

RIVEREAST

# News Bulletin

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**I Won a Bike!...** Sixty children went home from last week's Old Home Days event with a new set of wheels and a helmet thanks to the popular bike raffle that has become a hallmark of the Glorious Celebration. One of the lucky kids was 3-year-old Kyla Fargione, whose grin stretched from ear to ear when announcer Red McKinney called her winning number. For more on Old Home Days, see page 20.

## Officials Question State Arrigoni Decision

by Elizabeth Regan

Portland's delegation of lawmakers last week issued a letter to the state Department of Transportation questioning the agency's decision to put Arrigoni Bridge inspection services in the hands of the same company that engineered a failed bridge in Florida last year.

The pedestrian bridge collapsed near the campus of Florida International University in March 2018, killing six people. The project was engineered by FIGG Bridge Engineers, of Florida.

State Department of Transportation spokesman Kevin Nursick said the Arrigoni Bridge contract was awarded in mid-June to FIGG Bridge Inspections, another arm of the engineering company.

The \$46.8 million project will repair the bridge's two approaches and will install 8-foot high protective fencing to help prevent suicides.

The July 9 letter from state Sen. Norm Needleman, D-33, and state Rep. Christie Carpino, R-32, asked Commissioner Joseph Giulietti to help them "better understand if this is the right choice of contractor and how we can ensure the safety of our constituents and other residents of Connecticut."

Portland First Selectman Susan Bransfield said she reached out to Needleman and Carpino after she read a column in the *Hartford Courant* that raised questions about the state's chosen contractor.

"The bridge is our life blood to getting to Route 9, getting over to 91, and it's very important to us here in Portland. When we see the state DOT is going to work on the bridge, we want to make sure everything that's done is done to the best of our ability," Bransfield said.

Needleman this week said if his constituents are concerned, then he's concerned.

"My understanding is FIGG has done a lot

of work for the state of Connecticut in the past and they're probably a reputable firm, but I just want to make sure we get assurances, or an explanation, about what happened [in Florida] and what their involvement was or wasn't," he said.

A report from the U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) on the Florida collapse alleged structural design deficiencies and said FIGG "failed to recognize that the bridge was in danger of collapsing when it inspected it hours before the collapse." The list of 11 conclusions in the report also cited inadequate oversight from two other firms involved in the project.

FIGG Bridge Engineers in a statement said it disagrees with the report's conclusions, which it described as "factually inaccurate and incomplete."

The firm said the report overlooked "many important factors pertinent to the construction process leading up to the accident" and was not reviewed by other entities involved in the investigation.

Nursick this week said FIGG Bridge Inspection has been providing construction engineering and inspection (CEI) services to the state for more than 10 years.

He emphasized the FIGG team working on construction engineering and inspection jobs in Connecticut is "totally separate" from the design team that worked on the bridge in Florida.

"FIGG does two things: they do CEI and they do design. What they were doing in Florida was design. We don't use them on the design side," he said.

FIGG was chosen through a process outlined in federal regulations that is designed to find "the best, most competent consulting firm,"

See Arrigoni Decision page 2

## Toomey's Crossing Construction Set to Begin

by Sloan Brewster

The construction of the first phase of Toomey's Crossing – a mixed-use development more than six years in the making – is set to begin in Hebron's town center in the coming weeks.

This week, crews cleared the property at 13 Church Street, which sits behind the Douglas Library. That's where construction on the development's first office building will begin within the next two weeks, according to developer Roderic "Mac" McCarrison.

McCarrison, of McCarrison D.W. Fish Real Estate, is a partner in the SYM LLC development venture.

The three-phase plan for the 33-acre site includes several new buildings and incorporates a historic house and barn on the property, McCarrison said. It will be up to whoever buys the buildings to determine whether they will be used for residential purposes, commercial purposes, or both.

McCarrison estimates the entire project will be completed in two to two-and-a-half years.

"We're looking forward to it; it's been a long [process]," he said.

Phase one was approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission in May. The two subsequent phases, which are proposed to include commercial space and upscale apartments, have not yet been submitted to the commission for approval.

Construction of the first office building should be completed on or before Thanksgiving, McCarrison said. The rest of phase one will involve the renovation of the barn and old house and should be completed in the next six to eight months.

The house and barn are recognized as contributing resources to the Hebron Center Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places.

According to a history of the property by the See Toomey's Crossing page 2



Construction on the first building in Toomey's Crossing – a mixed-use development in the Hebron town center – will begin in the next few weeks. The rendering above is a rough sketch of what the development will look like. The house on the left in the first row, for example, has been redesigned and will be a 2000-square foot colonial style professional building.



**On Monday, crews were clearing land at 13 Church Street ahead of construction on the first building in Toomey's Crossing – a mixed-use development in the town center. Construction will begin in the next few weeks, with plans for the building to be finished by Thanksgiving.**

#### **Toomey's Crossing cont. from Front Page**

Hebron Historic Properties Commission, the Federal/Greek Revival-era house was built in 1816 by John Graves, a cabinetmaker who had a woodworking shop on the property. Graves built the barn a few years later, in 1820.

The report said Dr. Cyrus H. Pendleton, a well-known Hebron physician, purchased the property in the 1860s. It remained in his family until 1978, when it was occupied by Horace Sellers, Pendleton's great-grandson.

While plans for the house and barn are not yet finalized, McCarrison is hoping the barn will be transformed into an art center and said he is in talks with local artists to make it happen. He is also negotiating the sale of the house, which he said could be a consignment shop or a home and office.

Phase two will include two mixed-use buildings that could ultimately house offices, restaurants or retail stores and residential, according to McCarrison. Phase three includes three buildings, two with four upscale townhouse-style apartments and one with five upscale apartments.

