

RIVEREAST

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Linda's Garden, which was constructed in memory of Linda Thibodeau, a longtime administrative assistant for the Hebron and RHAM school systems, was dedicated last week. At the end of the ceremony, children released over a dozen monarch butterflies into the garden. Shown here are students Hannah and Ethan Raymond and William Shea, along with Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz.

Memorial Garden Dedicated for Longtime Hebron Secretary

by Sarah McCoy

Friends, family and colleagues gathered outside Gilead Hill School in Hebron last Thursday, Oct. 2, to celebrate the dedication of a memorial garden.

Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz emceed the event, which celebrated the opening of Linda's Garden, erected in memory of Linda Thibodeau.

Thibodeau, the longtime administrative assistant for both the Hebron and the RHAM school systems, passed away last November after a two-year battle with cancer. She was 63.

"It really shows how much everyone loved her and is still thinking about her," Linda's husband Roger said of the garden. "She would've really been touched by all of this."

Notes from the newly installed wind chime in the garden could be heard as Cruz thanked guests for attending. Despite questionable weather forecasts, the event took place under the shining sun. "I'm sure Linda is looking down on us and smiling," Cruz said.

The garden came to be thanks to countless donations by residents, stu-

dents and staff. Last winter Cruz sent out a notice to parents and staff asking for donations to the garden.

Almost immediately flower donations, money, and even a worm donation came pouring in. "It was overwhelming," Cruz said.

Workers from the Hebron business GreenScapes Landscape Construction donated their time to take the stone pavers and create a small walkway. A stone bench and birdbath were also installed to furnish the expanding garden. Blueberry bushes were also planted in the garden because of Linda's fondness for Maine.

"This garden," Cruz said at the dedication last Thursday, "is a reflection of the deep regard people felt for Linda."

Thibodeau came to Hebron in 1973 after growing up in Newington. She took the position with the school system soon after and never left. In fact, she was at work on Friday, Nov. 16, just two days before her passing.

She and her husband raised their two children, Michael and Michelle, in

Hebron. They both went on to graduate from RHAM High School.

Michelle was on hand Thursday to do the honors of cutting the ribbons to the garden in her mother's memory.

Roger Thibodeau, who lives just two miles from Gilead Hill School, said he has been checking the progress of the garden throughout the summer. "It's a way for me to remember her by," he said. "The act of building the garden really shows me why Linda loved the school and her co-workers like she did."

Roger also described his wife as good-hearted and good-natured. "She wanted to help everybody she could."

Linda's Garden sits on the western side of Gilead Hill School. It's marked with a memorial stone and is filled with flowers that represent Linda's favorite color palette – blues, silvers and yellows.

To close Thursday's dedication ceremony students released over a dozen monarch butterflies into the garden. Some of which immediately landed on the nearby flowers that will, hopefully, be their new home.

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

I spent this past Saturday morning in East Hampton, and had a delightful time. Veteran readers of this column (all two of you) may remember a few weeks ago when I spoke of the pie baking contest the Congregational Church of East Hampton was having as part of its fall fair. A few days after the column came out, Jill Walker from the Congregational Church called me up and asked me if I wanted to be a judge of the contest. Sampling several different apple pies sounded like a pretty fun morning. So, I agreed to help with the judging, and on Saturday drove down to the church.

I was joined by two other judges, Colin Kilpatrick, the owner of Governor's Tavern, and Carl Sottile, a chef from the tavern. Both were nice guys, and they seemed as eager as I was to get down to the business of eating pie. When I arrived, I saw that nine different pies had been entered. A slice was cut from each pie, and from that slice, a few spoonfuls were dug out and placed in a little disposable cup. (That was one of the first questions people asked me when I told them later about the contest: "You had to eat nine slices of pie?" I'm thankful I didn't have to eat entire slices. For while I may love pie, if I was faced with downsizing nine whole slices, I think my stint as a contest judge would have been rather short-lived. That's a lot of pie.) We were also given a sheet of paper, with the four categories we were to judge the pies on: appearance (we did get to look at the actual pies themselves, not just the portions scooped out into the little cups which, well-scooped as they might have been, didn't do much to give you an idea of what the pies looked like), texture, taste and preparation. For this last category, we were given copies of the recipes submitted by the nine pie makers.

