



RIVEREAST

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East Hampton residents, from left, Lori Weech, Bonnie Sweet-Reilly and Ruth Tegge read a prepared statement issued by Town Council Chairwoman Melissa Engel after the council voted last Friday to accept the resignation of Town Manager Jeffery O'Keefe.

O'Keefe Resigns

by Claire Michalewicz

Embattled East Hampton Town Manager Jeffery O'Keefe resigned last week after a summer-long controversy stemming from his decision to lay off Police Chief Matt Reimondo.

The Town Council voted to accept O'Keefe's resignation at a special meeting last Friday, Sept. 10, and to offer him a severance package of \$170,100. O'Keefe's resignation was effective immediately.

To replace O'Keefe, the council voted to offer Bob Drewry, the town's former Director of Public Works, the position of interim town manager. Drewry previously served as interim town manager in 2007 and 2008, after the departure of longtime Town Manager Alan Bergren. Drewry will make \$25 an hour as interim town manager, in addition to medical benefits for him and his wife.

Council member Sue Weintraub was the lone council member to vote against hiring Drewry. "We need somebody from the outside with fresh ideas," she said.

O'Keefe, who marked his second anniversary with the town on Sept. 1, had been under pressure to resign or be fired since eliminating Reimondo's position in June. Many residents in town accused O'Keefe of retaliation, removing Reimondo because of the police chief's involvement in three sexual harassment com-

plaints filed against O'Keefe.

The council met in a closed-door executive session for over an hour to discuss the separation agreement, drafted by the town's labor attorney Mark Sommaruga.

Only Weintraub openly opposed the separation agreement, reiterating that O'Keefe should be fired for cause. The previous week, Weintraub called a press conference to explain that she felt O'Keefe had lied on his application, by failing to disclose two lawsuits filed against his company in 2004 and 2005, when he headed the Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority.

"While I would like very much to go forward so the town can go forward," Weintraub said, "I have concerns about the dollar amount." She added that the council had stressed the importance of saving money since Reimondo was laid off.

Other council members expressed reservations about the size of O'Keefe's severance package, but said his contract required them to offer him that amount.

"It needs to be noted that this is a contractual agreement," said Town Council Vice Chairman John Tuttle.

Weintraub later explained that the \$170,100 includes O'Keefe's \$123,600 base salary for

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Sunny Days Draw Thousands to Hebron Fair

by Lindsay Fetzner

Nearly 125,000 fairgoers flocked to town for the Hebron Harvest Fair that began last Thursday, Sept. 9, and thrived over the weekend, Fair Superintendent John Johnson Jr. said.

Attendance saw a significant gain over last year, by about 15,000 more people. In 2009 approximately 110,000 people came through the gates over the four days.

"It is probably the largest crowd we've had in about five years," Hebron Lions Club Senior Advisor Robert E. Lee said.

The fair, put on by the Hebron Lions, was blessed with good weather this year, especially on Saturday, which Johnson described as "an absolutely picture-perfect day." Even though the sun wasn't shining as bright on Sunday, the culminating day of the fair, Johnson said bad weather still managed to hold off. Lee agreed, adding the fair "had a strong Sunday."

"We definitely had more [people] in attendance," Johnson said of the fair this year. "It definitely beat the last couple of years. It was a huge Saturday for us."

Although this year's fair marked the first for some, for others, it marked close to 40.

"I've come every year since I was a kid," Amston Lake resident Caren Taylor said. "I've probably been coming 40 years."

It is the "small town" feel and familiarity of faces that draws her back each year, she said. Over the years, although the fair has expanded greatly, Taylor said she still knows "a lot of people" from the community who come out and show their support for the yearly endeavor.

"It's small-town living," she said.

Taylor not only came out Thursday afternoon when the gates opened, but also attended on Saturday and planned on returning again on Sunday as well. And for Taylor, this is far from uncommon – each year, she usually comes all four days, she said. This past Saturday, Taylor accompanied her own children as well as her grandchildren to the fair.

"It's just so much fun," she said, adding that the demolition derby on Thursday afternoon was a hit with her 2-year-old grandson. "He loved it," she said.

And it seems the demolition derby wasn't only a hit with Taylor's grandson, but the majority of the fairgoers as well. Lee said there was "strong attendance" for both of the demolition derby shows.

"The biggest event still seems to be our demolition derbies," Johnson said, adding, "that and the Dock Dogs."

The cars battled it out on both Thursday and Friday, while the Dock Dogs provided a wealth of entertainment all four days of the fair.

"I liked watching the dogs," said 14-year-old Plainville resident Jonathan Charette, whose wet shirt was a testament to just how close he got to the action.

When asked what aspect of the fair he enjoyed the most, Charette chose the dogs as the winner.

For others, the country music was a driving factor that brought them to Hebron from the surrounding communities.

See Sunny Days Page 2



The Hebron Harvest Fair was held last weekend and approximately 125,000 people attended. Pictured above, Tayler Plante, 10, gives her calf Kotton Kandie a new haircut, with the help of her grandmother Cheryl Lee.



Three generations, Dail Negro, her daughter Debbie Barrett, and her 13-year-old granddaughter Michelle Barrett, enjoyed a bite to eat at the Hebron Harvest Fair, Saturday.

Sunny Days cont. from Front Page

“We come every single year,” said Lisbon resident Phyllis Rose. “We come for the country singers...and of course the food too.”

Phyllis said she is an avid country line dancer, as is John Rose, who accompanied her to the fair. The Roses planned on returning again on Sunday for the headline act of country band Gloriana.

“We just like a lot of country music,” Phyllis said.

Johnson said a “decent crowd” came out in support of Gloriana on Sunday afternoon. In addition to Gloriana, Vocal Trash took the stage on Thursday; the local band Columbia Fields performed Friday; the Don Campbell Band on Saturday; and Earl Wear and Haywire on both weekend days.

While lending an ear to Earl Wear and Haywire under the shade of a large tree, Plainville resident Kathy O’Leary said she too “comes every year.”

“We’ve come here many years and we have a wonderful time,” said Jim Charette, also of Plainville, who accompanied O’Leary.

“I like all the farm animals, the displays and the food,” O’Leary said, later adding, “It’s one of the best [fairs].”

In addition to thousands of visitors, a “fair” share of animals were also on display, including goats, sheep, poultry, swine and cattle.

Members of the four-generation Cat Paw Farm in Voluntown came to town with seven animals, plus rabbits, some of which they planned to show during a competition on Sunday.

“This is our hobby,” said Jennifer Plante, and recognized the animal aspect of the fair as her favorite part. “That’s my love, that’s my hobby.”

Plante said she has been part of 4-H (a youth development organization) for just under 25 years, and has come to the Hebron Harvest Fair many times over the years.

In the cattle barn, 10-year-old Tayler Plante prepped her calf, Kotton Kandie, beside her grandmother Cheryl Lee, both of Voluntown. Jennifer Plante, Tayler’s mom, said Tayler was going to enter Kotton Kandie into the junior dairy show on Sunday, which she said is “a benefit for the kids.”

But, the Plantes were just one of the many families that came to town to enjoy the four-day extravaganza, which, this year, marked “40 years of family fun.”

O’Keefe cont. from Front Page

his third year with the town, plus 95 days accrued vacation time, paid out at \$489 a day.

“I can’t be rewarding the town manager for what has taken place,” Weintraub said.

Weintraub also said she did not feel comfortable having Sommaruga draft the separation agreement, since Sommaruga had previously represented O’Keefe in the hearing into Reimondo’s removal. (That hearing was adjourned in July, but was scheduled to resume in September. A date has not yet been set.)

“I’m not sure how we got to today’s meeting,” Weintraub said, pointing out that just two days earlier, Engel had said it would take “about a week” to work out a severance package.

Engel said the search for a new town manager could take about six months “on a good day.”

“I bet there aren’t a whole lot of people clamoring to work in East Hampton,” she added.

O’Keefe was not at Town Hall last Friday, but Engel explained that he was resigning because the stress from the job was affecting his health and his personal life.

“He’s feeling very injured by all this,” she said, referring to the ongoing controversy and pressure on O’Keefe to resign.

In a prepared statement, Engel called O’Keefe’s decision to resign “an effort to spare the Town of East Hampton and himself further unjust criticism, distraction and legal expenses.”

Engel added in her statement, “Unfortunately, the misinformation that has been distributed by a small group of residents in our community and then replayed in the media has hindered Mr. O’Keefe’s ability to effectively lead our Town forward through the many challenges and opportunities we have before us – not to mention the toll it has taken on him and his family.”

Six of the council members, Engel said, supported O’Keefe’s decision to make cuts to the police department, and believed O’Keefe was innocent of all the allegations made against him.

Engel said there was no basis for firing O’Keefe for cause. The investigation Sommaruga led into the harassment complaints in May found no wrongdoing, she said, and O’Keefe was not required to disclose the two lawsuits because they were filed against his company, not against him personally.

O’Keefe could not be reached for comment, but Engel said that as of this week, he had not found another job.

“Given what they have done to his reputation, I think it’s going to be very difficult for him to find one immediately,” Engel said. “And

that’s very unfortunate.”

O’Keefe also is currently under two investigations. Engel has previously stated that state’s attorney Timothy Liston’s office is currently conducting another investigation into O’Keefe’s alleged harassment of town employees. Another attorney, Glenn Coe, is investigating allegations that O’Keefe created a hostile work environment, filed by Police Sergeant Garritt Kelly.

Residents at the meeting seemed happy to see O’Keefe go, though many were upset with the size of the severance package.

“You guys are just unreal!” one resident shouted as the council voted to authorize the agreement.

“Any fool that hires that man deserves him,” Lori Weech said.

“They don’t have the courage nor the fortitude nor the integrity, and they never have had it, to do the right thing,” Bonnie Sweet-Reilly said. “Those people, minus Sue Weintraub, will never sit on the Town Council again.”

Sweet-Reilly also lashed out at Engel’s accusation that residents had brought O’Keefe down by spreading “misinformation” about him.

“For the citizens of East Hampton, November of 2011 can’t come soon enough,” Weintraub said.

Through his attorney, Leon Rosenblatt, Reimondo issued a statement Friday after O’Keefe’s resignation.

