



RIVEREAST News Bulletin

Serving Amston, Andover, Cobalt, East Hampton, Hebron, Marlborough, Middle Haddam, Portland, Colchester and Salem

Volume 35, Number 26

Published by The Glastonbury Citizen

September 24, 2010



Are You Ready for Some Football?... The Colchester Cougars opened the 2010 Youth Football season Sept. 12, with victories over WPTP in Putnam. Pictured here, No. 10 Paul Chasse runs to the outside corner on one of his several breakaway runs. See story on Page 34. Photo by Rising Starr Photography.

O'Keefe Deal Draws Criticism

by Claire Michalewicz

Former East Hampton Town Manager Jeffery O'Keefe's separation agreement with the town has been released to the public, nearly two weeks after his abrupt resignation, and not everybody is thrilled with it.

The agreement calls for O'Keefe to receive a severance package totaling \$170,100. In a statement released on Wednesday, Sue Weintraub – the lone Town Council member to oppose the separation agreement – issued a statement criticizing the amount of the settlement and reiterating that O'Keefe should have been fired for cause. Weintraub included a copy of the separation agreement with her statement, explaining that she felt the town had tried to keep the document from the public.

The town manager's office did release the agreement on Wednesday afternoon, in response to a Freedom of Information (FOI) request. The six-page document, signed by O'Keefe and Engel on Sept. 10, explains that O'Keefe's \$123,600 salary will be paid out in biweekly installments through Aug. 31, 2011. O'Keefe also receives payment for his unused vacation and sick days, bringing the total to \$170,100.

The agreement explicitly says that O'Keefe's resignation cannot be interpreted as an admission of any liability or "of unlawful or improper conduct of any kind." The document also releases O'Keefe "in his individual and official capacity, from any and all claims, costs, demands causes of action and liabilities of any kind, whether known or unknown, which [the town] had or now have against [O'Keefe] by reason of any actual or alleged act, omission, transaction, practice, conduct, occurrence, or

other matter arising out of O'Keefe's employment or separation from employment." Likewise, it releases the town and its official and employees from any demands or claims they might have against O'Keefe.

Attorney Mark Sommaruga, who drafted the agreement, explained that the town had an obligation under state law to indemnify former employees, though that indemnity would not extend to any criminal investigations.

However, the agreement also requests O'Keefe's cooperation in defending any claim against him or the town, including any future lawsuits, as well as Police Chief Matt Reimondo's pending hearing, and attorney Glenn Coe's investigation into a hostile workplace environment complaint. Weintraub said she had received conflicting information from other Town Council members regarding how O'Keefe resigned. At a meeting held Sept. 8, Town Council Chairwoman Melissa Engel said a "management-level" town employee had come forward with a e-mail offering to resign. (The meeting was held before O'Keefe's identity was released.)

But, Weintraub said, Barbara Moore, a Town Council member, had been telling residents that she and Engel asked for O'Keefe's resignation.

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Jodi Thomas Quits Probate Judge Race

by Katy Nally

Jodi Thomas, Colchester's current probate judge and one of two contestants in this year's election for probate judge of the new Windham-Colchester District, has dropped out of the running.

The Colchester judge announced her decision Monday, Sept. 20.

Thomas, who became a widow in February when her husband Ron Crabb died in the Kleen Energy Plant explosion, said she left the race for "family reasons."

As a single parent, continuing the campaign for probate is "not the best thing for my little guy and myself," Thomas said this week.

This August, Thomas underwent what she called a "grueling [Democratic] primary," in which she lost to Windham resident John McGrath, by 121 votes.

Of the 3,129 votes cast Aug. 10 in the new probate district, Thomas received 1,504, and McGrath 1,625. McGrath won by a margin of 3.86 percent. During the primary, Thomas won the support of Colchester and Lebanon Democrats, but lost in Chaplin, Hampton, Scotland and Windham.

Thomas won most of her support from Colchester Democrats, taking in about 83 percent of the votes in her favor, at 771 for Thomas and 157 for McGrath. However, Windham was McGrath's biggest supporter and he won about 75 percent of the votes, at 1,022 for McGrath and 335 for Thomas.

Although Thomas lost the primary, she was also on the Republican ticket because she was unanimously endorsed by the Republican town committees in the new probate district. After the primary, Thomas had planned to once again campaign against McGrath, a Willimantic attorney, until Election Day.

"This has been a difficult year for our family and to engage in yet another campaign would be overlay taxing on us," Thomas said in a press release. "I am at peace with my decision."

Thomas said she probably would not have dropped out of the probate judge race were she running unopposed.

With Thomas out of the running, McGrath will become the Windham-Colchester District probate judge. McGrath did not return calls for comment.

The new district will take effect January

2011, as part of a redistricting of the state's 117 probate courts into 54. The consolidation, which Gov. M. Jodi Rell signed into law in June, was done to cut costs and also, Rell said, to "modernize" the probate court system. The Windham-Colchester District will encompass six towns: Chaplin, Colchester, Hampton, Lebanon, Scotland and Windham. Two of the three current probate courts, one in Colchester and the other in Windham, will remain open, with one judge presiding over both. The Hampton probate court will close.

Thomas' decision to not seek reelection also spells the end of her four-year position as the Colchester probate judge. When reached Wednesday, Thomas did not know what her next steps would be, but said "future options are under consideration."

She said she would definitely miss her job in Colchester, adding, "I love my job; I love my staff."

Thomas said she would miss, most of all, helping people through difficult times.

"It's been a wonderful career," she said.

Colchester Democratic Town Committee

See Probate Judge Page 2



Colchester Probate Judge Jodi Thomas dropped out of the running for probate judge of the Windham-Colchester District this week.

O’Keefe Deal cont. from Front Page

Moore said Wednesday that while she had gone to see O’Keefe “to see how he was doing,” she never asked for his resignation, and never told anyone that she had.

The distinction, Weintraub said, is important – according to O’Keefe’s contract, if he is terminated after the council offers to accept his resignation, he is entitled to 12 months of salary. If he is terminated for cause, he does not receive any severance pay or pay for unused leave.

But, Weintraub said, “if he resigns his position there is no compensation other than any vacation and sick days that might have accrued.”

Weintraub pointed to a section in the contract that said “all compensations, benefits and requirements of the Agreement shall remain in effect until the expiration of the term of the agreement unless Employee voluntarily resigns.”

But after the Sept. 10 meeting in which the council offered the agreement to O’Keefe, members John Tuttle and Thom Cordeiro both explained that while they were not happy with the large amount of the agreement, they were contractually obligated to pay him his salary.

“As I have stated publicly, this pay off is outrageous,” Weintraub said in her statement. “Not one penny should be given to Mr. O’Keefe. Contrary to the town attorney’s opinion, there absolutely are multiple reasons to terminate for cause.”

Weintraub also said the other Town Council members had tried to prevent the document from being released from the public. Sommaruga, she said, said it did not need to be

made available. But she said she called the FOI Commission, who confirmed that it was a public document.

“Entering into this agreement so quickly and rubberstamping it without proper discussion was grossly premature and unfair to East Hampton’s taxpayers,” she said. Since it was “rushed through,” she said, the town never had a chance to see if there were any other claims against O’Keefe or any other alleged wrongdoing on his part.

* * *

Residents approached the Board of Finance (BOF) at its meeting Monday evening, asking board members why they have not been involved in decisions regarding O’Keefe’s severance pay.

“It was an effort to bring them into the conversation,” resident Bill Marshall said after the meeting. “These are extraordinary times.” Marshall asked the BOF a series of questions, including whether they had been consulted about O’Keefe’s resignation, and where the money for O’Keefe’s separation agreement was coming from, as well as the salary for O’Keefe’s interim replacement, Bob Drewry.

BOF members stressed they had not been involved in O’Keefe’s resignation, and had not seen the separation agreement yet. Chairman Matthew Walton said he only knew the dollar amount from what he had read in the *Hartford Courant*.

Director of Finance Jeff Jylkka, who had seen the agreement, explained that the sick and vacation time paid out to O’Keefe was coming from a sick and vacation fund, while the bulk

of the package was coming from his budgeted salary. To pay Drewry’s wages, Jylkka explained, the town would look at any items the town would not need to purchase, such as trips O’Keefe had planned to go on, and then transfer the rest of the needed money from a contingency fund.

In addition, Jylkka explained, the town’s insurance policy would cover the town’s legal fees beyond a \$5,000 deductible.

Resident Dale Maynard offered help to the BOF.

“It appears that the Town Council and former town manager chose to ignore your expertise and responsibilities in recent months,” Maynard told the BOF. “Some of us would like to support you in helping to craft a budget for next year based upon fact, not fiction.”

Marshall added that since Reimondo was laid off, the town had provided documents about the costs of maintaining the police department, but never the benefits.

“It’s a safe place to live,” Marshall said, explaining that East Hampton had a good record of solving crimes, and he was concerned that a decreased police force could hurt the town.

Marshall said after the meeting he felt the BOF was responsive to his and Maynard’s concerns, but said he had been hoping to find more information to explain why Reimondo had been laid off in the first place. The lack of information on the BOF’s side, Marshall said, reduced the credibility of O’Keefe and the Town Council in their assertion that the cuts were made for purely financial reasons.

“I’ve never seen [the laying off of a major town official] handled in that kind of unilateral manner,” Marshall said. Marshall said he wasn’t necessarily opposed to cutting jobs to save money, but was upset with the way O’Keefe handled the situation.

In addition to not seeing O’Keefe’s separation package, the BOF was also left out of O’Keefe’s June decision to remove Reimondo. Historically, BOF member George Pfaffenbach explained, the BOF rarely got involved in administrative and contractual decisions.

“It’s only a problem when there is a problem,” Pfaffenbach said of the BOF’s lack of involvement.

