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The hanging sap buckets are a welcome sight in Hebron this time of year, as it means it's time for the Maple Fest. The two-day annual event returns this weekend.

Hebron Maple Festival This Weekend

by Sarah McCoy

The steel buckets hanging from the sides of trees can only mean one thing. With spring just around the corner, the time has come for the 19th annual Hebron Maple Festival.

The festival will be held this year Saturday and Sunday, March 14 and 15, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. both days. The affair will feature events across the town and plenty of food.

"It's unique," Wayne Palmer, owner of Winding Brook Sugar House and one of the coordinators for this year's festival, said. "We're the only town in Connecticut that does a maple festival and I've been told it rivals anything in Vermont because we've kept money out of the equation."

As in years past, there is free admission to the Maple Festival.

With a clear forecast predicted Maple Festival Committee chair Ron Wenzel is expecting the best Maple Fest ever. "Why would I expect anything different?" he said. "We offer families a great day out."

Wenzel, who has been involved with the festival since its inception in 1980, estimated that he had 2,000 visitors at his sugarhouse last year. This year his doors will be open again to visitors interested in learning the process of turning sap into syrup.

Joining Wenzel on his property will be one of the cows from the Mapleleaf Farm of Hebron, a producer of the Farmer's Cow milk.

Earlier this week, both Palmer and Wenzel

explained that the ideal syrup-making weather features nighttime temperatures in the low 20s, with daytime highs in the 40s, with lots of sun and little to no wind. While this year's season started off terribly, both sugarers agreed that the past few weeks have made up for the slow start. "This year might prove to be average," Palmer said. "That would be a huge achievement considering how the season started."

Palmer places taps in over 850 trees. Last year, he said, he produced 250 gallons of syrup. "Last year was one of the best in history," Palmer said. "It was an anomaly but we could get to 200 this year."

In addition to its use on pancakes and waffles, syrup can be used for all different reasons. It's a natural sweetener, making it a popular baking substitute or for use with coffee. Palmer said he's also had multiple requests from brewers looking to purchase syrup for beer. "The market's huge for this stuff," he said. "It's not hard to get rid of."

The Maple Fest features more than just syrup, though. One of the keys to the festival's success, Wenzel said, is the focus on Hebron. The event is filled with Hebron residents, business and organizations coming together to put the town on display. "Every year we get some from out-of-town who try to sneak in but we put the kibosh on that," he said.

Back this year is the Birds of Prey exhibition held at AHM Youth and Family Services. Julie Anne Collier will be on hand to display and inform audiences about various birds of prey. She is one of the founders of WINGMASTERS, a nonprofit group dedicated to protecting, rehabilitating, and increasing understanding about North American birds of prey. Tickets are still available for the two shows on Sunday to be held at 1 and 2:30 p.m. All profits will go to supporting AHM.

This year pony rides are back after a brief hiatus. The rides are sponsored by the Tea San Taekwondo Academy.

Artisan Framing is pleased to welcome silhouette artist Deborah O'Connor to town. Using just paper and scissors O'Connor will be creating silhouettes for visitors in just a few minutes.

The historic quilt show is also back this year along with the teacup auction. Both events are sponsored by the Hebron Historical Society and will be located in Old Town Hall.

The dog sledding exhibition will be held again at Christ Lutheran Church on Saturday. Country Carpenters will sponsor demonstrations of woodworking and blacksmith techniques. Throughout town nearly 100 events are scheduled for the weekend.

Program books for the Maple Festival are available at the Hebron Town Office Building, 15 Gilead St., as well as online at www.hebronmaplefest.com. Proceeds from the sale of advertisements in the program book go to support scholarships for Hebron students

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RHAM Juniors Hold Fashion Show

by Sarah McCoy

For one night, Casey Schaus abandoned her casual look for something quite different. The junior at RHAM High School was one of this year's models for the Prom Fashion Show, held last Friday, March 6, at the school.

"I practiced walking in my heels around the house," Schaus said. "My family was laughing at me but it was good practice."

Schaus and the eight models tackled the heels and the runway as they showcased prom dresses, makeup, hair and jewelry options for the high school's most glamorous night.

Holly Habicht, owner of Daisies and Daffodils flower shop in Hebron, initiated the idea last year. The event was put on as a fundraiser for the junior class. Eight different businesses participated in the event including six from Hebron.

Habicht said she had seen other schools put on similar events and liked the idea. "I thought it would be fun for the kids," she said. "And it was. The kids seemed to be having a great time."

Kim Hills, a gym teacher at the high school and one of the junior class advisors, said she was pleased with how the show - which attracted about two dozen people - went off.

"I was a little disappointed in the attendance

but it's only our first year of doing the show," Hills said. "I'd rather put on a good show for a smaller crowd than a not-so-good show for a lot of people."

Prep for the event began after school with Elissa Cote and Alesha Prescher, co-owners of Skintology in Hebron, doing the girls' makeup. The Hebron salon Capricorn I was also on hand to do participants' hair. Susan Gagliardo, a representative for home-based business Silpada, provided jewelry for the event. While dresses for the event were donated by Fairy Tales of Glastonbury and tuxedos were provided by Formal's Inn in Manchester.

The event began with a walk down the runway for each of the nine girls. Jesse Kivney and Kevin Trippel, both juniors at RHAM, escorted the girls.

The dance team performed at the halfway point, giving the models time to change outfits.

Gaby Levesque, a junior at RHAM, said she chose to participate because she thought it looked like fun. "I've always loved to dress up," she said. And, she added, she came away with "a ton of ideas for my real prom."

Gaby said she now knows exactly what kind of dress she wants and, said, that she saw a lot

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Gaby Levesque, a junior at RHAM High School, gets makeup applied before the Prom Fashion Show held at the high school last Friday. Gaby was one of nine girls to participate in the show.

Maple Fest Continued from Front Page
pursuing a career in the Environmental Sciences field.

While the festival's official hours are 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, some events, such as the pancake breakfasts, will begin earlier. Consult the program book – as well as a special section in this week's *Rivereast* – for a townwide map and schedule of events for more information.

Fashion Show Continued from Front Page
of wonderful ideas for accessories at the fashion show.

This was the first year the junior class sponsored the event, but Hills said she hopes it becomes an annual event. "We've been through it once and have learned some things to make it even better next year," she said.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Every time I sort of start to come back around to the *Hartford Courant* again, they do something like they did last week, when the increasingly-full-of-wire-stories-and-nothing-by-actual-*Courant*-staffers "CTLiving" section ran an Associated Press story all about the maple syrup business.....in Vermont.

That's right, Vermont.

Now, any Nutmegger worth his salt knows you can find plenty to say about pure maple syrup right here in Connecticut, where, at this time of year, sugar shacks are busy humming their sweet, sweet songs. And in Hebron this weekend, the area's premier maple sugaring event, the Hebron Maple Festival, will make its triumphant return.

Always held the second weekend of March, this two-day event can be counted on to provide an array of delightful sights, smells and, of course, tastes. I'll be out of town this weekend, so unfortunately I'll miss the Maple Fest; I've been to the festival every year since I think 2002. But I hope all of you reading this can make it. It really is a delightful time.

While the main draw of the Maple Festival is the tours of various sugar houses in town, there are also plenty of other activities taking place. And many of them, much to the delight of your taste buds, involve eating. Among the many options are: pancake breakfasts by the Knights of Columbus and the Hebron Lions Club (and the breakfasts are on separate days too – the KOC one is on Saturday, while the Lions' is on Sunday – so theoretically you could go to both, if you think your stomach can handle it), maple cake being sold by Gilead Congregational Church (I've had this cake before; trust me, it's wonderful. And make sure to eat it warm!), kettle corn from Hebron's own Majestic Kettle Corn (get the maple corn; you won't be disappointed), Jewish baked goods from United Brethren Synagogue, more baked goods – and hot cider too – from Christ Lutheran Church I could go on and on.

If at some point during the weekend you want to get away from all the sweets and still feed your face, you're in luck. Every year, I like to stop by the VFW and American Legion tent and get either a tasty cheeseburger or a chili dog (you can get the hot dog plain if you want, but the chili's just so good, it'd be a shame to get the dog plain). St. Peter's Church has pulled pork sandwiches, and the Hebron Democratic Town Committee sells grilled maple ham-and-cheese sandwiches.

Several organizations in town take advantage of the Maple Festival to hold events that aren't necessarily maple-minded, but are still quite enjoyable. The Friends of the Douglas Library always holds a big book sale in the basement of the library. The selection is quite good; there really is something for everyone. The Hebron Historical Society also puts on its annual Quilt Show in the Old Town Hall during the Maple Fest. The quilts are always very interesting – and sometimes educational as well – to look at. And on your way out of the Old Town Hall, you can buy a cup of some absolutely delicious ice cold maple milk.

