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Seeds of Hope...Members of the Congregational Church of East Hampton's Seeds of Hope Mission Team spent one week this summer doing home building and Hurricane Katrina repairs in Biloxi, MI, with the UCC Back Bay Mission Center. The group will speak about the trip this Saturday, Sept. 26, at the conclusion of a Pot Roast Dinner at the church, 59 Main St. The meal will be served from 5-7 p.m. and all are welcome. Cost is \$9 for adults, \$8 for seniors and \$5 for children 5-12 years old. Pictured from left are Carly Decoursey, Jill Walker, Sarah and Michelle Berkenstock, Nancy Crouch, Mike Dolde, Claire Crouch, Mary DeCoursey, Kelly Chasse, Deb McLellan and Nate Abraham.

Portland Boat Launch in Limbo

by Michael McCoy

Portland has been working toward obtaining a boat launch on the Connecticut River for over a decade. Now, with the state economy in shambles, the launch's realization seems further away than ever before.

About a dozen people, mostly town staff, attended a special meeting Tuesday, where the final report of the proposed boat launch, submitted to the town in July, was publicly issued.

Also on hand were Michael Payton and Eleanor Mariani of the State Department of Environmental Protection's Boating Access Unit, as well as Christopher Cullen of Fuss & O'Neill, who served as project manager for the boat launch study.

The major reason the project is on indefinite hiatus came earlier this month, when the state took away the \$5 million the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) had set aside for such projects. Now that the money is in the general fund, according to Payton, they now have to beg for it along with any number of other state organizations. "Our money is gone," he said, barely finding the energy to utter the words.

Payton went on to say, "It's kind of like the Alamo," explaining the state has "breached the outer walls," and now the department is left to protect what they have left.

However, despite the state's action, Payton

pledged that Portland's boat launch is "no less important to us." (Portland is sixth in line on the boat launch waiting list.)

The cost, estimated by Fuss & O'Neill's study, doesn't help either. Payton said most boat launch's run from \$600,000 to \$800,000. Portland's is estimated to cost \$1.6 million. Before the money was pulled back, the DEP was prepared to fund \$700,000. So, even in a more favorable situation, the town would still need to find funding for more than half of the project's cost.

One reason for the daunting cost is a recession of the launch ramp itself, which is built into the coast and slanted fairly sharply. The reason for this is twofold. First, the current at this particular point of the river is somewhat overpowering. Secondly, instead of a gradual slope, the riverbank drops off immediately at the shore.

The other major reason dates back over 150 years ago. "Over the years, the quarry had been dumping their spoils down here," Cullen said. According to him, the mix of brownstone rock, sand and silt dumped during the town's quarry days elevated the landscape 12-15 feet, leaving lots of hard surface to be drilled if their land is to be graded properly. Fuss & O'Neill ascertained this after drilling six test pits. "The rock is a big issue as far as construction costs go,"

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Hopefuls for Governor Speak in Colchester

by Katy Nally

Four Democrats considering a run for governor in 2010 convened at Colchester's Cragin Memorial Library Monday to field questions from an audience of about 60. Among the many questions, candidates were asked how they would have handled this year's budget and how to combat rampant job loss in Connecticut.

Of the four in the running, James Amann, a former speaker of the state House of Representatives, is the only official candidate. Susan Bysiewicz, the secretary of the state, Gary LeBeau, state senator of the third district, and Dan Malloy, the mayor of Stamford, have exploratory committees, but have not officially declared their candidacy.

The Democrats unanimously agreed that job loss was at the core of the economic downturn in Connecticut, but each candidate had different ideas on how to fix the situation. Malloy stressed that he turned Stamford around in the 14 years he has been mayor. He said he would streamline government and encourage business to come to the state, just as he did with Stamford. But Amann said Malloy shouldn't compare the job growth of Stamford to cities like Waterbury and Hartford because of its proximity to New York City. "He's not telling the whole truth about Stamford," he said after the panel discussion.

Instead, Amann said his tax credit program, Hollywood East, was an example of how he

would bring jobs to Connecticut. Hollywood East gives tax credits to film and television producers who set up shop in the state. He said he would expand the film and media industry, citing the show *Deal Or No Deal*, which recently moved to Waterford.

LeBeau said he would focus on "angel investors," who are wealthy Connecticut residents who invest in local small businesses. Bysiewicz also stressed promoting small businesses because, she said, they will eventually employ more people than larger corporations.

The four all said they would help out small businesses by cutting health care costs through a "pooling bill." A bill that would have pooled health insurance for "employees of municipalities, nonprofit corporations, community action agencies and small employers" was proposed this year, but was vetoed by Gov. M. Jodi Rell in July. According to the candidates, through pooling, insurance companies can bid on employees' healthcare plans, thereby driving down the cost. "We will build that pool, we will get prices down and we will get this state going," Malloy said. Bysiewicz said she would make health care in eastern Connecticut a priority by bringing in more doctors and practices to the area.

Aside from health care costs, the four agreed that another cause of job loss is young people leaving the state after college. LeBeau said

many of the best students who study in Connecticut move elsewhere after graduation. "If we had exciting jobs, we could keep a lot more of those kids in our state," he said. These "exciting jobs," according to LeBeau, are in fields such as medical technology, stem cell and fuel cell research.

Bysiewicz referred to this exodus as the "brain drain." She said the brain drain is intensified when young people in Connecticut's cities are undereducated while those pursuing higher education leave. She said the under-education could be addressed by "closing corporate tax loopholes." Tuition relief and affordable housing would be necessary to address the other side of the brain drain, Amann said.

The four drew on their different experiences to answer how they would have handled this year's budget. The 2009-10 fiscal year started July 1 without an official state budget; one only took effect by default on Sept. 8, after the state house and senate passed a budget that Rell neither signed into law nor vetoed.

Malloy said, as a mayor he "can't run away from budgets," so he would have used "honesty and truth" during budget discussions, which, he said, Rell lacked. Amann said, as governor, he would have at least listened to the advice of the economists, who forecasted the economic downturn in 2008. Bysiewicz said she would have reviewed every agency, started results-

based accountability and met regularly with legislators on both sides of the aisle. LeBeau had a similar response, touching on bipartisanship and honesty.

Throughout most of the forum, responses from the candidates were very similar, to the point where LeBeau said he was relieved to "finally disagree on something" during the discussion of toll roads. The question was about improving Connecticut's mass transit. As a member of the state Transportation Committee, LeBeau said tolls are inevitable, but a compensation program for Connecticut residents could be implemented.

However, Amann said, "Tolls are not the answer." He said a tax on petroleum-run automobiles has worked in the past and would work again once he is governor. Malloy said there needs to be a light rail from New Haven to Hartford, a trolley system in major cities and a better bus system, though he did not elaborate on how he would make these changes as governor. Bysiewicz added that there should be more "deep-water" ports throughout the state, similar to the one in New London. These ports, she said, would free up truck traffic on highways.

The candidates also disagreed on regionalism, which is when neighboring towns share municipalities and property taxes. Malloy was the only candidate who was against the prac-

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A dozen people attended a special meeting Tuesday of Portland's proposed boat launch. Fuss & O'Neill project manager Christopher Cullen is shown here explaining some of the finer points of the conceptual design.

Boat Launch cont. from Front Page

Cullen said.

Payton said the launch, made of grooved concrete, would be wide enough for two cars to launch and retrieve their boats simultaneously.

Cullen said Fuss & O'Neill's design looked to Hartford's boat launch, which is similarly recessed, as a model.

All told the site, which spans about 500 feet of riverfront, covers the better part of five acres, and includes a curved driveway and 48 parking spaces, two of them handicapped.