“I continue to be deeply moved by the support of the community of East Hampton,” Reimondo said. “Despite the situation, I’m thankful for the citizens’ passionate engagement in their government. Today’s developments are another step forward to bringing this painful period in our town’s history to an end.”

Also at Friday’s meeting, the Council voted 6-1 (with Weintraub opposed) to hire attorney Jane Marsh, of Marsh and Bouregy, LLC, in Deep River, to review the proposed change to town ordinance 109, which outlines the structure of the police department. Until the ordinance is changed – by a public hearing and a Town Council vote – Reimondo remains on administrative leave.

Sommaruga drafted three separate revisions to the ordinance this summer, but at an August meeting, the Town Council voted to delay any action on changing the ordinance until another attorney could review it.

The council discussed the ordinance at a special meeting held this Wednesday, Sept. 15 (see story on page 12.)

Marlborough Sewer Proposal Heads to Public Hearing

by Katy Nally

The Board of Finance (BOF) unanimously voted to send the sewer referendum question, which seeks \$2.9 million to finish sewers around the lake and bring them up to the Marlborough Commons, to a public hearing, to be held Wednesday, Sept. 29, at 7 p.m., at the elementary school.

BOF members had many of their questions answered at a special meeting Tuesday, Sept. 14, which Town Planner Peter Hughes, Water Pollution Control Authority Chair Jack Murray and the Board of Selectmen attended.

The proposal asks for \$2,893,913 to complete sewers around North Main Street, Lake Road, Coleman Lane, Old Cider Mill Lane and Jones Hollow Road, as well as installing a force main up to the Marlborough Commons, via Jones Hollow Road.

Selectmen have said the project would be funded by the Clean Water Fund, which is managed by the Department of Environmental Protection. The fund provides 25 percent of the total – \$723,478 – as a grant, and the other 75 percent – \$2,170,435 – as a loan to be paid back over 20 years at a 2 percent interest rate.

Like the original proposal made by the WPCA this July, the town contribution will remain at 30 percent and will be funded through taxes. There is an additional 30.4 percent the town will fund through connection fees paid by new users.

Lastly, the user contribution, to be paid through yearly benefit assessments of \$603, will fund the remaining 39.6 percent of the town's yearly debt payment.

This proposal estimates that 84 EDUs (equivalent dwelling units) will hook up to the sewers; 59 will come from around the lake, and about 26 from the Marlborough Commons. This assumes businesses will come into the commons once the sewers are installed there.

As the property is now, "we're not in the best position to attract anyone," First Selectman Bill Black said. "It's an investment," he said about the sewers. "It's an investment in our future."

If the proposal eventually makes its way to voters and is approved in November, it will alter the town's debt, which is currently about 12 percent of the town's overall budget, and is projected to show a decrease for the first time in at least six fiscal years.

"We're very high in terms of our debt per capita," BOF Chairwoman Cathi Gaudinski said.

If Phase II is approved, the town's debt is projected to still decrease in the 2011-12 fiscal year, but by 0.08 percent. Without the sewers, that decrease would be about 5.94 percent over the 2010-11 fiscal year. Gaudinski explained this decrease is because the town hasn't borrowed in a few years.

By fiscal year 2012-13, when the first Phase II sewer payment would be due, the town's debt would increase slightly, by 0.08 percent. If the sewers were not approved, the debt would decrease in 2012-13 by another 5.94 percent. By 2012-13, the difference between the two plans in terms of the town's debt would be about \$289,000.

(The debt figures are calculated if the town

borrowed \$2,170,435 and not the total \$2,893,913, because it assumes the Clean Water Grant will be available.)

There was some discussion Tuesday night about whether embarking on a new project, just as debt was coming down, was a good idea.

First Selectman Bill Black said about the town's debt, "We've been living on the ragged edge."

Although the BOF voted to send the proposal to a public hearing, there was not much support for the project from finance board members. Cliff Denniss said he had heard both pros and cons about the sewer project from residents, but he had heard only a "whole lot of cons" about the town's debt.

Other concerns were about the figures presented by the WPCA and Hughes. The BOF discussed the fact that only some of Phase I was completed with \$12.02 million and now, with just \$2.9 million, Phase II was expected to be completed.

"If history's the judge, I'd say take it with a grain of salt," BOF alternate Pasquale Amodeo said about the figures.

Also, the "deviation" was another point of concern for some BOF members. Dick Shea read aloud a letter from the Department of Environmental Protection, which had provided the deviation. It said the letter was not supposed to be used as a commitment from the state that funding would be available. Shea said this was probably a boilerplate written on all state docu-

ments, but he still questioned the availability of the Clean Water Fund.

"The state was never in quite the mess it was in before," he said. "It would not be in the best interest of the town and the taxpayers, in the current economic climate, to go ahead with this."

Like several of the BOF members, WPCA member Bill Lardi also stated he was opposed to the \$2.9 million proposal.

Gaudinski read aloud Lardi's letter to the finance board that stated he was "absolutely opposed" to bringing sewers to Marlborough Commons. He said he was also opposed to the BOS "inserting the changes" into the WPCA's original proposal.

In July, the WPCA approved a \$1.95 million proposal that only included finishing North Main Street, Lake Road, Coleman Lane and Old Cider Mill Road.

Despite the concerns, the BOF members agreed it was important for residents to have a chance to weigh in on the \$2.9 million proposal.

"Let's let the people have some input on it," BOF member Beth Petroni said.

The hearing will allow residents to ask questions about Phase II, but not take a vote on the proposal.

After the public hearing, the BOF has another chance to approve or deny the proposal. Monday, Oct. 4 would be the last day the finance board would be able to file its reasoning on the referendum question with the town clerk.

RHAM's New Video Truck Hits the Road

by Lindsay Fetzner

A retired Andover Volunteer Fire Department rescue truck now has a second life as a truck for the RHAM High School video production club.

This year's Hebron Harvest Fair marked the official launch for the truck, where the club covered different events over the course of the four-day event via Wi-Fi.

"I was very impressed with the response we got at the Harvest Fair," said Paul Bancroft, advisor to the club, and a TV/video teacher at RHAM High School.

The club filmed five different events between Thursday and Sunday, including the opening fair ceremony, the performance of local band Columbia Fields, the Dock Dogs, the monster truck/ATV/Motocross shows and a Sept. 11 memorial commemoration. Footage taken by the club at the fair is available online at www.ustream.tv/user/rhamtv.

"It's really awesome," said 16-year-old Tim Kuper on Saturday at the fair. "Just seeing what we [filmed] online was really cool."

Kuper said that after the club filmed the performance of Columbia Fields on Friday, he viewed the footage online and was impressed with what he saw.

Bancroft said the idea for the mobile truck started while the club was filming live indoor sporting events, such as volleyball and basketball, at the high school. He said the football team inquired about the club filming their games as well. However, due to the fact that there was no press box or cables for filming on the field, Bancroft said it presented a hurdle and got him "thinking how we could do that." The idea to get the truck, Bancroft said, came up this past winter.

As a member of the Andover Volunteer Fire Department, Bancroft said he was aware that the rescue truck had been retired and was stationed at the town garage. Bancroft said he approached the Andover Board of Selectmen and then the RHAM Board of Education about the club utilizing the retired truck. Eventually, after months of board meetings, Bancroft said the town donated the truck in the early spring.

The afterschool video production club, Bancroft said, covers a significant amount of events each year, traditionally concerts, sports and plays. Many of the club members have also taken Bancroft's classes at the high school – introduction to video production, creating motion pictures, broadcast journalism or advanced broadcast journalism. Approximately 24 students are part of the club, which has been active since 2003.

A couple weeks ago, Bancroft said, the club got tentative approval of a \$13,879 grant from the Department of Public Utility Control. The grant funds could be used to provide equipment for the vehicle full time. Bancroft said currently, some equipment is borrowed from the auditorium and frequently moved back and forth. Additionally, the grant funds could be used to update the truck's equipment and purchase a TriCaster, which would allow for features such as slow motion, replays and titles, Bancroft said.

Hillary Cavender, 17, joined the club during her sophomore year, and also took the introduction to video productions class. The club, she said, had afforded her "really great experiences."

"Bancroft opens every door for us," Cavender said. "I've made so many new friends."

In June, at the high school graduation, the club had a soft launch of the truck. Bancroft said the launch went very well. "We had no issues at all," he said. Most of the students in the club have used similar equipment in the high school auditorium or in the gymnasium, Bancroft said, for other school-related events.

"The transfer to the truck has been pretty easy," Bancroft said. "The only thing new is the environment."

Before the club had the truck, the students filmed inside the gymnasium or auditorium, and Bancroft said they were aware of where the cameras and the other equipment went in order to film. But, with the truck, Bancroft said the students "have to figure it out on the fly."

Despite these hurdles and having to think fast on their feet, Bancroft said the students are "pretty pumped" about being able to use the truck to film the local events.



RHAM's video production club officially launched its new video truck last Saturday, Sept. 11 at the Hebron Harvest Fair. Pictured above are video production club members in front of their truck, which was donated by the town of Andover.

"I just love the fact that we can use our creativity for something everyone can see," said 16-year-old Nicole Plaszewski on Saturday, who joined the club her freshman year.

Plaszewski also drew attention to the fact that the footage that is recorded to DVD can be broadcasted by the Community Voice Channel, and from there, seen by people in the local community.

The truck, Bancroft said, is completely funded by donations and sponsors – no taxpayer funds were used. At the fair, Bancroft said they were able to hand out "quite a few sponsor forms," which he said was a good thing.

"The names that are on the truck today basically paid for where it is right now," Bancroft said.

The funds were used for such things as fuel

and insurance costs, he said, but added that they are still looking for more sponsors to help with future fuel-related costs.

Looking ahead, Bancroft said the "big thing is for us to get our feet wet." He hopes to work with other video production clubs in surrounding communities, as well as possibly film away sporting events, as opposed to just those taking place at the high school.

Bancroft said that since the club received the truck, the students have enjoyed the opportunity to travel to different locations and figure out the logistics of filming. This, he said, allowed the club to "change it up a bit."

Bancroft added that he too has enjoyed the challenges of pulling the projects off, and most recently, seeing the success of the Harvest Fair footage the students filmed last week.

