

RIVEREAST

# News Bulletin

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**There's plenty of work to be done at the Peters House in Hebron, and with no remaining grant money, the hope is that local volunteers will step up to the plate and assist with the interior renovations of this historic property. Once completed, the idea is to use the building as a place for community meetings and functions as well as educational purposes and historic exhibits.**

## A Peek Inside The Peters House

by Geeta Schrayter

Over on East Street near the entrance to Burnt Hill Park in Hebron, an old house sits grandly beside the road. With large windows and pretty details such as fluted columns, dentil molding and a fanlight window above the front door, the Peters House is hard to ignore.

And although it was built between 1750 and 1790, a passing glance could make you think otherwise. Or, perhaps more appropriately, make you think you'd stepped back in time. The yard is well-maintained, the glass gleams in all the windows and the tan paint and white trim is bright and fresh.

All of this is due to the ongoing efforts of the town and volunteers who are all working to bring the Peters House back to its former glory. At this point, the idea is once it's completed, the building can be used as a place for meetings as well as historic displays and exhibits. The Peters House is believed to be the one-time residence of Cesar and Lowis Peters, two slaves who were captured and then rescued by Hebron residents in the 18th century.

To date, work on the house, which included insulation and window restoration or replacement along with the painting, has been paid for with a \$200,000 Small Town Economic Assistance grant the town was allotted in 2009. Work was also funded by a grant from the 1772 Foundation, an organization that provides support for historic preservation projects throughout the

country. But now, those funds have been depleted, and as Town Planner Mike O'Leary said last week, the project is only half done.

"We're halfway there," he said. "The grant that we had funded everything we've done to date which is great – but that's pretty much all expended at this point."

A step inside the building, which had been occupied up until the town purchased it in 2004, shows a scene much different from outside. Anyone with an imagination could picture what things may have been like back in the day – when the giant fireplace blazed in the kitchen, a pot of something delicious boiling over the flames as a loaf or two of bread baked in the stone ovens in the nearby wall; when the upstairs ballroom with the vaulted ceiling, which was at some point partitioned off to make two smaller rooms, was filled to the brim with guests enjoying themselves, with some dancing across the wood floors, and others chatting as they relaxed on the built-in seating that runs along the room.

It's a pretty vision, but the reality of the situation isn't quite so picturesque: while many of the original details of the house are intact, things have changed over the years and there's much to be done.

In a statement Mary Ann Foote, vice chair of the Historic Properties Commission released,

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## Boards Gather to Discuss EHHS Project

by Joshua Anusewicz

In hopes of reaching a consensus on an idling high school renovation project, the town's boards of finance and education met with the Town Council Tuesday to hash out a direction for the High School Building Committee to take to get the project moving again.

The meeting was scheduled in light of the recent vote held by the Board of Finance, which voted down the proposed project 5-2 on March 27. As presented to the finance board, the "renovate as new" project would include a major overhaul of the entire facility and provide additional science space, upgraded technology, and updated infrastructure. The cost would be \$52,471,220, with the town on the hook for \$28,834,540 after a 52.5 percent reimbursement rate from the state.

The majority of the finance board balked at the proposal due to what it perceived as a lack of information from the building committee, coupled with the inclusion of the Board of Education offices at the school and soccer field lighting in the proposal. Most of the board members opposed to the proposal deemed the inclusion of those items unnecessary, directing the building committee to reassess the scope of the project to draw down the cost.

The building committee – along with members of the public – has voiced its displeasure

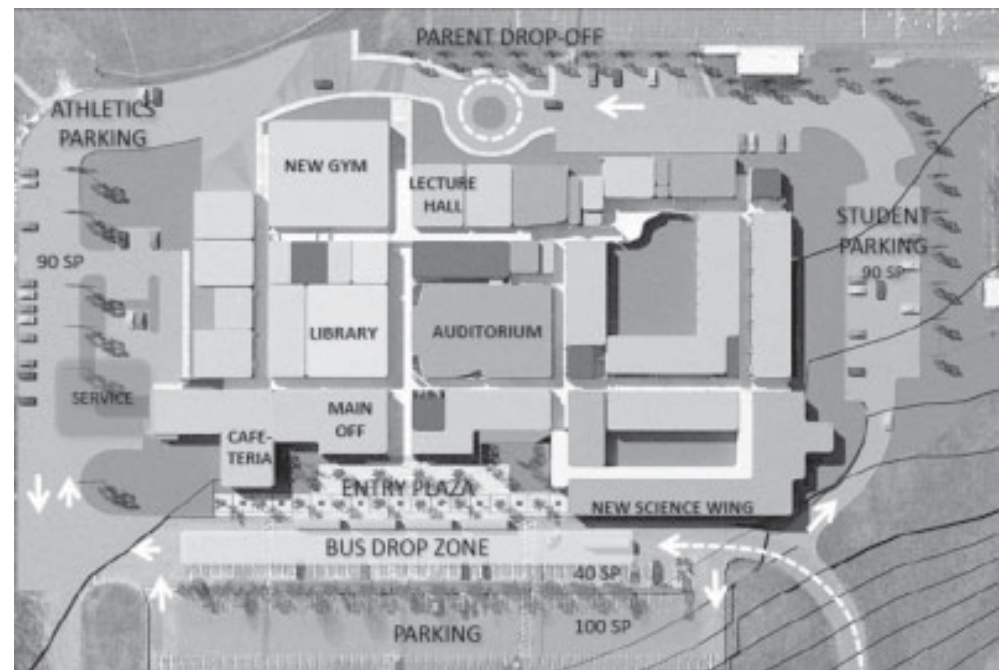
with the finance board's decision, opining that the savings of removing those items would be insignificant in the grand scheme of the project. But despite its opinion, the building committee soldiered on and, along with the designers of the project, SLAM of Glastonbury, presented a revamped design of the project on Tuesday night.

According to representatives from SLAM, the design proposal, now dubbed "Concept 5," would remove the proposed Board of Education space, which would hold the school district's central offices, and turn that space into academic space for technology education. To further reduce the building's footprint – the reimbursement amount is determined, in part, by the square footage of the school and how much is used for academics – the current library would be demolished and a large outdoor courtyard would be developed in its place.

The cost of Concept 5, as estimated by SLAM, the project manager, Capital Region Education Council (CREC), and the construction manager, Downes Construction, would be \$51.7 million, with the town paying roughly \$28.3 million.

But while the meeting was scheduled in hopes of moving the project forward, a healthy portion of the board summit was spent clearing

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**With a preliminary design concept rejected, the East Hampton High School Building Committee presented this concept, dubbed "Concept 5," at a tri-board meeting on Tuesday. This concept would not include additional Board of Education space at East Hampton High School, and would demolish the existing library to create a courtyard.**



**Inside the Peters House, volunteers are needed for all kinds of interior renovation work including the demolition of some modern changes – like the partition that was placed in the middle of the ballroom, shown here.**

#### Peters House cont. from Front Page

it was explained demolition work was needed of some of the modern paneling, the partition in the ballroom and tacks and nails on added floor coverings in order to bring the house “back to its original skin.”

After that’s been completed, the rooms need to be spackled and painted and the floors and wainscoting need to be restored and repaired. There’s masonry that needs to be done, an up-to-code staircase that needs to be built and boards and molding around the fireplaces that need to be replaced.

In addition, the house needs work on its heating/air conditioning system, plumbing and electrical system... in other words, the list is long.

While O’Leary said there’s a possibility future grants could be acquired and he’d “certainly” keep on eye on that, the hope is that volunteers in the community will come forward and help with the next phase in the renovation.

“Right now, we’re thinking ‘let’s try to do some of the things needed with volunteer work,’” he said. “We’re trying to promote the idea, get the word out, see who’s out there who might do some volunteer time restoring the house and get going with some of the work.”

O’Leary broke up that work into a couple of different categories. He said a lot of the inside work can be done with “little to no expertise – just some manual labor,” such as the paint scraping, demolition, the removal of some old radiators and clean-up work.

“There’s a lot of physical labor that just needs a lot of time and effort,” O’Leary said. “It’s per-

fect volunteer work.”

Then, the second category of work would require the help of contractors.

“We’d love to get the word out for contractors who might be interested in volunteering on the property,” O’Leary stated. “There are several areas for people with experience.”

Foote added this week there was something for everyone.

“We can use volunteers of any capability or lack thereof,” she said, explaining it could be a long process since the work is dependent on volunteers, but “that’s what we have to do.”

“We’ll just take it slowly - step by step - and do it right and make use of the spirit and qualities and special capabilities of our volunteers,” she said, adding that the town had a “treasure” in the Peters House.

“It’s spectacular,” Foote said, adding she wanted would-be volunteers to see the potential in the house.

To that regard, anyone who’d like to take a glance inside the home can do so during the clean up of Burnt Hill Park scheduled for Saturday, April 20. From 9 a.m.-12 p.m. the kitchen door of the Peters House will be open, granting individuals a peek at the work that needs to be done. Those who are interested will then be able to sign on to help with the Peters House Restoration Project.

For more information on the house, contact Foote at 860-944-3862 or [mafoote@fairpoint.net](mailto:mafoote@fairpoint.net).

## East Hampton Council Holds Off on Budget Vote

by Joshua Anusewicz

Just a week after the Board of Finance approved a town budget with a sizeable reduction, the Town Council on Tuesday elected to wait to send the budget to a town meeting until its next regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, April 23.

The majority of council members stated that they would reserve comment until further review, with just a handful of minor questions directed toward Town Manager Michael Maniscalco and Finance Director Jeff Jylkka. Only councilor Barbara Moore offered any feedback, echoing the sentiments of some finance board members last week that more money should be set aside for the town’s capital budget.

Last week, the finance board cut down the Board of Education’s proposal by \$316,000, bringing a 5.19 percent increase down to a flat 4 percent. As it currently stands, the total budget now sits at \$39.48 million, with \$27.78 million set aside for education. The board opted not to touch the town operations budget, which sits at \$9.72 million. The budget also includes \$1.10 million for debt service and \$869,916 for

fund transfers.

According to Jylkka, a \$39.48 million budget would yield a mill rate of 26.85 for the 2013-14 fiscal year, an increase of less than one mill from last year’s mill rate of 25.97. To explain the tax impact, Jylkka said that a property valued at \$200,000 would be charged \$5,370 in taxes for the year, down from \$5,426 in the budget that was originally proposed. (By comparison, under the current mill rate, a property valued at \$200,000 is charged \$5,194 in taxes.)

Following the town’s budget process, the council is tasked with approving the budget that is put forth by the finance board, with the budget then heading to a town meeting that is scheduled for Monday, April 29 at 7 p.m. at Town Hall. At that meeting, the town would schedule a town-wide referendum for Tuesday, May 7.

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The next regular meeting of the Town Council is scheduled for Tuesday, April 23, at 6:30 p.m. at East Hampton High School, 15 N. Maple St.

#### EHHS Project cont. from Front Page

the air and rehashing how exactly the project was stuck in a rut.

Michelle Barber, the vice chairwoman of the building committee, who has become the de facto spokesperson of the group, began by restating her position that the committee had done its due diligence by disseminating the project information “to the best of our ability.”

“We’re not trying to hide anything, we’ve been as transparent as possible. All of our meetings are public,” said Barber. “And if you need the information, please ask. We don’t bite.”

Barber continued, informing the boards that the committee worked within its charge to meet a scope that would meet the needs of the school district and the community. She added that by including items like the Board of Education space, the town would be getting “more bang for [its] buck” by adding items that would attain a higher reimbursement rate.

“We did not choose the most expensive plan,” Barber clarified, “but if you pick and choose different things, we don’t get that 52 percent reimbursement rate. So we wanted to try and maximize that rate. We’re not building the eighth wonder of the world.”

Another issue involving the Board of Education space focused on which board recommended adding that space in the first place. It was stated at previous meetings, by the building committee, that the Town Council had given the committee the direction, but council members have rebuked that assertion. Council Chairwoman Sue Weintraub, however, stated that she had recommended that the committee look into the idea at a meeting last year, and the idea became part of the design. Building committee member Cindy Abraham added that the committee was charged with looking into combining services and programs and that “it made a lot of sense” to include the Board of Education space.

The squabble over who said what didn’t sit well with Board of Education Chairman Mark Laraia, who attempted to put an end to the discussion. “I don’t see why it matters,” he said to loud applause from the public in attendance. “Anyone could have come to the [building committee] meetings and given their two cents. We’re not going to move forward if we keep spinning our wheels.”

But Board of Finance Chairman Matthew Walton disagreed, reading the building committee’s charge, highlighting a section about transparency. “The transparency got lost somewhere,” said Walton.

Barber answered Walton, stating, “Let’s put this to rest, there was nothing secretive here.”

Board of Education member Don Coolican stated that the finance board should be focused on the cost, and nothing else. “It’s up to the Board of Finance to decide whether we can afford it or not,” Coolican stated, “so pick one or the other, and let’s move on.”