Former First Selectman Ed Kalinowski began pursuing a boat launch in the late 1990s. The first site, located near Airline Avenue, proved too expensive. Then, in 2007, the DEP rejected a site near Wangunk Meadows, because of its exotic puritan tiger beetle population.

In May 2008, the state gave the town a \$100,000 grant for the feasibility study, which was to give a better idea of the cost, as well as provide a conceptual design. The study only cost \$68,000, and Bransfield had originally hoped the rest of the money could be carried over to the final design cost. However, while the state did not snatch away that money, Bransfield said Wednesday she was not prepared to take that step when the actual construction is nowhere in sight (not to mention that final design would cost far more than \$32,000).

Payton said Tuesday night that funding for such projects comes from not only the state, but the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, which Payton said usually gives the state \$300,000 or \$400,000 a year. Despite about \$900,000 currently in the pot, Payton said spending that money is contingent upon the state matching it. So, with no state money, the fund is temporarily useless.

As for federal money, Bransfield said she'll pursue every possible avenue, but added that Congressman John Larson's office said the federal government will not provide money for launches, as they already give the state money for such things.

She also figured the work so far would not be in vain. "I don't expect any major changes," Bransfield said, speaking of the conceptual design.

As for recouping much of the cost through fees, Payton said the state effectively prohibits this, when state money is used. User fees must be deemed reasonable, be the same for residents and nonresidents alike, and the money must go

back into the upkeep of the launch. (Payton said, for this reason, you will never see East Hartford's launch listed in state boating guides, as they charge a \$20 entrance fee for non-residents.)

Bransfield who found out the money was gone the beginning of this month called the news "very disappointing," lamenting that town residents are still without real access to the river. "It's really a pretty unfortunate situation," she added.

In an interesting twist, the town is making headway to gain that access by another avenue, Brownstone Avenue to be exact.

On Friday, Sept. 18, Bransfield received word from Rell's office that the town would receive \$200,000, the majority of the \$275,000 the town requested in April, through a Small Town Economic Assistance Program grant. This will address another long-gestating project, albeit one that is currently further along.

A report issued by Carol R. Johnson in 2001 called for the building of a short road connecting Middlesex Avenue and Brownstone Avenue. Last year, the town secured a STEAP grant for \$326,000 to build that 700-foot road, actually an extension of Brownstone Avenue, which should actually be paved by the end of next month.

The new grant will fund sidewalks, as well as a parking lot, where Brownstone Avenue, Middlesex Avenue, and Middlesex Avenue Extension converge. According to Public Works Director Rick Kelsey, the lot will contain 50 parking spaces. Bransfield said that this public parking will not only be useful for visitors of the riverfront park, but Agogliati Field, which hosts a lot of local sporting events.

Bransfield noted that the grant was especially generous as it put the project above the usual \$500,000 threshold for such projects. While also noting the irony in losing \$700,000 in state money at the beginning of the month and getting \$200,000 to fund something, Bransfield seemed grateful and said, "The STEAP grant is really a good program."

She also thanked State Representative Jim O'Rourke and Senator Eileen Daily for securing the money. Incidentally, STEAP is the brainchild of O'Rourke.

Bransfield expected the money to be officially approved by the state bond commission on Friday, Sept. 25.



Four Democrats considering running for governor in 2010 participated in a forum Monday at Cragin Memorial Library in Colchester. Pictured from left are Stamford Mayor Dan Malloy, Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz, former State House speaker James Amann and State Senator Gary LeBeau.

Hopefuls cont. from Front Page

tice, saying he would not support combining school districts. But Bysiewicz said regionalism is, "a chance to reward towns that share purchases and services."

The forum closed with each Democrat stating why they were the best candidate for governor. LeBeau said he had been "investigating these issues" since he became a senator and was prepared to address them as a governor. Amann referred to his pin of Connecticut's seal on his lapel, which reads "Qui Transtulit Sustinet" (he who transplanted still sustains). He said he would make more people "sustain" in Connecticut. "If you make me your governor I will make you proud again to live in the state of Connecticut," he said.

Bysiewicz stressed that she is the only one who has won both statewide primaries and statewide elections. When she ran for secretary of the state, she said she garnered 19,000 more votes than Rell, who was running for governor. Finally Malloy reiterated his experience of being mayor for 14 years, during which time he said he grew Stamford's parks, jobs and created affordable housing. "Say what you will, but the challenges before us are executive decisions – and I have run something day in and day out," he said.

The forum was organized by Take-Back.org and the Colchester Democratic Town Committee.

Colchester Health Director Discusses Flu Prevention

by Katy Nally

Not everything associated with the fall is crisp and cheery, because once the weather turns chilly the dreaded flu season is upon us. This year will make for a unique season with the addition of the H1N1 virus, also known as the swine flu.

"Since there are two strains of the virus circulating, it's probably safe to say that more people will get a flu than usual," said Wendy Mis, director of health at the Colchester Health Department. Mis gave a presentation about the virus at last Thursday's meeting of the Board of Selectmen.

Mis stressed that only nine people to date have actually died from H1N1 in Connecticut, and about 36,000 people die each year nationwide from the regular flu. But this year, with two viruses to combat, the number of sick people might be more than in previous years. She said this influx of ill people could affect the ability of hospitals and organizations to respond. Mis said people can end up in the emergency room from a "really bad case" of flu or from dehydration caused by the virus.

However, she said there are things people can do to avoid getting sick, which would alleviate some pressure at emergency rooms. People should cover their mouths when coughing, should wash their hands regularly and should stay away from sick people. She said those who are sick should definitely stay at home, so as not to infect others. "These preventative measures are meant to blunt the wave of sick people," Mis said.

Unlike last spring, schools, Mis said, would not close as a preventative measure. "No one benefits when school is closed," she said.

As another measure, vaccines for both

H1N1 and the regular flu will be administered later this year. But Mis said there is no way to know which type of vaccine they will receive, when they will receive it and how much there will be. Though she did know there is a limited supply of vaccines for H1N1.

Those who would receive the vaccine first include pregnant women, children 6 months to 4 years and people who are in contact with infants of less than 6 months. Mis said the Colchester Health Department would open a clinic in association with the nearby Uncas Health District to vaccinate people.

The good news, she said, is H1N1 has not mutated, so the vaccine does not have to change.

As if H1N1 weren't enough to worry about, it seems the disease-carrying mosquitoes are back. Mis also discussed Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). One-third of those who contract EEE die as a result, Mis said, and those who survive can wind up with mild to severe brain damage.

Within four to 10 days of being bitten by an infected mosquito, people can experience headache, fever, chills and vomiting. There is no preventative drug or vaccine for EEE, Mis said. She advised people to wear insect repellent and minimize time spent outside during dusk or dawn.

The infected mosquitoes have been found in 12 Connecticut towns – including Hebron – but EEE has not caused any human deaths in the state.

For more information about H1N1 or EEE visit the Colchester Health Department website, which can be accessed from www.colchesterct.gov.

Burton Reappointed as Fire Chief in Hebron

by Sarah McCoy

Three years ago the filling of Hebron's Fire Chief position changed from a vote by fire department members to an appointment by the town's head governing body – the Board of Selectmen (BOS). Paul Burton, who at that time was captain of Company No. 3, was appointed for a three-year term.

The selectmen must have liked what they've seen, as they agreed at a special meeting Tuesday to reappoint him for another three-year term as chief.

In 2006, Burton put his name in for the position because he was inspired by the work being done to turn the group of over 100 volunteers into a professional organization. "I wanted to see the progress that we had made in the last couple years to continue," he said at the time of his initial appointment.

