

**RIVER EAST**

# News Bulletin

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

Volume 36, Number 52

Published by The Glastonbury Citizen

April 6, 2012



**Andover residents gather to watch as a new pedestrian bridge is lowered into place over Route 316. The bridge will connect two portions of the Hop River Trail system and allow people using the trail to cross safely without having to step into the road.**

## Andover Finally Gets Its Bridge

by Geeta Schrayer

Last Saturday, March 31, Andover residents and interested individuals from neighboring areas bore the cold, raw, rainy weather to watch as the town's long-awaited covered bridge was moved into position.

The event was the culmination of over 11 years of work to have a pedestrian bridge cross Route 316 near the junction of Route 6. The bridge links together two portions of the Hop River Trail system, a rail trail which runs 5.8 miles through Tolland County and is part of the larger East Coast Greenway system.

The East Coast Greenway is a developing trail system running close to 3,000 miles from Calais, Maine to Key West, Florida, linking all of the major cities on the East Coast and weaving 198 miles through Connecticut. According to the Greenway Alliance website, about 26 percent of the East Coast Greenway is currently trails, while the remainder is on road.

The implementation of the bridge means one less area where individuals utilizing the greenway need to step off the trail and onto the street.

In an April 2 press release, state Representative Pam Sawyer, who was integral in working to make the bridge a reality, said the bridge solved a dangerous situation.

"Off-road bicyclists, horseback riders [and] cross country skiers all struggled with ways to get down the embankment, and up the other side at a spot where cars and trucks are not looking for people crossing the road," she said, stating

the bridge adds "a huge measure of safety."

Sawyer said she began working for the bridge after she was approached by individuals interested in completing the trail section. She worked toward receiving funding, recommending Andover apply for a Small Town Economic Assistance Program grant for \$474,000, while working with the Department of Transportation and Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to earn around \$45,000 for additional costs. She also worked with utility companies "to offset costs involved in placing utilities underground so the bridge could be placed."

"I have worked for 11 years to get this pedestrian bridge up for the community, with three different governors, four first selectmen and five separate commissioners of the Department of Transportation," said Sawyer, adding she was "so pleased" that First Selectman Bob Burbank "has taken this project to heart and has seen to the smallest details to get this done."

On Wednesday, Burbank explained he began working toward making the bridge a reality when he first came into office in 2006.

"At that point, nothing had been done on the bridge for quite some time," he said, adding there were some issues that needed to be resolved before things could move forward.

"There were quite a few details that had to be worked out that were rather controversial, and in some cases we even had to sit down in group sessions which included state legislators,

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## SEEC Dismisses Complaint Against Engel

by Joshua Anusewicz

Connecticut's State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC) recently announced that it would be dismissing allegations that former East Hampton Town Council Chairwoman Melissa Engel "impermissibly handled absentee ballot applications" prior to a town-wide referendum in November 2010 to reinstate Police Chief Matthew Reimondo.

According to the SEEC's findings, released March 21, the commission ruled the allegation that Engel sent unsolicited applications to 11 individuals prior to the referendum would be dismissed. The commission also dismissed the allegation that the applications were improperly handled, relating to the matter that several of the ballots were obtained for family members, which is protected by state statute.

The matter surfaced in October when Sgt. Garrett Kelly, at Reimondo's order, submitted the complaint to the SEEC after he had performed a preliminary investigation into a complaint a citizen had filed with East Hampton Police. That complaint claimed that Engel had

obtained an excessive amount of applications for absentee ballots and distribute to other individuals.

According to Kelly's complaint, Town Clerk Sandra Wieleba provided him with copies of the town's absentee ballot applications, where he found that 11 separate applications labeled Engel as the "person that assists another person in the completion of this application." The 11 individuals are residents of Engel's seasonal campground, Markham Meadows.

Kelly stated that Wieleba had a "suspicion" when two of the applicants, Donna and Richard Kelley, allegedly received the absentee ballots unsolicited. The town clerk's office then contacted Engel, who informed the office that she would come to pick up the absentee ballots, Kelly said; the town clerk, however, decided not to turn over the ballots, but rather keep them "on record." Engel requested that the ballots "simply be destroyed" instead, but the ballots were kept on file, Kelly said.

After completing the investigation and find-

ing no legal wrongdoing from a police standpoint, Kelly handed the information over to the SEEC to review any possible violations of state statutes pertaining to absentee ballots.

Shortly after the complaint was filed with the SEEC, both Wieleba and Assistant Town Clerk Bernice Bartlett sent statements to Gilberto Oyola, the lead legal investigator in the case, stating that neither felt that any violations had occurred and that Engel had obtained the absentee ballot applications properly. Oyola also received a letter from Donna and Richard Kelley, stating that they had asked Engel to obtain the applications for them. The SEEC ruled in favor of Engel, based on these statements.

The commission also ruled that Engel and Douglas Logan - who was named with Engel in the complaint - had completed absentee ballots for family members, which is accepted by state statutes. This qualified Engel and Logan as "designees," which can complete the absentee ballots "with the voter's explicit permission

via a signed designation."

Engel said Tuesday that she was "pleased, but not surprised" by the SEEC's decision to dismiss the case. She did, however, say that she was surprised that the matter was even investigated in the first place.

"My question is why it was even filed," Engel said. "I can't imagine why we spent time and money on such a baseless complaint."

Engel also mentioned that Kelly never contacted Donna and Richard Kelley during the investigation to ask if they had received the applications unsolicited.

But the matter doesn't appear to be stopping there; Engel stated Tuesday she had sent a formal complaint to Interim Town Manager John Weichsel against both Reimondo and Kelly, asking for a formal internal affairs investigation to be done by an independent third party. Engel did not reveal what was stated in complaint, but said it was a list of roughly 14 items, ranging "from unprofessional to illegal" con-

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**Spring Home & Garden Section Inside**



Andover residents cheered and took photos as the long-awaited bridge linking two portions of the Hop River Trail system was lowered into place on March 31.

#### Bridge cont. from Front Page

to try to work out some compromises and details."

Burbank went on to mention the original contract for the bridge was "very vague," which led to some problems, all of which needed to be solved before the bridge could come to fruition.

It was a long time coming, but now that it's here, Burbank said it was worth the wait.

"I think everybody in town is excited about having the bridge finally in place. I think a lot of people were starting to doubt that we would ever have a bridge – a lot of promises were made as far as when it would come that we couldn't keep," he said, but added now, "I think everyone thinks it was worth waiting for."

As the bridge was moved into place by a large crane around noon on Sunday, individuals looked on, enthralled, seemingly ignorant to the cold drizzle and a temperature only slightly above freezing.

Andover resident Judy Knox said she'd been back and forth all morning and her husband had come down around 8:30.

"We've been hearing about this for a long time, and we kept hearing it's coming 'soon,'" she said.

"Yeah – your husband, at the senior luncheons, would always say 'when's the bridge coming?' when the first selectman comes down," added resident Betty Kerr.

"So we've been standing here in the cold, and the rain for part of the time, but I said 'oh, I can't take a chance,' you know, that I might miss [the bridge being moved]," said Kerr.

Columbia resident Jean Bogue said she was at the scene "all day yesterday" to watch as the bridge was transported from Center Street, where it'd been sitting since last October.

"I was expecting the bridge to go up as slow as the rest of the process," she said. "But once [the crane operator] blew that horn it went up!"

Bogue explained she ran a group home and had two handicapped young men who'd taken

an interest in the process.

"I brought them yesterday when the bridge was over [on Center Street] and took them out of the car and took pictures of them with the bridge – one of them just couldn't fathom this thing moving, so it's pretty cool," she said, adding the wait "was worth it."

And for Andover resident Christa Pannorfi, the move became a weekend event with her nephew, Tyler.

"We've been waiting for this for years," she said. "When I heard it was going to happen this weekend I said 'I want to have Tyler come sleep over, we'll go down Friday night, watch them move it into place,' and then today – all the excitement!"

Pannorfi said Tyler, whose favorite part was when the bridge was lowered onto the platforms, watched part of the event with her online – the RHAM Video Club was streaming it live – because it was so cold. They weren't the only ones; at one point in the morning, a visit to the website showed over 100 individuals were viewing the event.

But, when it came time for the bridge to be lifted into place, Pannorfi, who lives up the road from the bridge's location, said they came outside to see it in person.

"Once we saw them put the crane underneath we ran out and said 'we gotta head down there,'" she said. "It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and it was very exciting."

Pannorfi laughed, "It's probably the biggest thing to happen in Andover in years." She said she and Tyler couldn't wait to walk and bike across it.

The bridge, which is 136 feet long, 10 feet wide and about 85,000 pounds, was chosen by Sawyer "to pay homage to our New England Heritage." Sawyer said she "encouraged the construction of a covered bridge to create a signature structure for the town of Andover." It is now the only covered bridge along the greenway.

#### Engel cont. from Front Page

duct by the two men.

On Wednesday, Engel also informed the Town Council of the complaint and asked the council to add the item to an executive session to keep abreast of the matter.

Former Town Council Vice Chairman John Tuttle also expressed concern in an email to Weichsel last week, stating that the matter involves "a town employee falsifying an investigation that was submitted to a state agency." Tuttle states in the email that Weichsel should set a "precedent-setting statement" to town employees that "there is no tolerance for unethical behavior."