To blend in with the town center and give it a "colonial, village type of look," McCarrison said white picket fences will be interspersed throughout the development. Gables, similar to those already on Route 66, will face out toward the road.

"We're trying to blend it as best we can into this colonial district," he said.

New parking lots for the development – with a driveway off Church Street – will be connected with existing lots behind Something Simple Café, including library parking, and there will be both public and private lots, McCarrison said.

Town Planner Mike O'Leary said it's all part of the concept of connectivity, which allows folks to park and walk to several shops or have a bite to eat.

Expanding the town center is in the town's master plan, O'Leary said. Zoning regulations

allow for special permits for mixed use "overlay" zones in already existing zones – in this case, the Village District. In mixed use projects, commercial and residential space can be interspersed throughout the site and within individual buildings – such as those with businesses on the bottom floor and apartments on top.

"In fact, that has always been historically what Main Street has been," O'Leary said. "The Hebron Green has been that for decades and decades. That was always how we had developed."

O'Leary used the example of the general store in the building that currently houses Something Simple Café. Former general store owners' Frank and Marian Celio – who was town clerk for 25 years and passed away in 1998 – lived upstairs and ran the business on the main level.

The mixed use overlay zone, which was approved in June 2015, was the product of an incentive housing zone study completed by the town in 2014 and an intensive 2011 planning workshop – known as a charette – that the town held in conjunction with the University of Connecticut, O'Leary said.

In the incentive housing studies, the town looked at different ways to encourage mixed-use developments in Hebron, he said. The charette involved about 35 people sitting at the library listening to presentations, perusing sketches and having conversations about the entire town center, he said. That was the impetus for giving the center a makeover with benches and sidewalks and making it look less like a commercial area and more like a streetscape, according to O'Leary.

For an overlay zone to be approved, the development planned must fit into the character of the area, O'Leary said.

"It's really trying to promote economic development and improve the character and function of Main Street," he said. "Make it a true town center."

#### **Arrigoni Decision cont. from Front Page**

according to Nursick.

He said the value of the contract hasn't yet been determined.

"You don't negotiate the price first. The federally-required process mandates you select based on merit, and then you negotiate a price later," he said.

Notable FIGG inspection projects to date include the Pearl Harbor Memorial Bridge completed several years ago in New Haven, the recent replacement of the southbound side of the Gold Star Bridge spanning New London and Groton, and current work being done on the I-84 and Route 2 interchange in Hartford, according to Nursick.

He said construction engineering and inspection services involve "standing over the shoulder" of the construction contractor to make sure thousands of state-mandated and design specifications are followed throughout the entire process.

"Then the CEI consultant reports back to the DOT. So there are multiple levels of oversight, and it's all answerable to DOT staff, ultimately," Nursick said.

A construction contractor has not yet been selected for the project.

Nursick said a response letter from the commissioner to Needleman and Carpino is set to be delivered any day now.

#### **'What's Safer?'**

Concerns raised in the *Courant* column came to light after Travis Woodward, president of the union for state engineering, technical and scientific employees, expressed reservations about using the private company associated with the Florida bridge disaster.

Woodward echoed those sentiments this week when he told the *Rivereast* there should be a "cooling-off period" while questions about who's to blame for the Florida collapse are addressed. He said the state should instead use its own engineers for the job.

He said using in-house transportation department engineers is the safer and cheaper alternative when it comes to inspecting bridges.

"What's safer for you? A bridge that's being inspected by a for-profit company, where money's the bottom line, or do you feel safer on a bridge that's publicly inspected, where we only care about safety?" he said.

DOT data shows projects are 46-63% less expensive when the work is performed in-house, according to Woodward.

"We do it better, we do it less expensive, and

the public is our only stakeholder," he said.

Acknowledging FIGG Bridge Inspections has been used for numerous other projects, he said he brought up the issue in relation to the Arrigoni Bridge because of the "timing of everything."

"OSHA came up with the report against FIGG in early June, and not even two weeks later, DOT's awarding this gigantic company that just failed down in Florida," Woodward said.

But it's all "the symptom of a bigger issue," according to Woodward.

"The state's always had an overreliance on consultants; since the 2000s, we've been losing engineers and hiring out more and more," the union president said.

He said residents don't need to look far to find out what can go wrong, pointing to the notoriously-deficient performance by a private inspection firm back in 2006 that left a 3.5-mile stretch of I-84 in Cheshire and Waterbury in need of a redo after a private contractor installed more than 200 defective storm drains. According to the *Courant* at the time, structural problems were also detected in two overpasses.

"It came down to for-profit companies watching for-profit companies," Woodward said.

But Nursick noted there were DOT staff on the I-84 project who were supposed to be keeping tabs on everything as well.

"So it's not fair to paint the entire private sector, which are very necessary in this line of work, with that one broad brush that they're just not effective or that somehow state employees are always the better option. That's just not the case," Nursick said.

The transportation department spokesman didn't mince words in response to the idea that the agency is compromising safety by using private contractors.

"I understand that Travis is advocating for more staff. I can't necessarily take exception with that, but to do so at the expense of misinforming the public is just irresponsible," Nursick said.

He reiterated that the design arm of the company used in Florida and the inspection arm used in Connecticut have "totally separate people and totally separate responsibilities."

"What Travis is doing is comparing apples and oranges. It's not fair. It's irresponsible. It's fear-mongering and it's misinformation. Safety is the number one priority of this agency. We don't compromise in that regard," he said.

# Hebron Town Clerk Change Among Proposed Charter Revisions

by Sloan Brewster

The Board of Selectmen last week advanced to referendum a series of proposed charter changes that would include turning the town clerk from an elected position to an appointed one.