With that in mind, Weintraub suggested that the boards conduct a straw poll to see which concept – the original, called Concept 2B, or Concept 5 – should be moved forward. Each present member of the three boards weighed in with their choice and why, with the overwhelming majority choosing the original concept, with the school board space included.

Finance board member Mary Ann Dostaler chose Concept 2B. “The cost difference is so nominal,” she stated.

Her fellow board member Tim Csere chose Concept 5. “Let’s give it to the voters, and I hope it passes,” he said.

The four Board of Education members present chose Concept 2B. “It’s cost efficient, and [the inclusion of the school board] is good for the high school,” said board member Carol Lane.

“I’m good with 2B, but I’d be happy with Concept 5 if it gets the Board of Finance to move this forward,” said board member Ken Barber.

Council members Barbara Moore and George Pfaffenbach chose Concept 5, relating that having the Board of Education offices at the school could create a security issue with outsiders entering the school facility. “It’s not about the money; it’s about the security,” said Pfaffenbach.

“It might seem like we’re nickeling and diming this, but I don’t think we are,” said Moore. “I think this project should be only for the education of our students.”

The council majority, however, approved of the original concept. Vice Chairman Glenn Suprono, as has become a hallmark, added some levity to the proceedings, stating “2B or not 2B? That is the question.” For Suprono, 2B would be the best choice, he said.

Weintraub stated that 2B was the right decision, as the current town-owned school board space in the Village Center needs substantial upgrades, and the move to the high school could save the town money in the long-run.

Weintraub also repeated a line that has been trumpeted by finance board member Patience Anderson at past meetings: “Can we afford it?”

That question will become the important one to answer after the boards can reach an agreement on which concept will move forward. While the consensus agreed with the original concept, the majority of the finance board sided with the new concept, without the Board of Education space. It will be up to the building committee to make the decision on which concept to move forward, knowing that sending the same concept back to the finance board could result in another failure.

A failure, at this point in the process, could derail the entire project and put the accreditation of the high school in serious jeopardy. According to Town Manager Michael Maniscalco, a town referendum must be held by Tuesday, June 18, to reach the June 30 deadline for applications to receive state reimbursement. Before the referendum, the concept must be approved by the building committee, the Board of Education, the Board of Finance and the Town Council – in that order – before heading to a town meeting to move to referendum.

Interim Superintendent of Schools Mark Winzler, who is now working on his third high school project, said that reaching that deadline is going to be “a real scramble.”

“We are so close to the wire,” added Winzler. With that in mind, board members pledged to get a concept approved as soon as humanly possible. “We need to fast-track this to move this forward,” said Laraia. “This is about the 2,000 kids we have out there.”

Sharon Smith, the chair of the building committee, promised that the committee would have a resolution to move forward by the end of its meeting on Thursday, after press time.

What that resolution will contain is anyone’s guess, but Tuesday’s meeting did shed light on what concept might earn the approval of the town’s elected officials. And with time not on the side of any of the boards, that might be the biggest takeaway from the meeting.

## Colchester Residents Accused of Running Drug Factory

by Melissa Roberto

Two Colchester adults were arrested Wednesday on charges they were growing and selling marijuana inside of their home.

James Ewan, 42, and Sarah Vandyke-Ewan, 42, both of 164 Cato Corner Rd., were each charged with cultivation of marijuana, possession of over four ounces of marijuana, operation of a drug factory, possession of drug paraphernalia and three counts of risk of injury to a minor, Colchester Police said.

Police said officers from the Colchester Police Department and Resident State Trooper’s Office had been investigating the illegal cultivation and sale of marijuana from the Cato Corner Road home. As a result, members of Colchester Police, the Resident State Trooper’s office and the Statewide Narcotic Task Force East Field Office executed a nar-

cotics-related search and seizure warrant.

During the raid, police found more than four ounces of marijuana, multiple marijuana plants and supplies for a marijuana cultivation operation. Officers also seized four handguns and four long guns, including a Sig Sauer .223 caliber rifle, weights and other drug paraphernalia items from the home, along with \$1,000.

Police said three children – aged 3, 7 and 11 – were residing at the home. The Department of Children and Families responded to the scene, police said.

Ewan and Vandyke-Ewan were transported to Troop K in Colchester, where they were charged and held on a \$20,000 cash/surety bond. They were each due at Norwich Superior Court Thursday, April 11.

# Two Established Businesses Join Under One Roof in Marlborough

by **Melissa Roberto**

When the Marlborough Barn closed its doors in 2008, residents in town weren't sure if anything would be able to take its place. In the last year, however, two businesses have nestled into the Shoppes at Marlborough Barn where the old furniture store was located and offer services that give customers the best of both worlds: custom home restorations that can look as new, or old, as customers would like.

Country Primitive Workshop and Kitchen Living vary in style but are both located under one roof at 45 North Main St., next to New England Traditions and across from Sadler's Restaurant.

The owner of Country Primitive Workshop, Chris Robidas uses the word "old" sparingly. He doesn't want residents to get the wrong idea of his unique business. Rather than taking old pieces and turning them into new ones, Robidas specializes in furniture construction by creating a new piece of furniture and giving it a primitive look.

"This is kind of like Old Sturbridge Village," said Robidas. "We can make something look like it was just unearthed."

The walls of Country Primitive Workshop are filled with several different pieces of furniture from wall cupboards and cabinets to dry sinks and entertainment centers. Also, armoires, hutches, chairs and sofa tables fill the floor space.

"If it's made out of wood we're going to make it for you," the owner explained.

What makes the pieces of furniture look so rustic, however, isn't just that the products are made out of wood but the wood finishes as well.

Robidas described the different finishes as either country – a smooth, rustic finish – or primitive – a more textured finish. No matter the finish, each piece is painted with multiple colors of paint, which is then applied to heat.

Authentic pieces are also designed by chipping of the wood and what Robidas liked to call the additions of "little wears."

"We try to duplicate where the marks would be," he explained while pointing to a cupboard with dark knobs. "Here, the knobs were darkened because that's where it would have become worn over time."

Finishing the products actually takes even longer than building them, Robidas said. He added that hammers and chisels come in handy when making primitive pieces.

Ten percent of what is found in the studio at Country Primitive Workshop is actually sold. Robidas explained that the remaining 90 per-

cent of his sales are pieces that are custom-made. However, even items already in the store can be modified to what the customer desires – at no additional cost.

Before moving his business to Marlborough, Robidas started Country Primitive Workshop back in September 2007 as a wholesaler selling custom furniture pieces at trade shows. In Marlborough, however, he says the general public will finally be able to see his work that is made out of the basement of his home in East Hartford. Some of the skills Robidas uses at Country Primitive Workshop come from the 20 years of experience he had working in the aerospace industry before he started up his own business.

The furniture found at Country Primitive Workshop includes replicas of furniture that would mostly be seen in the late 1800s or early 1900s. But the store also includes a line of candles Robidas makes himself, as well as other small housewares like candlestick holders.

In addition to custom-made furniture, Robidas also assists in home restorations, such as sheet rock installments – or building a kitchen.

And if he needs some help with those kitchens, Robidas doesn't have far to travel; Country Primitive Workshop shares a location with Kitchen Living.

Kitchen Living offers modern kitchen designs and cabinet installments, with the primary focus being, owner Matthew Modglin said, on cabinetry. The business offers materials such as exotic woods, countertop-materials ranging from simple ones like quartz to complex ones like onyx, and various paints and kitchen designs.

Modglin, an East Hampton native, said he mostly sells kitchen materials because, in recent years, kitchens have become the "heart of the home." He added that the kitchen is a great place for entertainment and he wants his customers' vivacity to be reflected in their kitchens.

"We really specialize in being able to do pretty much anything with cabinetry and give a creative edge to it too," he explained.

All of the cabinet products are made from plywood construction, Modglin said. He explained that plywood construction is made of sheets of wood material glued together and interwoven by their grain. Modglin said plywood construction is more durable, and lasts much longer than particleboard, which is what is usually found in larger stores.



**Country Primitive Workshop owner Chris Robidas (left) stands in front of a primitive-style kitchen he built while Kitchen Living owner Matt Modglin (right) stands in front of a modern kitchen design he built. The two share the same space for their businesses at the old Marlborough Barn space at 45 North Main St.**

"What we sell is something that is going to last for a long time," he said.

Like Country Primitive Workshop, the kitchen store tailors its products to what customers are looking for.

Modglin added that he uses his 11 and a half years of experience in the cabinet industry to give suggestions to customers as well. His goal in the business, he said, is to essentially "wow" the customers.

Both business owners said they have a philosophy based around good quality at low prices.

"If you were to buy our stuff in other stores it would be more expensive than what you're going to pay for it here," said Robidas of both businesses. "We want to offer more than what we're asking for it."

Robidas and Modglin also collaborate on projects at times, like constructing a kitchen.

In some cases, Robidas will use his old aero-

space skills to design a kitchen and then it is up to Modglin to work out its exact dimensions.

The owners stressed that it's nice to work in the same location as another business with the same goals.

"It's more working together as opposed to being at odds with each other," Robidas said.

The two owners hope to make people aware that they are in town. While they are enjoying their newly refurbished environment at the Shoppes of Marlborough Barn, the two are excited to see what customers have to say about their location.

Both businesses run from Tuesdays to Saturdays 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and on Sundays 10 a.m.-4 p.m. They are closed Mondays.

For more information on Country Primitive Workshop, call Robidas at 860-983-2285 or visit [countryprimitiveworkshop.com](http://countryprimitiveworkshop.com). To reach Modglin and learn more about Kitchen Living, call 860-819-5847 or visit [kitchenlivingct.com](http://kitchenlivingct.com).

## Farmers Market Coming to Andover

by **Geeta Schrayter**

With spring finally here and summer not far behind, kitchens can soon be filled with local produce instead of fruits and veggies that have traveled hundreds of miles (or more) to get from farm to table. And now, the Andover Economic Development Commission is looking to make it even easier for individuals to garner area goods with the start of a farmers market.

Economic Development Commission member Elaine Buchardt said the idea for a farmers market was something the commission had been tossing around since last spring.

"We thought it would be good for the town to have a farmers market," she said, explaining the event could result in some good public relations for Andover, the town's location on Route 6 would provide ample traffic, and there were some farms in town who could participate.

"It just seemed like a good idea," she said.

Last month, the EDC met with different individuals about the possibility including Mark Zotti, who is in charge of farmers markets throughout the state and Diane Trueb, "market master" of the Ellington Farmers Market, which Buchardt said the Andover EDC was looking to model theirs after.

Buchardt said the meeting taught the EDC

about the rules and regulations, the process and applications needed to start up a certified farmers market in the state. In addition they learned two key factors in setting up the market would be determining the location and who's going to be in charge of the event.

As far as the first factor, Buchardt said the plan is to hold the market by the ball fields on Long Hill Road from about 3-6 p.m. on Fridays from July through September.

"Then the 17,000 cars traveling on Route 6 can stop and pick up something," she said.

And in order to organize the event and run everything, last month Cathy and Mike Palazzi were officially designated as the Market Masters. Now, they'll be taking over the planning process with help from a newly formed Farmers Market Committee.

"We didn't want it to be an EDC thing," Buchardt said. "We needed somebody else to run it so we're really happy the Palazzi's stepped up to do that."

On Tuesday, Cathy Palazzi said when she'd first been approached by Buchardt about getting involved, she said she had to discuss it with her husband first. Mike, who is also chairman of the Conservation Commission, "thought it would be a wonderful project for Andover" said

Palazzi. "So that's how we got involved."

Palazzi explained she'd been in meetings over the past week to learn more about running a market, information she'd share with the committee during their first meeting on April 18. There, Palazzi said she planned to listen to other members, talk about any concerns and discuss what everyone had in mind for the market.

"I'm looking forward to the meeting," she said, adding she and Mike didn't want the planning to be "all about us."

"We want the committee to have a say," she said. "I want the committee to have input and express their feelings and what they want or envision because to me, that's the way a committee runs."

As far as what the market will provide, Buchardt said the hope is that there will be all kinds of produce, maple syrup, soaps, cheeses, meat vendors, herbs and more.

Palazzi added she'd like to have someone sell jams and jellies and thought it would be nice to have "some type of bakery items or some type of a cupcake booth." She said she'd also contemplated the idea of an animal exhibit for children.

As of now, Palazzi said she had seven vendors who were on board but would like to get

to 10 for the first year, then maybe 15 the following year. One of the groups already planning to participate is Andover's own Hurst Farm.

Shari Hurst, who helps run the farm with her husband Tom and her in-laws, owners James and Patricia Hurst, said having a farmers market in town would be "wonderful."

"It's wonderful," she said. "It's getting fresh produce closer to people where they can access it, and there's nothing like fresh."

Hurst Farm will be stocking the market with items such as sweet potatoes, squashes, peppers, tomatoes, lettuces, beets, beans and peas as well as blueberries, raspberries and strawberries – all of which are grown using organic methods.

