can be made to the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund, the East Hampton Food Bank or The Young People's Center for Creative Arts.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

Mary C. Vecchitto

Mary C. Vecchitto, 92, of Colchester, loving wife of the late Anthony F. Vecchitto, died Friday, Feb. 8, surrounded by her loving family, after a brief illness. Born in Meriden May 2, 1926, she was the daughter of the late Alexander and Anna Skurtowicz.

She resided in Meriden for most of her life and had graduated from Meriden High School. Mary was a parishioner of St. Stanislaus Church. She was an active member of the Colchester Senior Center for the past seven years. She loved her cat Mitsy.

She is survived by one son, Mark Vecchitto; three grandchildren, Ashley Whitcomb, Allen Vecchitto and Aja Vecchitto; five great-grandchildren, Kieghley and Keagen Whitcomb, Madelyn Vecchitto, and Gunner and Gage Gookin; and one sister, Ann Skurtowicz. She is also survived by many nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by two sisters, Bernice Arnold and Julia Macri, and two brothers, Stanley Stowe and John Skurtowicz.

The funeral was held Monday, Feb. 11, at 9:15 a.m., from the John J. Ferry & Sons Funeral Home, 88 East Main St., Meriden, and at 10 a.m. at St. Faustina Parish, St. Stanislaus Church, for a Mass of Christian Burial. Burial will be in St. Stanislaus Cemetery. Family and friends called at the funeral home Sunday, Feb. 10.

For online condolences, visit jferryfh.com.

Portland

Paula Margaret Petzold

Paula Margaret (Sims) Petzold, lifelong resident of Portland, passed away at her home in St. Maarten Saturday, Feb. 2. William (Bill), her devoted husband of 56 years, was by her side. Paula was born Jan. 7, 1944, and was predeceased by her parents, Thaddeus and Eva Sims.

Paula is survived by her husband Bill, sister-in-law Elaine Cote and her husband Richard Cote, as well as her two sons and daughters-in-law, Kenneth and Penelope Petzold of Glastonbury and Robert and Mary Petzold of Portland. Her grandchildren, Heather, Connor, Kara, Katie, Lorraine and Dominic were her treasures, and they will forever hold in their hearts the memories of her gentleness, kindness and unconditional love.

Paula graduated from Mount Saint Joseph's Academy in West Hartford. Among her many accomplishments, one of which was a porcelain painter and instructor, she enjoyed traveling, boating, gardening and gourmet cooking, and especially loved her winters spent at her home on the island she loved so dearly, St. Maarten. Most days you could find her and her beloved Yorkie Maarty, reveling in the sound of the gentle waves along the coral reef while reading on her kindle. One of the highlights of Paula's day was her phone calls with her best friend of many years, Joyce Levine.

Paula's strong Catholic faith was a cornerstone of her life. Paula's beauty, both inside and out, inspired all around her to be their very best. Paula will certainly be remembered for her strength, courage, perseverance and grace throughout her many health challenges. Those who knew her will always recall her unselfishness; no matter what she faced in her own life, she always asked after the wellbeing of those around her.

Calling hours will be held today, Feb. 15, from 4-7 p.m., at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland. A Mass of Christian Burial will be held Saturday, Feb. 16, at 10 a.m. in St. Mary Church, 51 Freestone Ave., with a burial immediately following in Saint Mary's Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers we ask that donations be made to St. Mary Church, 51 Freestone Ave., Portland.

Colchester

Judith Green

Judith (Putnam) Green, 88, of Manchester, formerly of Colchester, widow of the late F. Duncan Green, passed away Tuesday, Feb. 5. Born Aug. 17, 1930, in Willimantic, she was a daughter of the late Paul and Elizabeth (Hamilton) Putnam.

Judy was a loving woman who turned her house into a home for her family and friends. She was very gifted with her hands, creating unique homemade crafts by means of needlework, crocheting and quilting. Mrs. Green was a longtime member of the Westchester Congregational Church. Following Duncan's retirement, they lived in Nobleboro, Maine, for many years, until declining health brought her back to Connecticut.