Those of you who read my earlier column (and again, I thank you both) might recall that each pie maker had a set of rules they had to follow. The crust had to be made from scratch, and the filling had to include fresh apples. No canned apple fillings were allowed. Pies needed to be baked in a non-returnable tinfoil pan. And the pies all had to be served at room temperature; no warm pies allowed. So I knew this was going to be some serious stuff. But I was unprepared as to quite how serious. For instance, each of the four categories were to be scored on a scale of 1-25. I was prepared to grade on a 1-5 scale. Twenty five points are a lot of points when you're determining if a pie is pleasing to the eye or if it tastes good. I mean, how do you

decide if a pie is worthy of a 15, but isn't quite good enough for a 16? So trying to figure out just how many points each pie should get took some time and careful deliberation. Also, I learned that there were some real prizes to be awarded here; no simple blue ribbons in this contest. The first-prize winner was to receive an hour of massage therapy, while the second-place winner would fetch a \$50 gift certificate to Governor's Tavern and the third-place winner would get an oil change from Belltown Motors.

So what pie won, you're wondering? Well, after the other two judges and I finished up our scoring, we added up all of our marks and determined the first-place winner to be this delicious apple pie made with cream cheese and topped with pecans. It was baked by Joann Kneeland. Interestingly, on my score sheet, the pie didn't receive the highest marks for appearance, and scored strictly average numbers for preparation, but these minor setbacks were overcome by high marks for both texture and taste. For starters, I love cream cheese in a pie. It gives it a little bit heavier feel, and it just tastes damn good when mixed with fruit. And I love pecans. One of my favorite pies is a rich, gooey pecan pie. But apple pie is my very favorite. So putting pecans on top of an apple pie is as close as you can come to food perfection. Kudos, Joann, on a terrific pie. And congratulations to all those who entered the pie contest. (Winning second prize was Nancy Simonow and winning third prize was Anin Daley – who's only four years old – and her grandma.) Your confectionary creations left my mouth quite happy indeed.

I watched all of last week's Vice Presidential debate, and while Sarah Palin didn't make any colossal blunders (although she did provide enough fodder for another hilarious Tina Fey impression on *Saturday Night Live* a few days later), one thought sprang to my mind while watching it: I'm getting pretty sick of hearing her and John McCain use the word "maverick." I mean, geez, give it a rest. Palin used the word constantly in last week's debate. In fact, at one point I even thought about keeping track of just how often she said it, but I quickly abandoned that notion, once it became apparent I just wouldn't be able to keep up. She simply used the word too darned much last week. (You betcha.)

See you next week.

Colchester

Dorothy M. Spafford

Dorothy M. (Haynes) Spafford, 90, of Colchester, beloved wife of Donald A. Spafford passed away Sunday, Oct. 5. Born in Holyoke, MA, she was the daughter of Alonzo and Gertrude (Mason) Haynes. Before retiring, she worked as a nursery school teacher for Knight Hall School in West Hartford.

Besides her husband, she leaves behind two sons, William A. Spafford and his wife Margaret of Bangor, PA, David E. Spafford of East Hartford, a daughter, Donna M. Brown and her husband David of Roy, WA, a sister Frances Murphy of Holyoke, eight grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

She was predeceased by a sister, Mildred Wilson and a grandchild, Loreen Prinz-Kail.

A memorial service will take place Saturday, Oct. 18, at 1 p.m., at the First Congregational Church of Lebanon, 588 Exeter Rd., Lebanon. Burial will be private and at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Middlesex Memorial Hospital, Weiss Hospice Unit, c/o Development Fund, 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457. Connecticut Direct Burial & Cremation has care of arrangements.

Obituaries

Andover

Lawrence Dennis Sheehan

Lawrence Dennis Sheehan (Larry), 89, of Andover died unexpectedly Sunday, Oct. 5, at Windham Community Memorial Hospital from complications following surgery. Larry was born in New York City in 1919, the son of the late Dennis Patrick Sheehan and Ann Ryan Sheehan. Larry moved to Andover at age 18 where he met and later married his beloved wife Eleanore Covell Sheehan and would have celebrated his 65th wedding anniversary with her in January.