"I think [the market] can be successful," Hurst said, "and once people get out there and really get a chance to experience what's local to them, they'll keep coming."

"Mike and I really think [the market is] going to be a wonderful project for the town," Palazzi stated.

Anyone interested in having a booth at the market, joining the committee or both can call Cathy or Mike Palazzi at 860-742-8088.

# Fitzsimmons Leaving East Hampton Memorial School

by Joshua Anusewicz

Having spent over a decade as principal of Memorial School, Dr. Karen Fitzsimmons admitted that leaving the school would be “a bittersweet time” for her. But with the years of experience and warm memories she’s gained in East Hampton, Fitzsimmons decided it was time.

“I’ve been here for 11 years, and I think it’s time to try some new adventures,” she said this week, optimistically.

Last week, it was announced that Fitzsimmons would be stepping down as principal of Memorial School, which holds children from preschool to third grade, to take the position of principal at Duffy Elementary School, a kindergarten through grade five in West Hartford. Fitzsimmons will remain at Memorial until the end of the current school year.

Fitzsimmons brings a considerable amount of administrative experience with her, on top of the experience she gained at Memorial. Prior to her leadership role at Memorial, she served as principal of Dunbar Hill Accelerated School in Hamden for two years; before that, she worked in Danbury schools as a math specialist and originally taught math in East Hampton for grades three through six. Along the way, Fitzsimmons earned education degrees from Eastern Connecticut State University and Southern Connecticut State University, eventually earning her doctorate from Nova Southeastern University in Florida.

“Dr. Fitzsimmons’ experience, collaborative style, flexibility, high expectations, open door policy and genuine love of children make her an excellent match for Duffy School,” stated West Hartford Superintendent of Schools Karen List in a letter. “She will be a wonderful addition to our team with her drive for continuous improvement and life-long learning.”

That complimentary introduction comes as no surprise to those who have worked closely with Fitzsimmons in her time in East Hampton. Reflecting on the past decade or so, Fitzsimmons said that her relationship with students, parents and faculty would account for her “warmest memories” from Memorial.

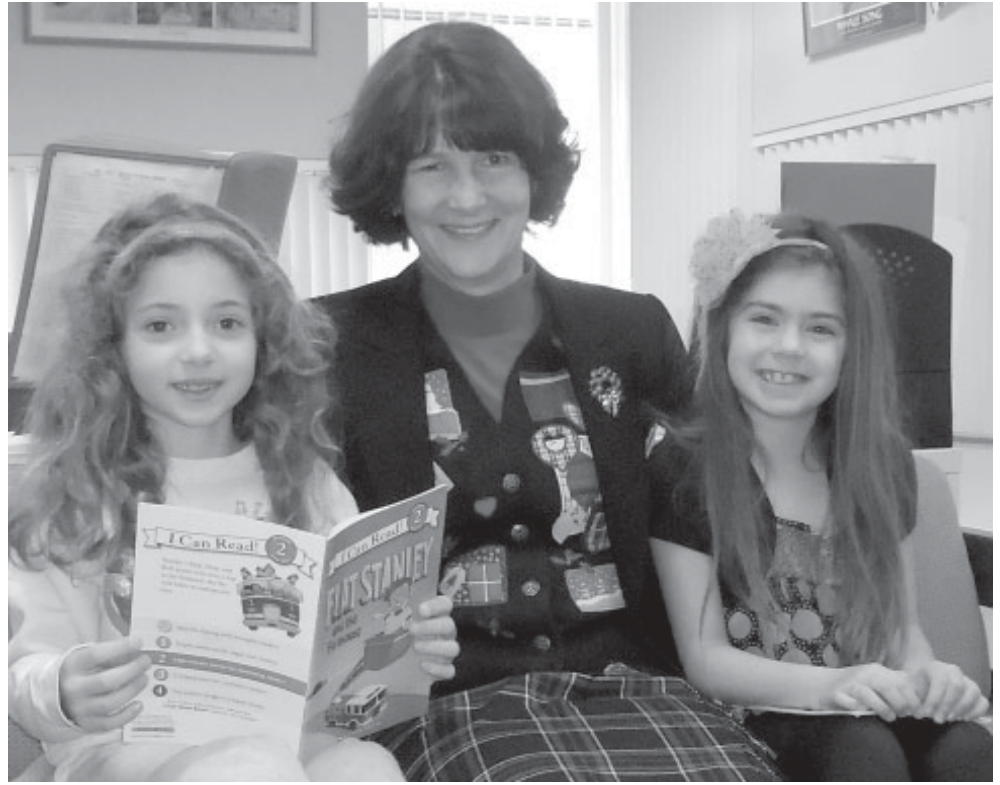
“Seeing the children walk through the school with their beautiful smiles, so happy to share their stories of things they’ve done or how their weekend went,” she reminisced. “That’s what has been most heartwarming and a total joy to watch.”

Fitzsimmons singled out the dedication and support of the parents, who take part in a number of programs throughout the year, including a mother/son, father/daughter dance for third-graders and a kindergarten ice cream social. She said she would also remember fondly the end-of-the-year patriotic show the school presents, which she added brings “tears to everyone’s eyes.”

With the support of the parents, Fitzsimmons said that she and the school staff have been able to turn Memorial School into a great institution for the town’s youth to begin their schooling. With the help of “by far, one of the hardest-working staffs I’ve ever worked with,” Fitzsimmons said the school has been able to integrate cutting-edge initiatives into the curriculum, including a “professional learning community” that sees teachers analyze data and determine each students’ individual needs as a team.

The school has also developed its Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) system, which rewards students for positive behavior in an effort to create a more positive education environment. It also includes interventions, both related to behavior and education, to provide students in need with supplemental help to keep the students on track with their classmates.

But one of the biggest successes during Fitzsimmons’ tenure has been Tigers Club, which she described as “an interdisciplinary approach to teaching skills to kids with autism.” With the help of school psychologist Jennifer Fiasconaro, Fitzsimmons said the program has been a boon for the school, with an overwhelmingly positive response from parents. This year, Tigers Club will be recognized at the Students Who Are Wired Differently national conference, which honors innovative approaches to educating children with behavioral or learning disorders.



Memorial School Principal Dr. Karen Fitzsimmons will be leaving the school at the end of this year, after 11 years at the school’s helm. Fitzsimmons has formed close bonds with the community, the school staff, and the students, like second-graders Kayla Gallmon, left, and Lily DeMonte, who she read a book to earlier this year.

Though Fitzsimmons has been at the forefront of all of these initiatives, she chose to deflect the credit to her “dedicated” staff, which develops and carries out all of these programs on top of their regular teaching duties. The staff has also dedicated time to reading *Teach Like A Champion*, a popular teaching book, and have streamlined any and all staff meetings to fit into the students’ schedules.

“A teacher’s time with the students is so important,” Fitzsimmons added.

It’s no wonder, with Fitzsimmons’ dedication to the needs of the students, that she was

a target for another school district. Much like her feelings on leaving, her departure is sure to be “bittersweet” to many, be they the students who are just entering Memorial School, or those who have now graduated from East Hampton High School, who she first saw when they started school over a decade ago.

So whether it’s a hug as a kindergarten walks into school on Monday, or a hug from a high school senior as they stride across the stage, diploma in hand this June, Fitzsimmons will take with her an attitude that has served her well over the past 11 years: “You never know how many lives you touch.”

## Public Hearing Held on RHAM \$25.94 Million Budget

by Geeta Schrayter

Less than a dozen people attended Monday’s public hearing on the proposed \$25.94 million RHAM schools budget for 2013-14. The spending package would be a 3.52 percent increase, or \$873,936, over the current year.

Superintendent of Schools Bob Siminski presented the budget, explaining the budget goals were to continue the same level of programming at the schools, address all statutory requirements, maintain technology at its current level and continue the process of implementing aspects of the Common Core, as required by the state.

Before sharing the actual number, Siminski explained the major budget increases, which include the result of contract negotiations, health insurance, magnet school tuition and transportation.

For the current fiscal year, Siminski said, teachers and non-certified staff went without a salary increase, but in the 2013-14 budget, certified staff salaries are slated to increase 1 percent plus step (which determines a salary based upon a teacher’s tenure). Non-certified staff salaries are to climb 2 percent plus step, and the administrators’ salaries will increase 1.88 percent.

The cost in health insurance is slated to climb \$324,672, or 13.43 percent, due to the rising cost of benefits, changes in national health care and an increased staff enrollment, Siminski said. He added that, over the past two years, insurance has increased by 30.31 percent, which is “unusually high.”

Siminski also shared that, due to an increase in the number of students attending magnet schools, the amount of money RHAM has to pay for tuition has gone up as well. During the 2011-12 school year, 101 students attended magnet schools, vocational agriculture schools or technical schools while comparatively, in the 2013-14 year, 155 students are expected to attend. The financial impact is a \$126,024 increase over the current year’s \$338,448.

Also, the transportation contract for the district was extended by one year and increased 1

percent, Siminski furthered. In doing so, the contract’s expiration will align with that of the three district towns – Andover, Hebron and Marlborough – and allow for the region to bid on transportation as one group. “Hopefully with that size contract we can realize some savings,” he said.

Siminski stated although these increases amounted to \$1.09 million, the board was only requesting for an \$882,382 increase, or 3.52 percent, “because we were able to realize some savings.”

He added that the cost of heating oil and bus fuel didn’t increase “too much,” and some significant savings were realized due to a new electricity rate. In addition, decreases were seen in special education tuition (\$165,440), board services (\$10,310) and vocational tuition (\$23,976).

Siminski stated another way the school was saving money was with the Clinical Day Treatment (CDT) program, which helps keeps special education students in-house instead of leaving to attend a school such as the Natchaug Hospital School, a special education program in Willimantic.

The cost of staff for the RHAM CDT program (three teachers and two paraprofessionals) is \$188,384. Currently, there are 16 students in grades seven through 12 in the program, and if those 16 students were to attend Natchaug instead, Siminski said that would cost the school \$873,936 plus \$83,160 in transportation.

About \$200,000 in the budget has been earmarked for technology purchases, including upgrading the telephone system at RHAM High School, which was put in place when the building was constructed, and replacing data switches for the Internet that are 10 years old. Siminski said the Internet needs to operate as efficiently as possible because in two years, all testing will take place online. Also in preparation for the switch to online testing, money is included to lease purchase six laptop carts (which hold 24 laptops each). Funding is also

included for the replacement of 10 desktop computers for office personnel and the purchase of three Apple laptops.

These items will be paid for, as is typically the case, by utilizing the lease-to-purchase option, where the technology is paid for over a period of five years. Siminski said Wednesday this option allows the district to keep the technology updated.

At the hearing, Siminski also discussed how revenues impact the RHAM budget. He said the schools receive revenue from such non-grant sources as Pay for Play for sports (estimated at \$150,000 for 2013-14) and rental income (\$20,000) from the use of facilities like the high school auditorium by outside groups. But he said the school also receives federal and state grants – and those are being impacted.

While federal grants are listed as increasing slightly, from \$348,841 in the current year to \$359,607 for the 2013-14 year, Siminski said these numbers could change as education grants are impacted by sequestration. He already knows state aid is dropping, and as a result revenue from state grants is to drop \$237,084. Siminski said the most important change in state funding was related to transportation, as Gov. Dannel P. Malloy cut \$100,000. This change was supposed to be made up for by an increase in Education Cost Sharing funding, but Siminski said that number won’t equate to the same amount.

“It’s unfortunate that mandates keep coming without funding,” he said. “Just the transportation cut in the governor’s budget – that’s \$100,000. That’s painful.”

During the budget analysis, Siminski described the school as a “very labor intensive organization,” with 55.9 percent of the budget going towards salaries and another 14.2 percent going to benefits. Remaining funds go to utilities (2.5 percent), bonds (9.6 percent), transportation (5.5 percent), tuition (3.3 percent) and “other.”

“Without impacting salaries, the ‘other’ category is the place where the most significant

changes can be made in the budget,” Siminski said, “and that’s only 8.1 percent.”

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The RHAM budget is paid by the three towns in the region; the amount they pay is based on the students’ town of residence. For the 2013-14 year, Marlborough is responsible for 28.19 percent of the budget or \$7.31 million, a \$5,686 increase over the current year. Andover is responsible for 16.10 percent or \$3.96 million, a decrease of \$75,831.

As usual, Hebron is responsible for the largest amount - 56.55 percent - or \$14.67 million. This is a \$952,529 increase over the current year, and after Siminski’s presentation, Hebron resident Brian Garcias expressed concern over the spike.

“We’ve heard in prior years that we have to sacrifice for the children,” he said. “I no longer agree with that.”

Garcias used the example of flying, and noted that safety protocol tells individuals to place on their own mask before helping with someone else’s – so in other words, the RHAM board needs to stop putting tax burdens on already-burdened residents, and saying it’s all for the children.