Selectmen unanimously agreed at their meeting last Thursday to send the proposed revisions to referendum in November, on the Election Day ballot.

Carla Pomproicz, the current town clerk, would be grandfathered into the role even if the changes pass – but she still made an appearance at the meeting to express her dissatisfaction with the proposal.

Pomproicz said she is of the opinion the position should remain elected – and has conveyed as much to the Charter Revision Commission and selectman since the revision process began.

“An elected town clerk works autonomously in the best interest of the town and is accountable directly to the electorate,” she wrote in a letter to the commission in February. “It is in the best interest of the community to have a representative that is free to act independently without fear of retaliation.”

Based on input from Pomproicz and Town Manager Andrew Tierney, the commission ini-

tially made the recommendation to keep the position as an elected office. That recommendation was put into the report Scot Kauffman, chairman of the nine-member commission, presented to selectmen in May.

Then, last month, Board of Selectmen Chairman Daniel Larson asked that commission to “readdress” the town clerk’s position.

In response, the commission presented updated recommendations including shifting the town clerk from an elected to an appointed or hired position.

“The current town clerk will be grandfathered in the position and transition to a town employee at the end of her term in January 2022,” the recommendation reads.

The Board of Selectmen appointed the Charter Revision Commission last August for the sole purpose of revising the charter.

The two biggest considerations were the town clerk position and the town budget. Kauffman said the commission had considered bifurcating the budget – meaning taxpayers would be faced with approving separate town and school budgets at the polls each spring, as opposed to voting on them in one big package. The commission did not recommend changing it, however; Kauffman said in May that data had shown

towns that have bifurcated their budgets have had difficulties in getting the spending packages to pass.

In a phone call Tuesday, Larson listed a few concerns with continuing with an elected town clerk, including that whomever is in the position may not have the appropriate certification but that people applying for the position would already be certified.

“There’s certification for town clerk and it’s a three-year course,” he said. “To expect someone to be elected and go through all that training not knowing if they’re ever going to be elected again ... that’s a potential issue.”

Larson also said he has concerns that elected town clerks can set their own hours.

“The only people to oversee them are the voters,” he said. “We have been very fortunate over the last few years but that could change. ... It just makes sense to try to think and look forward to the future and try to adequately prepare for the day that Carla decides to retire and enjoy the sunshine like so many others.”

Pomproicz said that despite being an elected position, a town clerk can be removed for not doing a satisfactory job – but Larson is not buying it.

“The only way to get rid of a town clerk if they are not doing their job is by action with the secretary of the state,” he said, adding that getting things done at the state level can be challenging.

When asked why the board flouted the commission’s initial recommendation, Larson said he did not know the clerk’s position was part of charter revision talks and that he would have attended the meetings had he known.

“What I believe is that they were acting more in a vacuum,” he said of the commission. “In a perfect world it would be nice if everything could be elected, but in today’s world it’s just not a realistic concept.”

Pomproicz expressed regret that selectmen overrode the commission.

“I’m sorry that the Board of Selectmen didn’t listen to the Charter Revision Commission the first time that they presented their thoughts,” she said. “What are the members of the Charter Revision Commission supposed to do with that?”

Now, the decision will be up to voters, she added. “So we’ll take it to the polls in November and see what the general public thinks about it. What will be, will be.”



This year’s Old Home Days Glorious Celebration included elements both new and old. The biggest change was the Rails to Trails 5K race, which replaced the 20-year-old Glorious Gallop. But other traditions, like the Saturday parade, remained the same as ever. Pictured at left are Mary Trapp, Kali Trapp and Kevin Radavich after the Rails to Trails race on Friday. At right is Cub Scout Pack 8, which won the award for best float. Right photo by Kamey Cavanaugh.



## Revamped Race a Highlight of East Hampton Old Home Days

by Elizabeth Regan

The 41st annual Old Home Days featured a revamped road race alongside all the traditional festivities that have given people from East Hampton a reason to come home for decades.

Seven-time Old Home Day Committee President Pam Joslyn-Greenwald said this year’s Glorious Celebration was one of the smoothest she’s overseen.

The three-day event included rides, music, a full complement of vendors and food favorites prepared by local organizations.

The committee gave away 20 bikes each evening to kids 12 and under, launched many free T-shirts into the crowds, and handed out superhero masks at the hero-themed parade on Saturday.

The inaugural Rails to Trails 5K took place Friday in the hot evening sun. The new course replaced the popular Glorious Gallop race that wound its way around the lake for 20 years under the direction of volunteer Sheila Oakes.

This year’s runners set off from the Connecticut Draft Horse Rescue on Chestnut Hill Road before crossing Route 16 to Alden’s Crossing and continuing on the Air Line Trail for about two miles. They entered the Village Center at the Company One Firehouse on Barton Hill Road for the last arduous leg of their journey up the Main Street incline and onto the Center

School grounds.

Resident Mary Trapp walked the fairgrounds with daughter Lauren while waiting for her other daughter, Kali, to finish the race. She said it’s been several years since she attended Old Home Days on a Friday night since the biggest draws for her are typically Thursday’s Family Night or Saturday’s parade.

This time around, it was Kali’s participation in a summer program through the town’s Parks and Recreation Department that drew the family to the Rails to Trails event, she said.

The eight-week running camp was held at the East Hampton High School track on Wednesdays for an hour and a half to prepare kids in grades six through nine for the 5K race. Coach Kevin Radavich focused on topics like stretching, running form and goal setting over the course of the program.

Radavich, who runs cross country at Nichols College in Dudley, Mass., told the *Rivereast* after the 5K that he started the running program as a way to pass along some of the knowledge he’s gained at the college level.

