



RIVEREAST

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The McNamaras and McCormacks are shown here enjoying the company of one another and the opportunity for fellowship at one of the Church of the Holy Family's "Fish Fry-Days." The Hebron church is holding the dinners each week to help raise money for a new elevator.

Raising Lift Funds Through Fish Fries

by Lindsay Fetzner

The Church of the Holy Family in Hebron hopes this Lenten season, their "Fish Fry-Days" will give them a boost in the right direction. All of the proceeds from the six Friday dinners held over the course of February and March will benefit the church's elevator fund.

When the church was built in 1994, Father Michael Smith said money was put aside unofficially for the elevator, but no real efforts were made until this past year. Prominent parishioner Harry Armstrong passed away on Nov. 27, 2009. In his obituary, it stated that donations could be made to the Church of the Holy Family Elevator Fund in his honor. His wife Estelle, an Amston resident, felt this was "absolutely perfect," given her husband's efforts and considerable amount of time spent dedicated to the project over the years.

Estelle said Armstrong wanted to make sure that what the committee was requesting would be the right choice and meet the needs of the church. When Armstrong learned the church did not have the appropriate funds to support the elevator, Estelle said "it was like spinning

wheels in mud." Despite this, Armstrong never gave up hope that one day the church would have been able to install the elevator.

Armstrong's daughter, Maureen Zaslowsky, a Manchester resident, said her father was "very dedicated" to the church. She remembers his involvement in the committee, which looked into the feasibility of installing the elevator and researched the costs associated with the project.

"It was part of his vision," Zaslowsky said, "and something he wanted to have done." Smith referred to Armstrong as an "unsung hero behind the scenes" in the church, who contributed a significant amount of time on a regular basis to the parish.

Estelle said her late husband was "loved and respected by his fellow parishioners." "It really translated into what he did in the church," she said. When Armstrong found out that the church was going to host the fish dinners this Lenten season and the funds would go to the elevator, Estelle said he "just about jumped out of his skin."

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Colchester Residents Push for Retaining Services

by Katy Nally

The big question raised at Wednesday's forum on the proposed Colchester town budget was how can the town "balance" a budget that some said was already stripped down to "bare bones."

First Selectman Gregg Schuster has proposed a \$13.77 million operations budget for the town, which is an increase of 3.18 percent or about \$425,000. (Schuster's presentation did not include the \$36.48 million proposed 2010-11 Board of Education budget, which is voted on at a separate referendum.)

According to Board of Finance (BOF) Chair Bruce Hayn, taxpayers would see a 2.21, or 9.34 percent, increase in the mill rate, if this budget were adopted as is.

So if the market value of a house was \$320,000 (assessed at \$224,000) there would be a yearly increase of about \$500. If the house's market value was \$400,000 (assessed at \$315,000) the yearly increase would be about \$700, under the proposed mill increase.

The proposal includes cutting one resident state trooper, the public health coordinator and a highway maintainer position; reducing a Parks and Recreation Department maintenance worker to a seasonal employee and making two full-time library positions part-time. However, only one library employee would feel the effects of this reduction because one full-time position is already vacant. Schuster said the resident state trooper is not technically a town employee, though Colchester pays for 70 percent of the cost and the state picks up the rest.

The budget also allocates about \$20,000 for an economic development coordinator, as well as a substantial increase in road improvements,

health insurance and vehicle maintenance.

Schuster said he has already begun to negotiate or renegotiate contracts with local unions. He said of the five in town, two have committed to no wage increases, the police have agreed to a furlough program, one is still in a discussion phase and Schuster said he hopes to address the fifth contract soon.

Despite the overall tax increase, Hayn asked the approximately 40 people at the forum Wednesday who would support a 3-5 percent tax increase to retain town services. An overwhelming majority of hands went up and only a few voted against.

Many residents who attended the forum at Cragin Memorial Library advocated for the town's services including police, emergency, health and youth services and the library.

Tom St. Louis, a member of the Youth Services Advisory Board, thanked Schuster for not making cuts across the board, but then asked him why funding in human services saw a decrease. "You're trimming fat from where it doesn't exist," St. Louis said.

Schuster said the change was due to the elimination of the public health coordinator, and added, "anything program-related" was left "untouched."

He explained he had a "hierarchy" for services the town needed and, at the top of the list, was public safety and emergency services and second was road improvements. The first selectman said it was important to spend money on the roads now, as they could cost much more in the future.

Between public safety and public works, the latter increased more, showing a \$231,000, or

10.68 percent, increase over the projection for spending in the 2009-10 year.

Schuster said there is a master list at Town Hall that shows each road improvement scheduled in order or priority.

Even with the \$90,000 savings from eliminating one of two resident state troopers, public safety increased about \$25,000, or 1.23 percent, when compared to the projected spending of this year.

Some residents questioned whether just the one resident state trooper left was even needed, because the State Police barracks are in town and Colchester has its own police force.

Schuster said it's important to keep at least one resident state trooper because if a municipality does not have an independent police force it must have a resident trooper supervisor. He said it would be too costly for Colchester's police to become independent because a new infrastructure would have to be created.

Police Commission Chairman Glenn Morron explained the Colchester Police currently use the resident trooper barracks for recordkeeping, dispatches and interviews.

Of the \$13.77 million town budget, about \$426,000 was proposed for human services. This is about a \$10,000, or 2.36 percent decrease, in spending when compared to the 2009-10 projection.

"It's apparent in your budget that human services are last on your priority list," St. Louis said. He asked Schuster for a commitment to not trim "what's already so lean." "I really want to feel like you're making a – and we as a town need to feel like – we're making a commitment to human services," St. Louis said.

Two girls, who said they use and enjoy the youth center, sided with St. Louis. The two said their lives and friendships would be much more different if they had never participated in the center's activities. "Youth Services changes a lot of teens' lives," one girl said. The other girl said she had recently left a private school and was now attending schools in the Colchester public district. "Without Youth Services, I don't know if I'd know many people, I don't know if I'd know any people at all," she said.

St. Louis said just hearing how the center had made an impact on the lives of these two girls would be enough for him to vote in favor of a tax increase that would retain services. "You can't put a price on that," he added.

Schuster said it was ultimately up to the community to decide what would stay in the budget and what would be cut. He said his own vision for an economic coordinator might not make it through the budget votes. "In this budget season everything is on the table," he said.

Some residents asked why a new big-box development was approved when there are already vacant stores in town. Schuster said anytime the town "improves a property" the town will see a benefit. That is, even if no tenants come in, the town will still see some property revenue.

Schuster went on to say the Keystone Shoppes, located on Linwood Avenue, would be filled, adding that the town would never stop development at the chance of an empty store front. At that shopping plaza, the prospective tenants and landlords have to come to an agreement before they can come in. Schuster said an

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“It made us feel so good that what he was trying to accomplish would eventually become a reality,” she said. Estelle added that she believes her late husband is watching over and “if he were alive, would be doing this [fish fry] together.”

Discussions on the project have been going on for about a year and finally, the project has been resurrected, Thompson said. Although efforts were made before Armstrong’s death, the donations have “contributed a significant amount of money.” Even though the church got this “healthy start” with the donations, the church has a goal of collecting \$55,000 to “make this dream a reality,” according to Melissa Rath, another organizer for the fish dinner, in addition to Thompson.

Although the church already has the elevator shaft on the premises, the cost for the elevator will be at least \$80,000, Smith said. Tom Loto, chair of the Parish Planning Committee, said the elevator could cost upward of \$100,000 depending on the amount of labor and services that are donated. Thompson said although there are many needs within the church, it became obvious that an elevator was needed for better access from the church to the hall downstairs.

For elderly parishioners and those in need that are unable to use the stairs, in order to get to the lower level of the church, they have to walk outside and go around the church building, where they can enter at the lower level. Loto agreed with Thompson and said the elevator would definitely be a welcomed addition.

Efforts for the elevator are just one of the projects the church has recently been working on. Within the last year, improvements were made to the handicap parking spaces at the church. The parking spaces were originally located on the side of the church, on a hill, which was not feasible for handicap parishioners and visitors. The spaces were moved to the front of the church and a ramp was installed, Loto said, which made the church more handicap-accessible.

The fish dinners are currently the only source of funds for the project. Smith said the time frame is still up in the air and in the works of being determined. Thompson said she wants to make parishioners aware that the church has the opportunity to pull together and make the elevator a reality. They are currently working on other ways they could raise money for the fund after the Lenten season comes to a close. Eventually, down the road, Smith said the project would have to be approved by the town of Hebron. Loto said the church would have to obtain a permit through the town building department.

Rath said the dinner has been a great event for both the community in general and the parish as well. “The elevator seemed to be something that was continuously coming up,” she said. “It was in the back of people’s minds.” For the older parishioners, Rath said it will be a welcomed convenience but nonetheless would please a lot of people in general. The fish dinners are shedding a spotlight on the fund, she said, which is informing parishioners about it who might not have known previously. Rath said there has been a good amount of search projects put on the table in the past at the church, but the elevator fund now is drawing more and more attention.