“I guess I feel like we’re in *Groundhog Day*,” he said. “Every year the economy hasn’t gotten much better but we see the same increases. Honestly I’m tired and frustrated.”

Despite his frustration, after the public hearing the board held a special meeting and voted 9-1 in favor of the budget as presented, with Amy D’Amaddio against. D’Amaddio did not return calls to comment as to the reasons why.

Now that the budget has been approved, it will continue on to a district budget meeting on Monday, May 6, followed by a referendum the following day. Voting will take place from 6 a.m.-8 p.m. in all three towns. In Andover, residents can vote for the RHAM budget in the Town Hall Community Room, 17 School Rd.; in Hebron, Hebron Elementary School, 92 Church St.; and in Marlborough, Marlborough Elementary School, 15 School Dr.

# Town Budget Heads to Public Hearing in Marlborough

by Melissa Roberto

The Board of Finance last week sent the proposed town budget to a public hearing – a spending plan that, due to last-minute adjustments, is anticipated to result in a drop in taxes for the upcoming year.

The budget stands at \$21,665,665 – a bottom line number that was adjusted just before the vote was taken at the finance board workshop last Thursday, April 4. The proposed spending package translates into an increase of \$114,366 or a 0.53 percent increase over the current fiscal year.

The town budget consists of the town operations budget, debt, contingency, Marlborough's share of the RHAM budget, and the local Board of Education budget, and this year, it was the local school budget that got the most attention before the final vote.

The sudden adjustment was made to the local school budget Thursday after the finance board received news of a miscalculation in the health insurance line item, and recent configurations made by the town's insurance carrier, that brought the initial health insurance spike significantly down from a 22.92 percent increase to a 4.94 percent increase.

First Selectwoman Cathi Gaudinski said Tuesday that the change in the health insurance is approximately \$191,000 in savings for the Board of Education budget.

Because of the drop, and other former adjustments made to the town operations budget, the mill rate also dropped from the originally proposed mill rate of 31.76 to 30.87 mills.

The new mill rate is a decrease of .165 mills over the current fiscal year mill rate of 31.03, and taxes are anticipated to decrease by .51 percent.

Last week's vote to send the Marlborough budget to public was prompted by Board of Finance Vice Chairman Cliff Denniss. Denniss and fellow members Ken Hjulstrom, Doug Knowlton and Susan Leser all voted in favor of

the budget, while Chairwoman Evelyn Godbout abstained from the vote.

Godbout said she would have liked the board to take more time to discuss the budget.

"I abstained not because I was opposed to anything but I thought we needed more discussion," she said. "I felt it would have been better to vote on it at the next meeting."

Before the vote, however, the board also voted on each of the aforementioned components of the budget. The town operations budget, debt and contingency all passed unanimously, while finance members delved into the two school budgets a bit further.

The town operations budget was approved at \$4,491,748 – an increase of \$70,999, or 1.61 percent, over the current year.

Also, debt was approved at \$2,659,873 – an amount board members said they didn't have much control over, as it's already been refinanced. The board also okayed \$20,000 for contingency, which is placed into the budget in case of emergencies.

At the meeting, finance members thoroughly discussed the school budget some more. Members had expected to see a drop in the health insurance increase because, just two days prior, Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz had informed the board numbers would be adjusted before Thursday's meeting due to information received from the town's insurance carrier. What was surprising, however, was the miscalculation by the superintendent's office, which led to the \$191,000 drop.

Leser joked that the mistake happened to be a "good" one, since it also caused the local school budget to decrease by .26 percent over the current year, at a total of \$7,181,605 – \$18,455 less than the current school budget.

Leser tried to cut the school budget even further, by \$100,000, because of items she said she did not particularly agree with, such as \$21,000 for textbooks, an \$8,000 expense for

library books and \$20,000 for yet-to-be-determined security improvements at the school.

"I have a real problem with buying textbooks now because of the new [Common Core State] Standards and because nobody has had a chance to put new textbooks together that are aligned to the new standards," said Leser.

She then told other finance members that she did not feel additional library books were necessary at the school. Godbout, however, reminded her that it had been three years since the district purchased library books.

Leser also balked at the \$20,000 for security improvements, saying the money wasn't necessary because it isn't attached to a particular project, First Selectwoman Cathi Gaudinski – from the audience – disagreed.

"There's maybe things that are planned but haven't been announced because it deals with security," she said. "It might not be stated publicly because of public safety issues."

Leser's motion to cut the school budget failed, with all four members of the finance board opposing it.

"As I look at it, this is a good year," said Denniss of the school budget.

Leser did end up saying that the school budget is "good," but stressed to the board that it has also been an easier year because the number of students attending MES has dropped. Godbout added to Leser's comment, by telling the board 680 students attended MES in 2009, and enrollment has dropped to 625 students.

Also at the meeting, the board took a vote on Marlborough's portion of the RHAM budget, which totals \$7,312,439. The vote failed by 3-2, with members Denniss, Knowlton and Leser in favor of it, and Hjulstrom and Godbout opposing it. (At least four 'yes' votes are needed in order for a motion to pass.)

While Marlborough's portion of the budget – determined by the number of Marlborough

students attending RHAM – is only climbing \$5,686 million, Godbout said she wasn't in favor of the overall RHAM budget's 3.52 percent increase, and its costly technology improvements. (A full story about the RHAM budget appears this week on page 31.)

Outside of the meeting, Hjulstrom added that he also felt the increase seemed "a bit high" and expects many Hebron voters to vote the budget down. Hebron is slated to pay the brunt of RHAM's proposed increase – nearly \$1 million of it.

The last vote taken by the finance board at the April 4 meeting was actually on a portion of town spending that isn't included in next year's budget – \$350,500 for capital items.

Gaudinski had proposed for capital items to be paid for with the town's undesignated fund balance, instead of being included in the town budget. The change is a policy that was created by Gaudinski, but Godbout said as of right now the finance board is only going to make a decision on next year's spending, and will take a vote on the policy in the future.

The vote to pay for next year's capital items through the fund balance failed, however, by a 3-0-2 vote, with Denniss, Knowlton and Leser in favor of it, and Hjulstrom and Godbout abstaining from it.

Godbout said her choice to abstain came from not having enough time to digest the change. "I'm not ready to vote on it," she told the board.

A discussion involving the capital items was supposed to take place in the following Board of Finance meeting that was scheduled for this past Wednesday, April 10, but it was canceled. The meeting was rescheduled to next Wednesday, 7 p.m. at the Senior Center.

The public hearing on the town budget is tentatively scheduled for Monday, April 29, at 7 p.m., in the MES cafeteria.

# Andover School Board Gives Maneggia a Credit Card

by Geeta Schrayter

The Board of Education Wednesday voted to allow Superintendent of Schools Andy Maneggia to apply for a Board of Education credit card in the amount of \$3,000.

Board of Education Chairman Jay Lindy explained board policy allowed for the use of a credit card issued in the name of the Board of Education, under the supervision of the superintendent. Policy 3326.3 states "only expenditures by board employees to conduct business associated with the school system will be authorized by the superintendent." Furthermore, it reads that the card shall be used "for school business only, not for any personal business" and if it were discovered the card had been used for personal business, "disciplinary action, which may include termination, will be taken."

Maneggia, who first joked about the timing of the request (in light of the current investigating into the use of a credit card with a \$50,000 limit by former Hebron superintendent of schools Ellie Cruz), said he wasn't a big fan of credit cards, but it would be more effective.

Maneggia explained personally, the only time he uses credit cards is to get gas, "but the reality is we're running into companies like [online retailer] Amazon who won't take purchase orders," he said. Adding the company tended to have better prices, but only takes credit cards. As a result, teachers have been getting approval to make purchases for their classrooms, and have then used their own credit card and received reimbursement.

"But that creates additional paperwork," Maneggia said, so he and Jill Collins, who is responsible for financial operations at the school, "came to the conclusion it would be more effective if a credit card were issued to the Board of Education with a \$3,000 credit limit."

"Rest assured," Maneggia continued, "I'm not going on any extravagant vacations with it," to which board member Kim Hawes quipped, "you're not going to go to Dunkin' Donuts a couple of times?"

And Lindy added, "or hit up Ted's?" (Ted's, the Hebron supermarket, is alleged to be one of the places Cruz used the Hebron schools' credit card.)

But jokes aside, the board expressed its faith in Maneggia by first, asking if \$3,000 was enough (Maneggia emphatically said he didn't want it any higher) and then unanimously authorizing the application.

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Also at the meeting, the board voted to approve a number of maintenance projects for the school. In a memo from Maneggia it was explained maintenance needs are examined yearly around this time. He provided a list of tentative projects that could use some repair, provided funding was available. This year, the list included painting the restrooms in the portion of the school that was from 1948 for a cost of between \$3-5,000; replacing a condensate pump for \$2,200; the replacement of motors for four large fans located on the school roof for a cost of \$2,000; replacing a leaky valve in the boys' locker room for \$1,200; and extending the air duct for the boiler room at \$450.

Maneggia explained these items at the meeting, sharing, for example, that a portion of the building is heated with steam and the condensate pump collects the moisture that the steam gives off. The heat is currently not on in the building, but Maneggia said if it isn't replaced, it would pose a problem next winter.

The total cost for these items was listed at \$10,850. However, a request for money to seal the amesite in the parking lot, outdoor basket-

ball court and play area and some of the walkways was made at the meeting. Maneggia explained Thursday sealing these areas kept the amesite from drying out and breaking up.

"My belief is if you don't seal the amesite it dries out and then you have a problem. And if it starts breaking up then you've got a very serious problem," Maneggia said.

He added the decision was made to try and prevent this by sealing these areas every other year. He said the school had been "trying to do it rather faithfully" to prevent a larger expenditure from occurring, should an entire area need to be replaced.

At the meeting, Lindy said the maintenance could extend the life of the areas another 8-10 years.

The cost for this item brought the total estimated price for the maintenance projects to \$25,525. In addition, if funds are available, the board informed Maneggia they'd like to see the hallways in the portion of the building from 1948 painted as well as the bathrooms.

Maneggia explained funds for these projects could be taken from money that had been budgeted for unemployment compensation. He explained at the meeting \$34,000 had been set aside in the current year's budget due to the reduction of a third grade teacher. However, only \$2,393 or 7.04 percent of that had been expended since the teacher had taken another job.

The board unanimously approved the requests.

In addition, they unanimously approved \$14,000 be used to resurface the roofs over the gym and the stage. Maneggia explained the funds for this item could be taken from the school's Capital Reserve Account. Maneggia

shared Thursday \$18,000 had been added to the account this year from two students who pay tuition to attend the school.

"What I'm saying to the board is money went in this year we can use without touching the money that has already accrued in there," he said.

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Also at the meeting, Maneggia updated the board on the status of next year's insurance rate. As with the other towns in the district, he explained the insurance rate had initially been expected to increase approximately 25 percent, but after going out to bid, Anthem came back with some "good news," in that the increase would be 14.3 percent.

Maneggia said this change made it sound like there should be "an abundance of money" coming out of the budget. If the same number of policies were issued next year, Maneggia said that would be the case – there would be about \$49,000 in savings. But that's how things work in a "perfect world," he furthered, and shared he'd already been informed by some employees that they planned to opt into the school's insurance plan instead of their spouse's.

"If that transpires," he said, "the savings is \$859."

As a result, Maneggia said he discussed the situation with the Board of Finance and while the money wouldn't be taken out of the budget immediately, if the larger savings were realized, the board will be "consistent," and as they've done in the past, the money will be returned to the town.

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The next Board of Education meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 8 at 7 p.m. in the Andover Elementary School library.

# Alternatives Looked at for WJJMS Project in Colchester

by Melissa Roberto

When the budget process was approaching back in early February, members of the board of finance, selectmen and education agreed to hold off discussing the William J. Johnston Middle School/senior center/community center project until they had more time to dissect its \$68.5 million price tag.

Meanwhile, they directed the building committee behind the project to work with the Tecton architects to research possibilities of minimizing the cost of the project, and in the past two weeks, the committee has updated all three boards with its findings.

At the behest of town officials, the building committee has devised not one but two alternate plans: one that would be \$11.5 million less than the original cost, and another, even less-expensive plan to just renovate WJJMS.

The original plans called for renovations and additions to the existing middle school – a building town and school officials have stressed is in dire need of repair – as well as a new senior center and community center within the existing school.

Currently, the town's senior center is located at 95 Norwich Ave. The proposed community center, however, would be the first of its kind in Colchester, and would house the Parks and Recreation and Youth and Social Services departments.

The original plans called for renovations to the current school to house the sixth grade in its western wing, and a three-story addition to house the seventh and eighth grades. The plans located the community center at the existing school; the facility would include a gym, as well as a game room, counseling room, technology room, lounge and library.

The plans also called for the senior center to be at the existing school, in the cafeteria wing. Its offerings would include a bistro/café, gift shop, lounge, library, counseling space, health room, hair salon and more.