American Legion Burger Booth No Longer at Hebron Fair

by Lindsay Fetzner

Visitors to the Hebron Harvest Fair this year may have noticed one missing booth, known for selling burgers – American Legion Post 95.

Due to escalating costs and expanding competition from for-profit organizations, the non-profit Legion has ceased the operation of their food sales at the four-day fair, which the Hebron Lions Club has put on for the past 40 years.

“It really got out of our ability to recoup our investment if we had even one day at the fair,” said Ron Winter, finance officer of Post 95. “It was a tough decision. The Legion has been at the fair as long as there has been a fair.”

Winter said when the vote was taken on not having a booth at the fair, discussion on the topic lasted less than five minutes, and was a unanimous vote.

“It just shows you how tired people had gotten,” Winter said. “We were sliding backward every year. Even though the weather was better and the turnout, I don’t think it would have been any better for us than in the previous years.”

Winter estimated it cost the American Legion about \$2,000 to walk into a booth at the fair, which he admitted is “considerably less than the commercial people pay.”

Hebron Lions Senior Advisor Robert E. Lee said professional vendors selling food are charged \$60 per linear foot of booth space. Nonprofits selling food are charged half of that amount, or \$30 per linear foot, Lee said. These figures have stayed consistent and have not been raised for several years, he added.

Lee said he was “somewhat reluctant” to release figures detailing fair expenses and how much the Lions take in from the event.

However, according to a Hebron Lions tax return for the 2008 year (the 2009 return was not available as of press time), the organization’s total revenue that year was \$665,828, including \$602,381 from Harvest Fair revenue. The tax return lists the fair as a \$684,473 expense.

“Sometimes people do not understand how

much it costs to put on a fair of that magnitude,” said Cathy Gerke, immediate past president of the Lions.

While the fair operated at a loss in 2008, Fair Superintendent John Johnson Jr. indicated this is generally not the case. “Unless we have a really, really bad fair where we lose a couple days, we should never operate on a loss,” Johnson said. “Everything should be budgeted off last year’s income.”

Johnson said the income from each year’s fair helps pay for the following year’s expenses. For example, the majority of expenses for 2008, Johnson said, were spent from the income from 2007.

Johnson noted that bad weather had an impact on the 2008 fair. Attendance dipped from 140,000 people in 2007 to 102,000 in 2008, with Saturday seeing a 90 percent drop in attendance compared to the year before. The Lions eventually shut the fair down at 6 p.m. on Saturday, due to the heavy rains that were a remnant of Tropical Storm Hannah.

In terms of the American Legion, Winter said in addition to the costs associated with space, the group also had to purchase the items they planned on selling at the booth- hamburgers, rolls, soda, water, condiments, etc. There were also costs associated with insurance and propane.

“We were constantly struggling against increasing prices there,” Winter said, adding that Ted’s Market in town was able to help the Legion “hold the line on the prices” the last couple of years.

“We had really good cooperation from local merchants helping us anyway they could,” Winter said.

In order to “just start breaking even,” Winter said, “we had to see crowds.” Although the Legion was sometimes able to break even by Saturday at noontime, the last couple of years, they weren’t breaking even until Sunday. And, if Sunday happened to be a “so-so day,” the Legion wouldn’t break even at all, Winter said.

The last two years especially, there were low turnouts at the fair, he said, which impacted the Legion’s sales.

Lee said that the weather is always a hurdle that those at the fair have to face. If it rains on a Saturday, which is typically the fair’s largest attendance day, some vendors may not be able to cover their fixed costs alone, never mind make a profit.

“We understand the plight,” Lee said.

Lee added that, to help the vendors, a few years ago the organization decided to stop being the “middleman” for selling beverages. Previously, vendors had to purchase beverages through the Lions, but they complained, saying they could get it cheaper themselves.

When asked if any other nonprofits had dropped out of the fair in recent years, Lee responded that the Hebron Democratic Town Committee (DTC) had. DTC member Mark Stuart said this week the group decided “there was no longer any incentive” for the efforts it would put to have a booth at the fair. “It wasn’t worth the amount of involvement in terms of time and dollars,” he said. “It was not a venture we wanted to participate in anymore.”

Stuart also said the fair is “not the community event that it used to be. It used to be the primary fundraising event for the nonprofit service organizations in the community, and that is no longer true.”

One other issue behind the Legion pulling out, Winter said, was how much to charge the public for the burgers at the fair.

“At the end of the day, we were also struggling internally on the question of what price to charge with the burgers,” Winter said. “A lot of guys did not want to go up on the price to recoup costs. We’re a community organization and we didn’t want to go up. That was a very difficult series of decisions.”

Last year, Winter said, many people were “discouraged” with the sales. The Legion could not go up against the increase in the costs of doing business, as well as the increase in com-

petition as a nonprofit, Winter said.

Even though the Legion has decided to leave the Hebron Harvest Fair, it will still be a mainstay at the Maple Festival in town. One of the upsides to that festival is the Legion’s food tent is set up in close proximity to its post, so the set-up and breakdown is not the same as it is at the Lions fairgrounds.

To raise further funds, Winter said the Legion sells flowers in celebration of Mother’s Day and sells pumpkins and strawberries as well. In the next week or two, the Legion will also begin selling mums. Sales from these events have been good, Winter said, as the “community has always been responsive.”

The money that the Legion raises goes to a number of causes and organizations both in town and across other communities. These include college scholarships, donations to the fuel and food banks, programs for veterans in needs, youth sporting events and scouting, among other things, Winter said.

“We’ve got a lot of things that happen in the community that we donate to,” Winter said.

In addition to the areas that the organization donates to, Winter said funds have to be set aside for upkeep on the Legion post in town. Costs for the post, Winter said, have gone up considerably over the years, including propane for heating.

“Our cost to keep our building open has more than doubled in the past 10 years,” Winter said.

A decade ago, Winter said, the Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and its auxiliaries and the Sons of the American Legion were all present at the fair. Costs were the reason for the VFW booth pulling out of the fair in 2001, and now, again, are the reason for the withdrawal of the legion from the fair.

In a letter to the editor in last week’s *Rivereast*, Winter thanked all of the annual visitors and workers at the booths over the years for both their support and also their loyalty at the fair.

“We will never forget you,” Winter said.

Hebron Elementary Named Blue Ribbon School

by Lindsay Fetzner

Administration and school board members were thrilled after Hebron Elementary School was recognized last week as a 2010 National Blue Ribbon School.

The school is one of just 304 schools selected, including 254 public and 50 private schools.

"It is such a testament to the wonderful work of the staff and of the children at Hebron Elementary School," Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz said this week. "They really deserve all the attention and credit in the world."

The U.S. Department of Education honors public and private elementary, middle and high schools with the Blue Ribbon based on one of two criteria – high performing schools, which are ranked among the state's highest performing schools, or improving schools, which have improved student performance to "high levels." Hebron Elementary School (HES) was honored for being a high performing school.

"I think it's a tremendous accomplishment not only for Hebron Elementary School, but also for the kids going through Gilead Hill School," Board of Education (BOE) member Brian O'Reilly said.

Not only is it a "huge accomplishment" for the children, but also for the parents and "everybody in the schools," including the superintendent, administration, teachers and paraprofessionals, O'Reilly said.

Fellow school board member Tina Marie Blinn said she is both excited and proud for

HES to be awarded with a Blue Ribbon.

"It just proves we have great leadership in Ellie Cruz," Blinn said. "We're fortunate to have teachers and paraprofessionals that strive for the best."

Cruz said the process began last winter, when Hebron Elementary School was invited to apply for the award, as schools do not self nominate for the Blue Ribbon award. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the chief state school officer nominates public schools and the Council for American Private Education submits the applications of the private schools. The application process, Cruz said, was "very rigorous."

"The teachers and staff worked very hard with [HES Principal] Kevin [Hanlon] and [former HES Assistant Principal] Vonda [Tencza] to complete the application," Cruz said.

In the spring, Cruz said, HES was notified that they had met most of the criteria to be an award winner; however, the one hurdle the school had to wait for the final word on was making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on the Connecticut Mastery Tests.

"AYP has been a challenge for us these past three years," Cruz said, adding that she knew the eventual winning of the award would hinge on whether the special education students made AYP.

Cruz learned the AYP results in August. In

reading, she said, the students were performing around 58 percent meeting proficiency, and had to hit the target goal of 79 percent. And in math, Cruz said the students were performing around 76 percent, and had to hit the target goal of 82 percent.

"We worked really hard," Cruz said, adding that some of the practices within the district were altered.

In August, Cruz said she received an e-mail stating that the students had reached the reading goal, with a mark of 79.7 percent, just .7 over the goal. Cruz said reading scores were increased by almost 22 percentage points. In math, Cruz said, "we overshot the goal," and surpassed the target of 82 percent, with a score of 84.5 percent.

"The support staff, the teachers and the children deserve all the credit because they did the heavy lifting," Cruz said. "They went the extra mile. They knew this was an objective and target, and they made the target."

But, like O'Reilly said, Cruz indicated that it is not only HES that is celebrating the Blue Ribbon award.

"It's Gilead Hill School as well, because they develop the foundation," she said. "It's a victory for everybody."

HES celebrated the victory last Thursday, when Hanlon made the announcement to the students. Cruz said blue, sparkly streamers were hung in the school to honor the accomplish-

ment.

"The kids had no idea what was going on," Cruz said, adding that after the audience found out, "people were just shouting and cheering."

The next morning, Cruz said BOE Chair Jane Dube also hung blue ribbons on the front school doors to celebrate.

The 2010 Blue Ribbon Schools will be honored at an awards ceremony on Nov. 15 and 16 in Washington, D.C. Cruz said Kevin Hanlon, along with Math Specialist Kristine Garofalo, will be in attendance to accept the award from the President of the United States. Garofalo was nominated by the teachers to accompany Hanlon, Cruz said.

The other schools honored in Connecticut were St. Gregory the Great School in Danbury, St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School in Fairfield, St. Catherine of Siena School in Trumbull, Thompson Brook School in Avon, Dr. Robert H. Brown Middle School in Madison, Our Lady Star of the Sea School in Stamford, Saint Aloysius School in New Canaan, Saint James School in Manchester, Saint Martha School in Enfield, Saint Mary School in Ridgefield and Smith Middle School in Glastonbury.

