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News Bulletin

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Great Gymnasts... The RHAM High School girls' gymnastics team won first place (136.6 AA) in the Valentine's Day Invitational in Glastonbury on Feb. 13. Glastonbury High School took second place (136), followed by Conard High School (135.5). The state divisionals will be held Feb. 27 at Pomperaug High School. Pictured, bottom from left are Emma Hartan, Kristy Nicolo, Sarah Fish, Caitlin Aisis; top from left, Jackie Werner, Ali Gostanian, Kelsi Levesque (from Coventry), Anna Gott, Carrie Mecca (from Bacon Academy), Taylor Murphy and Megan Voelker (from East Hampton).

Middle Haddam District Plan Approved

by Claire Michalewicz

The East Hampton Town Council passed the revised Middle Haddam Historic District Ordinance in a tense three-hour meeting Tuesday evening.

The ordinance officially establishes the boundary of the district along the shoreline of the Connecticut River, and removes a list of the original property owners that was attached to the documents in 2006.

After much discussion, the council passed the revision 6-1.

Before the vote, Town Attorney Jean D'Aquila offered her interpretation of the issue. D'Aquila explained that the ordinance would not change the boundary.

The boundary, she explained, had never been in the middle of the river. She recommended that the council pass the revision, which would make the ordinance clearer and more precise.

Many residents came to the meeting to speak out for or against the ordinance. The debate over the district has been going on for years, creating what Historic District Commission Chairman James Royster called "a community of turmoil."

Royster accused Margaret Faber, one of the residents that led the campaign against the re-

vision, of working to undermine the commission.

Faber had previously spoken to the Town Council, saying that the town had only provided documents that supported their side of the story. She insisted that the town needed to consider the 1976 study that was used to originally define the district.

"While the commission may be well-intentioned," said Patricia Harmon, another resident, "they don't represent the residents of Middle Haddam." Harmon insisted the Town Council tour the historic district before making a decision about the area that the commission protects.

Other residents focused on the debate that had sprung up over the proposed ordinance, and how it had ruined the quality of life in the neighborhood.

"Middle Haddam is no longer what it was," said Barbara Angelico, explaining that the fighting over the ordinance had "set neighbor against neighbor."

"I don't need legislation because I love my home," she continued. Angelico said that she has been criticized and verbally attacked for rebuilding a historic home that had fallen into

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Colchester Honored for its Love of Nature

by Katy Nally

Colchester was nationally recognized Wednesday as being a safe-haven for wildlife and a place that works to preserve nature when the town celebrated its Community Wildlife Habitat certification – the first of its kind in Connecticut.

A Community Wildlife Habitat is recognized through the National Wildlife Federation. A town of Colchester's size had to earn 375 points by certifying properties that utilize good gardening practices and provide water, food, shelter and a place to raise young for wildlife.

Colchester has 143 certified properties, including all four schools, Town Hall and Cragin Memorial Library.

The certification will ensure Colchester maintains a healthy environment, it will allow residents to reconnect with nature and sustain a positive quality of life, and it will safeguard local natural resources, according to Katherine Kosiba, co-chair of the initiative.

Kosiba and Ellen Falbowski, the second co-chair, first discussed the certification in the summer of 2008. Just about a year and a half later, on Jan. 22, their idea became a reality when the town completed its wildlife certification. Wednesday was the culmination of their, and a team of volunteers', hard work, when the certificate was presented to First Selectman Gregg Schuster at Jack Jackter Intermediate School (JIS).

Kosiba and Falbowski first brought their idea to the Board of Selectmen in August 2008. Just two months later, on Oct. 1, the two women

began their quest to certify properties.

"They had the passion, they had the vision and they had a plan for making Colchester better for all of us, and look what happened," former first selectman Linda Hodge said at the ceremony.

Even Governor M. Jodi Rell sent along a few words that were read by Director of the Eastern Connecticut Governor Office Jeff Nelson. Rell said the certification would allow Colchester to continue to be a "place where people, flora and fauna can all flourish." She called the town "truly a model community" and said that this effort would certainly "raise the standards" for other localities.

"You are the first in Connecticut to get this designation, but hopefully the first of many," Nelson added.

The certification will coincide with the state Department of Environmental Protection's program, No Child Left Inside, Nelson said. It is Colchester's effort to "raise healthier citizens," Nelson said.

Along with the governor's office, Director of Connecticut Forest and Park Association Caroline Driscoll also endorsed the project. She said it was the goal of her organization to conserve "our land for our children," and this recognition accomplishes exactly that.

Kosiba and Falbowski said being certified as a wildlife habitat would allow the community to combat the nationwide trend of "nature-deficit disorder." Superintendent of Schools Karen Loiselle spoke to this aspect, citing sta-



A ceremony was held Wednesday to honor Colchester's new Community Wildlife Habitat certification – the first of its kind in Connecticut. Above, First Selectman Gregg Schuster accepts the certificate from Director of Connecticut Forest and Park Association Caroline Driscoll. Also shown from left are Jay Cohen, Ellen Falbowski, Linda Hodge and, at far right, Katherine Kosiba.

tistics of childhood obesity rates and the shrinking amount of time children spend outdoors.

"The nature of childhood has changed," Loiselle said. "There's not much nature in it." Loiselle said kids who spend more time out-

side were shown to be more creative, less aggressive and demonstrate better concentration.

The superintendent said the certification was important because it would preserve natural

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disrepair.

Some residents just wanted the debate to end, urging the council to vote on the issue once and for all.

“This is fool’s gold,” said Pete Brown of the ongoing debates. “It doesn’t matter where the boundary is.” He explained that structures built on the edge of the river are regulated by the state and federal governments. Local government has no control over the shoreline, Brown said.

“Put it on the moon,” he continued. “It will not change who has control over what is built on the river.”

Before voting for the revision, council member Thomas Cordeiro said he supported the revision because the town should support the commission. He added that he appreciated all the effort and passion that residents had put into the issue.

Many residents and council members said that the issue had been confusing, and thanked D’Aquila for clearing it up.

“It’s as clear now as it will ever be,” said Town Council Chairwoman Melissa Engel immediately before the vote.

* * *

While the historic district ordinance was the biggest issue of the evening, several other points were also debated at Tuesday’s Town Council meeting.

The council discussed the proposed new roof for Memorial School. Town Manager Jeffery O’Keefe explained that the project has been on the drawing boards for years, and that the roof needed to be replaced.

The projected cost of the project is \$3.44 million, but the town expects to receive a school construction grant from the state. O’Keefe stressed that the project would not go forward until they received the grant, but that the town needed to authorize the full amount so that they could apply for the grant.

O’Keefe suggested that the issue go to a pub-

lic meeting in late March or early April.

Later in the meeting, the council narrowly voted to send a draft sidewalk ordinance to a public hearing before their next meeting on March 9.

The ordinance would relieve the town of liability for any injuries or damage sustained on any sidewalk except for those that the town would continue to clear.

At present, Engel explained, the town only clears about 10% of the sidewalks in town. She suggested that the town clear even fewer sidewalks, limiting plowing to sidewalks in front of town and federal buildings and a few streets in the center of town that many people use for exercise.

“We have to start cutting somewhere,” Engel said, explaining that the reduction would save the town money.

Councilwoman Susan Weintraub agreed, adding that most town residents already have to clear their own sidewalks. She pointed out that residents could help each other out with shoveling, and it could provide local children with a way to make some money.

But other council members said that residents were accustomed to having their sidewalks clear, and it wasn’t fair to take the service away from them.

O’Keefe explained that the draft ordinance stipulated that sidewalks in any future developments in town would not be cleared.

The council voted not to research a proposed nuisance ordinance, deciding that the definition of a nuisance would be too hard to define. Councilman John Tuttle said that it would “open up a Pandora’s box” of potential nuisances.

Tuttle and O’Keefe both pointed out that the town was already working with businesses who had received noise complaints to develop other solutions.

The next Town Council meeting will be held Tuesday, March 9, at 6:30 p.m., at Town Hall, 20 East High St.

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resources for young people.

She said certifying the schools in town was a “natural step” for students and faculty who have been continually involved in environmental initiatives.

Even students at JJIS proved to be actively involved with nature. Loisel asked for a show of hands from about 25 students to see who chooses to play outside when given the chance. Almost all the hands flew up.

In addition to helping humans, the certification marks the town’s effort to create a “corridor” for wildlife and connect surrounding patches of forest, Driscoll said. Since many local forests have been fragmented due to years of deforestation, some wildlife might not have

enough space, Driscoll said. The habitat initiative works to correct this, she added.

But the certification is only the beginning, Schuster said. “We have to make sure we continue this,” he added. The volunteer team that organized the habitat certification will be tasked with maintaining the recognition and involving the community in further conservation projects.

For many residents and local flora and fauna, the certification will be beneficial, said the two co-chairs. Falbowski called the Community Wildlife Habitat concept “the perfect way to ‘think globally, act locally,’” she said in a press release. “I’m thrilled with the support we’ve here in Colchester.”

Andover Grand List Shows Scant Increase

by Lindsay Fetzner

The Grand List for Oct. 1, 2009 rose just .6 percent from the previous year, Tax Assessor John Chaponis said this week.

But, while that may seem like a modest figure, “In this economy, I was surprised by the increase,” Chaponis said.

The total net assessment for this year’s Grand List was \$277.59 million, an increase of \$1.63 million, over last year’s total.

The Grand List represents the assessed value of all the taxable property in town. It is broken down into real estate, personal property and motor vehicle.

Real estate went from \$245.66 million last year to \$247.48 this year, an increase of \$1.82 million. Chaponis said new homes were definitely a factor, but a large industrial property put on a large addition that drove up the numbers. The town saw several permits for additions to homes. They included garages, finished basements, decks, porches and pools, to name a few, Chaponis said. “Any improvement to an existing property that has increased the market value would call for an increase,” he said.

Personal property saw a moderate decrease of \$37,400. Last year, the town saw a total of \$5.30 million, and this year the value jumped to \$5.26 million. As equipment depreciates, Chaponis said values for personal property usu-

ally go down. “Unless significant new purchases are made, it should go down about six percent,” he said.