Rath said the Church of the Holy Family is one of the most active and thriving churches in

the area. “We have a very unique environment,” she said. “It’s a special place.”

Rath described the community as family-like, and is fortunate that during these difficult times, the parishioners have continued to donate and take part in events such as the fish dinner. “We have been more fortunate than most places,” she said.

Jane Golino, a member of the Parish Council, agreed with Rath and said that one of the best things about the fish dinner is that it is an invitation for all members of the community to take part, not just the church parishioners. “There is something about getting together and gathering around a table,” she said. But it is about more than just the food, Golino noted, “It’s about nourishing each other.”

The dinner last Friday, March 5, was attended by almost 200 people, Rath said. “Every week, there has been a substantial increase,” she said. Although the first two dinners took place during school vacation and inclement weather, there was still a good turnout.

Golino was present at the dinner on Feb. 26, when snow ravaged the state. “Even in the snow,” she said, “people came out.” Rath said the community has “really caught on” and between word of mouth and better weather, the fish dinners have been a huge success overall. “I had no idea my quiet husband would make this much noise,” Armstrong said, cheerfully. In addition, Smith said the dinners provide an opportunity for “an evening we can have fellowship.”

Rath said each Friday, fresh fish is delivered from City Fish Market in Wethersfield. “We did our homework and tried to make this a good quality.” Dinner includes fresh fried or baked fish, or a combination of the two. Each meal comes with deep-fried French fries, homemade coleslaw and a different dessert each week.

Kid’s meals are also offered for the younger crowd. Options include macaroni and cheese with French fries or a fish/macaroni and cheese/French fries combination. For those wanting to take dinners to go, they are also available in person at the church. Rath said the dinners provide “a pretty healthy portion.”

Golino credited both organizers of the fish dinner, Rath and Thompson, for their continued efforts and hard work in putting together the dinner each Friday. “I am happy to see it’s been so successful,” she said. Rath agreed with Golino. “We have had so much fun and had so many terrific volunteers.”

These volunteers that come out and help each week are the direct source of the success of the fish dinner. Rath said, “The function is only as good as your volunteers.” Armstrong too, is pleased with how the dinners have gone and the commitment of both Rath and Thompson. “These women have just done such a wonderful job with this,” she said.

Last month, two fish dinners were held, on Feb. 19 and 26. One has already been held in March, which took place last Friday. Future fish dinners during the remainder of March will be tonight, March 12, as well as on the 19th and 26th. Dinners take place in the church hall, located at 185 Church St., between 4:30 and 7 p.m. Prices for dinner are \$12 for adults and \$4-5 for children under 10, depending on their selection.

Any further questions regarding the fish dinner can be directed to the church at 860-228-0096.

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economic development coordinator would facilitate this agreement.

Other questions were raised about Cragin. Schuster said Library Director Kate Byroade presented a budget that decreased by 4 percent and still included a technology overhaul and a retention of services. “She deserves a lot of credit for that,” Schuster said.

Even with the overall decrease, Byroade was able to increase the amount allocated for library materials. Currently, she said, no tax dollars are being spent on children’s books in town. The school board decided to place a moratorium on books for the 2009-10 year, and spending has been frozen at the library since December 2009. Before that, Cragin’s budget was frozen from March-September 2009. As a result of the freeze, the library spent \$39,000 instead of the \$45,000 that was budgeted.

Byroade said Colchester spent \$2.90 per capita on library materials for 2009, while East Hampton spent \$6.19 per capita. She said Cragin does not have the bestsellers, or most current books because of this lack of funds.

St. Louis said, although he is in a book club, he rarely uses Cragin to check out the books up for discussion, because they are not available there.

One woman, who does use Cragin, said “the service is wonderful.” She said she didn’t want to see “essential services” cut at the expense of raising taxes. “If you have to raise taxes, then

your have to raise taxes,” she said.

But resident Fred Baldauf said a proposed tax hike of this size is not a welcome option. Instead he said cuts should be made across the board. “You gotta get down to bare bones,” he said.

However, according to some board members, the town has been at bare bones for some time. A former BOF member said the town has begun to cut “bodies.” He said the budget decision will come down to “big-ticket items,” which he said are increasing class size and public safety. As a town, residents have to decide between services, or to “swallow a big tax increase,” he said.

Baldauf agreed that it was time for “some hard decisions,” but made the point that there are already “citizens in town who can’t pay the current taxes.”

Hayn summed up, “It’s about balance. The balance of what we all want to have ... and how much can we all accept.”

Residents with more budget questions can submit comments through the Colchester town website www.colchesterct.gov. People are also encouraged to fill out a budget survey that is also available online.

“This survey, along with the various budget workshops, forums, and meetings gives everyone a voice in the development of next year’s budget,” Schuster said in a press release.

Portland Selectmen, School Board Members Discuss Budgets

by Claire Michalewicz

The boards of selectmen and education opened their budgets up to public questions and comments in a lightly-attended hearing at Portland High School on Tuesday evening.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield and Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen gave brief presentations of their budgets and answered questions. About 20 residents came to watch the presentation, though only a few spoke.

The proposed town budget comes in at \$29.81 million, a 3.46 percent increase from the current fiscal year. The package includes a proposed \$18.22 million Board of Education budget, a 2.97 percent increase from current year spending.

If the town budget is approved in its current form at the referendum in May, the mill rate will increase by .79, or 2.93 percent.

Bransfield outlined some of the town's major accomplishments in the past fiscal year and their plans for the next. The town received funding to put in a new traffic light at Payne Boulevard, and to purchase new computers, guns and night vision goggles for the police department. Later this year, the town will replace the High Street water main and proceed with the Portland Town Place project.

Bransfield and Doyen both explained that their goals were to maintain services without making any cuts. Neither the town nor the school board is adding any new programs.

"Our major goal is to maintain staffing and programming," Doyen said. She explained that the schools would see a staff reduction of 3.5

people, due to retirements and one teacher who will move to another position within the school system.

Resident Stephanie Tetro asked Doyen if there were any plans to close Brownstone School and move those grades to other buildings. Doyen responded that the BOE was still unsure, but they hadn't ruled out the possibility.

Tetro also expressed her concern about Portland's lack of all-day kindergarten, saying that it was one of the few towns in the state that didn't offer it.

Doyen said that she would like to have all-day kindergarten, but because of financial constraints it was unlikely to happen within the next few years. Lengthening the kindergarten program would require at least three new certified staff members, which the district could not afford to do. For students who needed extra time, Doyen explained, the school would continue to offer individual help before or after school.

Tetro also questioned the increase in spending on public safety over the past few years. Bransfield explained that public safety was one of the town's biggest priorities, and the police force had hired an additional officer.

The town is holding a series of budget workshops on March 16, 17, 23 and 24, all at 7 p.m., at Portland Library. The Board of Selectmen will adopt a budget at its April 7 meeting. A second public hearing will be held at the high school on May 3, a week before the referendum.

Women's Wallet Stolen at Portland Church

by Claire Michalewicz

An 80-year-old woman's wallet was stolen while she received communion at church Sunday, March 7, according to Portland Police, who said they are still trying to identify the suspect.

The woman was attending Mass at St. Mary's Church. She put her purse on the floor between her and an unidentified white male who was sitting beside her, said Officer David Bond.

The woman told police she got up to receive communion, and when she came back the man sitting next to her was gone, Bond said. She told police she realized her wallet was missing a few minutes later, when she reached into her purse for money for the collection plate, Bond said.

Police suspect that the man sitting next to her stole the wallet.

The woman's credit card was later used at a Walgreens in New Britain and at a car wash in East Hampton, Bond said. The suspect was seen at the car wash with a woman who may also be involved in the theft, Bond said.

Bond said he was shocked by the crime,



Above is a surveillance photo of an unidentified woman thought to be involved in a theft.

and had never seen anything like this happen in a church.

"I thought there were some kind of limits and boundaries when it comes to this kind of stuff, but apparently not," he said.

Portland Police are hoping someone in town can identify the suspect. Anyone with any information is urged to call them at 860-342-6780.

Colchester School Board Passes \$36.481 Million Budget

by Katy Nally

Board of Education (BOE) members approved a \$36.481 million budget at Tuesday's meeting by a vote of 6-1.

BOE member Betsy Ciccone voted nay, and said throughout the meeting she could not support a reduction in the enrichment program.

The budget passed Tuesday represents a 4.749 percent increase over last year's BOE budget, which was \$34.83 million. Superintendent of Schools Karen Loiselle originally presented the 2010-11 budget of \$36.482 million, or a 4.752 percent increase, but after BOE deliberations, \$1,031 was cut out.

In the original proposal the enrichment program was to be cut from 2 full-time equivalents (FTE) to 0.5 FTE, and included eliminating the enrichment teacher. BOE members voted Tuesday to reinstate the teaching position and split the time between Jack Jackter Intermediate School (JJIS) and William J. Johnston Middle School (WJMS). This change brought the enrichment program up to one FTE.