A complete listing of the 2010 Blue Ribbon Schools is available at www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/2010/index.html, as well as additional information on the program and the schools' applications.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Last Saturday was Sept. 11, and I found myself at a New York Mets game. In many ways, it was the perfect place for me to be to mark the ninth anniversary of those horrific attacks of 2001.

Many may recall that after the events of Sept. 11 happened, baseball took several days off, as the entire nation reeled from the attacks. Play resumed the following Monday, and the Mets were on the road, in Pittsburgh. They were due to return home to New York on Friday, Sept. 21 – it would be the first sports event to take place in the city since the attacks. I knew just one thing. I wanted to be there.

So, shortly after I learned baseball was resuming, I called the Mets ticket office and got a pair of tickets for myself and my sister (a fellow Mets fan). We drove down to Shea Stadium on Sept. 21, for what would turn out to be an incredibly memorable experience.

The game featured appearances by various politicians – including New York City Mayor Rudy Guiliani, a huge Yankee fan (who understandably put his allegiances aside that night) – and such celebrities as Diana Ross, who performed “God Bless America,” and Liza Minelli, who did a rousing rendition of the theme from *New York, New York* (and while I’m a big Frank Sinatra fan, I recognize it was Liza’s song before it was his).

But one of the things that stands out is the National Anthem, which was performed by Marc Anthony (hey, it was 2001). Fans stood and removed their caps like they always did, but while Anthony was singing, I noticed something interesting was happening – the fans were singing too. It was quiet, and it was somber, but the entire ballpark – with no prodding from

the PA announcer – united to softly sing the National Anthem.

It was really quite amazing. I had been to dozens of baseball games before then, and always the fans just stood and watched as the singer down on the field performed the National Anthem. But this time, people wanted to sing it themselves. It was spontaneous, and remains etched in my mind. It was a stirring moment, and one that reminds me of the unity this nation felt in those immediate days and weeks after 9/11, before politics and the war in Iraq turned everything sour.

As for the game itself, well, you couldn’t have scripted a better return home for the Mets. Against the division-leading Atlanta Braves, the Mets were down 2-1 in the bottom of the eighth when Mike Piazza stepped to the plate with the tying run on base. And Piazza, as he so often did in those types of situations, came through, blasting a two-run homer over the center field fence, and sending the 41,000 fans at Shea that night into pandemonium. I mean, the place just erupted.

It was an emotional night, an intense night and, ultimately, a thrilling night. I’m very, very glad I was a part of it.

* * *

Speaking of the Mets, Cox Communications added SNY (which exclusively shows like 120 Mets games a year) just in time for the Huskies’ home opener last Saturday. Granted, it’s only the standard definition channel and not the high def one, but hey, half a loaf is better than none. The Mets are finally on TV again, every night, the way I used to watch them. It’s a beautiful thing. Thank you, UConn Huskies, for giving me back my Mets.

* * *

See you next week.

Colchester Police News

9/8: Philip Rutigliano, 24, of 27 Potash Hill Rd., Baltic, was charged with misconduct with a motor vehicle, State Police said.

9/8: Justin Bothur, 25, of 104 Pleasant St., was charged with third-degree burglary, third-degree arson, criminal mischief and three counts of failure to appear, Colchester Police said.

9/10: Adam Michaelson, 27, of 139 Lebanon Ave., Apt. 4, was charged with DUI and failure to carry license, State Police said.

9/10: Elizabeth Zipp, 47, of 10 Town Woods Rd., Old Lyme, was charged with DUI, State Police said.

9/11: At about 11:18 p.m., Troop K received several reports of an “erratic vehicle weaving

in and out of traffic” at the Hebron Harvest Fair, State Police said. Nicholas Daddario, 21, of 115B House St., Glastonbury, was subsequently stopped and charged with DUI and failure to carry license.

9/12: Joshua David Fuller, 31, of 726 Trumbull Highway, Lebanon, turned himself in for three counts of disorderly conduct, three counts of second-degree harassment and three counts of criminal violation of a protective order, Colchester Police said.

9/12: James Williams, 27, of 65 Brown St., Hartford, was charged with DWI and failure to drive right, State Police said.

Hebron Police News

9/7: Jordan Lee Hearn, 19, of 137 Birch St., Manchester, was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia and possession of less than four ounces of marijuana, State Police said.

9/7: Zachary Girouard, 20, of 1166 Route 94, was charged with failure to respond and violation of probation, State Police said.

Portland Police News

8/30: A 17-year-old female was arrested for possession of less than four ounces of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia, Portland Police said.

8/30: A 16-year-old female was arrested for narcotics not kept in original container, police said.

8/30: A 15-year-old male was arrested for narcotics not kept in original container, police said.

9/7: Richard Fillback, 63, of 7 Riverview St. Ext. was charged with third-degree criminal mischief, police said.

9/10: Arthur Bruce, 33, of 213 South Main St., Ablan, VT, was charged with four counts of first-degree forgery, two counts of fifth-degree larceny, two counts of issuing a bad check and third-degree larceny, police said.

East Hampton Police News

9/2: Matthew H. Lafo, 22, of 213 Grapevine Rd., Higganum, was arrested for illegal possession of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia and simple trespass, East Hampton Police said.

9/4: Stephanie Somerville, 19, of 14 Barbara Ave., was arrested for failure to obey a traffic signal, failure to drive right and DUI, police said.

9/6: Anthony Garofalo, 36, of 78 Mott Hill Rd., was issued a ticket for operating a motor vehicle without insurance, police said.

9/9: Michael D. Ciacchero, 22, of 53 Edgerton St., was issued a ticket for towing an unregistered trailer, police said.

Colchester Parks and Recreation Director Resigns

by Katy Nally

Parks and Recreation Director Jason Cohen resigned last week to “pursue other opportunities,” he said in an e-mail to the *RiverEast* Monday. The resignation came less than two weeks after Cohen was placed on administrative leave by the town.

When reached Wednesday, Cohen would not comment further on why he decided to resign. First Selectman Gregg Schuster would also not comment on Cohen’s resignation, because it is a personnel matter.

Cohen, who had been the town’s Parks and Recreation director since 2004, was placed on administrative leave Aug. 30 and his resignation was effective Thursday, Sept. 9.

An investigation into a “personnel matter” began earlier this month, but Schuster would not confirm whether this investigation was related to Cohen’s resignation. However, a source at the time, who asked to remain anonymous, said Cohen was under investigation.

According to the source, the investigation was because a Town Hall employee allegedly hid a video camera and recorded fellow employees.

However, the source said the recorded video has since been deleted.

The source said the Town Hall employees union was expected to file a grievance when the investigation first began. But, a union steward said this week, Colchester Town Hall members of the Connecticut Employees Union Independent were not involved with the matter and would not be filing a grievance.

Throughout his time in Colchester, Cohen helped the Dog Park Committee establish its new park, assisted in making Cody Camp Memorial Field a reality and helped plan the annual 57 Fest. (Cohen did not want to comment Wednesday on the highlights of his job.)

However, according to his employee file, Cohen had also been placed on administrative

leave twice during his tenure, and had several smaller conflicts with selectmen.

The first suspension was the result of an incident that happened at the Family Campout on Aug. 19, 2006. Because of “workplace violence,” “consuming alcohol while on duty” and “conducting yourself in a manner that is detrimental or contrary to the goals or best interest of the Town, not to speak of the poor judgment you exercised that evening,” Cohen was suspended from work without pay for five days and placed on probation for six months.

According to a police report in Cohen’s employee file, he had been drinking at Ruby Cohen Park during the campout and threw a beer bottle at a Ford F-150 that was passing through the area.

At the time, Cohen said the truck was speeding and doing “burnouts” in the park. He said felt the truck might travel toward the children’s tents, so he yelled for the vehicle to stop and then threw a beer bottle at the truck, the report said.

However, the driver of the vehicle said he came to the park and was making a right turn when he saw the tents, the report said. Then, “several men” began running toward his truck, “screaming and throwing beer bottles,” he said. One of the beer bottles caused the driver’s side window to shatter, the report said.

When police asked Cohen if he had been drinking he said no. But when police said they could smell alcohol on his breath, he said he had had a beer earlier in the evening. When asked where he got the beer bottle he threw, Cohen said he had been drinking a second beer at the time of the incident and threw that bottle, the report said.

After the campout, Cohen’s second leave of absence began on Jan. 20, 2009 and stemmed from his actions with the press regarding alleged fee changes.

According to a letter from Superintendent of Schools Karen Loiselle, Cohen did not communicate concerns the Parks and Recreation Commission had “regarding fees and scheduling for the community’s use” of school facilities, and did not know of a special meeting of the commission held to discuss the fees.

But instead of addressing concerns to Loiselle, Cohen spoke with Channel 3 News. Loiselle also said Cohen inaccurately quoted one of the fee changes.

“You did not communicate with me at all regarding serious concerns of the committee,” Loiselle wrote. “I learned of the matter and the special meeting request from an e-mail forwarded to me ... and from a broadcast I saw on Channel 3.”

In doing so, Loiselle said Cohen “violated a directive,” because he did not inform the first selectman he spoke with the press.

“The incident caused a serious disruption to the school system,” Loiselle said. “I had to spend considerable time responding to angry members of the community ... rather than devote our time to ... other important matters related to the education of Colchester’s children.”

Loiselle said she had also reviewed Cohen’s employee file and was “very concerned that despite formal reprimands starting in 2006, you continue to demonstrate a lack of communication skills and attitude to effectively perform in your leadership position.”

Because of the incident, Cohen was placed on leave without pay for four days.

In addition to the two suspensions, Cohen also had a few minimal reprimands from first selectmen during his time at Town Hall.

In July 2006 Cohen submitted a request for the town to purchase Epipen training from Community Camps, Inc. for a total of \$25. However, Cohen is a co-founder of Community Camps, Inc.

Jenny Contois, first selectman at the time, reviewed the request and wrote “No Way!” over it. She also sent Cohen an e-mail saying she had already advised him this was an “ethics violation” the year prior.