However, at a February meeting, members of the boards of finance, education and selectmen agreed that the \$68.5 million price tag was tough to look at. The initial \$68.5 million was broken down into two separate costs: \$47.8 million for the school portion, and about \$20.7 million for both the senior center and community center. But the actual cost to the town for the school portion was estimated at \$27.2 million while the state reimbursement was estimated at \$20.6 million.

One of the possible reductions the building committee presented lowered the cost of the project to \$57 million, while still including the school, senior center and community center in the same location. The \$57 million was broken down into two portions: \$42.4 million for the school construction and \$14.6 million for both the senior and community center construction.

The building committee's chairman, Tom Tyler, explained that along with the reduction in the cost would come a drop in the amount of state reimbursement. Of the \$42.4 million cost for school construction, the town would be responsible for \$22.7 million of the project, while the state would reimburse \$19.7 million – a reduction of nearly \$5 million to the town.

The change in state reimbursement is due to a decrease in the amount of new construction at the school, Tyler added.

"As you decrease from new construction to renovating as new to just renovating, the town portion goes up significantly and the

state reimbursement goes down significantly," he explained.

The drop to \$57 million would be achieved through possible changes at the school, senior center and community center. The major changes at the school totaled a \$4.2 million reduction. The changes include the deletion of four rooms, elimination of renovating one of the gyms, a 50 percent reduction in the size of the new parking lot, elimination of resurfacing the existing parking lot, and the elimination of new playing fields.

Additionally, a \$5.1 million reduction would also be achieved through changes to the senior center and community center. The changes include minimizing renovation of the community center space, eliminating the renovation of one of the school gyms and modifications made to the originally proposed entryway of the senior center.

However, two additional costs were factored into the \$57 million. Tyler explained that the first was a \$1 million addition for PCB remediation, or polychlorinated biphenyl remediation. The remediation is a form of cleanup that removes hazardous materials from buildings with PCB.

Tyler explained that PCB remediation is important to include in the project.

"It might sound like a lot of money but they are finding PCBs in a lot of buildings in this era and to clean it up is very, very difficult and very expensive," Tyler said.

Another \$1 million was factored into the cost due to the amount of time the project has actually been put off. Last year at this time, the three boards also decided to put off the building project because of the concurring budget sea-

son.

"It's just more money you have to spend because of the project being delayed," said Tyler.

In addition, per an earlier request by Board of Finance Chairman Rob Tarlov, Tyler shared what it would cost to renovate the school without a senior center or community center, and without a three-story addition. The price tag was pegged at \$53.4 million.

Of the \$53.4 million, the state would only reimburse \$8.2 million of it, Tyler added, or \$11.5 million less in state aid than what it would receive under the \$57 million plan.

The drastic change in the state reimbursement was once again due to the level of construction, which would go from new construction to solely renovations at the school.

At their April 3 meeting, Board of Finance members agreed they would start to delve into the reductions. Tarlov thanked the Building Committee for all of their "hard work" throughout the process.

Some Board of Education members were a bit more eager, however.

"The Building Committee has gone over and over this stuff," Board of Education member Michael Egan explained. "I think it's time as a board to give them some direction. We have to be extremely forceful as a Board of Education."

Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein also thanked the Building Committee for the updates in the process, and reminded board members that the timing of the project is important.

The boards of education, finance and selectmen are currently in talks of scheduling another tri-board meeting to discuss the project and its possible reductions.

# Colchester School Board Approves New Curriculum

by Melissa Roberto

The Board of Education approved a new English curriculum Tuesday night, and it affects students at the middle and high school.

Administration and teachers from Bacon Academy and William J. Johnston Middle School had formed a committee to develop the new curriculum for grades six through 12, and it took members nearly two years to complete it.

Director of Curriculum Barbara Gilbert attended Tuesday night's school board meeting alongside WJJMS Reading Specialist Dr. Virginia Goncalo, WJJMS Assistant Principal Dr. Jenn Olsen and Bacon Academy English teacher Joe Anastasio, who explained that the new curriculum is another step in implementing the federally-mandated Common Core State Standards that need to be implemented in schools across the country starting in the 2013-14 school year.

But the new curriculum wasn't created just because of the Common Core. Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein said the English curriculum follows a cycle and was up for review, so the approval came at a good time.

The new curriculum meets several new requirements of school districts including the new standards and teacher evaluations, but what

Gilbert highlighted is that it will prepare Colchester students to be "college and career ready" in reading, writing, speaking, listening and language skills.

In order to achieve the "college and career ready" goal, the curriculum includes approximately \$12,000 worth of textbooks at each school – both fiction and non-fiction. Though the board was made aware of the cost on Tuesday, Gilbert explained that the new textbooks would not need to be paid for until the 2014-15 fiscal year budget, and board members did not oppose the cost.

One of the curriculum's goals is to expose students to other perspectives and cultures, Gilbert said, and one way that will be done is by connecting literature to non-fiction texts.

When board member John Reeve heard the idea of incorporating more non-fiction into the classroom, he said he was worried that the curriculum would step away from teaching literature.

"I just hope this isn't the first step on a slippery slope where we're moving away from literature," he said.

Reeve added that he wanted students to continue to be challenged and become "creative

thinkers."

But Anastasio assured Reeve, and the rest of the board, this was something Colchester teachers had already thought about.

"Boy, was this a discussion in our department, and it's been ongoing," he said. "We do value fiction, but what we're doing is adding non-fiction in. I promise we will still be challenging and trying to create great thinkers."

The new curriculum also challenges students to dive deeper into a text by learning text-annotation, how to create an argument, and will be given the task of explaining why a writer chose to write a text in a certain way, or what the message of a text is.

Another aspect of the curriculum is to provide a more modern approach to classroom teaching by using technology and more online texts.

Anastasio even shared that in his high school classes he encourages students to conduct research on their own, like using their cell phones to look up the meaning of a word on [dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com) that they didn't understand. Doing so helps students also gain independence in the classroom, he said.

Another big shift in the curriculum is that

middle school students will learn how to write argumentative essays instead of just persuasive essays.

Through the new curriculum, middle and high school students will be asked to develop their own questions about texts, which is an element of the common core. In addition to explaining what students think a text is about, they will be challenged to develop their own questions about a text based on things they do not understand.

Goldstein was delighted with what he heard about the curriculum Tuesday night.

"I love seeing how the texts are there, the creativity is there, non-fiction is there, but what's also added is that element of questions," he said.

"It's not just regurgitation," added Olsen. "It's every student developing their own perspective."

But Gilbert stressed that Colchester teachers have already started teaching these skills in their classrooms. The difference in the approval of the curriculum, however, is that now these skills have to be taught if they aren't already.

The new curriculum will go into effect at both schools immediately.

# Portland Selectmen Move Budget Forward

by Joshua Anusewicz

After a series of lengthy deliberations over the past month, the Board of Selectmen unanimously adopted the proposed 2013-14 fiscal year budget on Wednesday night.

Since the budget was originally brought to the board by First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield at the beginning of March, the selectmen have made several tweaks to the spending package. The budget was proposed by Bransfield at \$30,861,603, with \$11,945,375 for general government and \$18,916,228 for the Board of Education. Altogether, that represented a \$415,008, or 1.36 percent, increase from the 2012-13 fiscal year.

After the deliberations, the selectmen lowered the budget total to \$30,823,855, a reduction of \$37,748 from the original proposal. Of that total, \$11,887,627 accounts for general government and \$18,936,228 is set aside for the Board of Education.

If the budget is approved by the voters as presented, it will represent a \$377,260, or 1.24 percent, increase from the current fiscal year; the budget for general government would decrease by \$104,272, while the Board of Education would be up roughly \$481,532. Bransfield

said that the budget is estimated to increase the mill rate by .55 mills, from 30.73 to 31.28.

The 2012-13 budget was approved by referendum last year at \$30.45 million, \$11.99 million for general government and \$18.45 million for education.

The budget adjustments made by the selectmen came from several places, including a \$20,000 addition to the Board of Education budget. The budget was originally proposed by the school board in January at \$19.10 million, a 3.5 percent increase from the current fiscal year; however, Bransfield made the decision to cut \$461,532 from that request, bringing the increase down to 2.5 percent from the current fiscal year.

The selectmen opted to add \$20,000 back during deliberations, and Bransfield added that the school board would also realize roughly \$68,000 in healthcare savings from what was originally predicted. Overall, Bransfield said about \$88,000 would be "restored" to what the school board had previously requested.

"We believe the budget will allow [the Board of Education] to accomplish many of their goals," Bransfield said. This year, that will in-

clude a series of state mandates, including upgraded technology to meet upcoming teacher and administration evaluations and standardized testing, which will all be done through computers on a new fiber-optic system.

The school budget also includes funding for the integration of all-day kindergarten, an initiative that has been championed by Portland parents and the Board of Education. The funding would include classroom upgrades and new materials, and savings would be found from the lack of a midday bus for half-day kindergarten students; no additional faculty would be needed, due to a shuffling of teachers from different grades.

On the general government side, Bransfield said additional healthcare savings of around \$30,000 were found, as well. Overall, the government side was reduced by the selectmen by about \$109,000, with reductions found from switching from heating fuel to natural gas, town employee retirements, and capital expenditures.

Despite a mostly-smooth budget process that has yielded a reasonable increase, the uncertainty of town revenue has been looming over

the proceedings. Bransfield said on Wednesday that more will be known about the state budget at the end of April and, by then, the town will have a better idea of how much revenue the town will be receiving from the state. Bransfield said the state has slashed grants for school transportation and voter registration fees, as well as the Mashantucket Pequot grant program, which has provided Portland with valuable revenue in the past.

With the uncertainty in mind, Bransfield said the selectmen prepared the budget accordingly. "We're very prudent in expenditures," she stated, "and especially careful with increases, so there's not a major impact [from the decreased revenue] in our operations."

"Portland is in pretty good shape," Bransfield added.

With the budget approved, it will now head to a town meeting Monday, May 6, at 7 p.m., at Portland High School, 95 High St. If approved at the meeting, the budget would head to an all-day town-wide referendum the following Monday, May 13, at the Portland Senior Center, 7 Waverly Ave.

# Ground Broken on Future CVS in Hebron

by Geeta Schrayter

Last Thursday, April 4, town and state officials gathered at a plot of land that currently boasts... nothing. The area, located at 110 Main St., on the corner of John E. Horton Blvd. is an expanse of dirt decorated with twigs and branches. But soon, all that will change as the spot is the future location of CVS/pharmacy. And last Thursday, those present celebrated that fact with a groundbreaking ceremony.

Economic Development Coordinator Randy Anagnostis called the ceremony appropriate as the groundbreaking was a “milestone accomplishment” and a major step toward the eventual development of the long-anticipated Village Green District.

“Today marks a milestone, and that’s why we have a groundbreaking ceremony – to commemorate an event,” he said, adding he hoped everyone would return to the same spot in the fall to celebrate the store’s grand opening.

The CVS will be a 13,000-square-foot store that Anagnostis said in a recent press release would complement “the Main Street New England style” in town. The store will be tan and beige clapboard, with a gabled entryway and large white columns.

“In keeping with the character of the community,” he wrote, “the building site will include extensive landscaping with indigenous maple street trees and white picket fencing along Main Street.”

At the ceremony, Town Manager Andy Tierney said it was a “wonderful day for Hebron.” He said Town Planner Mike O’Leary “always knew [the Village Green District] would take off eventually,” and called the construction of CVS a “landmark turning-point.”

Development “is going to happen,” Tierney

said, and the town was “ecstatic.”

Anagnostis added in his release that the addition of CVS meant major retailers were taking note of the town and “beginning to realize the exceptional opportunity that exists here in Hebron as an ideal location with very high-capita income.”

He added the Village Green District was on its way to becoming “one of the most desirable locations for mixed-use development” in the area.

State Sen. Cathy Osten was present at the ceremony as well, and as a small-town girl herself (she hails from Sprague), she said she was always happy to see some development.

“I love having businesses come to small towns,” she said. “I think it’s great and I’ll do whatever I can to help you out here.”

Hebron is a member of the Windham Region Chamber of Commerce, and as such, the chamber’s executive director, Roger Adams, was in attendance to share in the excitement. He said the last few years had been tough with regards to seeing any new businesses, job growth, or investment by major companies but through all that, Hebron had been a town that always looked forward.

“I think Hebron is a fine example of one of the communities in this part of the state that has always been looking forward during that down time,” he said, adding the town had done a “great job” in getting CVS to invest in the area.

“I commend Hebron for what you’ve done,” he stated.