He said he approached the Parks and Recreation Department early this year with the idea and was told there’s a gap in programming for middle school-aged kids.

“I was like, that’d be a perfect age to do a

summer running camp,” he said.

He said the kids really seemed to enjoy the camp – even when it meant running in the pouring rain.

Radavich finished sixth in the race and then waited to see how the rest of his runners did.

“I wanted to make sure I congratulated them,” he said. “They worked hard.”

He said the heat was “a little rough” on the young runners – and their experienced coach.

Radavich said the race was more difficult than the Glorious Gallop, which he participated in several times.

He said someone running the Glorious Gallop course could finish it about 20 seconds faster than if they were running the same distance on a traditional track, while someone running the Rails to Trails course would be about 10 seconds slower than if they were running on a track.

“It’s harder. There’s less downhill,” he said of the new course.

Kali Trapp said after the race that Radavich’s camp helped her prepare for her first 5K – and gave her friends to run with.

“I ran with my friend Julia and some other friends. So staying with her helped. She kept a good pace,” Kali said.

Coming in 243 out of 285 runners, Kali said she achieved her main goal: “I didn’t really care where I finished, but I wanted to not finish last.”

Another highlight of the event was the parade, which featured more than 50 local groups and businesses.

This year’s theme was “Superheroes,” with organizers inviting participating organizations to use their floats to recognize local or widely-known heroes that exemplify their mission.

Joslyn-Greenwald said the title of best float went to the Cub Scouts of Pack 8. The cape-wearing Cub Scouts sat on a trailer accented by bright signs promoting positive attributes like trustworthiness, kindness, and loyalty. The message spelled out on the front of the float was “You don’t need superpowers to be a hero.”

A familiar face at the parade belonged to Red McKinney, the announcer who is also one of the founders of the event and a longtime volunteer in town. His image could be seen all along the parade route on Saturday thanks to cardboard cutouts of his face that were affixed to sticks and used as masks by Red wannabes.

Joslyn-Greenwald said Rotary President Carol Williams had the masks made in celebration of McKinney’s selection as Rotarian of the Year.





Local kids have been hard at work for the past two weeks on *Elf the Musical Jr.*, Colchester Community Theatre's summer children's play for this year. The play will be performed Saturday, July 20, at 2 p.m., in the auditorium at Bacon Academy, 611 Norwich Ave.

## Elf Jr. Brings Christmas in July to Colchester

by Jessica Dyer

Based on the well-known holiday comedy, *Elf the Musical Jr.* features a hilarious Buddy the Elf and his quest to leave The North Pole to find his true identity in the middle of New York City.

This weekend, Colchester Community Theatre's Children's Summer Theatre Workshop brings this story, along with a little bit of winter in July, to Bacon Academy's high school auditorium with its production of *Elf the Musical Jr.*

This production – which was adapted from its original script to be more manageable for younger performers – hosts 77 cast members spanning from second-graders to tenth-graders.

"To prepare for this show, all cast members had two workshops on character development," CCT's vice president Wallis Johnson explained. "The most challenging part of this production is ensuring that all cast members understand their character's individual story so that they may portray them realistically on stage."

Johnson added that campers also spent three hours each day for two weeks rotating between stations where they are taught about different aspects of production – including choreography, singing, and set and costume design. Campers created even the ornaments and snowflakes.

"The really fun part of *Elf Jr.* is it's truly winter in July," Johnson said. "We have 'snow' and a real tree on stage for Rockefeller Center!"

With plenty of large ensemble numbers, elves and New Yorkers of every kind, this modern-day holiday classic features songs by Tony award-nominees Matthew Sklar and Chad Beguelin.

It's not just Buddy the Elf behind this production, however. In a two-week time span, campers and volunteers alike help to put together this production of *Elf Jr.* CCT's president Diane Ozmun said, "We're thrilled by both returning and new participants, as well as all the volunteer teen counselors who are workshop alumni from years past. This year, for the first time, we have two musical assistants, both alumni who are now music teachers: Rachel (Menhart) Ciccone and Marisa Sullivan."

Ozmun stated, "The kids have come to the workshop every day with smiles, excitement and a thirst to learn about the magic of musical theatre. What a gift that everyone is so excited to pass on to the community!"

*Elf the Musical Jr.* will take place Saturday, July 20, at 2 p.m. in the Bacon Academy High School auditorium, 611 Norwich Ave. Tickets are \$6 each for adults and children, and can be purchased at the door on the day of the performance. For more information, call Johnson at 860-267-1023 or Laura Brown at 860-537-3259.

Jessica Dyer is a Colchester Community Theatre board member-at-large.

## Trooper Ordered to Surrender Guns After Domestic Violence Arrest

by Elizabeth Regan

A state trooper formerly assigned to the Troop K barracks in Colchester has been forced to surrender his guns in the wake of his arrest on domestic violence charges.

Sgt. Gregory Smith, of East Haddam, was arrested July 12 and charged with third-degree assault, first-degree threatening and first-degree reckless endangerment. He was taken into custody at Troop K and was released on a \$50,000 bond.

The arrest came the day after Smith's wife went to Troop K with allegations that he physically assaulted and threatened her with a gun on multiple occasions.

A full protective order issued at Middletown Superior Court Monday required the 42-year-old Smith to surrender any weapons pending "further order of the court."

The arrest warrant affidavit prepared by investigators from the Eastern District Major Crimes Unit said Smith's wife told police he twice put a gun under her chin and put a gun to his own head on more than one occasion.

The victim said Smith has "severe anger management issues," according to the warrant.

A state police spokesman said Smith was suspended with pay pending the outcome of the investigation.

Smith earned \$156,309 in 2018, according to the Office of the State Comptroller website.