“I’m very upset,” Contois wrote. “It is inappropriate and this behavior must stop or disciplinary action will ensue.”

Later on that year, Contois also sent a memo to Cohen, reprimanding him for taking a town vehicle home overnight after a meeting.

“Jay, you are not an entity onto your own and you have no authority to make these types of decisions,” Contois wrote.

Lastly, in 2007, then-First Selectman Stan Soby said in a letter he was concerned about how Cohen had organized sponsorship for a car dealership for the Summer Concert on the Green.

According to the letter, Cohen put up a link to a car dealership’s website on the town’s site, which could have caused “potential legal issues for the Town,” Soby said.

“The entire sponsorship issue has been problematic from the start,” Soby said. “At many points along the way, you did not provide clear information to the Board or exercise good judgment in implementing what could have been a good plan to support the concert series.”

Despite the several reprimands, Cohen received high marks in his latest employee evaluation, which was administered by Schuster June 10 of this year.

“Overall, Jay is performing well,” the file states. “Jay needs to work on relations with his staff including a better understanding of what the maintainers do.”

With Cohen’s resignation, Director of Facilities Greg Plunkett is the acting Parks and Rec director. Schuster said no decisions have been made yet as to filling the position or leaving it vacant.

Colchester Senior Center Study Group Still Considering Options

by Katy Nally

The Senior Center Study Group, charged last November with recommending what direction the center should take, was renewed for another year at the Sept. 2 Board of Selectmen’s meeting.

Terms for each of the group’s nine members, and one alternate, were also renewed, to end on Oct. 12, 2011.

Originally, the committee was slated to present its recommendation for the senior center this coming November. Senior Center Director Patti White explained committee members weren’t sure if they could meet that deadline, so the date was extended. White estimated the group would determine a recommendation in about six months.

The Senior Center Study Group received three charges from selectmen in 2009 that included: developing a recommendation for a new senior center, whether it be a stand-alone structure or a joint community center; a recommendation for what populations the facility would serve; and a recommendation for what services the center would provide.

So far, selectwoman Rosemary Coyle, liaison to the group, said committee members have “basically done all their research.”

The group had six site visits to neighboring communities – Coventry, Lebanon, Tolland, Groton, Glastonbury and East Lyme – to check out other senior and community center facilities.

Senior Center Study Group member Jack Faski said he and many of the other group members liked the Lebanon facility because of its layout and use of space.

Coming up for the Senior Center Study Group is a site visit to William J. Johnston Middle School, to look at a vacant area the school no longer uses. Superintendent of

Schools Karen Loiselle and Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein gave presentations to the Senior Center Study Group at its last meeting, to discuss possible uses of the vacant facility.

Coyle said the site visits were an important tool in determining recommendations for the town.

“I think that was and is a big piece of knowing what you need and want to do,” she said.

Now, with much of the research complete, White said the group has hired a consultant to help the group sort through all of its information and determine its three recommendations. White said the consultant’s contract, which was approved by selectmen, will span about three months and won’t exceed \$2,200. White said the money for the consultant will come from either the Community Center Building Fund or the Senior Center Donation Account.

As part of the service, White said the consultant will create a survey for residents so they too can weigh in on the senior center’s future. This way, White added, the “broadest audience” could be reached.

The consultant will also provide an unbiased perspective for the group, which has yet to come to any unanimous decisions regarding the three charges.

White noted the group is very diverse when it comes to backgrounds, ages and experience, so agreeing on the senior center’s direction might take some debating.

“There’s a good cross section of the town,” Faski said, “There’s so many things that are up in the air it’s hard to tell where they’ll all land,” he said. “Hopefully we’ll get this thing rolling and everyone will be happy.”

But throughout the group’s meetings, White said, “One thing everybody does agree on: the



The Senior Center Study Group was recently extended for another year. The group is expected to make its recommendation for the future of Colchester’s senior center, pictured above, in about six months.

existing building, as it is, no longer meets the needs of Colchester’s senior population.”

She explained the current building, which is about 120 years old and was originally a schoolhouse, has a leaky roof, faulty windows and space issues. The current center, located at 95 Norwich Ave., is also utilized by local veterans and other community groups.

(On Sept. 22, the center will celebrate its 30th anniversary, commemorating the day it opened in Colchester. The senior center moved from Grange Hall.)

With the one-year mark for the establishment of the Senior Center Study Group about two months away, White, Coyle and Faski all said they were pleased with the work it’s done thus far.

“I think they’re doing an excellent job,” White said. “They’re very engaged and committed.”

The next Senior Center Study Group meeting will be Wednesday, Sept. 22, at 4:30, at the senior center.

Obituaries

East Hampton

Amber Miner

Amber Miner, 47, of East Hampton, beloved wife of Guy Miner, died unexpectedly on Wednesday, Sept. 8 in Portland. Born Feb. 5, 1963 in Middletown, she was the daughter of James Lyman and Donna Fuller.

Amber had lived in Marlborough until her marriage to Guy, when they moved to East Hampton in 1989. Amber was a member of Hope Church in East Hampton and had worked for Swiss RE in the customer service department. She was one of the founding members of the Colchester Continental Fife and Drum Corps and was an alumni of the Marlborough Fife and Drum Corps.

Besides her husband, she is survived by her grandmother, Arlene Fuller of Colchester and formerly of Marlborough; her father, James Lyman and his wife Cheryl of Hinsdale, MA; her mother, Donna (Fuller) Lester and her husband Curtis of Florida; two daughters, Lindsay Miner and Abby Miner, both of East Hampton; her adopted daughters, Jessica Edwards of New Hampshire; two brothers, James and Troy Lyman of Massachusetts; and a sisters, Jamie Summers of Ohio.

Amber had been an adoptive mother to many other children in her life who needed her. She made everyone feel as though they were family.

A memorial service was held Wednesday, Sept. 15 at 11 a.m. in the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, with the Rev. Roger Martin of Hope Church officiating. Burial will be private at the convenience of the family. Friends called at the Spencer Funeral Home on Tuesday, Sept. 14.

In lieu of flowers memorial contributions may be made to the Education Fund for Amber's children c/o Liberty Bank, East High Street, East Hampton, CT 06424.

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

East Hampton

Athele Eilert

Athele M. (Hagstrom) Eilert, 94, of Southington and formerly of East Hampton, widow of the late Winfred B. Eilert, died Friday, Sept. 10 at her home with her family by her side. Born June 12, 1916 in Hartford she was the daughter of the late Albert and Elizabeth (Nolan) Hagstrom.

She had worked as an office manager at Yale University until her retirement.

She is survived by her son, Winfred "Skip" B. Eilert of Colorado; her daughter, Kathie (Eilert) Whitcomb and her husband Robert of Southington; four grandchildren, Allan Scozzari, Wendy Ann Scozzari-Humes, Rachel Eilert-DeMers, Nathaniel Eilert; and three great-grandchildren, Danielle Scozzari, Bailey Ann Scozzari and Thomas Murphy.

Funeral services will be private at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the VNA Assoc. Hospice Unit of Plainville, 56 West Main St., Plainville, CT 06062.

The Spencer Funeral Home has care of arrangements.

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

Portland

Joan Halberg

Joan (JoAnne) Faye Goodman Halberg, 80, of Murrells Inlet, SC, formerly of Portland, died Sept. 8 in Charleston, SC. Born Oct. 30, 1929, in Freeport, IL, to Bessie McKnight Kramer and Earl Goodman, she grew up in Illinois and attended South High in Minneapolis, MN.

She married her beloved husband of 55 years, Dale Halberg Sr., at Gustavus Adolphus College in Minnesota. During the Korean War, Dale was recalled to duty, so Joan and her first three children moved to New Britain, near his family. Joan kept busy, modeling at a department store, and when her youngest started kindergarten, went to work for Rep. Daddario. She and Dale stayed active in Democratic politics, including JFK's campaign. She took a hiatus from work when their fourth child was born, then returned to work and college, at Wesleyan University in Middletown. For nearly 30 years she worked and studied in Wesleyan's Economics department. She and Dale raised their children in Farmington and Portland. In the early 1990s, Joan and Dale retired to Surfside Beach, SC, then Murrells Inlet. Dale died in August 2004.

Joan loved bridge, the *New York Times* crossword puzzle, cross stitch (award-winning), cooking and her friends. She was active in her Lutheran church in Connecticut, a Girl Scout leader for girls at risk, volunteered at the Murrells Inlet library and loved her rescue cat, Miss Finnegan. She was a strong person who demanded high standards, and much-loved in her family.

Joan is survived by children Dale (Sylvia), Saluda, VA; Leslie Flood (the late Michael E. Flood), Portland; Dana Halberg (Larry Pless), Atlanta; and Jaye Egan (Tom), Palm City, FL; grandchildren, Tara, Ethan, Danielle, Laurin, Anna, David, Deane, Jessica, Katherine and Sam; great-grandchildren Kathleen and Edwin; her sister, Earlene of Rockford, IL; and a large extended family in Connecticut.

The family is deeply grateful for the kindness, support and friendship of Joan's wonderful friends in Murrells Inlet, who were always there for her.

Memorial services were held Saturday, Sept. 11, at Goldfinch's Beach Chapel, 11528 Highway 17 Bypass, Murrells Inlet, and later at Arlington National Cemetery alongside Dale.

Donations in Joan's memory may be made to Coastal Animal Rescue, PO 2981, Murrells Inlet, SC 29576; Gustavus Adolphus College, 800 W. College Avenue, St Peter, MN 56802; or an organization of your choice that makes the world a better place.

Marlborough

Stanley R. Robbins

Stanley R. Robbins, 84, of Citrus Springs, FL, formerly of Marlborough, passed away Wednesday, Sept. 1, at his home. A native of Derby, VT, he was born Aug. 9, 1926 to Guy V. and Luella (Tice) Robbins and was a retired supervisor and machinist for Pratt and Whitney Aircraft.

Mr. Robbins served his country during World War II in the U.S. Navy from 1943-46 and was a life member of Edward Penno VFW Post 4864, Citrus Springs, FL; a 46-year member of American Legion Post 197, Marlborough; and a member of LST 494 Organization of World War II Shipmates. One of Stanley's great loves was golf and he was a member of Citrus Springs Golf and Country Club and a former member of Chanticleir Golf Course, Colchester.