She leaves five children and their spouses: Rebecca (Kurt) Stefanovicz of Manchester (with whom she had most recently made her home), Elizabeth Culhane of Manchester, Paul and Pamela Green of East Hartford, John and Carrie Green of Liberty Hill, Texas, and Robert and Karla Green of Dayton, Maine; 11 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; two sisters, Lynn Kask of Storrs and Elizabeth Retterbush of Ohio; and numerous extended family and friends.

In addition to her loving husband of 50+ years, she was predeceased by a son, James Duncan Green; and a sister, Mary Putnam.

A Memorial Service will be observed at 10 a.m. Saturday, March 2, directly at Faith Tabernacle Church, 110 Utopia Rd., Manchester. Graveside services will be observed at 2 p.m. Saturday, March 2, at the Westchester Center Cemetery, corner of Route 16 and Cemetery Road in Colchester.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Judy's memory to the Wounded Warrior Project, P.O. Box 758517, Topeka, KS 66675-8517 or Wreaths Across America, P.O. Box 249, Columbia Falls, ME 04623.

East Hampton

Rosanna B. Stoltz

Rosanna B. (Poulin) Stoltz, 79, of East Hampton, the beloved wife of Lee A. Stoltz Sr., died Friday, Feb. 8, at Middlesex Hospital. She was born in Hartford, the daughter of the late Paul and Mary (Eckel) Poulin. She was raised in Windsor before moving to East Hampton.

She liked to keep busy so she worked for Munson's Chocolates in Glastonbury and at the old Marlborough Tavern. Some of her favorite things to do were watching TV with her son or sitting on her porch watching the birds and the horses and, after supper, watching her son plant his garden.

Besides her husband, Lee, she is survived by a son, Lee A. Stoltz Jr. and a daughter, Sharon Stoltz, all of East Hampton; two sisters and a brother-in-law, Florence Grover of Windsor and Paula and Lynn Smith of Canton. She was predeceased by a brother, Ray Eckel.

A graveside funeral service was held Tuesday, Feb. 12, in St. Augustine Cemetery, Hopewell Road, South Glastonbury. There were no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Connecticut Humane Society, 701 Russell Rd., Newington, CT 06111.

For online condolences, visit mulryanfh.com.

Marlborough

Marie H. Johnson

Marie H. Johnson, 94, of Marlborough, widow of Joseph Johnson, died peacefully at Marlborough Health Care Wednesday Feb. 6. Born March 25, 1924 in Middletown, she was the daughter of the late John and Josephine (Loos) Hartinger.

Marie was retired from Liberty Bank where she worked in Hartford and then in the Marlborough branch. Marie was active in the Marlborough Parks and Rec. Department for many years.

She is survived by a daughter, Sandra Johnson; three sisters, Janet Marchand and husband Donat of Greenwich, Anna Hecht of East Hampton, and Elizabeth Wolstenholme and husband Roy of Salem.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, Feb. 16, at 11 a.m., in the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton. Friends may call at the funeral home Saturday from 9:30-11 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Marlborough Parks and Recreation Department, 26 North Main St., Marlborough, CT 06447.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Portland

Kelly Egan Warner

Kelly Egan Warner, 43, formerly of Portland, passed away Friday, Feb. 8, at her home in Daytona Beach, Fla. She was the daughter of Harry and Shirley Egan of Portland.

Besides her parents, Kelly is survived by her brother, Scott Egan and his wife Jennifer; her nephews, Kevin and Connor Egan; and several aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Funeral services are private.

Contributions in her memory may be made to the Connecticut Humane Society, 701 Russell Rd., Newington, CT 06111 or to St. Mary's Church, 51 Freestone Ave, Portland, CT 06480.

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

Portland

William L Sweeney Jr.