He is also survived by his daughter, Kathleen Sheehan Sideris and son-in-law Ven Sideris of Mansfield and his two grandchildren Brian Sideris of Philadelphia, PA, and Emily Sideris of Orlando, FL. He also leaves behind his son Dennis Sheehan of Andover, his brother Edward Sheehan and his sister-in-law Carolyn Sheehan of Andover.

Larry was predeceased by his sister Dorothy Anderson and his older brother John Sheehan.

Larry had numerous nieces and nephews who will miss his lively stories at family gatherings. Larry attended most of his high school years in New York but did attend Windham High School when he moved to Andover. He enlisted in the United States Air Force during WWII and after serving his tour of duty, Larry returned home to Andover to raise his family and work on building a new house. He was also a member of the Air Force Reserve in Westover, MA.

Larry worked for Grinold Auto Parts and made numerous friends all over the state as one of their top sales representatives. He later worked for ACME Auto until his retirement in 1994. He truly had the "gift of gab" and a great Irish sense of humor. Larry was a voracious reader and he amazed and impressed people with his limitless knowledge about limitless subjects. He especially loved to talk about sports. He was an avid New York Yankees fan but knew statistics and facts about every sports team and was a loyal fan of the UConn Huskies. He was so proud of his family and his presence will be missed greatly. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

Calling hours will be today, Friday, Oct. 10, from 4-7 p.m., at Potter's Funeral Home, 456 Jackson St. (Route 195) Willimantic. Funeral services will be Saturday, Oct. 11, at 2:30 p.m. at the Andover Congregational Church, Route 6, Andover and burial, with full military honors, will follow the service in the family plot at the Townsend Cemetery on Townsend Road, Andover.

The family would like to encourage everyone to "wear a little green" to honor Larry's Irish heritage. In lieu of flowers, gifts in Larry's name may be made to the ASPCA (as he was a devoted pet-lover), the Andover Fire Department (for all that they do to help the citizens of Andover) or to any Friends of Library of your choice (as Larry loved having books to read).

Visit www.potterfuneralhome.com for directions and online memorial guestbook.

Marlborough

Nancy Valentine

Nancy Valentine, 51, of Marlborough, beloved wife of John Valentine died peacefully Wednesday, Oct. 1, at her home surrounded by her loving family. Born April 7, 1957, in Hartford, she was the daughter of the late Russell and Edna (Brouillette) Jose. Nancy was a lifelong resident of Marlborough, where she and her husband John were the original owners and operators of the Marlborough Florist for 15 years, before her retirement. Nancy was a member of Trinity Covenant Church in Manchester.

She is survived by her husband and best friend John, her "number one favorite son" David Sheppard, a brother and sister-in-law David and Kathy Jose of Tennessee; two sisters Genie and her husband Bill Lazcano of Cheshire, and Judy Jose-Roddy of West Roxbury MA, and several very special nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by her brother-in-law, Gerry Roddy.

A memorial service will held Saturday, Oct. 11, at 1 p.m. in Trinity Covenant Church, 302 Hackamatack St., Manchester, with Pastor Phil Hakanson officiating. Burial will be private in Marlborough Cemetery. In lieu of flowers at the memorial service, please send flowers to a neighbor or friend in Nancy's memory.

To leave online condolences, visit www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com. The Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St, East Hampton, has care of the arrangements.

Portland

Nancy A. Lefco

Nancy A. Lefco, 71, formerly of Portland, went home to her Lord early Friday morning, Oct. 3, from her home on Cape Cod. She was the wife of the late Walter W. Lefco, Jr. Nancy was born in Willimantic to the late Walter and Cecilia (Wojnar) Zaklukiewicz. She graduated from Windham High School in 1954 and received her Nursing Degree from the Ona Wilcox School of Nursing in Middletown. She was an RN at Middlesex Hospital for many years and continued her caring ways in several other positions in Connecticut and Cape Cod, MA.