He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Bertha H. Robbins, Citrus Springs, FL; son, Randy G. Robbins, Citrus Springs, FL; son, Alan D. Robbins (wife Linda), Andover; son, William S. Robbins (wife Laurel), Marlborough; brother, Milton Robbins (wife Beverly), Meridianville, AL; sisters, Frances Taylor and Ruth Marsh, both of Derby, VT, and sister Marion Bates, Bradenton, FL; seven grandchildren, five great-grandchildren; and many nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews.

Mr. Robbins was preceded in death by a son, Gregg Robbins, in 1954, and a great-grandson, Brandyn Beebe, in 1999.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Hospice of Citrus County, P.O. Box 641270, Beverly Hills, FL 34464.

A memorial service was held Monday, Sept. 13, from Fero Funeral Home, Beverly Hills, FL (www.ferofuneralhome.com).

There will also be a memorial service to be held at American Legion Post 197 on Route 66 in Marlborough in November. The *Rivereast* will post the date and time in early November.

East Hampton

Patrick D. Loftus

Patrick D. Loftus, 89, of Somers, formerly of Cobalt, entered peacefully into eternal rest comforted by his family Saturday, Sept. 4, at Rockville General Hospital. He was the beloved husband of the late K. Patricia (Cowles) Loftus who predeceased him in 1999 and was his bride of 49 years.

Pat was born on April 14, 1921 in Montreal, Canada, to the late Joseph and Diana (LeBlanc) Loftus. He grew up in the Frog Hollow section of Hartford, raised his family in Glastonbury, and lived in Cobalt and Enfield before moving to Somers in 1999. Pat forwent a scholarship to Union College to enter the workforce and later become a veteran of World War II, serving his country proudly in the U.S. Marine Corps as a sergeant. He was with the Fourth Marine Division and saw combat in the Pacific Theater fighting in Iwo Jima, Tinian and Saipan and received commendations for his valiant efforts. Everyone enjoyed his stories about World War II, his battles, his down time in Hawaii and California, especially the stories about all the Big Bands and movies stars he met in Hollywood, and the shows he would sneak in to.

He worked for 44 years at Aetna Life and Casualty, starting in the mailroom and working his way up to regional director of the customer service department. He was voted president of the Aetna Men's Club, and was the star of the Aetna Men's Basketball team in the 1940s. His motto in his Hartford High School yearbook was "Never Late" and it continued to be his lifelong motto. He graduated from Hillyer College with a Bachelor of Science Degree in 1955 and had a leadership role in the fundraising to build what is now the University of Hartford.

Pat was a member of the Knights of Columbus, the Glastonbury Exchange Club, the Glastonbury Republican Town Committee and he coached youth basketball and baseball. He also was active in the regional YMCA, giving back the love and support he had received in his youth. He was a lifetime fan of the Boston Red Sox, was a big fan of UConn Men's and Women's basketball, and he loved Big Band music and Frank Sinatra. He led a full life and was a devoted husband and father. Pat will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

He is survived by his loving family, his children, Jeanne Tatoian and her husband, John, of Somers with whom he made his home and Daniel Loftus of Niantic; his cherished grandchildren, Erik Emanuelson, Kristina Emanuelson, Patrick Loftus and Bethany Rose Loftus; his brother, James Loftus and several nieces and nephews. He also leaves his special companions and loving caregivers Theresa Kollmer, Kathleen Leeper and Laura Motola; and a special friend, Cynthia Lindsley.

In addition to his wife, Patricia, Patrick was predeceased by his sister, Margaret Zendzian, his grandson, Joseph Loftus, and his daughter-in-law, Julie Loftus.

Family and friends gathered at Somers Funeral Home, 354 Main St., Somers, on Saturday, Sept. 11, to celebrate his life with his family, followed by a procession to All Saints Church, 25 School St., Somersville, where a Mass of Christian Burial celebrating Patrick's life was held. Burial, with military honors, followed at the Somers Center Cemetery, Battle Street, in Somers.

In honor of his wife, Patricia, donations in Patrick's memory may be made to the ALS Association, Development Department, 27001 Agoura Road, Suite 250, Calabasas Hills, CA 91301.

To leave an online message of sympathy, visit www.somersfuneralhome.com.

East Hampton

Kenneth E. Stephens

Kenneth Ernest Stephens, 65, formerly of East Hampton and a resident of Paddle Wheel Circle, Pamlico Plantation, Washington, NC, died Friday Sept. 3.

Mr. Stephens was born in Hartford Oct. 2, 1944, to the late Kenneth and Stella Stephens. He is survived by his wife Eileen Frances Maher, whom he married April 1, 1966, and whom he loved traveling with around the country.

He was a 1965 graduate from the electrical department of the A.I. Prince Technical School in Hartford.

He owned and operated Tri-County Electric in East Hampton for 20 years. In 1982 he began teaching electrical classes in the State of Connecticut Technical School system. Upon retirement in 2002, he moved to Washington, NC.

He was a member of Wanoca Presbyterian Church, was avid boater, auto racing fan, enjoyed camping and was very happy in his new community in North Carolina.

Survivors include his wife of the home, Eileen M. Stephens; two sons, Kenneth Stephens of Boston, MA, Kevin Stephens of Chandler, AZ; one daughter, Kathleen Stephenson of Columbia, SC, and three grandchildren, Elizabeth, Nathaniel and Micah Ann.

You may address to the Stephens family by visiting www.paulfuneralhome.com.

Portland

Douglas David Nielsen

Douglas David Nielsen, 61, of Portland died suddenly Monday, Sept. 13 at Middlesex Hospital. Born in 1948 in Waterbury, he was the son of Helen Nielsen and the late Douglas Nielsen of Portland.

He leaves behind a sister, Laurie Armstrong; brother-in-law, Robert Armstrong, as well as his niece, Alison Armstrong, and nephews, Daniel Armstrong, Eric Armstrong, and Grant Armstrong.

Doug was a graduate of Portland High School and Central Connecticut State University. He earned his living as a senior designer for Electric Boat in Groton, where he worked for 33 years. He was an avid reader and history buff. Some of his favorite pastimes were gardening, cooking, and playing golf.

Friends may call at the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, on Saturday, Sept. 18, between 9-11 a.m.

A graveside burial service will follow at the Swedish Cemetery in Portland.

Three Colchester Sports Teams, Paraprofessional Reinstated

by Katy Nally

The Board of Education (BOE) unanimously voted Tuesday to reinstate one paraprofessional and three sports teams, using one-time funds from the federal government.

BOE Chairman Ron Goldstein said freshmen boys' and girls' basketball at Bacon Academy, boys' and girls' basketball at William J. Johnston Middle School (WJJMS) and indoor track at Bacon have all been reinstated. Also, 0.5 FTE of a kindergarten special education paraprofessional will be brought in to restore the position to 1 FTE, to assist two new special education students, Goldstein said.

The reinstatements total \$16,688, which will come from the \$792,116 Colchester received from the federal government's Education Jobs Fund Program. Goldstein said Superintendent of Schools Karen Loiselle will make a recommendation to the BOE at its Oct. 12 meeting as to how to use the remaining funds.

"We're still looking into the way the money

can be spent," Goldstein said.

The Education Jobs Fund Program allocated about \$110 million for Connecticut, to allow school districts to retain, rehire and bring in new employees or reinstate previously eliminated positions.

The funds can also be used to restore reductions in salaries and benefits that were previously cut.

Besides teachers and paraprofessionals, the positions that could be reinstated include coaches, secretaries, bus drivers and custodians, among others.

Goldstein explained the funds could be used to retain, restore or rehire employees whose jobs are "related to students."

The BOE decided to use the funds to reinstate these fall sports teams, and their coaches, because schedules for these teams must be decided soon, Goldstein said.

"I think that it's an appropriate use of the

funds," Goldstein said. "But, I remain concerned about the sustainability of these programs."

The reinstated basketball and indoor track teams were originally cut in the 2010-11 budget along with freshman boys' and girls' soccer at Bacon and boys' and girls' soccer at WJJMS.

Goldstein was not sure what Loiselle's recommendation would indicate, but he said the BOE would have to use the remaining funds "in a way that doesn't create a real sustainability problem."

"We're still being cautious, because again, this money will disappear," he added.

Ultimately, the decision will be up to the BOE on how to allocate the approximately \$775,000.

In total, the Education Jobs Fund Program provided \$10 billion to schools nationwide. Congress approved the legislation on Aug. 10 this year. According to the US Department of

Education website, www2.ed.gov/programs/educationjobsfund, the money was issued to save or create education jobs for the 2010-11 school year.

Out of the seven towns the *Rivereast* covers, Colchester received the most money by far. Andover received about \$72,000, Marlborough, about \$102,000, Salem, about \$181,000, Hebron, about \$220,000, Portland, about \$250,000 and East Hampton, about \$444,000.

The funds were allocated based on the state's formula for the Education Cost Sharing grant. According to the state's Department of Education website, www.sde.ct.gov/sde, the jobs program funds will be "paid through the Department's cash management system... though monthly draw downs."

The next regularly scheduled BOE meeting will be Tuesday, Oct. 12, at 7 p.m., in the Bacon Academy media center.

East Hampton Council Moving Ahead With Plan to Cut Police Chief

by Claire Michalewicz

The Town Council voted this week to continue with the process to officially remove Police Chief Matthew Reimondo's position, sending a rewritten ordinance about the town's police department to a public hearing later this month.

Close to 400 people crowded into the high school auditorium for a special meeting Wednesday evening, to speak to the council and watch them review the ordinance language.

The proposed revision to Ordinance 109, which outlines the structure of the police department, removes the chief's position and gives its powers to a lieutenant. Reimondo has been on administrative leave since June, when now-former Town Manager Jeffery O'Keefe took Reimondo's badge and gun, and had him escorted home.

Reimondo is currently suing the town to be reinstated to his position. O'Keefe abruptly resigned from his position last week, and former Public Works Director Robert Drewry took his place as an interim manager. Wednesday's meeting marked Drewry's first public appearance in his new position.

Though the Town Council has held several special meetings in the past few weeks, this was the first meeting in over a month at which public comment was allowed.