Most of the events I just described are at or near the center of town and, as such, the Route 85/Route 66 intersection can get rather congested Maple Fest weekend. So consider yourself warned. However, the sugar houses themselves are somewhat off the beaten path. There's a "maple map" available in this week's *Rivereast* outlining where the sugar houses are. This year, there are three houses

available to the public for tours. If you've never seen how maple tree sap gets converted into syrup, you're in for a treat. Seeing the process that converts sticky maple tree sap into delightful syrup can be fascinating: Each of the sugar houses is equipped with large machines to boil the sap (it takes 40 gallons of sap to produce just one gallon of syrup). The machines are definitely a sight to behold, and I personally enjoy the sweet smell of the boiling sap.

As an added bonus, the sugar houses will also be selling bottles of pure maple syrup, and the Woody Acres Sugar House will also be offering other maple goodies, like the excellent maple cream.

If – like me – you can't make it to the Maple Festival this year, or if you decide after the festival you want a little more, don't worry, you can get maple syrup from the Hebron sugar shacks all year long. And that's great, because a waffle covered with pure maple syrup is a taste delight that knows no season.

* * *

Monday brought good news, when President Obama issued an executive order lifting former President Bush's ban on federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. I realize it's a controversial issue, but I'm a big fan of the research. Those opposed to it have argued about the destruction of human life involved in performing the embryonic stem cell research, but in most cases the embryos come from aborted fetuses. Regardless of how you feel about abortion, the fact is it happens every day, and those aborted fetuses would normally just be thrown away. If you can harvest embryos from those fetuses – which, again, are going to just be discarded anyway – and perform some potentially life-saving research.....well, what's wrong with that?

Embryonic stem cells are "master cells," and can morph into any cell of the body. Proponents of the research are hopeful the cells can be used to treat a variety of afflictions, including Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's, paralysis and even diabetes and heart disease. One of the better-known advocates of the research has been Nancy Reagan, and on Monday, a day when conservative Republicans were blasting Obama's repeal of the ban, Mrs. Reagan – whose husband was a pretty high-profile conservative Republican – was cheering it. She issued a statement saying she was "very grateful" for the move, and said that "countless people, suffering from many different diseases, stand to benefit from the answers stem cell research can provide."

Nancy Reagan is of course painfully aware of the dreadful effects of Alzheimer's, having lost her husband to the disease. While doing some reading earlier this week about Obama's executive order, I came across a quote from the former First Lady, which she gave in 2004, not long before Ronald Reagan's death (and a decade after he first announced he was suffering from the disease): "Ronnie's long journey has finally taken him to a distant place where I can no longer reach him," she said. "Because of this I'm determined to do whatever I can to save other families from this pain."

Here, here, Mrs. Reagan. I support you wholeheartedly. The day we find a cure for Alzheimer's, and the other afflictions I mentioned above, will be a most glorious day indeed. And I'm hopeful that, with the help of embryonic stem cell research, that day will come.

Colchester Police News

3/4-Brian Octigan, for whom no age was given, of Willimantic, was charged with driving under the influence, State Police said.

3/5-Tabatha Black, 18, of 106 West Rd., was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of a controlled substance and trespass, State Police said.

3/5-Jeffrey Frazer, 37, of 252 Norwich Ave., was charged with third-degree assault and disorderly conduct, State Police said.

3/5-Daniel Lewis, for whom no age was given, of Waterbury, was charged with second-degree failure to appear, State Police said.

3/6-Debra Mielczarek, 43, of 68 Nutmeg Circle, was charged with failure to drive upon the right and operating under the influence of alcohol, State Police said.

3/8-Sandra Macioce, 69, of Plantsville, was

charged with driving while intoxicated, State Police said.

3/10-Spiros Vasilakis, 60, of 307 Amston Rd., was charged with threatening, third-degree assault and disorderly conduct, State Police said.

3/10-John Poulos, 38, of Salem, was charged with threatening and breach of peace, State Police said.

3/10-Donald Gesswin, 40, of Lebanon, was charged with risk of injury, disorderly conduct and reckless endangerment, State Police said.

3/10-Jason Lenares, 29, of 523 Broadway St., was charged with violation of probation and disorderly conduct, State Police said.

3/11-Stephanie Petrazelli, 34, of Moodus, was charged with sixth-degree larceny, State Police said.

Portland Police News

3/1 — Mark Wheelock, 43, of 54 Riverview St., was charged with driving under the influence, operating under suspension and traveling too fast, Portland Police said.

3/4 — John O'Keefe, 20, of 9 Hall Hill Rd., was charged with possession of less than four ounces of marijuana, police said.

3/7 — Andrew Frizen, 20, of 68 Lake Rd., was charged with driving under the influence, simple trespass and operating a motor vehicle without a Connecticut license, police said.

3/7 — Troy Colby, 25, of 23 Lyman St., New Britain, was charged with possession of less than four ounces of marijuana, police said.

3/8 — Scott Ferguson, 45, of 3 Gloria Heights, was charged with disorderly conduct, third-degree criminal mischief and second-degree threatening, police said.

3/8 — Shawn Vare, 25, of 230 Main St., was charged with weapon in a motor vehicle, police said.

East Hampton Police News

2/25 — Ensanullah Hussaini, 44, of 23 Midwood Farm Rd., was arrested for operating an unregistered motor vehicle, misuse of plates and operating without insurance, East Hampton Police said.

2/28 — Michael E. Jones, 52, of 9 Lake Dr., was arrested for operating under the influence of alcohol, police said.

3/3 — Emily M. Nichols, 42, of 71 Daniel St., was issued a ticket for using a cell phone while operating a motor vehicle, police said.



State Representative Pam Sawyer stopped by the Board of Selectmen's meeting last week to talk about the federal stimulus package and the state budget. She is shown here with Town Manager Jared Clark.

Sawyer Likes Hebron's Chances for Stimulus Money

by Sarah McCoy

State Representative Pam Sawyer told the Board of Selectmen (BOS) last week that, while the competition is great, she likes Hebron's chances to get a piece of the federal stimulus pie.

Sawyer began last week's BOS meeting with a look into where the town stands in terms of that oft-discussed but still-elusive federal stimulus money and a state Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant.

Sawyer reported that Connecticut is slated to receive \$3 billion in funding – though that amount shouldn't be seen as a blank check. This money will be used to fund educational costs, Medicaid, competitive grants and "shovel-ready" projects, Sawyer said.

Earlier this year, towns submitted over 2,000 plans for shovel-ready projects, which meant they were only waiting on funding to begin work.

Hebron applied for nearly \$4.7 million in funding, with its number one priority being the development of the Village Green district. The \$1.8 million project would cover the necessary roadway improvements to begin development on the 165 acres of land. "Hebron is ahead of most towns in terms of planning," Sawyer said at last week's meeting. She said if the town were to get \$1.8 million for the improvements, it would "crack open the current log-jam [on the development]. To open 165 acres for development would create jobs. It's a smart growth project."

The other \$2.9 million the town has applied for is spread out over a variety of projects, including repairs to the roof at both elementary schools and improvements to the town water system.

Sawyer said that while there may be steep competition when it comes to towns vying for a piece of the stimulus package, she likes Hebron's chances, given the Village Green project's long-term benefit to the town, to workers, and even to the state.

Town Manager Jared Clark said there are two main parts to the \$1.8 million price tag for the roadway improvements in the center of town. Nearly \$400,000 is needed to restripe and install a stoplight at the intersection of Route 66 and John E. Horton Blvd., the entryway to the future Village Green district.

The other piece to the project, Clark explained, is improvements to the intersection of routes 66 and 85. Improvements include wid-

ening the roads, replacing stoplights, and adding pedestrian walkways and signals. The state Department of Transportation has had these improvements on their to-do list for years, Clark said. If Hebron is awarded stimulus money for the project it would, then, take the burden of paying for these improvements off the state government, he said.

The state has formed a board of 21 individuals to make decisions on which projects will receive stimulus funding. Members include a Hebron resident, Mary Anne Hanley, Director of the Office of Workforce Competitiveness, as well as Department of Transportation Commissioner Joseph Marie, Commissioner of the Department of Transportation, who is very familiar with Hebron's project.

Once the roadway improvements are completed, development can begin on the Village Green project. Hebron resident Sara Tarca has presented her plans for a fitness and aquatic center to both the Planning and Zoning Commission as well as the BOS. She looks to be in position to be the first occupant of the property. "It's time to get this project going," Mal Leichter, Board of Finance liaison to the BOS, said at last week's meeting. "The hope is that it's going to stimulate more development for that community, enhancing our tax base."

In addition to the federal stimulus money, Hebron officials have also applied for a \$439,000 STEAP grant. If received, the money would be used to renovate the Peters House, located at 150 East St., into office space for municipal use.

Like the stimulus funds, no decision has been made as to which towns will be receiving STEAP funding. But Sawyer reported that Hebron is still in the running for the money, given that the Peters House project is "unique in its historical value."