William L Sweeney Jr., 84, of San Diego, Calif., formerly of Portland, passed away Tuesday, Feb. 5. He was born June 24, 1934, in North Adams, Mass., to the late William L and Erminia (Barbuto) Sweeney.

William lived most of his life in Portland. He and his wife moved to Texas, New York, back to Portland, then retiring to San Diego. He worked as a jet engine mechanic at Pratt & Whitney, and a steam turbine mechanic for Terry Steam Turbine. He enjoyed building and flying model airplanes and working on various woodworking projects.

William is predeceased by his wife Susan. He is survived by his sons and daughters-in-law Marc and Kim Sweeney of Portland, Eric and Fifi Sweeney of La Jolla, Calif.; and grandchildren Ryan and his wife Elyse, Erin and her fiancé Anthony Flannery IV, Ian and Alanna.

Memorial donations in lieu of flowers may be made to the Portland Fire Department, c/o Town of Portland, 33 East Main St., P.O. Box 71, Portland, CT 06480-0071.



From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

When looking at the *Hartford Courant* home page Monday morning, I was crestfallen to see news of yet another suicide in the state – this time of a 16-year-old Danbury girl who jumped to her death from the Danbury Fair Mall parking garage.

Suicide, especially among younger people, seems to be at epidemic levels these days, and it really is just so heartbreaking. You wish you could reach out to each person and grab them and let them know that things will get better – and that there are so many who will miss them.

Often times, I believe, people are cognizant of the latter, but the problems they are dealing with at the moment are just too much to overcome – that the darkness far overpowers the light loved ones are trying to shine in.

I remember a friend of mine telling me he read an interview once with a person who had actually survived a jump from the Golden Gate Bridge. The person, my friend said, had told the interviewer that, on the way down, he realized he could solve all of his problems except the one he had just created by jumping off the bridge.

The key is, of course, to help people realize this before they take that jump, or ingest those pills, or pull that trigger – and this is where mental therapy really comes into play. Even today, in 2019, there's still this stigma about people who receive mental help, be it in the form of therapy or in the form of prescription medication. It's one of those hold-overs from generations past that just refuses to die.

It bears emphasizing: **There is absolutely no shame in seeking mental health treatment.**

I know firsthand what happens when you think you can just “get over it,” or think you can handle your problems yourself. It often doesn't work. You need outside help to get the results you need.

And that need should not be discounted – both by the person who needs it and by those around him or her. If a person is seeking of mental help it should be encouraged, regard-

less of their age.

I've said it before and it holds true: I am so glad I went to school when I did. It's not that I wasn't bullied. I was; sometimes brutally so. But the nice thing about going to school in the pre-internet age is there was a time limit to that bullying. The school day would end, and you could go home. Nowadays, though, thanks to Twitter and Snapchat and Instagram and any of the many other social media outlets out there, bullying can very much be a 24/7 affair. There is no escape. And that can feel suffocating.

Fortunately, there's added importance these days to mental health awareness, and the value of seeking it. But unfortunately, there also still seems to be that stigma. That feeling that there's something wrong with you, that you're being a baby, that there are bigger problems in the world than the ones you're facing and you really need to just suck it up and deal with it. It doesn't help matters when people, particularly of an older generation, seem to encourage that stigma – to tell you that you should just get over it, and that mental health treatment should be an absolute last resort.

I'm here to say no; it's not true and don't let anyone tell you it is. I've heard this analogy before, and it's true: If you had a problem with your leg, or another type of physical ailment, you'd see your doctor about it, right? Mental health needs to be taken just as seriously.

There's no shame in seeking help. It can, and often does, make things so much better. And if you've tried it, and it hasn't worked, keep trying. Not every therapist is the right fit for every person. Help is out there. It's a beautiful world, and you deserve to be in it – and to be an active part of it.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline can be reached at 1-800-273-8255, or online at suicidepreventionlifeline.org. For more local resources, visit preventsuicidect.org.

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See you next week.