Weichsel said Thursday he had received the complaint from Engel and stated that a formal, independent investigation was "indeed the way to go" on the matter. He said that he is currently in the process of establishing the investigation and that it would "start very soon."

"I'm handling it in a fairly routine manner," Weichsel said.

## From the Editor's Desk

# Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

I happened to be perusing the soda aisle at Stop & Shop last weekend, and when looking at the bottles of Coke I noticed something: they no longer say "Coca-Cola Classic" on them. They're simply "Coca-Cola." Sure, on the back of the bottle it says, in smaller writing "Coke, original formula." But nowhere on the bottle does it say "classic" anymore. Up until very recently, if you wanted a bottle or can of Coke – just plain Coke, not its low-cal or flavored brethren – your only choice was to get "Coca-Cola Classic." The word "classic" was pretty prominently displayed, right up there on the front of the can/bottle.

Personally, I was kind of surprised keeping "classic" a part of the Coke lingo hung on as long as it did. I mean, how many people younger than, say, their late 20s even really knew why their plain Coke was being marketed as "classic"?

Well, for those of you in their mid-20s or younger, or for those who just happened to block the fiasco from their minds, here's a fairly trivial – but pretty interesting – history lesson into one of the biggest corporate blunders ever. Coca-Cola Classic was called such because, in the mid-1980s, Coke changed its formula. The company was still the top-selling cola in the country, but it wasn't the giant it once was. Pepsi was gaining, and fast. So, the Coca-Cola Company felt a change was needed. Now, while I'm sure I had New Coke (the company didn't really call it this; it was simply called Coke. But "New Coke" has become the unofficial name for it and, to avoid confusion, that's how I'm going to refer to it in this column), I'm too young to really remember the taste. But, from what I've read, it was a pretty substantial change in formula. It was apparently much sweeter than classic Coke, sweeter even than Pepsi. And interestingly, in initial taste tests, before the product was introduced, people said they liked the new formula.

All that changed in April 1985, when the Coca-Cola Company launched New Coke. The company didn't just introduce the new formula, it discontinued the old formula at the same time. That led to an uproar among consumers. For while Pepsi might have been "the choice of a new generation," it just didn't have the brand power Coca-Cola did. Coke had been around for 100 years, and was more than just a soft drink. It was like a piece of Americana. While the Pepsi logo had undergone plenty of changes over the years, Coke really hadn't. So its image, with the classic white script writing on a red background, and that contour bottle, is nostalgic. Coca-Cola was the soda people grew up with. It was like comfort food. And all of a sudden, that comfort food was gone.

It turned out people didn't like having their Coca-Cola taken away from them, especially when you consider it was replaced by a product that, by all accounts, didn't really taste the same. People wanted their Coke back, and were quite vocal about it. In July 1985, the Coca-Cola Company caved, and started producing the old Coke formula again. They called it Coca-Cola Classic.

And that's the part I remember best. Like I said, I don't really remember the taste. Not only was I six years old when the product was introduced, it's also been more than 20 years. But I still remember a couple of the ads, and the stories that ran on the nightly news. Here was this big company basically giving a giant mea culpa. It's like they were saying, "Look, we know we screwed up. Here's your original Coca-Cola back."

Of course, there's debate over just how much of a screw-up New Coke really was. Conspiracy theorists (because there are al-

ways conspiracy theorists) have suggested the whole thing was a giant marketing ploy. As I said before, Coca-Cola was losing ground to Pepsi. By publicly taking away the Coke people had grown up with, the company created a higher demand for the product than was there before. Thus, when Coca-Cola then reintroduced the product a short time later, there was a greater interest in it than there had been; people knew what they were missing, and they wanted it back.

I don't really buy this theory. The Coca-Cola Company spent several years researching and developing a new formula, and there was a multi-million dollar marketing campaign pushing the New Coke. That's an awful lot of effort and money to spend just on the chance that people's attachment to the Coca-Cola brand was really that strong.

Another theory says the New Coke fiasco had been planned to cover up a change that was going on with the original Coke. The Coca-Cola Company, to save money, was planning to replace the sugar it used in Coke with high fructose corn syrup. However, if they had simply made the change, people would have noticed the taste difference and there would have been an uproar. But by taking Coke away for a few months, and only having this New Coke available, people would be so happy when the original was reintroduced they wouldn't notice that it wasn't really the original at all; it was flavored with high fructose corn syrup.

This theory's even less believable. Yes, Coca-Cola Classic was made with high fructose corn syrup and not sugar. Remember, it was only three short months from the time New Coke was launched and the time Coca-Cola Classic was reintroduced. If the high fructose corn syrup produced such a discernable taste difference so as to generate an uproar, wouldn't people have noticed the Coca-Cola Classic they were drinking in July wasn't the same Coca-Cola they'd been drinking in April? Still, there are people out there who say Coke sweetened with sugar is the only "real" Coke left. And while "throwback" Pepsi – made with real sugar – is frequently available, Coke has never gone this route. However, apparently, you can get Coke with real sugar during Passover, if you look hard enough; there are special cans and bottles of Coke produced that have real sugar, and not the corn syrup, as Jewish law prohibits corn products from being consumed during Passover. I've never had it, so I don't know how big the difference is, but like I said, there are some who say it's the only true Coke.

But anyway, back to New Coke. While Coca-Cola Classic continued to be a big hit, and helped the Coca-Cola Company get back some of the market share it had lost to Pepsi, New Coke got less and less popular. It was renamed Coke II in the early 1990s, but the product was still unsuccessful; I guess folks knew what Coke II really was, and wanted no part of it. Today, it's unavailable in the U.S., although apparently it's still sold in a few foreign markets.

And yet, for more than a quarter of a century, the word "classic" still remains part of the Coca-Cola label. I don't really mind it. It was a nice little throwback to the 1980s, a reminder of a brief period of time when the country was captivated by a soft drink changing its flavor. But perhaps it was time for it to go the way of the do-do. Because, like I said, for an ever-growing chunk of the population, "classic" Coke was the only Coke they've ever tasted.

\* \* \*

See you next week.

# Columbia Resident and Navy Vet Running for State Senate

by Geeta Schrayer

Columbia Republican Steven Everett, 52, announced this week he's running for state Senate in the 19th district, under the belief that "the government needs to be more responsible and responsive to the people it's representing."

The 19th district includes Hebron and Marlborough, as well as Columbia, Franklin, Lebanon, Ledyard, Lisbon, Montville, Norwich and Sprague. It is currently represented by Edith Prague, a Democrat also from Columbia.

In a press release dated April 5, Everett mentioned the state is riddled with debt, causing a Moody's downgrade and pressures for towns to increase taxes, "because our legislators won't cut spending but will send unfunded mandates to the local level putting more pressure on the taxpayer."

"People can't succeed unless they have good jobs and that means less taxation on individuals, businesses and investments," he said, adding, "our state economy benefits when hard-earned dollars are left in the hands of those who earned them."

Everett also mentioned a need to focus on the accountability of public schools "to ensure that public funds are spent wisely and educational progress can be effectively measured and evaluated."

Everett graduated from Eastern Connecticut State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in history. He has worked for more than 17 years with SNET and AT&T and most recently as a pharmaceutical sales specialist with AstraZeneca.

As a Columbia resident, Everett has been an active member of the community in a variety of ways. He's a member of the Republican Town Committee and St. Columba Parish. He was a mentor at the Youth Ski Club and has coached baseball, basketball and football.

Everett is married with three grown children, and as a family man, he stated he's especially concerned with the state's debt.

"I don't want my children paying for the mistakes Hartford makes today, when they become burdened with outrageous taxes later in their adult lives," he said.

"The fact that we're the worst state to retire in was like a slap in the face," Everett said Wednesday. "I come from a very family-oriented community [and] our house is very family-oriented. I want my kids to live close by, to see them – and then ultimately my grandchildren if we're blessed with them – grow up.

"But I can't look my children in the eye and say 'move back to Connecticut because there are good jobs here and it's a fair state,'" he continued. "I can't do that to them right now, but

with change I hope we can, and that's what I'm talking about."

Everett said he started thinking about running for senate "probably three to four years ago, when I knew that my military career was drawing down."

Everett joined the Navy in 1978 at the age of 17, and has served on active duty in such places as Pearl Harbor, HI, Charleston, SC, and the Naval War College in Newport, RI. He served in the Navy Reserves for 25 years, and was honorably discharged as a master chief petty officer in 2011.

"I served because I care about my country," said Everett. "I'm running for this office because I care about my community."

Everett explained he grew up with a mother and father who believed in helping people, treating people with respect and doing the right thing.

"I kept those values all through my military career [and] my work career, and when it came time to leave the military, different things that have been happening in the state made me decide, you know, something has to change," he said, adding, "I have the opportunity and the time now to be part of the solution instead of just sitting back and saying 'I'm tired of this.'"

Everett said he thinks many people would run for public office if it didn't require such a time commitment, and he's "thankful I have the time to [run] now. The state is in a very tough way – and when I say 'the state,' it's really 'the people of the state.'"