But to see residents speak out at a meeting, Pfaffenbach said, was a welcome change.

“As a board, I think we were thrilled,” said Pfaffenbach about residents’ input. “I’d like to have a roomful.”

Walton agreed. “The taxpayers have every right to question and criticize their Board of Finance. We as a board will always welcome constructive comments,” he said after the meeting.

Pfaffenbach said that as the BOF started work on the 2011-2012 budget, they were facing many concerns, especially a potential loss in the grand list’s value.

“We’re about to start the budget cuts,” Pfaffenbach said, explaining that the BOF would meet with department heads to see which areas could be cut. Whether jobs would have to be cut, he said, was still uncertain.

Probate Judge cont. from Front Page

Chairman Tim Gilman said he would be sad to see Thomas leave.

“This community loves Jodi and she is the best probate judge we have ever had,” Gilman said in a press release. “We are sad to be losing such a great judge but understand why she is not seeking re-election at this time.”

Secretary for the Republican State Central Committee Bill Jenkins had similar thoughts on Thomas’ decision.

“We are disappointed that Jodi will not be running – she is an outstanding judge with character and integrity,” Jenkins said in a press release. “However, we understand that her son is her number one priority and we support her decision.”

Thomas will finish out her current term in Colchester, which ends in January. She was elected to the position of Colchester probate judge in November 2006.

Andover BOE Votes to Use Federal Funds for Staffing Positions

by Lindsay Fetzner

The Board of Education (BOE) voted Sept. 8 to use money from the federal Education Jobs Fund Program for both additional teaching and paraprofessional time in the classroom, as well as bringing back a reading position from last year, Superintendent of Schools Andrew Maneggia said.

"We are looking to increase employment," Maneggia said. "So, we are extending hours and we are creating or restoring a job we had."

Andover was allotted a total of \$72,352 from the federal program, which provides assistance to states to save or create jobs for the 2010-11 school year.

Maneggia said the district would spread the funds out over a two-year period, cutting the amount in approximately half for each year's allotment. According to the state Department of Education (DOE), funds remaining after the 2010-11 school year can be used through Sept. 30, 2012.

Jobs that are funded through the program include positions that provide "educational and related services" for early childhood, elementary and also secondary education, according to the US Department of Education.

The funds can be used to hire new employ-

ees, retain existing employees or to recall/re-hire former employees. General administrative costs, overhead or support services by the school districts, however, are not covered by the program's funds according to the DOE.

The additional teaching time, Maneggia said, would be to help students in the areas of both math and reading. Paraprofessional hours would be directed toward the subject of reading, and additional teaching time would be directed toward math, Maneggia said. Maneggia said this week the district has already begun implementing these changes, and is about 60 percent complete.

Two current positions will get an increase in hours, including one paraprofessional and one part-time teacher. Maneggia said that last year, the district had a reading instructor on staff that worked a couple half-days a week, and the district is "looking to bring that person back."

The cost to up the paraprofessional's hours is approximately \$1,800, at an increase of three hours per week. Maneggia said increasing a teacher from half time to about 90 percent time would be \$19,000. And, for the additional reading instructor, the position would cost about \$15,000 for two-half days a week, or one-fifth

time, Maneggia said. The total figure for the three positions totals approximately \$35,800, which is just shy of half of the allotted amount from the federal government.

Out of the total \$10 billion allocated to schools nationwide, Connecticut is slated to receive approximately \$110 million. Congress approved the legislation this year, on Aug. 10.

Maneggia said in deciding where to use the funds, the district examined where and what their needs were.

"They change from year to year based on your student population," he said this week.

BOE Chairman Jay Lindy agreed with Maneggia, and said the board wanted to "make sure the money is going toward where we think the needs are."

In addition to these identified needs, Maneggia said he also conferred with some of the other staff at the elementary school in where the money should be directed.

Maneggia said by dividing the funds over a two-year span, the additional teaching time can be stretched farther than just one school year.

"We'll be able to do it for a two-year period," he said. "That's why we're only using half the

money. We didn't want to start something and not have the money to continue it."

Andover received the least amount of funds from the program as compared to the other districts that the *Riverast* covers. Hebron received approximately \$220,000; Colchester, about \$792,000; East Hampton, about \$444,000; Marlborough, approximately \$102,000; Portland, just under \$250,000; and Salem, about \$181,000. Regional School District No. 8, the RHAM schools, received approximately \$327,000.

The funds are allocated based on a school district's relative share of the town's Education Cost Sharing grant, according to the state's Department of Education. They will be paid through the department's "cash management system" through "monthly draw downs."

More information on the individual towns' or districts' allotments and/or the Education Jobs Fund Program, visit the US Department of Education website, www2.ed.gov/programs/educationjobsfund.

The next scheduled BOE meeting is slated for Wednesday, Oct. 13, at 7 p.m., in the Andover Elementary School library.

Facilities Studies Reviewed by Hebron Town Boards

by Lindsay Fetzner

Results from a town facilities report, as well as the findings of a school facilities report, were presented at a joint boards meeting Wednesday evening.

The boards of selectmen, finance and education and the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Committee heard from Building Official Joe Summers and Fire Marshal Randy Blais on the town facilities, and on the schools, from representatives of the Hamden-based Silver/Petrucci + Associates.

On the town side, Summer identified some of the major facilities that he and Blais felt were "concerns or serious shortcomings." The findings had previously been presented to the Board of Selectmen at a meeting in July. The public works facility, the Town Office Building and Fire Company No. 3 were briefly discussed.

Summer said the public works complex is "fairly outdated," with many of the buildings there pushing 40 years old. There is also limited storage space at the facility, Summers said.

With the Town Office Building, Summers said, accessibility is an issue in many of the offices. Blais also touched on the fire alarm system in the building. Currently, there are two separate fire alarm system panels, sitting side by side, with one covering the newer section of the building – which contains the elevator – and the other covering the older side. Both still work, but Blais suggested replacing them with a single, new panel.

In regards to the firehouse, Summers said, "to do any future renovations to Station 3 would be almost impossible." Summers pointed out that most of the property is on wetlands. Look-

ing ahead, he said the town should either start looking at a new location for station No. 3, or consider combining stations one and three to a central location.

Board and committee members viewed a presentation from Silver/Petrucci + Associates, who were hired in April, and culminated six months of work on the two elementary schools in town. Both infrastructure and space needs were examined, Dean Petrucci said, which resulted in a 200-page volume report of the two schools.

A 15-page packet of recommended repairs and improvements was provided, which listed each violation with a priority rank from one to four. Items listed with a rank of one are "urgent priority" and should be corrected as soon as possible; items listed as two are a "high priority" that should be corrected in a "reasonable amount of time;" items listed as three are a "moderate priority" with a remaining useful life of three to five years and finally, those listed as four are a "low priority" with a remaining useful life typically between five and 10 years, according to Silver/Petrucci + Associates.

At Gilead Hill School, there were three areas that were of significant concern discussed by the company - updating code and accessibility to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act, improving the gym and multipurpose space with more space, better ventilation and improved floors, and lastly, replacing the playground. The cost for the above is estimated to be \$645,495, which includes in a 15 percent contingency.

In terms of updating code and accessibility,

the company recommended providing several updates including a "more direct pedestrian access to the field area" from the south entrance of the building. Reconfiguring/redesigning the bathrooms was also listed, including installing new fixtures, finishes and accessories that meet all federal code requirements and clearances.

Reconfiguring or modifying the current reception counter and desk was also discussed, which would provide a workstation that is handicapped accessible.

And, the company suggested replacing both the equipment and surfacing of the playground at the elementary school.

In the gym and multipurpose rooms, providing call-for-aid devices in three bathrooms, accessible exit signs, a new heat recovery unit, and either replacing or upgrading operating controls were recommended, among several other suggestions.

At Hebron Elementary School, the costs associated with some of the improvements or renovations were significantly larger, at a cost just under \$5 million. A 15 percent contingency was also included in this figure.

Demolishing the fourth-grade portables, improving site safety, driveways and "loop traffic," as well as renovating the kitchen were of concern at the elementary school.

According to a presentation handout, "due to their overall poor condition, it is suggested that the fourth-grade portables be demolished and the classrooms be relocated to another location." Silver/Petrucci + Associates said the portables are 28 years old, and should be demolished based on welfare, safety and health

of the users.

Increasing on-site parking and developing a "parent drop-off loop" was suggested to improve the site safety and traffic at the school. Relocating the playground was also addressed. To allow for left and right turn exit lanes, the width of both driveways would have to be increased. This would allow for separation between bus and vehicle traffic, and improve safety.

The kitchen at the school was another concern, which "works, but doesn't work very well," the company said. In addition to installing a new grease exhaust hood, dishwasher hood, kitchen ventilation unit, a new freezer/cooler was suggested. Inspecting and cleaning ductwork was also on the list of recommendations from the company.

Looking at the improvements overall, priority one improvements came in at a total cost of about \$1.92 million, with a 15 percent preliminary contingency included in the figure. All priority two improvements came to just over \$1.95 million, all priority three items just over \$2 million and for priority four improvements, just shy of \$500,000.

Full remediation of all priorities one through four for the two schools would total roughly \$6.37 million.

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien said the recommendations will now go to the CIP Committee. Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz said she will meet the Board of Education's CIP liaison, Kathy Shea, and discuss the priority list, and plans to approach the Board of Selectmen in the future to talk about the projects further.

Hebron Banding Together for Concert for Local Youth

by Lindsay Fetzner

The community of Hebron will come together Saturday afternoon to support one of their own, who is battling cancer for the second time – 13-year-old John Georgiades.

A committee consisting of community members from local organizations have joined forces to put on a ‘Concert in the Park’ Saturday, with the net proceeds benefiting John and his family.