CVS/Caremark District Manager Tim Roy was also present, and said his employees were excited for the new building. Roy said it’d been “great” to be in Hebron over the past year (cur-



On April 4, a groundbreaking ceremony celebrated the start of construction of a new CVS/pharmacy in Hebron. Pictured here taking the first dig are, from left, town wetlands enforcement officer John Soderberg, property owner William Fochi Jr., Town Planner Mike O’Leary, Roger Adams with the Windham Regional Chamber of Commerce, Town Manager Andy Tierney, CVS/Caremark district manager Tim Roy, state Sen. Cathy Osten, property owner William Fochi Sr., CVS/Caremark district supervisor Jennifer Nemeec and selectwoman Gayle Mulligan.

rently, CVS is located in the building that used to house Hebron Pharmacy), joking it was sometimes tough to come into a smaller community.

“The first few weeks here were a little rough. I got kicked in the shins by a lot of little old ladies, so to speak, saying ‘what did you do to Spike [Houston, the owner of Hebron Pharmacy]?’” he laughed. “But hopefully by now we’ve done our job, which is to look out for the

health and well-being of Hebron.”

Roy said the store was on schedule for a November completion, and “it’ll be great to have a big, brand new store” with a drive-thru and a bigger store front.

“I think it’ll be great to be here,” he stated, “and I look forward to having a great relationship with the town of Hebron for many more years to come.”

# Cruz Back in Plymouth – But Hebron Still Wants Answers

by Geeta Schrayter

Former Hebron schools superintendent Ellie Cruz returned to work as the Plymouth superintendent this week, after an audit into her expenses since arriving in that town in late December didn’t find anything unusual.

The Hebron Board of Education, however, is still seeking answers from Cruz regarding \$15,000 worth of expenses she allegedly racked up during her last year of employment in town.

The Plymouth Board of Education held a special meeting last Thursday, April 4, to discuss the results of a financial audit performed on Cruz’s expenses since her arrival in town. Marcum Advisory Group, which prepared the report, said that, after reviewing the Plymouth board’s expenditures, it did “not [find] any issues of non-compliance” with the board’s policies, rules, regulations or applicable accounting standards and procedures.

Cruz had been on paid personal leave since the end of February while the board performed the audit, which was in turn a result of the allegations the Hebron Board of Education made against Cruz earlier that month. The Hebron school board is looking for around \$15,000 in reimbursement from Cruz, for questionable expenses she allegedly made on the district’s credit card. The board has also alleged Cruz made several payments to herself without a contractual basis and overpayments in insurance.

Last month, the Hebron board requested written documentation from Cruz which would prove the expenses were for the benefit of the district’s children and on Tuesday, Cruz said she’d done just that.

“I have responded to the board,” she said. “I met with the board attorneys twice and I also contacted the board and offered to meet with them which they declined. So I think I’ve been very available and open to having those conversations.”

But Hebron school board member William Moorcroft, the designated spokesperson on the

matter, said the response hasn’t been sufficient.

“We said ‘let’s have some documentation that we’ll consider and review and then we’ll decide if a meeting is warranted,’” he said, “and no documentation has been forthcoming.”

Moorcroft said the board remained “steadfast” in its desire to seek recovery “of any and all funds that were misused.”

“What we’re looking for is some substantiation that those charges – the car wash, jewelry stores, et cetera – were for the benefit of the children and we haven’t seen anything,” Moorcroft said.

Still, over in Plymouth the board voted 7-1 – board chairman Patrick Perugino dissented – to have Cruz return to work, which she did this past Monday. The Plymouth Board of Education said in a statement that while it was aware the issue hadn’t yet been resolved in Hebron, the board’s focus was on her ability in Plymouth.

“While we intend to monitor those matters [in Hebron] carefully, our focus is on Ms. Cruz’s ability to carry out her responsibilities effectively as superintendent of schools in Plymouth,” the statement read. “At this juncture, we believe it is appropriate to have Ms. Cruz return to work as our educational leader, with the understanding that the board will monitor matters related to Ms. Cruz’s conduct and performance on an ongoing basis.”

Cruz was pleased with the Plymouth school board’s support.

“I really appreciate the integrity with which the Plymouth board conducted this whole process,” Cruz stated. “I thought it was very respectful and professional. The internal forensic audit was conducted with complete transparency and there were absolutely no findings.”

Cruz said she thought the outcome was “completely fair given the circumstances,” and said she was looking forward to her continued fo-

cus and work in Plymouth.

Cruz added she would always look back on her time in Hebron with pride. “I have nothing but the highest regard for the staff and the children and the families,” she said. “I will always look back at that time with tremendous pride and I certainly wish them well.”

Meanwhile, for Perugino, the sole dissenting vote on the Plymouth board, the fact that Cruz was still under investigation by the Hebron board meant she *shouldn’t* return to work.

“The case is still open down there and I’d like to know when it’s finalized,” he said. “I thought that the board should have put her on administrative leave until this was done, but they chose otherwise, we voted, and that’s democracy.”

Perugino added that, once the Hebron school board comes to a decision, “then whatever the decision is, our board will take a look at it and then move from there.”

In the meantime, Perugino said he didn’t have any concern as far as the audit, and explained the superintendent isn’t allowed to sign off on anything without going through the business manager or the treasurer. The statement from the school board furthered there are “clear procedures” in place relating to Plymouth’s finances and any recommendations the forensic accounting firm made would be addressed “promptly.”

Furthermore, the Plymouth board said it had the “utmost confidence” in its business manager. It added that the school system does not issue credit cards to any of its employees – and had “absolutely no intention” of doing so.

The card which Cruz had been using in Hebron had a \$50,000 limit, and the Hebron school board has said it was applied for without the board’s knowledge; a review of the application shows it had been signed for by Cruz and then-business manager William Mazzara.

Mazzara, a RHAM school system employee whose services were contracted out to the Hebron school system two days a week, was placed on paid leave Jan. 2 due to the investigation into Cruz’s expenses. The Hebron Board of Education voted March 5 to negotiate an agreement with RHAM to terminate its arrangement with Mazzara’s services, and the RHAM board then voted March 11 to enter into a termination agreement with Mazzara. RHAM Superintendent of Schools Bob Siminski said this week that while an agreement has been reached, it wasn’t yet finalized – while on paid leave, Mazzara is still an employee of the school system – but he was anxious for it to be so.

“I want it to move forward so we can move on,” he said.

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In place of Mazzara, Board of Education Chair Kathy Shea explained Acting Hebron Superintendent Kathy Veronesi had hired Dave Lenihan as interim business manager. The board was introduced to Lenihan at its April 2 meeting. He had started work the day before, and Shea said in that short time he was already able to provide the board with plenty of helpful information.

“I was quite pleased,” she said, “and I think he’s a very valuable asset to the board and the superintendent, at least for the rest of this fiscal year.”

Shea said hiring a permanent business manager was something a new school superintendent would take care of; she added she anticipated that announcement would take place by the end of the month. To that regard, related executive sessions were scheduled for the Board of Education meeting on Thursday after press time, including potential action concerning a resolution related to the district credit card account, and possible action concerning the negotiation of a superintendent’s contract of employment.

## Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Regular *Rivereast* readers may be familiar with the band Tip the Van. The rock band, fronted by Marlborough sisters Nicole and Simone Oliva, started up in 2002 – when the sisters were still students at RHAM – and went on to enjoy several years of significant success, releasing four CDs and going on major, nationwide tours. The *Rivereast* had several stories about the band over the years.

But in 2011, the Oliva sisters decided to move to California, and have been there ever since. I was reminded of their move west earlier this week, when I got a notice sent to the paper about upcoming performances by The Drawbridge Band. Unbeknownst to me – but knownst, I suspect, to big Tip the Van fans – Nicole and Simone's parents, John and Jan, had started up the southern rock-country band in 2006. Though the band is based in Preston – John and Jan moved there from Marlborough in 2008 – next weekend they're going to be playing at Portland's Trinity Episcopal Church, for a special show to help commemorate the church's 225th anniversary. (Jan is a lifetime member of Trinity.)

After receiving the notice, I reached out to Jan to touch base, and to see how their daughters were doing. Jan, not surprisingly, is a very proud mother. "They have a gift," she said of Nicole and Simone and, touting the siblings' harmonies, said, "They're like the Everly Brothers, only they're sisters."

Jan also, quite helpfully, gave me Nicole's contact info, and I eagerly reached out to her to find out, firsthand, what life is like for her and her sister out on the left coast.

In the two years that they've been in California, the sisters – who currently live in South Pasadena but, in the summer, are relocating to Encino – have both landed jobs with connections to the music industry. Nicole, 26, works for The MusicCares Foundation, a non-profit that acts as the health and human services arm for The Grammys. The foundation, Nicole said, assists musicians all over the country when they are in times of need.

"It's a different path than what I expected to be doing with my communications degree [Nicole and Simone are each Eastern Connecticut State University grads] but there are definitely parallel themes, and I get to give back to the community that has given me so much," she said.

As for Simone, 24, she works for PSAV, which her proud older sister described as "one of the biggest audio visual companies in the world." Simone was recently promoted from technician to sales manager for two luxury properties in Los Angeles. Her role has shifted from physically building large scale events to planning and managing entire productions.

"Both of us are so fortunate to love what we do, and our jobs afford us time to work on music together," Nicole said. She admitted the past two years have been challenging, but added, "we've been able to carve a path for ourselves. It's incredible to be able to share this journey with my sister."

As for that music, Nicole and Simone have formed a new group, called Wellso. But it's a different sound from Tip the Van, which had a punk/ska flavor. Nicole described the new group's music as "sort of indie rock meets electronic chillwave."

Why the change in musical direction? Nicole's answer was pretty deep, I thought.

"We find inspiration in all sorts of music, and as an artist you feel compelled to move with what moves you," she said. "There can be this stigma attached to exploring different types of music if you've established yourself one way, but there is this innate fluidity in

the creative process that you have to honor. You never know what's going to resonate with you unless you try it."

Wellso also has a CD in the works and plans to release it – well, Nicole said, "soon."

"I can't give specifics," she said. "It feels like this secret surprise we can't wait to show everyone, but everything has to be in place first. We're still finishing up a few things, getting it exactly where we want it before we release it to the world."

The sisters just launched social media pages for Wellso this week. You can follow their new venture on Twitter at @wellso or on Facebook, at [facebook.com/wellso](https://www.facebook.com/wellso).

Nicole and Simone haven't done a ton of performances since moving to California – "We've been in our writing cave for the past two years, but we're almost ready to emerge," Nicole said – but they did perform last year on the Vans Warped Tour. The Oliva sisters were no strangers to the Vans Warped Tour, as Tip the Van performed nationally on the Warped Tour in 2005 and 2006, and again in 2009, when the band opened for one of its biggest influences, Reel Big Fish.

Being part of last year's Warped Tour also brought Nicole and Simone to the Fuse cable channel's series *Warped Roadies*. The show recently wrapped its first season, which can be downloaded on iTunes.

Nicole was understandably pretty excited to be a part of *Warped Roadies* – and was also pretty thrilled that her parents have been following in her and Simone's footsteps with The Drawbridge Band.

"We are so proud of them!" Nicole said. "Both my parents have great voices, and being married for 30 years helps the chemistry needed for live performances. For me, it's like being a parent to my parents, watching them grow into the powerhouse band they've become."

Having released multiple albums, gone on national tours, and played with bands ranging from Less Than Jake to Gym Class Heroes, Nicole and Simone know a thing or two about the music industry – tips they've been more than happy to share with their parents.

"It's the business side of the industry that throws off lots of bands, so I get to give them advice about booking, and how to handle guarantees, promoters, etc.," she said.

Nicole added, "The experience has helped us bond as adults and friends, and it's given my parents this whole new drive and excitement in their lives."

Nicole also offered up some advice for any area musician thinking of making the move to a major city to try to break out.

"If you're planning a big move to anywhere, it's best to have some prospects in sight for when you get there, and lots of money saved up," she said. "Some people think that they'll get out to the city and make it right away, and for some people that happens."

But, she added, "it usually takes a lot of hard work and time to make a name for yourself and become successful. Be prepared for anything – good or bad."

Nicole also said it "doesn't hurt to come through town on tour a few times before you relocate permanently. That way you can make some friends, feel out the vibe of the place, and see if it's really for you."

So, it sounds like Nicole and Simone are doing well out in California, and that's great to hear. Meanwhile, if you want to check out their parents' music, The Drawbridge Band plays at Angelico's in East Hampton tomorrow, April 13, and is also doing that aforementioned show at Trinity in Portland next Saturday.

## Colchester Police News

4/1: Colchester Police said a person that resides on Pinebrook Road reported that a STIHL Chainsaw Model MS270 was stolen from his/her residence sometime between 3/30 and 4/1. The case is currently being investigated by Colchester Police.

4/3: Colchester Police said Erik Lafountain, 31, of 181 Camp St., Meriden, was charged with second-degree failure to appear.

4/5: Colchester Police said Scott Kindelan, 45, of 296 Windham Ave., was charged with DUI, failure to drive in the proper lane on a multiple lane highway, failure to stop on right for an emergency vehicle and possession of narcotics.