She is survived by her daughter, Maureen Kotlow, her husband and "second son" Dominik; her son Michael, his much loved wife Evey; her devoted brother Roger Zaklukiewicz; and seven grandchildren.

Nancy and Walt moved to Dennis Port, MA in 1992 from Portland after spending many summers on their beloved Cape Cod. Nancy will fondly be remembered in our hearts as a true friend to all she met, and her strong faith and devotion to Our Lady – taking two trips to Medjugorie. She was widely known for her impeccable lawn and gardens, and her phenomenally delicious Christmas cookies. Nancy was the heart of our extended family and was involved in many activities that benefited others including; the Family Pantry, Angels of Hope, and the Women's Guild at Holy Trinity Catholic Church, West Harwich, MA.

Visitation was Sunday, Oct. 5, at Doane, Beal, & Ames, 260 Main St., West Harwich, MA, with a Funeral Mass Monday, Oct. 6, at the Holy Trinity Catholic Church, 240 Main St., West Harwich, MA. Memorial donations may be made to VNA Hospice of Cape Cod, 434 Route 134, South Dennis, MA, 02660 or the Family Pantry, PO Box 234, West Harwich, MA 02671.

Portland

Sarah J. Long Piatti

Sarah "Sadie" J. Long Piatti, formerly of Sugarloaf Terrace, Rockfall and Portland, died Friday (October 3, 2008) at Wadsworth Glen Health Care Center. She was the wife of the late Joseph F. Piatti, Sr. Born in Portland Jan. 26, 1918, a daughter of the late William A. and Mary Alice Brown Long, she was a lifelong Portland resident before moving to Rockfall several years ago.

She had been employed by Portland High School working in the cafeteria and later worked at Portland Care and Rehabilitation Center until her retirement. She was a parishioner of the Church of Saint Mary and had been a member of the Altar Society. She was also a member of the Portland Fire Department Auxiliary and had served as Tenant Commissioner of Sugarloaf Terrace.

Sadie is survived by her daughter Anita Bump and her husband John of Rockfall; her sons Joseph F. Piatti, Jr., Thomas M. Piatti and James E. Piatti and his wife Rose, all of Portland; her sister Clara Basso of Portland and Teresa Bock of Snellville, GA, nine grandchildren, 12 great-grandchildren and several nieces and nephews.

She was pre-deceased by her daughter-in-law Arlene Piatti, her sisters Mary Alice Long and Anna Lentini, and her brothers Harold Long, William Long, and Francis Long.

Her family received relatives and friends in the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, Monday, Oct. 6. Funeral services were held Tuesday, Oct. 7, from the Portland Memorial Funeral Home and at the Church of Saint Mary where a Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated. Interment followed in St. Mary's Cemetery.

Colchester

Gary R. Lucas

Gary R. Lucas, 65, of Blackstone, VA, and formerly of Colchester, passed away peacefully at his home Thursday, Oct. 2. He is survived by his wife of 40 years, Jo-Ann Biskupiak Lucas; two children, Kary-Ann Suprono and her husband, John of East Hampton, and Jason Lucas of Vernon and his extended family and friends.

A celebration of his life will be held 2 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 11, at the Joseph McMillian Funeral Home, 1826 Cox Rd., Business Highway 460, Blackstone, VA 23824.

Online register and condolences at www.mcmillianfuneralhome.com. In lieu of flowers, make donations to your local SPCA in memory of Gary.

Portland Propane Project to be Discussed Next Week

by Michael McCoy

Next Thursday, Oct. 16, is shaping up to be quite the lively night for the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Gospel Lane Properties LLC and Bruce Woronoff have applied for a special permit to construct a bulk propane storage facility on William Street Extension, just off of Route 66. The proposal is to be discussed at a public hearing at next Thursday's PZC meeting. The meeting starts at 7 p.m. and will be held in the Buck Foreman Room, located above the police station, on Main Street.