If elected, Everett said he'd work with everybody and was the kind of guy to "take a look at what you can do to make a difference right

away."

For him, that included looking at expenses and unfunded mandates.

"Our biggest thing is waste, fraud and abuse in our expenditures," he said. "We need to clean that up, and I think that everyone would want to take a look at where we spend our money."

Everett said that was something easy that could be done, and called it "low-hanging fruit."

He went on to say another area to examine would be job creation.

"I believe everybody wants to create jobs in the state," he said, adding the state needs "to cut back on red tape."

When asked what he would say to individuals deciding who to vote for, Everett said he'd ask them one question: "Are you happy with the way the state is being run right now?"

"If you are, that's fine," Everett said. "If you're not, it's been this way for a long time. We cannot continue to go down this path."

"If you put me in office I will give you my very best for the two years to work with people to change the way we do business in this state," he continued. "I'm not guaranteeing anything past that. What I'm saying is, give me two years. [But] if you vote for the way things are, bring your checkbook to the voting booth because we all owe thousands and thousands of dollars for



Steven Everett

the red ink the state has gotten us into."

Although she has not officially filed her papers, Prague said Thursday she is "certainly leaning toward" running for reelection and is anticipating "an honorable campaign" against Everett.

## Scholarship Offered

The Hebron Women's Club is offering a scholarship toward the pursuit of higher education to a deserving high school senior.

To be eligible for consideration, the applicant must be a resident of Hebron and must submit a brief essay stating his or her future goals, planned course of study, financial need, extracurricular activities, and community service. A high school transcript must be provided along with two letters of reference (one personal and one from a teacher or school administrator).

Application instructions and information about eligibility requirements can be obtained at RHAM, Mercy, East Catholic and Xavier high schools. Please mail application packets (essay, transcript, letters of reference) to Hebron Women's Club Scholarship Committee, P.O. Box 181, Hebron, CT 06248. Completed applications must be received by May 1.

## Ted's Owners Honored for Community Service in Hebron

by Geeta Schrayer

On April 3, David and Todge Armata of Ted's IGA were made honorary members of the Hebron Fire Department.

"They've done awesome things for the town," said Gladys Bryant, president of the Hebron Volunteer Fire Department Inc. Bryant went on to say the Armatas were always there for the department.

"They do a lot of things for the fire department [and] with the department – like at Thanksgiving, we have a senior center Thanksgiving dinner, and Ted's furnishes a lot of the food and cooks the turkey," she said. "Over the years they've done a lot of things... they're always there if we need something, if we're looking for donations or whatever, and they're that way with everything in town."

Republican Town Committee Chairwoman and Hebron Historical Society President Donna McCalla said the recognition was well-deserved.

"I think it's entirely appropriate," she said. "There's no doubt that the Armata family are leaders in terms of giving back to the community, supporting the nonprofit organizations, donating to them, standing on the corner and

letting nonprofits use their hotdog stand or providing all the food.

"The Armatas are just the mainstay and the core of Hebron," McCalla continued. "They represent what Hebron is about."

Both brothers were honored to receive the membership, and said they were simply following in the footsteps of their late father, Ted Armata, who had also been made an honorary member of the fire department.

"It's a huge honor," said David. "It was a very big honor to have that."

David said Ted's has been involved with the community "pretty much since 1974 when it first opened." He added his father was a big supporter of community service.

"We thought it was a terrific honor to receive," Todge said. "We've always kind of been supporters of the fire department [because of] everything they do in the community – it's like a tradition of my dad's to support the fire department, and it's something we've still always done."

And both brothers stated they "definitely" planned to continue on in the same manner.



David, left, and Todge Armata, co-owners of Ted's IGA, were recently made members of the Hebron Fire Department.

# New Training Facility Dedicated in Hebron

by Geeta Schrayer

The completion of Hendrik Cor Bilek's Eagle project meant more than the fact he could become an Eagle Scout – the highest rank in Boy Scouts. It meant local firefighters have a new place to practice some of the situations they'll encounter on the job.

Hendrik's Eagle project was to build a training facility for firefighters, and on April 1, two and a half years of work stood before community members, as the finished facility was officially dedicated at Burnt Hill Park.

"I decided to build the training facility because I wanted a challenge," Hendrik, a senior at RHAM High School, said Tuesday. "I wanted something that I would be proud of and something that would benefit the entire community."

Hendrik had the option to build a memorial garden for the fire department instead of the facility, but said he liked the idea of constructing a place for firefighters to train.

"It started off as just being a few simple training props for the department but it quickly evolved into a larger than life structure," he said.

In order for his idea to become reality, Hendrik explained he had to create the design, gather the materials and go through an approval process that included the Board of Selectmen, Planning and Zoning Commission and the Parks and Recreation Department, along with the fire department and Boy Scouts.

Afterwards, he needed to finalize the details then bring it all together and complete the project.

The cost was a little under \$2,000 and funds were raised through donations by the Hebron Fire Department and area organizations. Hendrik said he received help with the construction from Connecticut Light and Power, the Hebron Fire Department and Boy Scouts Troop 28.

The facility allows firefighters to practice three different aspects of firefighting, with the possibility to build onto the structure for additional training purposes in the future.

As the facility was dedicated, Lieutenant Matthew Troy spoke on the importance of Hendrik's project, saying: "because this is a training device that helps firefighters learn and practice – you're gonna save firefighters' lives."

"The legacy of this project is remarkable," Troy continued. "I can't even wrap my head around how important this is. And I'm so grateful – and I know the firefighters are grateful – that you took on such a project."

Troy went on to share he'd once dislocated his shoulder jumping out of a window during a training incident, and said "it's nice to have a proper facility to do this under a controlled setting – hopefully no one else will follow in my footsteps."

After those present walked from the pavilion to the facility's location up the hill, Captain Rich Shok spoke regarding the new structure.

"The training tower that we are dedicating today is the product of thousands of hours of planning, construction, red tape and logistics," he said. "I can remember when this idea was first presented to the fire department. I had no idea that I would be standing under it only two years later."

Shok explained the tower would allow firefighters to continuously train and help them uphold their priorities as firefighters, which can be summarized through the acronym LIP – life safety, incident stabilization and property conservation.

"This tower will be a valuable asset to the Hebron Fire Department and surrounding communities as we train our firefighters to give LIP," he said. "There's no doubt in my mind that the skills that will be forged here will contribute to saving lives, will improve our ability to stay safe on the fire ground, and will expedite the time it takes to stabilize an incident, thereby reducing the damage done to property."

After a prayer of dedication was offered up by Pastor Phil Hakanson, a fire engine roared to life and a traditional "wet down" was performed. All new items received by the department are sprayed with the fire hose in "a kind of baptism," explained Shok.

"So a couple of our guys here are going to give the official wet down to christen our structure."

Following the spray of water, training officer David Thurz explained the three evolutions as they were performed by different firefighters.

The first demonstration showed a "bailout."

"Should things go awry in a very uncontrolled environment, we often train our personnel how to save themselves – because at the end of the day we are 911," he said. "We have nobody else to call other than ourselves."

In the simulation, a firefighter rolled out of what was meant to emulate a second story window. He then moved down to the ground attached to a descender, a tool allowing the individual to lower at a controlled speed.



Hebron firefighters demonstrated ventilating a roof at the dedication of the new training facility at Burnt Hill Park on April 1. The structure allows firefighters to practice three different aspects of firefighting.

place with a live fire burning in the base and a chimney reaching up to the rooftop. Hay, which has the same consistency as creosote, is used to simulate the substance and a clogged chimney. The firefighters in the demonstration were stationed on the roof, and lowered a weighted chain into the chimney to break up the creosote, causing it to fall into the base of the chimney and allowing additional steps to be taken if necessary, to extinguish the fire.

The demonstrations showed first hand the impact Hendrik's project would have on area firefighters. The project was needed along with other requirements such as merit badges and community service in order for Hendrik to become an Eagle Scout, which he was honored as becoming at a ceremony prior to the dedication.

"It is an honor and a privilege to be an Eagle Scout," he said. "I am very proud of my work and I want to live everyday serving others and using my scouting skills to help the community and even the world."

The final demonstration involved responding to a chimney fire – something the fire department has seen more of lately. Thurz explained more people have turned to burning wood due to recent fuel costs, and "after all the trees that fell during the snow storm, wood is about 89 cents a quart," he joked, adding the increased use has resulted in more chimney fires.

The training facility is fitted with a small fire-

## Selectmen Accept Resignations, Decline Purchasing Property in Marlborough

by Katelyn Kelleher

The Board of Selectmen approved the resignation of two town employees at its regular meeting Tuesday.

Assistant Town Clerk Susan Wallen will retire after 28 years, First Selectwoman Catherine Gaudinski said, and the town is looking for replacements.

Gaudinski said the town is anticipating hiring a part-time assistant town clerk due to the lower volume of work coming in, but the position may eventually expand to full-time again.

Gaudinski said this should have a reduction on the town budget, but she doesn't know by exactly how much.

The board also accepted the resignation of part-time building official Earl Dean. Gaudinski said assistant part-time building official Claude Jean will replace Dean.

The selectmen turned down the option of purchasing a residential property at 52 South Main St. from the state.