The second reinstatement was the position of a part-time band teacher at Bacon Academy. Collectively 1.2 FTE was originally slated to be cut from music district-wide. The budget that

passed Tuesday cuts 0.7 FTE from music, including instrumental music.

These two reinstatements cost about \$57,000 and Loiselle found about \$58,000 to cut, creating a net decrease of about \$1,000.

Originally, 17 positions in the school district would be affected, including: the elimination of eight teachers and two paraprofessionals and the reduction of seven teachers, equating to a total of 12.35 FTE. With the two changes approved Tuesday, staff reductions decrease to 11.35 FTE.

Loiselle's preliminary budget projected an 8.82 percent increase over this year's, but after reducing staff, capital improvement plans and technology, and not instituting new programs, the superintendent cut \$1.4 million.

The 2010-11 budget faced several challenges including 60 students who are not included in this year's budget, which equals about \$643,000. Last year there was also a \$315,000 one-time stimulus grant and contractual concessions totaled about \$232,000.

Much of the discussion Tuesday night centered on the enrichment program. Some board members called the 1 FTE program "viable,"

but others considered it "on life support" if there were only 1 FTE handling the program.

"I'm not looking to have a viable program," Ciccone said. "I'm looking to have an excellent program."

The enrichment program would still include pulling out students at JJIS. But at WJMS, the enrichment professional would work with teachers on practicing differentiation and other techniques, and there would be no pull-out.

Several board members said this was a fair compromise because teachers would still receive the resources needed to instruct enrichment students. "At least we are offering something to these students," BOE member Mike Egan said.

But Ciccone said it was wrong to take from a program that already only has 2 FTE. "It's way too small to be taken from," she said. "We have to support it completely as we do the other programs."

Ciccone suggested taking from larger programs that are not state mandated or where Colchester schools exceed the state requirement. Essentially where there is "wiggle room,"

she said, noting all cuts are difficult to make.

BOE member Tim Lamp sided with Ciccone, saying "every child is entitled to an appropriate education," including students who fall in the enrichment category. He added that the enrichment portion is only a fraction of 1 percent of the overall BOE budget.

However, Egan stressed the budget had to reflect the "entire school district." He said there are many kids in the middle of the bell curve who are just "struggling to get by."

From a broader perspective, Lamp made the point that the U.S. is behind in education worldwide because the system ignores "the needs of the brightest students."

In the end, BOE Chair Ron Goldstein said he wanted at least a "united" vote, but would love a "unanimous" one. "Once the vote is taken, I would hope we're all united behind it," he said.

The BOE budget will be presented to the Board of Finance on Monday, March 15, at Bacon Academy. The finance board will make its recommendation about a week later.

Andover BOE Talks About Maintenance Issues

by Lindsay Fetzner

Maintenance projects said to be necessary for Andover Elementary School sparked discussion at Wednesday night's Board of Education (BOE) meeting.

Among the projects slated for the future are additional security cameras, the sealing and painting of the basketball court, repairing parking lot lighting and improvements to the gymnasium roof.

Superintendent of Schools Andrew Maneggia said three additional security cameras are needed for the interior of the elementary school. The recommendation, from the state trooper, was made because currently there are no cameras inside the school, only outside the building.

"If a problem were to occur inside, the camera system doesn't do us any good at all," Maneggia said. "Hopefully we will never need them, but if we do, they will be there." The cost for the three cameras is \$2,985.

Sealing and painting the basketball court, recommended by Maneggia, will cost the elementary school \$1,750. Maneggia said if the sealing and painting does not occur soon, the court pavement runs the risk of breaking up. If this were to occur, Maneggia said the school would face the cost of resurfacing the whole court. "This is something that should really be done," he said.

Replacing parking lot lighting is another necessary fix the school needs. At a cost of \$2,100, Maneggia said the rate is high because an electrician has to hire a lift to get into the lighting fixtures. "To put a ladder up there is an accident waiting to happen," Maneggia said.

The final maintenance project is the gymnasium roof. Maneggia said that on Feb. 24, after a rain/snow storm, water built up on the roof,

putting pressure on the membrane of an expansion joint, located directly over the edge of the stage. A slight leak occurred about a month prior, but it didn't warrant repair, Maneggia said. The elementary school moves due to the colder and warmer temperatures and as a result, cracks opened. A bid from Norconn Services Co., Inc., came in at \$3,364 to fix the expansion joint and coat it with aluminum coating when the repair was completed.

Maneggia said it was important to note that the company provided a guarantee that the expansion joint would not leak once the recommended work was completed. If a leak were to occur, Norconn would fix the roof leak at no charge to the town. "They are giving us what I believe to be a good price," Maneggia said, and felt the quotations provided were reasonable.

All of these maintenance projects for the elementary school will be phased in during the 2010-11 year, based upon the budget, Maneggia said. "We won't overspend the budget - I know that's not going to happen," Maneggia said at this point, there are sufficient funds in the maintenance fund. The BOE made a motion to appropriate funds for the projects at the meeting, which passed.

Maneggia informed the board that three vendors have been interviewed to implement a parent-student-staff notification system. Administration recommended the school go with School Messenger over the other two companies, Edu-Link and School Cast.

"We've been looking at a notification system for about four years," Maneggia said.

Out of the three companies, Maneggia said, School Messenger was "much more professional, a better organization, had a better cost and greater messaging capabilities." The noti-

fication system would inform parents and staff if school was cancelled, an early dismissal was called or there was a delayed opening.

Maneggia said if the calls were made manually, it would take several people and the better part of the morning. With the school notification system, "the service does it in five minutes," he said. "The technology is really amazing and I am asking for the board's approval." The cost for the system is \$170.62 from April to the end of the current fiscal year in June, and \$682.50 for July 2010 to June 2011, for a total of \$853.12.

Maneggia said School Messenger also services the Capital Region Education Council (CREC). CREC has negotiated a fixed price with its school districts - which includes Andover - which has resulted in training and set-up for the system coming at no cost to the town, Maneggia said. He stressed that the system can be used to send messages to staff and parents that are not just weather-related.

BOE member Kimberly Hawes agreed with Maneggia and said it "sounds like a great deal." "It makes so much sense," BOE Chair Jay Linddy said. "You can put anything you want on it and send it out - this is something we need."

Also discussed at Wednesday's meeting was Andover's ranking in the March edition of *Connecticut Magazine*. In that issue, small towns were rated on the basis of education, crime, economy, the cost of living, culture and leisure. Andover fell into the list of towns with populations below 3,500. Overall, it ranked seventh out of a total of 27 towns. Andover was ranked third for education, seventh for crime, number 12 for cost and 16th for leisure. Andover fell toward the bottom of the list for economy,

ranked number 20, due to its lack of businesses and development.

"From a school perspective, the Board of Education can look at this report and feel that at least the editors at this magazine feel Andover stacks up pretty well," Maneggia said. (The town ranked number one for education was Lyme and Norfolk came in at a close second place.) According to the publication, Connecticut Mastery Test scores from 2007-09 for the fourth, sixth and seventh grades were used to compile the numbers, in addition to Connecticut Academic Performance Test scores from the same years. SAT scores from 2007-09 and the percentage of public high school graduates who went on to college in 2007 were also considered in the equation.

The topic of seatbelts on public school buses was also discussed at the meeting. Linddy said the state has been debating whether seatbelts should be put in the school buses, following a January bus crash that killed a Rocky Hill teen. The town spent time many years ago researching the effect the seatbelts would have, Linddy said. "The first concern is the safety of the children," he said.

Linddy wondered how the seatbelts would be governed and whether an adult, in addition to the driver, would have to present on the bus. "I am not concerned about the money or the time if it's about the safety of the kids," Linddy said. "It is something we will have to revisit."

Linddy suggested that a subcommittee be formed in the future to discuss the matter.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the BOE will take place Wednesday, April 14, at 7 p.m., in the library at Andover Elementary School, located at 35 School Rd.

Proposed East Hampton Budget Would Raise Taxes 4.04 Percent

by Claire Michalewicz

East Hampton's proposed budget for the 2010-11 fiscal year calls for a 2.07 percent increase in expenditures, and covering these expenses would require a .97 mill increase, or 4.04 percent, according to Town Manager Jeffery O'Keefe.

O'Keefe has recommended decreasing the Board of Education (BOE) budget from its proposed 3.88 percent increase to a 3.08 percent increase, a savings of \$200,000.

After O'Keefe's change, the proposed education budget is \$25.88 million. Including town operations, transfers between funds and debt service, the total budget is \$38.00 million.

A copy of the proposed budget is available at www.easthamptonct.org.

O'Keefe told the *Rivereast* this week he feels confident that the Board of Education (BOE) can manage with their slightly smaller than expected budget without resorting to layoffs. He said that he could not support the tax increase that would be required to fund the budget the BOE requested.

