

RIVEREAST News Bulletin

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Presidents Past and Present...The Andover Friends of the Library held its annual goods and services auction April 26. Between bidding, the 50/50 raffle, pizza, beverage and bake sale tables, and quilt raffle ticket sales, the event raised over \$5,000 for the library. Pictured here are the group's current and past presidents, respectively, Janice Bazzani (left) and Dianne Grenier, at the 50/50 raffle table.

Hebron Selects New Superintendent

by Geeta Schrayter

Last week, the Hebron Board of Education announced it has selected a new superintendent of schools. With the help of a search consultant from Cooperative Educational Services, a nationwide search for the new superintendent was conducted. However, at the end of it all, the new superintendent, hails, not from some far-off state, but neighboring Colchester.

Jeff Newton, who has lived in Colchester with his family for 13 years and is the current director of special services for Westbrook Public Schools, said this week he was "absolutely excited" about the opportunity.

"Everything that I've heard and know about Hebron is that it's a wonderful place with wonderful people," he said. "I've been through the town a number of times, I've accessed some of the stores and businesses, my girls have gone to the gymnastics studio in town – and I look forward to increasing that."

Newton, who was present with his wife and three daughters at the special Board of Education meeting where he was appointed on April 25, has 13 years of experience as an educator. He received a bachelor's degree in psychology at Keene State College in New Hampshire, a master's degree in special education at Southern Connecticut State University and his sixth-year intermediate administrator certificate at Sacred Heart University. In July, he'll receive his superintendent certificate at the University

of Connecticut.

Newton worked as a special education teacher for four years, after which he served as assistant principal and then principal at the Dr. Charles E. Murphy School in Oakdale. He began working in Westbrook in 2011. He received the Outstanding First-Year Principal award from the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) in 2006 as well as Exemplary School Climate Recognition from CAS in 2009.

Newton said his previous experience will aid him as he becomes Hebron's superintendent.

"I was an elementary school principal for seven years then the director of special services currently," he said. "I have quite a bit of central office experience which I think will really help my transition from one small district to another."

Newton furthered being an elementary school principal meant he had an understanding of the needs in a pre-kindergarten through grade six school district, while his background in special education meant he'd be able to make sure the appropriate services are offered for students who are identified with special needs.

Hebron Board of Education Chairwoman Kathy Shea furthered that.

"Jeffrey's experiences as a special education teacher, assistant principal and principal in an elementary school, as well as his work as a director of special services, will bring our district a well-rounded educational leader with a

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East Hampton Welcomes New Police Chief

by Joshua Anusewicz

Thursday morning marked a new chapter in the history of East Hampton, as the town officially swore in its newest police chief, former Connecticut State Police officer Sean Cox.

"This is an exciting day," trumpeted Town Manager Michael Maniscalco.

Cox was chosen from a field of 52 applicants that were viewed by various police agencies over the past four months. After a handful of candidates were chosen by the agencies, a small committee whittled the possible candidates down to two, with Maniscalco eventually choosing Cox, whose "level of skill" stood out from the rest of the pack, the town manager said.

Maniscalco said that Cox was put through a rigorous hiring process, which included an "extensive" background check, physical and psychological evaluations, and even a polygraph test. "Everything in that report was positive," the town manager said. "There were no negatives, no concerns. He's a great guy and hard worker."

Cox, a resident of Mansfield, is a graduate of Eastern Connecticut State University and a 1992 graduate of the Connecticut State Police

Academy. Out of the academy, Cox served in the state police's Troop K barracks in Colchester, eventually moving on to become the resident state trooper in Mansfield and Tolland. Cox has also served as a sergeant in the Eastern District Major Crime Squad and a master sergeant in the Professional Standards and Internal Affairs Unit.

Prior to his retirement from the state police this week, Cox served as the commanding officer of Gov. Dannel Malloy's security detail.

"I'm excited to start this challenge," Cox said Thursday to a crowd of residents and town officials. Cox will begin with a salary of \$90,000, which will be raised to \$100,000 after a six-month probationary period.

Though he'd only been on the job for a couple of hours – he started at 4:30 a.m. on Thursday – Cox said he was already working to get himself acclimated with the policies and procedures of the department, and had plans to meet with all of the department's officers personally on his first day. Cox added that, over the next few weeks, he planned to meet with the other public safety services in town, as well as other local agencies – schools, churches, the

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Former state police officer Sean Cox was sworn in Thursday morning as the newest police chief of East Hampton.

Mother's Day Section Inside



The Hebron Board of Education meeting last week voted to appoint Colchester resident Jeffrey Newton as the new schools superintendent, beginning July 1. Newton was present at the meeting with his family, and is shown here, holding his daughter Emerson. Beside him, left to right, are daughters Molly and Hailey and his wife Jennifer.

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comprehensive background of professional experiences to help us move the Hebron Public Schools into its next era," Shea said in a press release.

Along with his experience, Newton said he thought his personality made him qualified for the position.

"I think my personality and openness and my open-door policy [qualify me]," he said. "I'll be caring for a community and staff that I know are hard workers, and we're going to work on a collaborative effort to make sure we continue to move Hebron forward in the right direction."

At the special meeting, the Board of Education went into an executive session prior to making a motion on Newton's candidacy. During that time, Newton could already be found mingling and chatting with the staff and administration present as though they already knew each other.

When the board returned, the motion to appoint Newton passed 6-1, with Dominic Marino against.

Marino said this week he didn't mean any disrespect to Newton, and said he seemed like an "upright person," but he said he felt acting Superintendent of Schools Kathy Veronesi had "earned the right to be superintendent and had the approval of the constituents and the students."

However, the board didn't have the option to vote for Veronesi. While she originally applied for the position, she later dropped out. To that regard, Shea wanted to make it clear this week that "the identity of all the candidates was confidential" and the Board of Education never made an announcement as to the names of those who had applied. Veronesi, she said, had revealed to staff that she had applied, and then withdrew.

"We couldn't vote on Kathy," Shea said. "She was not a candidate."

Veronesi did not return a call this week to explain her decision to withdraw.

As to whether things would have turned out differently had Veronesi stayed in, "I wish I knew," said Shea.

"There's no way to predict what would have

happened," Shea said. But she added she was "very happy, very pleased" with the selection of Newton.

"It was a very, I think, exhaustive process for the staff and the community and the board. It was very thorough," she stated. "We're just quite pleased."

And at the meeting, Veronesi expressed her pleasure as well.

"On July 1, you will become one of the luckiest superintendents in Connecticut," she said. "I want you to know I am pleased and very proud of you."

Veronesi said Newton would be "surrounded by children who will amaze you by their goodness" and will "lead with a team of administrators who will make you better simply by being in their company."

"With all of them you will change the world for the better, in every moment of every day."

Veronesi then presented Newton with a number of "tokens" to help him as he starts in his new position. These included a small toy turtle, to remind him "fast isn't always better;" a "no" button, in case he's ever at a loss for words; a roll of caution tape, so he remembers to take time out for himself (which she humorously said she didn't realize has not only "caution" but "hot and glamorous" written along it); and, a decoder ring.

"There are so many ways to find an answer," she smiled, but "when all else fails, try the secret decoder ring."

In a symbolic moment Veronesi, who used to run track in school, then handed Newton a baton and wished him "many, many steady laps in Hebron."

Now that he has the baton, Newton said he's looking forward to getting to know the staff, the students, the town and "all of our constituents and the families and really joining the Hebron family itself."

"I'm very excited," he added.

Newton will begin as the Hebron schools superintendent on July 1. He accepted a three-year contract with a base salary of \$136,400 and a benefits package which the release said was "commensurate with other administrators serving in the Hebron school system."



Town Manager Michael Maniscalco, left, and Town Council Chairwoman Sue Weintraub, right, were on hand Thursday to welcome Sean Cox, the town's newest police chief. Cox will replace the recently retired Matthew Reimondo, who served in the police department for nearly 30 years.

Police Chief cont. from Front Page

senior center – to introduce himself to the members of the community.

Highlighting what he hoped to do in his new position, Cox said that one of his biggest concerns was customer service, making sure that residents felt safe and that the police department could be used as an approachable resource to the townspeople.

"I always ask, 'What if this was one of your family members?'" Cox explained. He added that building a relationship with the community would "move us forward in a positive direction."

Cox's ideas were a breath of fresh air to many, particularly those who have kept a close eye on the continued issues surrounding the police department over the past two years. It was fitting that Thursday's swearing-in took place in the Town Hall meeting room, a location that has seen its fair share of controversy play out in recent years between elected officials, residents, members of the police department and, at the center of it all, former Police Chief Matthew Reimondo.

At this point, the details of the controversies are well-known, with Reimondo being laid off by former Town Manager Jeff O'Keefe, O'Keefe's subsequent resignation and Reimondo's eventual reinstatement by the town's residents. But the controversy continued to bubble, with accusations, suspensions of officers, no-confidence votes, and lawsuits that sullied the town's reputation and produced no clear winner on either side of the aisle.

Even Thursday's meeting wasn't completely free of mentions of the department's episodes. Town Council Chairwoman Sue Weintraub pub-

licly thanked Reimondo, who referred to himself as a "civilian" while sitting in attendance, for serving with "courage and honor" through the tumultuous times.

"It's been quite a ride," said Weintraub. "Police chiefs, government officials and media across the state all agree that the actions taken by the former administration were unprecedented." She continued, "In the entire country, you are probably the only police chief that was elected by the people in a landslide victory."

But Thursday's meeting didn't have the feeling of meetings past. Even the meeting room, the site of numerous controversial moments, felt differently, with the shades drawn and the windows open, letting bright sunlight and fresh spring air flow in.

Reimondo, who served the town for nearly 30 years, stated after the ceremony that the town "found an excellent individual" to lead the department and "bring integrity and professionalism back to this department."

He added that bringing in new blood would hopefully put the past where it belongs – in the past.

"I hope the chapter of the last three years is closed," Reimondo said. "You know East Hampton, they'll rally around him. This town needed a new chief to move this department forward the right way."

And Cox looks ready to do just that. After speaking with a handful of individuals for a few moments, Cox exited the meeting room with a brief statement – "Let's get to work" – and was off to continue his first day in his new post.

RHAM Referendum Next Week on \$25.94 Million Budget

by Geeta Schrayter

On Tuesday, May 7, the three towns in Region 8 – Andover, Hebron and Marlborough – will hold their annual budget referendum to decide whether the proposed \$25.94 million RHAM budget for 2013-14 will pass.

The budget number is a 3.52 percent increase or \$873,936 over the current year's budget. That number includes budget drivers in the form of contracted negotiations, health insurance, magnet school tuition and transportation.

Under the budget, certified staff salaries would increase 1 percent plus step while non-certified staff salaries would climb 2 percent plus step and the administrators' salaries will increase 1.88 percent.

Health insurance is expected to climb \$324,672, or 13.43 percent, as a result of rising benefit costs, increased enrollment and changes to national health care.

Due to an increase in students who attend magnet schools, the amount for tuition is also slated to rise, up \$126,024 over the current year's \$338,448.

The district's bus contract was also extended by another year and increased one percent – a move that aligns the expiration date with that of the three towns in the district in hopes the entire group can then bid together and realize some savings.

Superintendent of Schools Bob Siminski has explained while these increases amount to \$1.09 million, the board is only looking for an \$882,382 increase due to some savings. For example, Siminski budgeted less money for heating oil and bus fuel and savings were realized due to a new electricity rate. There are also a \$165,440 decrease in special education tuition, a \$23,976 decrease in vocational tuition

and a \$10,310 decrease in board services.