Gaudinski said she didn't know when exactly the state purchased the property, but it was due to a water condition pertaining to a high salt content in the well water.

Selectman Dick Shea said it is policy that

the town gets "first crack" at the state's surplus properties and the town had the option to purchase the property once before. He estimated it was offered for over \$60,000 and the town had no interest.

This time the property was offered at \$27,000, but the board saw "no foreseeable need for that land," Shea said.

Gaudinski said the selectmen were also concerned with removing taxable property by purchasing it.

Instead, it would be better for the town to allow a taxpaying individual to purchase the land. "There's a rumor that there's a private individual interested in acquiring it from the state," Shea said.

The water issue might be fixable and the land might be usable again, Shea said. "There are reverse osmosis systems," he said. "It's not as insurmountable a barrier as it used to be."

Also Tuesday, the board adopted Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity Resolutions, ensuring the opportunity to rent, purchase, finance and all other housing-related services on a non-discriminatory basis. Gaudinski said this was in accordance with the 2012 Small Cities Com-

munity Development Block Grant.

The grant will fund a housing rehabilitation program aiming to make qualified residents' homes more energy efficient and compliant with codes. It would cover the costs of items such as electrical upgrades, windows, roofs, furnaces, septic systems and wells, as well as interior and exterior modifications to accommodate homeowners with disabilities.

The Small Cities grant provides homeowners meeting specific income requirements with interest-free loans with an open-ended repayment period, or until the homeowner sells or refinances the property.

On Feb. 21, the board chose consultant Larry Wagner to administer the grant due to his experience working with the town and reasonable fee.

The town will have a public hearing for the grant Tuesday, April 17, at 6:30 p.m. at Town Hall, immediately before the regularly-scheduled Board of Selectmen's meeting. Town Planner Peter Hughes is collecting letters of interest from residents who meet the requirements of the program.

The selectmen continued discussion on a land use and building fee schedule. Gaudinski said the selectmen have a draft schedule and will be setting a public hearing on it at some point in May.

Hughes made recommendations to leave the fees at a flat rate and remove any additional calculations associated with them. He also recommended charging 10 percent of the total project cost for inspection fees. At the March 21 meeting, Gaudinski said that although charging 10 percent would be an increase from the current 7 percent, if the total fee was not expended, the town would refund the unused money.

The board also continued discussion on a request for proposals from firms to provide on-call engineering services for the town. Gaudinski said the selectmen have not set any interview dates and "it's an ongoing process."

More discussion on the engineering firms and the selection process will take place after the budget season.

The next Board of Selectmen's meeting will be held Tuesday, April 17, at 7 p.m. at Town Hall.

# Marlborough Plastics Receives Money for Expansion

by Katelyn Kelleher

On the brink of a decade-long plan to expand, a Marlborough business now has money in hand, through the state's Small Business Express Program (SBEP), to aid in the process.

Marlborough Plastics Inc. received a \$100,000 small business matching grant, equivalent to its own contribution, to aid in purchasing new machinery and retaining and creating jobs. While the grant was awarded last fall, the money was not received until late March.

The company, purchased by Joe Asklar in 1979, specializes in plastic injection molding, sonic welding and engineered thermoplastics. Asklar explained custom injection molding is "almost reverse engineering," where in order to manufacture a product, they must design the opposite image of it for a mold.

Marlborough Plastics creates molds for military/defense, aerospace, medical/healthcare, automotive and firearms industry products, as well as for electronics and sporting goods. The company works with different manufacturers in these industries to first create the molds, then the products.

Marlborough Plastics creates a diversity of products, but Asklar listed the discs attached to the front of driving range golf carts used to pick up balls and shooting industry products for Lyman Industries of Middlefield as examples.

The company will soon operate out of a new 11,250-square foot facility on North Main Street, just down the road from its current 4,500-square foot location. The new facility will likely be completed in late June or July, Asklar said.

The current building is in a residential area of North Main Street and looks more like a home than a business. "We keep it that way for the neighbors," Asklar said, adding some clients have even had trouble finding it.

The new facility will be a stainless steel building in a more industrial area. The com-

pany took out a loan through the state to fund the building project, so no grant money will be used for the construction.

Asklar has owned the land for approximately 10 years and has been planning the expansion just as long, but was waiting for the right time. "Business got soft so it wasn't smart economically to do that," he said. "It's a wiser business decision now than to do it 10 years ago."

Sales have increased as manufacturers who outsourced to Asia have started returning. Asklar said Marlborough Plastics offers competitive enough prices to bring business back and the company is the busiest it has been in 20 years. "Really it's fantastic," he said. "We're getting molds from China that have Chinese writing on them."

Asklar said the returning business was the "key ingredient that pushed us to build a new facility."

The company will use the SBEP grant to purchase new machinery and retain six jobs. The grant was introduced as part of a bipartisan jobs bill passed Oct. 26.

Currently, the company operates with six employees, including Asklar, his son Kevin Asklar and son-in-law Todd Machowski, who will eventually take over the business. The grant was awarded on the condition that those six jobs are retained, even in the event that business gets soft, Asklar said.

However, the company will be hiring employees to operate new machinery purchased in accordance with the expansion. Asklar said the grant will be used to purchase a new injection molding machine and a milling machine, used to cut metal to make the molds for the plastics.

The grant money might also be used for training, Asklar said. Businesses awarded the grant can also use the money for construction or leasehold improvements, relocation within the state, or other business expenses authorized by the



**Marlborough Plastics will soon be moving from its current 4,500-square foot facility to this 11,250-square foot facility on N. Main Street. The company, which is owned by resident Joe Asklar, recently received a \$100,000 small business grant from the state that will aid in the purchase of new machinery and will add additional jobs.**

commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). Any expenditure the grant money is used for must be matched with half of the company's own money.

Asklar thanked state Rep. Pam Sawyer, who helped the company with the SBEP grant, and said "none of this would have happened" without her.

"It's so nice to have a legislator work with you," he said.

According to the DECD, applicants are evaluated by their plan to use the money for

growth and job creation, the economic impact of the project, the performance and condition of the company and the availability of state funds.

In order to qualify, Marlborough Plastics had to meet a number of criteria. Eligible businesses must be Connecticut-based, with all operations located within the state, be in good standing with the payment of all state and local taxes and must "employ, on at least 50 [percent] of its working days during the preceding 12 months, not more than 50 employees," according to the DECD.

# Marlborough Finance Board Talks Parks and Rec Spending

by Katelyn Kelleher

The Board of Finance discussed issues with maintenance and operations budgets with members of the Parks and Recreation Commission at Tuesday's budget workshop.

Parks and Recreation Chairwoman Barbara Lazzari and member Louise Concodello, along with Chris Corsa from the Public Works Department, explained to the Board of Finance more funding is needed in the proposed town operations budget for playscape maintenance and facilities operations.

Lazzari said the playscape maintenance, currently budgeted at \$1,200, needs to increase by \$2,800 to purchase playscape mulch for insurance purposes. It would cost \$4,000 to add enough mulch to bring it up to the required 12-inch thickness.

The mulch has been "fluffed" by volunteers yearly, but is now too compacted and needs replacement, Lazzari said.

Board of Finance member Cliff Dennis asked if the town could save money by using its own trees to make the mulch, but Corsa said it needs to be certified playground bark mulch. "Because it's clean, doesn't contain any poison ivy or bugs, and they're also uniform," he said, noting that, as of 2010, the playscape needs to be handicapped accessible and the uniform mulch will ensure it is level.

Lazzari said the parks and recreation's facilities operations budget must increase to \$13,250 from \$12,764 due to a new requirement this year to have the town lifeguards waterfront certified. Leaving the budget at \$12,764 would only allow waterfront certification for the two head lifeguards.

Last month, First Selectwoman Catherine Gaudinski proposed to switch the parks' sanitation services to Olsen Sanitation, a state contractor, at a savings of \$3,600. Olsen Sanitation would charge a fee for each service visit, so the \$3,600 remained in the budget to cover those costs.

Lazzari had her doubts that the new contractor will save or provide the town with the same service as the current provider.

"[The contractor tells us] they're going to come on an emergency call for \$18," Lazzari said. "You know damn well they can't get their truck out of the yard for that. I think that number is going to go way up from what they say."

Lazzari joked that she "hate[s] to get passionate about port-o-lets," but said the current provider has checked on the facilities regularly and has even provided extra at no charge for events in the past.

Board of Finance member Susan Leser asked Lazzari and Concodello about the possibility

of charging a small fee for residents to obtain a parking pass for the town beach at Blish Park. Lazzari quickly dismissed the idea, as trying to enforce it would be complicated and would require staff to monitor the parking lot, she said. Additionally, she did not think tax-paying residents should be charged for "utilizing the beautiful beach we have."

\* \* \*

Also at the meeting, the town tax assessor explained the majority of residential property owners in town will see an increase in taxes due to their new assessed values.

Assessor Marie Hall said most residents' home assessments decreased due to the revaluation and it is likely that 75 percent of residential property owners in town will see a tax increase. "Most people don't understand that it's a double-edged sword," she said. "When the assessment goes down, the mill rate goes up."

Board of Finance member Kenneth Hjulstrom said he was shocked by the widespread tax increase.