This year’s total for motor vehicle was \$22.52 million. This is an increase of \$315,350 over last year’s value of \$22.20 million. In the past, Chaponis said the values for motor vehicles have risen dramatically, but many towns this year are seeing their motor vehicle Grand List values plummet. “Some are only 10 percent of what they used to be,” he said. Because the increase was so small, Chaponis said “I would call it a loss.” Cash for Clunkers really paid no part in the Grand List, he said, as many residents who took part in the government program purchased vehicles after Oct. 1.

First Selectman Bob Burbank said that initially he was not sure whether the town would see an increase in the grand list this year, but was content with the small jump. Burbank said he knew the town would pick up additional houses from the previous year, and that the pieces of real estate would serve as the bulk of the increase. Burbank also noted this was not a re-evaluation year and that although property values may have gone down, they would not change the assessment. The next re-evaluation will take place in the next fiscal year, 2010-11.

Burbank said, “It is hard to say what the next year will bring.” Last year, a property on Route 6 was sold to Network Inc., a nonprofit organization, which is tax-exempt. Assessments that the town cannot account for, such as this \$525,000 assessment, could have a significant affect on the numbers.

Chaponis noted that many towns actually saw a decrease in their Grand List this year. “I have not seen anyone over one percent and I do think it is a sign of the economy,” he said. Andover and Hebron, who saw an increase of .65 percent, were among the two largest jumps. Chaponis said in a struggling economy, “people tighten their belt even if they still do have a job.” Waiting to purchase new cars or trading in their large SUVs for smaller, less expensive vehicles are common measures people take during difficult economic times. “This new car actually has a lower assessment,” Chaponis said. “Overall, the owner has a smaller payment and fuel cost.”

As for the future, Chaponis said he does not anticipate another Grand List increase next year and “would be lucky to stay stagnant.” This forecast is the result of a lack of new commercial projects for next year or new subdivisions with new housing in town. “However, that is not always a bad thing,” Chaponis said. If new

homes were to be built, the enrollment in the schools would go up and consequently the cost of one child “would be double the additional tax revenue,” he said. “So, Grand List growth is a double-edged sword; you don’t just want growth, a municipality wants the ‘right’ growth.”

The Top 10 taxpayers in town totaled 29 accounts and an assessment of \$9.05 million. Connecticut Light & Power Company was the top taxpayer, with a net assessment of \$3.02 million. The others included Whispering Hills LLC at \$887,200, New Samaritan Housing Corporation at \$844,400, B&B Realty Co at \$828,800, Martin Marshall at \$789,200, Hillside Self Storage Center LLC at \$695,100, Post Ellen D Trustee at \$520,200, Andover Plaza LLC at \$499,200, Algonquin Gas Transmission LLC at \$484,500, and Slattery Beth Ann at \$482,600.

The Grand List is used by the Board of Finance to set the mill rate. It is determined by dividing the town’s overall budget by the Grand List total. If the Board of Assessment Appeals makes no reductions to the list, a mill will represent \$277.59 million. Residents can calculate their taxes by multiplying their total assessments by the mill rate. One mill is equal to \$1 tax per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

Marlborough Business Owners Unhappy With Sewer Fees

by Katy Nally

Several business owners in town said they could have a tough time paying their bills, and might be forced to close, when sewer fees kick in.

The Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) held a public hearing Wednesday, Feb. 17, to discuss its 2009-10 budget, its allocation of Equivalent Dwelling Units (EDUs) and its sewer usage fees. Connection notices will begin going out to area homes and businesses in March, although people can defer the connection up to three times in 30-day installments, or no more than 90 days.

Many of the EDUs and flow rates assessed for businesses are grossly overestimated, said several business owners at the hearing. Robert Elliot, who owns a shopping complex on East Hampton Road, said the figure for water usage is 50 percent higher than what the stores actually use. "The flows as indicated on the [town] chart are just not accurate," Elliot said.

Based on the chart, businesses in the Marlborough Tavern Green, from 3 East Hampton Rd. to 5 East Hampton Rd., use a total of 11,009 gallons of water per day. However, according to Elliot, these businesses use about 4,500 gallons per day, based on meter readings – or less than half as much as the chart indicates.

These flow rates, including the 11,009, come from the Connecticut Public Health code, Town Planner Peter Hughes said.

The East Hampton Road plaza was assessed at 46 EDUs, and each EDU is charged \$319. This means Elliot will be charged about \$14,000 for this fiscal year in sewer usage fees.

According to the flow chart, 3 East Hampton Rd. uses a total of 7,435 gallons of water per day. Marlborough Country Bakery co-owner Georgette Goodale speculated that this address included her store, The Marlborough Tavern, It's So Ranunculus, a physical therapist, Quest Diagnostics, an obstetrician and a mortgage broker's office.

This address alone will account for about \$10,000 of Elliot's bill.

Goodale said the biggest water user in her address is The Marlborough Tavern. Based on the state numbers, a restaurant with public toilets utilizes 30 gallons of water per day, per seat. This number is increased by 50 percent if the restaurant serves breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Ultimately Elliot will be billed for this water usage, but the tenants pay a pro-rated amount

for sewer usage. Goodale called the situation a "big nut for all of us to crack."

Goodale said she was unsure whether her business could afford the upcoming sewer usage fees. Small businesses, she said, almost always have uncertain futures and finances to match. "We're hanging on now then you add something else," she said.

But one thing will remain constant for this fiscal year – the sewer bill. Goodale's husband and co-owner of the bakery, Dave Goodale, said even if his business wanted to save money by conserving water it wouldn't be possible under the new flat fees.

Hughes said the fees and EDUs would be reevaluated in about eight to 10 weeks, but he said he doesn't "see anything changing in the next [2010-11] budget." However, for the 2011-12 budget, Hughes said the "numbers could be dramatically different."

Currently the town estimates the total consumption of water at 119,879 gallons per day, where non-residential properties use an estimated 62,679 and residential properties use 57,200.

With this equation, Hughes said "the biggest variable" is the gallons of water per day. "Is it 119,000 gallons per day? I wouldn't bet on it," he said. "That number is going to drop, I just can't tell you how much."

But Georgette Goodale was not as optimistic. "Nothing ever goes down," she said this week.

Doug Thibodeau, owner of the shops located at 9-11 South Main St., said he understands how the town calculated his gallons per day, but said the figure is about four times greater than what the complex actually uses, according to meters.

Thibodeau said the approximately 10,000-sq. ft. lot used an average of 503 gallons per day in 2009. The owner said he took water meter readings on a weekly and monthly basis. However, the town assessed the property at 2,002 gallons per day, based on the state health code.

"They used the best system they could...not that we're happy about it," Thibodeau said.

In the South Main Street plaza there is a nail salon, a barbershop, an oral surgeon, a podiatrist, a seamstress, an attorney's office, a psychiatrist's office and two small apartments, Thibodeau said.

The nail salon for example, is allotted 50 gallons of water per manicure station and 100 per pedicure chair. The barbershop assessment is similar with 50 gallons per chair.

The flows for most of the other facilities are calculated by multiplying the square footage by a factor set by the health code that is usually 0.1 or 0.2.

While many businesses in town have water meters like Thibodeau's, Hughes said utilizing these readings was not practical because each one would have to be certified and calibrated. "I think we'd go through a lot of headaches," WPCA chair Jack Murray said, adding business owners and residents should be careful what to wish for because meters could cost more than the current plan in the long run.

However, at the hearing, Dave Goodale said he felt otherwise. He said using meters would be a better solution than the health code numbers that seem to double the current water usage.

In Thibodeau's plaza there are 8.3 EDUs, so his sewer usage fees will total about \$3,000 per year, for the next two fiscal years.

There are a total of 449 EDUs in town, including 190.5 residential and 258.5 non-residential. The price per EDU was calculated by dividing the entire operations, maintenance and repair budget (after a credit from East Hampton was added) by 449.

A non-residential EDU is calculated by using the flows from the Connecticut Public Health code, multiplied by 1.25, because businesses have a 25 percent surcharge attached, then dividing that number by 300, which is the flow of one EDU, Hughes said this week. The surcharge was instituted to "equalize the cost of commercial flows," Hughes said at the hearing.

Several business owners at the hearing said the piece of the project financed by local businesses was too great. "The responsibility lies on too few people," Craig Robinson of It's So Ranunculus said this week.

"The burden here is too hard," Elliot said, adding that the WPCA should go back and find ways to share the finances "a little more equally."

Carl Zirkenbach Jr., who owns the Shoppes at Marlborough Barn with his father, said the businesses in town are paying the majority of sewer fees. His complex comprises 32.4 EDUs, equating a total of 7,764 gallons per day. Based on the equation, Zirkenbach will pay about \$10,000 for the first year of sewer usage fees.

Zirkenbach said some of the businesses in the barn complex likely use less water than an

average family. For example, Zirkenbach said there are two employees in New England Traditions, where most of the water usage comes from flushing toilets. His water usage was assessed at 450 gallons per day. Although Zirkenbach's facility does not have a meter, he said this figure is overestimated. "I don't use 450 gallons in a week," Zirkenbach said.

Under the current sewer fees, coupled with the sluggish economy, Zirkenbach could potentially close down. "They're going to put me out of business," Zirkenbach said. "In this economy right now they're going to put everybody out...I'm hoping and praying the economy picks up," he said.

Most of the stores in the barn complex are retail, Zirkenbach said, which simply doesn't "make it anymore." Zirkenbach said it was a possibility the stores would be converted into apartments that would likely sell better than retail goods.

Another alternative would be to sell the complex, but Zirkenbach said finding a buyer would be difficult, especially in this economy.

Zirkenbach said one of the original benefits of installing sewers was to attract businesses, but with the fees he said businesses might leave, with few to take their place.

Georgette Goodale had a similar outlook. "The bottom line is we're expensed out," she said.

"If there's no business in town that's not going to help anybody," she added.

Although some said businesses might leave town due to fees, Kevin Haggerty of Sadler's Restaurant said the sewers were necessary for the town to "have a chance of ever developing a tax base." He called water usage a "necessary evil" for the restaurant business. However, Haggerty said he might also have to raise food prices to cope.

According to Murray, the sewers are long overdue. Murray said that in the past few years, the state health department threatened to shut down several businesses around East Hampton Road and North Main Street because of septic systems that failed on a regular basis. He added, the ground in the center of town simply "cannot accept anymore septic."

Murray said the town "really doesn't have much of a choice" when it comes to sewers. For Georgette Goodale the lack of choices comes down to: "you can either pay or pay."