The project actually consists of two separate applications for two separate but adjoining parcels. The one filed solely by Gospel Lane Properties LLC is located at 34 Gospel Ln. (Gospel Lane Properties is owned by Bruce and Ken Woronoff.) The other application filed by Gospel Lane Properties LLC and Bruce Woronoff is located on William Street Extension, though there is no more precise address.

Each application seeks permission for bulk propane storage, which would consist of three 30,000-gallon aboveground tanks on each property.

Both properties are located in the IP (Planned Industrial) zone. In May the PZC granted a text amendment making the sale and distribution of petroleum products an allowed use in IP zones. This decision was the result of an application filed by Gospel Lane Properties.

Richard Lavengood is an engineer whose company, Relco, is employed by Gospel Lane. Though he is not the design engineer, he is responsible for making sure the facility is designed to comply with National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA) standards. The NFPA codes were first adopted into regulation by the state in 1995, and since that time, the NFPA has issued new standards, in 1998, 2001, 2005 and 2008. Each subsequent code has increased the safety provisions, and Lavengood said he made sure the site conformed to the 2008 code.

Holyoke, MA-based Relco performs the majority of its work in Massachusetts, but the company has also been a part of projects in Vermont, New Hampshire and Connecticut. "We basically help small businesses comply with state and federal regulations," Lavengood said, and added that Relco works on four to six projects a year.

Lavengood said that he knows of only two other facilities in Connecticut that meet the level of sophistication that this one would. "Propane is growing very rapidly right now," Lavengood said. According to him, propane is far cheaper

than oil.

Lavengood also said the proposed site for the facility is much farther from the highway than many others he has been a part of. "The one off Gospel Lane is one of the most ideal locations I've seen," he said, calling it "virtually invisible."

Some in town have speculated about a possible explosion. (Explosions at a Toronto propane facility in August led to the evacuation of thousands, as well as the death of a firefighter who helped battle the ensuing blaze.) But, Lavengood said, "It takes something on the outside to make this happen. ... If you don't have a flame impinging on that tank, nothing will happen." He said that even a car crashing into one of the tanks would not result in combustion.

Also, Lavengood said, propane must have just the precise mixture with oxygen to result in combustion. More specifically, he said that only when the mixture of air and propane includes 2.2 percent to 8 percent propane will it combust.

Lavengood also said that when dealing with tanks anywhere between 2,000 and 30,000 gallons in volume (the number of tanks does not change this), the tanks must be no less than 50 feet from the nearest property or "important building." The latter term is not defined in the NFPA standard. Lavengood estimated that the nearest property was 200 to 250 feet away from the proposed facility.

The facility is also required to have access to enough water to extinguish half a tank in 10 minutes. To this end, the proposal submitted to PZC includes two 10,000-gallon underground water storage tanks. Lavengood said these tanks would be available to the town in the case of a fire at any other location as well at no cost.

Lavengood is also an authorized OSHA instructor and a registered Environmental Scientist.

However, no surprise that not everyone looks as favorably on the project as Lavengood does. Fourteen households, most of which are located near the proposed site, have banded together to form Portland Residents Opposed to Propane (PROP). The group met for the third time Wednesday night to plan their opposition.

The effort started when group spokesman Steve Potter thumbed through the legal ads in the September 26 issue of the *Rivereast*, and was shocked to find this particular application. So, he went around banging on doors, and the

collective was born.

"I read the legals in the *Rivereast* every week," he said. "It's very rare that I don't read them."

Resident Paul Decelles said at a PROP meeting earlier this week that he understands that the facility may be engineered to conform to the strictest codes in the book, but it's the unforeseen mishap that could lead to tragedy. "You can't engineer-out [an] accident," he said.

Speaking to the proximity of the schools, Decelles said, "What if [the tank explodes] at nine in the morning?"

Potter said truck drivers hauling propane are mandated to drive no more than eight hours and subsequently rest for eight more hours. However, he said, "You know and I know, you can't make money on a truck driver that's on break for eight hours."

Potter later commented on how often you get a spark when entering or exiting your car. "One static electricity spark with a propane leak ... forget it. I'm gone."