Sawyer noted that this is the final year that STEAP funding is included in Gov. M. Jodi Rell's budget. Currently the plan is to award \$20 million this year with no funding for at least the next two years. However, Sawyer said, she wouldn't be surprised to that number being divvied up to \$10 million this year, \$5 million next, and the remaining \$5 million in 2011-12.

Sawyer said she's fighting for ongoing financial support for the STEAP grants.

Decisions for STEAP funding, according to Clark, are expected in the coming weeks.

Proposed East Hampton Budget Calls for 1.97 Percent Tax Increase

by Michael McCoy

Town Manager Jeff O'Keefe submitted his first East Hampton budget proposal on March 6 – a \$37.53 million spending package that calls for a 1.97 percent tax increase.

The proposed 2009-10 budget represents a \$586,590 increase, or 1.59 percent, over current year spending. O'Keefe submitted his budget to the Town Council and Board of Finance last week.

The bulk of the \$37.53 million proposal is a \$25.36 million Board of Education budget, which is a \$615,952 increase, or 2.49 percent, over current year school spending. The town government side of the budget comes to \$10.20 million, which is actually a \$91,982 decrease, or .89 percent, from the current year. (The remainder of the budget is Debt Service. That comes to \$1.97 million, a \$62,620 increase, or 3.28 percent, from the current year.)

The budget calls for a mill rate of 24.28, up 0.47 mills from the current figure. This translates to a 1.97 percent tax hike.

O'Keefe called his spending proposal "probably one of the lowest budgets in the region," in terms of the increase. Still, he said, the Town Council has signaled to him that they wish to see an even slimmer proposal. "Is this the final budget that will go to the voters?" he said. "I doubt it."

While officials in other towns have presented budgets that call for layoffs, O'Keefe's budget proposal does not. He said this was made possible when he asked all the department heads to submit budgets devoid of fat and containing increases between zero and 3 percent. "They met that charge," he said. He said the tightening consisted of discretionary spending and "things they could go without."

O'Keefe noted that of the 638 different line items in the budget proposal, 470 either stayed the same or were decreased from the 2008-09 budget.

Still, O'Keefe made it clear he'd like to be able to do more, if the economy were in better shape. "Certainly, I would like to invest more in the road infrastructure improvement budget," he said. As it stands, he said, "It's nowhere near what we would actually need." But, he conceded, "Now isn't the time."

Likewise, O'Keefe said the town senior center "could have used an additional part-time person." On the other hand, O'Keefe did allow for a new part-time animal control officer, which he said "this town desperately needs." The new position will cost the town \$12,918, and brings the animal control department up to three part-time employees.

Despite the relatively small budget increase, O'Keefe said "we're going to be able to maintain the same level of service." He credited this to town staff rising to the challenge and department heads making prudent prioritizations.

O'Keefe said Superintendent of Schools Judy Golden is among these. He said the two of them sat down to agree on the more than \$120,000 cuts from the budget the Board of Education adopted last month. Although, he added, "I'm

not sure she'd be at peace if I made further cuts."

When asked if he just applied a flat cut to each department or if he looked at each request line-by-line, the town manager said the latter was the case. O'Keefe said that in some cases, he had to make further cuts to those requests but that overall, "I didn't have to do a lot of that," and he thanked the department heads for this.

One of the more notable reductions in the budget is a \$30,000 decrease, or 16.85 percent, in the motor fuel account. According to Finance Director Jeff Jylkka, "That's a result of us locking in for the next 12 months," although, he added, a lesser factor was the price of fuel being down altogether.

Another major decrease is the capital improvement line, which dropped \$235,674, or 20.1 percent, from last year.

One of the few major increases in the proposed budget is a \$124,757 bump, or 10.29 percent, in the police regular patrol line item. However, that's not as steep of an increase as it seems. Of that \$124,757, around \$80,000 is already in the budget, in the "unallocated payroll" line item. As a result, the actual new spending in the police regular patrol line is around \$45,000.

All around, revenue is a veritable wash. The 1.46 percent increase in the 2008 Grand List is expected to yield \$390,000 in new tax revenue. However, all other revenue, which is primarily composed of state aid, is down \$383,000. This nets just a \$7,000 increase.

O'Keefe is not proposing applying any money from the town's undesignated fund balance to be applied to the budget. He said such a move is "contrary to an adopted rule in the budget policy statement," referring to the document adopted early this year by the Town Council.

The only time fund balance was applied to the budget during the previous four fiscal years was in 2006-07, when \$210,559 was allocated.

O'Keefe began as East Hampton Town Manager in September, and said he basically began discussing the budget as soon as he started in town. O'Keefe said he felt his budget proposal is "reader-friendly" and "very thorough," budget virtues he chalked up to working side-by-side with Jylkka. (The 120-page budget proposal is available for viewing at www.easthamptonct.org.)

O'Keefe is scheduled to begin discussing the budget in workshops with the Board of Finance (BOF) today, Friday, March 13. The BOF will hold a public hearing on the budget Monday, April 6, at 7 p.m., at East Hampton High School, 15 North Maple St.

The finance board is expected to adopt the budget and send it to Town Council during a special meeting Wednesday, April 8, at the library at East Hampton Middle School library, 19 Childs Rd. The Town Council must adopt the budget no later than April 23. A referendum on the 2009-10 budget is scheduled for Tuesday, May 5, at the high school gym.

No Foul Play Suspected in Death of Woman in East Hampton

by Michael McCoy

East Hampton Police said this week foul play is not suspected in the death of a local woman, whose body was found late Sunday afternoon.

Police Chief Matthew Reimondo said neighbors found Sue Ann Cummings, 46, lying in the yard of her 43 Lake Dr. home. By the time the neighbors found Cummings, Reimondo said, she was already dead.

Reimondo said her body showed no wounds of any sort that would cause reason to suspect foul play. The state Chief Medical

Examiner in Farmington conducted an autopsy on Monday, but the results were "inconclusive," Reimondo said. At the moment, police are calling it an untimely death, Reimondo said. He said a toxicology report is due back in four to six weeks, and he was hopeful it would provide some answers.

In the meantime, Reimondo said, "We're conducting interviews" to get a better understanding of the situation. Officer Jason Wishart is leading the investigation, Reimondo said.

Marlborough Finance Board Gets Look at Proposed Budget

by Adam Benson

The Board of Finance Wednesday got its first look at a proposed 2009-10 budget that calls for a 6.6 percent tax hike – and also got an earful from several residents, who were not happy with the projected levy increase.

“For people who have already lost their job or facing a loss, the idea of additional taxes is one that won’t be well-received,” resident Richard Shea said. “I hope the board will take the position of starting with the dollars that are available and budget from there.”

Last week, the Board of Selectmen sent to the Board of Finance a \$21.4 million budget that represents a 3.5 percent increase in spending over the current year’s budget.

While town leaders have so far been able to avoid layoffs or cutting out core services, First Selectman Bill Black said a severe drop in revenue combined with rising debt payments for projects already completed or under construction has forced many of the costs to be passed on to taxpayers.

“We built this budget knowing what our debt load is and said ‘what if’ from there,” Black told the Board of Finance. “We seriously considered layoffs.”

Black said the town will have \$310,000 less cash on hand in the upcoming fiscal year, along with a 13.9 percent increase in its debt load, from \$2.05 million last year to \$2.34 million.

While property owners have steadily petitioned town and school district leaders to craft zero-growth budgets, Black and the Board of Finance said that was an impossibility given the financial health of the town.

“If we all went to zero, we’d still have a 3.47 percent tax increase, and that’s because of debt,” Black said.

The proposed \$21.4 million budget includes \$4.5 million for town government and \$7.2 million for the local Board of Education. (The school board adopted its 2009-10 spending plan last month.) Board of Finance chair Catherine Gaudinski said she anticipates Marlborough’s share of the RHAM middle and high school budget to be roughly \$7.1 million. (The RHAM budget is to be voted on at a tri-town referendum in May; the RHAM schools serve Andover, Hebron and Marlborough.)

Several people took time at Wednesday’s meeting to criticize state spending habits, but cautioned town leaders to take those missteps into account when planning for Marlborough’s future.

“I think down the line when Marlborough

turns to the state next year, they’re going to be severely restricted,” Shea said.

Resident John Stimson was even more direct, calling the idea of a 6 percent tax rate increase “sacrilege” and “unconscionable.”

“I know Marlborough is an affluent town, but every big company in Connecticut is having layoffs, and you have to think sooner or later there are people in Marlborough who are going to be affected,” he said. “It just seems like there’s always somewhere, somehow, we can make things better, and I think it’s something we should look into.”

Gaudinski asked Black whether pay freezes, furloughs or other personnel reductions were considered when town leaders were putting together their budget proposal.

Though the town employs about 25 people full-time, any net savings would be lost since the municipality is self-funded, Black said. That means the town itself would be responsible for paying unemployment claims, unused sick leave, personal days and vacation time.