"I think that many people were lulled into a false sense of security when they saw a decrease in their assessed values, not realizing that the decrease might be less than what is required to avoid a net increase in taxes," he said.

Hall said only two people went to informal assessment hearings to increase the evaluation of their home's value and, unsurprisingly, both homes were up for sale.

"They had new hardwood floors, kitchens, etc., but not one building permit," she said.

The last full physical revaluation, in 2005, cost \$280,000, Hall said. This year was just an update and only property sold in the last two years, properties that acquired building permits and commercial and industrial plants were inspected.

The next full physical revaluation in 2016 will cost less. "The previous assessor [in 2005] had all commercial properties audited for personal property. I conduct my own personal property audits so wipe that [cost] off the slate," Hall said. She estimated the 2016 revaluation will cost approximately \$150,000.

The Board of Finance is scheduled to receive last-minute changes from Gaudinski at a meeting Thursday, after press time, including an increase in the RHAM budget and surpluses from roof projects at Town Hall and the town garage.

The board will hold a public budget hearing Monday, April 23, at the Marlborough Elementary School cafeteria.

## Portland Man Nabbed For Chainsaw Theft

by Joshua Anusewicz

A man who was taking up temporary residence at the Riverdale Motel in Portland was arrested by East Hampton Police recently after stealing a chainsaw from a home, Sgt. Garrett Kelly said Wednesday.

On Friday, March 23, Alex Niver, 27, who was living in Room 27 at the Riverdale, was arrested and charged with third-degree burglary, third-degree criminal mischief and sixth-degree larceny. Niver is still being held on \$10,000 court set bond.

According to Kelly, earlier this year, Niver smashed a window and broke into the home of an acquaintance on Schoolhouse Lane, stealing a chainsaw. Kelly said Officer John

Wilson began an investigation into a complaint by the resident, which resulted in Wilson locating the chainsaw at a pawn shop in Wethersfield.

Wilson was then able to track the sale of the chainsaw back to Niver, Kelly said. At the time of the arrest, Kelly said that Niver had other charges pending for unrelated crimes.

According to the state judicial website, over the past year, Niver has had several run-ins with the law, including motor vehicle infractions, use of drug paraphernalia and a felony charge for possession of narcotics.

Niver is scheduled to appear in Middletown Superior Court for the theft-related charges on Friday, April 13, at 10 a.m.

## Lifestar Called to Route 66 Crash in Marlborough

by Katelyn Kelleher

An East Hartford resident was transported to Hartford Hospital by Lifestar helicopter for injuries sustained when his vehicle rolled over after a two-car crash on Route 66 Wednesday, March 28, State Police said.

Edward Roberts, 70, of 886 Main St. Apt. 305, East Hartford, struck an oncoming vehicle while heading westbound on Hebron Road in Marlborough, continued on, struck an embankment and the vehicle rolled over onto its roof, police said.

Police said Roberts struck Hebron resident Frank Anastasi's Volvo, after Anastasi had swerved right to avoid traffic from a minor

crash heading eastbound.

Police said Anastasi, 47, sustained minor injuries and was not transported.

Marlborough Fire Captain Mark Merritt said it took crews approximately 30 minutes to extricate Roberts from the rolled-over vehicle. Merritt said Roberts suffered lower extremity injuries.

Roberts was then transported by Lifestar helicopter to Hartford Hospital from the Marlborough Clinic.

A spokesperson for Hartford Hospital said Roberts was treated and released.

# East Hampton Finance Board Cuts \$264,500 From Budget

by Joshua Anusewicz

The Board of Finance spent two nights this week deliberating over cuts to the budget, eventually settling on a \$264,500 trimming Wednesday. The adopted budget was passed unanimously.

The reduction brings the proposed 2012-13 budget down from \$39.084 million to \$38.820 million. The reduction also brings the expected mill rate down from 26.64 – a 0.96 mill, or 3.74 percent, increase from the current year – to 26.40, a 0.72 mill, or 2.8 percent, increase from the current year.

Wednesday's cuts included a \$175,000 reduction from the Board of Education budget, as well as a \$38,000 reduction from the capital budget. The reduction from the capital budget represents \$10,000 for furniture at the senior center, \$13,000 for room dividers in the senior center's new multi-purpose room and \$15,000 for the Center School parking lot. Finance Director Jeff Jylkka said Wednesday that these projects will still be funded by the town, but during this current fiscal year, pending the approval of a fund transfer by the Town Council.

Additional savings were also found in the highly-debated town engineer position, which Interim Town Manager John Weichsel proposed in his budget. The position was supported by Public Works Director Keith Hayden, who was on hand at multiple budget deliberations to express the need for the position with various town projects on the horizon.

The board, however, has been hesitant to fully add the position, as immediate savings might not be realized. The new town engineer position, which would cost the town roughly

\$109,000 with benefits, would be considerably less than the average amount of money the town has paid for contracted engineering services over the past several years. Weichsel's proposed budget included the addition of the position and adjustments to engineering fees and the public work department's materials budget, a concession Hayden made to allow for the position's approval. With all of the adjustments, the majority of the board felt that adding the position was basically a wash for the first year, and that adding a position during tough economic times might not be advisable.

With that in mind, board member Tom O'Brien made a motion to fund half of the position, at a total of \$54,494 with benefits. The reasoning for the partial funding, O'Brien said, would be to allow a new town manager to make the decision as to whether the position is necessary or not. A new town manager is expected to be hired over the next month or so.

"[The new town manager] may be saddled with a position they might not want to have," O'Brien said.

Chairman Matthew Walton agreed, calling the decision a "good compromise."

"This gives the town some breathing room," he said. "The idea is to hold off, then let the new town manager decide."

Walton added that he expected Hayden to have an individual in place for the position if it were approved and would "have [the board's] blessing" to hire that person.

"The engineering fees are already funded," added board member Ted Turner. "If we do this, we might save some money, too."

Some board members did support fully funding the position, however. Board member Mary Ann Dostaler had fully supported the position during deliberations, and on Wednesday, called Hayden's rationale for the position "extremely sound."

At a public hearing on Monday, Dostaler was the first to propose the cuts to the education budget, which she said would "match" the increase in the education and town operations budget. That reduction would have brought the mill increase down to 0.76, a figure that most of the board was more comfortable with.

"I think getting down to around 0.75 would not have a large effect on town services," Dostaler said Monday.

Monday's public hearing was more interactive, as Jylkka and Superintendent of Schools Dr. Judith Golden presented the town and education budgets. Residents were also able to give their input to the board, although all of those who spoke were elected officials or town employees.

Board of Education member Don Coolican opposed the increase in the education budget, citing a trend in spending increases versus a declining student enrollment. Coolican, who stated he has been through 19 budgets on the school board, said that "enough is enough."

"We've got more employees and fewer students," Coolican said, adding that the district spends roughly \$14,000 per student. "The school budget keeps increasing faster."

Fellow school board member Bill Marshall supported the budget, contesting that the economy was improving. "People are spend-

ing money," he stated. Marshall added that if the budget were accepted as proposed, the monthly tax increase would be around \$14, "the cost of a pizza."

The cuts to the budget that were made Wednesday would have been \$267,500, but an additional \$3,000 was added to budget at the request of James Royster, the chairman of the Middle Haddam Historic District Commission (MHHDC). On Monday, Royster stated that the town was funding only 17 percent of the Middle Haddam Public Library, a total of only \$7,000 a year.

"We need more support than we're getting," Royster said, who added that the library is roughly \$20,000 in the red.

The idea drew support from the board, who originally proposed that \$3,000 be moved from the contingency fund to the historic district. Although that idea gained traction on Monday, Dostaler and fellow board member Patience Anderson stated Wednesday that moving money from contingency to other line items could set a bad precedent for the future.

With that in mind, the finance board allotted \$3,000 to the MHHDC for the library, in a move Walton described as "moving one checker to another square."

Now that the Board of Finance has officially adopted the budget, it will now move to Town Council, which will hold a special meeting to adopt the budget and send it to a town meeting scheduled for Monday, April 30. That meeting will set the budget referendum, which is currently slated for Tuesday, May 8.

## Low Turnout for Public Budget Hearings in Colchester

by Katelyn Kelleher

Resident turnout was sparse at public budget hearings Monday and Tuesday. Only two residents spoke at Monday's public budget hearing, where the First Selectman and Board of Education presented the Board of Finance's proposed education and town budgets.

Superintendent of Schools Karen Loiselle-Goodwin, Board of Education Chairman Ronald Goldstein and Vice Chairman Donald Kennedy presented the changes over this year in the 2012-13 fiscal year school budget.

The proposed budget showed a 2.98 percent increase over the current fiscal year. Goldstein said the goal of a 2 percent increase was not attainable, as it "would require us to cut deeply into educational programs."

Goldstein external stressors have impacted the budget greatly. The most significant changes included a \$736,904 increase in employee health insurance due to an increase in claims and the loss of \$550,000 in Federal Jobs Bill funds to help retain jobs.

"When we took that [federal] money, we knew it was one-time money," he said. "Now it needs to be offset or raised by local taxes."

Goldstein said these two stressors would increase the budget by \$1.4 million, but the Board of Education made an additional \$298,000 for an increase of \$1.1 million.