About \$200,000 in the proposed budget has been earmarked for technology purchases. These include upgrades to the telephone system at the high school which was installed when the school was constructed as well as the 10-year old Internet data switches. Siminski said the upgrade to the switches is needed to ensure the Internet runs as efficiently as possible in preparation for the switch to online testing two years from now – this is also the reason money is included to lease purchase six laptop carts holding 24 laptops each. Other technology purchases include the replacement of 10 desktop computers for office personnel and money for three Apple laptops. As is typical, these items will be purchased utilizing the lease-to-purchase option, and will be paid for over five years.

The RHAM budget will be paid for by the

three towns in the district; the exact amount each town pays is determined by the number of students it sends to the middle and high schools. 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.

Voting on the budget will take place on Tuesday, May 7, from 6 a.m.-8 p.m. in all three towns. In Andover, voting will occur in the Town Hall Community Room, 17 School Road; in Hebron, Hebron Elementary School, 92 Church St; and in Marlborough, Marlborough Elementary School, 15 School Dr.

New Portland Business Getting Physical

by Joshua Anusewicz

Like a lot of people, Keith Arcari had a plan when he graduated college. He would earn his master's degree, obtain the proper training and hopefully, five years out, he would open his own physical therapy practice.

"But then I fell in love and had three kids," he said with a smile, showing he was more than happy to put his plans on hold to start a family.

Now, though, the time seemed right. On Monday, Arcari will open Symmetry Physical Therapy in Portland, located at 270 Main St., where he will put to good use the skills he's honed over the past 13 years in the field.

Arcari, a Marlborough resident, graduated from the University of Connecticut in 2000 –



Keith Arcari

he was the president of his class – then went on to earn his master's degree in physical therapy. In 2005, Arcari received his manual therapy certification from the Manual Therapy Institute, one of only a handful of American Physical Therapy Association-credentialed programs in the United States. Prior to opening Symmetry, Arcari has worked for Select Physical Therapy in New Britain.

A unique aspect of Arcari's work history is his experience with on-site physical therapy for manufacturing companies. He explained that some larger companies are now contracting physical therapists to regularly meet with employees to prevent or quickly treat injuries that are sustained on the job to keep insurance costs down and workers healthy.

When looking for a location for his business, Arcari said he was looking to find a place closer to home and that was in need of a physical therapy practice. With only a handful of practices in town, Portland fit the bill.

"I really like Portland," Arcari said, adding

that he wouldn't rule out moving to the town in the future if his business is a success.

With his business, Arcari said his focus will be on what he knows best. Arcari specializes in outpatient orthopedic services, particularly the neck and back pain. His experience has included treating a host of injuries and ailments, including work and sports injuries, stroke recovery and brain injuries. Arcari said he would treat any patients from five years old to senior citizens.

"I do just about anything. I don't want to pigeonhole myself," he furthered.

To start, Arcari will be the only physical therapist in the office, focusing primarily on one-on-one treatments. The sessions, Arcari said, would incorporate various manual therapy treatments, including joint mobilization and manipulation, soft-tissue manipulation, and an after-care program for additional treatments after the patient has recovered.

Arcari added that a unique aspect at Symmetry is the opportunity for one-on-one fitness

training, as well. The facility will include a separate fitness area where patients can work out, either to continue strengthening after an injury or completing your regular workout in a non-competitive environment.

"No meatheads," Arcari assured.

Arcari is active in fitness himself, regularly competing in triathlons around the state.

This week, Arcari was putting the finishing touches on the office, which will be run by only him and an office manager to start. He said he plans to expand and, hopefully, hire additional help to expand the business.

But, for now, Arcari is basking in the glow of a realized dream – having his own physical therapy practice. "It's about time," he said.

Symmetry Physical Therapy is located at 270 Main St., in the back entrance. Hours will be Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 8 a.m.-6 p.m.; Thursday, 8 a.m.-3 p.m.; and Thursday, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. All major insurance carriers are welcome. For more information, visit symmetryusa.net.

Chaconis Inducted into Portland Women's B-Ball Hall

by Joshua Anusewicz

Having reached virtually every milestone an individual in his position could attain, it didn't seem like there were any other ways Portland High School girls' basketball coach Nick Chaconis could be honored for his service to the sport. So when he found out he had been nominated for induction into the Connecticut Women's Basketball Hall of Fame, he admitted he was "speechless."

"It was fantastic," Chaconis said this week of the experience. "It was beyond words."

Chaconis, who is also a special education teacher at the school, was among seven individuals inducted last Wednesday, April 24, at a ceremony in Hamden, which included former high school and college players and coaches, including University of Connecticut women's



Nick Chaconis

basketball coach Geno Auriemma and his assistant coach Chris Dailey.

But the other inductees, including perhaps the decorated Auriemma, likely take a backseat to Chaconis in longevity and commitment to the game. Chaconis has served as Portland's coach for the past 39 years, racking up a record of 538-319. Under his tutelage, Portland teams have appeared in the state tournament 33 times, chalking up eight Shoreline Conference titles, 10 state tournament semi-final appearances, two state finals appearances and, the cherry on top, the 2011 Class S state championship.

Chaconis has also earned a number of personal accolades, as well. In 1985, Chaconis was named CIAC Girls' Basketball Coach of the Year. In both 2001 and 2005, Chaconis was a finalist for the National Girls' Basketball Coach of the Year. In 2004, he received the CIAC Basketball Merit Award; was inducted into the Portland High School Hall of Fame in 2005; and, in 2012, Chaconis received the Central Connecticut District Board's Sportsmanship Award.

It's hard to imagine someone staying in the same position for nearly four decades, particu-

larly a position of considerable stress and turnover. Asked what's kept him going for so long, Chaconis highlighted the 40 or so individuals that came to the induction ceremony last week to support him.

"It would be impossible to try and list everybody," Chaconis said of his supporters throughout the years. "You can't last in this job without help, and I've had a lot of help."

Chaconis said the support has come from every angle, including current and former players, coaches, school administrators, colleagues, friends and, most importantly, his family, all of which were part of his contingent at the induction.

With so many supporters, Chaconis said it was hard to choose who would be his honorary presenter at the ceremony – "I asked for 15; they said I could have two," he joked. Chaconis chose former Portland High boys' basketball coach Gene Reilly and Arnie Liscombe, one of his former assistants, to do the honors, but added that his current assistant and former player, Diane Coleman, was his "silent presenter" and was tough to choose against.

Chaconis called the entire induction ceremony "surreal," particularly being able to rub elbows with Auriemma, a legend in the women's game. He added that he joked with the UConn coach, telling Auriemma "he was in good company" because the two were inducted together and would be forever linked.

But even with the memorable individual accomplishment, Chaconis said his mind was where it has been since 1975: with those who have helped earned his accolades.

"Portland is special," he said, pointing out the heroes welcome his team received when they won the state title in 2011. "It's the only job I've ever had."

It's most likely the only job he ever will have in girls' basketball, as Chaconis said he plans to return for his 40th season next year. Working on "a year-by-year contract," Chaconis joked that he will continue to coach "as long as they still want me."

With years of success and personal and team honors – and with more sure to follow – don't be surprised if the Hall of Fame coach goes out on his own terms.

East Hampton Budget Referendum Set for Tuesday

by Joshua Anusewicz

Next Tuesday, East Hampton residents will get the opportunity to vote on the proposed budget for the 2013-14 fiscal year, which totals \$39.24 million.

The referendum will take place May 7, from 6 a.m.-8 p.m. at East Hampton High School, 15 N. Maple St. All residents and property owners of East Hampton are able to cast a vote for the budget.

The budget total represents an \$892,213, or 2.33 percent, increase from the current fiscal year. Of the budget total, \$27,530,863 would be for the Board of Education, \$9,734,919 would be for town operations, \$1,102,277 for debt service, and \$869,916 for fund transfers.

The town operations budget would represent a \$299,538, or 3.17 percent, increase from the current fiscal year, while the education budget would be an \$820,023, or 3.07 percent, increase.

The current year's budget, which was defeated at the first referendum, was approved by voters last June, 994-812. The budget totaled \$38,345,762, which was a \$581,471, or 1.54 percent, increase from the prior year.

According to Finance Director Jeff Jylkka, the proposed mill rate, if voters approved the budget as is, would be 26.63, a 0.66 mill increase from the current fiscal year. To explain the tax impact, Jylkka said that a property val-

ued at \$200,000 would pay \$5,326 in taxes for year.

This budget season has been marked by decreases to the Board of Education's proposed budget. Though this has become common practice in recent years, this year marked a considerable slash to the school board, which originally requested nearly a 6 percent increase to cover costs that include new technology for teacher evaluation and standardized testing, an additional section of all-day kindergarten, and new English and chorus teachers at the high school.

The school board initially knocked the increase down to 5.19 percent, but that figure was

decreased yet again by the Board of Finance, moving it down to a flat 4 percent. Last week, however, the Town Council opted to cut the increase once again down to 3.07 percent, which is a 1 percent increase in "real expenditures" from the current fiscal year.

The town operations budget has seen miniscule change since Town Manager Michael Maniscalco presented it last month, with the only change being a \$10,000 increase in funding for the Middle Haddam Public Library.

For more information and an in-depth breakdown of the budget, visit easthamptonct.org and click on the link on the homepage for the Town Council approved budget.

East Hampton Resident's Artwork in Show

Haddam Neck resident Carole Johnson will have her work on display at Prelude to Summer, an exhibit opening at Maple and Main Gallery in Chester on May 17. The exhibit will feature a wide range of works by 38 artists as well as a special show of paintings of rocks.

The opening for this show, the largest the gallery has undertaken in its almost three years, will be Friday, May 17, from 5-8 p.m., when many of the artists will be on hand and wine and light food will be served along with a May wine punch.

The Joslow Gallery on the lower floor of the gallery, will be devoted to paintings that render rocks and the interpretation of rocks.

Johnson, an "intuitive" artist, is a member of Maple and Main Gallery of Fine Art in Chester. In addition to showing her work at the gallery, Johnson is the Children's Art Camp instructor for 7- to 14-year-olds. Look for her on Fineartamerica.com or Facebook, or contact her at overview24-7@sbcglobal.net.

The show runs through mid-May.

Maple and Main Gallery, located at 1 Maple St., Chester, is open Wednesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Visit mapleandmain.com



"Maria Selling Fruit in Rio" by Haddam Neck resident Carole Johnson will be on display at an art exhibit opening at Maple and Main Gallery in Chester on May 17.

for more information, or call 860-526-6065.

Large Fire Destroys East Hampton Home

by Joshua Anusewicz

A large fire last Friday burned down a single-story home on Browning Drive, the East Hampton Fire Department announced this week.

According to a release from Jim Burke, the newly-appointed public information officer for the department, the fire occurred on Friday, April 26, just after 10 p.m. Burke stated that a neighbor smelled smoke and called 911, with the first units arriving on the scene at 10:06 p.m.

By the time crews arrived, Burke stated that the house was fully engulfed in flames. Firefighters worked quickly on the interior and exterior of the home, and a crew was also able to disconnect a large propane tank from the house.

The fire was quickly extinguished, Burke said, and crews remained until roughly 3 a.m.

Saturday to monitor the scene.

Burke said no injuries were reported – the lone occupant of the home was able to escape the blaze before firefighters arrived – and the house was deemed a "total loss." As of Wednesday, officials from East Hampton and the Connecticut State Fire Marshal's office are investigating the cause of the fire, which Burke said "appears to be accidental."