Though the tone of the meeting was certainly one of frustration, Potter offered some words of optimism. "The town stands to save tax money from this," he said. He then went on to recount the recent episode, when the selectmen explored the idea of turning off a portion of the town's streetlights to save money. However, when the room ended up flooded with residents fervently against the idea, the effort died. Potter figured something similar could happen here.

Resident Gary Forshee also predicted this would severely affect property values. "Your home is your biggest investment as an average American," he said.

Resident Eric Handel, meanwhile, said, "My ponds are in the blast zone, but I know I have species on the cautionary list." He said these included box turtles and wood turtles.

The "blast zone" he speaks of concerns a study done by Dr. A.M. Birk of Queen's University in Ontario. According to him, flying fragments from a propane facility explosion could reach a mile in radius. (Those numbers concern 10,000-gallon tanks.) The high, middle and Valley View schools are all located within this radius.

Decelles said an explosion would most likely result from "people doing the worst possible thing at the worst possible moment." He added that such an accident simply couldn't be anticipated, adding, "I don't care how much tech-

nology you thrown at the plan."

PROP has gone so far as to chip in and hire an attorney: Michael Dowley, who practices out of Middletown.

Potter said he figures many in the town may know about the application but, "I don't think they know the scope of what's proposed."

"It's just too dangerous a product," he continued. "Are they willing to take a gamble if something goes wrong? I think they could find something better to put on this property. ... It's just not a good idea." And, he added, "It's not just 'cause we live right next to it."

Potter continued, "Any other type of business, we probably wouldn't be fighting."

He also expressed his distaste over the town's not notifying abutting homeowners that the application was on the docket.

Though Potter certainly made his displeasure over the plan quite clear, he noted one silver lining. "We've bonded together as group in the community," he said of these past couple weeks.

To this, Decelles said, "The value of a common enemy is a very powerful uniting force."

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield declined to weigh in on the issue, noting that it was a matter for the PZC, not the selectmen. However, she did say, "Obviously, there's a lot of neighbors concerned about this particular application," and added that she received two e-mails and a personal visit from concerned residents.

PROP member Reg Farrington said the group, which on Thursday registered with the town for intervenor status (which would allow the group access to various documentation and notifications related to the application), intends to sue should the PZC approve this project. Other PROP concerns include noise and light pollution as well as traffic patterns.

Members of PROP will be at the Portland Agricultural Fair throughout the weekend, talking with residents and collecting signatures of people opposed to the project.

While the proposed propane project may be the talk of the town right now, it is not the only item on the agenda for next week's PZC meeting. Planning and Land Use Administrator Deanna Rhodes said that should a very large number of people turn out for the propane facility hearing, the PZC may open the hearing, and immediately continue it to a later, special meeting, where only that matter would be addressed.

Hebron Teen Charged With Manslaughter After Accident

by Sarah McCoy

A Hebron teen faces four charges as a result of a car crash that killed an Andover teen last December.

Christopher Gonsalves, 18, of 434 Wall St., turned himself into State Police at the Troop K barracks in Colchester last Thursday, Oct. 2. He is charged with second-degree manslaughter, third-degree assault and three motor vehicle violations, including traveling too fast and passing in a no-passing zone.

According to state police reports, Gonsalves, who was 17 at the time of the accident, was driving a 2003 Ford F350 southbound on Route 316 just after 6 p.m. on Dec. 2, 2007, when the vehicle veered off the road. The truck struck a boulder off the east shoulder of the road near the entrance to Fox Road.

Gonsalves' passenger, Zachary Choquette, who was 18 at the time of the accident, passed away a day after the crash. A senior at

Windham Technical High School, Choquette was set to graduate last May. He had planned for a career as a heating and air conditioning specialist.

Another passenger, Peter Chase of Scotland, was ejected from his seat in the rear of the vehicle. Chase, who was 18 at the time of the accident, was treated with life-threatening injuries but was later released from Hartford Hospital.

Hebron resident William Siter, 17 at the time, was also in the car at the time of the accident. He was transported to Windham Hospital with minor injuries.

State police said the arrest comes after an investigation into last year's accident but they would not say what circumstances of the crash brought about the charges.