Judge Outlines Hebron Probate Court Future

by Lindsay Fetzner

Glastonbury Probate Court Judge Peter Alter made an appearance at last Thursday's meeting of the Board of Selectmen (BOS) and offered assurance that the merger of the Glastonbury and Hebron probate districts would be a smooth transition.

Over the past several years but culminating last spring, the probate assembly, consisting of 117 courts, was directed by legislature to develop a merger plan. "The system couldn't continue to support itself," Alter said.

In a letter to the BOS in December 2009, Alter said the configuration of the towns' merged courts became finalized with the action of the legislature in the fall and final approval by Governor M. Jodi Reil. The goal was to reduce the court system to 50, but in the end, ended up with 54 across the state. Alter told the board, "it was a torture process." The merger will become effective on Jan. 5, 2011, according to Alter, who will serve as judge of the new-look court after the merger takes place.

Alter said that Connecticut is in a unique place, as the probate system as been in place for over 300 years. Over the course of its history, the probate assembly were the only judges elected to office in Connecticut, all others were appointed by the governor with legislative consent. Recent financial hardships facing the state have put the costs of the probate system in a

"downward spiral." The legislature had to address this problem and the financial issues in the probate courts, Alter told the board.

With the retirement of Judge Kevin Connor, Judge Elaine Camposeo began serving as the acting judge for the Hebron Probate Court. On Jan. 1 of this year, Alter assumed Camposeo's position and became the acting judge.

Alter said that for many towns across the state, the mergers have resulted in several towns being represented by one court system. In the beginning, Hebron and Glastonbury were part of a larger district, which included Marlborough, Colchester, Lebanon and East Haddam. This district would have served a population of over 80,000 people. In the end, however, Hebron only ended up sharing the court system with one other town, Glastonbury. This final district serves a population of roughly 43,000 people. Surrounding towns like Colchester and Lebanon became part of the Windham court system. Alter said out of the 54 courts across the state, the Glastonbury/Hebron court is the third smallest and feels that this will be very beneficial to both towns. He described the transition as "a lot easier than other towns."

"I feel very confident this will work for our two communities," Alter said. Additionally, the merger will allow the court system to "continue

to serve the community very well."

Alter said the records and clerks will be based in Glastonbury, but hearings will be held locally. In Hebron, hearings are currently taking place in the Town Hall building. The current facility that Hebron has will be turned back to the town, as it does not meet the statutory requirements. Alter said this week that the legislature mandated that every court provide a separate hearing room as well as a place for the judge to privately confer. The office, which is opposite the town clerk's office, does not meet these requirements.

In addition, records will be microfiched as part of a larger process that will extend into the future. Records from 1976 forward will be available on a desktop and as time goes on, older records will be added. This particular year represents the minimum number of years that title searchers need to see when searching available records.

When selectmen addressed their concerns of the workload associated with the merger, Alter said he is confident that he can adjust to the increased responsibilities placed on him. In comparison to Glastonbury, Alter said the weighted workload in Hebron is only about 330. Glastonbury's workload of 1,750 is nearly five times as large. "I have accepted the demands

the two courts place on me," he said.

One of the important aspects of the court Alter hopes to keep consistent is the personal, community based service. "My commitment is that we will continue to have hearings and service people out here [in Hebron]," he said. "The purpose of the probate court is to be part of the community."

Gayle Mulligan also announced at the meeting that Hebron residents can take advantage of an e-mail service provided by the town to voice their comments and concerns regarding the budget. The e-mail address is budget2010@hebronct.com, and the selectmen intend to have the address added to the directory on the town website.

"I think it's great we are getting the feedback and [people] are writing," Dan Larson said. Brian O'Connell agreed and said that he hopes to get the most feedback as possible, as it will be helpful down the road when prioritizing what items need to be addressed.

Mulligan said it will be beneficial to start receiving feedback now, as the board will shortly begin going through the budget "piece by piece," as opposed to down the road when budget negotiations have already taken place. She recommended that residents become "involved in the process as we go."

RHAM Schools Chief Proposes 2.52 Percent Budget Increase

by Lindsay Fetzner

Superintendent of Schools Robert Siminski presented his recommendations for a 2.52 percent budget increase for the 2010-11 fiscal year at a RHAM Board of Education (BOE) meeting Monday night, and the proposal seemed to go over well with board members.

Siminski's proposed "continuation budget," as he called it, totaled \$24.50 million, with an increase in spending just over \$600,000. The superintendent also discussed the reductions that would be made to reach a 1.49 and zero percent increase. A 1.49 percent increase would drop the budget down to \$24.25 million and a zero percent increase would total \$23.90 million.

The superintendent acknowledged the goals for this fiscal year's budget. Among them were to continue to provide the same level of programming currently in the school system, to preserve teaching positions, to use any and all cost-saving measures and to confront the special education costs in an effective manner, he said.

Siminski presented a list of highlights for the continuation budget. Among the items touched on were the .5 reduction of a school psychologist, a middle school PE staff reduction of .5, contractual salary increases and tuition for the magnet schools. Siminski also stated that supplies, textbooks, library books and curriculum writing are all budgeted at reduced prices.

Overall, the budget analysis was broken down into 56.2 percent for salaries, 11.9 percent for benefits, 10.9 percent for bond, transportation at 5.1 percent, tuition at 4.5 percent, utilities at 3 percent, fuel at 1 percent and 7.4 percent for other.

The superintendent noted that the enrollment at the high school as well as in the special education program would increase, which are two factors that will have a definite impact on the budget. For the 2010-11 year, administration projected an enrollment at the high school to be 1,199; however the New England School Development Council (NESDEC) is projecting

1,149. For the middle school, the administration projected a total of 623 students, and NESDEC is showing 600.

At this time last year, administration projected an enrollment of 1,157 at the high school while NESDEC projected 1,129. The actual enrollment was 1,084. Board of Education chairman Mike Turner said magnet school enrollment accounted for some of the difference, but a lack of families moving into town as a result of the economy was a contributing factor as well.

Other areas affecting the budget are heating oil and bus fuel, priced at \$2.33 and \$2.40 per gallon, respectively.

Although the continuation budget accounted for a 2.52 percent increase, Siminski said there were many factors offsetting budget increases. Special education and paraprofessional increases are being paid by the stimulus money as well as the clinical day treatment program, he said. State special education aid is expected to be lower in 2010-11, due to budget constraints. State transportation aid is also expected to be reduced.

Siminski also highlighted the per pupil expenditure for RHAM in comparison to the state average. According to 2008-09 Connecticut data, the state average is \$12,805. RHAM's average is roughly \$500 less, totaling \$12,310.

The proposed budget allocated for \$3.32 million for the special education budget. The excess cost, estimated at 60 percent, totaled \$304,538. The IDEA federal grant contributed \$269,290. Siminski said the percentage of special education from grants is 17.3 percent.

Siminski also touched on ways to achieve a 1.49 percent and zero percent increase. In order to reach a budget with a 1.49 percent increase, \$246,301 would be cut from the originally proposed budget. Siminski said that instructional supplies would have to be reduced to the 2009-10 levels, there would have to be a .5 psychology staff reduction, and concessions from the administrators. In addition, textbooks

and curriculum writing would also be reduced, he said.

To come in with a flat budget, much deeper reductions in the amount of \$355,963 would come. Supplies would be cut, a reduction of two library paraprofessionals would be made and there would be cuts in the maintenance account. There would also be a cut in the number of sixth teaching assignments for staff members. The reduction in the teaching assignments, Siminski said, "would cause class sizes to go up." A late bus reduction would be equally as harmful to the students. Siminski said the cut is "not without cost, because students won't be able to stay for extra help or intramural sports." School athletics would be affected as well. Siminski said gymnastics, golf and indoor track at the high school have low participation and are expensive for the school. In terms of the middle school, offering three sports (indoor track, outdoor track and wrestling) would "complement programs offered by the town recreation department," he said.

Despite the cuts that would have to be administered to reach a flat budget, Siminski did inform the board at the latter end of his presentation that there were recent reductions in health insurance. The health insurance costs were estimated to increase by 12.5 percent, but are not sitting around 11.5 percent. As a result, he informed the board that he is going to revisit some of the cuts proposed to get a 1.49 and zero percent increase. "Some of the things put on the cutting block can be put back in," he said.

After Siminski's presentation to the board, Andover BOE Chairman Jay Lindy voiced his concern during public comment about increased class sizes and students attending magnet schools. In Siminski's presentation, it was estimated that approximately 66 students would attend the magnet schools. Students can change their mind, he said, and is the reason the 66 placeholders were accounted for. "We are in competition with the charter magnet schools," Lindy said. He noted the schools are even ad-

verting during regular season football games. "Going up on class size, in my opinion, is not where you want to go."

Siminski stated in his budget presentation that the magnet schools essentially have "unlimited resources," which is a driving factor for many students to attend the schools. "Some parents are going to say, well why not," he said. "The ads are saying we have this, we have that and in some cases, we can't compete with that."

Additional cuts to supplies were another concern for Lindy. "Teachers and administrators need to have something they can work with."

When Turner addressed the board with his chair report, he mentioned the Feb. 8 joint meeting of the Hebron boards of education, selectmen and finance, which provided an overview of that town's current financial situation. Turner said the boards of finance and selectmen encouraged them to try for a zero percent increase to the budget. "Debt is a little high, the Grand List is flat, and there is a concern next year with the end of the stimulus money," he said, drawing on the tough financial times many towns are currently facing.

BOE member Maryanne Leichter was also concerned about the stimulus money running out next year and the implications it would have on the future. "Last year was difficult and this year was difficult," Leichter said. Siminski added, "Next year will be ugly."

Commenting on the overall budget presentation given by Siminski, Turner reminded the board that "the 2.5 percent budget does have cuts in it," and described it as "austere."

"It's a lot to get and it's a lot to go through," Turner said. "But," he added with a laugh, "we have a lot of extra meetings."

The next regular meeting of the RHAM BOE will be on March 15 at 6:30 p.m. at Elmer Thienes/Mary Hall Elementary School, located at 25 School Dr., Marlborough. The board is meeting for a special budget workshop Monday, March 1, at 6:30 p.m. at Andover Town Hall, located at 17 School Rd.

Colchester Selectmen Tweak Firefighter Staffing Policy

by Katy Nally

At the Board of Selectmen's meeting last Thursday, Feb. 18, several members of the Colchester Hayward Volunteer Fire Department (CHVFD) spoke on behalf of their newly-elected first assistant chief, Don Lee.