Burke and the department also praised the mutual aid from the nearby Marlborough and Colchester fire departments, which sent manpower and equipment to the blaze, and an employee of the local Citgo Food Bag, who provided coffee at his own expense to the firefighters that remained on the scene.

"It was a nice touch in the middle of the night and we thank him for his thoughtfulness," said Burke of the convenience store employee.

Mazzara Officially Out as Hebron BOE Finance Director

by Geeta Schrayter

After being on paid leave since January, the RHAM and Hebron school board's finance director, William Mazzara, has officially resigned, effective this past Wednesday, May 1.

Under a release agreement between Mazzara and RHAM, the regional school district will pay him around \$18,000 in unused vacation time and sick leave.

Mazzara, who had been finance director since 2005, was responsible for the finances of both the RHAM and Hebron school systems. Although he was considered a RHAM employee, his services were contracted out to Hebron two days a week.

The Hebron school board placed Mazzara on paid administrative leave in December as the result of an investigation into the finances of former schools superintendent Ellie Cruz. After learning of the investigation, RHAM soon followed suit and placed Mazzara on leave Jan. 2.

Shortly after Cruz left Hebron to take over as the superintendent of schools in Plymouth in December, the Hebron school board learned she had allegedly used the school district's credit card to make a number of unauthorized

purchases including groceries – like a \$90 charge at Ted's IGA Supermarket the day after her employment ended – and items at jewelry shops, boutiques, online retailers, restaurants – even a Nordstrom Rack.

The card the charges allegedly occurred on had a \$50,000 limit and was acquired without the knowledge of the Board of Education. The application was signed for by Cruz and Mazzara.

After a study was conducted on the business operations at Hebron Public Schools, it was also determined there were a number of weaknesses in the business office. These included the lack of an appropriate procedural manual, weak oversight, weak financial controls, no special approval procedure for purchases over \$10,000 and a lack of encumbering – when Mazzara was asked how he kept track of budget lines without encumbering funds, a report on the findings explained he seemed "unaware" that governmental accounting practices required this.

In March, both school boards voted to enter into a release agreement with Mazzara; the agreement, which he signed April 2, states Mazzara "voluntarily retire[d]," effective this

past Wednesday, May 1.

Leading up to Wednesday, Mazzara continued to receive his salary, which for the 2012-13 fiscal year, was \$82,242. He will now be given \$7,512 for 19 unused vacation days and \$10,674 for 180 accrued sick days. In addition, Mazzara will continue to be covered by the district's health insurance until June 30, but the agreement explains he is "not entitled to any payments, benefits or compensation, in any form for any reason, from either Hebron or Region 8 beyond those found in this agreement."

In a separate agreement between RHAM and Hebron, RHAM will also pay the Hebron school district a lump sum of \$6,000 as a settlement amount.

"I think that if you look at [the agreements], the agreement refunded Hebron for the time [Mazzara] didn't serve as business manager, between the time he resigned and the end of the year," Siminski stated this week. "And since he resigned, the agreement paid him in accordance with his conditions of employment."

The agreement also calls for Mazzara to

make himself available "upon request" from now through June 30 to provide information regarding accounting issues in either of the districts; however, in Hebron, an interim finance director has already been hired, and Siminski said he hopes to do the same by July 1.

As far as business operations at RHAM, Siminski said there were no unusual findings in this year's audit report, but to be sure, an accountant consultant will be utilized to "just do a little further investigating to make sure there aren't any irregularities" and look at all of the invoices and bills to ensure there's a match between the two and that all of the proper procedures had been followed.

Siminski said everyone in central office has been performing extra duties in the absence of a business manager and prior to hiring one, he wants to make sure there's an "appropriate set of duties" in the finance area.

"So that's kind of where I am right now," he said, and, overall, he added he's just happy the district can start to put this issue in the past.

"I'm glad it's behind us so we can move forward," he said.

Prague Happy to be Back in Action

by Geeta Schrayter

When former state Sen. Edith Prague retired last year, she vowed she wasn't going to disappear. "I'm not going to go away," she told the *Rivereast* last year.

And with her recently being named the commissioner of the State Department of Aging (SDA), that statement's been proven true.

Gov. Dannel P. Malloy nominated Prague in March, saying she was the "natural choice" to lead the newly-created department considering her "background and expertise."

Prague, a Democrat from Columbia, served as state senator for the 19th District from 1994-2012. (The district was recently redrawn, but during Prague's time it included Andover and Hebron.) She was often praised for her work for the elderly, and served as the senate chair of the Committee on Aging in 2011. Also, just before she started as senator, she served as Commissioner of Aging under Gov. Lowell



Edith Prague

Weicker. There, she was considered "instrumental" in setting up the first assisted living facilities in the state, as well as a state-wide health insurance program to inform seniors about their insurance options.

Malloy said in March he knew Prague would "make an immediate impact" in her new position, and added she was "eager to work with her to address the needs of our state's growing senior population."

And it's because of that growing population that Prague – who was confirmed for the position last month – said last week she'd asked for the department and the position.

"I asked for it because I believe this state needs a department on aging to deal with the many problems we're going to face with this growing population," Prague said, adding the position would entail "making this a more livable state for seniors; trying to help them stay out of nursing homes, making communities livable communities, improving the transportation system – we have a lot of work to do."

The purpose of the SDA is to provide seniors with services that will allow them to live their lives "with dignity, security and independence," the release explained. The SDA encompasses the Department of Social Services' State

Unit on Aging as well as the Office of Long Term Care Ombudsman, and Prague explained people who are currently working in the state's elderly services division will be moved over to the SDA.

Upon hearing about Prague's return, various town officials expressed their confidence in her abilities.

"I think they couldn't have got a better person for the position," said Hebron Town Manager Andy Tierney. "I had the pleasure of being in Edith's company when she's come to the [Russell Mercier] Senior Center and spoken to seniors. She's very knowledgeable of all the programs and benefits out there offered to the seniors."

Tierney added Prague was always willing to assist the seniors in her district through any process and now, "her efforts will be statewide."

Andover First Selectman Bob Burbank mirrored those sentiments, calling Prague the "perfect person" to advocate for seniors.

"Edith has always been a friend to Andover and a friend, obviously, to seniors," he said, calling senior support her "forte."

"It's nice to see her back," he said, "and I'm sure she'll be a great help with the senior programs."

Former Andover Municipal Agent for the Elderly Cathy Palazzi said she was "so happy" Prague was returning and called her a "wonderful person" who spent her life "dedicated to working for and helping the seniors."

"She's the one person I knew I could count on for the seniors. Whenever I called and needed some help she always responded," said Palazzi. "I'm so glad she's well enough to take this."

Meanwhile, Hebron Senior Services Coordinator Sharon Garrard called Prague "tenacious" and the "ideal choice" for the position.

"She really has her finger on the pulse of what people want [and] what people need," she said, adding that Prague has "the perfect insight" for this position."

And Garrard noted Prague had already been invited to the Russell Mercier Senior Center to share some information on the department with local seniors. Prague will be making an appearance on Thursday, May 16, at 3:30 p.m. to talk about the department and receive input.

Prague said she's back in Hartford every day now, and hopes to be commissioner of the SDA "as long as [Malloy is] governor."

"My hope is that we can keep more seniors out of nursing homes and keep them in the community where they want to be," she said.

Referendum Next Week on Hebron \$35.02 Million Budget

by Geeta Schrayter

The time for the annual budget referendum has arrived. On Tuesday, May 7, Hebron residents will have the opportunity to head to the polls and decide the fate of the 2013-14 proposed budget of \$35.02 million.

The spending proposal is an increase of 3.71 percent, or \$1.25 million, over the current year's budget. It includes a general government budget of \$8.35 million, a 2.26 percent increase over the current year; a local Board of Education budget of \$12.01 million, a .97 percent increase; and Hebron's portion of the RHAM Board of Education budget, which clocks in at \$14.67 million – a 8.04 percent more than the current year – and is due to increased enrollment at the schools as well as the overall spending increase in the RHAM budget.

The general government budget includes \$6.57 million for town government; a \$558,325 contribution for capital improvement projects

that cost more than \$25,000; \$69,445 for capital projects that cost between \$5-25,000; \$100,000 for open space land acquisition; a \$50,000 contribution for revaluation; \$10,687 for capital non-recurring projects and \$990,308 for town debt.

Under the proposed budget, the mill rate is expected to climb 1.25 mills to 34.80. For a resident with a home assessed at \$200,000, this would equate a tax increase of \$250, from \$6,710 to \$6,960.

During the referendum, voters will be deciding, in three separate questions, whether or not to support the overall \$35.03 budget as well as a capital improvement program budget of \$846,641 and the overall RHAM Board of Education budget of \$25.94 million.

Voting will take place Tuesday, May 7, from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. at Hebron Elementary School, 92 Church St.

Colchester Referendum Coming Up

by Melissa Roberto

Colchester's town and education budgets will each be voted on at the annual referendum on Tuesday, May 7.

Residents will be able to vote on the budgets from 6 a.m. until 8 p.m. at Town Hall, 127 Norwich Ave.

The overall \$52.225 million 2013-14 fiscal year budget is a 3.87 percent increase over current year spending. It also calls for the mill rate to climb 1.48 mills over the current year's tax rate, from 28.80 to 30.28.

The \$13.15 million proposed town operations budget is a 3.07 percent increase over the current fiscal year. The proposal includes several public safety improvements like repairing sidewalks at Town Hall, repairing ramps and doors at Fire Company 1, as well as funding a heavy rescue vehicle that is used in emergencies.

The \$39.08 million education budget is a 4.14 percent increase, largely due to a 16.67

percent spike in health insurance costs at a cost of \$5,573,488. A key item in the education proposal that has been well-received by the public is the all-day kindergarten proposal. The proposal would offer six all-day kindergarten classes, instead of the two all-day classes currently in place, for which students are chosen by lottery.

First Selectman Gregg Schuster is pleased with each budget proposal.

"The boards and administration have really gone over the budgets with a fine tooth comb," he said. "We have put forward what we believe is needed to run the town."

Schuster added that he hopes residents will participate in the budget process by venturing to Town Hall on Tuesday to cast their votes. He said all residents should contact his office at 860-537-7220 if they have any questions about the proposed budget.

Schuster to Seek Third Term – May Be Facing Ford in Colchester

by Melissa Roberto

First Selectman Gregg Schuster announced last week he will seek re-election this fall – and selectman James Ford declared this week he hopes to run against him.

Schuster, a Republican, has held the title of first selectman since 2009. On April 23, Schuster announced that he is seeking a third term.

Ford, a selectman, held a press conference on Wednesday to announce he is pursuing the Democratic nomination to run for the seat. In the next few weeks, he plans on reaching out to the community and listening to their concerns. The Democratic Town Committee will caucus in July to determine its nominee for the slot.

Earlier this week, Schuster said being born and raised in Colchester is one of the reasons why serving the town as first selectman has been such an honor.

"I love this town," he said.

But besides what he calls a "very enjoyable experience" as first selectman, Schuster said his decision to seek a third term is based on a couple different reasons. First, Schuster said he wants to stay in his seat because he'd like to stick around for the final stages of some of the projects that he started, such as the Honeywell



Gregg Schuster

Energy Savings project.

Also, Schuster wants to continue his goal of bringing more economic growth to the town. He said he has assisted in the process of getting Tractor Supply to open in Colchester and wants to help guide the process as it makes its way into town.

Ford – who was met by Democratic Town Committee members on Wednesday at the Town Green to announce his interest – said he hopes his interest in the first selectman's seat will convert into a nomination by the committee. He explained that his approach of forming what he called an "exploratory committee" will give him a chance to explain his position on things happening in town.