Smith worked at Troop K from July 2017 through August 2018, according to state police. He was assigned to the Troop F barracks in Westbrook at the time of his arrest. He has been a trooper since 2000.

Smith was promoted to sergeant in 2015, state police said.

The spokesman would not say if Smith has been criminally charged in the past or if he has been disciplined as a result of any internal investigations. An email to the state police Legal Affairs Unit was not returned by press time.



Sgt. Gregory Smith

The warrant said Smith's wife went to the Colchester barracks to report the abuse on July 11. A sworn statement provided the next day to the major crimes investigators alleged seven months of escalating abuse following their January wedding.

The alleged victim in the warrant detailed "increasingly more volatile and dangerous" behavior by Smith that included pushing, grabbing, pulling out a clump of hair and ultimately using a "headlock-type maneuver" that restricted her breathing.

The woman told police that Smith said "I am going to end it" while holding a gun against his own head during a February argument. He said "this is how it is going to end" while again holding a gun to his head in May, according to the warrant.

The warrant said the alleged victim sought medical attention two times for injuries caused by her husband. She went to Middlesex Hospital in May with what she feared was a broken arm, but did not tell hospital staff the true cause of her injury because Smith was there with her. She sought treatment again in July for difficulty swallowing and breathing after Smith used the headlock maneuver on her during an incident that ultimately prompted her to go to the police, according to the warrant.

The victim recorded the July 7 incident on her cell phone after an argument about money began to escalate, the warrant said. The woman told police Smith attacked her from behind in the headlock; when she dropped to her knees and began screaming for help, he covered her mouth and told her to shut up while continuing to hold her against her will for about 20 seconds.

The warrant said the victim could be heard telling Smith she was going to call the police and Smith could be heard saying "I'm getting f—ing arrested." She told police Smith then went upstairs; when he came back down, he pointed one of his firearms at her.

The victim ultimately drove away after telling Smith she was going to the grocery store, the warrant said. She told investigators she has left the home for her safety.

Smith is next scheduled to appear in court on Aug. 9.

## Lebanon Man Killed in Colchester Crash

by Elizabeth Regan

A 19-year-old Lebanon motorcyclist was killed in a Tuesday evening crash involving a pickup truck.

State police said Joseph Bialczak was riding a 2018 Yamaha MT-07 east on Route 16 near Bulkeley Hill Road at about 9:21 p.m. That's when a 2009 Chevy Silverado K3500 LT operated by John Moore, 60, of Middletown, was attempting to make a left turn from Bulkeley Hill Road onto Route 16 southbound.

Police said Bialczak collided with the driver's side of the pickup truck. He died at the scene.

Moore was not injured, according to police. He was the only occupant of the truck.

State police did not indicate who was at fault in the preliminary accident report. A state police spokesman said the investigation is ongoing.

## East Hampton Police News

7/6: Daniel Doherty, 20, of 82 Comstock Trl., was arrested and charged with third-degree assault and disorderly conduct, East Hampton Police said.

7/7: Seth Tibus, 23, of 58 Spice Dr., was arrested and charged with DUI and failure to obey a stop sign, police said.

7/7: Andrew Talbot, 25, of 3 Nutmeg Ln., was arrested and charged with DUI and failure to obey a stop sign, police said.

7/9: Melinda Rannou, 58, of 85 N. Main St., was arrested and charged with DUI and failure

to drive right, police said.

7/10: Todd T. Bower, 30, of 234 Main St., Portland, was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and interfering/resisting an officer, police said. Bower also had two outstanding warrants for his arrest and was charged with two counts of second-degree failure to appear, police added.

Also, from July 1-7, officers responded to 14 medical calls, five motor vehicle crashes and 12 alarms, and made 23 traffic stops, police said.

## Portland Police News

7/13: Shantika Henderson, 23, of 38 Rome Ave., Middletown, was charged with operating a motor vehicle without a license, operating an unregistered motor vehicle and misuse of plates, Portland Police said.

## Andover Police News

7/8: State police said Elijah Lebron, 21, of 37 N. Main St., Apt. 7, Wallingford, was arrested and charged with DUI.

## Marlborough Police News

7/10: State police said Megan Saul, 39, of 240 Quinn St., Naugatuck, was arrested and charged with DUI and reckless driving greater than 80 mph.

## Colchester Police News

7/9: State police said Jose Pedraza, 22, of 319 Jefferson St., 1F, Hartford, was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear.

7/9: Wesley Brady, 61, of 314 New London Rd., was arrested and charged with three counts of breach of peace and second-degree stalking, state police said.

7/10: Ashleigh Streich, 28, of 103 Horsepond Rd., F, Salem, was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear, state police said.

7/13: Joseph Porter, 22, of 169 Melanie Ln., was arrested and charged with illegal possession of a weapon in a motor vehicle, second-degree criminal mischief, second-degree breach of peace, second-degree intimidation due to bias, and second-degree threatening, police said.

7/13: Police said a Maclyn Drive resident reported a white 2018 Volkswagen Passat was stolen from a driveway sometime between July 12-13.

# Marlborough Day Scrapped for This Year

by Sloan Brewster

Marlborough Day has been rescheduled... to next June.

While they're not using the word "cancellation," the Connecticut River Valley Chamber of Commerce is scrapping this year's edition of the popular festival. The chamber took over the planning of Marlborough Day in April, when it absorbed the Marlborough Business Association (MBA), which had run the event for the past 12 years.

Initial plans were to have the event at Blish Park in August as usual, said chamber president Mary Ellen Dombrowski. Upon a closer look, however, organizers determined that there tended to be low turnout at the event on that date "just because it was the last week of summer."