First Selectman Gregg Schuster also gave an update on the town's budget – which he projected will include layoffs, though he's not yet sure how many – and told residents a budget forum was scheduled for Wednesday, March 10, at 7:15 in Cragin Memorial Library.

Selectmen also touched on unemployment compensation services at the meeting.

The firefighters came before the Board of Selectmen (BOS) at the meeting seeking approval for a change made to their staffing policy.

According to CHVFD President David Martin, the annual fire department elections were held on Jan. 14 and Lee won the position of first assistant chief. There are four chief positions at CHVFD – chief, deputy chief then first and second assistant chief.

Fire Chief Walter Cox said Lee won with a vote of 49-17; however, due to staffing policy, Lee, a paid firefighter, could not double as an

appointed chief.

This regulation was created in 2003 so that paid staff could not be involved in labor negotiations with the union, Cox said.

The compromise is that Lee will work from 5 a.m.-5 p.m. as the paid lieutenant supervisor at CHVFD and from 5 p.m. to 5 a.m. he will be on call as the first assistant chief. "Don is fully-qualified to do this position," Cox said. Lee will not be involved in labor negotiations, Cox said.

After selectmen approved the amendment, Schuster said the next step is a memo of understanding (MOU) between the town and the union, and then Lee could be appointed. Schuster said all town-appointed personnel must go through this procedure and wait for a MOU.

Cox said Tuesday the union is currently working on the MOU and Lee should be appointed as first assistant chief at the next BOS meeting.

Schuster said he was comfortable with the change because it covers what the fire department needs to "function properly."

Firefighter John Knapp said he doesn't see a problem with Lee being the fire chief. "We're trying to raise our standards for the benefit of the town," Knapp said. Martin had similar feelings to Knapp. Colchester "deserves trained leaders to answer emergency calls," Martin said.

Cox said this week, in the past, before the union was introduced in 1997, career staff did double as appointed officials, as Lee would.

After approving the amendment to the CHVFD policy, Schuster updated the BOS on the town's budget. Schuster said he's "targeting" a maximum increase of 3 percent, or a growth of about \$400,000, but nothing has been established yet. "I expect this proposal to be a starting point," Schuster said.

The proposed town budget would include staff reductions, Schuster said, but he said he is not sure who or how many people would be affected. He said the entire town staff has been informed about these potential cuts.

Schuster said he and town officials would work on the budget for the entire month of March. So far, because there has not been a

formal proposal yet, Schuster said he hasn't received any direction from the Board of Finance.

The selectmen expect to hear and utilize input from residents at the budget forum on March 10. The final budget review is scheduled for Tuesday, March 23.

Before adjourning, selectmen discussed the benefits of unemployment claim services. Schuster said for a total of \$1,600, split equally between the BOS and the Board of Education (BOE), an outside service would handle any unemployment claims. Currently these claims are managed by the finance department.

Schuster said it "takes a substantial amount of time" to fight the claims that come in, so transferring the work to a private agent would free up time in the finance department. The \$1,600 is covered in the Board of Finance budget, Schuster said, and the contract would be a year long. The hiring of the outside service was unanimously approved.

The next BOS meeting will be Thursday, March 4.

Portland Grand List Grows 1.16 Percent

by Claire Michalewicz

Portland showed a small increase in its Grand List in 2009, with the total up 1.16 percent from the previous year. The total value of taxable property in the town has been assessed at \$852.15 million.

Personal property showed the greatest growth, up 6.64 percent to \$30.66 million. The value of motor vehicles increased by 2.78 percent to \$64.14 million, and real estate by .82 percent to \$757.35 million.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said Town Assessor Nicole Lintereur had kept her well-informed throughout the process, so she had been anticipating a small increase in the list total. The actual increase was a pleasant surprise for her, coming in slightly higher than she expected.

"It's certainly welcome," Bransfield said. "Any increase is welcome."

Bransfield attributed the increase to several

new businesses that had opened in town.

Several new manufacturers had come to Portland, Lintereur said, as well as the new Oakwood Soccer Park. These new businesses would be major sources of income for the town.

Lintereur added that the total also increased because she had discovered some existing businesses that had not previously been listed.

Bransfield is using the Grand List to help her prepare her projected 2010-11 budget, which she plans to present next week. She said that even if the mill rate did not change, the town would still see an increase of about \$250,000 in tax revenue. Still, she added, she is anticipating an increase in the mill rate when she presents her proposed budget on March 1 – although at this point she doesn't know what that increase might be.

She said that Portland can't depend on state revenues rising, and that the town would have

to save money one way or another.

"You have to make that up somehow," Bransfield said, "either through a reduction in services, or through an increase in a request for taxes."

She said that town employees were anticipating increases in salaries, benefits and pensions, and her budget would have to cover those.

Bransfield said that she does not plan to add any new programs.

"We're trying to do our best with what we have," she explained.

Lintereur also said that she was pleased with the increase in the Grand List. She added that she hadn't noticed any real trend of increasing or decreasing in other towns, but noted that Portland's always goes up.

The top 10 taxpayers for real estate are: St. Clements Foundation with \$4.37 million; Perry Portland Associates (owner of the Elmcrest

property), \$4.2 million; Buckeye Cattle Company (the Quarry Ridge Golf Course), \$3.91 million; Stone Container Corporation, \$2.86 million; Portland Care and Rehabilitation, \$2.37 million; Richard G. Manner (a private landholder), \$2.06 million; Pharmagraphics (Keller Crescent), \$2.05 million; Fairways Fivesome (Portland Golf Course), \$2.05 million; and Chatham Ridge Associates, \$1.98 million.

The top 10 taxpayers for personal property are: Connecticut Light and Power with \$9.02 million; Westlake Industries, \$2.15 million; Jarvis Airfoil, \$1.58 million; Connecticut Natural Gas, \$1.09 million; Standard Knapp, \$897,000; American Concrete Pumping, \$750,000; Algonquin Gas Transmission, \$666,000; Safety-Kleen Systems, \$510,000; Henkels & McCoy, \$449,000; and Murphy Road Recycling, \$414,000.

Meet the New Special Ed Director in Hebron

by Lindsay Fetzner

Lisa Wheeler joined the Hebron schools as director of special education last month, and brings with her years of experience from a field she calls “her passion.”

Wheeler, who lives in Preston, used a treadmill analogy to describe the educational arena. “You get on the treadmill in September and get off in June,” she said, smiling.

Wheeler replaces Interim Special Education Director Anne Sweeney, who took over for the previous director, Brenna Kosicki.

Wheeler started her position during the busy budget season but nonetheless said she is looking forward to the responsibilities she will come up against in the forthcoming months. “Hit the ground running and off you go,” she said in lieu of the fast-paced environment she has recently become a part of.

Wheeler credited the parents and administration of the town of Hebron as very welcoming, and said it is “a really lovely community to be part of.”

Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz said she is “absolutely thrilled” to have Wheeler join the staff. Cruz described Wheeler as having a deep and in-depth understanding of children, with whom she has a strong commitment to. Wheeler’s extensive knowledge of programs, the budget, laws and instruction were also very clear to Cruz.

“We are extraordinarily fortunate” to have Wheeler in the school system, Cruz said.

In her new role, Wheeler said she is most looking forward to “the marriage of general education and special education” but more specifically SRBI (Scientific Research-Based Interventions), an effort that started in July 2009. Wheeler said the practices and curriculum of SRBI are based in research, with heavy emphasis on the general education setting before the special education setting. “It is a very recent initiative,” she said, “and I am excited to be assisting with it in Hebron.”

Similarly, the hardest aspect of her new position, Wheeler said, will also be SRBI. Wheeler described the process as a paradigm shift. She said there is a necessity in moving people to understand that children’s needs can be met in both arenas – special education and general education. Wheeler said the line between the two

is slowly becoming more gray instead of just black and white. “It is a dichotomous system,” Wheeler said.

Focusing on each child is a primary concern for Wheeler. Her goal is to individualize for each child in the general education setting. Currently, there are 143 students in the special education program, ranging from pre-k to the sixth grade. Wheeler said she loves a challenge, and looks forward to the new responsibilities she will take on in the Hebron school district.

Board of Education (BOE) Chairwoman Jane Dube said Wheeler brings “a tremendous amount of experience to the district” and foresees many positive changes to be made to the special education program. Dube said Wheeler’s presentation of the special education budget to the BOE in January was “extremely well-thought-out” and showed she had a firm understanding of the budget and its components.

Wheeler started her career as a speech pathologist in Waterford Public Schools, a position she held on to for close to 17 years. Wheeler worked with a wide range of age groups in both urban and suburban districts. She was also involved with The Friendship School, a magnet school located in Waterford that services 3-, 4- and 5-year-old children. The school is a collaborative effort between Waterford and New London. Wheeler said she was fortunate to have had great mentors while she was there, who encouraged her to go for her administration certification. She “wanted to affect change in a different way,” and saw a role in administration very appealing and a medium through which she could achieve this.

Wheeler took an administration position with Vernon Public Schools as the supervisor of early childhood education and special programs. She called it a “great experience,” where Wheeler was able to put her main focus on early childhood and work with several unique disorders, gaining exceptional experience from her role. Wheeler said she worked closely with disorders in the autism spectrum as well.

Wheeler continued with her involvement in early childhood, and took a position with Capital Region Education Council (CREC) as the director of early childhood. Describing it as a



Preston resident Lisa Wheeler is the new director of special education in Hebron. She started with the school system last month.

“fascinating position,” Wheeler said it opened her eyes to the challenges urban children often face. Some of the work Wheeler did as director was intertwined with the Sheff v. O’Neill lawsuit. In 1996, the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled it was a violation of state law to isolate Hartford children as a result of racial or economic factors. The settlement from the case called for the integration of new magnet schools in the state’s capital, according to the Sheff Movement website (www.sheffmovement.org).

Working at CREC, Wheeler saw three magnet schools and a charter school built in a very short amount of time, an effort she called “unbelievable.” Wheeler was able to broaden her knowledge in the legislative arena as well, where she discovered the impact Capital Hill had on local school districts.

Inspiration for going into the speech pathology field is something Wheeler credits to her

mother. Wheeler’s mother was the supervisor of a grandparent program for handicapped children. Growing up, Wheeler accompanied her mother when she visited clients and got a taste of what the field offered.