Since that time, Burton said, that progress has continued but not without its growing pains. "You're not going to please everyone," he said earlier this week. "But, my hope is, we can do the work to be in the best position to help the residents of Hebron, if they ever need us."

Tuesday's appointment comes after Deputy Fire Chief Fred Speno spoke on behalf of the fire department leadership in favor of retaining Burton as chief. "The department is going forward in a positive manner," Speno said on Tuesday. "We aren't perfect but we're moving forward."

At the selectmen's regular meeting last Thursday, Sept. 17, Fred Huhn, a former member of the Hebron Volunteer Fire Department, urged the selectmen to take a look at the way the department was being run. Huhn said he was dismissed from the fire department after years of service in an unprofessional way.

After his appointment on Tuesday, Burton said he had met with the BOS to discuss the matter. While he preferred not to get into specific personnel matters, Burton did say, "There

are two sides to every story."

Burton likened the department to "one big family," where people don't always agree but each person is committed to one another and the town. "When a call comes in, we all know what we need to do," he said on Tuesday.

At Tuesday's BOS meeting, Interim Town Manager Andy Tierney made a recommendation to the board to reappoint Burton but also to name a BOS liaison to the fire department.

Board member Gayle Mulligan said she was in favor of the reappointment but asked for town officials to look into the process for grievances that are similar to the steps in place for town employees. Fellow board member Brian O'Connell agreed. "There needs to be a process for all members to speak with their supervisor and feel like they're being heard," he said. "I believe we are moving in the right direction. Policies and procedures take a long time to get in place."

The motion to approve Burton's reappointment passed unanimously. While the selectmen liked Tierney's idea of a liaison, they did not decide who that person would be.

In his three years as chief, Burton said he's been focused on creating a system approach for the department with clear roles, descriptions and policies. This system, he feels, will allow members to have an opportunity to move through the department with a clear understanding of what's being asked of them.

Burton's new term will start on Oct. 1 and end on Sept. 30, 2012.

Presently the fire chief is a volunteer position. At Tuesday's meeting, BOS Chair Jeff Watt said he'd like to see the position be a full-time, paid one but stated, "we're not there yet."

Burton is a career firefighter and serves at the University of Connecticut. In addition to volunteering with the fire department, Burton also coaches and helps manage the RHAM lacrosse program.

Graduation Changes Possible at RHAM in Light of Test Results

by Sarah McCoy

Members of the RHAM administration presented relatively flat results from last spring's Connecticut Mastery Tests (CMTs) and Connecticut Academic Performance Tests (CAPTs) at Monday's Board of Education meeting.

And those results have RHAM High School Principal Scott Leslie re-thinking how his school operates.

The CAPT is administered to all 10th grade students each March. The test is scored into five categories: below basic, basic, proficient, goal and advanced. In order to meet No Child Left Behind (NCLB) guidelines, schools must show that 80 percent of students are meeting proficient level.

Overall, the percentage of students scoring proficient on the CAPT is down from 93 percent in 2008 to 91 percent this year in math; down from 96 percent last year in science to 94 percent this year; up from 94 percent in 2008 in reading to 95 percent this year and down from 97 percent to 95 percent in writing.

All scores are still well above the guidelines set by NCLB. Still, there was a general trend downward in the percentage of students who met the state goal, which is to have students achieve at either the goal or advanced levels of the CAPT.

Compared to last year, fewer RHAM students met goal in three of the four subject areas. In math, 72 percent of students met goal in 2008 compared to 68 percent this year; 70 percent of students met goal in science in 2008 but only 59 percent did this year; and while 79 percent of students met goal in writing last year just 64 percent did this year.

Scores in reading were up slightly with 64 percent achieving the state goal this year as compared with 63 percent in 2008.

The CAPT results are used by school staff as a barometer of success. However, that alone, Leslie feels, isn't always enough motivation for students to give it their all when taking the yearly test. "I wish I could say to students, 'Hey, Mr. Leslie has to present the results to the Board of Ed' and that was enough for them to do their best," Leslie said on Monday. "The truth is we're asking students to perform at their peak when, in reality, they're asked to do very little."

Students are required to score at least at the proficient level in order to meet graduation requirements. Proficiency, Leslie feels, is all that students are aiming for.

"Going into the CAPT test, most students just assume they're going to pass so no one tries their hardest," Julia Sauve, a student representative on the RHAM school board, said at

Monday's meeting.

In order to change that mindset, Leslie requested that the BOE alter the district's graduation requirement so that all students must achieve goal, not proficient, on the CAPT.

"If you ask them for more, students will give you more," Leslie said Monday.

Currently, students will be able to retake any portion of the test that they don't reach goal in the following year or complete a portfolio demonstrating the skills measured by the CAPT test in order to fulfill the graduation requirement. They would still be able to do that under Leslie's proposal.

Board of Education members are considering holding a special meeting in order to discuss this policy change within the next month. In order to enact any possible changes for the current year, the BOE would need to approve the recommendation by December.

Leslie's presentation was preceded by RHAM Middle School Principal Michael Seroussi's discussion of how students fared on the CMTs, which are taken every year by students in third through eighth grade.

On the CMTs, scores went up in science from 76 percent in 2008 to 78 percent in 2009 achieving mastery. Writing scores went up from 76 percent to 80 percent in seventh grade and from 80 percent to 83 percent in eighth grade. Math scores went from 82 percent achieving mastery in 2008 in seventh grade to 84 percent this year and from 81 percent to 86 percent achieving mastery in eighth grade.

Eighth grade reading scores showed a slight increase, from 80 percent achieving mastery last year to 81 percent this year. Seventh grade reading scores were the only ones to drop and that was from 87 percent last year to 86 percent this year.

"Overall, I'm pleased," RHAM Middle School Principal Michael Seroussi said of the scores. "We're making gains, however small they may be."

He added that many of the areas targeted by teachers have shown dramatic results. For instance, in the reading strand for making connections scores went up from 66 percent to 71 percent in seventh grade and from 63 percent to 74 percent in eighth grade. "Our challenge is to improve where we've typically not performed as high without losing the skills that we continue to perform well in," Seroussi said.

The next regularly scheduled RHAM Board of Education meeting will be Monday, Oct. 19, at 6:30 p.m. in the music room at the high school, which is located at 85 Wall St., Hebron.

RHAM School Board Considering Uses for Leftover Funds

by Sarah McCoy

The RHAM Board of Education (BOE) will soon decide what to do with the remaining money from a flooring settlement.

At its meeting last Monday, BOE members heard potential options for spending the \$218,000 remaining from a \$1.1 million settlement the district had with companies involved in improperly installing flooring during the school's renovation.

According to RHAM Superintendent of Schools Robert Siminski, within months of the new high school opening in 2003 school officials noticed bubbles and peeling of the linoleum tile that had been installed. The school district hired attorney firm Wiss, Janney, Eistner and Associates to seek retribution for the damages.

At this time the district borrowed \$500,000 from Andover, Hebron and Marlborough in order to cover legal fees and begin repairs.

In 2006, the BOE settled with six companies, with the largest sum (\$720,000) coming from Kaestle Boos Associates, Inc., the architectural firm that oversaw the project.

After repaying the three towns and fixing the majority of the flooring, the BOE must now decide what to do with the remaining \$218,000.

Some options Siminski presented include repairing the football practice field, fulfilling items on the district's capital improvement plan, paying down the debt on the administrative offices wing or returning the money to the towns. After the meeting Siminski said that while it's a board decision, he'd like to see the board use the money for items that

would have to be included in the budget in future years.

Of particular concern to Siminski is the state of the football practice field. This field, which sits along Wall Street on the south end of the high school's property, was built over what used to be a roadway. In order to save money, the district opted to forego the purchase of loam in that area. As a result, pieces of that roadway are starting to come through the turf, Siminski said.