Vendors organizers had approached were expressing disinterest in that weekend – and were declining, Dombrowski said. She added that even one of the chamber employees had said she couldn't be there because she is bringing her son to college that weekend.

"We have been working on it for eight weeks trying to get vendors to participate," she said. "We do the Apple Harvest Fest in Glastonbury [each October] and have access to hundreds of vendors. What we are hearing back from them was that it was a difficult week. They just said it was a bad weekend."

Last year, approximately 1,000 people

showed up at the event, but they would walk around the booths and leave, Dombrowski said.

To attract more people to stay longer, the plan was to get different types of vendors than the Marlborough businesses and political parties that are generally represented, Dombrowski said. Instead, she said, the chamber wanted to bring in crafters, music acts and a beer garden.

Craig Robinson, who was the chair of activities with the MBA and is now an associate with the chamber, said that while Marlborough Day, in its previous incarnation, was well-received, he supports the changes, which he described as an expansion.

"They want it bolder, bigger, more involved with crafters, vendors, food trucks," he said. "They're trying to make it a much larger event."

Robinson said the MBA had always been happy with the event and that people who went were positive about it, but he understands the chamber's plans to grow it and bring in more money to keep it alive for years to come.

"It honestly wasn't making money, it was a break-even event," he said.

"We're trying to take the emphasis off of Marlborough businesses," Dombrowski said. "We've even found at the Apple Harvest [Fest], which is a much bigger scale, that people don't go to the booths; they want to spin a wheel and win a prize, they don't want to sign up for a

new bank."

Chamber members also approached the farmers market in Glastonbury – after learning there was none in Marlborough – to see if those vendors were interested, but they are already booked and said they couldn't do anything in August, Dombrowski said.

So, Dombrowski went back to the Chamber Event Committee, which looked at a calendar and decided to have something in June instead, she said. The intent to shift the emphasis and transform it into an event that draws larger crowds of people having such a good time that they want to stay and have an enjoyable family day at the park's Lake Terramuggus.

"It would be nice to have people that stay the whole day," she said.

Another plan is to hold a duck race in the lake as part of the event. This year, the chamber held a duck race in East Hartford in the Hockanum River. Organizers sold raffle tickets corresponding to ducks and five winners were awarded cash prizes. The plan is to move that race to Lake Terramuggus next year.

The hope is that the event will attract more people, including folks who live outside of Marlborough.

But while Marlborough Day is a no-go for this year, a new 5K road race planned for the night before will still take place. The Lightning Bug 5K will be run Friday, Aug. 23. The race

will take place at Blish Park at 6:30 pm.

Participants are encouraged to deck out in their best lightning bug costumes. The 3.1-mile course will go left from the park, with runners circling the lake counterclockwise, finishing by the pavilion and enjoying a dip in the water after completing the race. Those interested can sign up to run in the 5K at [crvchamber.org](http://crvchamber.org).

Organizers will collect donations at the race for Marlborough Food Bank. Cash donations will also be accepted.

"So there will not be a traditional Marlborough Day this year but we are doing a Lightning Bug 5K," Dombrowski said. "I feel terrible about people who feel badly about it, but I think when we have a wonderful event [next year] people will understand why."

She said she so far hasn't gotten any negative feedback about scrapping the event for this year.

"I just know that if you change a tradition in New England people don't like it," she said. "Change isn't easy for people all the time but hopefully it's a much better change."

The new Marlborough Day will take place next year on Saturday, June 6, with crafters, a farmers market, food trucks, live music, a beer garden and a duck race.

For more information, call the chamber at 860-659-3587.

## New Study Reduces Cost of Andover School Wing Conversion

by Sloan Brewster

A feasibility study on the proposal to convert the third- and fourth-grade wing at Andover Elementary School into a senior center has knocked the estimated price of the job down by hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Silver Petrucelli & Associates, the Hamden-based architectural firm hired by the Board of Selectmen in February to perform the study, handed the completed document over to the Board of Education last month.

According to the finalized report, the estimated cost of the project is \$130,400 versus the \$400,000 to \$500,000 estimates in the firm's initial findings in a report submitted in March.

The Board of Education felt the original estimates were too high, so Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen sat down with the architects and cut the plan back to essentials, she said in a meeting with the *RiverEast* Wednesday.

"The Board of Education knew that that was just not feasible, workable, doable in anyone's brain, so I worked with the architect at that point and we talked about... the basics that we want," she said. "We took that original estimate and really pared it down to the basics."

Items such as furnishings and the cost of moving, which were included in the earlier document, were not a part of the final draft, she said.

"Silver Petrucelli did a brief study just to kind of introduce the big picture and they did make some very, very general dollar estimates; but they included really many things that when we looked at that initial representation we realized we wouldn't need," Doyen said.

A big price reduction came when the architects met with the State Department of Administrative Services and the state fire marshal and learned there was no need to build a firewall between the wing and the rest of the school, Doyen said.

Overall, the study looked at if transitioning the space is feasible and what the goals would be, Doyen said.

"It's feasible," she said. "It's possible to do, but the question is just does the town want to do that?"

Last week, Doyen passed the report on to selectmen, which then passed it to the Planning and Zoning Commission for its review.

"At this point the Board of Education has completed its role so far in this project," Doyen said. "The rest is up to the town."

On Wednesday, First Selectman Jeff Maguire said that once the Planning and Zoning Commission completes its review, the report will be returned to the Board of Selectmen to determine if the cost is acceptable.

Assuming selectmen approve the cost, the

proposal would then be put in voters' hands.

The school board offered the wing for a possible senior or community center after the closure of the Old Firehouse on Center Street, which has been used as a senior center since the early 1990s and was also a meeting spot for boards and commissions. Last fall, selectmen officially closed the building after air quality tests confirmed what folks around town have said they have known for decades – it is infested with mold.