## Hebron Police News

4/2: State Police said a burglary was reported at a residence on Hoadly Road between 8:45 a.m.-6 p.m. Police said approximately \$20,000 worth of jewelry was reported stolen from the home. Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to contact Trooper Dawn Pagan at 860-537-7500.

4/3: State Police said Nella Stelzner, 58, whose address was listed by police as a P.O. box, but phone records listed as 297 Skinner Ln., was traveling north on Pendleton Drive and left the roadway, striking a utility pole and snap-

ping it at its base. Stelzner was transported to Marlborough Clinic for evaluation by the Hebron Fire Department. Police said Stelzner was issued a written warning for a restricted turn.

4/6: State Police said Arthur Bruce, 35, of 324 Boswell Ave., Apt. 3, Norwich, turned himself in on three outstanding warrants for violation of probation.

4/7: At approximately 9:30 a.m. Colchester Police responded to a residence on Prospect Street in regards to a criminal mischief incident to a motor vehicle. The rear window of the vehicle appeared to be shot twice by a BB or pellet gun. Anyone with information about this incident is asked to contact Officer Jonathan Goss at 860-537-7555 ext. 4083.

## Andover Police News

4/5: State Police said Alex Flowers, 30, of 23 Hebron St., Hartford, was charged with DWI and failure to drive right.

4/5: State Police said a residence on Ryan Road was broken into during the evening hours and five firearms and ammunition were reported stolen in addition to \$10,000 worth of jewelry and NASCAR signed collector's cards in acrylic plastic cases. Anyone with information is asked to contact Trooper Dawn Pagan at 860-537-7500.

## Marlborough Police News

4/3: State Police said Samantha Nappi, 19, of 141 South Borough Rd., Southington, was charged with DWI, speeding and unsafe backing.

4/4: State Police said Adrienne Hodges, 33, of 67 Harold St., Hartford, was charged with second-degree failure to appear.

## Portland Police News

3/31: Timothy Trotier, 33, of 9 North Fairfield St., Manchester, was charged with sixth-degree larceny, Portland Police said.

4/2: A 17-year-old male was given an infraction for possession of less than four ounces of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia, police said.

4/7: Abraham Vasquez, 21, of 107 Meetinghouse Ln., Middletown, was charged with second-degree failure to appear, police said.

4/8: A 17-year-old male was arrested for disorderly conduct and second-degree criminal mischief, police said.

## East Hampton Police News

3/22: Sara Kammerman, 30, of 42 Bissell St., East Hartford, was arrested for criminal attempt to commit sixth-degree larceny, East Hampton Police said.

3/27: Ashley Kristen Zurowski, 26, of 9 Curry Ln., was arrested for second-degree larceny, police said.

3/28: Robert Michael Sweikert, 45, of 283 Jagger Ln., Hebron, was arrested for violating probation, police said.

4/2: Russell J. Bonaccorso, Jr., of 27 N. Maple St., was issued a summons for traveling unreasonably fast and operating an unregistered and uninsured motor vehicle, police said.



# Obituaries

## East Hampton

### Galen Gordon Tyler

Galen Gordon Tyler, 66, of East Hampton, beloved husband of Cheryl (Rand) Tyler, died Wednesday, April 3, at Middlesex Hospital Hospice after a two year battle with cancer. Born May 21, 1946 in Lubec, Maine, he was the son of the late John and Hazel (Parker) Tyler. Galen had lived in East Hampton for the past 37 years. He was a past member of the East Hampton Jaycees.

Besides his wife Cheryl, he is survived by his son Adam Tyler and his wife Jennifer of Arlington, Mass.; his daughter, Amy Ordonez and her husband Alex of East Hampton; a brother, John Tyler and his wife Patricia of Lubec, Maine; and his three precious grandchildren, Cormac, Quincy and Harper.

Hailing from the small town of Lubec, Maine, Galen started his 43-year career at Pratt & Whitney as a sheet metal apprentice. Through hard work and determination, he rose to become a senior jet engine engineer. Early in his career, he met the love of his life, Cheryl. They married in 1969, and had a beautiful and loving marriage. In 1973, they had their first child, Amy, and three years later, their son, Adam.

Galen was immensely proud of being a husband and father, and provided a wonderful life for his family. He was a role model to his children, and many of their friends, and was a caring and dedicated husband. He was also a proud Papa to his three grandchildren. Throughout his life, Galen was a master storyteller. At gatherings he loved to entertain family and friends with tales of his childhood growing up in Maine. He will be missed dearly by his family and friends.

Friends called Saturday, April 6, at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton. Funeral services and burial will be in Lubec, Maine, at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers the family would like to ask that donations be made in Galen's name to East Hampton High School, care of John Fidler, for the purchase of athletic equipment.

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

## Colchester

### Alfreda Arvai

Alfreda Arvai (Wisk) of Colchester passed away peacefully Good Friday, March 29.

She was born in 1922 and raised in New Britain, moving to Newington to raise her family. Upon retiring, she and her husband moved to Colchester to their lake property and eventually moved to Moodus to live with their daughter and son-in-law for the last years of her life.

She passed at home with her husband of 71 years, Paul S. Arvai Jr., at her side. She leaves behind her four children and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

She was laid to rest at Rose Hill Cemetery, Rocky Hill in a private ceremony.

Thank you to Middletown Hospice for their gentle care and the many, many people who were kind and caring during this difficult time.

## Portland

### Grace E. Broberg

Grace E. Broberg, 92, of Portland, died Thursday, April 4, at Middlesex Hospice. She was predeceased by her beloved husband of 46 years, Vernard O. Broberg, in 1988.

Grace was born on Nov. 4, 1920 in Brooklyn, N.Y., to Jens and Jenny (Sorensen) Jensen. She was employed by United Technologies in the Public Relations Department in Hartford, retiring in 1980. Grace was a member of the Zion Lutheran Church in Portland for 65 years and volunteered there any time she was needed, especially in researching church records to help people find information on their family heritage.

Grace is survived by her nephew, Peter Gilheany and his wife Joyce of California.

She will be missed by her many friends and Vern's cousins, who she often joined for a family breakfast at the Main Street Diner.

She was predeceased by her sister, Doris Scovell and nephew Thomas Gilheany.

The family expresses its gratitude to the people at Portland Care and Rehab for the loving care that was given to Grace while she made her home there.

Relatives and friends called Tuesday, April 9, at Zion Lutheran Church, 183 William St., Portland. Her funeral service began that afternoon, with the Rev. James Reemts officiating. Burial followed in the Swedish Cemetery, Portland.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Mrs. Broberg's memory can be made to the Zion Lutheran Church.

Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, has been entrusted with her arrangements. To send an online expression of sympathy, visit [portlandmemorialfh.net](http://portlandmemorialfh.net).

## East Hampton

### William M. Blodgett Jr.

William M. Blodgett Jr., 89, of East Hampton, died Thursday, April 4, at Middlesex Hospital.

Born June 4, 1923, in Racine, Wis., to William M. Blodgett and Adelaide (Docter) Blodgett and raised in Mayville, Wis., Bill loved all things Wisconsin, including the Green Bay Packers, but he came to love New England too.

He is survived by his beloved wife of 66 years, Margaret Hetzel "Margie" Blodgett of East Hampton – until the end, they called each other "OAO" (one and only). They had many adventures together and lived in Wisconsin, Montana, New York and Illinois before settling in Connecticut to raise a family. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a degree in food science and worked in the canning industry, later working for many years in sales for the printing industry (including 25 years at Waverly Printing in Portland).

A World War II Army veteran, he was stationed at Avon Old Farms Convalescent Hospital where he worked as a rehabilitation instructor with blinded soldiers. This is where he met Margaret, who was playing piano and singing with a group entertaining the troops.

Bill, a history buff who loved to read and was known for his dry wit, will be missed by his family and friends for his gentle manner and intelligent observations.

Bill is predeceased by his beloved son, William M. Blodgett III.

He is survived by his daughter, Margaret Melinda "Mindy" Blodgett and her husband James Turner and his granddaughter, Margaret Adelaide "Addie" Turner of Hopkinton, Mass., and his sister, Jayne (Blodgett) Murray of Mayville, Wis. He is survived by many beloved nieces and nephews: Jayne Murray; Olivia Murray and James Murray and Susan; Joan (Rau) Ohanessian and Edward; Marye (Rau) Ruimerman; Fred Rau and Pamela; Andrea (Hetzel) Fratarangelo and Paul; Leslie (Hetzel) O'Connor and Charles; Jack Hetzel and Laurie; David Hetzel and Constance; Anne (Hetzel) Meyers; Michael Hetzel; Gail (Hetzel) Stone; Carla (Hetzel) Cooper and Mark Hetzel and Denise.

The family expresses its gratitude to the people at Portland Care and Rehab for the loving care that was given to Bill while he made his home there.

Relatives and friends attended his Mass of Christian Burial Wednesday, April 10, directly at St. Patrick Church, 47 West High St. (Route 66) East Hampton. Burial will be later at the family's convenience.

In lieu of flowers, you are welcome to make donations in Bill's memory to St. Patrick Church or to Xavier High School in Middletown, via [xavierhighschool.org/s/952/start.aspx](http://xavierhighschool.org/s/952/start.aspx).

The Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, has been entrusted with his arrangements. To send an online expression of sympathy, visit [portlandmemorialfh.net](http://portlandmemorialfh.net).

## Middle Haddam

### Robert Earl Dewar Jr.

Robert Earl Dewar Jr., PhD, 63, of Middle Haddam, beloved husband of Alison Richard, died Monday, April 8, at his home. Born July 4, 1949 in Birmingham, Mich., he was the son of the late Robert E. and Nancy J. (Miller) Dewar and had lived in Middle Haddam for 37 years.

Robert was a professor of anthropology at the University of Connecticut at Storrs. He was a member of Christ Episcopal Church in Middle Haddam.

Besides his wife, he is survived by two daughters, Bessie Dewar and her husband Alex Welsh of Jamaica Plain, Mass., Charlotte Dewar and her fiancé Ed Lowther of London, England; a brother, John Dewar; a sister, Jane Dewar; and his granddaughter, Violet Welsh.

He was predeceased by his son, Gavin R. Dewar, in 1987.

Funeral services will be held today, April 12, at noon in the Christ Episcopal Church in Middle Haddam. Burial will be private at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers memorial donations may be made to St. Vincent DePaul 618 Main St. Middletown, CT 06457.

The Spencer Funeral Home has care of arrangements. To leave online condolences, visit [spencerfuneralhomeinc.com](http://spencerfuneralhomeinc.com).

## East Hampton

### Melvin Clay Hobson Jr.

Dr. Melvin Clay Hobson, Jr. Ph.D., 86, of Hyannis, Mass., and formerly of South Windsor and East Hampton, widower of the late Patricia Ann (Gallagher) Hobson, with whom he shared 50 wonderful years of marriage, passed away Sunday morning, April 7, at the Mayflower Rehabilitation Center in Yarmouth, Mass. Born Aug. 7, 1926, in Ft. Myers, FL, he was the son of the late Melvin and Gladys (Worthington) Hobson.

Dr. Hobson served proudly during World War II in China with the U.S. Marine Corps. He was a doctor of physical chemistry, receiving his master's of chemistry at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland and his doctorate in physical chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania. He was a research chemist as well as a professor of chemistry for many years. He was also an expert in the field of Mossbauer spectroscopy, publishing many articles and speaking about the subject at numerous conferences across the country and the world.

His hobbies included genealogy, gardening, photography and gourmet cooking as well as spending time with his daughters and grandchildren.

Survivors include three loving daughters, Lisa and Dean Senesac of Pittsboro, Ind., Kathleen and Robert Clay of Amston and Kimberly Hobson of Hoboken, N.J.; four wonderful grandchildren, Shannon Garrigus, Jordan Duff, and Jacqueline and Kevin Clay; and numerous extended family members and friends.

Funeral services will be held at 10 a.m. today, April 12, at the Wapping Community Church, 1790 Ellington Rd., South Windsor. The family will receive guests starting at 9:30 a.m. at the church. Interment with full military honors will follow in the Wapping Cemetery, South Windsor.

Care of arrangements has been entrusted to the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester.

## East Hampton

### Emil E. Reich

Emil E. Reich, 98, husband of the late Gladys (Wrinn) Reich, passed away peacefully on Monday, April 8, at the home of his son, Kevin, in East Hampton. Son of the late Emil Reich and Ida (Zielke) Reich, he was born in Bristol, on April 20, 1914 and resided in Bristol until two years ago when he moved to East Hampton.

He graduated in 1928 from Immanuel Lutheran School and with the Class of 1932 from Bristol High School. He married Gladys Lorraine Wrinn on June 29, 1946, at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Brooklyn, N.Y., by his brother-in-law, The Rev. Louis C. Meyer.

Emil was employed for many years by Pratt and Whitney as an experimental machinist, a job he was very proud of. He was also employed a number of years at Federal Machine and Tool in Forestville. He was a member of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Bristol and served as an usher for several years.