Gonsalves is free on \$20,000 bond and is due at Rockville Superior Court on Oct. 15.

East Hampton Police News

9/19 — Cary H. Doran, 50, of 145 Chestnut Hill Rd., was arrested pursuant to a warrant on charges of sixth-degree larceny, and conspiracy to commit sixth-degree larceny, East Hampton Police said, and added that Doran was also arrested for possession of drug paraphernalia.

9/26 — Robert Romano, 48, of 62 Auburn Knoll, was arrested pursuant to a warrant on charges of third-degree assault and disorderly conduct, police said.

Portland Police News

9/27 — Travis Puida, 18, of 215 Thompson Hill Rd., was charged with DUI, failure to obey stop sign and failure to use a turn signal, Portland Police said.

October Means Time for the Portland Fair

by Michael McCoy

This weekend is shaping up to be a banner year for the Portland Agricultural Fair. Just ask Fair Association Vice President John Dillon: "The gods are smiling on us, we're going to have spectacular weather."

The fair runs Friday from 5-11 p.m., Saturday from 9 a.m.-11 p.m. and Sunday from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. It will once again be held on the Portland Exchange Club Fairgrounds, located on Route 17A, near the intersection with Route 17.

The fair is put on every year by the dozen or so member Portland Fair Association, of which Don Bascom is president.

This will be the fair's ninth consecutive year since it was restarted in 2000. (The fair initially ran from 1919-1989, but it wasn't held in the '90s, due to lack of interest.)

One of the annual centerpieces of the fair is the Portland Junior Women's Club Talent Show, and this year will be no different. The show features children in grades 1-8. The top three acts in each age group will earn trophies. The show is Saturday from 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Also similar to last year's fair is the bevy of exhibits on display all weekend, ranging from archery to apple pie, sheep to spinning and rabbits to fruits and vegetables. However, it may be wise to keep the last two separate.

This year, attendees can expect 28 hours of wall to wall events this weekend. This will kick off with the first of the tractor pulls when the gates open at 5 p.m. tonight. An hour later, the opening ceremonies will officially get the three-day party started. The Portland High School band will lead this kickoff. The night will close out with the Green Hill Mountain Band, a group from the Connecticut Country Music Association named its band of the year.

The fun continues bright and early (well, early for a weekend) Saturday morning, with the dairy cattle show and the antique tractor pulls. Other livestock shows will follow, including goats at 10 a.m., beef cattle at 2 p.m. and youth sheep at 3 p.m.

Saturday's music tunes up at 11 a.m., with the Portland Middle School Marching Band. Later, Brother Sleeze will wind up the after-

noon with their classic and modern rock covers. They are slated for two sets, one at 2 p.m. and the other at 3:30 p.m., both on the small stage. This will overlap with Number 9, a Beatles cover band that looks to figuratively turn the grounds into strawberry fields at 4 p.m.

At 5:30 p.m., Joe Milardo and the Musical Cavaliers will class up the event, and the Nifty Fifties Band will take things into the night with the greaser-infused set. In addition, their act will include a '50s dance contest. The best duo or group will take home a trophy.

At noon, gearheads can get revved up over the hot rod car show.

The day will also include visits from Ronald McDonald and Wally the Green Monster, the Red Sox mascot. Wally will look for all the good will he can get to take back to his friends on Yawkey Way.

Sunday's music includes Small Town Roots at 11 a.m., Breakin' Strings at 12:30 p.m., Dirigo Highway at 1:30 p.m., and Wild Notes at 2 p.m. Breakin' Strings and Dirigo Highway, both from Gardiner, ME, will play second sets at 2:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m., respectively.

The Magic of Christopher will dazzle those of all ages at 1 p.m., and at 2 p.m., take a stop by the dog agility competition.

Also, at 1 p.m., one of the New England Patriots cheerleader will be at the fair signing autographs and selling calendars. Between her and Wally, Dillon said, "We certainly have New England sports covered."

Of course, food will not be scarce. Vendors and civic organizations of all sorts will be on the grounds serving up goodies. These will include hot dogs, hamburgers, fried dough, fried vegetables, kettle corn and popcorn.