When asked this week if he is excited to attend the concert in his honor, John said, “I am, I am. I want to go so bad!” John said he was a “little surprised” by the magnitude of the event, but added that over the past couple years, during his battle with cancer, community members “have always been helpful.”

John was diagnosed in 2006, at age 9, with neuroblastoma, a cancer of the sympathetic nervous system, the network of nerves that transports messages from the brain throughout the body. Charlene Caruso, John’s mom, said he complained of back pain, and it was thought that the pain was due to growing pains. However, after a scan was completed, doctors found a mass in John’s back, attached to his adrenal gland, which is located at the top of each kidney. Caruso said John’s gland was later removed.

“It was terrible,” Caruso said of the diagnosis. “It was overwhelming. But, you have to stay strong and we just did what we needed to do to try to continue on.”

When the family discovered that John had cancer, Caruso said, “It was so hard to tell him.” Caruso said they told John the name of his diagnosis, neuroblastoma, and that “what he had was bad,” but that they were going to the hospital “to get him better.”

“He just had this positive attitude and still to this day, we don’t talk about the consequences,” Caruso said. “We try to live a normal life.”

Caruso said John underwent treatment at the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York for seven months, where he went through rounds of chemotherapy, radiation therapy, antibody therapy and surgery to remove the adrenal gland.

John was in remission for almost three years,

but this past May he relapsed, Caruso said. The relapse was discovered during a routine check-up.

But, throughout the extensive treatments, friends and family members say John has remained strong and positive.

“Just thinking about other things, thinking about the people that I love, that just kind of keeps me motivated and my mind off of it,” John said. “I just keep my mind off of it.”

Constant visits from family members while at the hospital, John said, have kept him motivated too. And, calls and cards from friends in the community, who Caruso said have been “amazing,” have also helped along the way.

“Our family pretty much came every day, or every week, when [I was] down in New York,” John said. “It was sad not being with them, but once they were there, it was a lot better.”

According to the Cancer Center, neuroblastoma is rare, with approximately 700 new cases occurring in the United States each year. The cancer is found most often in young children and among infants, is the most common cancer, according to the Cancer Center’s website, www.mskcc.org.

Tumors can begin in the nerve tissues in several parts of the body – neck, chest, abdomen, pelvis or adrenal gland. The latter is the most common place for the lump or mass to begin, according to the Cancer Center.

Caruso said the cancer has definitely taken a toll on their family, John’s 9-year-old sister Sophia included.

“It’s been very, very difficult for her,” Caruso said, adding that Sophia has “always been very bubbly and happy and she still is, but you can see that concern in her all the time.”

And, throughout the whole process, Caruso said the town of Hebron has been “amazing.”

“It’s such a great town and the people have been amazing,” she said, adding that the family moved from Marlborough to Hebron in August 2007.

Stephanie Haines, an elementary school social worker in town who came up with the idea for the concert, said the Friends of John Committee formed over the summer.

“It’s a nice group,” Haines said. “That’s what

I love about Hebron - the community really comes together to support one of their own.”

Haines met John through her work at the elementary school, and says John’s positive attitude throughout his fight “is an inspiration.”

“He is the neatest kid,” Haines said. “He’s got a smile that everybody here says lights up the room and a wonderful sense of humor.”

Caruso, too, commented on John’s “great personality.”

“He is just so friendly,” she said. “He will talk to everyone. He is not shy in any way.”

The project to put on the concert, Haines said, “is a labor of love.”

“He has done much more for me than I’ve done for him,” Haines said. “He’s on my heart and I felt I had to do something.”

Caruso thanked Haines for her efforts in both her line of work and for putting together the concert. Haines, Caruso said, is “like an angel.”

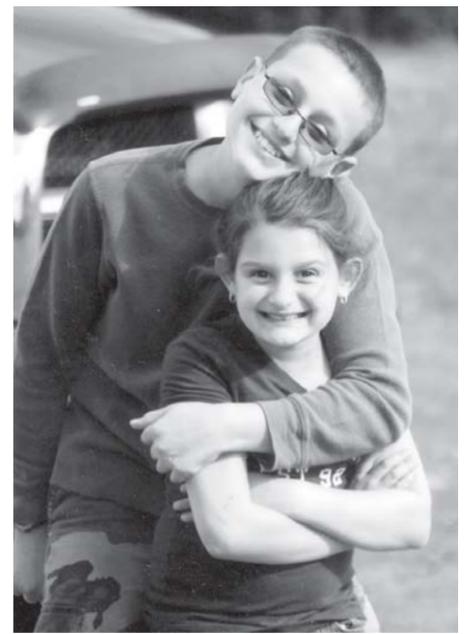
“I have seen Stephanie over the past couple years,” Caruso said. “She has done so much for us. She is just amazing.”

Haines said she hopes that the event will be more than just a pep rally for John to show how much people care about him, but also a financial help to the family. John’s second battle with cancer, she said, is “financially, a huge burden for the family.”

The Friend of John Committee consists of members with affiliations from AHM Youth & Family Services, the Lions Club, the Junior Women’s League, the RHAM Leos Club, Hebron Elementary School staff, the Hebron Fire Department, Christ Lutheran Church, Gilead Congregational Church and the Worship Center, as well as other area organizations.

In addition to music and games for children, there will also be face painting, dessert concessions and themed baskets that will be raffled off, Haines said. The fire department is also donating a ride to school in a fire truck, also to be raffled off in a teacup-style raffle, where ticket holders place their ticket in front of the basket they want.

Some of the prizes include gift certificates to area stores such as Barnes & Noble, Toys R



A concert for John Georgiades, 13, will be held this Saturday. John, who is battling cancer for the second time, is shown here with his little sister, Sophia, 9.

Us and Harley Davidson, gym memberships to Anytime Fitness, vouchers for hour-long massages as well as many other items.

Two bands will also take the stage, providing entertainment for the crowd. They include The Modern Riffs and Yellow 9. Modern Riffs, a local band, will offer a combination of swing, classic rock, jazz and blues. And, the Hartford-based rock group Yellow 9 will feature music from the ‘70s, ‘80s and ‘90s.

The concert will take place Saturday, Sept. 25, from 4-7 p.m. at Burnt Hill Park, 150 East St. Rain date is Sunday, Sept. 26. Tickets are \$5 per individual and \$20 per family. Advance tickets are also available at Ted’s Supermarket, 127 Main St. Visitors are encouraged to bring a picnic, as well as chairs or a blanket for the event.

Hebron School Board Agrees on Uses for Federal Funds

by Lindsay Fetzner

The Board of Education (BOE) unanimously voted last Thursday to allocate funds from the federal government to make two custodians full-time and to eliminate a nearly \$20,000 budget shortfall.

The town of Hebron was allotted a total of \$220,043 from the Education Jobs Fund Program. The program funds provide assistance to states to either create or to save jobs for the 2010-11 school year.

Jobs that are funded through the program include positions that “provide educational and related services for early childhood, elementary and secondary education,” according to the U.S. Department of Education.

“It is really to protect jobs, resources and programs lost during the budget process last [fiscal] year,” said Superintendent of School Ellie Cruz.

The funds can be used to hire new employees, retain existing employees or to recall/re-hire former employees. The money cannot, however, be used for general administrative costs, overhead or support services by the school districts, according to the state Department of Education (DOE).

At a cost of \$24,278, the board voted for two

current custodian positions to be upped to full time. One position would increase by three hours per day, and the other by two and a half hours per day, for a total increase of five and a half hours per day. With the additional hours, each custodian would work a full 40 hours per week.

“I think those five and a half hours would make all the difference in the world,” Cruz said.

Back in June, the BOE voted to reinstate non-certified positions slated for elimination by re-directing resources. The savings came from a combination of areas, including a recent retirement, the creation of an elementary behavior program and surplus money. One exception to the reinstatements, however, was a custodian.

Cruz said this week that even though the district had to let go of the 40-hour custodial position, with the additional hours, 27.5 hours per week will be regained. The 12.5-hour shortfall, Cruz said, will be managed with “new streamline strategies.” Even with the additional custodial hours, Cruz said the district is saving about \$20,461.

BOE Chairwoman Jane Dube said the decision to increase the custodian’s hours is “sort of an in-between,” as the board is not bringing

back a position, “but extending” two already existing ones.

The other recommendation suggested by Cruz was to eliminate a \$19,126 shortfall in the 2010-11 budget.

“Even with freezing all of our line items we could freeze,” Cruz said, “we are about \$19,126 in the hole.”

Cruz said line items such as computers, professional development and supplies were frozen due to budget constraints with a zero percent increase to the local education budget. The budget took three tries to pass, with the school budget eventually sitting at \$11.716 million.

Without “the hard work of the [administrative] team,” Cruz said the situation “could have been a lot worse.”

Making the two custodians full time in addition to eliminating the shortfall totals \$43,404, leaving \$176,639 remaining from the federal funds. Cruz recommended this money be put aside as the board plans for the 2011-12 budget.

Overall, the Federal Jobs Fund Program will provide \$10 billion to schools nationwide, and out of that amount, approximately \$110 million has been allocated to Connecticut. Con-

gress approved the legislation on Aug. 10 of this year.

Hebron fell somewhat in the middle in terms of fund allotment, as compared to the other districts that the *Rivereast* covers. Colchester received the most funds from the program, and Andover, the least. Andover received approximately \$72,000; Colchester, about \$792,000; East Hampton, about \$444,000; Marlborough, approximately \$102,000; Portland, just under \$250,000; and Salem, about \$181,000. Regional School District No. 8, the RHAM schools, received approximately \$327,000.

The funds are allocated based on a school district’s relative share of the town’s Education Cost Sharing grant, according to the state’s Board of Education, and will be paid through the department’s “cash management system” through “monthly draw downs.”