“I felt like I wanted to do something like that,” Wheeler said. “[And] even the playing field.”

When Wheeler moved back east from Washington, a location her husband Doug was stationed at while in the Navy, Wheeler said she was “ready to start fresh.” Her son Adam was only nine months old when she enrolled in graduate classes at Southern Connecticut State University. At that time, Wheeler embarked on a journey that would eventually lead her to the town of Hebron and her current role.

“I am just scratching the surface,” she said. “But I am looking forward to the new position.”

Loiselle Presents Ways to Retain Staff in Colchester

by Katy Nally

At Wednesday’s Board of Education (BOE) meeting, Superintendent of Schools Karen Loiselle announced she and her staff had found a potential way to retain an enrichment teacher and a part-time band teacher.

Loiselle said she found an additional \$58,000 to cut, to keep the teachers on staff.

The enrichment program was originally slated to be cut down from 2 FTE (full-time equivalent) to 0.5 FTE. With Loiselle’s adjustments the program would go up to 1 FTE and the current enrichment teacher at William J. Johnston Middle School (WJMS) would split her time between Jack Jackter Intermediate School (JJIS) and the middle school.

A part-time band teacher at Bacon Academy was also slated to be cut, but under Loiselle’s revisions his position was reinstated.

Although these changes were proposed, the board tabled any action on the budget.

Loiselle’s original \$36.48 million budget, which she presented last month, called for eight teacher layoffs and two paraprofessional layoffs, as well as seven teachers that would see their hours reduced.

Before Loiselle presented her proposed reinstatements, several residents advocated for the part-time band teacher.

Seventh-grader Katie Fiducia asked the board to maintain the band program at WJMS. Katie,

who sings and plays the clarinet, said band was a place where she “could go to express my feelings...music was my only refuge.”

Katie said she currently takes band with Gary Hart, who will retire at the end of the school year, and she also works with Bacon Academy band teacher Michael Gowdy in a wind and strings ensemble after school.

“Mr. Gowdy brings consistency and continuity to the program,” added Katie’s mother, Deborah Fiducia.

She went on to say the school’s music curriculum is her daughter’s only chance to practice the clarinet and sing, because there is no town-wide option. “This is all they have,” Deborah Fiducia said. “It will help her as she goes farther in life.”

However, reinstating the two teaching positions will come at a cost. To retain the part-time band teacher, and the enrichment teacher, Loiselle proposed delaying the implementation of software for the library and media centers (which will have to be put in for the 2011-12 budget, she said), eliminating one kindergarten bus route, reducing the business program at Bacon Academy by 0.2 FTE, reducing the amount spent on library books and freezing a special education grant.

Other programs the board asked Loiselle to potentially reinstate included physical educa-

tion (PE)/health, technology, world language and capital projects.

However, Loiselle said, “We will not be able to do those other things; PE will be reduced. ... We would not have the funds to address these [line items] unless you wanted to cut something else.”

To reinstate more programs, Loiselle said, the board would have to start looking at increasing class size, cutting athletics and cutting staff in core subjects.

A total of 3.4 FTE was originally proposed to be cut from PE/health, which includes a full-time teacher at Bacon Academy.

PE/health teacher Don Levine stood before the board several times Wednesday and said he would continue to advocate for his department even if he had to “go down in flames.” Levine, a 21-year teacher who currently works at Colchester Elementary School and JJIS, said “cutting PE at the k-2 level is beyond me.” At the kindergarten-fifth grade level, students are starting to “build an appreciation for physical education,” Levine said.

Physical education, Levine said, is vitally important to children’s academic future as well. With the proposed cuts, Levine said “it’s going to be difficult to keep these kids not only physically sound, but also academically sound.”

The cuts slated for PE/health were based on data that showed Colchester had more than double the amount of PE/health class time per week than the district average. PE/health class time was proposed to drop from 123 to 82 minutes per week, while the regional average is at 60 minutes per week.

Because the proposed cuts were in areas where Colchester exceed the district average, including PE/health and enrichment, the board had some discussion on what toll it would take on the district to cut programs that define Colchester.

“Trying to keep what makes this district special is very important,” BOE member Mitch Koziol said. Otherwise, “we’re just like everyone else ... and no one will stay.”

Other members agreed with Koziol. “Colchester schools – they’re the jewels of our community,” BOE member Mary Tomasi said.

But, according to Loiselle, the teachers’ “number one concern” was class size. She said Colchester already has more students per class than most schools in its district, adding, teachers already feel they are stretched thin.

The board agreed to consider Loiselle’s proposed reinstatements and continue its discussion and approve a budget at the next scheduled meeting on Tuesday, March 9.

East Hampton BOE Passes Budget With 3.88 Percent Increase

by Claire Michalewicz

The Board of Education (BOE) passed its proposed budget for the 2010-11 fiscal year on Monday night, after debate over whether they were asking for too much.

The budget calls for 3.88 percent increase over last year. Some board members felt that they should reduce the budget, because the town would not be able to afford the increase.

Many residents had come to the meeting because they had heard that the board might be laying off some teachers to cut costs. Administrators explained that layoffs were unlikely, and they had warned the teachers as a precaution.

Several residents warned the board members that firing teachers would drastically affect the town's schools.

"There have to be other ways of saving money in this town," said resident Amy Meisinger, adding that she was upset that she and many other residents had found out about the possible layoffs via email.

High school student Tasha Gawkowski warned that laying off teachers would affect students.

"Some of the teachers who don't have tenure are some of the very best at this school," Gawkowski said.

"I would caution the board to do everything in their power to avoid layoffs," said William Dinunzio. He remarked that his daughter is in

kindergarten, and East Hampton teachers have been doing an excellent job educating her. Dinunzio warned that if the school system reduced the number of teachers, it could take years to fix the decline in educational quality.

Superintendent of Schools Judith Golden explained that she had met with 29 non-tenured teachers before February vacation to tell them that they might be facing layoffs.

"This action does not mean that any teachers will lose their jobs, necessarily," Golden said. Indeed, she added, "we don't anticipate that there will be any layoffs."

Rather, she explained, the school board notified the teachers because they were legally obliged to. State law requires that non-tenured teachers be warned months in advance if there is even a small chance that some of them would lose their jobs.

BOE member Donald Coolican added that layoffs were extremely unlikely, and the law requiring that teachers be notified was designed to protect them.

If layoffs were to happen, Golden explained, the board would not be able to make that decision until June.

BOE Chairman Michael Vasquenza started the budget discussion by saying he would vote for the proposed budget, which called for a 3.88 percent increase from last year.

"We as a town need to provide quality and consistent services to our citizens," Vasquenza said.

Not everyone was happy with the proposed budget.

"It's about double the budget last year, and the situation with the economy is worse," said Coolican. "We're going to have to cut it somewhere."

After being approved, Vasquenza explained, the budget will go to the town's Board of Finance for review. From there it will go to Town Council, town meeting and then to a budget referendum, where it will be voted on as part of the overall town budget.

Several board members pointed out that since the town would ultimately decide on the budget, they shouldn't compromise at this point.

"We need to let the town decide," said BOE member Carol Lane. "At this point, this is the budget that we need."

"I don't want to be part of anything that hurts," said board member Glenn Gemma, explaining that he would vote for the budget.

School board member Debra Robinson pointed out that the board had already made cuts to the budget.

"To throw up our hands and say 'It'll come back to us anyway,'" she said, would give the

Town Council the wrong impression about what the Board of Education needed.

Golden explained after the meeting that increasing the budget was necessary due to increases in the cost of living.

"If we rolled over the current budget to next year," Golden explained, "we would not have the same level of services."

Golden added that she hoped the board did not have to reduce services, and was unable to say which programs would be affected.

As another way of cutting costs, administrators have agreed to be furloughed for three days during the 2010-11 school year, Golden announced during the meeting. She said she admired the administrators for taking leadership and being the first to offer to take concessions.

"I think we all do," Vasquenza chimed in.

Before the meeting adjourned, Vasquenza addressed the residents who had been misinformed about the potential layoffs. He explained that communications were sometimes difficult in a small town, and that misinformation about issues like layoffs can sometimes "snowball out of control."

Any residents with questions or concerns should call the BOE for clarification, Vasquenza said.

East Hampton Budget Reviewed at Tri-Board Meeting

by Claire Michalewicz

The Town Council and boards of education and finance met in a tri-board meeting on Wednesday to discuss the town's proposed budget. The recently-passed Board of Education budget was a hot topic as residents and town officials tried to balance the school system's needs with the limited resources available to them.

Town Manager Jeffery O'Keefe will finalize his proposed budget March 5. On Wednesday, he presented a summary of the town's proposed budget, which includes the budget that the Board of Education passed on Monday.

The preliminary budget would set the mill rate at 25.50, an increase of 6.2 percent from last year. O'Keefe said that he worried about increasing taxes by that much, since many people were already struggling to pay their bills.

O'Keefe repeatedly stressed that the budget was preliminary, and would change dramatically before he finalized it. He said he was trying to balance the needs of the town with the needs of the residents.

"It's a difficult, difficult challenge," O'Keefe said.

Board of Education (BOE) Chairman Michael Vasquenza summarized the \$26.08 million budget that the board passed by 6-3 on Monday night. The school board budget calls for a 3.88 percent increase, which some members felt was too much to ask for in this

economy.

Vasquenza explained that the philosophy of those who voted for the budget was "to put forward a budget that represents what we need, without reductions."

Vasquenza also announced that the school system was losing three teacher and staff positions. Several people, including Town Council Chairwoman Melissa Engel, said that they were unaware of the three lost positions. Vasquenza clarified that they were empty positions that the board was choosing not to fill, rather than current employees who were losing their jobs.

Superintendent of Schools Judith Golden spoke about the rumors of teacher layoffs that had spread through the town in the past few days. Golden said she had met with 29 non-tenured teachers about the budget as a precaution, and that it was unlikely that all or even any of them would lose their jobs. She added that personnel issues were confidential, and that she had been unable to speak about the potential layoffs until this week.

BOE member Donald Coolican said teachers were worried about contract negotiations, for fear that the town would cut their benefits. Engel assured him that the town council had never rejected a teachers' contract in the past. She offered her written assurance that the council would not look into cutting benefits or retirement, and only to look at options like fur-

lough days.

Some council members wondered if the town was being too protective in the teachers' contract negotiations. John Tuttle pointed out that many workers in the private sector hadn't seen increases in their wages in recent years.