"These are difficult times right now," O'Keefe said of the global recession, adding that East Hampton's unemployment rate is around eight percent.

O'Keefe also stressed that each town has its own financial concerns, and that people shouldn't compare East Hampton's budget to those of surrounding towns.

Town employees will only receive a one percent increase in pay, which O'Keefe said is lower than that of employees in other towns.

"The town employees recognized that times are difficult," O'Keefe said, commending them for offering concessions to avoid layoffs.

O'Keefe is also proposing reducing two full-time positions in the tax and town clerk's offices at Town Hall to part-time positions, a move he says will save \$56,000 and better serve taxpayers. O'Keefe also plans to hire a new town engineer, which he said will help reduce the costs that the town currently pays to outsourced engineers.

O'Keefe also highlighted some of the projects the new budget will fund, including a new roof for Memorial School and the development of a community "master plan."

The small increase in the grand list makes funding all the town's operations without raising taxes more difficult. The grand list increased just .56 percent in 2009, its lowest increase since 1991. Finance Director Jeff Jylkka said the grand list added \$150,000 in tax revenue, but that increase was not enough to cover rising costs.

Revenues from the state are another concern. Jylkka said they've decreased by \$400,000. He and O'Keefe both anticipate that state revenues will continue to dwindle, creating problems for town budgets.

"It could actually be worse next year," Jylkka said of the budget process.

Still, Jylkka said he's confident that the town and the taxpayers can work out a budget that will work.

"I think we'll make it through," Jylkka said. "Every year has different challenges."

O'Keefe agreed.

"I really felt it was a fair compromise between what the Board of Finance and the department heads wanted," O'Keefe said. He added that he was constantly monitoring costs in all fields and looking at ways to save money.

Not everyone is satisfied with the budget. Superintendent of Schools Judith Golden said that the school board would work with the Board of Finance to try to decrease O'Keefe's proposed cuts. Golden said she was unsure how the school system would manage with the smaller-than-expected budget while trying to avoid layoffs.

The BOE will meet with the Board of Finance (BOF) for their budget workshop on Friday, March 12, at 5 p.m. A special finance board meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 23, at 7:30 p.m., at the high school auditorium, to gather input from other boards and from the public.

Colchester Revaluation, Library Consortium Plans Discussed at Meeting

by Katy Nally

Tax assessor John Chaponis announced at last Thursday's meeting of the Board of Selectmen (BOS) that his department would take the first steps toward the 2011 revaluation and begin collecting data.

Board members also awarded a \$30,000 bid for a library consortium and appointed Don Lee to first assistant chief at the Colchester Hayward Volunteer Fire Department (CHVFD).

Chaponis clarified that he will not be re-appraising properties; instead he will just be collecting data to prepare for the revaluation.

The tax assessor laid out an "aggressive" plan that aims to collect information from about 100 properties per month. Through this method, Chaponis said he hopes to trim costs from about \$300,000 to between \$150,000 and \$200,000.

The data collection would act as a head start for the outside service that would normally begin the revaluation at the end of 2010, Chaponis said.

After the assessor's presentation, selectmen heard from Library Director Kate Byroade.

At the beginning of January, Byroade told selectmen Cragin Memorial Library employees were wasting staff time due to an outdated computer system. At last Thursday's meeting she said the situation was actually worse. "I found even more inefficiencies than I thought there were," Byroade said.

Currently the computer system crashes on a monthly basis and Byroade's staff spends time getting the database back on line. Also, with the system down, employees cannot scan in new items that come in, such as magazines.

Once Cragin joins a consortium, patrons would be able to renew items online, download audio and e-books and view the catalog from home. It will also link Cragin with other neighboring libraries, so items can be shared easily.

Byroade said the library received four bids for consortia and went with Library Connection INC of Windsor at a cost of about \$30,000, which will come from the library's existing budget. Although there was a cheaper bid, Byroade said it would require more staff, which would not fit in with the library's budget. The cheaper bid, at about \$10,000, would make Cragin the biggest library in the network and require a larger staff.

The director said she began finalizing plans with Library Connection last Friday. She said First Selectman Gregg Schuster is working on drawing up a contract and plans to have the system live by September.

The bulk of the work until then will be focused on renaming the items in the current database to match those from Library Connection, Byroade said.

"We're getting very close," she said. "I think people will be pleased with the enhanced services they'll be getting through the library's website."

After selectmen approved the consortia, the board unanimously voted to appoint Lee as first assistant chief.

At the Feb. 18 BOS meeting, firefighters from CHVFD asked that their staffing policy be changed. In January, Lee won the position of first assistant chief, but could not accept the title because of a snag with the policy. Since Lee is a paid staff member at CHVFD, according to the old regulations he could not double as an appointed chief.

However, the memo of understanding between the town and the union was amended and Lee was rightfully appointed last Thursday.

The next BOS meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 18, at Town Hall.

Proposed Hebron Budget Features 3.38 Percent Spending Increase

by Lindsay Fetzner

Interim Town Manager Andy Tierney proposed a zero percent increase for the general government portion of the overall 2010-11 budget Thursday evening. A flat budget was recommended by the boards of selectmen and finance due to the economy's effect on the town, directly affecting its taxpayers.

The overall proposed 2010-11 town budget presented at the March 4 Board of Selectmen (BOS) meeting totals \$34.28 million. This is an increase of \$1.12 million or 3.38 percent over the current year's budget. The tax increase amounts to a 4.4 percent. The proposed budget would result in an increase of 1.24 mills for a total mill rate of 29.41.

Much of the increase, Tierney said, is due in part to the population shift in the RHAM budget levy. Educational expenditures are responsible for 100 percent of the proposed mill increase, Tierney said, whereas non-educational expenditures account for none of the increase.

The town management team – consisting of Tierney, Executive Assistant Donna Lanza and Town Planner Michael O'Leary – proposed a total general government budget of \$8.83 million, which is absorbed into the larger, overall town budget of \$34.28 million. Last year's general government budget came in at just \$307 more than this year's recommended budget.

Overall, Tierney said, "the town manager's recommended budget is the result of much hard work as well as the invaluable work of Interim Finance Director Elaine Griffin." He added, "We all have to deal with very hard decisions in the budget."

Tierney said after meeting with all of the department heads, they "came back with very responsible budget requests."

Out of the \$8.83 million general government budget, \$6.24 million accounts for town government and is a 1.16 percent increase, or \$71,505, over last year. A contribution to capital projects in the amount of \$626,527 was included in the budget as well as a contribution of \$100,000 for open space acquisition.

The contribution to capital projects was flat funded and there was no difference from funding during fiscal year 2009-10, due to the economy. The management team said in its presentation that the decision was difficult, but was decided upon in order to keep budget increases as minimal as possible. In the future, the team said it will be crucial to increase CIP's funding for capital projects for many unavoidable or necessary projects in the future.

There was a proposed decrease of \$30,000 in funding for open space acquisition, a change of 23.08 percent. For debt service, the budget calls for a total of \$1.9 million, which is a decrease of \$34,812 or 1.83 percent over last year.

A \$7,000 contribution to capital non-recurring made last year was not continued into this fiscal year. The BOS will review the proposed budget from the management team during March and will make a recommendation to the Board of Finance.

Other expenditures in addition to the total general government budget were discussed at the meeting. One source of increase in the overall town budget came in the form of salaries. A salary increase of 2 percent was proposed for non-union employees and 3.25 percent for contractual increases for the Public Works, Clerical and Parks Unions, for a total of 5.5 percent for the full-time salary line. This figure includes the adjustment for five furlough days in the 2009-10 fiscal year.

The town management team recommended the elimination of a part-time administrative position within the police department. During the 2002-03 fiscal year, Hebron only had one resident state trooper and the position was added by a grant, initially funded 100 percent. In fiscal year 2005-06, the grant ended. A second resident state trooper was added in fiscal year 2007-08. The management team said it feels the two troopers can handle the responsibilities of the administrative position, and noted that Hebron is the only town in the area that employs this position. Statistics have shown that there has not been an increase in calls at the police department that would increase the workload for the two resident state troopers, the management team said.

The Hebron Board of Education (BOE) has proposed an increase of \$467,144 or 3.99 percent, for a total proposed budget of \$12.18 million. The RHAM BOE has presented three different budgets: a continuation budget with a 2.52 percent increase, a mid-point budget with an increase of 1.49 percent and a flat budget. The management team used the continuation budget when preparing their proposed budget. This budget, at \$24.50 million, would be a \$654,476 increase to the town based on the 2010-11 levy. For the mid-point budget, totaling \$24.25 million, Hebron would face an increase of \$521,028. Lastly, the zero percent increase budget of \$23.90 million would result in an increase of \$328,310.

Hebron is also due to pay a slightly higher percentage of the RHAM budget in the 2010-11 fiscal year than it is currently paying. Currently, Hebron is responsible for 52.81 percent of RHAM, a figure that is based on the hometown of students that attend the middle and high schools. That percentage is expected to climb to 54.14 percent for the 2010-11 budget.