"It's a liability issue," he said earlier this week. "Valid requests, like this, are going to be coming our way and we need to handle them."

Siminski stated that the district wrapped up the last of the flooring repairs it intends to complete this past summer. There are some areas that still remained damaged but, Siminski said, "the damage isn't severe enough to warrant ripping the floor out and replacing it."

At Monday's meeting, BOE member Joe Farrell requested that the board consult with the boards of finance in the three towns. Board Chair Sue Griffiths said she didn't want this to become a decision of the three towns. "We have repaid the initial money we borrowed from the towns and now it's up to this board how we handle the rest," she said.

School board members indicated on Monday they would like to hold a special meeting on the matter prior to its regular Oct. 19 meeting. As of press time, this meeting had not yet been scheduled.

State Awards Grant for Peters House in Hebron

by Sarah McCoy

Governor M. Jodi Rell's announcement that the town has been awarded a state grant has riled up emotions over the ever-controversial Peters House.

Last Friday, Sept. 18, Rell announced that the town would receive a Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant for \$200,000. That money is to go towards the rehabilitation of the Peters House, located at 150 East St.

It is less than half of what the town initially requested (\$439,000) in STEAP funding. Still, many town officials are praising the efforts of State Representative Pam Sawyer and Rell in recognizing the town's historic property. "To get \$200,000 in this economy is huge," Board of Selectmen (BOS) Chair Jeff Watt said. "This will go a long way in restoring a significant piece of Hebron's history."

Last summer, the Peters House Use Committee recommended the town maintain ownership of the historic property to use as municipal space. Earlier this week, Watt said it would be up to the BOS to make a final decision but his "feeling would be to use the grant to restore the building for the public to have access to Hebron's history as well as town

space."

Watt mentioned the possibility of the Parks and Recreation Department using the space, which is located right next to the newly-opened Burnt Hill Park, for its offices.

Not all the selectmen are crazy about that idea. BOS Vice Chair Mark Stuart said he would "absolutely not support maintaining the building for municipal use." He said the building would never be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and that the cost of maintaining the building would be more than the town wants to afford.

As for the Parks and Rec. office, Stuart responded, "We already built a building for the Parks and Rec. Department [at Burnt Hill] and it's brand new."

Stuart said he would like to see the selectmen not accept the grant funding. "People will say, 'This is state grant money,'" Stuart said. "But who do you think provides the money for the state to give grants? It's still taxpayer money."

The grant application, itself, was controversial. Donna McCalla, a member of the town's Historic Properties Commission, worked with former Town Manager Jared Clark and Town

Planner Mike O'Leary to apply for the STEAP funding at the 11th hour of the grant deadline last December. However, since the deadline was sooner than it typically is, the Board of Selectmen had not decided yet which project they'd like to seek funding for.

Instead, Watt told Clark to proceed with the Peters House grant, without consulting other members of the BOS.

The grant application was eventually voted on by the selectmen, after Clark had applied for it, and received the slimmest of approvals, 3-2, with Stuart and Brian O'Connell voting against the motion.

Now that the grant recipients have been announced, the controversy is back.

McCalla and Watt expressed gratitude towards state officials for recognizing the merits of the project. Earlier this week Sawyer said she supported the grant proposal "for its obvious historic value and the fact that the building needs attention now if future generations are going to enjoy it."

But, with only \$200,000 of the requested \$439,000, Stuart is wondering how much can realistically get done. "How can the town com-

plete the initial proposal with less than half the money?" he questioned.

McCalla said the town authorized some repairs to the house already in order to stabilize the structure from the elements. She said \$8,000 has already been spent to replace a sill and a corner post, as well as additional work on windows and drainage for the home. Additionally, McCalla said, the town is waiting to hear about more grant funding through the 1772 Foundation, as well as federal grants.

"Whatever we get, we'll make it work," she said. "I went into this strictly with the idea of not costing local taxpayers' money."

The Board of Selectmen will rekindle the Peters House discussion later this fall. Watt said it could be on the agenda as soon as late October. If the selectmen wait any longer than that, the board will have at least one new member joining the discussion (unless they hold a special meeting on the matter).

Stuart and BOS member Will Moorcroft's seats are up for reelection. While Stuart is seeking reelection, Moorcroft is not. The Republicans have endorsed Dan Larson and the Democrats have endorsed Stuart and Peter Moon.

East Hampton Gets STEAP Money for New Park

by Michael McCoy

Twelve years of griping ended this summer after the DiStefano property got cleaned up this summer. The next step just might be sooner than expected.

Despite the sluggish state economy, several area towns received good news last week, when Governor M. Jodi Rell announced that they would receive Small Town Assistance Program (STEAP) grants. Among them was East Hampton, which, pending bond commission approval today, will receive \$200,000 of the \$500,000 the town requested in February 2008.

Ideally, according to Town Council and Streetscape Steering Committee (SSC) member Sue Weintraub, the money will go toward purchasing the .35-acre DiStefano property and transforming it into a visitor's center/park.

In January 2007, just after receiving a \$500,000 STEAP grant, the town formed the Streetscape Steering Committee. The group was tasked with directing the safety/beautification project started by the Economic Development Commission in 2005. Most notably, the project improved dilapidated or non-existent sidewalks, but also included plantings, benches and lighting.

The finishing touches were just put on that project this summer, and the town still has about \$20,000 to spare. The rest of the money will go to a Wayfinding Signage Program, which Weintraub said is similar to the one in Hartford. The goal is to install a system of signs directing people to hot spots in town, such as municipal buildings or natural resources. Weintraub said this project "goes beyond the scope of the streetscape," but the money will at least kick start it with the first five signs, which were designed by Weintraub and Terry Prestash. Though the money is there, the Department of Transportation must approve anything involving a state road. The signage will be submitted to them in the coming weeks.

Weintraub pointed out that the streetscape project has been under the leadership of three different town managers. When it began, Alan Bergren was the town manager. Weintraub

said she approached Town Council members Melissa Engel and Christopher Goff in November 2007, just after the election, about preserving the legacy of former Governor Bill O'Neill (who had recently died) with a park at the Mr. Di's site, located at the corner of Route 66 and Main Street. This was while Bob Drewry was acting town manager.

Weintraub said the idea occurred to her when one news article after another reported the late governor always counted volunteers as "the heart of the community." Weintraub said in February 2008 Drewry enlisted her help crafting the grant application for the property.

Of course, now the project is being guided by Town Manager Jeff O'Keefe, who started just over a year ago.

Local pub Mr. Di's burned down in 1997. After 12 years, which involved a string of land use complications, the old foundation was removed and the property got a new coat of topsoil in late June.

While all of this is good news, it leaves the town in a quandary of how to come up with the rest of the money. Of the \$500,000, roughly \$287,000 would go to purchasing the property. (That number reflects what it was appraised at in October 2007.) Another \$88,000 would address lighting in the center of town. The rest would go to creating the park and visitor's center.

Weintraub was not quite sure yet how the town would squeeze this project into a \$200,000 box, but suggested one place to start might be eliminating the additional lighting.

Despite the grant coming in at just 40 percent of the request, Weintraub remarked, "Given the economy...I was thrilled that we received what we received." She added, "It's a very exciting project that many people have worked on and talked about for years and years."

However the town ends up approaching the project, Weintraub said the next step would be to form some sort of ad-hoc committee, that she hoped would consist of town council members, SSC members, residents at-large and Nikki O'Neill, the late governor's widow.

Library in Marlborough to Receive \$250,000 Grant

by Katy Nally

A \$250,000 grant for Richmond Memorial Library is expected to be approved today by the State Bond Commission, State Representative Pam Sawyer said.