Per the report, the wing would be sealed off from the rest of the school and a secondary entrance would be built in one of the classrooms, Doyen said during a tour of the wing Wednesday.

"I think the main issue was the separation from the rest of the building," she said. "The door from that wing into the rest of the school would be blocked off. There would not be any access."

Doyen said that, if the conversion of the wing takes place, the first year would be considered a pilot year – to see how the plan works.

The first year, the space would be limited to senior citizens in town and usage by the town, Doyen said.

However, at last week's Board of Selectmen meeting, some residents, including Debbie Scanlon, voiced discontent with the plan and

suggested the seniors would be better served with their own building.

Selectmen reiterated that nothing would be done to change the wing without Board of Selectmen approval and a vote by residents. In the meantime, they said they were also looking at different possibilities for a community center, including a steel building, which Adrian Mandeville, vice first selectman, said would be a less expensive option for new construction.

One other outstanding piece of the plan is the Memo of Understanding for shared use of the space between the town and the education board, which has been signed by the town but not by the school board.

"We're waiting for the board," Doyen said.

Meanwhile, this summer classrooms from the third- and fourth-grade wing are being moved to the other side of the building, and the relocation should be complete by the first day of school.

The move was planned prior to the decision to offer the wing to the town for a senior center, Doyen stressed.

"We needed to [move]," she said. "Our enrollment is going down and so we were planning on consolidating, and so [a senior center] just seemed to fit in... maybe."

## Obituaries

### Colchester

#### Lee Searle Littlefield

Lee Searle Littlefield, 64, of Colchester, passed away Tuesday, July 9, at Backus Hospital. Born Nov. 30, 1954, in Bangor, Maine, he was a son of Joan (Stark) Pier and the late Lester Allen Littlefield. In 1977 he married his wife Suzanne.



Lee was a welder by trade, working for 27 years at J.T. Slocomb in Glastonbury, and recently at Spartan Aerospace for the last 15 years. Lee was a very loving and considerate man who tried to make the community around him a better place; he was a proud member of the Elks BPOE 2202 in South Glastonbury, where over the years he held many posts. When his children were growing up he volunteered as a Coach for the Colchester Cougars Recreational Football team, and the Babe Ruth Little League.

Lee will forever be remembered as a hardworking man who loved the great outdoors, working with his hands through landscaping and gardening. Those who knew him well will always remember his selfless nature and his smile.

In addition to his loving wife Suzanne, he is survived by his son Searle Littlefield of Colchester; his daughter, Kimberly (Chad) King of Plainfield; mother, Joan (Russell) Pier of Florida; his brothers, Dennis (Barbara) Littlefield of North Carolina and Wayne (Linda) Littlefield of Oklahoma; sisters, Kerri (Bill) Deal of Georgia, and Jodi Holmes of Maine; his two granddaughters, Angela and Sarah King; his aunts, Lucy Morin and Patricia Stark; and numerous extended family and friends.

Calling hours will be held today, July 19, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, from 4-5 p.m. with a chapel service at 5 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to Disabled American Veterans ([www.dav.org](http://www.dav.org)), or Houses of Heroes CT ([www.hohct.org](http://www.hohct.org)).

For online condolences, visit [auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com](http://auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com).

### Marlborough

#### Ruth Ann Rathbun

Ruth Ann Rathbun, 90, widow of the late Gordon J. Rathbun, of Hebron, passed away Saturday, July 13, at Marlborough Health Care Center. Born April 16, 1929, in Hartford, she was a daughter of the late Walter and Elizabeth (Porter) Nelson.



Ruth was married to her husband Gordon for 40 years, until he predeceased her in 1988. She was a member of Gilead Congregational Church for many years, and also belonged to the senior center in Hebron. She was a sweet and gentle woman with a big heart who enjoyed showing her love through cooking for her family and friends. She could make a feast out of scraps at any time of day and loved to be a hostess, especially over the holidays.

Some of her favorite things included checking on the hay fields, or being at the barn with her son, teaching her granddaughters the ways of the kitchen, and had an endless amount of love for all animals, especially her cats.

She is survived by her son Gordon and his wife Denise Rathbun of Hebron; her three granddaughters, Emma and her husband Steve Saltonstall, Molly and fiancé Bill Foley, and Annie Rathbun; and numerous extended family and friends.

In addition to her parents and husband, she was predeceased by her sister Elizabeth.

A graveside service will be held directly at the Gilead Cemetery Saturday, Aug. 10, at 10 a.m. A celebration of life will follow; all are welcome.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in Ruth's name to the Hebron Volunteer Fire Department, P.O. Box 911, Hebron CT 06248, or to the Hebron Lions Club, 347 Gilead St., Hebron, CT 06248

For online condolences, visit [auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com](http://auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com).

### Portland

#### Ryan M. Valeri

Ryan M. Valeri, 38, a lifelong resident of Portland, passed away at his home Thursday, July 11.

He is survived by his wife, Andrea (Berger) Valeri; his mother, Christine Valeri; and his brother and sister-in-law, John and Chelsey Valeri, also of Portland, CT. He was predeceased by his father, Thomas M. Valeri.

Born Jan. 30, 1981, Ryan spent his childhood cultivating the interests that would become his passions; these included hockey (go Penguins!), music, and all manner of outdoor adventures. He graduated from Portland High School in 1999 and later earned an associate's degree from Middlesex Community College. He most recently worked at Yale Electric Supply, where co-workers supported him generously throughout his illness. Ryan was fiercely loyal to family and friends, and seldom passed up an opportunity to share their company, whether it be to make them waffles, play guitar, light a ceremonial bonfire, or set off fireworks.