The budget proposed \$700,000 for the Debt Management Fund (DMF). The DMF helps in

alleviating the impact of major projects completed in town. Examples include the Hebron Parks Project and RHAM Building Project.

Three initiatives were also included in the proposed budget: a full-time park maintainer, a senior center fitness instructor and a plotter. The full-time park maintainer, which Tierney said is currently seasonal at 36 weeks, would be a \$1,150 increase to the budget. In an effort to maintain and improve parks in Hebron, the management team said it felt this request from the parks and recreation director was a necessary initiative.

During the 2009-10 fiscal year, a grant was approved for the addition of a fitness instructor at the senior center in the budget. The position would cost \$10,080, with participant fees accounting for \$2,889 and grant revenue accounting for \$7,191. The last initiative is for a plotter, which would cost \$4,800. A one-time licensing and set-up fee would be an additional \$1,200 for the large format copier/scanner/printer. The cost for the plotter would be split between the town clerk, building department, assessor and public works. The town clerk would be responsible for a contribution of \$2,400, whereas the other three departments would contribute \$1,200. Presently, the town utilizes outside sources and would benefit greatly in the future from having this technology in town.

The management team said leasing costs would be offset with the ability to sell maps and that the plotter would replace a copier machine removed a few years ago. The plotter would also be of great benefit to other departments within the town, who could utilize it as well, the management team said.

BOS Chair Jeff Watt thanked the management team for their continued efforts in preparing the government budget, which the board will review this month. BOS member Mark Stuart also voiced his appreciation. "The management team has done a lot of hard work," he said. "Obviously there are some really hard choices that have been made." Stuart later said he does not foresee many changes to be made to the proposed budget presented.

The CIP committee also presented its proposed budget shortly after the management team's presentation. CIP Chair Mal Leichter said "we struggled this year, as every year, and are hoping we made the right decisions." Leichter presented CIP's budget, which maintains a five-year capital plan in the amount of \$8.25 million, but is tax neutral. The current funding levels are not sufficient enough to meet the needs and demands of the town, Leichter said, and in the future, would have to find ways

to increase CIP funding.

The total amount for projects proposed to take place this year is \$896,418. For the public works department, CIP recommended \$408,702 for road resurfacing and improvement, street signs, a dump truck and mini excavator. Leichter said the town has approximately 100 miles of roads that need to be resurfaced every 10 years. A total of \$229,216 is necessary for the replacement of the 1970 roof wing of Gilead Hill Elementary School.

In terms of the fire department, a contribution of \$180,000 is needed for the replacement of a vehicle, replacing turn out gear, and station renovations/maintenance to the three fire stations. The recreation department is in need of a dump body as the current one is a safety hazard to town employees and would need a contribution of \$6,000 for this replacement. Lastly, CIP recommended \$72,500 for miscellaneous needs, including the cost of the assessor's 2011 assessment (\$52,500), Town Office building roof replacement (\$10,000) and a police cruiser (\$10,000).

Leichter stated some of the challenges CIP faced when preparing their proposed budget. One of the many challenges is that requests are continually exceeding funds that are currently available, with maintenance and equipment needs being delayed on a regular basis. Leichter said unfunded mandates, health and safety are among the critical things that will receive priority from CIP in the future. "I really feel we have given you the minimum but I am not saying, by any means, that you can't cut it," he said. "I feel strongly what we proposed is the minimum."

Also at the meeting, Watt introduced Bonnie Therrien, the new town manager, who will take her post on April 12. "Bonnie comes with a wealth of experience," he said, and introduced her to the board members and residents present. Therrien thanked everyone for their warm welcome and noted that the interview process went very well.

Therrien said she hopes "to work with the selectmen and citizens to make this community what it is you're looking for." "I'm here to help and the door is always open," she said. Watt proposed a motion that the BOS appoint Therrien as the town manager effective April 12, 2010, which passed unanimously.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the BOS will be on March 18 at 7:30 p.m. at Douglas Library, located at 22 Main St. In addition to a regular BOS meeting, a budget presentation by the RHAM and Hebron boards of education will also be presented that evening.

East Hampton Residents, Town Officials Talk About Town Future

by Claire Michalewicz

East Hampton residents and town officials gathered for the Let's Talk East Hampton forum on Wednesday evening to discuss the Community Master Plan.

They brainstormed ideas for what the plan would include, and how it could help the town achieve its goals. The plan will outline, among other things, land use, housing, environmental protection, transportation, and economic development.

Town Manager Jeffery O'Keefe explained that the town's existing Plan of Conservation and Development could be a good starting point for drawing up the master plan.

Some residents feel that a plan was important because it would give the town a broader goal to work towards in its smaller projects.

"Aren't all other projects part of the master plan?" asked Lynda Krasnitski.

Resident Josh Piteo suggested that the plan should not be too rigid. Some people, Piteo said, are "looking for some kind of standards or blueprint that everyone has to follow. The town is not like that."

Piteo said he was worried that strict regulations would prevent property owners from developing their land in the future.

O'Keefe assured Piteo and the rest of the

audience that the plan would not be too strict.

"I just want to make sure everyone's thinking along the same lines," O'Keefe explained. The master plan, he said, would be updated every few years to match the town's current situation.

O'Keefe and Jim Carey, the administrator of the town's Building, Planning and Zoning Department, both stressed that the master plan would not be copied from those of other communities.

"We're 300 years old here," said Carey. East Hampton has a history to preserve, he explained, and the town needed input from residents to draw up a plan that is unique to the town.

"We want to stay small-town, we want to stay rural-looking," Carey said. "But at the same time, we need to respond to our needs and move the town forward."

Carey stressed that it was important to study the demographics of the town, because residents' ages are a good indicator of what they're looking for from the community.

"You have to know who we are at any given point in this analysis," Carey said.

O'Keefe said building more houses can attract new residents and bring business into the

town, but also place a burden on the town's resources, including water systems and schools. The water system, he said, was one of the town's major priorities.

"We're one of the few towns with amazing natural resources," O'Keefe said, and explained that it was important for the town to put those resources to use while preserving the natural environment.

Many residents said that revitalizing the village center should be an important part of the master plan. Piteo feels that the empty and run-down buildings in the village were driving people away.

"That really is a toxic thing, to have that many empty stores in your downtown," Piteo said.

O'Keefe asked Town Council Chairwoman Melissa Engel what her vision for the town was. Engel agreed that the village center should be rejuvenated, but said she was hesitant about forcing existing businesses out of the area. Engel also expressed concern about affordable housing, and said the town should identify areas where housing could be built.

"And of course I want the lake to be blue," she added.

Engel and O'Keefe both urged residents not to ignore other commercial areas in the town. O'Keefe stressed that Route 66 is important, because it provides space for major retailers, and because it is often the only part of East Hampton that people see when they drive through.

"Route 66 is not our personality, but it could be our lifeblood," Engel said.

Resident David Price said that an excellent school system was his first priority, and he also wants more industry in the town to increase the tax base.

Price also said that there weren't enough recreational facilities for children and teens. Krasnitski pointed out that Sears Park was a good place for youth in warm weather, but she and Price agreed that there are no good places for youth to gather in winter. Krasnitski suggested that private companies should build recreation facilities in town.

O'Keefe urged residents to look at the Plan of Conservation and Development on the town's website to see how it matched with their idea of a Community Master Plan. He welcomed residents to e-mail him with any questions or suggestions about the plan.

East Hampton Residents Speak to BOE About School Bus Concerns

by Claire Michalewicz

School bus safety was the hot topic at the Board of Education (BOE) meeting on Monday, with residents coming to the meeting to voice their concerns about bus inspections.

An article in the *Hartford Courant* the previous day had outlined some of the safety issues on Connecticut school buses. A searchable database on their website provided safety inspection information for all buses in the state.

Resident Lynn MacDonald checked the safety information, and came to the meeting to voice her concerns. Her son and daughter, MacDonald said, ride to and from school on a bus with 11 safety violations, according to the database.

Kyle Dostaler, another resident, asked whether the board would be giving any assurances to parents and other concerned residents that the buses were being properly inspected.

Dostaler alleged that the Nichols Bus Company – which operates school buses for East Hampton schools – always gets its contract renewed without being properly reviewed. “It looks like it shouldn’t have been extended,” he said.

“At this point, I don’t trust Mr. Nichols and his company,” said Jim Berg, another parent.

Berg said he had seen the safety reports from 2008 as well as 2009, and the violations were not fixed between the two years. Berg called the lack of diligence from the school board “unacceptable.”

“We’re not taking this lightly,” Golden said.

Assistant Superintendent of Schools Kevin Reich said that he had met with the owner of Nichols Bus Company. While he was at the bus lot, he watched employees visually inspect six buses. Reich said that the buses met all requirements, and two buses that did have violations only needed their windows cleaned.

Reich added that he would be meeting again with the bus company on Wednesday, March 10, to map out a strategy for keeping buses safe.

Nichols Bus Company officials were unavailable for comment for this story.