Nancy Wood, the library director, said she was very excited about the grant. She said with the new funds, construction of the second floor could finally be finished. The upstairs of the library has been incomplete since it opened in 1987, Wood said.

In addition to the second floor, Wood said the roofline will incorporate two new side dormers. A handicap accessible elevator and restrooms will also be added through the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. As for changing the layout of the library, Wood said there isn't a "working plan yet," but there have been discussions about moving the children's section upstairs.

The next step for the renovations, First Selectman Bill Black said, is to meet with the library association to decide how to fund the rest of the project. He said the town would probably apply for a Small Cities Grant of \$225,000 in the spring of next year. Then the town would need to fund about \$50,000 to \$60,000 for engineering and design, he said. "This is a preliminary budget for planning purposes," Black said.

"We really hope the town gets behind it and the people support it because we're running out of space," Wood said. The library was built to hold 22,000 items, she said, but it currently houses approximately 45,000. "If all the items came back on loan, there would be no way we could house them," she said.

This is not the first proposed expansion project for Richmond Memorial, Wood said. "There's been a lot of interest for a long time

to expand the library," Black said. In 2007, residents rejected a more-than-\$5-million proposal to create a "much larger expansion" through a town referendum, Wood said.

However, the current project is not as extensive as the 2007 proposal, with only an estimated cost of \$750,000. This cost, according to Sawyer, is funded through a partnership between private dollars, the town, the state and the federal government.

Plans for this renovation began in 2008 when the selectmen applied for a \$500,000 grant. The grant is part of a Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP). According to Sawyer, this year's STEAP grants were slow in coming because of state budget delays. "There was a budget dilemma because of the downturn in the economy," she said. "This had to wait until after the budget was passed."

Sawyer said the limit for STEAP grants used to be \$500,000, but this year it was decreased to \$250,000 because of the economy. But, she said cheerfully, "This means more towns got to have more little projects."

Marlborough isn't the only town in Sawyer's district to plan renovations with this STEAP grant. According to Sawyer, Andover will receive \$250,000 for its senior center/Old Firehouse, Hebron will receive \$200,000 for the Peters House and Bolton will receive the same amount for its sewers.

Wood said Sawyer was a "big help" in receiving the grant. "The state senators and representatives really look out for their districts," she said. Sawyer said she "pushed very hard" to get \$250,000 for Marlborough and that she "did a little tap dance" when she heard the STEAP grant was on today's agenda for the Bond Commission meeting.

Mixed Results on CMTs, CAPTs in East Hampton

by Michael McCoy

The Board of Education last week reviewed the results of this year's Connecticut Mastery Tests (CMTs) and Connecticut Academic Performance Tests (CAPTs) and, as was the case with the 2008 results, the relatively low scores in third and fourth grade juxtaposed with the relatively high scores in the middle school.

The CMTs are given statewide to students in third through eighth grade, while the CAPTs are taken in 10th grade. The tests are traditionally administered in March.

The tests are scored into five categories: below basic, basic, proficient, goal and advanced. In order to meet No Child Left Behind (NCLB) guidelines, 100 percent of students must achieve a score of proficient or higher by 2014.

There are 24 schools in East Hampton's District Reference Group (DRG). On the reading portion of the CMTs, third-graders came in 21st of those schools. Fourth-graders came in 20th – by comparison, those same students ranked 18th when they were in third grade. (Area towns in East Hampton's DRG include Colchester, Cromwell, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield.)

To improve the students' scores, Superintendent of Schools Judy Golden said teachers are working to improve fluency, the ability to read swiftly and comprehensively. To this end, Golden said the district used most of its \$400,000 in federal stimulus money to hire trainers, who will help teachers master reading instruction. Since the stimulus money can only be used during the 2009-10 and 2010-11 school years, Golden said it was wiser to hire specialists to train the teachers than to hire new staff

that could not be funded down the road. The initiative began in August. One trainer will work with the high school and third grade, one will work at Center School and one will work with the middle school. Each will put in about 25-30 days.

But Golden didn't throw the teachers under the school bus. "Our third grade teachers are very, very skilled," Golden said. "This is a specific area where they need professional development. We are working on that." And, since reading instruction doesn't end in third grade, Doyen said "we're really building up the teaching of reading at every grade level," and added that it's also taught across disciplines.

As students get older, their CMT scores seem to grow more impressive. Sticking with reading, 88.9 percent of seventh graders scored at goal or high. That number is up from 75 percent in 2008, when those students were in sixth grade.

"Isn't that just fabulous?" Golden remarked. She said the district "completely changed the reading program" at the middle school, and credited much of the success to East Hampton Middle School Principal John Fiddler. Golden said one of the major changes was a more universal focus on reading, not exclusively sticking to literature.

Eighth-graders did similarly well, with 88.5 percent scoring at goal or higher in reading. This was good enough for leading the DRG, rising 8 spots from their seventh-grade work. In the same class, 87.4 percent achieved goal or higher in math, edging out East Granby for the num-

ber one spot in the DRG. (As seventh graders they placed second only to that school in math last year.)

Golden said the instruction pertinent to both the CMTs and the CAPTs is "embedded" throughout the year. In other words, Golden said, it's seamless, and the students don't even realize they are being prepared for the test, specifically. Golden said this addresses the common complaint of "teaching to the test."

Golden said that "as much as we all...groan about the test," it's filled with skills and knowledge she'd want all her students – as well as her grandchildren – to know. "It's not the test that's bad," she said. "How the government uses it is objectionable." Golden criticized the federal government for "putting a subscribed end to something that should go on and on." She also called the 2014 deadline "an artificial cap."

Though nothing in the CAPT results sticks out the way some of the CMT scores do, 91.5 percent of students met the NCLB criteria in math, 92.4 percent in science, 96.2 percent in reading and 97 percent in writing. To compare this to the CMT result, if the third through fifth grade reading scores are taken out of the equation, 89.6-97.2 percent of students reached the NCLB criteria, depending on the test and grade (students in grades three through five on reading ranged from 81.8-86.6 percent reaching the NCLB criteria).

Overall, Golden said, "I'm very happy with the result," while admitting, "No superintendent is completely happy...because we want

everything."

Board of Education Chairman Michael Vasquez had a somewhat ambivalent take on the results, explaining this week that he is one of the few who puts little stock in what standardized tests reveal.

"I think people like to look at charts and numbers," Vasquez said, figuring that actual success after high school was much harder to measure. Instead, he said exploring whether or not East Hampton graduates are "productive members of society" is the question to ask, though it provides fewer easy answers than test scores.

However, Vasquez did say last week's presentation was illuminating in at least one way, namely, "to the extent that the administration is using that data to focus its resources and energies where they need to be." To this end, Vasquez said he was pleased with the measures being taken to address reading skills in the earlier grades.

Summing up his position, Vasquez said, "There's a lot more to a school district than looking at how we do on standardized test scores."

Among those is where students end up after their years in the East Hampton school system come to an end. And, as administration disclosed at last week's school board meeting, of the district's 151 graduates from 2009, a whopping 141 are currently attending post-secondary schools. As for the other 10, five have taken jobs, four are in the military and one is traveling in South Africa.

Colchester Police News

9/14: Daryl Todd, 29, of 452 Deepwood Dr., Lebanon, was charged with violation of probation, State Police said.

9/15: Ronald Girouard, 47, of 36 Pleasant St., was charged with DUI and failure to drive in proper lane, State Police said.

9/16: Evan Orgen, 20, of 11 Tartia Rd., East Hampton, was charged with possession of less than four ounces of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of marijuana with intent to sell and having prescription drugs out of the storage container, State Police said.