Still, Black said officials have found ways to sidestep personnel costs over the past few years by keeping vacant several positions, including a public works director, assistant building official and clerical positions in the offices of assessor and treasurer.

On top of that, he said, the town has opted against summer hires in the Public Works department. That translates to 30 weeks of help for mowing and other grounds work.

“People have been saying, ‘I want my cul-de-sac mowed every two weeks,’ and we haven’t been doing it,” Black said. “That’s a big force reduction right there, and it’s having an impact.”

Board of Finance vice chair Elizabeth Petroni defended the Board of Selectmen’s decision-making process leading into the budget, but promised her body would look for greater savings where they could before presenting a plan to the public.

“I know there is a sentiment in the community by some people that we should be at zero or less than zero in this budget and looking back over the past three years, we certainly have been very frugal or judicious,” she said. “I don’t think there’s a lot of fat in this budget but I don’t want to go through here and cut pens and paper, because there’s not a lot to cut from and I don’t want to spend money on the salaries and not have the materials for people to do their jobs.”

Colchester School Board Adopts \$35.4 Million Budget

by Adam Benson

After weeks of deliberation in front of record crowds and an unprecedented town hall forum, the Board of Education Wednesday night adopted a proposed 2009-10 budget.

Though the \$35.4 million plan virtually mirrors Superintendent of Schools Karen Loiselle’s recommendations – including the district’s first round of layoffs in 17 years – board members restored funding to Bacon Academy’s golf and indoor track program as well as William J. Johnston Middle School’s track team.

But gone are freshman sports and the middle school’s soccer and basketball programs. Board members squared that stance by noting the competitive recreational soccer and basketball leagues that exist through the town’s Parks and Recreation Department.

“They’re not going to go without playing sports, whereas if we cut track and golf, those are the end of the programs,” school board chair Will Hettrick said. The district will pay just over \$24,000 to keep the track and golf teams operating, with the rest of the costs being covered through revenue brought in by Colchester’s pay-to-play fees.

Though the 3.4 percent overall budget increase marks the district’s most modest annual percentage uptick since 1993, it includes the elimination of 14 positions and holds down any expansion of academic programming and curriculum projects.

Still, Hettrick said the budget is “totally” in

line with the wishes of the community, as reflected by the results of the Feb. 18 town and education budget survey. (See related story on page 13.)

“What was not surprising but what we were pretty happy about is clearly academics was the number one priority for the community, and that really reinforces what Karen Loiselle is doing and where she went with her reductions,” he said. “I feel comfortable with this budget moving forward to the community.”

Hettrick and town officials say there is still a lot more work to do before a final version of the budget gets presented to voters during May’s Town Meeting, but Wednesday marked a major first step.

The Board of Education is scheduled to meet with the Board of Finance next week for a workshop, where both sides will get a better idea as to whether more cuts will be needed.

As it stands, residents would be facing a mill levy increase of 1.2 mills, with .9 of that coming from the school side, Board of Finance vice chair Ronald Goldstein said.

“We don’t know what we’re going to do on the town side. We haven’t analyzed revenue as carefully as we will,” Goldstein said. “There are a lot of questions to be answered, and the biggest one is obviously related to the [federal] stimulus money and it gets to be spent.”

Hettrick and other school board members have said repeatedly they won’t bring a budget

Siminski Presents Stimulus-Free RHAM Budget

by Sarah McCoy

Superintendent of Schools Robert Siminski submitted another version of his proposed 2009-10 budget to the RHAM Board of Education (BOE) Monday – and this time, he didn’t factor in any stimulus money.

Last fall, anticipating a trying budget season, the BOE asked Siminski to develop three budget proposals: one continuing the programs already offered by the school district, one at a slightly lower percentage of increase and a final with flat spending. Last week, Siminski presented these numbers to the board, though, in his zero-percent-increase proposal, he factored in the \$269,000 of federal stimulus money the regional school district is expecting. The proposal came to \$23.82 million.

At a budget workshop last week, BOE members asked Siminski to show them what a zero percent budget would look like without the stimulus money. “The intent [last fall] was to see what a zero percent budget looked like and go from there,” school board member Danny Holtsclaw said at the time. “Two hundred and sixty nine thousand dollars of stimulus money gives a whole different look to the budget.”

Siminski was back on Monday with the requested changes.

According to Siminski’s budget proposal, getting to a zero percent budget increase – or \$23.55 million – would cost the school district two Special Education teachers, two paraprofessionals, one custodian, one math teacher and one science teacher. That’s in addition to a \$56,000 reduction to the textbook line item, nearly \$200,000 in instructional supplies, and \$32,000 from the library budget.

“If I go to an absolute zero budget there will be a direct impact on students,” Siminski said after the meeting. “If I go to the reduced budget there will be an impact on students, just not as severe.”

Siminski told the BOE that he, along with the other superintendents across the state, have been invited to a meeting with state Commissioner of Education Mark McQuillan. Both Siminski and BOE chair Susan Griffiths said they expect this meeting to provide some of the missing information regarding the stimulus funding. “I hope to walk out with a clear understanding of how the stimulus money can be used,” Siminski said.

Griffiths said that, after the meeting with

McQuillan, she expects the board to have the necessary information to do their job and make decisions about the budget. Budget workshops are scheduled for March 18, 23, and 25, and Griffiths said she is looking forward to discussions at those meetings. “Once we have these missing pieces we can really get to work on the numbers presented to us,” she said.

Also Monday, board members heard final formal presentations from department heads before budget deliberations will get underway. On Monday they heard from Director of Special Education Carl Gross, Technology Department chair Sarah Smith, and Michael Ceresa, head of the Maintenance Department.

At Monday’s meeting, Holtsclaw questioned the 115 percent jump in district funding to AHM Youth and Family Services for two social workers. Siminski told the board that the school district currently pays 50 percent of the costs for these two employees, who were stationed at the middle and high schools, despite being employees of AHM. But, due to AHM’s budget problems the district has been asked to fully fund both these positions in the 2009-10 budget.

Mal Leichter, a member of the Hebron Board of Finance, spoke as a member of the public on Monday night and urged the BOE to keep this funding for AHM. “For 25 years they’ve been a one-stop shop. They’ve hit a tough time with fundraising in the ditch,” Leichter said. “They are counseling our kids at times of economic uncertainty. They have more needs now, not less.”

Griffiths questioned how the deep reduction in instructional supplies would impact students. RHAM Middle School Principal Michael Seroussi said that the nearly \$200,000 reduction would mean teachers wouldn’t be able to conduct the lessons as they’re accustomed to. RHAM High School Principal Scott Leslie highlighted the science department as one area where students wouldn’t receive the same amount of lab experience that prior classes had.

The BOE will continue deliberations on Wednesday, March 18, at 6:30 p.m., in the chorus room of RHAM High School, 85 Wall St., Hebron. There will also be a regular meeting of the Board of Education on Monday, March 16. That meeting is also at 6:30 p.m. in the high school chorus room.

posed budget in late January, she’s been working to forge partnerships with area agencies and town departments in an effort to make sure athletic and counseling services exist for children that traditionally have been paid for by her district.

“It’s the only way it’s going to work. Nobody has enough resources anymore,” Loiselle said. “I’m trying to spend most of my time doing outreach so we don’t have to cut what’s near and dear to our hearts.”

Before handing their plan over to town officials, school board members made it clear they weren’t willing sacrifice quality education for economic savings.

“The first thing I want us as a board to reiterate is that as much as we possibly could, the superintendent and board are looking at these academic issues and making sure we aren’t losing them if we don’t add curriculum,” board member Michael Egan said. “We have to look at the core here.”

The school board mulled increasing its pay-to-play fees in an effort to keep more athletic programming, but opted against that after survey respondents identified academic programming and classroom personnel ratios as higher priorities.

“I think by making sports less than one percent of our entire budget, we’ve met that mandate,” school board member Tim Lamp said.

Proposed Library Cuts Discussed at Portland Budget Hearing

by Michael McCoy

Despite calling for layoffs of six town employees and a 3 percent tax hike, only four people spoke about the proposed 2009-10 town budget at a public hearing held Tuesday night – and all four expressed concern over the proposal's impact on the town library.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield presented the proposed \$29.32 million spending plan, a \$481,146 increase, or 1.67 percent, over the current year's budget. (Bransfield first submitted her budget proposal to the Board of Selectmen last week.)

The \$29.32 million budget proposal includes \$11.36 million for general government, a .75 percent increase from current spending, and a \$17.96 million Board of Education budget, a .92 percent increase over the current year. (The school board actually adopted an \$18.24 million budget in January; Bransfield trimmed \$275,000 from that request when she prepared her budget. The school board has yet to address those mandated reductions.)

The budget anticipates a 27.82 mill rate, an increase of .83 mills from the current rate. This translates to a tax increase of 3.08 percent.

At her presentation Tuesday night, Bransfield said she is primarily trying to "maintain core services" but still "minimize taxes."