More information on the Education Jobs Fund Program and each individual town or districts’ allotment can be found on the US Department of Education website, www2.ed.gov/programs/educationjobsfund.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the BOE is Thursday, Oct. 14, at 7 p.m., at Gilead Hill School.

Devoted Mother, RHAM Library Assistant Remembered

by Lindsay Fetzner

Christine Barrett will forever be remembered by her family, friends and colleagues as always bearing her "signature smile" and for her caring and devoted personality that was evident in her work in the community.

After a battle with cancer, Christine passed away at home peacefully Sunday, Aug. 29, at the age of 54, family members said. She left behind a husband of 32 years, Joseph, and two children, Shauna of Hebron and Steven and his fiancée, Jenn, of Portland; three brothers and sisters-in-law; two brothers-in-law and their wives; another sister-in-law; a godson; a friend Chris, whom the family called "her special angel;" and numerous nieces, nephews, friends and extended family members.

Family members remembered Christine as constantly having a smile on her face, and always tending to others before herself. In the more than 300 cards and notes the family received after Christine passed, Joseph said, "The biggest thing there was her smile. ... The smile was her signature."

After Christine's diagnosis, Shauna said her mother received at least one card every day for close to six months – and even after that mark, the cards continued to pour in. The continuous outreach from the community, Shauna said, touched Christine greatly as she battled the cancer.

Shauna added that Christine was never one to focus on herself, but always put her focus on others. "It was never about her," she said, and added that Christine "always worried about everybody else."

"If she wasn't your friend," Joseph said, "it was because she hadn't met you yet."

Steven said the outpouring from the community after Christine passed away has "been phenomenal" and his dad Joseph agreed, adding that he was overwhelmed with "people coming together for a common cause... and that was Chris."

"She touched a lot of people," Joseph said. And, Shauna said, "the kicker" of it was that "I don't think she even realized it."

Friends called Sept. 1 at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home in Colchester, and Christine's funeral followed the next day, on

Sept. 2, with a celebration of the funeral liturgy at the Church of the Holy Family. Steven said he was told the procession from the church to the New Hebron Cemetery was two miles long. The service for Christine, Steven said, was "well-deserved." Joseph estimated that approximately 650 people came through the funeral home in celebration of Christine's life.

The libraries within the community were the location of many years of dedication in Christine's professional life, her family said. She worked a total of 10 years as a paraprofessional at the RHAM Middle School library, and an additional four years at the RHAM High School library. And, while working at RHAM, Christine also worked in the children's department at the Douglas Library during the evenings. Steven said it was her love of reading and children that brought her to the libraries.

"I remember being 3 years old and having her read to me and teach me to read," Steven said, adding that over the many years she worked at the libraries, and "a lot of families were touched that will miss her."

Steven also said that Christine was "an invaluable resource" for both the staff and children in the school district and always had a "willingness to help."

"There were always good things said about her," Steven said. "When she wasn't there, it was noticed."

RHAM High School Principal Scott Leslie described Christine as having an "absolutely stunning sense of humor." What makes or breaks a high school media center, Leslie said, is how welcoming and desirable a place it is for students to go.

"We're really blessed in that all of our media center staff is so kid-focused and Chris just added to that so much," Leslie said.

Christine was very welcoming with the kids, and they felt comfortable going to her. But, Leslie said, this did not stop with the kids, as it extended to the teachers as well.

Arthur Kevorkian, library director at RHAM High School, described Christine as a "tremendous help to students and faculty."

"She was a very giving and helpful person," Kevorkian said. "The kids loved her. ... In short, she was my right hand."

And, at the middle school, Library Director Janice Cole said she worked beside Christine for nearly six years. "She was a very hard worker and interacted well with the kids," she said. "She was friendly and outgoing, and it was enjoyable working with her."

Cole said that no matter the task that needed to be done, Christine was "always willing to do it."

Christine left the school district at the end of the last school year, but Joseph said it was a leave Christine did not want to make. "She would have stayed right up until the bitter end," he said. "She did not want to leave there."

To celebrate her years of dedication to the district, as well as other retiring teachers, Shauna said an "amazing assembly" was held during the last week of school. Shauna said her mother received a standing ovation, which touched her incredibly, and brought the family to tears.

As an avid Red Sox fan, Christine attended games since the late 80s, and had dubbed No. 25, Mike Lowell, as her favorite player. Joseph said Christine's love of the team "can't be stressed enough" and joked that there was always a lot of family rivalry due to her brothers being Yankees fans.

Steven also remembered his mom's love of a particular game of cards, called "Hand and Foot," which is a game similar to canasta. Joseph said the game was "one of the things that burned the midnight oil" in the home.

"That was *the* game," Joseph stressed, which was taught to the family by an uncle who resided in Georgia and visited the family's home often while traveling for work. "She couldn't wait for him to get here."

The beach, too, was a favorite vacation spot for Christine and her family. For nearly eight years, the family ventured to Rhode Island for a yearly two-week stay at the Bonnet Shores in Narragansett, RI. Shauna remembered the family's annual trip to Newport for the day, where they shared memorable meals on the water.

And as a token of her stay at the beach, family members said Christine always collected shells. In honor of the shells she treasured,



Christine Barrett

Steven said his mom's grave was "completely covered with sand and shells."

Family members said that during her fight with cancer, Father Michael Smith of the Church of the Holy Family came to see Christine often, and "really did enjoy his company."

Smith recalled making his way to the family's home to pray for her, and noted how much she cared for other people. Even dealing with the cancer, Smith said, if the particular type of chemotherapy couldn't work for her, she "would be grateful if it could help another person down the road."

Shauna said the family was "overwhelmed" by the community of the Church of the Holy Family and the acts of the compassion ministry.

"It kept us comforted, it kept us going," she said.

As the family gathered last week to remember their mother, they were asked to pick a word or phrase that they saw fitting to describe Christine. For Joseph and Shauna, it was her "signature smile."

And for Steven, he simply said, "irreplaceable."

Number of Kids in RHAM Sports on Rise

by Lindsay Fetzner

Increased athletic participation and significant field use were two points made in an athletics overview presentation to the Board of Education (BOE) Monday evening by the high school athletic director.

Athletic Director Mark Logan estimated that for the 2009-10 school year, roughly half of the high school student population was involved in athletics. Last year, the population was about 1,080 students and out of that figure, just over 530 students participated in sports. The athlete count is a unique count, Logan said, which counts an athlete only one time, regardless of the number of athletics seasons the students participate in.

The participation in athletics, Logan said, has increased dramatically over the past nine years. In the 2001-02 school year, he said, the unique count was 306 students. The number of athletes continued to rise to 347 students in 2003-04. The following school year, in 2004-05, the number dropped slightly to 282 students, but continued to jump until this past year. For the 2009-10 school year, 531 students were involved in high school athletics.

RHAM High School offers four Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) sports during the fall season. They include football, boys' and girls' cross-country, boys' and

girls' soccer and girls' volleyball. The sports not offered are field hockey and girls' swimming. However, Logan pointed out that previously, the high school has had a team of one in girls' swimming.

During the winter, a total of six different CIAC sports are offered to the student athletes – boys' and girls' basketball, boys' and girls' indoor track, wrestling, ice hockey, boys' swimming and gymnastics. The high school offers all available CIAC winter sports, Logan said.

And, during the spring season, the high school offers the most options for sports. Among the choices are boys' and girls' track and field, boys and girls' tennis, softball, baseball, boys' golf, boys' lacrosse and girls' lacrosse. Logan said girls' golf and boys' volleyball are currently not offered at the high school.

Last year, the sport with the most eligible student athletes was football, at a total of 76. Coming in second was boys' lacrosse with a total of 56. The remainder of the sports with eligible athletes above 40 students were boys' outdoor track, baseball, girls' outdoor track, boys' cross country and wrestling. The two sports with the lowest population were girls' gymnastics, with a total of 11 students, followed by girls' swimming and diving, with one eligible student athlete.

Field use was an overarching issue that Lo-

gan pointed out to the BOE Monday evening, as well as the consequences due to overuse.

"The biggest difficulty right now is our field situation," Logan told the BOE.

In his presentation, Logan listed six different field locations for the athletic teams – the competition field/track, the high school baseball outfield, the Wall Street fields, the high school softball field, the middle school baseball/soccer fields and those at Veterans Memorial Park.

Currently, the Wall Street fields are offline, due to field repair. After a couple seasons of use, Logan said, the material below the surface started to come up. Consequently, the fields had to be repaired and irrigated. Logan said it will take a year, or possibly longer, for the grass to come up. And, in the meantime, Logan said, the school is faced with a shortage of fields, and "condensing our teams into an even smaller range."

"We had space problems before," Logan said on Tuesday. "Consequently, where we were short of space before, now we are really short of space and really congested."

Due to the Wall Street fields being offline, Logan said the high school relies on the competition field for all levels of football, boys' and girls' varsity soccer and the occasional junior varsity or middle school game during the fall

season. In the springtime, the field is used for track and field competitions at both the high and middle school level, as well as high school boys' and girls' lacrosse games. Between all of these games, Logan said, there are a couple of weeks where the competition field is being used five out of the seven days.

With the continued and sometimes nearly non-stop use, Logan said the rest period of the RHAM fields is becoming less and less.

"With the addition of lacrosse, we are seeing our field use year round," Logan said.

Despite these hurdles the high school is faced with in terms of field space and overuse, Logan did point out the strides the school's athletics have made in gender equality.

In the 2007-08 school year, the boys' variance was -1.7 percent, and the girls' was -7.6 percent. The following year, boys' jumped to 2.6 percent, while the girls stayed pretty consistent at -7.4 percent. This past year, the boys' sat at -2 percent and the girls' variance was -3.7 percent.