9/17: Michael Olbrias, 40, of 185 Windam Ave., was charged with DUI and failure to have lights lit, State Police said.

9/17: Danielle Caiafa, 27, of 300 Lebanon Ave. Apt. 32, was charged with DUI, driving while license is suspended and a stop sign violation, State Police said.

9/18: Stacey Bernac, 26, of 20 Haley Meadow Rd., Griswold, was charged with DUI and traveling unreasonably fast, State Police said.

9/18: Kenneth Shuckerow, 30, of 1720 Exeter Rd., Lebanon, was charged with operation of a motor vehicle when license is suspended and possession of drug paraphernalia, State Police said.

9/19: Ryan Carpenter, 23, of 491 Old Hartford Rd. Apt. A, was charged with failure to appear at a court date, State Police said.

9/19: Joseph Oatley, 43, of 60 Linwood Ave., No. 3, was charged with DUI and reckless driving, State Police said.

9/20: Kenneth Glann, 46, of 4 Birch Circle, No. 4, was charged with third degree assault, risk of injury and disorderly conduct, State Police said.

9/20: Troy Emerson, 23, of 56 Gungy Rd., Salem, was charged with DUI, failure to drive in proper lane and failure to drive at a reasonable distance, State Police said.

9/21: Linda Whiting, 39, of 12 Raven Rd., was charged with possession of less than four ounces of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia, DUI and failure to drive right, State Police said.

9/21: Patrick Small, 55, of 435 Old Hebron Rd., was charged with operation of a motor vehicle when license is suspended, operating a cell phone while driving and failure to drive right, State Police said.

9/22: James Young, 40, of 133 Liberty St., Madison, was charged with criminal violation of protective order, State Police said.

East Hampton Police News

9/5 — Janice Cavanaugh, 52, of 204 Hog Hill Rd., was issued a ticket for simple trespass and creating a public disturbance, East Hampton Police said.

9/9 — Amanda Whited, 27, of 22 Lake Blvd., was issued a ticket for failure to renew a registration, police said.

9/11 — David Grenon, 41, of 14 Holbrook St., Ansonia, was arrested for misuse of plates, operating without insurance, operating an unregistered motor vehicle, failure to display and operating under suspension, police said.

9/11 — Joshua Markham, 18, who police said they had no certain address for, was arrested for conspiracy to commit third-degree burglary, criminal attempt to commit third-degree burglary, criminal attempt to commit sixth-degree larceny and interfering with a police officer, police said.

9/11 — Clarence Braun, 24, of 87 Sillimanville Rd., Moodus, was arrested for criminal attempt to commit third-degree burglary, conspiracy to commit third-degree burglary, criminal attempt to commit sixth-degree larceny and interfering with a police officer,

police said.

9/13 — Lucie Modzelewski, 50, of 1 Garnet Rd., Enfield, was issued a ticket for failure to obey a signal, police said.

9/13 — Andrew Ziobron, 17, of 15 Joe Williams Rd., Moodus, was issued a ticket for traveling too fast, police said.

9/14 — Joshua Brockwell, 19, of 56 Peck Rd., Middletown, was issued a ticket for failure to obey a signal, police said.

9/14 — Elizabeth Gustafson, 64, of 77 Bashan Rd., East Haddam, was issued a ticket for traveling unreasonably fast, police said.

9/14 — Shayna Shields, 23, of 56 Mott Ln., Moodus, was issued a ticket for traveling unreasonably fast, police said.

9/14 — Robert C. Strickland Jr., 22, of 30 Old Young St., was arrested pursuant to a warrant for operating under the influence of alcohol, operating without a license and operating without insurance, police said.

9/15 — Heath Galvin, 20, of 61 North Main St., was arrested for second-degree threatening and disorderly conduct, police said.

Portland Police News

9/15 — Kelly Davis, 33, of 315 Main St., was charged with operating an unregistered motor vehicle, theft of number plate, improper use of marker plate, insufficient insurance and operating under suspension, Portland Police said.

9/15 — Theresa Devito, 46, of 59 Freestone Ave., was charged with DUI, failure to have light on and refusal to submit to a chemical test, police said.

9/19 — Stacy Smith-Smazer, 43, of 642 Main St., was charged with possession of narcotics and false statement, police said.

Obituaries

East Hampton

Jonathan B. Cramer

Jonathan B. Cramer, 93, died Thursday, Sept. 17, peacefully with his family by his side. Born Oct. 20, 1915, he was predeceased by his wife Alvera, son Bob and grandson David Goff.

He leaves his daughter Barbara and her husband Roy; three granddaughters, Sue, Linda and Jane; two grandsons, Steve and Chris. He also leaves his 13 great-grandchildren who were the love of his life.

Jonathan was an inspiration to all who knew him and will be missed terribly.

Private services will be held at the convenience of the family.

Donations in his memory may be made to the East Hampton Ambulance Association.

The Spencer Funeral Home has care of the arrangements.

Hebron

Roxanne Lee Berry

Roxanne Lee Berry, 51, of Westbrook and formerly of Hebron, passed away suddenly on Sunday, Aug. 23, at her home. Born May 25, 1958, in Manchester, she was the daughter of Don and Jan (Porter) Berry of Killingworth.

Shortly after graduating from Coginchaug High School in 1976, she began working for the Aetna Insurance Group in Hartford, then in their brand new office in Middletown. More recently she worked for ETI in Old Saybrook. She enjoyed knitting, crocheting, cross stitch, and had an overwhelming urge to write stories, poems, and novels.

Besides her parents, Roxanne is survived by her loving sister, Rhonda M. Gardner; a devoted sister-in-law, Teri Berry; three nephews who she thoroughly enjoyed, Jack and Danny Berry and Nicky Gardner; her dear niece, Ashley Eliza Gardner, who she had a very special bond with and spent many hours playing games and pretending anything!

She was predeceased by her brother, Trooper First Class Robert D. Berry, and her maternal grandmother, Mildred "Gram" Porter.

A memorial service was held Friday, Aug. 28, at the Doolittle Funeral Home, 14 Old Church St., Middletown.

In lieu of flowers, friends may make donations in Roxanne's memory to the American Cancer Society, P.O. Box 1004, Meriden, CT 06450 or the American Heart Association, 5 Brookside Drive, Wallingford, CT 06492.

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

East Hampton

Steven A. Czapiewski

Steven A. Czapiewski, 43, of East Hampton, passed away Friday, Sept. 18, at his home. He was born in New Britain, son of the late Alfons and Irene (Sagan) Czapiewski, and he was a member and organist at the Church of the Transfiguration in New Britain. Steve was employed as a HVAC technician.

Steve is survived by his Uncle Stanley and Aunt Maria Sagan of New Britain; his cousins, Stasia Rodriguez, her husband, John and their children, Nicole and Joshua of New Britain; and Yola Smith, her husband Joe and their children, Kaitlyn; and his goddaughter, Sarah of Southington; his godfather, Atty. Wally Wojcik and his wife, Kathleen Donnelly and their children, Nicholas and Jessica of Ohio; his special friend, Valerie Simmons and several cousins in the U.S., Poland and Canada.

His funeral service was held Tuesday, Sept. 22, from the Burrill Hill Funeral Home, 332 Burrill St., New Britain, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial at the Church of the Transfiguration. Burial in the Polish National Catholic Cemetery. Relatives and friends called Tuesday before the service, at Burrill Hill.

Memorial donations may be made to the Church of the Transfiguration, 8 Concord St., New Britain, CT 06053.

To share a memory with his family, visit www.burrillhill.com.

East Hampton

Oriana David

Oriana "Viola" (Daniels) David, 82, of East Hampton, wife of Jack David, passed away Wednesday, Sept. 16, at Hartford Hospital. Born in New Britain, she lived in Yonkers, NY for 24 years, moving to East Hampton in 1991.