"I don't think the teachers should necessarily be excluded from the pain the rest of us are feeling," he said.

Many people said that there was a lack of communication between the town and its residents. Resident Ruth Gawkowski wondered if the BOE could send notices about meetings and important issues home with students. Town Council member Thomas Cordeiro suggested that all information be centralized on the town's Facebook page, and councilwoman Barbara Moore suggested setting up a phone tree to inform residents of important issues.

Gawkowski also said that she worried about the lack of creative programs like drama or creative writing, and whether any budget cuts would hurt even more.

"There are no outlets for these kids to be creative," Gawkowski said.

Elaine Pellegrino had similar concerns. She worried that if class sizes increased, more advanced children like hers would suffer. If teachers had to cut back on services, Pellegrino said, the optional programs that some of them run for gifted children would be the first to go.

"Educating gifted students is not on your horizon," Pellegrino said. "My children deserve an education at the level they can perform at."

"We'd love to have a gifted program," John Tuttle said later in the meeting, "but we don't have the money to do it."

He encouraged the residents to get involved and continue speaking out in support of the budget.

"Your passion, your comments - don't leave them here," Tuttle advised. "If the budget fails, we'll have no choice but to cut it."

Resident Mary Ann Dostaler said the 4.40 percent increase in the government budget was disproportionately high compared to that of the education budget. O'Keefe responded that he felt the two percentages couldn't be compared. The increase in the government budget, he explained, was less than half the dollar amount of the increase in the education budget.

Others urged the boards to be more idealistic in putting together the budget.

"The three boards need to come up with a budget that they think the town needs, not a budget they think they can get passed," said Dave Simko, chairman of the Fire Commission.

The town manager will release his proposed budget on March 5. After a series of budget workshops, the town will vote on the final in May.

Town Closing in on New Manager in Hebron

by Lindsay Fetzner

Hebron officials have narrowed down its pool of candidates for the town manager position to one, Interim Town Manager Andy Tierney said this week, and are currently waiting for the candidate to accept the position.

The concluding sets of interviews with the final candidates were held the last week in January and the subsequent final interview with the one candidate was held shortly after. Tierney said the town is now awaiting confirmation from the chosen candidate and should fill the position within a few weeks. At last Thursday's meeting of the Board of Selectmen, selectwoman Gayle Mulligan updated the board on the interviewing process and said she hoped to have an announcement by the next regular meeting on March 4. "Things are moving forward and look good," Mulligan said last week.

Tierney said the process so far has gone "the way we thought," as something of this nature "doesn't happen overnight." BOS member Dan Larson agreed. "Timewise," he said, "it went along very smoothly."

Larson was very pleased with the "terrific pool of candidates" that applied for the town

manager position and noted that people from all across the country showed interest. People residing in places as far as the Midwest were among those who applied. Mulligan said it was "nice to see" such an interest.

The state of the economy and so many people looking for employment were definitely factors in the overwhelming interest in the position, Larson said. "They are definitely high-quality people," he said. "We were very fortunate to have very good candidates." Mulligan agreed, and described the pool of candidates as "wonderful."

Larson said the board took into consideration how quickly each of the candidates would be able to assimilate into the atmosphere, especially those coming from other parts of the country. Larson also said he too hopes to have an answer by the next BOS meeting. Mulligan is hopeful the candidate will accept the offer and prompt the announcement next Thursday. "We are waiting for the individual to say yes, I'll be there." But, until confirmation is received, Larson said, "it's in their court."

Black Ice Leads to Portland Crash, Road Closure

by Claire Michalewicz

Route 17A was closed for nearly an hour on Monday morning due to dangerous black ice that caused one accident and nearly caused another.

The accident occurred around 7:20 am when Bonnie Realejo, 45, of Portland, was driving north near the fairgrounds. Her car, a Ford Expedition, skidded on the ice and struck an oncoming Volkswagen Golf, said Portland Police Officer Scott Cunningham.

Elizabeth Doran, 52, of South Glastonbury, was driving the Golf. Doran said she saw the other vehicle skid out of control and move into her lane. She said she tried to avoid an accident, but Expedition struck the front of her car.

Cunningham said Doran sustained minor injuries in the accident, and was transported to Middlesex Hospital. Her car suffered heavy damage in the crash, and was towed. Realejo's vehicle was damaged on the left side and was also towed. She did not sustain any injuries.

While police were on the scene of the accident, another car drove by and skidded on black ice. The vehicle nearly struck Doran and a police officer who was on the scene, Cunningham explained.

Because of the dangerous conditions, Route 17A was closed for nearly an hour between Route 17 and Summer Street, until trucks from the Department of Transportation could salt the road.

FOIC Recommending East Hampton Put More Info on Agendas

by Claire Michalewicz

The Connecticut Freedom of Information Commission (FOIC) has made a preliminary recommendation that the Town of East Hampton needs to provide more information on some of its meeting agendas. However, the commission will make its final decision on the matter next month.

The commission reviewed two complaints that resident Mary Ann Dostaler filed against the town last year. Dostaler alleged that the town's Water Development Task Force hadn't provided adequate information on the agenda for a meeting on May 15, 2009. She later submitted a second complaint, saying that the task force provided the same insufficient information on the agendas for two more meetings.

Dostaler said that the meeting agendas all listed an item called "Land Acquisition/Pending Litigation," but had not elaborated on where the land was and what the town intended to do with it.

In a hearing on Oct. 7 of last year, the state FOIC decided that the town had committed a violation by failing to describe the purpose of the meetings. The commission's decision was just released earlier this month.

In her complaint, Dostaler requested that the town be required to attend an FOI training ses-

sion, according to the hearing report. The hearing officer, Sherman London, decided that training was not necessary.

Town Council Chairwoman Melissa Engel said she herself had written some of the task force's agendas, and that she never doubted that they included enough information. Engel added that she had spoken to the town attorney, who verified that the agendas fulfilled FOI requirements.

"We've never been taken to task for this before," Engel said.

"We were not wrong in going into executive session, nor was it wrong to exclude addresses," Town Manager Jeffery O'Keefe said of the hearing's decision. During the hearing, town representatives said that they do not include addresses on agendas so that rival bidders don't bid on the property and drive the town's costs up.

Dostaler said that while the issue of providing addresses on agendas was discussed, the town's policy of not providing them was never formally contested. She also added that she never questioned the task force's right to have a closed executive session, but only asked that they tell the public what they were discussing.

Engel said she was disappointed that

Dostaler had taken the case to the state commission, rather than have it investigated by the town's Ethics Commission.

"There were other avenues available to her that were free," Engel explained. Engel said that defending the FOI complaint cost East Hampton taxpayers nearly \$3,000.

But Dostaler said that when she originally filed the complaint, she told town officials that she would only take her case to the state commission if they were not more forthcoming with information.

"There's a lot more that the town could and should do," Dostaler said. She added that she feels the town has an attitude that publicity fulfills FOI requirements. Simply advertising that a meeting is happening, she said, does not provide residents with adequate information about the meeting.

Engel responded that agendas are posted on the town's website, www.easthamptonct.gov, and on its Facebook page, and she doesn't know where else Dostaler would want them published.

Engel and O'Keefe both acknowledged that the Water Task Force needed to add more information to the headings on its agendas.

O'Keefe said the Task Force has already implemented these changes.

Dostaler said that she hopes the town will start providing more information, but that she's not optimistic about it.

"The real issue is a lack of professionalism," Dostaler added in an e-mail. "Residents should expect professionalism from our town council and our town manager."

"I'm so sorry she feels that way," Engel responded, "but I disagree." Engel explained that many council members were becoming frustrated by continued opposition from a few residents in town. She said that Chatham Party members, including Dostaler, tend to challenge the Town Council, even when the council agrees with them.

"We go ahead and try to do the right thing," Engel said. "We can't change East Hampton for the five people who come to meetings and complain."

"It's frustrating," she said. "You cannot win." The FOIC will hold another meeting on the matter March 24. The commission will review the case and hear oral arguments before making its final decision.

Hebron Police News

2/18: Chadley Hopp, 48, of 7 Chesbro Brdg Rd., Columbia, was charged with disobeying a signal of an officer and sixth-degree larceny, State Police said.

2/19: Mario Braga, 43, whose address was listed as P.O. Box 334, turned himself in for reckless burning, State Police said.

Salem Police News

2/16: Jonelle Quamme, 23, of 194 Virgo Dr., Groton, was charged with breach of peace, risk of injury to a minor and second-degree reckless endangerment, State Police said.

2/16: Mark Mincarelli, 25, 144 Freeman St., Hartford, was charged with breach of peace, risk of injury to a minor and second-degree reckless endangerment, State Police said.

Marlborough Police News

2/18: At about 10 p.m. Aziz Saidi, 37, of New London, lost control of his 1997 Toyota Corolla and veered off South Road near the intersection of Pond View Lane and hit a tree, State Police said. Saidi sustained cuts to his head and right arm, police said, and was transported to Hartford Hospital.

2/21: John Williams, 40, of 21 Evergreen Ave., Hartford, was charged with DUI and failure to drive in proper lane, State Police said.

Colchester Police News

2/16: Henry Stone, 52, 16 Nelkin Rd., was charged with disorderly conduct and risk of injury to a minor, State Police said.

2/17: Tabatha Black, 19, of 106 West Rd., turned herself in for two counts of failure to appear, State Police said.

2/17: Patrick Dougan, 63, of 56 Lafayette Rd., Marlborough, was charged with failure to maintain lane, DUI, State Police said.

2/17: Amanda Williams, 24, of 197 Gifford Ln., Bozrah was charged with two counts of failure to appear, State Police said.

2/19: Amy Gallager, 34, of 655 Talcottville Rd., Apt. 129, Vernon, was charged with DUI,

making an improper turn and failure to obey a control signal, State Police said.

2/19: Robert Taddia, 44, of 2078 Parker St., Springfield MA, was charged with reckless driving and DUI, State Police said.

2/21: Evan Cyr, 20, of 78 Autumn Dr., South Windsor, was charged with DUI and failure to drive in proper lane, State Police said.

2/21: At 5:15 a.m. 19-year-old Michael Hussey of Colchester veered off Parum Road and struck a tree with his 2001 Ford Explorer, State Police said. Hussey sustained minor facial injuries and was transported to Marlborough Clinic.