Bransfield touched on some budget highlights, which included a 43 percent bump in workers' compensation, a 6.59 percent hike in medical insurance, a 33.2 percent increase for pensions, and a 6.25 percent drop in debt service. (The last item is a function of the town getting closer to the year 2025, when the school will pay off the school renovation project from earlier this decade; as that final payoff date draws closer, the individual payments the town has to make get smaller and smaller.)

"Investment income is just not there," Bransfield said, addressing a drop in revenue, as well as the extra money that must be paid

for pensions. All told, Bransfield said she expects total revenue to drop \$549,000 for fiscal year 2009-10.

Bransfield noted her application of \$200,000 from the town's \$2.58 million unreserved fund balance. "I typically do not do that at this point," she said, but added, "I believe this is a rainy day."

Bransfield also spoke briefly about upcoming "major grant initiatives," such as the imminent Main Street improvements, the proposed boat launch and Portland Town Place, the long-awaited Elmcrest property project that Bransfield called "the biggest project to come to the town in a long time."

Bransfield also mentioned the town's request for \$1.86 million worth of federal stimulus money concerning "shovel-ready" projects, including the Brownstone Avenue extension and an upgrade to the front of the public library.

Speaking of the library, all four people who spoke at Tuesday's hearing specifically addressed it, which was hit with major cuts in Bransfield's proposed spending plan. (Of the six layoffs included in the budget, the library accounts for four: one fulltime and three part-time employees.) Three of those speakers are directly involved with the library.

Young pointed out the sea of red in the audience, as library board members and staff, as well as members of the Friends of the Library, had come to the hearing dressed in red. "These shirts are being worn to show solidarity," Young said. "I wish that our selectmen could have all seen this." (Not all of the town's seven-member Board of Selectmen were present at Tuesday's hearing.)

Young added, "The library budget has been decimated more than any other budget I've seen" during Bransfield's presentation.

Among the opportunities the library affords, Young said it offers Internet access to those who

do not have it or perhaps cannot continue to afford it in this economy.

Young said the library currently has six full-time and six part-time employees, and converted this to 363 staff hours per week. She said Bransfield's proposed cuts would subtract 103 staff hours from the library, or 28.4 percent. She deduced that if the same percentage were then applied to the library's operating hours, those would be cut from 52 per week to 37 per week.

"Will we be open when it's convenient for you?" she asked the audience.

Young also told the audience that many meetings are also held in the library and that the proposed cuts would affect everyone "from the smallest child to the oldest adult."

Finally, Young noted that book purchases have been cut from \$46,000 in 2008-09 to \$16,000 in the proposed 2009-10 plan, and the compact discs and videos line item has been reduced from \$4,455 to nothing.

Friends of the Library President Stephanie Tatro also advocated against the library cuts, saying, "In a time of fiscal meltdown...the libraries are used more, not less."

Tatro said the the opportunities the library provides for children give "safe harbor" to those whose parents are at work. She also said that "for kids who can't afford to go see a movie," the library has plenty of free movies to check out. In general, she said the library "makes our lives a little easier to bear when we know the economy stinks out there."

Tatro also alluded to Bransfield's mention of improvements to the front of the library, and said, "Why are we going to do that if that building's not open?"

Suggesting that perhaps the burden be distributed more evenly, Tatro proposed that all town employees who are not contractually obligated to do otherwise forego raises or take pay cuts to offset the budget constraints.

Bransfield said that all town unions (not including those from the BOE budget), as well as non-union directors have approached her about doing what they can. However, other than the police union deferring their raise, nothing has yet been decided.

Library employee Lauren Coleman said, "We really work with everyone," and called the library an "integral part of the education of the children in the community." She said library staff knows what books the kids like, what grade they are in and what reading level they are at, making it easier for them to recommend appropriate material.

Resident Stephanie Miller noted her affinity for the library, and wondered why two police cars needed to be replaced. (Bransfield had noted earlier that she was allowing for two of the four cruisers with more than 100,000 miles on the odometer to be replaced.)

"A lot of people have cars that, if they're well-maintained, go over 100,000 miles," she said. Miller suggested perhaps replacing only one car in the 2009-10 year.

Bransfield said after the hearing that she was not particularly surprised over the fairly low public turnout.

"Maybe they're still digesting it," she pontificated of the public at large. Speaking with a hopeful tone she said, "I think people will maybe come to our workshops."

Those workshops begin Tuesday and run through Wednesday, April 1, at the library's Mary Flood Room. (The workshop concerning the library is scheduled for March 31.) The Board of Selectmen is to adopt a budget by April 8, and a referendum will follow Monday, May 11.

The proposed budget is currently available at www.portlandct.org. It may also be viewed in Bransfield's or the town clerk's offices at Town Hall, 33 East Main St.

Survey Results Offer Glimpse of Colchester Residents' Wishes

by Adam Benson

Nearly half of Colchester residents who participated in a recent survey told the town they don't want to see an increase to their tax rate but want the town to maintain services, while a third of the survey respondents said they weren't willing to see the town borrow money to rehabilitate the Bacon Academy track.

More than 630 people participated in the survey, which was held from Feb. 18-March 2, and the results were posted on the town website (www.colchesterct.gov) last Friday, March 6.

In addition to giving residents a chance to speak out about how officials should spend tax dollars in some of the most challenging economic times to hit the municipality in decades, the survey information is being used by town and school district leaders to help craft spending plans most in line with the desires of the public.

Overall, nearly five percent of Colchester's population participated in the survey. Survey conductors received almost 700 written comments ranging from planning advice and praise for community events to harsh criticism about upkeep of the Colchester Senior Citizens Center and complaints about the lack of night life in town.

In addition to presenting town leaders with insight into local issues on taxpayers' minds, the survey also provided a wider glimpse about residents' concerns with the economy as a whole. More than 40 percent of respondents said they were worried "a great deal" about having enough money for retirement, though 51 percent of people – 318 out of 624 – said they weren't worried about losing their home.

Closer to home, 56 percent of participants said they'd support borrowing money for the purchase of a new fire truck, though only 24.8

percent would back the idea even if it meant raising taxes.

Board of Finance members said the data gathered through the survey will be a major force in budget talks, and the results already got their first real test earlier this week.

On Tuesday, the Board of Education adopted a \$35.4 million budget proposal, and used the findings from the survey to help guide the process. For example, 63 percent of people identified academic programs as the highest priority, followed by class size, instructional supplies, teacher training and the purchase of computers.

Preserving sports programs at the high school and middle school were ranked ninth and tenth respectively. The board voted to restore \$24,000 to their budget to keep track and golf programs alive at the schools, but wouldn't go any further than that, killing freshman sports and middle school soccer and basketball.

"It looks like we've adhered to the community's wishes," school board member Michael Egan said at Tuesday's meeting. "The money is where it's supposed to be."

Meanwhile, the Board of Finance is huddling with department heads across the town as they work to craft a municipal budget that officials say will likely include staff reductions a sharp decrease in discretionary spending.

That's also in line with the survey's results, which found residents want services maintained across the board. More than a third of participants said they expected to see a two to three-percent decrease to the tax rate, though 34.1 percent of people said they could support an increase of between a half to one percent.

Full results of the survey including all written responses can be found online at www.colchesterct.gov.

Ice-related Pileup Shuts Down Arrigoni Bridge in Portland

by Michael McCoy

The Arrigoni Bridge is never a picnic to cross during rush hour, but on Tuesday morning, that passage became dreadful as a three-car accident closed the bridge down for about 80 minutes.

According to a press release from Portland Police, Jesse Allen, 31, of Middletown was traveling eastbound on the bridge March 10, when, at around 7 a.m., he hit an icy patch. Allen, who was on the bridge's Portland side, lost control of his 2002 Hyundai Elantra as he was rounding the curve in the bridge, police said.

The ice spun Allen about 180 degrees, and forced him into the westbound lane, where he struck the 1996 Audi A4 being driven by Michael Humphreys, 23, of Rocky Hill, police said.

Humphreys spun clockwise and struck a westbound traveling 2004 Jeep Grand Cherokee, driven by Arthur Rodgers, 38, of East Hampton, police said. Ambulance and fire personnel responded to the scene, as did Portland Police Officers Eric Grant and James Capello.

Only Allen suffered injuries, albeit minor

ones, police said. However, his neck and back pain was enough to be taken to Hartford Hospital via ambulance, police said. The Hyundai suffered rear-end damage, while the other vehicles sustained front-end damage, police said. Given the age of the Audi, Portland Police Sgt. Scott Cunningham guessed that it could very well have been totaled.

Traffic was detoured away from the bridge until 8:20 a.m., Cunningham said. During that time, drivers heading to Middletown had to use the Putnam Bridge. As for drivers already on the bridge at the time of the collision, Cunningham said police "snaked them around" the accident, allowing them to clear off the bridge.