A graduate of New Britain High School, Class of 1945, she was a professional dancer who appeared in concerts throughout the U.S. and Canada, and was also the solo dancer in the New York City Opera production of *Carmen*. She also worked at the March of Dimes Office in Westchester County, NY.

Besides her husband Jack, she leaves a son, Adam David and his wife Susan of Ridgefield; three grandchildren, Michelle, Matthew and Nicholas David, also of Ridgefield; a sister-in-law, Elizabeth Kopycinski and her husband Eugene of Newington; and two nephews, Bruce Kopycinski and his wife Gayle of Newington, and Jeffrey Kopycinski and his wife Grace of Kensington.

Funeral services were Monday, Sept. 21, at Carlson Funeral Home, 45 Franklin Sq., New Britain, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial at St. Joseph's Church, South Main Street, New Britain. Burial in Fairview Cemetery. Calling hours were Sunday, Sept. 20, at Carlson Funeral Home.

Donations may be made to the March of Dimes, 1275 Mamaroneck Ave, White Plains, NY 10605.

Share a memory or note of sympathy at www.carlsonfuneralhome.com.

East Hampton

Andrew Joseph McLaughlin

Andrew Joseph McLaughlin, 40, of East Hampton and formerly of Hebron, passed away unexpectedly Wednesday, Sept. 16, at home. Born April 29, 1969, in Royal Oak, MI, he was a son of Thomas and Corliss (Laking) Walsh of Hebron.

Andy was a chef for many years at Poncho Loco in Rockville and most recently was a butcher at Ted's Market in Hebron. He was an avid Giants and Red Sox fan and in his spare time, he enjoyed riding dirt bikes with his brother.

In addition to his parents, Andy is survived by his brother and sister-in-law, Shawn and Siobhan McLaughlin of Meriden; a niece and two nephews, Alyssa, Seth and Joshua McLaughlin of Suffield; and numerous extended family members and friends.

Andy will be remembered for his fun loving spirit, generosity and devotion to his family.

Friends called Saturday, Sept. 19, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A chapel service followed. Burial private.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to the Hebron Vol. Fire Dept., P.O. Box 911, Hebron 06248.

For online condolences, visit www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

East Hampton

William Francis White

William Francis White, 69, of Dziok Drive, East Hampton, died Wednesday, Sept. 16, at Middlesex Hospital. He was the husband of 47 years of Pamela "Penny" (Rand) White.

Born in Waltham, MA, July 28, 1940, a son of the late Paul R. and Rita Beattie White, he was raised in Ferrisburgh, VT, and had been a long-time resident of East Hampton. He was the proprietor of PBW Enterprizes and had served an enlistment in the U.S. Army. He was a member of the Teamsters Local No. 671 and the Odd Fellows No. 56.

Besides his wife Penny, he is survived by his son, Brian White and his wife Dawn of Modesto, CA; his daughters, Rita Michaud and her husband Mitch, Rachel Farkas and her husband Lee, Rebecca Godwin and her husband Jeff, all of East Hampton, Phyllis Rodgers and her husband Gordon of Lebanon and Polly White and her partner Bill Taylor of East Hampton; his sister, Bridget Leopold of Vermont; his brothers, Albert White, Jack White and Scott White, all in Vermont; his stepmother, Marjorie White of Vermont; his step-sisters, Patricia and Jill, both in Vermont, and Helene in Oregon; stepbrothers, Richard in Vermont and Bruce in Virginia; his sister and brothers-in-law, Charlie Anderson of Middletown, Theodore and Lynn Rand of Pennsylvania, and James and Patricia Rand of Moosup; 23 grandchildren, four great-grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews.

He was predeceased by his brother Paul R. White Jr.

His family will receive relatives and friends in the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, on Thursday, Sept. 24. Graveside funeral services will be held Saturday, Sept. 26, at the North Ferrisburgh Cemetery, North Ferrisburgh, VT.

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

Marlborough

Rev. Mario P. Pepe

Rev. Mario P. Pepe, retired pastor of St. John Fisher Church in Marlborough, died Thursday, Sept. 17, at St. Francis Hospital, Hartford.

Born March 23, 1928, beloved son of the late Louise (Cipriani) and Pasquale Pepe, he was raised and educated in Branford graduating as valedictorian of the Class of 1946 from Branford High School. He was also a graduate of St. Thomas Seminary and St. Bernard Seminary, Rochester, NY. Father Pepe was ordained May 10, 1956, at St. Joseph Cathedral by Archbishop Henry J. O'Brien. He celebrated his first Mass May 13, 1956, at St. Mary Church, Branford.

He is survived by his beloved brother and sister-in-law, Louis and Clara Pepe of Branford; his nephews and niece and their families, Gary and Linda Pepe, David and Valeria Pepe, Richard and Kris Pepe, and Dianne and John Belanger. He is also survived by several cousins.

Father Pepe shared a love for God, a love for family and friends and a passion for the parishioners he served in the parishes of St. Paul, Kensington, Holy Rosary, Ansonia, St. Philip, East Windsor, and St. John Fisher, Marlborough. In retirement, he volunteered as chaplain at St. Mary Home, West Hartford.

Relatives and friends called Monday, Sept. 21, at St. Thomas Seminary Chapel, 467 Bloomfield Ave., Bloomfield, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial with The Most Reverend Henry J. Mansel D.D., Archbishop of Hartford, as Principal Celebrant. Committal prayers were held that afternoon in St. Agnes Cemetery, Branford.

Contributions may be made to an Archdiocesan charity of the donor's choice. The Samsel & Carmon Funeral Home of South Windsor is caring for the arrangements.

For online condolences, visit www.carmonfuneralhome.com.

Portland

Nancy Gibbons Olson

Nancy "Elizabeth" Gibbons Olson, 89, of Great Hill Road, Portland, died Sunday, Sept. 20, at Middlesex Hospital. She was the wife of the late Raymond Gibbons. Born in Deatsville, AL, Sept. 22, 1919, a daughter of the late Samuel H. and Nancy Goree Gibbons, she was a Portland resident for many years. She had worked at the former Bunce's Department Store in Middletown in the housewares and children's departments. She was a member of Zion Lutheran Church.

She is survived by her daughter, Nancy Gandini and her husband Jack of Portland; her son Phillip Olson of Portland; her grandchildren, Joe Gandini of Portland, and Tim Gandini, presently serving in the U.S. Navy stationed in Gulfport, MS; her sister Kate Esco of Deatsville, AL, and several nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by her sisters, Marguerite Gibbons, Isabel Morton, Gertrude Dameron, and Frabces Stokes, and her brothers, Lamar, Robert Lee, Howard, Cecil, Holloway, James and Carey Gibbons.

Her family received relatives in the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, Saturday, Sept. 26, from 9:30 a.m. until the time of the funeral service, which will be at 10:30 a.m. Interment will follow in the Swedish Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, gifts in her memory may be sent to the Middlesex Hospital Weiss Hospice Unit, c/o Office of Philanthropy, 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457.

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

East Hampton

William T. Hutchinson

William Turner "Hutch" Hutchinson, 74, of Newington, beloved husband for 54 years of Patricia (Bean) Hutchinson, passed away unexpectedly Wednesday, Sept. 16, at Hartford Hospital. Born in Keene, NH, he was the son of the late Donovan and Esther (Holland) Hutchinson.