Also Monday, the board voted unanimously to hire Nancy Briere as the assistant principal of the middle school. Briere has worked in East Hampton schools for years, starting as a math teacher at the middle school and becoming the math coordinator for the district. Briere has also served as the assistant principal at the high school.

Briere said she’s excited to go back to the

middle school and work with Principal John Fidler.

“Middle school has always been my first love in terms of the age level of the students,” Briere said. She explained that she likes middle school students because they’re old enough to make their own decisions, and teachers can help them build up confidence. Having strong education at that age, Briere said, “really, really is very vital.”

After the meeting, Golden offered her thoughts on Town Manager Jeffery O’Keefe’s proposed budget, which would cut \$200,000 from the budget that the BOE passed last month.

Golden said the BOE would work with the Board of Finance in a budget workshop on Friday, March 12, to try to reduce O’Keefe’s proposed cuts. She explained that two teachers were retiring, which would help with expenses, but was unsure what the school board would do to avoid layoffs.

The BOE also voted to send a letter to the Town Council about teachers’ contracts. Teachers were concerned that the Town Council may not honor their contracts after the school board had approved them. The town council agreed at the February 23 Tri-Board meeting that they

would not alter the teachers’ contract. The board is requesting that the Town Council vote on a motion to accept any teachers’ contract that the BOE submits to them.

At the beginning of the meeting, the board held a brief awards ceremony to honor the achievements of some high school students. Board members presented Erik Guy Harper with a certificate to honor his acceptance into the United States Air Force Academy. They also commended Josh Gustine for receiving the Connecticut Soccer Coaches Association’s Dr. Valerio Moretti 2010 Scholar-Athlete Award. The CSCA gave Gustine a \$500 scholarship.

The East Hampton High School Girls’ Indoor Track team was the 2010 Shoreline Conference Champion, with a score of 100 points. The runner-up, Old Saybrook High School, had 74 points. Team captains Elizabeth Plummer, Andrea Galanto, and Michelle Brahen, along with other team members, were at the meeting to accept their recognition.

Golden also noted that March is Board of Education Appreciation Month, and presented the board members with gifts and cake in recognition of their efforts.

Colchester Residents Write Musical Dealing with Cancer

by Katy Nally

Twenty-five years after his father’s death, George Gargano began to mourn. Over the course of about a week, his grief began to materialize as a musical love story that chronicles one man’s trials and tribulations with pancreatic cancer – the disease that killed his father as well as his friend.

Gargano, a writer and poet, and fellow Colchester resident, John Ringo, crafted the cathartic ode *Closing in on Forever*, and it’s scheduled to debut Saturday, April 24, at the Mega Center, located at 52 Mill St. Gargano said he wrote the words and lyrics while Ringo, the music director for the Colchester Civic Orchestra and Choir, put “all those nice words to music.”

The musical depicts a “blue-collar” character named Bob and centers on his struggle with cancer and the support he receives from his young friends, Ringo and Gargano said. Bob and his wife Sue are 20-somethings who live in an apartment complex, near their friend Roc.

The protagonist plays a “bittersweet” role in which he falls in love during the first act, but is soon diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Gargano said Bob sings about his uncertain future as his

friends rally around him during his struggle.

His alter ego, Roc, whom Gargano described as a “male chauvinistic pig,” offers comedic relief through songs that ask things like “why should women live anyway?” Gargano said Roc acts like “Archie Bunker toward women” and is the “weird friend who always comes up with the things we wouldn’t say.”

Gargano and Ringo held auditions last weekend and will hold more tomorrow from 2-5 p.m., also at the Mega Center. Gargano said he’s predominantly looking for people in their late teens and 20s. About 20 people will comprise the cast, he added.

Closing in on Forever attempts to bring awareness to the reach of pancreatic cancer and how it can affect people both young and old, Gargano said. It’s his hope to have someone at the premiere who can explain the cancer and its signs. “It’s the thing no one expects to have,” he said.

Ringo said the play is not something the average theatergoer sees since it tackles tough subjects and, overall, it’s “more down to earth.” He said the story about pancreatic cancer is a “current” theme for today’s society.

Gargano also is no stranger to the disease. When he was 17, he watched as his father deteriorated from the cancer, and as an adult, he witnessed the same malady attack his friend.

His father, who died when he was 64, never informed his family of his disease until several months before his death, Gargano said. Even then, Gargano said his mother was the one who broke the news.

Gargano said his father’s secrecy was because he was “old school.” He called him a “first-generation Italian” who wouldn’t complain about himself, instead “they complain about everyone else.”

“He wasn’t one to show pain,” Gargano added.

After his father died, Gargano moved to Michigan just a few years later. There he met another person who had pancreatic cancer, but it went undiagnosed for a long time.

As the two men became close, Gargano said his friend began showering excessively due to persistent body odor and he suffered through stomach problems – both signs of pancreatic cancer, according to Gargano.

His friend was diagnosed and died a year

and a half later when he was 44. Gargano said, as his friend began chemotherapy he grew thinner and turned yellow. In his final days, Gargano said his friend used to sit in a rocking chair with a blanket across his lap, and simply rock. Gargano used this image in his show to depict Bob as the cancer takes its toll.

According to the American Cancer Society, in 2009 more than 35,000 people died from pancreatic cancer and more than 42,000 new cases were diagnosed. About 1 in 72 Americans are at risk of developing this cancer, which is about the same for men and women.

About a year after his best friend died, Gargano moved back to Colchester, and one day in 2009 he began to write down his story about pancreatic cancer. He called the process “therapeutic” and said he wrote off-and-on for a week. “That’s how my writing is,” Gargano said. “I kind of off the cuff do it.”

There are two showings scheduled for *Closing in on Forever* – Saturday, April 24 and Sunday, April 25, both at the Mega Center.

If interested in auditioning tomorrow, call 860-805-1501 or 860-267-6271 to set up an appointment, as walk-ins will not be accepted.

Hebron Police News

3/3: Daryl Tipton, 37, of 525 Crown St., Meriden, was charged with forgery, illegal use of a credit card, sixth-degree larceny and credit card theft, State Police said.

Colchester Police News

3/3: A juvenile was charged with disorderly conduct and threatening, State Police said.

3/3: Kevin Miller, 53, of 59 Sisson Rd., Lebanon, was charged with DUI and speeding, State Police said.

3/3: A 16-year-old was charged with motor vehicle violation and possession of less than four ounces of marijuana, State Police said.

3/3: Allen Pudlo, 18, of 92 Elm St., was charged with possession of less than four ounces of marijuana, State Police said.

3/3: A 16-year-old was charged with motor vehicle violation and possession of less than four ounces of marijuana, State Police said.

3/3: Walter Shumbo, 54, of 283 Westchester Rd., Apt. #17, was charged with DUI and failure to drive at a reasonable distance, State Police said.

3/3: Kimberly Jehning, 22, of 41 Westover Rd., New Britain, was charged with failure to maintain lane and DUI, State Police said.

3/3: Carlos Montanez, 35, of 130 East High St., East Hampton, was charged with second-degree harassment, State Police said.

3/5: Jasper Stanley, 45, of 7 Heritage Brook Dr., East Haddam, was charged with speeding, DUI, possession of drug paraphernalia and possession of less than four ounces of marijuana, State Police said.

Salem Police News

3/5: Sometime between Sunday, Feb. 28 and Thursday, March 4, a house on Old Colchester Road was entered and several items were taken, State Police said.

3/6: Somphonnyom Phonvantha, 26, of 19 Hyannis Pl., Worcester MA, was charged with DWI and failure to drive in proper lane, State Police said.

3/7: Cory Kastner, 36, of 20 Valley Brook Rd., Rocky Hill, was charged with operating a motor vehicle when license is suspended, operating an unregistered motor vehicle and having an improper attachment on plate, State Police said.

3/7: Phillip Mosdale, 24, of 514 Old Hartford Rd., was charged with breach of peace and third-degree assault, State Police said.

3/7: Kerron Pottinger, 30, of 19 Spring St., Middletown, was charged with breach of peace and third-degree assault, State Police said.

3/7: Meghan Rose Reavey, 26, of 164 Deer Run Dr., was charged with possession of less than four ounces of marijuana, State Police said.

3/7: Michael Reavey, 24, of 164 Deer Run Dr., was charged with breach of peace and third-degree assault, State Police said.

3/8: Mathew Vik, 21, 853 Sawcreek Rd., Bushkill, PA, was charged with fourth-degree larceny and third-degree criminal mischief, State Police said.

3/8: Benjamin Adams, 19, of 27 Myrna Dr., Marlborough, turned himself in for failure to appear, State Police said.

East Hampton Police News

2/20: An 18-year-old male juvenile was arrested for possession of marijuana, East Hampton Police said.

2/20: Thomas A. Debaise Jr., 20, of 19 Christians Crossing, Durham, was arrested for operating under the influence of alcohol, failure to drive right, possession of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia, police said.