Ford added he "didn't want to presume that the town committee would automatically endorse my candidacy," he explained.

Ford has served as a member of the Board of Selectmen for the last four years.

According to a press release he issued on Wednesday, Ford said he feels it is "more important than ever" that a strong leader leads the town. He said he can fill this role by using his experience in municipal government and land development to expand economic development in Colchester. Earlier this week, Ford also explained that he believes government is a service.

"The reason we have a town government is to provide services so I believe we have to serve the citizens," Ford stated.

Schuster this week looked back on what he has accomplished in the last four years. He said one of the highlights of his term was receiving

an award by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) for the last fiscal year's budget. Schuster explained that when he first took the seat in 2009, the town budget consisted of "a book ... with line items and numbers." However, Schuster said he vastly expanded the document to describe to taxpayers the budget's objectives, departmental descriptions, and what the money is used for.

He also recalled his success of working with the state to bring in a Department of Transportation facility to town.

"That is an extremely important success that is putting the town on much better financial footing," Schuster said.

Schuster and Ford also this week expressed their goals if elected this fall.

Ford said he understands that there are many needs in town. His goals include strengthening educational opportunities, as well as improving services for seniors, families and children in Colchester.

Democratic Town Committee Chairwoman Dorothy Mrowka said she believes Ford can do just that.

"We really need a first selectman that has leadership skills, communicates to boards and



James Ford

commissions, makes decisions out in the open and needs to be a team player," she explained. "I think Jim Ford can do it."

For Schuster, a primary goal of his if he sits in the first selectman's seat once again is to continue the economic development in the town. Schuster said he had just been sitting down with a developer on Wednesday discussing bringing something new to town.

"It's that part of the job that I really enjoy," Schuster said. "My primary focus is to continue to bring employers to the town to have jobs and expand the tax base."

Aside from economic development, Schuster added that he'd like to assist in determining the fate of the William J. Johnston Middle School building project. He also said he'd like to increase community services "whether it is youth, seniors or the population in general."

Republican Town Committee Chairman Brenden Healy said he is "very excited" that Schuster has decided to seek a third term.

"He's done a lot of great things for our town," said Healy, while highlighting Schuster's involvement in helping Tractor Supply and the state DOT facility break ground in Colchester.

"He's really streamlined the town side of the budget," Healy added. "He's made some hard decisions and cost-cutting measures, but yet he's also invested in the areas in town that are in need like improving roads that weren't taken care of by his predecessors."

Both selectmen will continue to express their interests in the seat to residents in town. Municipal elections will occur in November.

Schuster Meets the ‘Real Housewives of Colchester’

by Melissa Roberto

First Selectman Gregg Schuster met with “The Real Housewives of Colchester” last week to discuss their visions of the town’s future.

But for those who might be wondering, Colchester has not embarked on its own spin-off of the Bravo network’s *Real Housewives* series. Instead, “The Real Housewives of Colchester” is the name of a Facebook group that was created for women of Colchester to join, and to share advice, give suggestions and update each other with what’s happening around town.

The group’s latest conversation happened outside of the Facebook world and outside of the Keystone Shops on route 16 last Thursday with Schuster. Nearly 20 of the women who are a part of the group (which is 386 members strong) made Schuster aware of what stores, restaurants and businesses they’d like to see come to town.

The meeting was planned after Schuster heard that the housewives had discussed what restaurants they’d like to see in town within their Facebook group. Schuster said the conversation sparked his interest and he reached out to creator of the group, Wendy Maurice, so he could hear what else the ladies had in mind.

And it didn’t take long on Thursday for the women to let the first selectman know that they want “more!”

The ladies started with restaurants. While they agreed that the town’s many pizza and Chinese restaurants are “great,” they admitted a variety would be nice. The women then rattled off chains they would like to see in town: Panera, Chili’s, Friday’s, Outback Steakhouse, Ninety Nine and the list goes on.

One woman mentioned that she’d like Colchester to become a part of the new frozen yogurt craze. Another offered up the idea of bringing an independently-owned restaurant to town that would be “unique.”

The group also pointed out one of the town’s downfalls – a lack of stores to shop in. They

shared their difficulties with shopping for groceries, new clothing, home items and more.

“When we go shopping we don’t go to Colchester and that’s huge,” said Maurice.

The women admitted that they can often be found shopping for essentials in such places as Waterford, Norwich, Lisbon, Willimantic, Glastonbury, Manchester, East Hartford and Rocky Hill – but they’d rather be doing it locally.

“Those days I have to go shopping I dread,” resident Jeannine Gilbert said. “If we had something in town I would definitely stay in town and support my community.”

The group also mentioned that they’d like to see another grocery store come to Colchester. They said they feel the Stop & Shop in town has higher prices because it doesn’t have any local competition.

The biggest concern expressed by the housewives was the lack of retail stores in Colchester. The women explained that shopping for new clothing, essentials for children and items around the home requires at least a 20-minute car ride, leaving some parents the difficulty of shopping for their families around their work schedules.

“I plan shopping trips around my lunch break or after work because I don’t have it here in Colchester,” resident Stephanie Bunting explained.

Stores that the women said they would like to see possibly come to town include Target, TJ Maxx, Kohl’s, as well as a store for children’s clothes like The Children’s Place.

“Colchester is a very family-centered town,” Maurice said earlier this week. “There’s a lot for working parents with kids and we don’t want to spend extra time to travel and shop.”

Resident DeeAnne Corticelli also felt that a retail store is a necessity for the many families in Colchester.

“It would make it convenient for those who need to get their shopping done within their busy schedules.”



First Selectman Gregg Schuster met last week with the “Real Housewives of Colchester,” who shared their thoughts on grocery stores, retail stores and restaurants they’d like to see nestle into the area for more convenience to residents.

Schuster – who often agreed with the group – told the women he understands the need. As a father of two, Schuster said he has also experienced the difficulties of shopping for last minute items for his family, and can often be found in Glastonbury picking up some of his favorite foods to eat that aren’t available in Colchester.

He also said he wanted to be “realistic” with the group.

“It’s a long ways off to say we’re going to be like Glastonbury or Manchester where you can get just anything and everything,” he said to the women.

But the selectman said that would not stop him from doing what he can to reel new businesses in.

“We’re standing in an area where all the roads in the area pretty much converge,” he explained at the Keystone Shops. “We’re the big city. We draw people in from all over the

place.”

Schuster also highlighted that the town has seen a new hibachi restaurant and Sears open recently, and that he is looking forward to the Department of Transportation facility and Tractor Supply, which will be opening soon.

Though Schuster relayed to the women that the vacancy rate in Colchester is “very low,” he told the women he thinks Colchester has an attractive market full of residents that are willing to spend money locally.

When asked how Colchester can attract businesses, Schuster said it can be achieved by “pounding the pavement and just talking to businesses” – something that he ensured the women he will continue to do. But he did ask the housewives for their support, and they all agreed they’d help carry out the endeavor.

For more information about *The Real Housewives of Colchester*, search for the group on Facebook.

Mixed Reviews for Budget at Public Hearing in Marlborough

by Melissa Roberto

The Board of Finance Monday held the town’s annual public hearing on the proposed 2013-14 fiscal year budget, and it resulted in mixed reviews from members of the public.

Board of Finance Chairwoman Evelyn Godbout kicked off the hearing by presenting the budget to the nearly 40 residents who attended the hearing.

The budget totals \$21,665,665, or a .53 percent increase over current year spending. The five categories that make up the budget are the town operations budget, the local Board of Education budget, and Marlborough’s portion of the RHAM budget, contingency and debt.

The budget proposal includes a few surprising aspects. It includes a tax decrease of .51 percent – what Godbout referred to as “probably a first in Marlborough” – as well as a Board of Education budget with a .26 decrease. The mill rate is also anticipated to drop from the current year’s rate by .165 mills, to a proposed rate of 30.87.

Another first Godbout highlighted in the proposed budget is a new way of funding capital items. In the next fiscal year, the town has proposed five capital items that total \$350,500. Instead of including the capital items within the town’s annual budget, the town is proposing to pay for the items with cash through the town’s general fund balance.

Godbout said the change in paying for the capital items would save the town money in the long run.

“Everybody knows if you go out and get a loan you’re going to pay a lot more money than if you can pay for something [in cash],” she said.

For example, Godbout said the town would save approximately \$30,000 on the \$175,000 seven-yard dump truck that has been proposed.

Also, Godbout said next year’s debt payment will be the “largest debt payment in the history

of Marlborough.” At \$2,659,873, the town will see an increase of 6.91 percent in debt over current year spending. However, Godbout ensured the public that the amount “is going to be decreasing from this point forward.”

Lastly, Godbout translated the town’s expenses into percentages. Coming in at the highest percentage is Marlborough’s portion of the RHAM budget at 33.8 percent, followed by the local Board of Education at 33.2 percent, town operations at 20.7, and debt service at 12.2 percent, capital items at 1.4 percent and contingency at 0.1 percent.

Following Godbout’s presentation, about 17 residents weighed in on the town budget and a majority of the comments pertained to the local Board of Education budget.

In regards to the local school budget, several residents said they’d like to see the \$192,000 – that had been decreased from the budget due to a health insurance error – split between the school district and the town. (A full story about the error appears elsewhere in this issue.) Residents that pushed for this said the money could be spent on programs at the school that had once been cut, like a world language program and the former Challenge and Enrichment program.

“Give [MES] the tools it needs to be as attractive as it can be by providing programs such as a world language program because our students need to be globally competitive,” resident Judy Benson-Clarke said.

Other residents argued that funding additional programs at the school will make the town more attractive, which in turn would draw people into the town.

Resident Sophie Burrows explained what the outcome would be if this doesn’t happen.

“If this town doesn’t become attractive to come in, houses are not going to get sold and our taxes are going to stay up from what I un-

derstand,” she said.

However, resident Debbie Bourbeau – a former MES teacher of 35 years – spoke in response to the several comments made about enhancing the school.

“I can’t stand sitting here listening to how terrible life is at Marlborough Elementary School,” she said. “I know the people who work here, I know the time and effort they’ve put into this place and I just can’t sit there quietly and let you put this place down. It’s not that bad.”

Also, a handful of residents spoke from a taxpayer’s point of view.

Selectman Dick Shea – speaking at the meeting as an individual, and not on behalf of the board – reminded the public that state mandates and state funding cuts will only continue to be pushed onto towns. He added that those are things that towns have no control over.

“We know they’re going to hurt and we know we’re going to have to make it up locally,” he said.

Richard Denno was a resident in favor of seeing the taxes go down. Also, he referred to the aforementioned request by residents to put money back into the school budget as “financial insanity.”

“God forbid we should get a tax break this year in the town of Marlborough,” Denno said to the crowd. “That \$192,000 could make sure that the actual tax bill for the residents in Marlborough will be less.”

Resident Joe LaBella – a former selectman and Board of Finance member – wrapped up public comments at the meeting with one simple suggestion for the board.

“Let the people decide,” he said. “Bring it to a vote.”

A special Board of Finance meeting followed the public hearing Monday night, where members once again voted on the overall town bud-

get.

The budget was passed by a vote of 5-1 with no changes made to it, with members Godbout, Susan Leser, Doug Knowlton, Ken Hjulstrom and Cliff Denniss in favor of it, and member Beth Petroni against it.

Though no changes were made, the board discussed the popular request that was made by residents earlier that night to return some of the \$192,000 to the school budget. Some board members said they felt it would be unfair to return the money to the school budget because the same hadn’t been done for the town operations or RHAM budgets – budgets that also had decreases in their health insurance accounts.