"With the addition of girls' lacrosse... we have made strides in reducing the variance between the girls and the boys," Logan said, which he referred to as "one of the positive things."

The next meeting of the BOE is slated for Oct. 18 at 6:30 p.m. in the RHAM High School chorus room.

Reimondo Files for Injunction to Return to East Hampton Job

by Claire Michalewicz

Laid-off police chief Matt Reimondo's lawyer has filed for a temporary injunction to immediately reinstate Reimondo to his job.

The injunction, if granted, would put Reimondo back in his job while his lawsuit against the town is resolved, his attorney, Leon Rosenblatt, explained. Reimondo has been on paid leave since June 22, when then-Town Manager Jeffery O'Keefe abruptly removed him from his position.

Rosenblatt filed the motion for an injunction at Middlesex Superior Court last Monday, Sept. 13. A hearing on the motion is scheduled for Monday, Sept. 27, with future court dates being set after that.

Reimondo is suing the Town of East Hampton, along with O'Keefe, Town Council Chairwoman Melissa Engel and Vice Chairman John Tuttle, and Acting Lieutenant Michael Green, to be reinstated to his position. The lawsuit, filed last month, also asks for financial damages "in excess of \$15,000," though Rosenblatt said the exact amount is still unknown.

Reimondo alleged that the defendants con-

spired to remove him in retaliation for passing three harassment complaints on to the town attorney, and to protect O'Keefe from the allegations. Six of the seven Town Council members, along with O'Keefe, have insisted that the move was not retaliatory, and was done to help the town weather a predicted budget shortfall in the 2011-12 fiscal year.

In the motion for the injunction, Rosenblatt wrote that the layoff has not only affected Reimondo. East Hampton residents are in potential danger because they do not have a qualified police chief, Rosenblatt said.

When asked Thursday about Rosenblatt's comment, Engel said, "That's entirely not true. We have a very capable police department, and [Acting] Lt. [Michael] Green is doing a great job."

Green has been serving as acting chief since Reimondo was laid off, though the Town Council is working to adopt a revised ordinance that will transfer the chief's powers to the lieutenant, with oversight in swearing in officers going to the town manager.

"The defendants have absolutely no good or legal reason to keep Plaintiff Reimondo from assuming his rightful position as East Hampton Chief of Police," Rosenblatt wrote. "But the plaintiff remains out of the work, and the people of East Hampton remain deprived of a qualified chief of police."

Under the demands of the lawsuit, O'Keefe and Green have to prove that they did not usurp the position of police chief, which Rosenblatt said they have still not done. Rosenblatt also demanded they prove there was just cause for removing Reimondo, but said "they cannot even articulate a single good reason for Chief Reimondo's removal."

If the injunction is not granted, Rosenblatt said, Reimondo and the taxpayers of East Hampton will continue to suffer. Reinstating the chief to his position would not cause the defendants any harm, he added.

"The plaintiff and the residents and taxpayers of East Hampton, Connecticut will suffer irreparable harm with no adequate remedy at

law if this application for temporary injunction is denied," Rosenblatt wrote.

Another demand Rosenblatt made in the motion was that the town grant Reimondo a public hearing into his removal, as required by state statute. Reimondo had a hearing in July, but the town's attorney, Mark Sommaruga, moved to adjourn it. Sommaruga said Reimondo was not entitled to a hearing because he had been fired for budgetary reasons – not for cause. In August, O'Keefe, serving as hearing officer, decided to grant him one, though he did not set a date.

After Rosenblatt filed the motion for an injunction, the continuation of the hearing was scheduled for Monday, Oct. 4, at 5 p.m. in the high school auditorium. Since O'Keefe has left the town, Sommaruga said, Interim Town Manager Bob Drewry will fill in as hearing officer.

David Monastersky, the lawyer representing O'Keefe, Engel, Tuttle and Green, did not return calls for comment.

Investigation Shows Colchester Director Taped Employees

by Katy Nally

Parks and Recreation Director Jason Cohen resigned last Thursday, Sept. 16 "to pursue other opportunities," and an investigation shows Cohen had been secretly videotaping employees in the month before his departure.

A Town Hall investigation conducted in August shows First Selectman Gregg Schuster and Superintendent of Schools Karen Loiselle had planned to recommend Cohen's dismissal at the Sept. 16 Board of Selectmen meeting, noting Cohen had violated the town charter.

According to the investigation, which was conducted by Schuster, Cohen violated section XII of the Town Personnel Policy, which prohibits "improper or unprofessional treatment" of an employee, and "any conduct which is determined by the First Selectman to be detrimental or contrary to the goals or best interest of the Town."

"The action of secretly recording fellow employees without prior authorization is unprofessional treatment and contrary to the best interest of the Town..." the investigation report states.

Five Parks and Rec. Department maintainers and their crew leader were interviewed during the investigation, as well as Cohen.

The maintainers said they had discovered a digital camera around 6 a.m. on Monday, Aug. 30, hidden "on a shelf near the ceiling." "The camera was pointed in the direction of the table where the crew takes their breaks and meals," the report said.

Cohen told Schuster he had set up the camera at about 5:30 that morning after hearing complaints of "a hostile work environment," according to the report. Cohen said he "wanted to substantiate these claims."

Once the camera was discovered, Parks and Rec. Department maintainer Alan Veazie called the crew leader, Tim Angell, to ask if he had been recording employees, the report said. Angell replied he did not set up the camera, and later reviewed the footage, which showed "our table & few shadows walking by," Angell said.

Later that day, Angell went to Schuster to discuss the issue. He also asked Cohen about the matter, who, according to Angell, told him he was "just curious."

"I feel like I am being targeted & being harassed by this," Angell said in a written statement to Schuster. "I told [Cohen] he was micromanaging me/us and that he should let me do my job."

According to the investigation report, around 7:30 that morning, Cohen asked Veazie to return the camera. Veazie first told Cohen he didn't know what Cohen was talking about, but after Cohen advised him "it would be better if you told me," Veazie handed it over. Cohen said there was no content on the camera when he received it.

However, according to Veazie, he had lied about the camera when Cohen inquired because he intended to turn it over to the police or

Schuster. Veazie also asked Cohen if he would be fired for not returning the camera, but Cohen said he had never said that.

Veazie later turned over the camera, noting none of the content had been deleted, the report said.

While talking with Cohen, Veazie said he "felt threatened throughout the entire exchange," according to the report.

In discussing the matter with Schuster, Cohen also said he had been "secretly observing the crew" near the soccer sheds that morning, and had overheard the maintainers' conversation when they discovered the camera, the report said.

Throughout the interview, Schuster noted Cohen was "apologetic and said he recognized he used bad judgment." Cohen stated he had never taped employees before.

Ten days after the investigation, Schuster and Loiselle issued their statement to Cohen, who had been placed on administrative leave Aug. 30.

Based on Cohen's "previous record and this most recent incident," Schuster and Loiselle agreed to recommend Cohen's dismissal at the Sept. 16 selectmen's meeting.

The Sept. 9 letter from Schuster and Loiselle notes the two times Cohen was placed on administrative leave during his time at Colchester.

"In reviewing your personnel file with the Town of Colchester, we have noted that this is not the first time you have exercised extremely

poor judgment in your position," Schuster and Loiselle said.

Cohen's first leave came in 2006, after he threw a beer bottle at a car during the Family Campout. His second leave came in 2009 because he spoke with the media without authorization from the town.

The letter also mentions "in recent job performance evaluations you have been counseled that you needed to improve employee morale in your department and to improve your relations with your staff."

Cohen's most recent evaluation, administered June 10 this year by Schuster, said Cohen needed to "continue efforts to improve relations with staff and not jump to decisions too quickly." The evaluation continued, "Jay needs to work on relations with his staff including a better understanding of what the maintainers do."

In an e-mail sent to Schuster and Loiselle on Aug. 31, Cohen once again apologized for his "lapse in judgment."

"I eat, sleep and breathe this job, and sometimes I take it too personally. But I really don't want the [department], town or community to suffer in my error," Cohen said. He continued, "I love the community and what we have been able to accomplish over the last few years."

With Cohen's departure, Director of Facilities Greg Plunkett is the acting Parks and Rec. director.

East Hampton Police Investigating String of Burglaries

by Claire Michalewicz

Police are investigating a string of burglaries in town, including five that happened earlier this month.

East Hampton Police Sergeant Garritt Kelly said the burglaries happened between Sept. 6 and 14, in five different areas of the town. People committing these types of crimes are usually motivated by drugs, especially heroin, Kelly said.

The burglars usually move quickly, entering and leaving homes in minutes, and take items like jewelry and expensive electronics, Kelly said.

"Because the price of gold is so high, it's very lucrative to steal that and sell it for scrap," Kelly said.

No arrests have been made in connection with the burglaries, Kelly said, though he said he believes a man arrested for a burglary in Portland last week can be linked to two of the East Hampton crimes.

Kelly said East Hampton is a target for burglars because it is largely made up of residential homes that are vacant during the day, when residents are at work. In most cases, Kelly said, the burglars simply knock on doors, and force their way into the home if

there is no response.

If a resident answers the door, Kelly said, the burglars usually feign innocence, explaining that they accidentally came to the wrong house.

"It's not a violent crime," Kelly said, explaining that the would-be burglars usually came up with believable excuses for coming to the house, such as visiting a friend or viewing an item of furniture for sale, and then leave peacefully.

Police are urging residents to report any suspicious activity while it is happening, so police can promptly investigate and make arrests if necessary, said Kelly.

"Please do not take these encounters for granted," Kelly said. "Be suspicious. Make observations. Report them as soon as possible."