Having been married almost 35 years, he enjoyed his retirement years with his wife, traveling, shopping, vacationing on Cape Cod, reading, piano, guitar, art painting, woodworking and spending time with family and friends.

Emil leaves behind his children, Eric D. Reich and his wife, Beth, from Leominster, Mass., Kevin M. Reich, with whom he made his home these past two years, in East Hampton, Rebecca Reich Sammito and her husband, George, from Middletown, and Duane J. Reich of Bristol. He leaves behind his cherished and favorite grandson, Matthew, with whom he also resided, and his dog companion, Mischa, who was always at his side and at the time of death. He also leaves behind a sister, Ida Reich Meyer of Ridgewood, NJ and numerous nieces, nephews, their spouses and children.

In addition to his wife, Gladys, he was predeceased by a daughter-in-law, Joanne Andershonis Reich; and a brother, Erhard E. Reich.

Funeral services were held Thursday, April 11, at Immanuel Lutheran Church, 154 Meadow St., Bristol, with the Rev. Kevin Karner, pastor, officiating. Burial will be at the convenience of the family in West Cemetery, Bristol. Calling hours took place at Immanuel Lutheran Church Wednesday, April 10. Funk Funeral Home, 35 Bellevue Ave., Bristol, is in charge of arrangements.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Immanuel Lutheran Church, 154 Meadow St., Bristol, CT 06010.

The family would like to thank the staff at Chestelm Senior Daycare in Moodus for providing Dad with friendship and daily life activities. Special thanks also to Middlesex Hospital Hospice for their compassionate care showed these past few weeks.

## East Hampton

### Hubert H. Benjamin

Hubert H. Benjamin, 81, of East Hampton, died peacefully Friday, April 5, at his home. Born Sept. 15, 1931, in Champlain, N.Y., he was the son of the late Halsey and Eva (Jarvis) Benjamin.

He moved to East Hampton in 1966 and had worked as a welder for the J.T. Slocum Company in South Glastonbury. He proudly served his country in the US Navy aboard the USS Muliphen from 1952-56. He was awarded the National Defense Medal and the Good Conduct Medal. He then was in the Reserves from 1956-60. He was an avid gardener and he loved the Red Sox and UConn Huskies.

He is survived by his wife Shirley (Therrien) Benjamin; three sons, Robert Benjamin and his wife Dawn of East Hampton, Raymond Benjamin of Marlborough, David Benjamin of East Hampton; stepson, Gary Messier of East Hampton; seven brothers; five sisters; his six beloved grandchildren, Jennifer Swan, Crystal Evans, Melissa Swan, Tina Hill, David Benjamin, Robert Benjamin Jr.; and six great-grandchildren.

He was predeceased by his daughter, Paula Hiettman.

Friends may call at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, on Saturday, April 13, from 11 a.m.-1 p.m., followed by a funeral service at 1 p.m. Burial will be private, at the convenience of the family.

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

## Middle Haddam

### Elva Creeger

Elva (Stearns) Creeger, of Middle Haddam, passed away peacefully Friday, March 29, at the Cobalt Lodge Health Care Center. Born to Carl (long-serving Wesleyan University astronomy professor) and Mildred (Parkhurst) Stearns in 1928 in Middletown, she grew up on the edge of the Wesleyan campus in homes on Lawn and Home Avenues.

From Middletown High School, she pursued her education at Vassar College (B.A. in mathematics), and Wesleyan (A.B. in physics and Ph.D. in biophysics) earning Phi Beta Kappa, Sigma Xi distinctions and Louise Hart Van Loon and NIH graduate and postdoctoral fellowships. Dr. Creeger's original research included such diverse topics as mathematical modeling of piezoelectricity in crystals, cell membrane permeability, and cancer research.

Her career included teaching and research posts at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine, the Veteran's Affairs Medical Center in Newington, and the Max Plank Gesellschaft in Berlin, Germany, where she worked with a team quantifying the DNA molecule. After "retiring," she became a policy editor for Hartford Insurance firms.

A certified water safety unstructor for many years, she was an avid, lifelong swimmer. Dr. Creeger was also an enthusiastic blood donor to the American Red Cross.

Devoted spouse of George Creeger for 62 years, loving mother of three, fond grandmother, impeccable home-maker, and master of her universe, she is survived by her husband, her sister, Doris Swain and husband, James Swain, her daughter, Catherine Creeger and son, Christopher Creeger and his wife, Shelley Hadfield, and grandchildren, Ethan and Joshua Creeger.

She was predeceased by her son, Carl, and brother, Robert, in 2009.

She will be dearly missed.

Services are being planned and will take place at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in her name to The American Cancer Society, 825 Brook St., I-91 Tech Ctr., Rocky Hill, CT 06067. Doolittle Funeral Home, 14 Old Church St., Middletown, is handling the arrangements and messages of condolence may be sent to the family at [doolittlefuneralservice.com](http://doolittlefuneralservice.com).

## East Hampton

### Janet K. Davidson

Janet K. Davidson, 51, of East Hampton, formerly of West Haven and Plantation, Fla., passed away Friday, April 5, at the home of her sister in Shelton, after a courageous battle with cancer.

She was born July 26, 1961, daughter of the late Harold and Dorothy Anderson Davidson. She was a manager for several Wawa food stores in Connecticut for over 18 years. For the past five years she was a customer service rep for American Express.

She is survived by one child, Brian "Sarah" Hyland of Anchorage, Alaska, her siblings, Harold "Butch" Davidson of East Hampton, Sharon Quick of Lake Elsinore, Calif., David Davidson of West Haven, Darla Miceli of Shelton and Dolly Shashaty of Coral Springs, Fla.; her granddaughter, Isabelle Hyland; and several nieces and nephews.

Family and friends called at Keenan Funeral Home, 238 Elm St., West Haven, Wednesday, April 10. Burial will be private.

Those wishing to send condolences online may do so at [keenanfuneralhome.com](http://keenanfuneralhome.com).

## Marlborough

### Josephine Chesky

Josephine (Leja) Chesky, 90, formerly of Wethersfield, passed away with her family by her side, Saturday, April 6, at Marlborough Health Care Center. She was born Nov. 19, 1922, in Edwardsville, Pa., daughter of Anthony and Mary (Zapalski) Leja.

She was predeceased by her daughter, Helen Sternberg-Powidzki; her sister, Helen; brothers, Stanley and Edward; brother-in-law, Edward Chesky; and her dearly beloved husband, Alfred, to whom she was married for 57 wonderful years.

She enjoyed cooking holiday dinner for her family. She enjoyed crocheting Afghans, which she made for family and friends, doing puzzles, bingo, ceramics and she was an avid bowler and cheered the Red Sox, win or lose.

Prior to her retirement she worked for Chandler Evans, as a clerk, in West Hartford, and also Colt Firearms. She retired in Hartford moving to Wethersfield where she lived for 58 years.

She leaves her beloved sons, Michael Chesky and his wife Barbara, Alfred Chesky and his wife Darlene all of Marlborough; grandchildren, Christopher Sternberg-Powidzki and his wife Sharon of Seattle, Wash., Cathy Sternberg-Powidzki of Providence, R.I., Allison Saltzman and her husband Todd of W.Va., Sgt. 1st Class Amy Hall and her husband Lt. Matthew Hall of Lacey, Wash., Michael Chesky Jr. and Steven Chesky, both of Marlborough, Jenifer Chesky of Bristol; great-grandchildren, Hailee, Abby and Brady Saltzman, Anthony Sternberg-Powidzki; her son-in-law, Martin.

Never say goodbye, only so long.

The funeral was Thursday, April 11, from The Dillon-Baxter Funeral Home, 1276 Berlin Tpke., Wethersfield, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial in Sacred Heart Church, 56 Hartford Ave., Wethersfield, CT 06109. Burial will be in the Village Cemetery. Visiting hours were Thursday, April 10, prior to the funeral, at the funeral home.

Her family wishes to thank the caregivers at Marlborough Health Care Center, 85 Stage Harbor Rd., Marlborough, CT 06447, and also her dear friends in Wethersfield, Elaine Noonan, Paula Houde and Jane and Steve Holtz.

Donations can be made to Sacred Heart Church or Marlborough Health Care.

To share a memory with the family, visit [dillonbaxter.com](http://dillonbaxter.com).

## Colchester

### David L. Tomm

David L. Tomm, 72, of Rockland, Maine, formerly of Colchester, passed away Thursday, April 4, after a brief battle with pancreatic cancer.

Born in Manchester Aug. 20, 1940, he was the eldest son of Clarence S. Tomm and Helen (Zapadka) Tomm. He graduated from Manchester High School in 1958. He also served two years in the United States Coast Guard.

Dave relocated to Colchester in 1967, and several years later, was elected first selectman. He served from 1971-73. He was active on various town committees as well. He owned The Lumber Shed, a lumber and building materials business in Colchester from 1974-82. He then formed his own advertising and sales consultancy, DLT Design, which was active through the 80s and 90s.

In 2000, Dave moved to Rockland, Maine. Two years later, he started the Seasoned Workforce, an entity that worked in both the public and private sectors to raise awareness of the issues surrounding workers over the age of 50 re-entering the workforce. He advocated for these people with major companies throughout Maine, and conducted forums to help them brush up on their skills and to network with potential employers. Many older workers in Maine have successfully found jobs through Dave's efforts.

In his spare time, Dave loved to build furniture, do woodcarving, and spend time with his gardens and plants.

He is survived by his son, David M. Tomm and his wife Michelle of Eagleville, Pa.; his daughter, Katherine (Tomm) Doyle and her husband Paul of Colchester; his two beloved grandsons, Brandon Tomm and Patrick Doyle; his brother Douglas Tomm and his wife Maryann of Plympton, Mass., and several cousins.

An informal memorial service was held Sunday, April 7, at his home, attended by family and numerous friends and neighbors.

Donations may be made to the Kno-Wal-Lin Hospice, 170 Pleasant St., Rockland, ME 04841. Write "Pen Bay Foundation" on the memo line. They will be used to help build a new Hospice facility on the campus of the Pen Bay Medical Center in Rockport.

Arrangements are in the care of Burpee, Carpenter & Hutchins Funeral Home, 110 Limerock St., Rockland, Maine. To share stories and memories about Dave with the Tomm family, visit his Book of Memories at [bchfh.com](http://bchfh.com).

## Colchester

### William Thomas Williams

William Thomas Williams, "Billy," 70, of Orange and formerly of Hartford and Colchester, widower of the late Lorraine (Cooper) Williams, passed away Wednesday, April 10, at the Marlborough Health Care Center. Born Oct. 4, 1942 in Hartford, he was a son of the late Richard and Ruth (Cooper) Williams.

Mr. Williams worked in construction for many years before his retirement, owning and operating Williams & Sons, "paving" the way for his family and friends.

A sharp-dressed man who loved dancing and gaming, he will be remembered most fondly for his calmness and fairness, often acting as peacemaker. May he now rest in peace.

He is survived by four children and their spouses, June and Justin Potter of Westbrook, William and Charlotte Williams of Buffalo, N.Y., Andrew and Marie Williams of Quaker Hill and Richard and Lisa Williams of Columbia; 19 grandchildren; 24 great-grandchildren and one expected; one great-great grandchild expected; and numerous extended family members and friends.

In addition to his parents and wife of 53 years, he was predeceased by two sons, Leonard and Mark.

Friends may call Saturday, April 13, starting at 1 p.m., at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A chapel service will be observed at 3 p.m. Burial will be private in the Hillside Cemetery, East Hartford.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to the American Cancer Society, P.O. Box 22718, Oklahoma City, OK 73123-1718.

## Colchester

### Frank J. Len

Frank J. Len, 91, of Rockledge, Fla., and Colchester, passed away Friday, April 5. He lived in Connecticut for most of his life where he and his wife of 63 years, Jean (Kuchy) Len, owned and operated "Len's General Store" at Salem four corners, in Salem for 31 years.

He leaves behind his wife, Jean, his sister Helen (Len) Koziel and her husband, Joe, a brother Joseph and his wife Evelyn, sister-in-law Verna Len, loving nieces, nephews, grandnieces, great-grandnephews and a wide circle of friends and neighbors.

Frank was predeceased by his parents, Ignacy and Victoria (Jara) Len, sisters Tina Lesnewsy, Sophie Santore, and a brother, Stanley Len.

Frank and his wife spent their retirement years between Colchester and Rockledge, Fla. Frank was an Army veteran; he was very proud of his vegetable gardens at his Connecticut and Florida homes. He was a regular at most of the area flea markets anxious to bargain for treasures he could offer at his antique shop in Salem.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, April 13, starting at 10 a.m., at the Belmont-Sabrowski Funeral Home, 144 South Main St., Colchester, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial at St. Andrews Church interment will follow in St. Joseph cemetery will full military honors. Visitation will be held today, April 12, from 5-7 p.m., at the funeral home.