When confronted with the eventuality of death, he chose to live fully in his final years. He married his longtime partner, traveled within the country and beyond, tended to his house and yard with absolute pride and devotion, and made memories that will be carried on in others. He also helped to care for his beloved mother, with whom he shared a particular fondness for sunflowers.

Ryan's last weeks were spent surrounded by the people and things he loved most. He had a quiet strength that enabled him to defy expectations and embrace mortality on his own terms. While the years in his life were short, the life in his years was not – and we'll all live just a little bit better for having known and loved him.

A special note of thanks to the hematology team at Smilow Cancer Center for their genuine friendship, and for sharing in both happy times and hard ones.

Calling hours will be held Monday, July 22, from 5-7 p.m., at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St, Portland. Services and burial will be private at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105 or online at [stjude.org](http://stjude.org).

### Marlborough

#### Kathleen M. Morrow

Kathleen M. Morrow of Marlborough passed away peacefully at Middlesex Hospital early Monday, July 15. She was the daughter of William and Mary Corcoran.

She is survived by two brothers and a sister: Robert Corcoran, Donald Corcoran and Patricia Corcoran. She was the wife of the late Thomas W. Morrow III. She is also survived by two sons, Russell W. Caudill and Scott E. Caudill, from her first marriage with the late Glen E. Caudill; and three children from the late Thomas W. Morrow III: Thomas Morrow IV, Kimberly Meechan and Lisa Scheid. Kathy was loved and will be greatly missed by their grandchildren; and her many friends and family.

Kathy was an exceptional woman with a pioneering spirit. She was self-employed as a highly-successful real estate agent with Sentry Real Estate for over 35 years; and a Sober Home Business "Walker House of Miracles" with her late husband Thomas W. Morrow III. She was the first agent to get a CHFA loan for her client in Connecticut. Through their Sober Homes, they provided 35 beds in three rooming houses and two other houses for those serious about recovery from alcohol and/or drug addiction, for decades.

A wake/viewing will be held from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, July 20, at the John F. Tierney Funeral Home, 219 West Center St., Manchester, CT 06040. The funeral service will be held Sunday, July 21, at 3 p.m., at the same location. Her wish is to be cremated like her husband.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be given to: The 180 Center, P.O. Box 6806, Hamden, CT 06517. For further information, call Ministry (Teddy) at 203-909-9194.

For online condolences, visit [tierneyfuneralhome.com](http://tierneyfuneralhome.com).

### Portland

#### Richard R. O'Keefe

Richard R. "Tiny" O'Keefe, 66, of Portland, husband of Cathy (Schwamb) O'Keefe, passed away Tuesday, July 9, at Yale New Haven Hospital, surrounded by his family. Born Jan. 20, 1953, in Hartford, son of the late Francis and Joyce (Gustafson) O'Keefe, he was raised in East Hartford before moving to Portland 27 years ago.



Richard had been retired from Pratt & Whitney Co. after 41 years. He was a member of St. Mary Church, Portland.

Besides his wife, he is survived by his loving family: three sons, Rick O'Keefe and daughter-in-law Taylor of Southington, Matthew Fasciani and wife Jessica of Portland, and John O'Keefe of Portland; three daughters, Melissa Chivers and husband Craig of Middletown, Margaret O'Keefe of Portland, Kara O'Keefe and Austin; a brother, Frank O'Keefe of Vernon; three sisters, Brenda Pagano of East Hartford, Anne Cimadon of East Hartford, Sheila Brown of South Windsor; six grandchildren, Raychel, Brionna, Molly, Avery, Matthew, Cole; and also several nieces and nephews.

He loved his family more than life itself. He was a kind, gentle soul who loved nature, wood-working, but most of all spending time with his family and friends. He was the 'BEST' man to all that knew him. He will be missed every day for the rest of our lives.

The funeral was held Saturday, July 13, at 9 a.m., at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial in St. Mary Church, Portland, at 10 a.m. Burial was in the Swedish Cemetery, Portland. Friends called at the funeral home on Friday, July 12.

### Colchester

#### Alan R. Clark Funeral Services

Services for Alan R. Clark of Colchester are scheduled for Saturday, July 27, at 11 a.m., at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Hebron.

Clark died Tuesday, June 25, at the age of 71, at Backus Hospital, after years of health issues. In addition to his loving wife Denise, he is survived by two stepdaughters, Heather Sullivan and Denis Kogan, Jennifer Sullivan; three grandchildren, Michelle, Misha and Jacob Kogan, all of New York. Al is also survived by two sisters, Lorraine and Nickie Fantacci of Waterford and Karen and Ron Capozza of East Lyme.

For online condolences, visit [auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com](http://auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com).

### East Hampton

#### Christine Bitcon

Christine (Deprey) Bitcon, 54, of Middletown, passed away Friday, July 12, at home, surrounded by family after a long fight with cancer. Born Aug. 11, 1964, in Middletown, she was the daughter of the late Kathrene Deprey and Clayton Cobb.



She was raised in East Hampton before moving to Portland and later Middletown.

She is survived by her sons, Daniel Bitcon and Samuel Bitcon; daughter, Kathryn Jurczak and husband LJ Jurczak; her fiancé, Kevin Lauritzen; granddaughter, Charlotte Bitcon; sister, Elizabeth Hardy and husband Tracy Hardy; brother, Ted Deprey; sister, Lindy Collins and husband Noel Collins; along with several nieces and nephews.

She enjoyed playing cards, fishing, playing games on her computer, and above all else, spending time with her family and friends. She was loved by everyone that knew her and was a friend to all.

Services will be private. Memorial Donations in honor of Christine can be made to the American Lung Association and/or Middlesex Hospice.