"Cooperation of citizens in the community has shown to be a strong factor in support of the solving of these crimes," Kelly said. He said several residents had already called the department with tips, which were helping police with their investigation.

Anyone with information should call East Hampton Police at 860-267-9544, Kelly said.

Mixed Feelings About Colchester Dog Park

by Katy Nally

In the two months since its July 18 opening, the Colchester Dog Park has received a lot of both paw and foot traffic, but also some mixed reviews from users.

Dog Park Committee Treasurer Amanda Nelson said the group received e-mails and Facebook posts, both criticizing the park and praising it.

Nelson said it was in the committee's best interest to be open about the recent complaints, as a way to be proactive.

"I feel like it's better to make it public," she said. "We know these issues and we're trying to fix them."

Specifically, Nelson said, the complaints mostly revolve around the maintenance of the park and the bricks fundraiser.

One Hebron resident, Laurie Meotti, who frequents the park with two of her three dogs, said the park provides the opportunity for dogs to socialize, but the lawn should be maintained better.

"The lawn needs to be kept short, and dog owners need to be diligent about cleaning up after their dogs," Meotti said. "This will keep the park safe and clean for everyone's use and enjoyment."

Nelson said Meotti's concerns were similar to others she has heard. One dog park user told the committee, "It is very difficult for humans to navigate the areas in the back of the park because the grass is so high; yesterday the weeds were up to my knees."

The same person continued, "It is difficult for dog owners including myself to pick up after their dogs when the grass is so high."

Nelson said there was a commitment from the town's Parks and Recreation Department to mow the grass and remove the trash. Acting Parks and Rec. Director Greg Plunkett said the

agreement was to mow every two weeks, or when needed, and empty the garbage two to three times per week.

The grass and weeds at the dog park might grow faster than other areas because, Nelson explained, the site was once a landfill, which has since been capped, and has "rich" soil.

Besides the maintenance, Nelson said there have been a few issues with the chairs dog park users brought and left at the park. One complainant said because dog owners are sitting in these chairs, as opposed to walking around with their dogs, it causes "dogs to gather around their humans, form packs, become territorial...and even snap at each other."

"People, PLEASE get up and walk around the park with your dogs," the person stressed. "They will have more fun exploring, you will burn a few calories yourself, and this promotes healthy interaction between our pets."

The chairs were not in the original plan for the dog park, unlike the benches that were donated to the committee, Nelson said. She added the chairs would probably not be removed.

Also in the original design was a walkway into the bullpen that is partly paved with bricks. Nelson said there have been some concerns from people who purchased bricks and still don't see them in the walkway. A few people have even asked to be reimbursed.

Nelson explained the committee only places its bulk orders for bricks twice a year, so residents who purchased a brick a month ago might not see it installed until the next year.

To make matters worse, the first set of bricks were not delivered on time, Nelson said.

Also, "we're at the mercy of volunteers to actually take them time to lay them all," she added.

"We can't be constantly installing and ordering the bricks," Nelson said.



The Colchester Dog Park, shown here at its July opening, has received both good and bad feedback from its users.

The next set of bricks will be laid during the spring.

But besides the negative comments, the Dog Park Committee also received a lot of positive feedback.

Nelson said she's noticed dogs playing together and their owners socializing as well. Most importantly, the "dogs are leaving tired," she said.

"And that's what you want; a tired, happy dog."

One person told the committee, "Yesterday, myself and my mini poodle, Abby, made our

first visit to the Dog Park it was definitely a lot of fun for both of us!! Thank you all for your hard work at creating this place of joy for our best friends!!"

The feedback, be it good or bad, is essential for the dog park to grow and better serve the community, Nelson said.

"It's ultimately what we need to make it a better park."

For more information about the dog park, visit its Facebook page under Colchester Dog Park.

Colchester Sewers, Sidewalks Discussed at Selectmen Meeting

by Katy Nally

At their Thursday, Sept. 16, meeting, selectmen were updated on the progress of two town projects: sewers and sidewalks.

Public Works Director Mark Decker explained the town has begun to use its Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant money to fund the planning stage for sewer and water infrastructure.

After Decker spoke, Town Planner Adam Turner discussed a plan to create sidewalk routes, including some that would lead to Colchester's four schools.

In 2008, the town applied for \$130,000 from STEAP to "develop a master plan to provide sewers and water," Decker said. A year later, Colchester received the grant and in June of this year, the town signed a \$83,550 contract with a consultant to begin planning the sewer and water infrastructure. That contract will end Oct. 25.

The project aims to bring sewer and water lines to the parcels in the area of routes 85, 11 and 2 and Lake Hayward Road. The plan creates a "W" as sewer and water lines would follow Chestnut Hill Road from Lebanon Avenue to Route 2, along Route 2 and up Route 85 to

the intersection of Halls Hill Road, then along Lake Hayward Road to Cabin Road, and up Cabin Road.

"We're trying to create a large loop between all of these commercial properties that have been rezoned," Decker said.

With the remaining \$46,450 from the STEAP grant, Decker said the town would look to design the "primary leg" of the project, which includes Route 85 from the intersection of Route 354 down to Lake Hayward Road.

"This brings it down sort of to the hub, and everything would radiate out from that position," he said this week.

The ultimate goal of the project, he said, would be to "accommodate the needs" of Colchester's anticipated commercial expansion. By creating the sewer and water plans, Decker said, developers would have more of an incentive to use the commercial space in town.

Decker said the "if you build it, they will come" idea wasn't too far off base.

"This is an investment in our future," he said.

Turner said it was his hope to have "parcel by parcel" maps of the commercial area, ready to hand to prospective developers. Having the

planning stage complete, Turner said, would be a "big advantage."

"We think that's a great incentive as we look to provide services for [developers]," he said.

Also, taking care of the planning stage now, Decker said, would provide a range of choices for the town when it came to financing the project. The two extremes being: relying 100 percent on the developer to cover the infrastructure costs or having the town bond out the entire cost.

With the planning stage underway, Decker said an important upcoming step would be to educate people on the proposed project. Education, Decker said, is a "critical component," and the best way to garner support from residents is to "be as transparent as we can," Turner said.

The project would also need the support of businesses, developers and the town, Decker said.

After Decker, Turner spoke with selectmen about Colchester's current sidewalks, many of which do not lead anywhere, he said.

Several months ago, Turner said the town put in place a new fee-in-lieu-of payment system

to start a sidewalk fund. If a property owner doesn't want a sidewalk on his or her land, he or she can pay a fee that goes into a town account that funds the construction of sidewalks elsewhere in town.

Turner said Superintendent of Schools Karen Loiselle is also looking for grant money that would provide safe routes to schools.

The entire plan to connect existing sidewalks and construct new ones would total about \$1.5 million, Turner said, and continue over the next 10 to 15 years.

Turner listed several sidewalks that would be priorities for the town, including Chestnut Hill Road and Halls Hill Road where there are two daycares, on Norwich Avenue between Pleasant Street and William J. Johnston Middle School and Broadway between Amston Road and Fernwood Drive.

After hearing Turner's presentation, First Selectman Gregg Schuster said the sidewalk plan would probably be voted on at the next Board of Selectmen's meeting, which is scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 7, at 7 p.m. at Town Hall.

Portland Police News

9/19: Donald Carriere, 53, of 7 Chafee Ln., Southington, was charged with fourth-degree larceny, Portland Police said.

EH

East Hampton Police News

9/4: A 17-year-old juvenile was issued a ticket for third-degree criminal mischief, East Hampton Police said.

9/8: Thomas A. Bezilla, 44, of 21 Seminole Trail, was arrested for second-degree breach of peace, police said.

9/8: Kenneth J. Barber, 22, of 8 Midwood Farm Rd., was arrested for second-degree harassment, police said.

9/11: Timothy Anderegg, 50, of 22 Harlan Pl., was arrested for cultivation of marijuana, possession of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia, police said.

9/15: Eric LaChappelle, 28, of 74 Colchester Ave., was arrested for interfering with a police officer and disorderly conduct, police said.

9/17: Eamonn Rival, 27, of 41 Champion Hill Rd., was arrested for third-degree larceny, police said.

Portland BOE Votes to Transfer Funds to Address Goopy Roof

by Claire Michalewicz

The Board of Education voted Tuesday to transfer funds to replace the leaking roof at Brownstone Intermediate School (BIS).

In a meeting of the Facilities and Financial Subcommittees before the regular meeting, school board members discussed the proposed repairs for the roof at BIS. In their regular meeting, they voted to transfer funds from a salary account into a maintenance account, so it would be ready for construction next month.

The roof on the northeast wing of the school has been waterlogged and leaking black "goo" into some of the classrooms. The project to replace that portion of the roof is scheduled for the Columbus Day long weekend in October.

The project will be funded by \$47,000 in the town's capital fund set aside for roof repairs, as well as from \$80,000 saved earlier this year when the teachers' union agreed to spread a scheduled salary increase over a period of two years. Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen presented the roof proposal to the Board of Selectmen at its meeting on Wednesday night (see story on page 17.)

Tom Robinson, the town's finance director, had helped the town "tremendously" in planning the repairs, Doyen said. BOE member Christopher Bongo also thanked Director of Buildings and Grounds Paul Bengston and

Doyen for their work in planning the repairs.

Also at Tuesday's meeting, Doyen explained to the school board that she had received the results of the schools' Adequate Yearly Progress on its Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) and Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) standardized test scores, and that Portland had succeeded in all areas.

AYP on CAPT and CMT scores is a major criterion for meeting the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind act. "We are 100 percent this year," Doyen said, adding that while test scores are not the only indicator of student learning, she was very pleased with the results.

Another way to measure student success, she said, was to look at what high school seniors went on to do after graduation. Of the classes that graduated from PHS in June, 83 percent were now enrolled in two- or four-year colleges.