Kennedy said costly state mandates have also been a strain on the budget and explained local and surrounding communities' educational leaders met with state legislators in January to "speak freely in front of the state legislature about the mandates and the teachers that are being lost as these mandates are forcing us to make cuts."

The proposed budget would cut 12.7 positions, which includes 7.7 teachers and 0.5 support staff and three student programs: non-mandated summer school, Project Oceanology (a marine studies program at the middle and high schools) and the enrichment teacher at William J. Johnston Middle School (0.5 positions), who identifies gifted and talented students.

Staff cuts were made due to a projected decline in enrollment, and Goldstein said over the past six years, for every 14 students no longer in the district, the administration has eliminated one teacher position. Over the past six years there has been a decline of 343 students and a total of 24.5 teacher cuts. For the 2012-2013 fiscal year, the administration projected 106 fewer students in the district, resulting in the 7.7 teachers cut through attritions due to retirement, not renewing one-year contracts and one layoff.

Loiselle-Goodwin said the staff cuts will reduce the certified staff salaries budget by \$57,838 less than the current fiscal year and classified salaries will increase by \$191,932.

Resident Jim Kelly asked about the classified salaries increase, which Loiselle-Goodwin said is largely due to a loss of federal funding, not solely to teacher raises.

Goldstein and Loiselle-Goodwin both noted Colchester's school district falls in the bottom fifth percentile of per-pupil expenditures in the state, and performance on state tests fell between the 36th and 80th percentiles in reading, writing, math and science.

Colchester also ranked well in a district-by-district evaluation of educational productivity, which identified high-achieving, low-spending school districts.

First Selectman Gregg Schuster presented the proposed town budget at the public hearing, which included a \$50,047 increase in the road maintenance budget, the addition of a part-time network technician at \$26,000, a \$27,650 increase in capital reserve in accordance with the Capital Improvement Plan and a \$124.38 million decrease in the Grand List totals due to the revaluation.

The proposed addition of a resident state

trooper to cover Colchester during the third shift was not approved by the Board of Finance.

Resident Monica Swyden-Bolles asked about benefits for part-time employees. Schuster said the number of part-time employees receiving benefits is small and would have no impact on the budget. Additionally, some of the cost would be offset by reducing the current information technology coordinator's hours.

Schuster said his main concerns with regards to the budget are infrastructure and public safety. "I made my changes based on the priorities that I think should be adhered to and I really make no secret of what those priorities are over the years," he said.

He added there are some small changes to the budget that have a social impact, including an additional \$3,500 for new library books and \$10,000 funding for Colchester Collaborative for Children (C3).

Schuster said 92 percent of the town's children have had some pre-school before entering kindergarten. "Morally I think we have an obligation and a duty to reach as many kids as possible before they get to the school system," Schuster said. "It costs less to help a child develop properly than it does to fix something that's hurt in their life."

# Portland Residents Express Support of Blight Ordinance

by Geeta Schrayer

More than two dozen community members attended a public hearing Wednesday night regarding the proposed blight and nuisance ordinance – the majority expressing their support.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield opened the hearing with a comment she'd received in writing in support of the ordinance by resident Ted Clark.

"I'm not able to attend," Clark wrote, "but would like to express support" for the ordinance.

He went on to mention different properties in town such as an "infamous" house towards the center of town that was known for its condition, and said when he tells people he lives in Portland, that's the first thing they think of – and a reason to enact the ordinance.

Resident Bruce Tyler then addressed some of the objections he'd heard, such as "Portland is too small" for a blight ordinance and "existing regulations are enough."

To the former, he stated, "any town with blighted buildings is big enough [for a blight ordinance]."

In regards to present regulation, he said there's "some truth to that in terms of motor vehicles," but there are numerous blighted properties, such as one at 170 Marlborough St., that exist with the current regulations.

Another objection, he said, is that the ordinance is an invasion of privacy. But, he countered, since it applies to the exterior of properties and buildings, that's not the case.

"If I can see it from the street, it's not an invasion of property," he said.

Tyler also said those opposed have stated the

ordinance limits what they can do on their property. While he noted this was true, he added there were already numerous regulations in town such as building and fire codes that did the same thing.

Additionally, Tyler expressed his thoughts on some of the language in the ordinance draft – particularly the part that exempts town property from the ordinance.

"I don't think it's a good idea," he said. "A municipal exemption weakens the credibility of the ordinance."

Resident Susan Young agreed.

"I don't think that's fair," she said, adding the town should be asked to follow the regulations in the ordinance as well.

"The town has come a long way," she continued, but cited numerous blighted properties in town and said the town needs to get the ordinance in effect "so we can do something" about those properties.

"This is how the world is perceiving our town," she noted. "We need to make sure this blight ordinance is upheld, voted on and hopefully passed."

John Decina also spoke in support of the ordinance, explaining he'd lived in town for about 12 years and while it was "a nice place to raise a family," he's "frequently disappointed" with the blighted properties that distract from the positive aspects of town and "create negative perception in the minds of visitors."

"I think by adopting this ordinance and supporting the enforcement of it, the Board of Selectmen will have the ability to improve life [in town], protect property values, enhance eco-

nomic development" and build on "that positive momentum the town is now achieving," in regards to improvements, he said.

Resident Betsy Smith voiced similar feelings, expressing love for the town and the people in it, but saying she was concerned, especially since she'd recently become a realtor, at "property values and being able to sell homes [in town] and get investments."

"I'm in full support and basically reiterate everything John Decina has said," she stated.

Bransfield noted it was important to create an ordinance that would be legal, have the correct citation and was the "most encompassing" without becoming overly large.

"The ordinance," she said, "is not going to cover every person's interpretations of what they consider to be blight," but an ordinance has to be adopted "that meets the needs of the town in 2012."

Upon being asked how long it would take to get the ordinance into effect, Bransfield explained it was important to take the time to draft an ordinance "that meets with the majority of the population," she said, since residents could petition if they didn't like it, requiring the ordinance go to referendum for adoption.

"If you don't have everything legally done, and do them correctly from the beginning, you're bound to fail," she added. "And we're bound to succeed."

Bransfield said she hadn't received any opposition of the ordinance to date via phone or email. Indeed, at Wednesday's hearing, Michael Tierney was the sole resident who spoke against the ordinance in person.

Tierney cited the fact that many people have wooded areas on their properties and asked, "Are we going to have to mow that now?"

He went on to say there were already a lot of rules in effect – "do we need more rules and regulations?" – and he disagreed with the town being exempt.

"I think the town needs to lead by example," he said.

Additionally, Tierney noted there might be a reason someone isn't maintaining their property up to standards.

"Are they not mowing their lawn because they have to put food on the table?" he asked. "Cleaning up their yard – yeah, we'd all love to," he said, "but maybe they don't have the physical or financial" means to do so.

Tierney also said he feels individuals should have to sign their written complaints if they submit one.

"I think if you're going to call someone out for having an issue you need to sign it – if you have the guts to write it, sign it. I believe in the freedom in the current laws to do what you want to," he stated, adding, "we got to number 88 in [CNN Money's list of America's best small towns] without a blight law and I don't think we need one in the future."

The property maintenance subcommittee of the Board of Selectmen will meet next week to further discuss the ordinance, and then another public hearing – this one on a proposed appeals process for people cited for blight – will be held prior to the next selectmen's meeting on Wednesday, April 18.

## Portland Soldier Welcomed Home

by Geeta Schrayer

On March 20, 1942, in the midst of World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued a proclamation naming today, April 6, Army Day.

"Our Army is a mighty arm of the tree of liberty," he wrote. "It is a living part of the American tradition, a tradition that goes back to Israel Putnam, who left his plow in a New England furrow to take up a gun and fight at Bunker Hill. In this tradition American men of many ages have always left the pacific round of their usual occupations to fight in causes that were worth their lives – from Lexington to the Argonne."

Roosevelt called Army Day "a day when all of our citizens in civil pursuits can rally to the support of our armed forces...."

And on April 4, that's exactly what Portland and state officials and members of the Portland Veterans Affairs Committee did for Army Specialist and Portland resident Aaron Malecky.

Malecky, who enlisted in the Army in March 2010, was deployed to Afghanistan in February 2011 where he served a little under a year of duty ("Eleven months and 23 days," said his mother Susan, showing she'd been keeping a close tally of the time until his return). He came back on leave in January, and was honored for his service and welcomed home Wednesday night.

"We're really very thrilled to have you here today," said First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield.

Bransfield explained the town likes to welcome back their soldiers, "just to let you know, number one, how much we missed you. And number two, how proud we are of you and how grateful we are for what you've done for our country and what you continue to do as well... and also to say how handsome you look," she

laughed.

Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Reginald Farrington read a proclamation to Malecky, stating his "extraordinary efforts, personal sacrifices and dedication to duty are keeping with the highest traditions of the military service."

He continued on to read, "the town of Portland is fortunate to have you as a resident of the town and protector of our freedom and rights."

State Rep. Christie Carpino was also present at the event to present Malecky with an official 'thank you' from the state.

"I don't have any more sincere words for you than 'thank you,'" she said. "Thank you for protecting our community, our state, our country – and for giving away your own personal time."