2/23: Richard D. Klemyk, 55, of 102 Mountainview Rd., was arrested for operating under the influence of alcohol and failure to drive right, police said.

2/27: William P. Mott, 39, of 8 Hayes Rd., hit two parked vehicles and a stone wall and mailbox, police said. Mott was arrested for operating under the influence of alcohol, failure to drive right and three counts of evading

Portland Police News

3/4: Jimmy Bracket, 54, of 173 Airline Ave., was charged with third-degree assault, Portland Police said.

responsibility, police added.

2/28: Sean Cullen, 19, of 74 Barton Hill Rd., was arrested pursuant to a warrant on charges of aiding in the commission of a crime (evading responsibility) as the result of an accident that occurred on Nov. 5, 2009, police said.

2/28: Robert L. Daniels, 28, of 68 Creek Row, East Haddam, was arrested for speeding, police said.

3/1: Brian Dill, 22, of 131 Beebe Rd., East Haddam, was arrested pursuant to a warrant on charges of driving while under the influence of alcohol and failure to drive right on Dec. 12, 2009, police said.

3/2: Adam R. Travers, 21, of 20 Edgerton St., was arrested for speeding, police said.

Sidewalk Plan Fails at East Hampton Council Meeting

by Claire Michalewicz

The motion to institute a new sidewalk ordinance failed at the Town Council meeting on Tuesday evening. The council will consider a revised version of the ordinance at a later meeting.

The failed ordinance would have shifted liability for damages or injuries sustained on unplowed sidewalks from the town to the adjacent property owner. The town would have continued to plow the streets that it is already responsible for, except for six streets in the Spice Hill and Royal Oaks developments.

The council voted 3-2 in favor of the ordinance, but motions need to receive four votes to pass. (Council members John Tuttle and Barbara Moore were not present.)

Council members Thom Cordeiro and Sue Weintraub voted against the ordinance because they want the town to plow fewer streets. Cordeiro pointed out that the town plows sidewalks in several developments where few people walk. He thinks the town should only plow sidewalks on major roads that many community members use.

“There’s no community that I’m aware of that doesn’t require residents to clear their sidewalks,” Cordeiro said after the meeting.

Only dissenting voters can bring the issue back for reconsideration, and Cordeiro said he’s working on a new proposal. He said he’s not yet sure what the changes would be, but he’s investigating charging fees for snow removal.

The council also discussed a revised media relations policy designed to better organize the information available on the Internet. They reviewed some samples of media policies in other towns, which they decided were too strict for East Hampton.

Town Council Chairwoman Melissa Engel said the council unanimously agreed that a policy like the sample ones would restrict the ability of elected officials to speak freely. They also agreed that communication with town hall employees was already well-organized, so a policy was only needed for the town’s internet presence, including its website and official Facebook page.

“We want to make sure there is a gateway

for information going out over the internet,” Engel said after the meeting.

Cordeiro is the administrator of the town’s Facebook page.

“It’s a great way, and an important way, to communicate,” he said. The media relations policy, Cordeiro explained, would outline how town officials would provide information on the town’s webpages. He stressed that it would in no way change what elected officials are allowed to say.

At the meeting, O’Keefe announced that East Hampton, along with Colchester, had been selected for a special pilot program with the Salmon River Project with the Nature Conservancy. The Nature Conservancy will work with town officials and community members to implement conservation measures and educate residents and developers about land use and watershed protection.

The council also reviewed the Plan of Conservation and Development timetable. The timetable is a list of conservation projects in East Hampton and the estimated amount of time they would take. O’Keefe will prioritize the list and bring it back to the council at their next meeting, so they can approve their own version of the timetable.

The Town Council also received copies of O’Keefe’s proposed town budget, which he released last week. The council will hold a series of budget workshops with various town departments over the next several weeks to negotiate and finalize the budget that residents will eventually vote on.

During the public comment sections of the meeting, residents debated instituting a noise ordinance. The noise ordinance was not on the agenda this week, but the council had discussed it at previous meetings.

The town also presented Dennis Erickson with a commendation for his efforts in getting a tax benefit ordinance for permanently disabled veterans.

The next Town Council meeting will be held Tuesday, March 23, at 6:30 p.m. in the meeting room at Town Hall, 20 East High St.

From the Editor’s Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

I’d planned a big column for this week about the Hebron Maple Festival, as it truly is a delightful event. But then I got word Wednesday afternoon the festival had been postponed, to next weekend. The weathermen are calling for lots of rain and wind, so organizers decided to move it.

In the eight years since I started going to the Maple Fest, I’ve never seen it postponed. (According to event chairman Wayne Palmer, it had been postponed once before, more than 10 years ago.) Not surprisingly, the postponement apparently sent people scrambling throughout the town, as several groups and organizations had events planned for this weekend, to coincide with the festival. As I write this, most of the events that were to take place this weekend have been rescheduled to March 20 and 21. (Not all of the events are on the move, however; for example, Douglas Library is going on with its book sale. That sale is inside the library, though, so it makes sense that a rainy, windy day wouldn’t stop it from happening.)

I was looking forward to this weekend, and all the various sweet, maple-icious food items I’d have been greeted with. At least they’ll all be here next weekend.

* * *

Speaking of sweets, this week I finally got a Shamrock Shake from McDonald’s. It’s something I’ve been meaning to get the past few years, but for one reason or another, things never panned out. (It doesn’t help matters that they’re very much a seasonal beverage: as soon as St. Patrick’s Day hits, McDonald’s stops selling them. In fact, I believe last year I was in a McDonald’s March 18, and they were already gone.)

From what I’ve observed, people seem to either love them or hate them. I don’t think I’ve ever seen a McDonald’s menu item inspire so much passionate debate among people. People that I wouldn’t normally think of as McDonald’s fans flock to the golden arches this time of year for the minty treat. And on the other side of the coin, I’ve read it described as a vanilla shake that looks – and tastes – like it was mixed with Listerine.

I definitely fall into the former category. I thought it was great. There was nothing mouthwash-y about it. It tasted like mint ice cream, only made into a shake. Like all McDonald’s shakes, it was perhaps a little too thick, but that’s a small price to pay. It was money well-spent, and I fully intend to have another one.

If you want to try one, don’t forget, St. Patrick’s Day is less than a week away, so the clock is ticking. So hurry on down to McDonald’s, pick up a Filet-o-Fish sandwich (because I know you’ve got that catchy-as-hell jingle stuck in *your* head too) and pair it with a tasty Shamrock Shake. It’d be a wise move.

* * *

The Oscars were last Sunday, and the awards went to pretty much who all the Oscar prognosticators *thought* they would go to: Jeff Bridges won Best Actor, Mo’Nique won Best Supporting Actress, *Up* won Best Ani-

mated Picture and Sandra Bullock won Best Actress. (Incidentally, Bullock also won a “Razzie” award for Worst Actress of the Year last weekend, for the horribly-reviewed *All About Steve*; she became the first person ever to win both awards in the same year. And, as she’d promised all awards season, she showed up to the Razzies last Saturday night, to collect her trophy.)

The only race that was somewhat up in the air was Best Picture. And, since I’ve never seen *The Hurt Locker*, I can’t say for sure it should’ve won Best Picture, I am glad *Avatar* did not. I’ve already spoken about this movie in two different columns this year, so I’ll try not to repeat myself too much. But while *Avatar* deserved to win every technical award, I didn’t see it as Best Picture material. To me, a movie that’s named the best picture of the year should be something that you could see playing nearly as well on the small screen as it did on the big; something that you can see yourself watching on DVD or cable TV five, 10 or 15 years from now. *Avatar*’s story (and its dialogue) were pretty lacking. It’s not something I could see enjoying outside of a movie theater that was showing it in 3D. Its eye-popping visuals were truly the best thing about it.

Apparently, the Academy agreed with me.

* * *

I used to tune into *Jeopardy!* two or three times a week. Lately, I’d gotten away from that. However, this past Monday I just said to myself, “Why not,” and turned it on. And I was hoping, as I waited for the show to start, that it’d just be a normal, everyday episode. It’s March (not a “sweeps” month, the ratings period where such events are usually trucked out, because I guess most viewers like them), so I was cautiously optimistic it wouldn’t be one of those tournament weeks, such as a celebrity tournament or the college one, or my least favorite of them all – the children’s tournament..

I’ve just never liked that tournament, and I can’t really explain why. Maybe it’s the fact that Alex Trebek talks down to the contestants even more than he talks down to the regular adult contestants. Maybe it’s that those kids standing there on the podium remind me of those annoying old Hooked on Phonics commercials (“Hooked on Phonics worked for me!”). But whatever the case, I really don’t care for it. I’d rather watch paint. Not even watch it dry; just watch it sit there in cans.

The teen tournament isn’t much better, but at least it’s an improvement. While I prefer the regular version of the show, as the questions are more challenging, I admit it feels kinda good to be able to correctly answer the questions more often than not. There’s a certain satisfaction in being able to identify the author of the words “shall I compare thee to a summer’s day” while some 15-year-old sophomore just stands there with a blank expression on his face. Take that, Dylan!