Given the road conditions, no charges were filed against any party, Cunningham said.

Immediately following the accident, the state Department of Transportation salted and sanded the road, something they were en route to do when the accident happened. In another oddly-timed twist, Cunningham said a Middletown police unit had been dispatched to the bridge just minutes before the accident, to check on road conditions.

Police Commission, Selectmen Still Appear at Odds in Colchester

by Adam Benson

The rift between Colchester's Police Commission and Board of Selectmen appears to be widening.

Two members of the police commission abruptly resigned last Thursday, March 5, on the heels of a decision by selectmen earlier this month to remove Jim Stavola from the commission. Stavola has said he plans to appeal that vote, and is awaiting a status hearing before the Board of Selectmen. First Selectman Linda Hodge said she plans to set a date for that sometime in the next 10 days.

In their letters submitted last week to the Board of Selectmen, neither John Jones nor Arthur Standish gave specific reasons behind their decisions to step down. Police Commission chair William Otfinoski said earlier this week that one of the men has reconsidered and will resume his responsibilities at the commission's next meeting.

Otfinoski declined to identify who returned, deferring further comment to Hodge. Hodge said Thursday she was able to speak with Jones following last week's selectmen's meeting, and got him to re-commit to the commission. She said she hasn't yet been able to reach out to Standish and plans to do so next week.

Getting at least one of the two men back on board was essential, because without them the panel would not have had enough members for a quorum, and selectmen would have taken on the body's duties until new members were appointed.

Hodge said Jones' resignation came about as a result of internal tensions within the board that made it difficult for the commission to function.

"One of the things he said was that he was so concerned that the commission was embroiled in internal issues they weren't able to get any work done," Hodge said. "I believe it was building and it just became 'enough is enough.'"

At their meeting last week, selectmen declined to accept the pair of resignations until Hodge had a chance to speak personally with the men.

"I think we need to sit down with them and get this all on the table and see if it can't be resolved," selectman Greg Cordova said. "It's just too crazy right now."

Police Commission Chairman William Otfinoski – recently cleared by the town's Ethics Commission of allegations he misrepresented contract talks between himself and the

police union to his colleagues – agreed.

"There's still enough experience on the commission to move forward, but what's important is to talk and resolve all issues and move forward with that as a united body, and I think that's something we're going to have to work on," Otfinoski said.

Prior to their decision, selectmen heard from several members of the public who said they were concerned with the communication gaps between the sides – particularly in light of the circumstances surrounding Stavola's dismissal.

Stavola was let go after he drafted a statement, purportedly on behalf of the entire Police Commission, expressing disappointment in the Ethics Commission's handling of the allegations against Otfinoski.

Hodge said Stavola's statement was released before she had a chance to vet it – a violation of the town's charter.

That charter policy didn't sit well with Colchester resident and veteran building committee member Dave Dander.

"You know better than most that getting volunteers to serve on boards and commissions is difficult," Dander told the selectmen, "and I would hate to see a controversy that may or may not have personalities involved result in people, who are happy to volunteer in the town and do their civic duty, to shy away from that for what looks like micromanagement."

Tim Edwards, president of the Colchester police union and a staunch supporter of Stavola, also had sharp words for the selectmen.

"If there is a problem with the statement that he released, the Board of Selectmen should have a problem with the entire commission," Edwards said. "As police officers, the foundation of our careers is based upon honesty and integrity, and we do everything we can for this town. It's very disheartening to learn the Board of Selectmen wants to punish a commissioner who spoke the truth."

Hodge said town officials are anxious to work through the dissent and get the police commission functioning the way it was intended to.

"It always concerns me if I have a group that can't get work done. I'm confident we'll work through the process," Hodge said. "It's not a choice. We have to make it work. It's imperative and in the best interest of the town that we get it working again."

Obituaries on Following Page

Obituaries

Marlborough

Victoria Campbell

In Branford, Wednesday, March 4, Victoria Russo (Ross) Campbell, 97, formerly of North Branford, entered into rest after a long illness. She was the daughter of the late Alfonso and Hortensia Longobucco Russo and wife of the late Robert J. Campbell.

Her son, Robert E. Campbell of Clinton, a daughter Dianne M. Marlowe of North Branford, her grandchildren Paul Colburn of Marlborough, Victoria Lewis of Simsbury, Ward Colburn of Branford, David Phelan of Branford, Craig Phelan of Palm Bay, Florida, and 10 great-grandchildren and many nieces and nephews survive Mrs. Campbell. Two daughters, Joan O'Brien and Nancy Campbell, a great-grandson, Christopher Colburn and 21 brothers and sisters predeceased her.

A memorial Mass for family and friends will be celebrated at Trinity Episcopal Church on the Green in Branford on Saturday, March 14, at 10:30 a.m. Private interment in Montowese Cemetery, North Haven. In lieu of flowers, donations in memory of Mrs. Campbell may be sent to Memorial & Gift Fund, C/O Trinity Episcopal Church, 1109 Main St., Branford, CT 06405 or to Connecticut Hospice, 100 Double Beach Rd., Branford, CT 06405.

East Hampton

Sue Ann Cummings

Sue Ann Cummings, 46, of East Hampton, died unexpectedly at her home on Sunday, March 8. Born Feb. 3, 1963, in Barre, VT, she was the daughter of Dianne Amidon and the late Richard Cummings. She had lived in East Hampton for most of her life, where she was loved by everyone. Despite her blindness she saw the best in everyone.

Besides her mother, she is survived by her daughter, Kelly James of Haddam and her son, Bradford Bartels of East Hampton; longtime companion and love, William Mott; a brother, Richard Cummings; three sisters, Dianne Cronin, Laurie Ely and Ceadra Dawson; three grandchildren, Michael Felgate, Malachi James and Annabelle James; many aunts, uncles and close friends.

She was predeceased by her brother, Bradford Cummings and a niece, Kristin Cronin.

Sue Ann was a deeply devoted mother and grandmother with that same love for all the children she knew. She loved to cook for everyone and was famous for her chicken soup. She was always there to help friends and family whenever they needed her. She may have been small but she had a very big heart.

Funeral services will be held today, Friday, March 13, at 11 a.m. in the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton. Burial will be in Lakeview Cemetery. Friends were to call at the funeral home Friday morning from 9 a.m. until the time of the service.

To leave online condolences, visit www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

Violet Caron

Violet (Bryant) Caron, 88, of Colchester, widow of Francis W. Caron, passed away Sunday, March 8, at Middlesex Hospital. She was born in Proctor, NC, the daughter of John and Mary (Curtis) Bryant.

She leaves behind a son, John Caron and wife Angela of Virginia; a daughter, Ronda Camilleri and husband Tony of Colchester; a daughter-in-law, Linda Caron of Georgia; nine beloved grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren. She also leaves many nieces and nephews and a host of friends.

She was predeceased by a son, Paul Caron.

A funeral service will be held today, Friday, March 13, at 1 p.m. at the Rose Hill Funeral Home, 580 Elm St., Rocky Hill. Burial will be in Rose Hill Memorial Park. There are no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Marlborough Health Care Center, 85 Stage Harbor Rd., Marlborough, CT 06447.

Colchester

Clarence Hermann Sr.

Clarence Herbert Hermann Sr., 73, of Colchester and formerly of Haddam, husband of the late Shirley Herman, died Tuesday, March 10, at Chestelm Health and Rehabilitation in Moodus. Born March 24, 1935 in New Britain, he was the son of the late Herbert and Helen (Anderson) Hermann.

He had served his country in the United States Air Force retiring after 20 years of service. He was also retired from Pratt & Whitney Aircraft. He was a member of the Moodus American Legion Post and the Moodus V.F.W. Post.

He is survived by his three sons, Clarence Hermann Jr. of Colchester, Michael Hermann of Pawcatuck, Charles Hermann of Haddam; a daughter, Barbara Lack and her husband William of Salem; two brothers, Walter Hermann and Ronald Hermann; a sister, Ruth Stoker, and three granddaughters, Crystal, Breanna and Amanda.

Friends called at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, Thursday, March 12. A graveside service will be held at the convenience of the family in the family plot in Tylerville Cemetery in Haddam.

In lieu of flowers memorial contributions may be made to the American Cancer Society Franklin Commons, 106 Route 32, Franklin, CT 06254-1800.

To leave online condolences, visit www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

Hazel H. Ulrich

Hazel H. Ulrich, 90, formerly of Lititz, PA, passed away Thursday, March 5, at the Liberty Special Care Center in Colchester. She was married for 40 years to Leon R. Ulrich, 13 years to C. Ray Tomb, and three years to Ralph R. Ulrich. Born in Cumberland County, PA on May 21, 1918, she was the daughter of the late Elmer W. and Esther (Kreider) Hutchinson. She was a graduate of Elizabethtown College Class of 1940.