For over an hour, one resident after another stood up to address the council. Some said they were part of what Town Council Chairwoman Engel called "the silent majority" of residents who supported the council in their decision to remove the chief and save money.

"My concern is the former town manager, Mr. O'Keefe," said resident Art Marsden. "This man's life has been destroyed." Marsden explained that there was no proof of any of the harassment complaints, and that O'Keefe would have a hard time finding another job.

"I believe this was a very difficult decision," said Janice Cavanaugh. Cavanaugh explained that thousands of other Connecticut residents had been laid off in recent months, but "you haven't seen the media coverage or media cir-

cus over any of those other people."

Most, though, criticized the council for going ahead with its attempt to remove Reimondo's position.

"This has got to stop," said William DiNunzio. "The town is becoming the laughingstock of the state."

"You should be listening to the townspeople, and not someone who has conveniently taken the problem off your hands," said Dick Gosselin, referring to O'Keefe's recent resignation.

"There is a silent majority, and it is the council," Mary Ann Dostaler said. "You have the majority and you have been silent." Dostaler criticized the council for not listening to the residents that have been vocal in their support for Reimondo since June.

Dick Vezina, a former East Hampton police officer, said he had "the honor" of working with Reimondo when the latter first started on the force. It was "a little more than a coincidence," Vezina said, that Reimondo was laid off shortly after approaching the town attorney with the harassment complaints against O'Keefe.

If Reimondo did anything wrong, Vezina said, it was to go to the town attorney before having his officers fully investigate the complaints.

"It seems we're changing the charter and regulations to make it okay to not have a police chief," said Andy Shelto, who stressed that he was not trying to take sides in the controversy.

Last week, the council voted to hire attorney Jane Marsh to review the language of the ordinance revision. The council reviewed three draft ordinances from the town's labor attorney, Mark Sommaruga, last month, but decided to wait 30 days to have another attorney review Sommaruga's work.

Marsh did not attend Wednesday's meeting. Engel explained that the changes to the ordinance language were so basic that she didn't see the need to pay Marsh to attend.

The only changes Marsh made to Sommaruga's drafted ordinance were to add the

language "including but not limited to a lieutenant," opening up the possibility of adding more positions to the department. The ordinance gives the town manager oversight in hiring officers, but puts day-to-day operations in the hands of a lieutenant.

Weintraub pointed out that a lieutenant position had been added to the police department in 1988, but removed in 1992. Since the position had not been reinstated, promoting Michael Green to lieutenant in June was illegal.

"That kinda makes the ordinance not ready to go forward," said Weintraub.

Weintraub also explained that she still didn't know what proposed budget shortfall O'Keefe had predicated Reimondo's removal on. She said she spoke to Matthew Fritz, an assistant to Governor M. Jodi Rell, who said he was unaware of any communications sent to municipalities about a shortfall.

"If you think everything is fine," council member Thom Cordeiro said, "it's not." Cordeiro pointed out that many other people in the public and private sectors were facing layoffs.

"I think you, as a Town Council member, should spend a little more time talking to [Director of Finance] Jeff Jylkka and not to state people," said council member Barbara Moore to Weintraub.

"I think that you need to get aligned with the people in this town," Moore continued. "You need to join with us and try to save money as we should."

Engel agreed. "We're on the right track and we're not gonna get off it now," she said.

The council voted 5-1 to send Marsh's revised ordinance language to a public hearing on Sept. 28, at 6 p.m. (John Tuttle was absent, and Weintraub voted against the motion.) After the hearing, the Council will vote to make the ordinance change official.

Reimondo sat silently in the audience for the meeting.

"I'm here to hear what the council has to say, and to show support for the people who are out to support me," he said after the meeting. He

said that if anyone had thought that O'Keefe's resignation would cause the council to change their mind, it was now clear that that wouldn't happen.

The council also addressed a Freedom of Information request that Weintraub submitted, asking for all of O'Keefe's e-mails since he started as town manager in 2008.

Last month, Weintraub filed an FOI request to Superintendent of Schools Judith Golden for all of O'Keefe's sent and received e-mails from the time he started with the town in 2008. (The servers are housed in the Board of Education's office.)

Golden responded to Weintraub on Sept. 1, explaining that the consultant who set up O'Keefe's e-mail account had died, and she didn't know why he had set up the account to delete all outgoing messages.

Weintraub told the council the e-mails she received did not include all of O'Keefe's e-mails, explaining that the *Hartford Courant* had obtained some messages that she hadn't.

Cordeiro said that since O'Keefe had left the town, he didn't understand what Weintraub hoped to gain from seeing his e-mails. Engel told Weintraub that she should try to obtain the e-mails through a regular FOI request. The motion Weintraub made to grant her access to the e-mails failed, as no other council member seconded it.

In other business at the meeting, the council decided to prepare an explanatory document to inform residents of the proposed revisions to the town's charter, completed by the Charter Revision Commission this spring. The changes will go to a referendum in November.

The Council also voted 6-0 to award a contract for cleanup of the industrial building at 13 Watrous Street to TMC Services, Inc., for the amount of \$118,225.

The next Town Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Sept. 28, in the high school auditorium. There will be a public hearing on the changes to Ordinance 109 at 6 p.m., followed by a regular meeting at 6:30.

East Hampton Motorcyclists Injured While Swerving to Avoid Dog

by Claire Michalewicz

A dog was killed and two motorcycle riders injured when the dog ran into Route 66 on Sunday afternoon.

Police Sergeant Garritt Kelly said the accident occurred near the Marlborough town line shortly after noon, when the dog, a large pit bull/bullmastiff mix, ran into the road. The motorcycle driver was unable to avoid the

dog, and the impact knocked both riders off the motorcycle, Kelly said.

The dog died from its injuries, Kelly said. He said the two motorcyclists were taken to the hospital for minor injuries and released later that day.

Kelly said the dog had been previously reporting missing, and had been running around the nearby Wangonk Trail neighborhood.

Belltown Ready for Some Football

by Claire Michalewicz

For many, fall means football season, and for the first time ever, that's true in East Hampton. The brand-new joint East Hampton High School/Vinal Technical High School team has been practicing for several weeks, and they play their first game next week.

An East Hampton football team, explained Dawn Repoli of Friends of East Hampton Football, had been a longtime dream for many in town. The Board of Education officially approved football in January 2009. The catch, though, was that the team would have to raise its own money, which has come from a variety of fundraisers.

Vinal had been playing on a cooperative team with Coginchaug Regional High School for years, but as the team's head coach Joe Cefaratti explained, Coginchaug decided to field its own team this year. That left Vinal looking for a high school to pair up with, and since East Hampton was looking for a team, the two schools decided to join up, Cefaratti said.

The team is so new that they don't have a name yet – Cefaratti said they're still working to create a mascot that combines a Hawk (Vinal's team name) and a Bellringer. But three weeks into their practices, Cefaratti said his team was playing together well, and he was optimistic as he looked forward to the team's first game next week.

"The kids from both schools are meshing together and forming friendships on and off the field," Cefaratti said.

His players agreed. Halfback Steven Hall, a Vinal junior who lives in East Hampton, said he likes being on a team with both his current classmates and with people he knew from his hometown.

"It's really great that all the East Hampton kids have a chance to play," said quarterback and EHHS senior David Peterson, who said he'd been playing football for years and was

glad to have a chance to represent his high school on a team.

"The Vinal and East Hampton kids are getting along as one," said linebacker Zach Dombrowski, a sophomore at Vinal. "It's not two schools; it's one team."

Since the East Hampton players have to raise their portion of the team budget, Repoli said it's taken a lot of effort from players and the families who make up Friends of East Hampton Football. Repoli said the first season would cost about \$41,000, but she said that since they obtained some used equipment, the actual cost might be a bit lower. Vinal is contributing money for their portion of the team.

So far, the East Hampton booster club has raised about \$32,000. Repoli explained that the money came from donations and from several fundraisers, including a recent poker run, spaghetti dinners, bake sales and setback tournaments. Another fundraiser in the works is a walkathon, in which players gather donations for walking.

"We really reach out," Repoli said, explaining that the financial support from local residents and businesses has been "amazing."

Repoli got involved with the team because her two sons were involved with the Portland Panthers youth football team, and she wanted them to be able to play for their high school.

"Our sons wanted nothing but to play football," she said. Repoli said she was struck by how much they enjoyed playing as a team, and by the friendships the players formed.

In addition, Repoli said the quest to form a football team has taught the players an important lesson. "If you really want something," she said, "you can work to get it."

This year, the Vinal/East Hampton team includes 42 JV players and 22 freshmen, and freshman team coach Adam Gootnick said the roster is evenly divided between East Hampton and Vinal players. This year, the Vinal and



Head coach Joe Cefaratti and members of the new East Hampton/Vinal Tech football team cheer during their practice Tuesday. The team kicks off its inaugural season Monday, Sept. 20.

East Hampton are fielding two teams, freshman and junior varsity. Next year, Cefaratti explained, they'll add a varsity team.

"These kids are playing very well," said Gootnick. "You wouldn't think it's two different schools. They're getting along very well."

Gootnick is starting his first full year teaching health at EHHS and Memorial School, though he started at EHHS as a substitute last year. That's when he heard that the school would be starting a football team, and contacted the coaches about helping out. He said Cefaratti and the two other coaches were welcoming, and

made him feel like part of the team.

Football, Gootnick said, has always been important to him. He played at Central Connecticut State University, and his goals after graduating were to teach school and coach football.

"It was really a blessing for me," Gootnick said, to discover that East Hampton was starting a football team and looking for coaches. "I'm doing everything I want to do."

The team's season kicks off on Monday, Sept. 20, with a game at Coginchaug at 3:45 p.m.

East Hampton CMT and CAPT Test Results Reviewed

by Claire Michalewicz

East Hampton teachers and administrators are pleased with their schools' standardized test results, as they discussed at a Board of Education (BOE) meeting on Monday evening.

"Although we are very pleased with our results, we will refrain from bragging," said LuAnn Hardacker, the district's language arts coordinator. Hardacker led the BOE and audience through a summary of East Hampton's scores on the Connecticut Mastery Tests (CMTs) and Connecticut Academic Performance Tests (CAPTs), and explained how teachers had prepared students for the tests.