Board members also pointed out that the Board of Education did not request any additional money to be added into their budget once the health insurance costs decreased.

“The local Board of Education did not ask for a modification of their budget so we received no request by the board at all,” Godbout said after the meeting, “which weighed in on our discussion as we voted.”

Also at the meeting, First Selectwoman Cathi Gaudinski updated the finance board with minor changes in revenue that caused the mill rate to drop a tad bit further than it was previously presented to the public. With the changes, the mill rate went from the initially presented 30.87 mill rate to 30.86, with a drop of .16 mills instead of .165 mills. Also, the new tax decrease went from a .51 to a .52 percent decrease.

Residents will have the opportunity to vote on the town budget at the annual budget meeting on May 13, at 7 p.m. in the MES cafeteria, 25 School Dr. If the budget does not pass, a town meeting will be rescheduled within three weeks of the town meeting, and will continue to be rescheduled every three weeks until it is passed.

Marlborough School Board Approves Study for World Language Program

by **Melissa Roberto**

On April 25, the Board of Education approved a feasibility study that allows Marlborough Elementary School (MES) administrators to begin researching what it would take to bring a world language and cultures program back into the school's curriculum.

Bringing back a language program at the school has been a popular request by residents – and many MES parents – since the school's Spanish program was cut from the budget last year.

The study was approved by a vote of 6-1, with members Ruth Kelly, Betty O'Brien, Louise Concodello, Carole Shea, Judith Kaplan and Karen Tyler voting in favor of the study, and Bob Clarke opposing the study. Mimi LaPoint and Shannon Bielaczyc abstained from the vote.

A feasibility study on whether to provide all-day kindergarten at the school and to report back on it in November was also included in the vote – but it was the world language program that members weighed in on the most.

The study that will be dedicated to the language program gives MES administrators seven months to complete the study before reporting back to the board with their research in October.

But before Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz explained how the study would be conducted, Board of Education Chairwoman Ruth Kelly felt it was necessary to explain why the school's former Spanish program was cut in the first place.

"The decision to discontinue the language program was based on economic concerns in a very difficult budget environment," Kelly recalled of last year's budget process.

The chairwoman added that the board was faced with a "tough decision" to either increase classroom size or to discontinue the Spanish program. Kelly said the board surveyed the parent community, which she said indicated to the board that classroom size was parents' "highest priority" – thus causing the Spanish program to be cut from the budget.

"We made a tough decision based on economic concerns and only on economic concerns," Kelly said, "and we decided to keep classroom sizes constant."

Kelly then explained that a subcommittee was charged earlier this year to explore options of providing an afterschool language program. The feasibility study, however, will be the first time administrators will research options to fit a program into the school day.

"This is the first step," said Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz of the study, adding that bringing a program back would involve two phases.

The superintendent – who would conduct the study alongside MES Principal Scott Nierendorf and Assistant Principal Maureen Ryan – explained that an implementation process would follow the feasibility study, where the board would hear the study and "make a decision to move forward with it in a timely manner."

As for the feasibility study, Sklarz highlighted what the administration team plans to tackle in the next seven months. He said the team will research various programs, survey the community, design a program, determine how a program is able to fit into the school day and attach a budget to it so the cost of the program is known before the development of the 2014-15 fiscal year budget begins.

"I just think that's a good timeline and good planning," Sklarz added, "and it says to the public 'yeah, we're moving forward.'"

Shea stressed that having a budget to look at before the board needs to make a decision on a program would be helpful.

"I think it's important just to know where we stand budget-wise and before we move forward with anything," Shea said, adding that a budget would help determine whether a program would need to be phased in or not.

However, before a vote was taken, some board members felt seven months to conduct the feasibility study was too long.

"We have been talking about world language for the three and a half years I've been on this board and I just don't understand why it's going to take seven months," LaPoint said.

Clarke had similar thoughts. He felt the administrators could complete the study and report back to the board in its June meeting. He said if the study was completed by June, board members would have time before the start of the upcoming school year "to make an intelli-

gent decision."

"We're talking about an elementary school program here," Clarke added to further his opposition. "There are many examples in this state and resources that we can draw upon."

Clarke then made a motion for the administrators to complete the study and report back to the board in June but the vote failed by 5-4, with Clarke, LaPoint, Bielaczyc and Kaplan in favor of it, but Kelly, O'Brien, Shea, Concodello and Tyler defeating it.

Members who voted against Clarke's motion said they felt comfortable allowing administrators seven months to complete the task.

"I want it to be meaningful," said O'Brien. "I think there's a lot of work [for the administration] to do."

"We need to go about this the right way," Shea added. "We need to make this a lasting program."

Following the meeting, resident Dave Porteous said he felt the study could have been done in "30 to 60 days," criticizing "those who wish to stall" by waiting seven months to complete the study.

The approval allows the administration team to begin the feasibility study immediately. The implementation of a program will be based on the report that is brought to the board in October. The Board of Education will then need to decide whether or not they support the program that the administration designs, and when the program would be implemented.

Marlborough Residents Slam School Board Following Budget Error

by **Melissa Roberto**

Residents last week slammed the Board of Education following news of an error in formulating the 2013-14 fiscal year budget, which led to the spending package dropping nearly \$200,000 from what the school board approved in March.

The error – which is related to incorrect health insurance numbers being used to calculate the budget – was discovered on April 2 in a Board of Finance meeting.

The board's meeting last Thursday, April 25, was its first since news broke of the error – which played a large role in the school budget for next year dropping by approximately \$192,000. The reduction lowered the initial \$7.37 million budget to \$7.18 million – a decrease of .26 percent over current year spending.

The error was a hot topic at the meeting, as residents and Board of Education members expressed concerns over it, which prompted Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz to address the issue.

Residents who spoke to the board about the error said they felt the board missed an opportunity to repurpose the \$192,000 to place key items back into the budget that they felt were missing from it.

"You could have taken half that amount and put it towards the language program," resident Wes Skorski said to the board.

Resident David Farrington also gave the board examples of what some of the money could have funded.

"It's a Spanish program, it's a challenge and enrichment program, it's library books," Farrington said. "It's everything missing out of the budget that we want that could have been put back in. You guys blew it and you still have no reason why."

A handful of board members also were concerned about the error. Some members questioned who discovered the error and why an emergency meeting wasn't held after the error was discovered.

Sklarz then walked the board through the discovery of the error. First, he made members aware that the insurance is the "most fluid" number during the budget process because rates continue to change. He said the initial health insurance increase that was budgeted at 25 percent over the current fiscal year was "staggering," but that he expected the increase to go down; he added, though, that he was unaware of how much at the time.

It wasn't until the April 2 Board of Finance meeting that Sklarz said he and other Board of Education members present at the meeting were made aware of the error. At the beginning of that meeting, Sklarz told finance board members that he anticipated the health insurance increase to go down to 19.4 percent, or reflect \$27,000 savings in the budget. However, Sklarz said First Selectwoman Cathi Gaudinski arrived to the meeting with news of the error that lowered that increase even more.

The error Gaudinski shared had to do with a miscalculation that was made in the superintendent's office. Sklarz said whoever calculated the health insurance rates in the school budget forgot to plug in new rates for all teachers at the school, who switched to a new insurance plan last July.

Earlier this week, Gaudinski said she came across the error just a few days before the April 2 finance board meeting, while verifying health insurance rates for both the town operations and Board of Education budgets. It was then that Gaudinski said she questioned whether the right numbers had been used in the education bud-

get. Upon her discovery, Gaudinski contacted the assistant treasurer for the town, Hayley Wagner, to verify that an error had been made.

"I wanted to verify it because it was a large number," she explained.

She told Wagner of the possible error at the close of business on Friday, March 29. Wagner looked into the mistake, and confirmed it the afternoon of April 2 – the day of the finance board meeting.

"It just came up very quickly," Gaudinski added. "No conspiracy there."

The first selectwoman added that she contacted Board of Finance Chairwoman Evelyn Godbout and Sklarz as soon as the error was confirmed. However, Sklarz told the board last Thursday that he hadn't checked his email, so the meeting was the first he heard of the news.

Board of Education Chairwoman Ruth Kelly, Vice Chair Betty O'Brien, Secretary Louise Concodello and Carole Shea all attended the April 2 meeting and admitted that they, too, were shocked by the news.

But some school board members still wanted answers.

"Why didn't we hold an emergency meeting to try and readjust our budget?" member Bob Clarke asked, adding that the money could have gone towards funding additional programs at the school, furniture or library books.

Other members expressed frustration about not knowing about the error until after the Board of Finance approved the budget on April 4.

Member Mimi LaPoint said she found out about the error while reading an article that week in the *Riverast*. "That's absurd," she said.

"I think we probably could have handled it differently," member Shannon Bielaczyc added.

Kelly admitted that an emergency meeting "never" crossed her mind.

"Truthfully, I didn't even think about that because that night we were all astounded," she said.

Sklarz continued to address the timing of the discovery as some board members said they felt that the error was intentionally kept from them.

"It was just a matter of timing and communication," he explained. "Everything moves so fast and I don't think it was with malice intent because I talked to Cathi [Gaudinski] and communication broke down at the eleventh hour."

Sklarz added that the error probably wouldn't have been found without Gaudinski's verification.

Board of Finance Chairwoman Evelyn Godbout also commented on the \$192,000 savings this week. She explained it was a combination of two things: the error that was made and a drop in the increase that was already anticipated by both the education and finance boards.

Board of Finance member Ken Hjulstrom also made sense of the error this week.

"There was no money cut from the budget," he said. "It was simply that the final numbers reflected the correct information."

Since the error was made, Sklarz said a "checks and balances" system has been put in place that allows the town to verify the school board's budget each year.

Also, the board came to a consensus that in future years, a regular meeting will be scheduled in between the first presentation of the budget to the finance board and before the finance board approves it, giving the board more time to discuss the budget.

More discussion about the error occurred at the public hearing on Monday and a full story about that appears in this issue.

Andover Municipal Elections are Next Monday

by Geeta Schrayter

Next week, Andover residents will head to the polls to vote for a number of candidates running in the municipal elections. Most – like those running for the Board of Finance, the Board of Education, the Zoning Board of Appeals and Zoning Board of Appeals alternate – are guaranteed a seat due to either the number of candidates running (or, rather, a lack thereof), or, as is the case with the Board of Education, “restricted voting.”

Although the ballot residents will fill out on Monday will read “vote for any two” for the Board of Education and there are three candidates – current members Whitney Covell and Christina Tamburro along with newcomer Lisa Hewett – all of them will be a part of the board.

Cathy Palazzi, the Republican registrar of voters, explained this week “restricted voting” is an “unusual law” that applies only to the Board of Education. State election law sets out provisions regarding the size of boards of education and the methods for nominating candidates and electing members, she said. Since there happens to be an open seat (occupied by Danny Holtsclaw, who is also a RHAM Board of Education member and is not seeking re-election in Andover) along with the two seats Covell and Tamburro occupied, there’s space for three members. And, with three running, that means

all of them will be seated uncontested.

However, as per the law, voters can only vote for half the number of members who are to be elected – Palazzi furthered there could have been four candidates on the ballot (thereby making the number a voter can vote for two) and if that had been the case, one would have lost.

That’s not the case for the Planning and Zoning Commission however, where incumbent Republican members Leigh Ann Hutchinson and Robert Russell are up against Democrat Patrick Dougherty, who currently serves as an alternate.