She was a retired teacher from Ephrata Area School District in Clay Township, having taught 36½ years, experiencing the transition from teaching in a one-room school (Sunnyside) to teaching third grade in a consolidated school (Clay) where she taught for 23 years. She was a lifetime member of both the Pennsylvania and Lancaster Co. Education Associations.

Hazel was a faithful member of Brickerville United Lutheran Church and served in many leadership capacities including Council President, president of the Women's Group and as adult Sunday school teacher. Using her sewing and quilting gifts, she made church banners for each season of the liturgical year. She was a charter member, first president and long-time secretary of the Baron Stiegel Lioness Club, as well as receiving the Melvin Jones Award for her leadership and service. She was also a long-time member, and past president of the Society of Farm Women No. 1.

As a member of the Lancaster Toastmasters Speakers Bureau for 25 years, she gave many programs to community organizations, telling about her "Friendship with a Navaho Family" which began in 1963 on their reservation in New Mexico, and continued with a visit every two or three years. A hobby developed of collecting Indian art, which she displayed in her talks. She was a member of the Good Samaritan Camping Club, PA Chapter No. 2. In her motor home, she traveled in all 50 states, taking slides which she showed as programs to various groups.

She is survived by her sister, Roberta Ostar (Allan) of Tinton Falls, NJ; children, Rev. Dr. Linda U. Barnes of Colchester, Wilmot E. Ulrich of Largo, FL; step-children, Barbara Cochenour (Marland), Barry Deim (Vicki), Jerry Ulrich (Ruth) and Steve Ulrich, all of Ephrata; four grandchildren, two great-grandchildren; four step-grandchildren, 10 step-great-grandchildren.

Relatives and friends attended Hazel's Life Celebration from the Brickerville United Lutheran Church, 340 E. 28th Division Hwy., Lititz, PA on Tuesday, March 10, with the Rev. Clifford R. Hanus officiating. Interment in St. John's Lutheran Cemetery. Viewing was at Spacht Funeral Home, 127 S. Broad St., Lititz, PA, on Monday, March 9 and on Tuesday at the church before the service.

Please omit flowers. Memorial contributions may be made to Brickerville United Lutheran Church at the address above or to the Landis Valley Museum, 2451 Kissel Hill Rd., Lancaster, PA 17601. www.lifecelbration.com

East Hampton

Filomena Castronovo

Filomena Castronovo (May 5, 1937-March 4, 2009), of East Hampton, left to be with her mother Fanny, and brothers Johnny and Danny after a Don Quixote-like battle with pancreatic cancer. Through it all "Phil" kept up her sense of humor and refused to hear any negative talk or let anybody tell her she had an expiration date. No doom or gloom allowed.

Filomena is survived by her husband, Giacomo Castronovo Sr., whom she loved and was devoted to for over 50 years; also her son (and sometimes vicious Scrabble opponent), Jack Jr., her son Nicholas of Florida, and her most amazing son-in-law on the planet (her words), Kevin Anderson. She is also survived by her biological daughter Annmarie, and her favorite daughter (and foot rubber) Karen Karavolis Gerolami. She will miss her grandchildren more than anyone (except for maybe her dog Mya), Danielle, Vincent, Anthony and Alicia, all of whom contributed to her care over the past year.

The family would like to thank neighbors, and supportive friends like Val Greco who were there without being asked, and were there as soon as they were asked. We would also like to mention the care given to our mother by the staff of Cobalt Lodge, and the nurses of Middlesex Hospice, Eva, Melinda, Mary, etc... thank you.

The following was printed years ago in a Mother's Day Special issue of a local paper and sums up what Mom was all about:

There are children in the world who do not have the easiest childhoods. You were one of them. Fortunately for us, your outlook was "My children will have better." You were wrong, we had the best! Even though we are adults now with children of our own, you are always there for us. When times were tough for us, you took us in. You watched over our children, went to work, cooked, cleaned and still loved. When we were back on our feet and able to move out, and another one of your children hit on hard times, you took him and his two small boys in without any thought for yourself. As children and adults, we were denied nothing. Your grandchildren are denied nothing. Christmas, Easter and birthdays were and are filled with presents, food, laughter, food, love and more food. So on this Mother's Day, I would just like to say thanks for the emotional and financial support you have shown all of us the past 35 years.

— Nicky, Annmarie and Junior
A Memorial Celebration will be held in the spring. In lieu of flowers please give to the charity of your choice. The Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, has care of the arrangements. To leave online condolences, visit www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

East Hampton

Helen Elizabeth Callahan

Helen Elizabeth (Schneider) Callahan, 86, widow of the late John "Jack" Callahan, died Thursday, March 5, at Middlesex Hospital. Born Nov. 29, 1922, in Bismarck, ND, she was the daughter of the late Benedict B. and Martha (Kurtz) Schneider. Helen and her late husband Jack had been residents of East Hampton since 1946. Helen was a communicant of St. Patrick Church in East Hampton.

She is survived by her three sons, Michael Callahan and his wife Patricia McNamee of East Haddam, Robert and Carolee Callahan of Old Bridge, NJ, Richard and LeeAnn Callahan of Colchester; a daughter Patricia and William Law of Tallahassee, FL; a brother Robert and Diane Schneider of California; 10 grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

She was predeceased by two sisters, Shirley Cairns and Margaret Buck.

A funeral liturgy will be celebrated Saturday, March 14, at 11 a.m. in St. Patrick Church in East Hampton. Burial will be private at the convenience of the family. Friends may call at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton today, Friday, March 13, from 6-8 p.m.

In lieu of flowers memorial contributions may be made to Middlesex Hospice Palliative Care 55 Crescent St. Middletown, CT 06457.

To leave online condolences, visit www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

East Hampton

Faith E. Korpinen

Faith E. (Law) Korpinen, 74, of East Hampton, beloved wife of Robert Korpinen, died Monday, March 9, at her home. Born June 17, 1934, in East Putnam, she was the daughter of the late Roy and Laura (Greene) Law. Faith had worked at Bevin Bros. Manufacturing in East Hampton before her retirement.

Besides her husband, she is survived by a son, Glenn Korpinen of Middletown; two daughters, Irene Denski and her husband Daniel of Terryville, and Louise Barber and her husband Robert of East Hampton; three brothers, Frank, David and Ernest; five sisters, Mildred, Florence, Beverly, Arline, and Anne; six grandchildren, Diane, Dan, Sara, Benjamin, Jessica and Natalie; and three great-grandchildren, Kyle, Catalina and Isabella.

She was predeceased by her son Frederick and her granddaughter Makayla.

Funeral services were held Thursday, March 12, in the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, with the Rev. Thomas Kennedy officiating. Burial will be in the family plot in Lakeview Cemetery. Friends called at the funeral home Thursday before the time of the service.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contribution may be made to the Makayla C. Korpinen Class of 2004 Memorial Scholarship, c/o East Hampton High School, 15 North Maple St., East Hampton, CT 06424.

To leave online condolences, visit www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Portland

Peter Dubiel

Peter Dubiel, 96, of Portland, died peacefully on Thursday, March 5, after a long and happy life. He was the beloved husband of Anna, who predeceased him in 2000. Frank was a resident of East Hampton for many years until he moved to Portland to be with his daughter's family. He retired from Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Co. after a career that spanned over 35 years.

Frank leaves his son, Gerald Dubiel of Montana; his daughter, Carol Buckman of Portland; his beloved grandchildren, Amy Meckensturm, Heath Ostergren, Garth Ostergren, Barbara Laria, and Stephanie Thongsythaovong and her husband Jack; and his five great-grandchildren who were the love of his life and always lit up when they saw him.

Frank was a devoted husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather who will be remembered for his passion for history, music, and reading. The family wishes to extend its appreciation for the wonderful care given to him by the Portland Care and Rehabilitation Center, especially Estrela and Abe.

Relatives and friends attended a Memorial Mass of Christian Burial Tuesday at 11 a.m. in the Church of Saint Mary, Portland. There are no calling hours. Arrangements are under the direction of the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland.

In lieu of flowers, gifts in Frank's memory may be sent to Amazing Grace Pantry, c/o St. Vincent DePaul Place, P.O. Box 398, Middletown, CT 06457.

For directions or to leave an online expression of sympathy, visit www.portlandmemorialfh.net.

Marlborough

Elizabeth A. Jensen

Elizabeth (Betty) A. Jensen, 78, of Marlborough, formerly of Groton, entered into eternal peace Wednesday, March 4, at Middlesex Memorial Hospital, surrounded by her loving family. The daughter of the late Jerry and Lee (McCormick) Kononchik, Betty was born Feb 9, 1931, in New London. She lived her entire life in Groton, before moving to Middletown, and then Marlborough, about six years ago. She will always be remembered for her enthusiastic personality, and enjoying life and friends.

Betty leaves behind her daughter, Rita Jensen of East Hampton, her brother, Jere Kononchik and his wife Shirley of Groton, her sister, Beverly Haley and her husband Les of Mystic, as well as nieces and nephews.