* * *

See you next week.

Obituaries

Marlborough

William H. Burke

William H. Burke, 81, of Marlborough, beloved husband of Betty Ann Burke, died Wednesday, March 3, at Middlesex Hospital.

Born March 29, 1928, in Marlborough, he was the son of the late William A. and Florence (Strickland) Burke, and was a lifelong resident of Marlborough. He had retired in 2007 and had worked as a stone mason since the age of 16 and had also been a heavy machine operator. He had a square dance band that was very popular during the '40s and '50s. William loved fishing, hunting and boxing and was an avid gardener of both flowers and vegetables.

Besides his wife, he is survived by a son, William Burke of Marlborough; a brother, Charles Burke of Marlborough, and several nephews and cousins.

He was predeceased by his first wife Elaine G. Burke in 1991.

A memorial service was held Tuesday, March 9, in Marlborough Congregational Church with Rev. Robert Faulhaber officiating. Burial followed in Marlboro Cemetery.

The Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, has care of the arrangements.

East Hampton

Alice A. Weaver

Alice A. (Miller) Weaver, 72, of East Hampton, died unexpectedly on Friday, March 5, at Marlborough Medical Center. Born Sept. 14, 1937, in Hartford, she was the daughter of the late Edward and Ruth (Battles) Miller. She had lived in East Hartford for most of her life before moving to East Hampton three years ago.

She is survived by her very special friend, Margaret Bannon; her son, Greg Weaver; her three daughters, Bonnie Otto, Carol Dence and Nancy Donahue; a sister, Shirley Baker; her five grandchildren, Stacey Donahue, Troy Dence, Christy Dence, Joey Bushey and Kristen Bushey, and her great-grandson, Mason Bileau. She also leaves her beloved cat, Jacob.

Funeral services will be private. There will be no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Protectors of Animals, P.O. Box 24, South Glastonbury, CT 06073.

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

Colchester

Dorothy Meara

Dorothy Meara, 87, wife of the late John Meara of Colchester, formerly of Sharon, MA, passed away on Monday, March 8, in Colchester. She was born April 8, 1923, in Somerville, MA, daughter of John and Adelaide Bernadetti Tedesco.

Surviving are two sisters, Patricia LaGrega of Colchester, and Rita Pioccone of Tyngsboro, MA, and sever grand and great nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were held Wednesday at 10 a.m. from the Belmont/Sabrowski Funeral Home, South Main Street, Colchester, followed by an 11 a.m. Mass of Christian Burial at St. Andrew's Church, Norwich Avenue, Colchester. Burial was private at the Bourne's Veteran Cemetery in Bourne, MA. Visitation was Tuesday at the funeral home.

Donations in her memory may be made to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, 705 North Mountain Rd., Suite G 102, Newington, CT 06111-1411.

East Hampton

Michael Francis Clynes

Michael Francis Clynes, 75, of East Hampton and Sun City, CA, died at home in California Thursday, March 4. He was born Jan. 8, 1935, in New Britain, the son of the late Francis and Katherine (Gregor) Clynes.

Michael was the beloved husband of 50 years to MaryAnn (Cameron) Clynes. He attended New Britain public schools and graduated from the former St. Anthony's High School in Bristol. Michael attended Central Connecticut State College. He proudly served in the United States Navy. Mike worked in sales in the commercial tire business retiring from Connecticut Tire in New Britain. He was a lifelong member of the New Britain Elks.

While residing for almost 40 years in Southington, he was actively involved in numerous community organizations. He was a past member of the Democratic Town Committee. He also served on the Zoning Board of Appeals for 33 years and was chairman for several years. He was a Southington town constable for over 10 years and was previously involved with the Northern Little League. Michael was a parishioner of St. Dominic's Catholic Church in Southington. Most recently, he was a parishioner of St. Vincent's Church, CA, as well as St. Patrick's Church in East Hampton.

Besides his wife, Michael is survived by his three sons and daughters-in-law, Kevin and Michelle Clynes of Lake Elsinore, CA, Patrick and Terri Clynes of Houston, TX, Frank and Patrice Clynes of Southington; and daughter and son-in-law, Karen and John Longo of Southington. Michael was also the grandfather of John and James Longo, Megan, Michael, Cameron, Kathryn, Avery, and Mackenzie Clynes, as well as Timothy Birt and John Lalla. He also leaves sisters-in-law, Rose Symolon and Shirley Blair in addition to many nieces and nephews and cousins.

Michael lived his life with a smile on his face, a kind word for everyone and a song in his heart. He will be truly missed by all who knew him.

A memorial service will be held in Connecticut at the convenience of the family. Miller-Jones Mortuary, Sun City, CA, is handling the arrangements. Memorial donations may be made to the Alzheimer's Association, Connecticut Chapter, 279 New Britain Rd., Suite 5, Kensington, CT 06037.

Marlborough

Joseph H. Eber

Joseph H. Eber, 93, of Marlborough and formerly of Ridgefield, died Tuesday, March 2. Born Jan. 2, 1917, in New York City to the late Leo and Eva (Schmidt) Eber, Joseph was the beloved husband of the late Irene (Hyer) Eber. Joe proudly served his country during World War II as a radio operator on B-29 Bombers in the Pacific Theatre.

Joe is survived by four daughters and their husbands, Irene Klein (Peter), Ruth Schreiber (Walter), Patricia Dyke (George), and Dorothy Jones (Brian); three sons and their wives, Joseph Eber (Joyce), Robert Eber (Sharyn), and Charles Eber (Allison); 22 grandchildren; 28 great-grandchildren; and one great-great-grandchild.

Calling hours will be Saturday, March 6, from 9-11 a.m., at the Glastonbury Funeral Home, 450 New London Tpke., Glastonbury. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 11:30 a.m. at St John Fisher Church, 30 Jones Hollow Rd., Marlborough. Burial to follow in Marlboro Cemetery.

Memorial contributions may be made in Joe's name to the Fresh Air Fund, 633 3rd Ave., 14th Floor, New York, NY 10017, 1-800-367-0003, or to Saint Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105, 1-800-822-6344.

Visit www.glastonburyfuneral.com for more info or to express online condolences.

Colchester

Beatrice Adams

Beatrice (Rockwell) Adams, 90, of Lebanon, widow of the late Gilbert E. Adams, passed away Monday evening, March 1, at the Harrington Court GHC Center in Colchester. Born Aug. 8, 1919, in Hartford, she was the daughter of the late Glover and Eva Marie (Rouselle) Rockwell.

She was a graduate of Norwich Free Academy and she and Gilbert were married on March 23, 1940. They shared 54 years of marriage before he predeceased her in December of 1994. Together, they settled in Lebanon to raise their family. Mrs. Adams was a bookkeeper for the Lebanon Veterinary Hospital. In years past, she was a member of the First Congregational Church of Lebanon and the Lebanon Guild of Arts and Crafts.

She is survived by two children and their spouses, Jeffrey and Linda Adams of Colchester, and Suzanne and William Ingalls of Chelsea, MA; five grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; a brother, Glover Rockwell, and his spouse, Doris of Eatontown, NJ; and numerous extended family members and friends.

Care of private arrangements has been entrusted to the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester. For online condolences, visit www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Portland

Helen M. Merc Gotta

Helen M. Merc Gotta, 83, of Glastonbury Turnpike, Portland, died Wednesday, March 10, in her home. She was the wife of the late Robert Gotta Sr.

Born in Newington, March 27, 1926, a daughter of Simon and Domicella Merkinikas, she was a graduate of Newington High School and the Morse Secretarial School. She was a Portland resident since 1947. Following the death of her husband, she and her son Richard were the proprietors of Gotta's Farm Stand in Portland, until her retirement in 2000. She worked hard all of her life and enjoyed the greenhouse and talking with her customers at the farm stand. She was a parishioner of St. Augustine's Church in South Glastonbury.

Helen is survived by her sons, Robert Gotta, Jr., and his companion Linda Gajevski of Woodbury, and Richard Gotta and his wife Jackie of Portland; her brother, Louis Merc and his wife Beverly of Portland; her grandchildren, Corinne Tawa and her husband Steve of Durham, Chris Gotta, Elizabeth Gotta, and R.J. Gotta, all of Portland; and her great-grandchildren, Ian Gotta, Olivia Tawa and Alex Tawa.

She was predeceased by her sisters, Ann Kehoe and Virginia Nappi.

Helen's family would like to thank the Middlesex Hospice Homecare and special thanks to Anna, her care provider for all the services they gave. Relatives and friends are invited to attend a Mass of Christian Burial Monday, March 15, at 10 a.m., at St. Augustine's Church, 55 Hopewell Road, South Glastonbury. Burial will be private. Arrangements are under the direction of the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland. There are no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that gifts in Helen's memory be sent to the Middlesex Hospice Homecare, c/o Office of Philanthropy, 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457.

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