Dougherty, who’s lived in town for over five years, explained this week he’s running for the commission because he has an interest in what’s going on with the town. He is already a member of the Democratic Town Committee and joined the Economic Development Commission two years ago.

“I like helping out my community,” he said, adding he’s always been interested in the planning and zoning aspect of the town. “My family and I, we just want to keep Andover a nice town to live in for our son – and that’s about it really.”

As an alternate, Dougherty said he’s already started learning about what the position entails. He said he’s been reading through planning and

zoning regulations and will take into consideration things he’s learned as part of the Economic Development Commission regarding how the town is going to “look towards the future.”

Dougherty added it was important to pay attention to the kind of businesses that are promoted.

“You want to see the kind of businesses move into town that’ll fit the town,” he said, “and that’s my focus.”

Russell, who’s been on the commission for 23 years and said he “might as well continue,” felt similarly.

“I’m for business in the town of Andover, and I want to maintain its rural affect – and that’s why it’s important to me,” he said.

In his years on the commission, Russell said he thinks they’ve done “a good job,” and when residents are considering who to vote for, they should think of him because of his experience.

“Basically, you’re looking at experience,” he said, adding he’s lived in town for “better than 50 years” and likes the small size of it, adding while there’s been growth over the years, “it’s still small enough to give it that rural effect – and I just love it.”

Hutchinson, who has also lived in town all her life and been on the board for over 20 years,

said she enjoys the work of the commission and, like Russell, believes in economic development while maintaining the rural character in town.

“The preservation of the rural atmosphere while trying to bring in some businesses that are appropriate in size to the town so there’s a little bit less of a residential tax base” is important, she said.

Hutchinson said moving forward, planning is the most important aspect and, without a town planner, more of that work falls on the commission. She said the lack of a planner is one of the challenges the commission faces as they have “much more responsibility,” and a reason she wants to continue on – “just to bring some continuity,” she said.

“I really enjoy the work of the commission and I lived in Andover my entire life,” she said, “so I’m very interested in the future of the town from the planning and zoning aspect.”

Along with the Planning and Zoning Commission, voters will also be choosing which two candidates to elect for the fire commission out of Democrats Barry Hansen Sr. and Gregory Vincek and Republican Gerald Wright.

Elections will be held Monday, May 6, from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Andover Town Hall, 17 School Rd.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

The calendar has turned to May. The weather is – allegedly – getting warmer. The Mets are still only a handful of games removed from first place (which means anything can happen!). And it’s also, once again, time for residents to vote on their town budgets.

Three *Riverast* towns – Colchester, East Hampton and Hebron – as well as the RHAM school district will see their budgets decided at referendum next Tuesday, May 7. Voting will take place from 6 a.m.-8 p.m., just as they do on Election Day. That means residents will have 14 hours to vote. That’s a lot of time, folks; surely you can eke out a few minutes on your way to or from work.

I think it’s vital for everyone who can to get out and cast a vote in their budget referendums. Budget votes typically get nowhere near the attention elections do, but high turnout for budget referendums is just as important. This is your chance to help decide what towns pay for in the next fiscal year – and in turn, what your taxes will be. If you’re against a particular spending initiative, go out and vote ‘no.’ Do you really want to see something passed? Go out and vote ‘yes.’ Don’t think someone else will do it instead.

And here’s a word of advice from someone who’s covered many budget votes over the years: When budgets get defeated, they rarely get more money added to them. They’re almost always cuts.

The referendum is the ultimate in democracy at work. To be honest, I think every town should have a budget referendum. (I’m looking at you, Marlborough!) A town meeting just feels very antiquated. Lots of towns, bigger communities than the *Riverast* towns, still do it, I know, but it just doesn’t feel right. Town meetings can be difficult to get to. Referendums give people plenty of time to show up and lodge their simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ opinions. Election Day isn’t handled via a show of hands or a paper ballot at town meetings; why should Budget Vote Day?

The bottom line for Colchester, East Hampton and Hebron residents: get out and vote

next Tuesday. And residents of Andover and Marlborough: get out and vote for RHAM. (Andover gets its municipal budget referendum later this month, as does Portland.) It doesn’t matter if you vote ‘yes’ or ‘no.’ Make your feelings known, and see what change you can affect. Democracy’s a beautiful thing.

* * *

I was disappointed – and not in the least surprised – to see the New York Jets release Tim Tebow this week. While I’m nowhere near as into them as I am into the Mets – I prefer baseball to football, quite frankly – I am a Jets fan – and what they did with Tebow last season was a disgrace.

They traded for a quarterback who had taken the Denver Broncos to the playoffs – despite already having a quarterback. The move smacked of just a cheap way for the Jets to grab some headlines; Tebow was an insanely popular guy, and the Jets wanted to ride the wave. *Don’t worry*, the Jets said. *We’ll find ways to use him.*

Except they never did. Head coach Rex Ryan seemed opposed to the acquisition from day one, and hardly ever put Tebow into games. Even when the Jets’ season started to collapse, Tebow stayed on the sidelines. Rumors were Tebow simply wasn’t very good. Okay, fine; give him a chance to prove it. They never did – and it’s not like they were running Joe Namath out there. Mark Sanchez, who I can only imagine had his confidence shattered by the Tebow deal, was dropping balls, throwing interceptions, running into players’ butts – it was vital to keep this guy on the field? In games that meant nothing?

Apparently the Jets thought so. So instead, they let Tebow waste a valuable year of his football-playing life warming the bench. It’s a shame. Tebow deserved better.

Hopefully he can find it at his next stop – and I’m sure there will be a next stop for the talented 25-year-old.

* * *

See you next week – and don’t forget to vote!

Colchester Police News

4/22: Colchester Police responded to a single vehicle accident on Middletown Road approximately one-tenth of a mile west of Victoria Drive. Police said the driver, Ellen Brunsgaard, 22, of 24 Tarragon Dr., East Hampton, was transported to Backus Hospital by the Colchester Hayward Fire Department for precautionary measures. Brunsgaard was later arrested for DUI.

4/22: Colchester Police said Thomas Michael Soboleski, 22, of 75 Alexander Dr., was charged with violation of a protective order.

4/23: Colchester Police said they are currently investigating an incident involving attempted entry and damage to a residence on White Oak Drive at approximately 1:25 p.m.

4/23: Colchester Police said they are cur-

rently investigating a reported burglary/larceny from a residence on Westchester Road. Police said several items were taken from the locked residence.

4/25: Colchester Police said Yolanda Ann Wilson, 44, of 132 Parum Rd., was charged with sixth-degree larceny.

4/25: Colchester Police said they are currently investigating a report of an unknown person entering a residence on West Road at approximately 6:12 p.m. Police said several items were taken from the residence.

4/25: State Police said H. Lee Maccowell, 47, of 627 Central Ave., Dover, New Hampshire, was charged with DUI and reckless driving.

Hebron Police News

4/25: State Police were called to an active physical altercation between four females at a residence on Wall Street. Three victims were treated on scene for injuries. Police said Katherine A. Donofrio, 24, of 91 Copper Beech Dr., Rocky Hill, was transported to Marlborough Clinic for minor injuries. Donofrio was charged with two counts of third-degree assault and breach of peace.

Portland Police News

4/24: Sean Dent, 29, of 43 Briarwood Dr., Old Saybrook, was charged with disorderly conduct and criminal mischief, Portland Police said.

4/25: State Police said Tamra Peck, 50, of 29 Senate Brook Dr., Amston, was charged with failure to have lights illuminated, littering, DUI and speeding.

Marlborough Police News

4/23: State Police said Eftihia A. Markantonakis, 24, of 95 Eastbury Hill Rd., Glastonbury, was traveling in the right lane of Route 2 westbound in Marlborough when she veered off of the road striking a wire rope guide rail. The vehicle then rolled over once before coming to a rest on its tires against a tree. Police said Markantonakis complained of pain and was transported to the Middlesex Hospital Walk-In Clinic by the Marlborough Volunteer Fire Department. Police said 50 feet of wire rope guide rail and posts were down as a result of the accident. Markantonakis was issued an infraction for failure to drive in the proper lane.

4/25: State Police said Tamra Peck, 50, of 29 Senate Brook Dr., Amston, was charged with failure to have lights illuminated, littering, DUI and speeding.

Obituaries

Hebron

Dorothy E. Stomberg

Dorothy E. (Donlin) Stomberg, 92, of Hebron, passed away peacefully Thursday, April 25, at the Marlborough Health Care Center. Born April 16, 1921 in Hartford, she was a daughter of the late Lawrence and Pearl (Leavitt) Donlin.

She worked in the credit office for Sage-Allen Stores for 12 years and later worked for Sears in retail and fashion until her retirement in 1994.

Dorothy was a Girl Scout Leader and service unit chairman in the 1960s. She was very active with the Russell Mercier Senior Center and the Hebron Commission on Aging. She was a communicant at Church of the Holy Family in Hebron. Most importantly, she will be remembered as a loving and devoted wife, mother and grandmother.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband of 47 years, Alden S. Stomberg, on June 21, 1989; three children, William, Dennis and Brian; four brothers, William, Raymond, Lawrence, Robert; and two sisters, Nancy Sullivan and Barbara Frazier.

Survivors include three children, Carol Ann and her husband Matthew Dabrowski of Ashaway, R.I., Gary Stomberg and his wife April of Deland, Fla., Jacquelyn and her husband Robert Tyrseck of Pittsburgh, Pa.; a sister, Jacqueline Donlin of Newington; 22 grandchildren; 30 great-grandchildren.

Friends attended calling hours Monday, April 29, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral service was held Tuesday, April 30, at Church of the Holy Family, Church Street, Hebron. Burial followed in the New Hebron Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, Memorial contributions may be made to The Church of the Holy Family, P.O. Box 146, Hebron, CT 06248.

The family would like to extend their heartfelt gratitude to the staff at Marlborough Health Care Center for their compassion and care over the last four years.

Colchester

Madeline G. L'Heureux

Madeline G. L'Heureux, 94, of Glastonbury, passed away peacefully Wednesday, April 24, at Harrington Court, after a brief illness. Madeline was born April 5, 1919, in Worcester, Mass., to John and Anna Gudauskas.

She spent most of her adult life in Connecticut living in the Hartford area and 38 years in Glastonbury, most recently at the Herbert T. Clark House. She was employed by the Hartford Group for a number of years and Glastonbury High School for five years. She was an active member of Glastonbury Senior Center and she especially enjoyed setback tournaments.

Madeline, fondly known as "the road runner" is survived by her only child, Lynn L'Heureux and her spouse Cheryl Whitman of Colchester; brothers George (Vivian) Gudaskas of East Hartford, William Goode of New York City, and a number of nieces and nephews. She will be especially missed by Viv, her sister-in-law and best friend of 60 years.

Madeline is predeceased by her husband of 50 years, Richard E. L'Heureux; her sisters Eleanor Pendzick and Alice Gagnon; and nephew David Gagnon.

Our thanks to the staff at Harrington Court of Colchester, especially Jenn, for the loving care and support given to Madeline in the last weeks of her life.

A memorial service was held Sunday, April 28, at the Glastonbury Funeral Home, 450 New London Tpke., Glastonbury. Family and friends gathered before the memorial. Burial will be private at a later date.

Memorial donations may be made to Connecticut Community Care, Inc., Independent Living fund or a charity of your choice.

For tributes, online condolences or directions, visit glastonburyfuneral.com.

Middle Haddam

Robert Dewar Jr. Memorial Service

A memorial service for the late Robert Earl Dewar Jr., PhD, of Middle Haddam, will be held Saturday, May 11, at 2 p.m., at the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Middletown.