Those present were thanking Malecky for all that *he'd* done, but Malecky was all gratitude in return.

"I'd just like to say, 'thanks a lot,'" he said, stating he'd lived in Portland all his life, and the town was what he thought of when he'd think of "home."

"It means a lot when you're in someplace like Afghanistan, knowing that some place like home is thinking about you," he said. "So this really means a lot, and I appreciate this and everything else everyone in town has town for me."

While he was overseas, Malecky stated the living conditions "were pretty lousy."

"For a majority of [the time] we had no running water," he said. "We ate rations everyday. We didn't have much of anything in the way of comforts."

Malecky's mother, who was present with her husband Tom, added there were days it could



State Rep. Christie Carpino presents Army Specialist Aaron Malecky with an official citation from the state during a small ceremony celebrating his return at Wednesday's Board of Selectmen meeting. Malecky returned from service in Afghanistan in January, where he was deployed in February 2011.

get as hot as 120 degrees, along with times it would drop to the 20s and snow.

"But he's very happy and he's proud of what he's done," she said, also noting the acknowledgment of her son's service was "very meaningful."

"It's very nice because it was a heck of a year" while he was deployed, she said.

Though there were tough conditions to endure, Malecky stated it was the men he was stationed with who helped him get through it.

"You get close," he said, adding that was true in the physical sense as well, because "we had about six inches between our beds."

And when that year came to an end and Malecky returned to the states, he said the first thing he wanted was "some fast food and a cold beer." He'll be able to continue enjoying those comforts stateside until April 21, when he'll return to his current station in Germany. But Malecky has no qualms about heading back to that part of the world.

"Germany's great," he said. "I mean, it's Europe!"

But back here in America, Malecky's family and friends will always be waiting for the day they can say he's home safe in Portland.

# Portland Selectmen Approve Budget with Some Cuts

by Joshua Anusewicz

After making cuts to the proposed 2012-13 town budget during deliberations last week, the Board of Selectmen formally adopted the budget at its regular meeting Wednesday.

The cuts, which total \$65,695, bring the budget total down from \$30,512,290 to \$30,446,595 — \$11,991,899 going to general government and \$18,454,696 going to the school board. This reduction brings the overall budget increase over the current fiscal year from 2.3 percent to roughly 2 percent.

The 2011-12 budget was approved by referendum last year at \$29.82 million; \$11.73 million for general government and \$18.10 million for education.

The lengthy deliberations lasted over four hours over the two-day deliberations, where the selectmen pored over each and every line item. As a result, the board was able to find a reduction in electricity costs, primarily due to the selectmen and the Board of Education receiving a lower bid than was originally anticipated.

The selectmen also saw a 3-4 percent reduction in the cost of health insurance, an unpre-

dictable item that has resulted in considerable increases in the town operations and education budgets of other towns. The town will also see savings from a recent decision by the town to switch Gildersleeve School and Fire Company Nos. 1 and 2 from regular oil to natural gas.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said Wednesday that the total of the cuts "might have been more," but the selectmen decided to add more money to the budget for oil and gas in anticipation of higher prices. Bransfield said the original budget figures for oil and gas were put together in January, prior to the spike in prices.

Overall, Bransfield called the budget "modest."

"It's pretty consistent, our budgets have maintained pace," Bransfield said about the budget increase. She added that she believes the budget will satisfy her goals of preserving infrastructure and town services in a cost-effective manner.

"It keeps the town moving forward, while following our conservative approach to fi-

nances," she said. "There aren't any spikes in costs."

In terms of the school budget, Bransfield said that the selectmen decided to leave the Board of Education budget as is, citing "confidence" in the school's board's ability to submit a responsible budget.

"We work so closely with the Board of Education, I'm very confident in the numbers coming from them," Bransfield said. "They do a very good job in managing their budget. There's no animosity [amongst the Board of Education], they just want to help improve things."

The proposed Board of Education budget shows its first increase since 2010, with a 1.98 percent, or \$358,384, increase over the current year. A considerable amount of the increase is due to a lack of grant money coming into the school system this year, which totaled roughly \$240,000. The school system, however, will be able to maintain the same level of teachers, staff and programs.

As for what is driving the town operations

increase - a \$272,410, or 2.27 percent, increase from this year - most of the bump can be found in the public safety and public works line items, including a brush/leaf bucket for the highway department and a new sport-utility vehicle for the police department. There will also be projects at the senior center, the high school building and athletic grounds and for the town's computer system that are included in the increase.

Because the budget has yet to pass through referendum and the appeals process for last year's revaluation is not complete, Bransfield said the exact mill rate figure was not yet known.

Now that the selectmen have approved the figures, the proposed budget will next move to a public hearing on Monday, May 7, at 7 p.m. at the Portland High School auditorium. After the public hearing, the spending package will move to a town budget referendum on Monday, May 14, from 6 a.m.-8 p.m. at the Portland Senior Center.

# Colchester Finance Board Sends Budget Back to Selectmen

by Katelyn Kelleher

The Board of Finance approved three transfer requests and voted to send the combined \$51,067 million town and school budget proposal for the 2012-13 year to the Board of Selectmen Wednesday.

The board approved transfer requests for three projects: \$20,650 to replace seven switches at Bacon Academy, \$24,684 to put in a strip of sidewalk on Halls Hill Road and \$9,000 for painting and minor repairs at Colchester Youth and Social Services' youth center building on Norwich Avenue.

Each of the projects would be funded by savings from refunding from outstanding debt services from the 2011-12 fiscal year budget.

Chief Financial Officer Maggie Cosgrove said the transfer would be \$97,000 total from an overall \$541,000 worth of savings.

Board of Finance Chairman Robert Tarlov said the Board of Selectmen voted on all three transfers as one item, and therefore the Board of Finance had to do the same. Although Tarlov said each of the individual projects had merit, he had hoped to be able to vote on each transfer separately.

Selectman Rosemary Coyle said she was also uncomfortable looking at the three issues together and preferred not having multiple items

"boxed" together in the future.

Board of Finance member Thomas Kane took issue with the transparency of the transfer request to replace seven Cisco switches at Bacon Academy, which are between 10 and 12 years old and impede the speed of the computer network.

The board had asked the Board of Education to add \$20,650 to the education budget when presenting it to the public at Monday's budget hearing.

Kane said in the past, when school expenses were put on the town side of the budget, there were issues with transparency, although the public still had the right to vote about it. "What we're doing now is just doing it and taking it away from the town," he said. "Making it even less [transparent] because the town has no input."

Board of Finance member Art Shilosky said the transfers would not change the town budget. Furthermore, the money would come from revenues saved during the current 2011-12 fiscal year, not 2012-13.

Cosgrove said this situation involves the current year budget so it is not something that would have to go to the voters. Additionally, if it stayed in the Board of Education budget, "the voters

are not really determining that it would be spent on the switches. The voters are only determining the bottom line of the budget," she said.

Tarlov said he understood Kane's concerns, but the board has "to move on and get the switches."

The strip of sidewalk the budget transfer would fund would run from Apple Tree Learning Center to Castle Child Care Center on Halls Hill Road.

Kane pointed out that there is already a sidewalk on the other side of the road, but Superintendent of Schools Karen-Loiselle Goodwin said the town cannot put crosswalks in that location, and "felt the only safe way to get the kids to school was to get them down the road and have them cross in a different location."

First Selectman Gregg Schuster said the town applied for a Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant for the project, but won't see the funding for it this year.

The \$9,000 final transfer request would be used to make minor repairs and repaint the youth center, which is supposed to be white, but Schuster said "hasn't been white for a while."

Cosgrove said this is regular maintenance every five years, but these types of projects are funded by savings so the budget doesn't spike one year and drop the next.

The board voted to approve all three transfer requests and then voted to remove \$20,650 from the Board of Education budget for the switches. Then the board voted to move the budget on to the Board of Selectmen to make any additional changes. A town budget meeting will be held April 25.

Also at the meeting, Schuster discussed plans to recommend the school facilities department fall under the management of the town's director of facilities, Greg Plunkett. He said this is common in other Connecticut towns.

"The facilities manager would be split between the town and the school and report to the public works department," he said.

The Board of Finance also voted to appoint former board member John Ringo until the next election in November 2013. Ringo took the place of Democrat Bruce Hayn, who resigned from the board Feb. 26.

Coyle said Ringo will bring a wealth of experience to the Board of Finance.

## East Hampton Police News

3/24: Mitchell Anderson, 22, of 24 South Main St., was arrested for DUI, traveling too fast for conditions and failure to drive right, East Hampton Police said.

3/25: Charles W. Curtis II, 27, of 17 South Main St., was issued a summons for operating an unregistered and uninsured motor vehicle, police said.

3/27: Kathleen A. Rose, 44, of 10 Chatham Ct., Portland, was arrested for DUI and failure to drive right, police said.

3/29: Michael Curtis Sentell, 27, of 7 Starr Pl., was arrested for evading responsibility, misuse of plates and operating an unregistered and uninsured motor vehicle, police said.

## Colchester Police News

3/28: Kendall Smith, 24, of 429 Barbour St., Hartford, was charged with speeding, failing to meet minimum insurance coverage requirements and possession of narcotics relating to cocaine, State Police said.