One noticeable change between the Class of 2010 and previous classes, Doyen said, was that the number of students attending four-year colleges had decreased. On average, she said, around 70 percent of graduating PHS seniors went on to four-year programs, but this year, only 56 percent did, with another 27 percent enrolling at two-year schools.

Doyen said the change was not unique to Portland, as students throughout the state and the country were feeling the effects of the economic downturn.

Doyen also announced that representatives from the Capital Region Education Council (CREC) would be visiting PHS to see the distribution of male and female students in technical education classes. At PHS, Doyen noted, enrollment in technical classes was primarily male, while more female students took home economics courses. In the audit, CREC representatives will check to see that the school is not discriminating against students in class enrollment.

The BOE also reviewed a proposal for technology education classes for adults at the high school. PHS technology teacher Krista Karch proposed the classes, after a summer technology camp she ran for students this year proved to be popular, with 35 students enrolling.

The evening classes about computers, Internet use and digital cameras would cost \$20 per person per session, Doyen explained, and the program would only run if the payments collected covered the costs of running the program. Karch said she would only run the classes on weekdays and on Saturdays when the school

was in use by other groups, so as to avoid the costs of extra custodians.

BOE member MaryAnne Rode said she was happy to get children and adults to use the high school facility outside of school hours, since the town had put so much effort into constructing it. In addition, if more classes like the summer technology class were offered, younger students could get excited about technology and lead to more equitable enrollment in the high school classes.

The BOE agreed to further review the program when Karch provides a more detailed schedule, and to consider opening the school facilities to other individuals and groups running classes under authorization from the BOE.

The BOE also voted to authorize two field trips, including an October trip to the Bronx Zoo. The trip for high school students was designed to reward them for their performance on the CAPT. Doyen said she didn't feel students should miss an entire day of classes to reward them for things they should be doing anyway, but was approving the trip because PHS principal Andrea Lavery had already promised the students the trip.

The next BOE meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Oct. 5, at 7 p.m. in the high school library.

Milardo Talks to Selectmen About Spike in Portland Burglaries

by Claire Michalewicz

Portland has seen an increase in burglaries in recent weeks, Police Lt. Ron Milardo explained to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) at their meeting on Wednesday evening.

Milardo said the break-ins were mostly affecting homes and cars in the rural eastern part of the town, though boats at the Yankee Boatyard had also been burglarized, he said.

To protect their homes, he added, motion lights were usually effective in scaring off potential burglars. To deter car break-ins, Milardo said, residents can take simple steps like making sure their doors are locked, and not leaving their keys in their cars

Portland Police arrested a man last Friday after he robbed a home on Middle Haddam Road (see related story on page 15), and suspected he could be linked to other burglaries in the area. East Hampton has also seen an increase in burglaries, and Milardo said Portland and East Hampton police were working together to investigate the crimes.

Milardo said he was urging residents to call the police if they see any suspicious activity, even if it seemed insignificant.

"We'd rather check it out and have it be nothing," Milardo said.

Milardo also announced that Niko, the police department's German shepherd, had died earlier that day after a fight with cancer. First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield offered her sympathies to the police department and especially officer Peter Paranzino, who had worked with Niko for years.

The selectmen also heard a presentation about the Brownstone Intermediate School (BIS) roof replacement, scheduled for October. Superintendent of Schools Dr. Sally Doyen and Board of Education Chairman Chris Phelps outlined the project to the selectmen.

The Board of Education had already authorized the \$99,784 project at their meeting the previous night. The roof replacement will be funded by \$47,000 from the capital fund, with additional money coming from salary concessions.

"The reason the board is able to do this is because of concessions some of our salary groups made last year," Doyen said, thanking the teachers' union for spreading out an expected pay raise, freeing up \$80,000 to be used to replace the roof.

The new roof, Doyen said, "will certainly make the learning environment safer and more

predictable for the kids." The roof has been leaking into several fifth-grade classrooms for the past several weeks.

Director of Buildings and Grounds Paul Bengston explained that Evergreen Construction of Springfield, MA, will replace 9,700 square feet of roofing along Middlesex Avenue and the back of the school will be replaced. Bengston said he hoped the repairs could be completed over the four-day Columbus Day weekend. (Tuesday is a professional development day, so students will not be in class.)

If the repairs took longer than the weekend, Doyen explained, she and BIS Principal Laurie Boske had worked out a contingency plan for moving students. Doyen said there is enough space in BIS to move students from the affected classrooms into other areas of the school while the repairs are completed.

Also at the meeting, the BOS authorized repairs to a culvert off Route 66, leading into St. Mary's Cemetery. A 1982 easement makes the town responsible for maintenance of the stream that runs along the cemetery to reduce erosion. The town is still responsible for keeping the stream clear and in stable condition.

M. Terri Larson, from the St. Mary's Cemetery Association, explained that the town's water running through the stream was undermining the bridge, and since the stream was the town's property, the town had a responsibility to repair it.

The BOS voted unanimously to reinforce the bridge and a collapsing wall, and pour a concrete slab underneath the bridge. The project, as engineer J. Howard Pfrommer explained in a letter, would cost about \$13,000.

At a meeting held last Wednesday, Sept. 15, the BOS voted to renew Portland's eligibility for the Small Town Economic Assistance Program, which they do every four years. They also discussed proposed changes to the town's ethics ordinance, but Bransfield said the BOS does not yet know when the final changes will be ready for them to review.

The next regular BOS meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Oct. 20, at 7:30 p.m. in the Portland library. (A meeting originally scheduled for Oct. 6 has been canceled, as Bransfield will be at a conference.)

East Hampton Man Charged in Portland Burglary

by Claire Michalewicz

Portland police arrested an East Hampton man after he was caught walking out of a home carrying stolen items.

William Marchinkoski, 40, of 83 North Main St., was interrupted by a homeowner who saw him walking out of her home on Middle Haddam Road, Portland Police Officer Michael Fitzpatrick said.

The homeowner called police, who apprehended him a few minutes later, walking east on Middle Haddam Road, Fitzpatrick said. Marchinkoski was carrying some coins that the homeowner was missing, Fitzpatrick said. Fitzpatrick said the coins were the only things Marchinkoski took from the house, because the homeowner interrupted him during the burglary.

Marchinkoski explained that he thought he had been in a friend's house, though neither the homeowner nor police knew of anyone with his friend's name who lived in the area, Fitzpatrick said.

Fitzpatrick said Portland Police were famil-

iar with Marchinkoski. He said East Hampton Police also interviewed Marchinkoski, in connection with a string of burglaries that have happened there in recent weeks.

"They've just been getting hammered with burglaries," Fitzpatrick said of East Hampton, noting that Portland was seeing an increase in these crimes as well.

"It's just the heroin addicts out there," he said, explaining that the burglars usually broke into houses during the day, looking for valuable items to sell. Fitzpatrick said that if they encountered a resident, the burglars usually said they were looking for another house, like Marchinkoski did.

Marchinkoski was charged with third-degree burglary, sixth-degree larceny and second-degree breach of peace. Police held him in lieu of a \$20,000 bond, and Marchinkoski appeared in court on Monday morning, Fitzpatrick said.

He is being held on a \$75,000 bond, and is due to enter a plea next Monday, Sept. 27.

Hebron Police News

Troop K received several reports of and "erratic vehicle weaving in and out of traffic" at the Hebron Harvest Fair Saturday, Sept. 11, at about 11:18 p.m., State Police said. Nicholas Daddario, 21, of 115B House St., Glastonbury, was subsequently stopped and charged with DUI and failure to carry license, State Police said.

Colchester Police News

9/15: A 17-year-old was charged with possession of less than four ounces of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia, Colchester Police said.

9/18: Brittany Mounce, 24, of 8 Town St., Norwich, was charged with failure to carry registration, failure to carry license, evading serious physical injury and DUI, Colchester Police said.

9/19: Robert Clarke, 46, of 179 South Main St., Apt. 1, was charged with third-degree assault, disorderly conduct and risk of injury to a minor, State Police said.

9/21: Nicholas Romano, 20, of 71 Briarwood Dr., was charged with violation of a protective order, State Police said.

Marlborough Police News

9/15: Several items were stolen from a residence on Saner Road, State Police said. Anyone with more information is asked to contact the Marlborough Resident State Trooper's Office at 850-537-7500.

9/15: A residence on Chapman Road was broken into, State Police said. The suspect entered the house by pushing an air conditioner through a front window, State Police said, and assorted items were stolen.

9/18: Michael Magana, 42, of 44 Ude Way, Colchester, was charged with failure to drive right and DUI, State Police said.

9/18: Jonathan Whitlock, 58, of 24 East Ridge Ct., Cheshire, was charged with failure to drive in proper lane and DUI, State Police said.

Salem Police News

9/19: Melissa Shutsky, 32, of 1459 Route 163, Oakdale, was charged with criminal impersonation, interfering with police, operating a motor vehicle under suspension and misuse of plates, State Police said.

9/20: Alex Blais, 19, of 454 New London Rd., was charged with breach of peace and driving with the intent to intimidate or harass, State Police said.

Obituaries

Marlborough

William J. Baldwin

William J. Baldwin, 86, of Marlborough, husband of Mildred (Davis) Baldwin, died Monday, Sept. 20, at Marlborough Health Care. Born Oct. 1, 1923, in Groton, he was the son of the late Bernard and Hazel Baldwin.

William retired from Pratt & Whitney in 1983, where he had worked as a group supervisor. He proudly served his country in the Navy during WWII. He was a Marlborough resident for more than 58 years. He was a member of the Marlborough Congregational Church where he served as a deacon and was a Sunday School teacher, a graduate of Putnam Trade School where he graduated as an aircraft mechanic, a member of the Marlborough 4-H where he helped establish the 4-H Camp, a life member of the Marlborough Volunteer Fire Department, a member of the Roy B. Pettengill Ambulance Association, and he also was the first driver of the Marlborough Senior Citizens bus.