Dewar, the beloved husband of Alison Richard, passed away April 8 at the age of 63. His obituary appeared in the April 12 *Rivereast*.

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

East Hampton

Donald Prescott Markham

Donald Prescott Markham, 85, beloved husband of Pauline (Lindquist) Markham, passed away Friday, April 26, after a long convalescence. A lifelong resident of East Hampton, Donald, born Nov. 5, 1927, was the son of the late Percy P. and Rose (Knotek) Markham.

Family, community, service and commitment defined him. Donald, who preferred to be called Don, upon graduation from East Hampton High School in 1945, enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. World War II ended during his basic training, but he was placed as a member of the inactive reserves. He worked for the FBI in Washington, D.C., from 1946-47, and in 1949 was called to active duty, becoming a decorated veteran of the Korean Conflict. Upon returning to East Hampton, he worked for Thatcher Drug and then the Sisson Drug Co. of Hartford until 1961, at which point President Kennedy appointed him East Hampton postmaster; a position in which he proudly served for 26 years.

Don was actively involved in the life of the East Hampton community in various capacities. He was a master mason for over 50 years and served as master of Anchor Lodge No. 112 AF & AM during the 100th anniversary (1971), as well as serving on the Masonic Temple Association Board. He was a founding member of the East Hampton Lions Club Inc. in 1957. Don served as commander of American Legion Post No. 64 and was a life member, and, along with other veterans, revived Old Home Day, serving as co-chair in 1953 and 1954.

He was a charter member and first president of the Chatham Historical Society, and was honored as chairman of both the East Hampton Bi-Centennial Committee in 1967 and the local Bi-Centennial Committee celebrating the founding of our nation in 1976. He was also a board member of the Lake View Cemetery Association.

Serving his fellow citizens in town politics, Don, a lifelong Democrat, was elected to the Board of Education in 1956, and from 1969 to 1976 was an appointed member of the Water Pollution Control Authority. From 1952 through 1960, he served as the Democratic Town Committee Chairman. Don was elected to the East Hampton Town Council in 1995, serving as chair, and was re-elected to four more terms (serving through 2005).

Don is survived by Pauline, his wife of 65 years, and sons: Dean P. Markham and his wife Debbie of East Hampton, their children Nicole F. Markham of Newport, R.I., Danielle P. Mathias and her husband Greg and great-grandson Desmond of Phoenixville, Pa., and Gregory D. Markham and his wife Kira and great-grandchildren Sandra and Alexander of East Hampton; and Allan N. Markham and wife Sharon of East Hampton, and their sons David A. Markham of East Hampton, and Stephen P. Markham and his wife Colleen and great-grandson Chase of Pembroke, Mass.

The family sincerely thanks the caring and loving staff of Middletown Health Care who provided for his well-being and comfort.

Friends called at Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, on Monday, April 29. Funeral services were conducted by The Rev. Michelle Madsen-Bibeau (Haddam Neck Covenant Church) at Spencer Funeral Home on Tuesday, April 30. Burial followed at Lake View Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, the family would appreciate a donation in Don's memory to a local charity or organization such as the East Hampton Food Bank, 20 East High St., the East Hampton Ambulance Association at P.O. Box 144, or the Lake View Cemetery Fence Restoration Project at P.O. Box 71, all in East Hampton at 06424, or give the gift of life - become a blood donor with the American Red Cross.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

Anna Victoria Wierbicki

Anna Victoria Wierbicki, 86, of Colchester, widow of the late Stanley Wierbicki, passed away Tuesday, April 23, at the Middlesex Hospital. Born Sept. 3, 1926, in Rumford, Maine, she was the daughter of the late Casimir and Anna (Satkowski) Bardelis.

Mrs. Wierbicki worked her way up through the ranks at the Salem Clock Co. in Hartford, retiring as executive assistant to the president.

She and Stanley shared 65 years of marriage before he predeceased her on March 13, 2012.

She leaves two nieces and their spouses, Nancy and Jim Warren of Colchester and Bernice and Bert Rice of East Hartford; and many nieces, nephews and extended family members and friends.

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

Marlborough

David Miller

David Miller, 92, passed away Thursday, April 25, at his home in Marlborough. Born Sept. 15, 1920, in Brooklyn, N.Y., he was the son of the late Harry and Rebecca Miller.

He was predeceased by his son Harry, named after his father, in 1968, and his wife Sara in 2009.

Dave worked as a dental technician and owned Lakewood Dental Labs in Lakewood, N.J. His skill as a crown and bridge technician won him awards and recognition from the dental community for over 50 years.

Upon retirement, he moved, with his wife, to Marlborough, so that they could be closer to his family. He was a happy, giving, and supportive person who always had a smile on his face. Dave spent over 20 years as an adult leader in the Boy Scouts. His love of nature and the outdoors, his great integrity and respect for others, benefited hundreds of young people over the years.

He is survived by his sister Lynn of Modii'n, Israel; his son Bert and wife Frima of Marlborough; grandchildren Scott Miller and his wife Chrissy, Laura Miller, Erin Miller, and Emily Finkle and her husband Ryan; great-grandchildren Max, Stephanie, and Mckenzie; and many nieces and nephews.

He was laid to rest at Floral Park Cemetery, South Brunswick Township, N.J., on Sunday, April 28.

Marlborough

Genevieve Morrone

Genevieve Morrone, 92, of Glastonbury, formerly of Marlborough, died Friday, April 19, at Glastonbury Health Care. Born Aug. 10, 1920, in Hartford, Jenny was the daughter of Pete and Nellie (Blizniak) Androsko. Jenny loved flowers, and enjoyed playing golf until she was 86 years old.

Jenny is survived by a nephew, Edward Rakas and his wife Elaine of Colchester, and a niece, Marilyn Rakas of Florida.

In addition to her parents, Jenny was predeceased by a daughter, Jamie-Lyn.

A memorial service celebrating Jenny's life will be held today, May 3, at 11 a.m., at the Glastonbury Funeral Home, 450 New London Tpke., Glastonbury. Friends are invited to visitation today from 10-11 a.m., at the funeral home.

Memorial contributions can be made to the Alzheimer's Association, CT Chapter, 2075 Silas Deane Highway, Suite 100, Rocky Hill, CT 06067.

Visit glastonburyfuneral.com for more information.

Colchester

Claudette Lynch

Claudette (Chamberlain) Lynch of Colchester, widow of the late James F. Lynch, with whom she shared 30 years of marriage, passed away Thursday, April 25, at home. She was a daughter of the late David and Germaine (St. Laurent) Chamberlain.

Early on, Mrs. Lynch worked in administration for various real estate agencies before owning and operating the Burnham Employment Agency in Hartford for 20 years before her retirement. She was a communicant of St. Andrew Parish in Colchester and was an active volunteer at local nursing homes and soup kitchens.

She leaves her sister, Gail Nevins of West Hartford and Florida, and two nephews, Kevin Nevins of Stafford Springs and Mark Nevins of Harlem, N.Y. She also leaves Mary Ellen Vincenzo, a roommate and friend.

In keeping with her wishes, funeral services will be private and that as a tribute to her memory, please do a kind deed for another.

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

Colchester

Mary Dominick

Mary Dominick, 98, of Colchester, widow of the late Frederick W. Dominick, passed away Friday, April 26. Born Dec. 11, 1914, in New York, she was a daughter of the late Andrew and Theresa (Paskevitz) Swidor.

Mrs. Dominick had worked as an Administrative Assistant for the Hartford Public School system for many years before her retirement. She was a longtime communicant of St. Andrew Parish in Colchester.

She is survived by her grandchildren, Keith and Susan Augeri of Rocky Hill, Carrie and Steven Aitken of Durham and Corrin and Eric Hultgren of Middlefield; great-grandchildren Matthew, Olivia, Cody, Carson, Tyra and Tatum; and numerous extended family members and friends.

In addition to her parents and husband, she was predeceased by her daughter, Barbara Herczeg Augeri, who passed in January of this year, her brother, Gus Swidor and her sister, Anne Jaczko.

Friends may call Saturday, May 4, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, followed by a Chapel Service at 10 AM. Burial will be private.

East Hampton

Ruby Elizabeth Marquis

Ruby Elizabeth Marquis, 94, of East Hampton, widow of the late Leo Joseph Henry Marquis, died Sunday, April 28. Born Sept. 10, 1918 in Smyrna Mills, Maine, she was the daughter of the late Charles and Iva (Chase) Condon. Ruby moved to East Hampton in 1951 and raised her family.

She is survived by her sons, Leo C. Marquis of East Hampton, Eugene Marquis and his wife Wendy of Vermont; a daughter, Sharlene Gagnon of Maine; 11 grandchildren; and many great-grandchildren.

She was predeceased by two sons, Cedric and Steven.

Funeral arrangements are private. Burial will be in the family plot in Maine.

The Spencer Funeral Home has care of arrangements.

Amston

Donald Joseph Strom

Donald Joseph Strom, 90, of Amston, formerly of Hartford, husband of Lucille Jane (Schurmann) Strom, passed away peacefully Monday, April 22, in Marlborough Healthcare Center. Born in Hartford, son of the late Joseph C. and Carol (Blovsky) Strom, he lived in Hartford for many years, before moving to Amston and spending winters in Delray Beach, Fla., following his retirement.

After graduating from Bulkeley High School Class of "1942," Donald enlisted in the U.S. Coast Guard and served for three years during World War II. Upon returning to Hartford Donald worked for many years with his father (Joe) at the family owned Texaco Gas Station in Barry Square. Don took over ownership from his father and ran the service station until his retirement in 1988.

Besides his wife Lucille, Don leaves his daughter Janet LaPointe and her husband Stephen of Worcester, Mass., his four sons; Donald E. Strom and his wife Judy of Whitehall, Mont., Kenneth A. Strom and his wife Alice of Washington, Mich., James E. Strom of Imperial Beach, Calif., and David W. Strom and his wife Diana of Milwaukie, Ore.; his seven grandchildren, Judson Strom, Megan Strom, Peter Strom, Amy Strom, Adam LaPointe, Andrew LaPointe and Joy (LaPointe) Poole. Don also leaves his nine great-grandchildren, Joshua, Jackson, Austin, Aubrey, Jamison, Evangelina, Jacob, Eli and Titus.

Don is preceded in death by his twin brother, Eugene.

Funeral services were held Thursday, May 2, in St. Augustine Church, 10 Campfield Ave., Hartford. Burial with military honors will be held today, May 3, at 1 p.m., in Connecticut State Veterans Cemetery, Bow Lane, Middletown. Friends called at the Farley-Sullivan Funeral Home, 34 Beaver Rd., Wethersfield, on Thursday, May 2.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Alzheimer's Association, Connecticut Chapter, 2075 Silas Deane Hwy., Suite 100, Rocky Hill, CT 06067, alz.org.

To extend online condolences, visit farleysullivan.com.

Colchester

James R. Blanchard

James R. Blanchard, 40, passed away unexpectedly Wednesday, April 24. Born Dec. 18, 1972, he was the son of Raymond M. Blanchard and Carol (Rioux) Blanchard. They survive him.

James graduated from Griswold High School in 1990 and graduated with a Bachelor's degree from University of North Carolina at Pembroke in 1996. After graduating from college, he worked in Florida and later Reno, Nev., before moving home to help care for his mother. His devotion to her was timeless.

Furthermore, James was a devoted father and loving uncle to his nieces and nephews. He had a special way of touching all those around him and his infectious laugh will be deeply missed. James was an active person who always celebrated life. He was an avid camper, hiker, cyclist and photographer. Skiing was another one of his passions.