East Hampton Police News

2/3: Vincent A. Tedesco, 20, of 2 Summit St., was arrested pursuant to a warrant for possession of marijuana and failure to appear, East Hampton Police said.

2/9: Robert Howard, 40, of 406 Lake Vista Dr., was arrested pursuant to a warrant for driving under the influence and failure to obey a stop sign, police said.

2/12: David R. Foster, 47, of 58 Mott Hill Rd., was arrested for operating under the influence of alcohol and failure to drive right, police said.

2/12: Carl J. Cloutier, 45, of 10 Lena Ln., was issued a ticket for failure to obey control signal, police said.

2/12: A 16-year-old male juvenile was issued a ticket for possession by a minor of tobacco, police said.

2/12: David J. Lanzi, 42, of 30 West High St., was issued a ticket for failure to obey a control signal and operating an unregistered vehicle, police said.

2/13: Anthony Perreno, 39, of 10 Austin Dr., Marlborough, was arrested for improper use of high beams, failure to drive right, operating under suspension and driving under the influence, police said.

2/13: Hope L. Brodersen, 37, of 31 Creek Row Rd., East Haddam, was arrested for operating under the influence of alcohol, operating

an unregistered motor vehicle and failure to drive right, police said.

2/15: Lisa McGinley, 39, of 4 Hall Hill Rd., Portland, was issued a ticket for operating an unregistered motor vehicle and failure to carry insurance, police said.

2/15: Karen Hartley, 52, of 68 Childs Rd., was arrested for operating an unregistered motor vehicle, misuse of plates, operating without insurance and operating without a license, police said.

2/16: Abdirahim Hussen, 36, of 40 Putnam St., Hartford, and Elizabeth Shepard, 45, of 64 South Main St., were involved in a two-vehicle accident on Summit Street, one-tenth of a mile west of Bishop Hill Road, police said. Hussen was issued a ticket for traveling too fast for road conditions, police added.

2/17: Brandon Scott, 21, of 7 Aarons Way, was arrested pursuant to a warrant for disorderly conduct, third-degree assault, interfering with an emergency call, second-degree threatening and third-degree criminal mischief, police said.

2/17: Jessica Duers, 40, of 75 Tarragon Dr., was arrested pursuant to a warrant for third-degree assault, reckless endangerment, driving under the influence, illegal operation under suspension, reckless driving, and failure to grant right of way to oncoming traffic, police said.

Police Charge Local Man with Mini-Crime Spree

by Claire Michalewicz

A night of drinking led to the arrest of a local man early last Friday, Feb. 19, after, police said, he stole one vehicle, burglarized another and stole several pieces of mail.

After arresting Andrew Bonertz, 20, of 100 Colchester Ave., for mail theft, officers collected a series of clues that linked him to the other two crimes.

"Little by little we pieced things together," Sergeant Michael Green explained. "We've had strings of criminal activity before, but not one that unfolded after we already had someone in custody."

Police apprehended Bonertz around 7:10 a.m. after they received a call reporting a man stealing mail from mailboxes on Barton Hill Road. Officers Jason Wishart and Hardie Burgin arrested Bonertz for the mail theft and brought him to the police department, Green said.

While Bonertz was at the East Hampton Police Department, officers located a pickup truck on Gadpouch Road, Green said. The truck was lightly damaged and had two wheels stuck in a rut.

Green said the truck's owners were unaware that their truck was missing until police called them about it. The truck's owners live almost exactly across the street from Bonertz, and the truck had been stolen from their driveway some time during the night.

While officers were at the site where the truck was found, a resident of nearby North Cone Road called police. The resident reported that his car had been broken into. Among the items stolen was a carrying case for a laptop computer.

Green said police searched Bonertz's possessions and found the laptop case and several other items from the vehicle. Bonertz admitted to stealing them, but insisted that he

had not been involved in the theft of the pickup truck. Green said Bonertz claimed that one of his friends had stolen the truck.

The fact that the truck was stolen from Bonertz's neighbors suggested that Bonertz was involved in the theft, Green remarked.

"It doesn't take a super sleuth to figure that out," he said.

Wishart and Burgin went to the home on Colchester Avenue where the pickup truck had been stolen. In the snow on the driveway, they found a footprint that did not belong to any of the residents at that address.

The footprint did match the shoes that Bonertz was wearing.

Wishart confronted Bonertz with the evidence that he had found at the scene, including the footprint. Bonertz then admitted that he was responsible for the entire string of crimes, Green explained.

According to Green, Bonertz said that after a night of drinking, Bonertz said, he stole the truck and took it for a "joy ride." He said he wanted to return the truck, but it got stuck in the mud on Gadpouch Road. Bonertz said he started walking, and stole the laptop case from the vehicle on North Cone Road so he could carry his six-pack of beer in it.

Bonertz said he then walked to Barton Hill Road and began stealing mail. When a resident confronted him, he tried to flee, but Wishart and Burgin apprehended him.

Bonertz was charged with third-degree burglary, third-degree larceny, fifth-degree larceny, sixth-degree larceny, third-degree criminal attempt to commit identity theft, and first-degree criminal mischief, Green said.

Bonertz was held on a \$50,000 bond and was arraigned in Middletown Superior Court on Monday, Feb. 22, Green said.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

My hunger for strange-but-true news stories was fed this week by something that happened right in my own backyard. It seems two men in my hometown of Manchester were arrested by police after they hallucinated a break-in.

According to the *Journal Inquirer*, at around 12:20 a.m. Monday, Manchester Police responded to a West Center Street home after a woman there had called to report men had pursued her boyfriend, Brendan McDermott, and Pedro Ortiz to her home.

Once there, police said they found McDermott and Ortiz – who were each carrying handguns – as well as the woman, but there was no sign of anyone else having attempted to enter the home.

Here's where the story takes a turn for the bizarre.

Police said they determined McDermott and Ortiz had been at a motel on Tolland Turnpike earlier in the evening, using cocaine. Shortly before midnight, police said, the two men began hearing noises and believed they saw people outside the motel who they worried might try to break into their room and hurt them. So, McDermott and Ortiz fled the motel, armed with guns, and went back to McDermott's West Center Street home.

However, being home apparently did not ease their minds. Once they arrived, McDermott and Ortiz felt their imagined pursuers had gotten there first, police said. So, McDermott told his girlfriend to call 911 and report the two had been followed home.

McDermott and Ortiz then went around the house, police said, firing their guns at what they thought were the intruders. Police said they believed the men fired six rounds inside the home, as well as another from inside their car as they drove back from the motel.

Both of the men were charged with first-degree reckless endangerment, unlawful discharge of a firearm, carrying a firearm under the influence and second-degree breach of peace, police said.

So the two of them got high, freaked out that they'd been followed home, then began firing bullets at hallucinated intruders. I imagine officers will be using McDermott and Ortiz's story in DARE classes for quite some time.

* * *

With the Olympics wrapping up this week, NBC will be back to regular programming next week, which includes *The Tonight Show* at 11:35 p.m., once again hosted by Jay Leno. During the Olympics, NBC has apparently been running a rather lame promo for *The Tonight Show*, in which Leno is driving down the road in a race car with the number 10 pasted on it. As Leno drives, the number 10 flies off, revealing 11:35 in its place. Leno glances at the camera, then continues speeding off. All this while "Get Back" by the Beatles plays in the background.

Yawn.

I read earlier this week that NBC had briefly considered running a decidedly cooler-sounding promo, in which Victoria Principal walks to the bathroom and opens her shower door to discover Jay Leno in there. The spot would've been one of the things I love best: a parody of 1980s television.

For those of you who don't know, or who once knew but have since replaced that knowledge with something more useful, at the close of the 1984-85 TV season, Patrick Duffy decided he'd had enough of *Dallas*, and wanted to explore other options. So, his character was killed off in the final episode of the season. The trials and tribulations of J.R. Ewing and company continued along during the 1985-86 season, but something was off. Duffy's Bobby Ewing was a pretty popular character, and viewers started tuning out the once white-hot *Dallas*. (The show dropped from number two in the ratings for the '84-'85 season to number six for '85-'86.)

The producers, as well as J.R. Ewing himself, Larry Hagman, made a personal plea to Duffy (and I'm sure offered him a nice raise too) to come back to the show, and so he did. Only thing is, well, his character died. On camera. That's a tricky thing to get around.

So the writers came up with a solution: To make it all a dream. Yes, the entire season that Bobby wasn't there turned out to be one big, elaborate dream by Principal's Pam Ewing character.

Critics at the time panned the move – and yes, it was a little silly – but really, what choice did the show have? The only other course of action would be the "long lost twin" route, and I don't think anybody really wanted that. Even in the mid-'80s, that had to have been getting to be a tired soap opera convention. If the show wanted to bring Bobby back and restore some of its ratings glory (and keep in mind, the highest-rated entertainment show in the history of television was at one time an episode of *Dallas* – the conclusion of the "Who Shot J.R." two-parter), I think this was kind of the only option.

The gambit didn't really work that well. The viewer erosion at least slowed a little bit during that first season Bobby was back, but overall the ratings continued to fall. The show managed to last until 1991, although it never again achieved the ratings it had enjoyed before Bobby "died."

It would've been neat to see NBC and Leno give that little wink to TV past. Yes, the sequence has been parodied before. And yes, there's a fair chance people in their 20s and younger might not get the joke, but that's not the demographic that watched Leno anyway. It still would've been a more interesting spot than watching Jay Leno drive a car.

* * *

See you next week.

Obituaries

East Hampton

Barbara Rittman

Barbara “Bobbie” (Kidd) Rittman died peacefully Monday, Feb. 22, at Middlesex Hospital Hospice. She was the daughter of the late Gladys (Rockwell) Kidd and Charles Kidd.

Bobbie was born in Hartford on June 14, 1927 and lived all her adult life in East Hampton.

She was predeceased by her beloved husband, William J. Rittman Jr.; and four brothers, Donald “Red” Rockwell, Charles Kidd, Laurence Kidd, and Joseph S. “Sam” Kidd.

She leaves a son, William J. Rittman III and daughter-in-law Marie of Lynnfield, MA; a daughter, Lori Rittman Clark and son-in-law Thomas of Windsor; a brother, Kenneth Kidd and sister-in-law Mary of Middletown; a brother, George Kidd and sister-in-law Phyllis of West Haven; and a sister, Shirley Staples of Middletown.