Besides his loving and devoted wife of 63 years, Mildred Baldwin, he is survived by his son, Ronald Baldwin and his wife Cindy of East Hartford; two daughters, Tina Baldwin of Middletown and Dorothy Daniel and her husband Harry of Windsor Locks; a brother, Bruce Baldwin of Storrs; two sisters, Melba Ketner and her husband Charlie of Quaker Hill, and Barbara Baldwin of Quaker Hill; and his two wonderful grandsons whom he truly adored, Zachary Daniel and Tyler Baldwin.

He was predeceased by a brother, Clinton Baldwin, and three sisters, Alicia Reynolds, Cora Woolley and Martha Johnson.

Funeral services will be held today, Sept. 24, at 11 a.m. in the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, with the Rev. Robert Faulhaber officiating. Burial with Military Honors will follow in Marlboro Cemetery. Friends may call today at the Spencer Funeral Home from 9:30 a.m. until the time of the service.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Marlborough Congregational Church Memorial Fund, P.O. Box 57, Marlborough, CT 06447, the Marlborough Volunteer Fire Dept., P.O. Box 237, Marlborough, CT 06447 or to the Masonicare Partners Home Health and Hospice, 111 Founders Plaza, Suite 200, East Hartford, CT 06108.

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

East Hampton

Theodore R. Carlson

Theodore R. Carlson, 83, of Middletown and East Hampton, beloved husband of Ruth (Brainerd) Carlson, died Monday, Sept. 20, at Middlesex Hospital. Born Jan. 5, 1927 in Middletown, he was the son of the late Theodore and Florence (Williams) Carlson.

He proudly served his country in the Army during WWII. He retired in 1993 from Standard Knapp of Portland where he had worked as a Design Engineer. Ted was an avid woodworker and loved the UConn men's and women's basketball teams.

Besides his loving wife Ruth he is survived by his son, Robert Carlson and his wife Melissa of Haddam; a daughter, Linda Carlson of Rocky Hill; a brother, Roy Carlson of Middletown; and several nieces and nephews.

He was predeceased by his three sisters, June Hetzel, Elna Filanda and Mary Carlson.

Funeral services were held Thursday, Sept. 23, in the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, with the Rev. Shelley Timber officiating. Burial with military honors followed in Rock Landing Cemetery in Haddam Neck. There were no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the American Diabetes Assoc., 1701 North Beauregard St., Alexandria, VA 22311.

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

Andover

Willis W. Covell

Willis W. "Sonny" Covell, 85, loving husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather and life-long resident of Andover, passed away Wednesday, Sept. 15, at home. Willis was the son of the late Ellsworth and Christine (White) Covell.

Upon graduation from Windham High School, Sonny joined the U. S. Navy and served as an aviation radioman on a B26 Bomber during WWII. A member of the Teamsters Union, he retired after 40 years as a tractor trailer driver from First National Stores.

Sonny is survived by his wife of 66 years Barbara Tedford Covell, son Lawrence Covell and wife Dana, daughter Barbara Francisco and husband Carl, daughter Gail Fracchia and husband James and daughter-in-law Judy Covell, as well as five grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

He was predeceased by son, William Covell, in 1998.

In lieu of flowers, make memorial contributions to the Andover Volunteer Fire Dept., 11 School Road, Andover, CT 06232. Funeral services and burial are private.

Holmes Funeral Home in Manchester is in care of arrangements.

Marlborough

Bessie Morgan

Bessie Morgan, 85, of Marlborough, widow of the late Raymond Morgan, passed away Monday, Sept. 20, at her home. Born Dec. 1, 1924, in Elizabeth, NJ, she was the daughter of the late James and Loretta (Thorn) Taylor.

Bessie was a member of the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Colchester congregation and enjoyed working and serving as a Jehovah's Witness. She was devoted to her family and enjoyed raising her children up to serve Jehovah.

She is survived by five children, Theresa Morgan of Fort Mohave, AZ, Christine O'Sullivan and husband Gary of Jamacia, West Indies, Cynthia Archer and husband Alexander of Ladson, SC, Charles Morgan and wife Rita of TX and Lorraine Morgan of Marlborough, with whom she made her home; a brother, Thomas Wilson Sr. of Middletown, RI; 15 grandchildren and numerous great-grandchildren, extended family members and friends.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, Sept. 25, at 3 p.m., at the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, Colchester Congregation. Burial will be private.

Donations in her memory may be made to: Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, 297 Westchester Rd., Colchester, CT 06415.

Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd Colchester has been entrusted with arrangements. For online condolences, visit www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Clement Bagadinski

Clement Bagadinski, 93, died Sunday, Sept. 19, at Middlesex Hospital. Born in Portland Aug. 20, 1917, he was the son of the late Walter and Mary Bagadinski.

He had lived and worked in Portland his entire life except for serving his country in the U.S. Army during World War II. He served in the 1st Armored Division. He saw action in Algeria, French Morocco, Northern France, Rhineland, Sicily and Tunisia. He was awarded various medals including the Bronze Star. He worked many years as a carpenter, building many homes in the Portland area. He leaves behind a legacy of love to his many nieces, nephews, and numerous friends. He will be missed dearly by all who loved him.

He was predeceased by his sisters Lucy Wotjiewicz and Sophie Piecuik; and his brothers Walter Bagadinski, Stephen Bagadinski, and Henry Bagadinski.

His family, Henry Bagadinski Jr. and Richard Bagadinski, received relatives and friends at the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, Thursday, Sept. 23, followed by a service at the funeral home. Rev. John F. Ashe officiated. Interment, with military honors, followed in St. Mary's Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, gifts in Clem's memory may be sent to the American Diabetes Association, P.O. Box 11454, Alexandria, VA 22312.

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

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Note: The views expressed in this column do not necessarily represent the views of the newspaper.

What was looking increasingly inevitable finally happened two weeks ago, when East Hampton Town Manager Jeffery O'Keefe resigned, effective immediately.

As weeks went by, and allegations and revelations continued to pile up, it seemed like O'Keefe stepping down from his post, even if temporarily, was the best way to begin to restore some normalcy around town. The whole Reimondo/O'Keefe controversy had become a tremendous distraction and it was becoming obvious that, for the town to be able to, well, function, something needed to be done. (Because believe it or not, there are other things going on in East Hampton besides the laying off of Reimondo.)

Personally, what I would have done is put O'Keefe on administrative leave, particularly after it came to light he was being investigated by the state's attorney's office, due to the harassment allegations brought against him this spring, as well as by an attorney due to a hostile work environment complaint filed against him by East Hampton Police Sergeant Garritt Kelly. I've covered towns for a while, both as editor and before that as a reporter, and it seems that, in most any other situation, that's what would have happened. If a town employee or school employee were under investigation for alleged wrongdoing – by the state's attorney's office no less – he or she would have been placed on administrative leave while the investigation takes place. Truth be told, I was surprised this was never done in this case.

Instead, O'Keefe remained in his post, while the allegations mounted, while the distractions mounted, while the TV crews flocked to the town and this mess of a story became the lead piece on the 6 o'clock news on what seemed like a weekly basis.

In a statement issued after O'Keefe resigned, Reimondo said the development was "another step forward to bringing this painful period in our town's history to an end." He may be right, but this ugly chapter for Belltown isn't over yet. I held off on writing this column last week because I wanted to see what the Town Council would do in terms of Reimondo's position. At a special meeting last Wednesday, the council opted to go ahead with cutting his position, sending a rewritten ordinance – removing the chief's position and giving its powers to a lieutenant – to public hearing next Tuesday, Sept. 28. It wasn't surprising that they're moving ahead with this,

but I'm not sure it's the best idea.

As I've written before in this space, the timing in this whole mess has stunk, from day one. O'Keefe and the majority of the Town Council members have claimed from the start Reimondo's removal was done strictly for budgetary reasons, and while that may well be the case, O'Keefe and/or the council should have realized how bad it would look if Reimondo were laid off shortly after forwarding to the town attorney and the council the sexual harassment allegations made by town employees. Council Chair Melissa Engel was quoted in the *Hartford Courant* shortly after Reimondo was laid off as saying the "police department is not going to be the last department that the Town Council looks at in ways to save money." If so, then why not look at those other departments first and then come back to the police department after some time had passed and the laying off of Reimondo wouldn't look quite so, well, retaliatory. But they didn't do that, and instead the matter exploded in a fashion that frankly should have been predictable.

So now the council is forging ahead with eliminating the police chief's position, despite the fact that so many in town are still seething about O'Keefe and just want Reimondo back. Look, I'm a grown man; I know the right decision is not always the most popular one. But in this case, the council needs to look at the hundreds of angry constituents out there and consider if this is really the atmosphere most conducive to getting things accomplished. Frankly, I don't think it is.

So, what I propose is this: temporarily reinstate Reimondo, and look at some of the other departments Engel said the council could look at to save money. (In fact, in a letter to the editor in this week's *Rivereast*, Engel outlines the cost savings in O'Keefe's restructuring of the police department, and even if you remove Reimondo from the equation, savings are still there.) If at the end of the day there's still a need to save money, then go to Reimondo and address it. And for goodness sakes, if you can do so, offer the man a pay cut before firing him. I'm sure there are plenty of people out there who'd rather see their pay reduced in lieu of getting canned outright.

This likely won't happen, and next Tuesday's public hearing will go on as planned, and it will be another vitriolic affair. And, ultimately, another sad chapter in what has become a sad, sad saga for the town.

* * *

See you next week.