To prepare students for the tests, teachers used a variety of strategies, Hardacker said. She said she encouraged them to use the philosophy "teach well and the test will take care of itself."

One of the factors that helped improve scores, Hardacker said, was an increased focus on reading in all subjects and grades. "We are all teachers of reading," she said.

Clive Tucceri, a middle school science teacher, said that since science tests were content-based, teachers had to remind students of science lessons from previous years in the weeks leading up to the test.

"All it takes is some reminding," Tucceri said, explaining that in most cases a reminder was enough to help students score well.

At the middle school, Hardacker and Tucceri explained, teachers were implementing a new

Daily Math Program to increase student accountability and number fluency. In kindergarten and first grade, teachers were emphasizing phonics, while in the other grades, teachers were leading students in reading workshops to improve their skills.

Middle school Principal John Fidler explained how on the CMT, his school had improved its standing from a school "in need of improvement" to a school in "safe harbor." In previous years, Fidler explained, students with disabilities had not met the proficiency requirement in math or reading.

To improve scores, Fidler said, students who achieved the two lowest score categories on last year's CMT reading section were placed in supplemental reading classes. Fidler said, preparation for the CMT was a consideration in switching the school to block scheduling, which allows for longer reading and English lessons. In addition, Fidler said, he asked teachers in all subject areas to focus on reading skills in their classes, and held pep rallies to get students motivated for the tests.

The efforts, Fidler said, paid off, with the number of East Hampton students achieving proficiency exceeding the state goal in both math and reading. If East Hampton Middle School makes "safe harbor" again in the next year, the school will have met its Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) target, Fidler said.

"I'm very proud of the school," Fidler said,

but added, "The bad news is we have to do it again."

High school principal Linda Berry presented the results of the Advanced Placement (AP) and SAT Reasoning Test (SAT). In all three areas of the SAT – critical reading, math and writing – East Hampton students scored well above the state and national averages.

Berry said more students were taking AP tests each year, which tended to drive average scores down. But she said the classes were helpful in preparing students for college, so she was happy that students of differing abilities were taking them.

Also at Monday's meeting, Superintendent of Schools Judith Golden explained that third-party inspectors had visited Nichols Bus Service on Aug. 28, two days before school started.

"The inspectors were very pleased," she said. Golden said Nichols has been working hard since the spring to improve their safety record, performing daily inspections and hiring another mechanic and a supervisor.

Golden also discussed the federal Race to the Top school funding program, which recently awarded money to several neighboring states but not to Connecticut.

Before submitting the state's application to the program, she said, Connecticut legislators passed several school reforms, which the state will have to enact even without federal funding from Race to the Top. The changes, Golden

said, especially affect the high school curriculum, including Algebra 2 classes for all students, broader science requirements, a senior project and more career and technical classes.

In addition, Golden said, the future of the No Child Left Behind Act depended on the outcome the November elections. Coolican pointed out that by 2014, schools were expected to have 100 percent of their students reach proficiency on standardized tests, or else "bad things start to happen."

Golden agreed, explaining that the schools were continuing to work toward that goal. "It's a bridge we have to cross when we get to it," she said.

In other business at the meeting, the BOE discussed drafting a letter to state Senator Eileen Daily and state Representative Gail Hamm to voice their concerns about school funding. Part of the reason Connecticut had not been a finalist for Race to the Top funding, BOE member Don Coolican explained in a letter he drafted, was that because of binding arbitration, the teachers' union would not agree to a contract tying teachers' salaries to student performance.

BOE Chairman Michael Vasquez suggested writing the letter in a special subcommittee meeting, and bringing another draft to the next regular BOE meeting, scheduled for Monday, Sept. 27, at 7 p.m., in the East Hampton High School library.

East Hampton Police Union Unhappy with Council Members' Statements

by Claire Michalewicz

The East Hampton police department's union is speaking out against Town Council members who said their supporters feared speaking publicly because of the threat of retaliation from police.

East Hampton officers are encouraging residents to tour the police station and meet with officers, to allay any fears they may have.

Last month, Town Council Chairwoman Melissa Engel said she felt the council had more supporters in town than those who had been speaking in meetings about the ongoing controversy about Chief Matt Reimondo's layoff in June. But, she said, this "silent majority" of supporters might be afraid of speaking publicly in case police officers retaliated against them.

Engel said that while she understood the residents' fears, she felt that "the majority" of officers would not retaliate.

"Officers are horrified that town councilors would imply that any of our members would behave in a retaliatory fashion," said Dave Hebert, union representative for the International Brotherhood of Police Officers Local 524, which represents East Hampton officers. "They couldn't believe that the council would actually say that."

Speaking last month in response to Engel's

comments, both Acting Lieutenant Michael Green and Reimondo said that if residents did have fears, they were unwarranted. Green said the officers would not exploit political issues, and Reimondo said the officers were professionals, and urged residents to come forward and file a complaint if they had any concerns about retaliation.

Hebert pointed out that East Hampton officers have stayed out of politics since Reimondo was removed from his position, except for a unanimous no-confidence vote the officers took against O'Keefe on June 28. To mention retaliation and intimidation, Hebert said, was "a slap to the profession in general."

Hebert said East Hampton's police department is well-organized and well-managed. He added that the officers are on Reimondo's side during his struggle for his job. Hebert said he works with about 20 different police departments, and said that, for Reimondo to have the support of all his staff was unusual for a police chief.

Engel said the police department's decision to offer tours and meet with residents was a good idea.

"What we need is community-minded policing," Engel said. She added that she still be-

lieved that the majority of East Hampton's officers would not retaliate against residents for their political views.

Hebert explained that if residents did have concerns about retaliation, the department takes its complaint process seriously, investigating all complaints and penalizing officers who violate the code of conduct.

Town Council member Barbara Moore said last month that while she was upset that people weren't publicly supporting the council, she understood why they were nervous about doing so.

"I think they mean no offense to the police officers, for sure," Moore said Wednesday of the council's silent supporters. But, she said, East Hampton is a small town, and since the police department cuts have been so highly contested, she understood why people didn't feel comfortable speaking publicly.

"No one's afraid of the police," Moore added. "They're doing their job."

Hebert also spoke out against the Town Council's statements that the police department was too large. Right now, he said, the department has fewer officers than it did in 1997, even though East Hampton now has more roads, houses and residents.

"You don't cut a department when your town is growing," Hebert said.

But Engel said this week budget cuts were inevitable, given the current economic problems.

"It's the way of the world right now," she said, explaining that many people and companies were struggling to "do more with less."

Hebert said East Hampton's officers were already struggling with cramped facilities and poor equipment, but that they still managed to get their jobs done. He added that the officers knew East Hampton is "not a wealthy community" and were not complaining about the condition of the police station.

"Officers appreciate the support they've had from residents, but they'd love to tell them personally about the realities of police work," Hebert said. East Hampton's officers were working hard, Hebert said, training for additional certifications and investigating local crimes.

Hebert said the officers are "more than willing to accommodate" any residents and the concerns they might have. Anyone interested in seeing the police station and meeting with officers can call the station at 860-267-9544.

Portland Stables Cleaned Up After August Defacing

by Claire Michalewicz

With new grass planted and fresh coats of yellow paint on the walls, Quarry Town Stables is almost ready to start showing to potential buyers. It's a dramatic change from just a few weeks ago, when Andrew Srb first took possession of the property and found it heavily vandalized.

"It's looking more like a farm than a pigsty," said Srb. Srb won the farm in a settlement reached after he sued Robert Johnson, the farm's former owner and his former riding instructor, alleging that Johnson sexually assaulted him over 20 years earlier.

When Srb first arrived last month, the farm was filthy – vandalized with spray paint on the walls, light bulbs and windows smashed and trash strewn around the property. Garbage was rotting on the kitchen floor, the hot tub was filled with paint, and an above-ground pool was removed. Manure was spread throughout the farm, and insulting statements spray-painted on walls.

"Every building had a hateful message," said Srb's attorney, Gerald Sack. The house was so filthy, he added, that some people threw up from the smell when they went inside.

Sack and Johnson's lawyer, Michael Dwyer, worked out the settlement in July. Sack said that while the value of the farm didn't approach the \$1.73 million awarded to Srb in court earlier this year, it was "a reasonable solution." Johnson's farm was facing foreclosure, Sack explained, and he may not have been able to pay the full amount of damages.

This Wednesday, Srb and Sack showed the property, now clean, and thanked local residents

for their support. Cleaning up the farm, Sack and Srb explained, took weeks of work. Srb's brother Ben, who owns Primary Landscaping in Portland, helped Andrew with much of the work, offering his equipment and employees for the clean-up. Other companies who donated their services were Harmon Properties and Rocky Hill Enterprises, Ben Srb said.

Andrew Srb said the farm should be ready for viewing in another week. Already, he said, potential buyers had expressed interest in the property, with at least five coming to look at it so far. He said he hopes to sell the property soon.

Johnson had been required to leave the farm on Aug. 15, the day before Srb first arrived. Last month, after Srb discovered the vandalism, Johnson told the *Rivereast* he had "left a mess" at the farm for Srb, though he would not elaborate on what he had done. Johnson explained that since he hadn't yet signed any documents to transfer the property to Srb, he had the right to do what he wanted.

"I don't know what his big deal is," Johnson said last month, adding that Srb "just likes to mess with me."

But Sack said that it didn't matter that Johnson had not yet signed any documents. By vandalizing the property, Sack said, Johnson had violated the terms of the settlement, which required him not to engage in any waste or destruction of the farm.

In court on Monday, Sack said, Johnson denied admitting to any vandalism, and refused to say whether he had done it. Sack said Johnson's silence could be construed as "con-



Andrew Srb has since cleaned up the Quarry Town Stables after they were vandalized in August, and showed the facilities to residents Wednesday. Srb, pictured above in front of his property, won the stables in a court settlement.

sciousness of guilt," and Judge Robert Holzberg has 120 days to rule on whether Johnson violated the terms of the settlement by leaving the property in that condition.

Portland Police have not made any arrests in connection with the vandalism. Johnson declined to comment for this story, and Dwyer did not return calls for comment.