In addition to his parents, James is survived by two daughters, Conoly Jones Blanchard of Raeford, N.C., and Rylee Blanchard of Reno, Nev.; brothers, David Blanchard and his wife, Susan of Colchester and Michael Blanchard and wife Maryellen of Norwich; nieces and nephews, Gabrielle and Elijah Blanchard of Colchester and Christopher and Caroline Blanchard of Norwich.

The family received relatives and friends Tuesday, April 30, at Leffler Funeral Home, 30 N. Main St., Jewett City. Funeral services were private. There will be a fund established for his surviving daughters.

For the online memorial/guestbook, visit lefflerfuneralhome.com.



East Hampton

Ronald William Flood

Ronald William Flood, 69, of East Hampton, passed away peacefully at home Wednesday, April 24, after a wonderfully fulfilled life. He was born Aug. 30, 1943, in New Britain.

He leaves behind his beloved wife and best friend of 44 years, Louise (Di Fiore), daughter Kimberly and her husband Garth Colegrove of Clinton, a son, Michael, his wife Lydia Morris Flood and grandson Wayland Morris Flood of Issaquah, Wash., and his brother Gerald Flood, of Portland.

Before moving to East Hampton, Ron was a longtime resident of Durham where he enjoyed restoring a 1730 colonial house on Main Street and raising his children in the community.

He was predeceased by his parents Joseph and Margaret (Farmer) Flood, his brother Peter C Flood, and his beloved orange tabby cat of 19 years, "Dallas."

Ron truly loved people, entertaining kids with inventive games and hosting a great party. He will be forever remembered for his positive outlook on life, endless supply of jokes, infecting others with his positivity, laughing out loud often, and serving up Manhattans and Yuengling beer to guests. His children, nephews and nieces will forever remember Uncle Ronnie's legendary "snipe-hunting" adventures. His family will remember the wonderful summers spent in Charlestown Beach, R.I. He served for six years in the Connecticut Army National Guard, Company A 1st Battalion, as a paramedic and as a sharpshooter.

Ron worked for the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation and retired after 39 years of service. He had a very active retirement. He spent many hours playing golf and pool with friends and family, biking the Air Line Trail and Bristol Pike Path with Louise, reading novel upon novel, going to the casino with his closest friends, and traveling extensively throughout Europe, the Caribbean and the U.S. He enjoyed his vegetable garden and made great salsa and stuffed hot cherry peppers for friends and family each summer. His favorite moments were spent sitting in the sun or on the beach, and playing with his grandson Wayland who shares his sense of humor.

Ron enjoyed model trains, a hobby that started as a youth where he created his first train layout under his bed. During retirement, Ron built an impressive HO model railroad layout where he made much of the scenery and buildings. The trains were a delight to both young and old.

Ron leaves behind many beloved relatives, Irene and Dave Jensen, Rhodie and Paul Coleman, Catherine Slack, Mary Jane Flood, his soulmate, friend and brother-in-law Clarence "Red" Slack and many nieces and nephews.

The family would like to thank all the doctors and staff of Middlesex Hospital and Hospice for their compassionate care of Ron.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be made to Middlesex Hospital Palliative/Hospice Care, c/o Office of Philanthropy, 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457 or if you prefer to send flowers, send them to a living person in his memory.

A memorial service was held Sunday, April 28, at Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown. Friends called at Biega Funeral Home that day, prior to the service.

To share memories or express condolences online, visit biegafuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Randi L. Goldberg

Randi L. (Nirenstein) Goldberg of Holbrook, Mass., formerly of Colchester, entered into rest Wednesday, April 24.

She was the beloved wife of Alan H. Goldberg; dear daughter of Selma Nirenstein of Colchester and the late Morris Nirenstein; loving sister of Bea Rea Norman and husband Thomas of Vernon and Ruth Hollum and husband Robert of Vernon; loving sister-in-law of Marshall Goldberg and Karen W. Starr of Wayland, Mass.; cherished aunt of David Norman, Rachel Norman, and Joshua Hollum. Randi was also loved by many friends in Connecticut and Massachusetts.

The funeral service was held at Stanetsky Memorial Chapel, 475 Washington St., Canton, Mass., on Sunday, April 28, at noon, with interment at Sharon Memorial Park, Sharon, Mass. The memorial observance was at the home of Marshall Goldberg and Karen W. Starr following interment and on Monday, April 29.

Charitable contributions in memory of Randi may be made to the MSPCA, 350 South Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02130 mspca.org or the American Diabetes Association, 1701 North Beauregard St., Alexandria, VA 22311 diabetes.org or the American Lung Association, 1301 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20004 lung.org.

The online guestbook is available at stanetsky.com.

Hebron

Wesley E. Keeney

Wesley E. Keeney, 88, of Salem, formerly of Hebron, husband of the late Lorraine (Syphers) Keeney, passed on to heaven Wednesday, April 24, in Millersburg, Ohio. Wesley was born in Manchester July 13, 1924, to Howard and Hulda (Anderson) Keeney and was very proud of his family ancestry.

He was raised in Manchester, and graduated from Manchester High School in 1942 where he played high school football. He was a U.S. Navy submarine veteran stationed in Groton during World War II. He resided in Manchester, Glastonbury and Hebron before moving to Salem. He spent the last five months living at his daughter's home in Glenmont, Ohio, where he accepted Jesus Christ as his personal lord and savior on Dec. 3, 2012.

Wesley delivered milk in the Glastonbury area for the family dairy business (Dari-Maid Milk Co.) for over 40 years. He was everyone's friendly milkman who regularly delivered the milk directly into the refrigerator. He was an avid gardener, enjoyed photography, antiquing, going to flea markets, and spending time with his family and friends. Wesley was also a diehard Yankees baseball and UConn women's basketball fan.

He is survived by his six children, Susan (Exior) Voisine of Stafford Springs, Joyce (Vaughn) Evans of Westchester, Everette Keeney of East Hartford, Janet (Steve) Dwyer of Tolland, David (Judy) Keeney of Hampton and Sandra (Paul) Purdy of Glenmont, Ohio. He is also survived by nine grandchildren: Brenda Baker, Marc Voisine, Kimberly Young, Karyn Evans, Krystal Keeney, Wesley Keeney, Erika Collier, Tara Norbut and Renee Purdy; and 13 great-grandchildren.

He is also survived by a niece, Elaine Keeney of West Hartford, cousins, Donald Keeney of Hebron and Everette (Bucky) Buckland of Manchester, former wife Jeanne (Baker) Fallon of Coventry, and many, many friends who will miss him greatly, including his special nurse's aide Jamie Stocker of Killbuck, Ohio, and faithful canine companion Daisy.

In addition to his wife and parents, he was predeceased by his brother, Clifford Keeney.

A memorial service will be held at a later date to be determined.

Memorial contributions may be made to Hospice and Palliative Care of Greater Wayne County, 2525 Back Orville Rd., Wooster, OH 44691.

Colchester

Jessie Marie Smith

Jessie Marie Smith, 31, of Colchester, passed away unexpectedly on Monday, April 22. She was born Jan. 21, 1982, in Groton, a daughter of Loriann Smith and the late Michael Smith.

Jessie's belief was that anything could happen if she kept living her life fully; and that she did. Her love of music had her teaching her children classic rock and roll from the cradle. Her favorite belief was that when music hit you, you feel no pain; and she kept all types of music in her family's world. Jessie loved to laugh and was the life of a party, quick with a joke, smart remark or a kick in the ass. Living life her own way, she was a friend to have for life whose loyalty ran deep.

A loving mother, she leaves behind her beloved children, Maliya P. Dean and Leo G. Williams IV. She will always be remembered by family as a courageous woman that was striving for a better path for herself and her children to whom she was devoted. Her love and zest for life will be sadly missed.

In addition to her mother, Loriann, and Larry Mahoney with whom she made her home, she leaves her sister, Melanie L. Smith and her son, James of New London; two special sisters, Kellie and Donald Berube and their children, Alex and Andrew of Bow, N.H., and Teri DeDee and her children, Tailey Tucker, Daisy DeDee and Chevy Spencer of Antiigo, Wis.; grandparents, James and Carol Kernozek of Montville; aunts and uncles, James and Leslie Kernozek and family of Waterford and Barbara and Omar Morales and family of Norwich, Daphne and Peter Volkmer and family of Waterford, Joanne and Joe Dolan and family of Boston, Mass.; Gerald Smith and family of Quincy, Mass., and Paul and Lisa Smith and family of Crestview, Fla.; and numerous extended family members and friends.

A celebration of her life will be held at 1 p.m. Saturday, May 18, at Devil's Hopyard State Park.

Donations in her memory may be made to benefit her children, C/O Dime Bank, 630 Norwich Ave., Taftville, CT 06380.

The Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester has been entrusted with arrangements.

Colchester

Thomas Edward Oppelt

Thomas Edward Oppelt, "Tommy," of Colchester, beloved husband of Conchita Oppelt, passed away Friday, April 26, at the age of 80, after a long and courageous battle with cancer. Born on the 3rd of June in Hartford, he was the eldest son of the three children of the late Frederick and Dorothy (Callahan) Oppelt, and grew up in West Hartford on Edgemere Avenue.



He spent much of his young life with the Boy Scouts, rising to the rank of Eagle Scout. He always said it was one of the happiest times in his life. Tommy graduated from William H. Hall High School and began a long career in grocery retail. He worked for ShopRite and later, Stop and Shop until his retirement.

Patriotism was an important part of Tommy's life. He enlisted in the Army in 1952, training as a sniper and served during the Korean War with the 1745 CO E 27th Infantry Regiment and was wounded in combat. Before returning in 1954, Tommy was awarded the Korean Service Medal with two Bronze Stars, the Combat Infantry Badge and the United Nations Service and National Defense Service Medals.

Tommy's loves were golfing, bowling, playing cards and spending time with his family, especially his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Up until recently, Tommy enjoyed spending Monday nights with longtime friends bowling in a duckpin league. What started as a once-a-month friendly card game of setback turned into a marathon evening of food, drink, setback and poker (friendly, yes; competitive, definitely). It was during these occasions that the family introduced him to wine (as an addition to his favorite beer, "Bud"). He remained the setback champion right up to the last game played in the hospital several days before his death.

Nothing interfered with Tommy's yearly trips to Maine and Niantic. He loved the tranquility of the water and experienced peace and calm while being there.

In addition to his wife, Tommy is survived by his sister, Joan Oppelt Brodeur; four children, Doreen Oppelt, David Oppelt, Sandra Carrier and her husband, William, and Thomas Oppelt Jr.; his grandchildren, Rebecca Oppelt Hooper, David Oppelt, Jr., and Jason, Todd and William M. Carrier; great-grandchildren, Amber, Laurel and Isabella.

He was recently predeceased by his sister, Mary Lou Oppelt Charest Groskritz.

Tommy was an old-world gentleman who enjoyed and protected the ladies. His compassion, wonderful sense of humor and overall love for humanity will not be forgotten. The family would like to thank the "Angels" of AMC at Backus Hospital. A heartfelt "thank you" goes out to Dr. Mandeep Dhimi, who, against all odds, gave Tommy an additional three years of quality life, and to his staff for all of their wonderful care during his sickness.

The family received guests Tuesday, April 30, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A chapel service with full military honors was observed that evening. Burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Tommy's honor can be made to The National Boy Scouts of America Foundation, 1325 W. Walnut Hill Ln., Irving, Texas 75015-2079 or to the Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation, 10301 McKinstry Mill Rd., New Windsor, MD 21776-7903.