3/30: Virginia Martin, 43, of 20 Old Hebron Rd., was charged with DUI, State Police said.

3/30: Timothy Cordova, 27, of 32 Edgewood Dr., was charged with DUI and failure to register a motor vehicle, State Police said.

3/31: Michael Ferdinand, 23, of 3D Earls Court, Farmington, was charged with DUI andreckless driving, State Police said.

4/1: Laura Spencer, 37, of 259 Westchester Rd., was charged with violation of a restraining order, State Police said.

4/2: Scott Smith, 35, of 132 Evergreen Ter., was arrested on active warrant and charged with failure to respond to an infraction, State Police said.

## Marlborough Police News

3/31: Kristine Roberts, 40, of 230 Main St., Wallingford, signed a medical refusal for transport with the Marlborough Fire Department for complaints of back pain following a motor vehicle accident on Route 66. Wayne Malenfant, 42, of 102 High Meadow Rd., struck the rear of Roberts' vehicle. Malenfant, his two passengers, and two passengers in Roberts' vehicle were not injured, State Police said.

## Obituaries

### Hebron

#### Frank J. Mazzarella



Frank J. Mazzarella, 90, of Hebron, formerly of East Hartford, passed away peacefully Tuesday, March 20, surrounded by his loving family.

Born in Hartford in 1921, Frank leaves behind his beloved wife Elsie Mazzarella; daughter Carol Cosker and her husband Edmund Cosker; son Frank Mazzarella and his wife Michelle Mazzarella; his grandchildren Brian Cosker, Michael and Amy Cosker, and Alyssa and Julia Mazzarella; and great-grandchildren Addison and Jack Cosker. Frank also leaves behind his brother Paul Mazzarella and his wife Ann Mazzarella of Wethersfield, as well as several nieces and nephews. Frank was predeceased by his brother Ralph Mazzarella.

Frank attended Hartford High School and then went on to serve in the 1116th Military Police Company of the US Air Force in the China Burma India Theater during WWII. A 43-year employee of Pratt & Whitney, Frank was an adept welder and supervisor. He received several awards for his ideas to improve the company's production and profitability.

In his spare time, Frank enjoyed woodworking, most recently on the lathe with his son. He always jumped at the opportunity to help others with home improvements, including his daughter Carol, son-in-law Ed and son Frank. He also enjoyed vegetable gardening.

Frank celebrated, with family and friends, his 70th year of marriage to Elsie Mazzarella on Jan. 3. The couple spent 25 years enjoying Rhode Island beaches and a second home in Green Hill, where they frequently entertained their family and friends. Over the years, Frank and Elsie also traveled to Hawaii, Europe, and the Caribbean together.

To honor Frank's life, his family will hold a memorial Mass at 10 a.m. Saturday, April 14, at the Church of the Holy Family on Church Street (Route 85) in Hebron. Military honors will follow the Mass. After the service, a celebration will be held at the clubhouse of the Loveland Village on Buttonwood Road in Hebron. All are welcome.

In lieu of flowers, make a donation to the Harry Gray Center at Hartford Hospital: mail to P.O. Box 5037, Hartford, CT 06102 or visit [giving.harthosp.org](http://giving.harthosp.org).

### Amston

#### Linda B. Poulin

Linda B. Poulin, 57, of Amston, beloved wife of Peter G. Poulin, Jr., passed away Saturday morning, March 31, at St. Francis Hospital. Born Sept. 24, 1954 in Hartford, she was a daughter of the late George and Claire (Wondeloski) Muzzy.

She attended Hartford Public Schools and went on to train to become a Certified Nurses Aide. Linda enjoyed working for several years as a Nurses Aide for home health care patients. She will be remembered most for her hard work, her passion for caring for others and her dedication to her family.

She loved to brag about and share photos of her grandchildren along with the happenings and accomplishments of her entire family. Linda also enjoyed arts and crafts, trivia games and loved playing card games with family and friends.

In addition to her loving husband of 40 years, she is survived by two sons, Brian Poulin of Amston and John Murray of Cromwell; three grandchildren, Katherine, Matthew and Sarah Poulin of Glastonbury; four sisters, Carolyn Trojanowski and Lois Hetu of East Hartford, Gail Levesque of Manchester and Cindy Levesque of Torrington; and numerous extended family members and friends.

She was also predeceased by her daughter, Kimberly Lynn Poulin and three brothers, George Muzzy of Rocky Hill, Robert Muzzy of Tucson, AZ and Leonard Muzzy of Southington.

Friends called Wednesday, April 4, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A memorial service followed that evening. Burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to the Hebron Vol. Fire Dept., 44 Main St., Hebron, CT 06248.

### Portland

#### Douglas T. Bransfield

Douglas T. Bransfield, 77, a lifelong resident of Portland, and beloved husband of 50 years of Rita (Manzolli) Bransfield, passed away peacefully at home Friday, March 30, after a short battle with cancer.

Doug was in the printing and binding business most of his life and was the founder of Connecticut Valley Bindery in New Britain. He loved his vegetable garden and enjoyed spending countless hours sitting at his picnic table in the backyard reading a good book or "shooting the bull" with others.

Besides his wife Rita, he leaves his five children and their spouses, Michelle and Richard Reber of St. George, UT, Laura and James Daniels of Essex, Michael and Susan Bransfield of East Haddam, Douglas and Marsha Bransfield of Middletown and Daniel and Jodi Bransfield of Portland. He was also the proud grandfather of 11 grandchildren, Michael Reber and Megan (Reber) Mathis, Kelly and Christopher Daniels, Patrick, Gillian and Ethan Bransfield, Justin and Daniel Bransfield, Nikki Marotta and Cortnee Bransfield.

Funeral services were held Wednesday, April 4, with a Mass at the Church of St. Mary, 51 Free-stone Ave., Portland. Burial was in St. Mary Cemetery, Portland. Relatives and friends called Wednesday morning at the funeral home, 231 Main St., Portland. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Church of St. Mary 51 Free-stone Ave Portland, CT 06480.

To send an online expression of sympathy, visit [portlandmemorialfh.net](http://portlandmemorialfh.net).

### East Hampton

#### Jeanine Carol Westcott

Jeanine Carol Westcott, 60, of East Hampton, passed away peacefully Friday, March 30, with her family by her side. Born Jan. 21, 1952, she was the daughter of the late Phillip A. and Emily (Dorrance) Smedick.

Jeanine was a long-time resident of East Hampton and was employed by CL&P for more than 30 years until her retirement. Jeanine was married to her beloved husband of 40 years, Walter J. Westcott.

Jeanine will be forever remembered by her loving family, her two daughters Tina L. Khentigan and her husband Eric of Cromwell, Heather A. Westcott of Cromwell, her two brothers Jeffery Smedick of Texas, Charles Taylor of Florida, two sisters Bonnie Hesselman and her husband Thomas of Old Lyme, Kelly Ayotte of New Hampshire, her two beloved grandchildren, Madison and Ethan, and many nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by her brother, Mark Taylor.

Jeanine touched the lives and hearts of many people. She will be remembered fondly for her beautiful smile, genuine caring and most of all her sense of humor which stayed with her until the end.

Friends called at Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, Wednesday, April 4. A eulogy was given that evening. Burial will be at the convenience of the family in the Connecticut State Veteran's Cemetery.

The family requests that memorial donations be made to the Middlesex Hospice and Palliative Care Unit at Middlesex Hospital c/o Middlesex Hospital Department of Philanthropy 55 Crescent St. Middletown, CT 06457. The staff gave such great care to Jeanine in her time of need.

To leave online condolences, visit [spencerfuneralhomeinc.com](http://spencerfuneralhomeinc.com).

### Colchester

#### Eileen Rathbun Twomey

Eileen Rathbun Twomey of Norwich, 92, died peacefully surrounded by her family Wednesday, March 21, at Harrington Court in Colchester. She was born Oct. 27, 1919, in Norwich, the daughter of the late Ellen and Clarence Rathbun of West Main Street, Norwich.

Eileen graduated from Norwich Free Academy in 1937 and worked as a teacher's aide and Librarian aide at Stanton School in Norwich for many years. She was a devoted wife and mother. She met her loving husband of 66 years, Gerald Twomey, in high school, saw him off as he fought in World War II, and waited for him to return. They married June 24, 1946 and raised a loving family. Eileen enjoyed UConn basketball, her gardens, and was active in the Women's City Club, AARP and many church functions at St Peter and Paul's Church.

She is survived by her husband, Gerald, and five children: Catherine Twomey Fosnot of New London; Mary Ellen Zoerner of Columbus, OH; John Twomey (Karen) of Norwich; Michael Twomey (Gail Whitney) of Preston; and Meg Twomey Ceccarelli (Daryl) of Franklin. In addition, she is survived by eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Calling hours were held Friday, March 23, at the Cummings-Gagne Funeral Home on 82 Cliff St. in Norwich. A funeral Mass was held Saturday, March 24, at St. Peter and Paul's Church, 181 Elizabeth St., Norwich, with interment afterwards at St. Mary's Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to St. Peter and Paul's church.

For an online obituary and to share a condolence with the family, visit [cummingsgagnefh.com](http://cummingsgagnefh.com).