Dillon made particular mention of The Portland Fire Department's French fries. "That's just tradition," he said. "If you're from town, and you come down, you've gotta get your French fries."

Noting all the groups that will participate as vendors, he predicted, "We should have a full house."

On top of all that, rides and amusements will be available all weekend, courtesy of Coleman



Coleman Bros. employees set up the Portland Fair's bumper cars Tuesday afternoon at the Exchange Club Fairgrounds.

Brothers. On Friday evening and Sunday, kids can purchase wristband that will give them carte blanche on rides all night.

If this sounds like a lot to digest, it certainly is. You can visit the fair's website at portlandfair.com for more information, including a full entertainment schedule. There will also be programs available at the fair.

Dillon also encouraged all those interested in getting involved with future fairs to stop by guest relations.

Dillon gave special kudos to two parties for helping out with this year's fair. One is Psi Epsilon, a Wesleyan University fraternity, which is sending about 10 guys every day this

weekend to help with the fair. "They've saved us a lot of trouble," he said.

The other is town employee and fair association member Michael Lastrina who has spent the whole last week preparing for the fair. "He took his vacation to help us," Dillon said. "We call him 'Mr. Carnival.'"

Fair admission is \$7. Seniors will be admitted for \$5, and children ages 9 or younger will be admitted free.

Parking is located on Route 17, behind the town garage. A free shuttle bus will run back and forth from the fairgrounds. Handicapped parking will be available on the fairgrounds.

Andover Selectmen Abandon Website After New Law

by Sarah McCoy

The Board of Selectmen voted last week to abandon the town's website after new state legislation was passed requiring towns to post meeting minutes within a week after the meeting takes place.

"It's just another instance of an unfunded mandate from the state government," First Selectman Bob Burbank said this week. "We just don't have the resources to add these new responsibilities."

While the town will no longer sponsor a site, the selectmen did agree that a site run by volunteers should continue with the same information that was available. The town's unofficial website remains online at www.andoverct.org.

The new legislation, which took effect Oct. 1, requires towns to post minutes within a week after the meeting.

"Our feeling is that this new rule could have a very large effect on the membership of our boards and commissions," Burbank said. "Most of our volunteers go to work everyday and mail their minutes in. If they were required to post these to the Internet, our fear is, many of the volunteers would simply stop volunteering."

Bart Russell, the executive director for the Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST), said Andover is not alone with its concerns. As of Oct. 9, at least six towns had abandoned their town website since the legislation took effect, including Lyme, Salem and Middlefield.

"I think it's a well-intentioned law but it probably wasn't thought out enough from a practical standpoint," Russell said. "I'm hearing town leaders say, 'We're absolutely committed to informing our residents. We're committed to transparent government. But, from a technical standpoint, we just don't have the resources.'"

Russell said the new legislation, which aims

to provide residents with more information, is, in reality, having the opposite effect because so many towns are shutting their online presence down.

State Representative Pam Sawyer said she hadn't heard one complaint about the legislation until Burbank called her on Oct. 1. "For years we have heard complaints from residents saying they didn't know when meetings were and what was happening in the town," Sawyer said. "People were asking, 'We have the Internet, why not use it?'"

The new mandate for towns to include minutes and agendas was first included in Governor M. Jodi Rell's ethics reform package, Sawyer said. It was passed by the state legislature in special session this summer.

After hearing of Burbank's concerns, Sawyer said she called the Freedom of Information (FOI) Commission asking how towns can fulfill the law when their website committees meet only once a month, as is the case in Andover.

Sawyer said she was told that any towns where the website committee meets only once a month would only be required to update their site within 48 hours of the website commission's meeting. Initially relieved, Burbank asked for this in writing.

"I was told that this wouldn't be possible until the FOI Commission has heard a case on this matter," he said. "I don't want to be the test case where Andover residents are left footing the bill for an attorney and other costs associated with an FOI hearing."

Sawyer said she plans to recommend a piece of legislation that clarifies this piece of the law during the new legislative session. "What we're seeing now is how difficult it is to create one law to fit 169 towns, not all of which run the same," she said.