Bill lived in East Hampton for 42 years before moving to Middletown and then to Newington five years ago. He was a veteran of the Korean War serving in the U.S. Navy and worked as a salesman for Torrington Supply Company, prior to his retirement. Bill was a member of Masonic Lodge No. 9 F & AM in Richford, VT, 32nd Degree Mason of Norwich, the American Legion Post No. 197 in Marlborough and Red Sox Nation. Bill was a former member of the East Hampton Lions Club and Sportsman Club. He was an avid reader and enjoyed fishing, hunting, woodworking and photography.

Besides his wife, he is survived by a son, Mark Hutchinson and his wife, Christine of East Hampton; a daughter, Cathy Westerberg and her husband, Peter of Middletown; a brother, Douglas Hutchinson and his wife, Cindy of Orange Park, FL; three grandchildren, Micayla Westerberg, Laura St. John and her husband, Justin, and Jessica Hutchinson; and his special buddy, "Freddy" the cat.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, Sept. 26, at noon, at the Doolittle Funeral Home, 14 Old Church St., Middletown, with Rev. Norm Erlendson officiating. Burial will be private and at the convenience of the family.

There will be no calling hours and in lieu of flowers, friends may make donations in Bill's memory to Hartford Hospital Cardiology Department, 80 Seymour Street, Hartford, CT 06115.

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

East Hampton

Theresia Magdalena Lechner

Theresia Magdalena (Arnold) Lechner, 86, of East Hampton, widow of Joseph Lechner, died Tuesday, Sept. 22, at Middlesex Hospital. Born Dec. 18, 1922, in Undergrumbauch, Germany, she was the daughter of the late Franz and Anna Arnold. She had lived in East Hampton for the past 51 years and was an active communicant of St. Patrick Church in East Hampton.

She is survived by her two daughters, Virginia Dobrouch of East Hampton and Kathleen Recchia of Middletown; three grandchildren, Robert Dobrouch III, Rebecca Dobrouch and Bunny Rodriguez; also several nieces and nephews and friends.

A funeral liturgy will be celebrated today, Friday, Sept. 25, at 10 a.m. in St. Patrick Church. Burial will follow in St. Patrick Cemetery.

Memorial donations may be made to St. Patrick Church Renovation Fund, P.O. Box 177, East Hampton, CT 06424 or Weiss Hospice Unit c/o The Development Office, 55 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457.

The Spencer Funeral Home has care of arrangements. To leave online condolences, visit www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

It's been a foregone conclusion for weeks, and this past Tuesday it became official: the Yankees clinched a playoff spot.

The Red Sox should be following shortly; as of Wednesday afternoon, they've got a seven-game lead over the Texas Rangers in the wild card race, with 12 games left to play. It would take a monumental collapse for Boston to not wind up in the postseason.

As for the Mets? The Mets last week were officially eliminated from not just the postseason, but even finishing with a .500 record. And, like the Yankees' clinching, it was basically a formality, unfortunately. It's been a pretty lousy season for them.

I've heard this question asked of some Mets fans: is it better to lose this way than the way the team did each of the last two years – which was suffering soul-crushing defeats on the very last day of the season? After all, one could argue, there won't be that last-minute heartbreak. While the team wasn't mathematically eliminated until fairly recently, it's been obvious the season's been done for weeks now. So, one may suggest, at least this way, us Mets fans have gotten used to it, we've had time to prepare, we can focus more fully on football. (By the way: J-E-T-S, JETS JETS JETS.)

But, those arguments don't fly with me. The last two seasons were much better.

Stephen King once wrote the words, "Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things," and that's what the last two seasons gave Mets fans: hope, right up until the very end. Even in 2007, when the Mets infamously blew that seven-game lead with 17 to play, at least gave us meaningful September games, a reason to watch *Baseball Tonight*. Around here, being involved in a pennant race this time of year is particularly exciting; it's tough to sit on the sidelines and watch Red Sox and Yankees fans talk about who's going to be on their postseason rosters when, in your mind, you've already begun counting down the days until pitchers and catchers report to spring training.

Plus, it just makes the games more fun to go to. I was at Shea Stadium for the next-to-last day of the season in both 2007 and 2008; in both cases, the Mets' backs were against the wall, they needed a win to ensure they would in fact live to play another day – and, both years, they won those games. The atmosphere at Shea was raucous. It was an intense, tremendously thrilling experience. The only thing stopping Citi Field from being Gloom Central this last month of the season this year is the fact that it's a new stadium, and a lot of people are still seeing the ballpark for the first time. But trust me, if it were old Shea, the place would be positively funereal.

So, no, going out this way is not better. There is no thrill of the chase. There is no hoping, praying, living, dying with every pitch and every crack of the bat. There's just sadness. Thoughts of what could have been. And a sub-.500 ball club.

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I don't know how many of you saw the finale of *America's Got Talent* last Wednesday (I believe it was the week's highest-rated show, so I'm guessing at least a few of you did). I saw it, and was pretty disappointed in the results.

Barbara Padilla was robbed.

Oh, I was very happy she made it to the bottom two (the show started with 10 performers, and they were booted off one-by-one as votes from Monday night's show were read),

but her competition in that final slot was Kevin Skinner. Kevin was a poor chicken farmer from the south, and while he wasn't the most photogenic of the *America's Got Talent* finalists, he did have a certain appeal. He sang fairly well – although not super great, and this was something the judges freely acknowledged. He didn't hit all the notes, but the judges didn't seem to mind, as he had real charisma. You could see it, and it was almost enough to overlook his not-quite-there performances of songs like "Always On My Mind."

Almost.

Barbara Padilla, meanwhile, was already there. And then some. She was a super-talented opera singer who gave performances so perfect, so spot-on, you'd swear your TV had suddenly changed channels to PBS. I missed her audition performance when it was shown, but I caught her on the quarter-final show, and was just blown away by the quality of her voice. At the semi-finals, she did even better, with an absolutely fantastic rendition of "Ave Maria." She of course came back for the finals, and turned in another terrific, worthy-of-a-standing-ovation-even-if-it's-just-in-your-living-room performance.

Now, on *America's Got Talent*, it helps contestants if they have a tug-at-your-heartstrings backstory. Kevin Skinner, being the poor chicken farmer trying to manifest his life's dream, certainly had one. But Barbara Padilla, being a breast cancer survivor, had one too. Plus, anyone who watched her during the various results shows had to be charmed. Every time she was voted through to the next round, she had a look of utter astonishment on her face, as if she had no idea how talented she was. She came across as very humble.

So, when it came down to Kevin Skinner and Barbara Padilla, it was no secret who I felt deserved to win. Kevin had a good story and everything, and seemed like a nice guy, but Barbara had....that amazing voice. As the judges would often remind contestants during the show, if you win *America's Got Talent*, you need to be able to sustain a Las Vegas-length show, which would be between 75 and 90 minutes. And I could easily see myself watching her sing. Surely, I thought to myself, the rest of America feels the same way. Surely, I thought, she'd beat Kevin Skinner, who, to be honest, wasn't even the most talented of those who made into the final 10.

I was wrong.

My jaw just about hit the floor when Nick Cannon announced Kevin was the winner. America, in my opinion, had gotten it wrong. Maybe they hadn't seen the same Kevin Skinner I saw – a guy who, while he seemed nice and had charm, just did not have the best voice in the competition. Maybe the lesson to take away from this was that a good story trumped talent? But, again, Barbara Padilla is a cancer survivor; it's not like she was a disgraced politician or something. She had a good story, she had likeability, she had that wonderful voice.

In the end, though, it was Kevin who landed the \$1 million prize, as well as a headline act in Las Vegas. I'm sure Barbara won't go away empty-handed, though. Somewhere, a record company executive had to be watching her sing. So I bet she'll get signed up (and if that's the case, you can be sure I'll be buying that CD).

But she deserved to win it all.

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See you next week.