Calling hours were held Sunday, March 8, at Byles-Groton Memorial Home, 310 Thames St., Groton, CT 06340. A Mass of Celebration was held Monday, March 9, at St. Mary Mother of the Redeemer, 69 Groton Long Point Rd., Groton, CT. Interment at Elm Grove Cemetery in Mystic followed.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to The Alzheimer's Association, Connecticut Chapter, 279 New Britain Road, Suite 5, Kensington, CT 06037-3165 or Middlesex Hospital Hospice and Palliative Care, 28 Crescent Street, Middletown, CT 06457.

Her daughter would like to thank the nurses and staff of Marlborough Health Care Center for their constant care and love they provided during the last years of her mom's life, as well as the nurses and staff of Middlesex Hospital Hospice and Palliative Care, for their compassion and care to mom and the family during her final days.

Portland

William P. Pozzetti

William P. Pozzetti of Portland died Monday, March 9, at Middlesex Hospital. He was the husband of Violet Panelli Pozzetti. Born in Portland on April 5, 1928, the son of the late Lodovico and Annunziata Barillari Pozzetti, he was a resident of Portland his entire life.

He attended Portland schools and was a veteran of the U.S. Navy. After his service in the Navy, he was employed at Chevron Oil Company until his retirement. He also served as Treasurer and Agent of Town Deposit from 1967-1981, Board of Selectmen from 1989-1991, Economic Development Commission from 1991-1995, Long Range Planning from 1991-2005, Sewer Authority, and Democratic Town Committee for the Town of Portland. After his retirement he was employed by Peterson Oil Company until his death. He was a parishioner of Saint Mary's Church of Portland.

Besides his wife, he is survived by his daughter, Lisa Burr and her husband Stanley of Higganum; son, Paul and his wife Debbie of Portland; son, Peter of Cupertino, CA; and Pop's loving grandchildren, Jeffrey and Carrye Burr of Higganum, Samantha Burr of Higganum, Patrick and Natalie Pozzetti of Portland, and Anthony Pozzetti of Cupertino, CA. He is also survived by his brother, Anthony Pozzetti.

He was predeceased by a sister, Mary Todd of Somers, and a brother, James Pozzetti of Portland.

His family will receive relatives and friends in the Portland memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, today, Friday, March 13, from 4-7 p.m. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated Saturday, March 14, at 11 a.m. at the Church of Saint Mary. Interment will be private.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to St. Mary's Church, 51 Freestone Avenue, Portland, CT 06480 or the Portland Volunteer Fire Department, P.O. Box 71, Portland, CT 06480.

For directions, or to leave an online expression of sympathy, visit www.portlandmemorial.net.

Portland

Emanuel Sbona

Emanuel "Manny" Sbona, 70, beloved husband of Nancy Darrow Sbona, of Perry Avenue, Portland, died Thursday, March 5, at Middlesex Hospital. Born in Middletown Oct. 14, 1938, the son of the late Michael and Concetta DiMauro Sbona, he was a lifelong area resident. Manny had been a foreman for the Durham Manufacturing Co., for many years until his retirement in 2003.

He was a veteran of the Vietnam War having served in the U.S. Army, 809th Engineering Battalion (Const) and had helped build the Freedom Highway in Thailand in 1962-63. Manny loved fishing and was an avid Red Sox fan. He also enjoyed the New England Patriots and NASCAR. He was a parishioner of the Church of Saint Mary.

Besides his wife Nancy, he is survived by his daughter, Cherie Bolton and her husband Gregory of Middle Haddam; his son, Jeffrey Sbona and his wife Lori of Durham; his grandchildren, Samuel and Allyson Bolton and Michael and Eric Sbona; his sister, Carmelina King and her husband Walter of Portland; and several nieces and nephews.

His family received relatives and friends in the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, Sunday, March 8. Funeral services were held Monday, March 9, from the Portland Memorial Funeral Home and then at the Church of Saint Mary for a Mass of Christian Burial. Interment, with military honors, will be in Pine Grove Cemetery in Middletown.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Connecticut Oncology Group, 536 Saybrook Rd, Middletown, CT 06457.

For directions, or to leave an online expression of sympathy, visit www.portlandmemorialfh.net.

Colchester

Benediktas Dapkus

Benediktas Dapkus, 92, of Colchester, beloved husband of Zita (Petravicius) Dapkus, died Friday, March 6, at Middlesex Memorial Hospital. He was born in Mirantiskiai, Sereclzius, Lithuania, son of the late Kazimieras and Barbora Dapkus.

Prior to his retirement, Benediktas worked as a tool design engineer at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft from 1959-73. He previously worked from 1957-59 at Combustion Engineering as a senior draftsman and earlier for Van Norman Company, Springfield, MA, from 1952-1955. He also worked for Grosite Industries, Farmington.

He graduated from Kaunas University in Lithuania 1931-37 and Stuttgart Technical University of Higher Studies, 1947-49 in Germany. He also received a certificate from the Red Cross as an accomplished dental technician. He attended the Lithuanian Military Academy from 1937-40, where he served as a 2nd Lt. and later a 1st Lt. in the 6th Infantry Company. He was a graduate of Hyller College (University of Hartford) with a BS degree in mechanical engineering. He also attended the Chicago Technical College 1951-52.

He was a longtime communicant of Holy Trinity Church, a member and Past President of Knights of Lithuania Veterans Assoc. He was an active member who spent considerable time and energy helping the Lithuanian Community and was a very patriotic American who loved the United States.

He is survived by his son, Rimvydas "Ray" Dapkus of Colchester, his daughter, Laima Kristina Dapkus of Carrollton, TX, his sister, Broni Firaviciene and her daughter Dalia of Lithuania and other extended Dapkus family members in Lithuania, his sister-in-law, Regina Pilvelis of West Hartford and her sons, Algirdas and Raymond.

He was a wonderful, compassionate, humble man with a heart of gold and never showed any animosity toward anyone. Friends called Wednesday, March 11, prior to the funeral, at the Dillon-Baxter Funeral Home, 1276 Berlin Tpke. Wethersfield, Wednesday. The funeral was also Wednesday, March 11, from The Dillon-Baxter Funeral Home, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial 10:30 a.m. in Holy Trinity Church, 53 Capitol Ave. Hartford. Burial in Mt. St. Benedict Cemetery, Bloomfield.

Contributions in his memory may be made to: The American Cancer Society, 538 Preston Ave. Meriden, CT 06450.

To share a memory with the family, visit www.dillonbaxter.com.

East Hampton

Barbara W. Briggs

Barbara (White) Briggs, 78, formerly of Middletown and South Glastonbury, died peacefully Monday, March 9, at Arden Courts of Farmington, where she had lived while bravely battling Alzheimer's disease. Barbara was born in Middletown on Nov. 19, 1930, to the late Doris (Jones) and Charles E. White.

She earned her nursing degree at Hartford Hospital in 1950. Barbara married her high school sweetheart, William F. Briggs Jr., in 1952. Her greatest pleasures came from her four children and 10 grandchildren. Barbara especially enjoyed family gatherings at her cottage on Lake Pocotopaug in East Hampton. Her favorite pastimes included traveling, photography, gardening and arranging flowers.

She was an active member of The Congregational Church in South Glastonbury. Barbara managed the Glastonbury Thrift Shop and volunteered at the Village for Families and Children in Hartford for numerous years. She was also an exceptional auctioneer at their annual fundraiser. Barbara was involved in the Girl Scouts most of her life as a scout leader and as an active member of the Hartford Council.

She leaves behind her husband of 57 years, William F. Briggs, Jr., her beloved sister, Marilyn W. Baillargeon, her brother-in-law, Robert H. Briggs of Madison; her children, Cynthia and son-in-law, Jeffrey Thierfeld of Portland, Cathleen and son-in-law, John Glynn of Marlborough, Carolyn and son-in-law, David Aubin of Hebron, and William F. Briggs III of Middletown. She will also be missed by her 10 grandchildren: Kelly, Morgan, Amy, William, Charles, Brittany, Nicholas, Kayla, Corey and Parker and many nieces and nephews.

Besides her parents, Barbara was predeceased by her son, Charles "Chipper" William Briggs.

The family would like to thank all of the loving staff at Arden Courts of Farmington who passionately cared for her.

A memorial service will be held at The Congregational Church, 16 High St., South Glastonbury, on Saturday, March 21, at 10 a.m. Burial will be at the convenience of the family in Pine Grove Cemetery in Middletown.

There will be no calling hours and in lieu of flowers, donations may be made in her honor to the Alzheimer's Association, CT Chapter, 279 New Britain Road, Suite 5, Kensington, CT 06037 or Village for Families and Children, 1680 Albany Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105.

Messages of condolence may be sent to the family at www.doolittlefuneralservice.com. The Doolittle Funeral Home, 14 Old Church Street, Middletown is handling the arrangements.