Bobbie also leaves five sisters-in-law, Jeanne Rockwell of Higganum, wife of Donald; Mary Kidd of Haddam, wife of Laurence; Virginia (Rittman) Sciarini of Roy, UT; Claire (Rittman) Lavine of Shalimar, FL; and Jean Rittman of East Hampton. In addition, Bobbie leaves many nieces, nephews, cousins and dear friends.

Bobbie was an extraordinary person who loved her home and family. She will be deeply missed.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, Feb. 27 at 10 a.m. in the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, with the Rev. Dr. Randall Balmer of Christ Episcopal Church in Middle Haddam officiating. Burial will follow in the family plot in Lakeview Cemetery in East Hampton.

Friends may call at the Spencer Funeral Home today, Friday, Feb. 26, from 4-8 p.m.

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

Andover

Clara Savage Ursin

Clara Savage Ursin died Sunday, Feb. 21, at Marlborough Health Care Center, where she had graciously made a new home for herself the last five months. Previously, she was a lifelong resident of Andover. She was born Sept. 12, 1922, in Willimantic, daughter of Arthur W. and Hedwig B. Savage.

She was predeceased by her husband, Stephen J. Ursin, a son, Brian Ursin, and two grandsons, Peter Duprey and Benjamin Ursin.

She leaves four children, David Ursin and his wife, Fran, of Street, MD, Carol Romero and her significant other, Gary Silverman of Glastonbury, Nancy Small of Palm Coast, FL, and Bruce Ursin and his wife Claudia of Ashford; and deeply adored eight grandchildren, four great-grandchildren and several nieces and nephews. She also leaves her sister, Wilma Grenon and her husband, Robert of Palm Coast, FL and her brother, Clarence Savage and his wife Donna of Tamarac, FL.

Clara was a loving, dedicated stay-at-home mother, and referred to her five children as “the five fruits of my life.” Clara lived with the love of the Lord and her very loving family. Her other dedication and love was the First Congregational Church of Andover, where she was a lifelong member, serving on its many boards. She served as president of the Women’s Fellowship, deaconess, and mentor to youth joining the church. In 2007 Clara was given special recognition by Church Women United as a Valiant Woman. A very rewarding and joyful experience for her was her service with the Eastern District Women’s Fellowship, State Fellowship and Church Women United.

She served in leadership roles in the Andover Mother’s Club, 4-H Groups, P.T.A. and had been employed by the Andover School System as head cook and then as teacher aide for seven years. She felt great pride when studying psychology at Manchester Community College in the 1990s. Clara’s other passions included Josh Groban, Boston Red Sox, UConn Women’s Basketball and wearing purple and a Red Hat! She was loved by all and will be missed very much.

Her family will receive relatives and friends at Potter Funeral Home, 456 Jackson St., Rte. 195, Willimantic, today, Friday, Feb. 26, from 4-7 p.m. Her funeral service will be held Saturday, Feb. 27, at 11 a.m., at Andover Congregational Church, Route 6, Andover. Interment will follow in Townsend Cemetery, Andover.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions are suggested to the Andover Volunteer Fire Dept., 11 School Rd., Andover, CT 06232.

Visit www.potterfuneralhome.com for directions to the funeral home and online memorial guest book.

Andover

George H. Griffing

George H. Griffing passed away peacefully on Monday, Feb. 22, at the age of 94, after a short illness. He was the husband of Barbara Cartwright Griffing; they had been married for 25 years.

George was born in Stafford Springs, son of the late Joseph and Lillian (Mack) Griffing. He resided for many years in Hebron and Andover, where he was the owner of George H. Griffing, Inc. He retired in 1994 when he moved permanently to Providence, RI.

George had been an active member of several Masonic bodies in both Rhode Island and Connecticut for over 60 years. He served as High Priest of Royal Arch Mason chapters in both states.

Besides his wife, he leaves his daughter, Cheryl Griffing of Pico Rivera, CA; his step-daughter, Kimberly Allen of Providence; and two grandchildren.

He was predeceased by his brother, Joseph; and his sister, Lillian Shensie.

Friends called at the Monahan Drabble Sherman Funeral Home, 230 Waterman St., Providence, RI. Thursday, Feb. 25. Funeral services will be held today, Friday, Feb. 26, at 1 p.m., in Swan Point’s Redwood Chapel. Burial will be in Swan Point Cemetery.

Condolences may be left at [monahan drabblesherman.com](http://monahandrabblesherman.com).

Portland

William Browning Frisbie

William Browning Frisbie, 85, of Portland, died Thursday, Feb. 18, at the Middlesex Hospital Hospice Unit. He was the son of Dr. Otto Frisbie and Louise Deckleman Frisbie.

He attended Brooklyn, NY, schools and obtained his engineering degree from Northeastern University. After his retirement from Northeast Utilities Quality Engineering section, he and his wife enjoyed traveling extensively in Europe and Asia. For the last 25 years, he was active in the Portland Historical Society and assisted in the creation of the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History. He also was active in the Portland Friends of the Library.

He is survived by his wife of 62 years, Phyllis Bristol Frisbie, and daughters Lisbeth Frisbie Wallace, Frankestown, NH and Claire Frisbie, Portland, and their families.

Services were private.

Donations in his memory may be made to Portland Historical Society, PO Box 98, Portland, CT 06480.

Marlborough

Edward Daniel West

Edward Daniel West, 55, of Marlborough, died Wednesday, Feb. 17 at Middlesex Hospital. Born June 16, 1954 in Columbus, OH, he was the son of Richard C. and Edna B. West.

Edward received his bachelor’s degree in engineering in 1976 from the University of Cincinnati and was employed by Pratt & Whitney Aircraft from 1976 until 2009, where he worked as a military accident investigator.

Besides his parents he is survived by his daughter, Danielle R. West of Marlborough; a brother, Charles T. West and his wife Patricia; niece, Elizabeth Churby and her husband Brad; nephew, Phillip West and his wife Hillary; nephew, Zachary West and his wife Kristen; and great-nieces Emma Churby and Charlotte West, and great-nephew Gunnar West; all of Dayton, OH. He also leaves many close friends.

He was predeceased by his brother Richard West.

Ed enjoyed golfing, hiking and softball. He loved to travel on business and for pleasure, especially to Italy.

A funeral liturgy was celebrated Saturday, Feb. 20, at St. Patrick Church in East Hampton. Burial was private.

The Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, provided arrangements.

East Hampton

Thomas W. Otto

Thomas W. Otto, 57, of Middle Haddam, passed away at Middlesex Hospice on Sunday, Feb. 14, after a valiant battle with cancer. He was the beloved husband of Bonnie Weaver Otto and “Daddy” to his faithful canine companion Sachi Koto.

Tom was self-employed. He was respected and admired by all companies he represented in the organics and horticultural industry. He particularly loved traveling to Germany for business and pleasure. Tom served proudly in the Air Force Reserves and was a third degree member of the Glastonbury Council Knights of Columbus.

Besides his wife he is survived by his mother, Blanche G. Otto; a loving and devoted sister, Susan O. Stannard and her husband Bruce of East Hartford, sister Joan Boone of Houston, TX; a brother, Donald Otto of Maine; a special sister-in-law and friend, Nancy A. Donahue; nieces Samantha Stannard; and goddaughter, Lisa D. Comi and her husband Giovanni; nephews Nicholas “Little Tommy” and Joseph Comi; also his godson, John Roy. Tom also leaves his devoted friend and “brother,” Carl McLean and his wife Donna.

He was predeceased by his father, Carl W. Otto.

The family wishes to thank the physicians and staff of Branford Internal Medicine, Medical Oncology and Hematology of New Haven, Dr. Frank Cardinale and staff, Middlesex Hospice, also Mary Maloy, Tim O’Connor and Linda Hodgkins.

A private military funeral will be held. There will be no calling hours. Memorial donations may be made to the Connecticut Humane Society, 701 Russell Rd., Newington, CT 06111.

The Spencer Funeral Home has care of the arrangements.

Colchester

Karen Sue Abrams

Karen Sue (Gitlitz) Abrams, 52, passed away on Monday, Feb. 22, after a long, courageous battle with cancer. Her loving family was by her side.

On Aug. 14, 1988, she was married to her beloved husband of 21 years, Jeffrey Abrams.

Besides her husband she is survived by her two devoted sons, Matthew and Adam of Glastonbury. She also leaves to mourn her, her loving parents, Sidney and Edith Gitlitz of Colchester; her two loving sisters and two brothers-in-law, Marcy and Peter Hutchinson of Colchester, and Maureen and Michael Reid of Seymour; and her five nieces and nephews. She also leaves behind her constant companion and loyal friend, her dog, Bernie.

Karen devoted her time to teaching children with special needs. Her warm smile, sense of humor, and personality made her unforgettable to everyone who knew her, including her family, her friends, her co-workers in the Bloomfield public school system and all of her exceptional students whose lives she touched and who touched her life. Graveside services were held at Ahavath Achim Cemetery, Taintor Hill Road, Colchester, Wednesday, Feb. 24.

Contributions can be made to the Special Olympics.

Arrangements were entrusted to Weinstein Mortuary, Hartford. To sign the guestbook for Karen, visit www.weinsteinmortuary.com.

Colchester

Marjorie Elizabeth Tanner

Marjorie Elizabeth (Fiander) Tanner, 93, of Coos Bay, OR, formerly of Colchester passed away Feb. 19 in Coquille, OR. Marge was born on Dec. 26, 1916, in East Port, ME, to John E. Fiander and Frances H. (Flaherty) Fiander.

Marge is survived by her son Rich Tanner and his wife Kathleen of Colchester; Grandchildren Michelina Tanner-Wilcox and Shawn Tanner; great-grandchildren Emma and Charlotte Wilcox; and her close friends Karen Dixon of Albany, OR and Mary Abryzzese of Coos Bay. Marge was preceded in death by her parents; her first husband Linheart Kelly and her second husband Ben Tanner. At her request, no public services will be held for Marge.

Cremation rites will take place at Ocean View Memory Gardens Crematorium in Coos Bay, OR. A ceremonial scattering of her ashes will take place at the Sunset Memorial Park Cemetery Ossuary in Coos Bay.

Memorial contributions may be made in her name to the American Lung Association, 7420 SW Bridgeport Road, Tualatin, OR 97224.

Arrangements are under the direction of Coos Bay Chapel, 541-267-3131.

