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Portland resident Brenda Mierzejewski (left) is going Hollywood – or at least her lip balm is. Lip Luxe, which Mierzejewski first cooked up in her kitchen a year ago, will be featured in celebrity gift bags at the Academy Awards on Sunday. She's shown here with her husband David and kids Brady and Leana, showing off the lip balm. Photo by Melissa Hanson, MPH Studios, East Hampton.

Local Woman's Product Meets Hollywood Royalty

by John Tyczkowski

The Oscars take place Sunday night – and Portland resident Brenda Mierzejewski is particularly excited about it.

No, she's not up for one of the prized golden statues. Rather, Mierzejewski will have her Lip Luxe lip balm featured in gift bags for 100 A-list celebrities this weekend at the 87th annual Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Awards in Los Angeles.

"I never thought I would own a lip balm business in a million years, much less have my product make it to the Oscars," she said. "Actually I was just trying to do a home remedy for myself and my family."

Mierzejewski, a stay-at-home mom of two, who had previously worked in supply chains for pharmaceutical companies, began working on the lip balm last March.

"We were in the middle of our first winter here in Portland; we had moved here in June," she said. "And our house is in a very windy place right near the Meshomasic State Forest, right on the hill there."

Mierzejewski, a longtime fan of do-it-yourself projects, said she took it upon herself to combat her family's chapped lips.

"I started to go through all these different recipes with all these different ingredients, and it took me four to five months to perfect this because I didn't know what I was doing," she said. "And I ended up creating a high-end product with natural and/or organic ingredients. I wanted something that was going to work and that wasn't going to be addicting."

To that end, Mierzejewski said some of the most important components of the lip balm are various types of essential oils.

"We use those in a variety of ways every day in my family," she said. "I'm very holistic."

At first, Mierzejewski said she made too much for her family alone, so she bought some small jewelry containers to house the leftovers, and gave them away to family and friends.

"The people who I gave it to soon came back to me and said, 'I love it; can you make more?'" Mierzejewski said. "So, I started to make hundreds of lip balms and started giving them out."

Eventually, she said her husband encouraged her to make it into a business.

"He said, 'People obviously love this stuff; you should do something with it,'" Mierzejewski said. "I love that people love this stuff, and I love doing it, so I started selling it."

Lip Luxe officially launched Oct. 31, 2014 – and soon found its way into a number of hair salons in Portland and Glastonbury.

Mierzejewski said that the road to the Oscars, however, was much more happy coincidence than planning.

Over the holidays, a friend of her brother-in-law came to visit, and things just took off from there, she said.

"He was asking me so many questions about my lip balm," Mierzejewski said. "He told me, 'Why don't I take some samples and bring it out to Beverly Hills? Maybe I can get it in a boutique.' He knows a lot of people out there."

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RHAM Chief Pitches 4.76 Percent Budget Increase

by Geeta Schrayter

Increases in a variety of line items, a flatness in state reimbursement, as well as a new way of presenting the initial budget is behind a proposed \$28,129,675 RHAM middle and high school budget for the 2015-16 fiscal year, Superintendent of Schools Bob Siminski told the regional school board last Thursday.

The proposal is an increase of \$1,278,753, or 4.76 percent, over current year spending.

Included in that spending proposal is \$941,872 in budget offsets, another \$80,517 in budget reductions and \$72,268 for new initiatives.

The budget offsets include federal and state grants as well as other non-grant revenue sources. On the federal side, \$275,338 in IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) funding is expected, as well as \$34,507 in Title I grant money; on the state side, \$392,099 in Excess Cost grant funding for special education costs, and \$101,527 in transportation grant money is expected. Non-grant revenue sources include \$105,422 in athletic use fees, \$9,969 in club user fees, \$5,259 in gate receipts, \$14,751 in E-Rate reimbursement from the federal government for items related to technology, and \$3,000 in interest.

But despite those offsets, Siminski shared this week he was concerned with the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant, which has remained flat despite inflation and enrollment changes.

"Our ECS has been pretty level-funded," he said, adding "With all the state mandates, the state has increased reimbursement for alliance districts [the 30 lowest-performing districts] but not really our reimbursement at all."

The budget reductions include the reduction of a speech and language pathologist for \$41,039 and the reduction of two paraprofessionals for \$39,478.

Speaking on those reductions, Siminski said, "those are based on recommendations of the new special education director and if you'll notice I asked for a department head in the middle school and the way I'm paying for that is to make those reductions."

Included in the money for new initiatives is \$8,372 for the creation of a special education department head at the middle school, which supplements a position that already exists at the high school.

Regarding that addition, Siminski wrote in his Feb. 12 budget memo the middle school

department head "will allow the director to restructure the department to provide services in a most cost efficient manner."

In addition, \$34,947 is included to make the school to career counselor a full-time position; \$20,431 is included to increase the desktop technician to full-time; and \$8,518 is included for 10 additional support hours for audit compliance.

Along with the above, Siminski shared the district would be working to get a Chromebook for each student in eighth grade.

"Phase two of the program will be the introduction of Chromebooks into grade nine the following year," he added.

The goals of the budget, according to Siminski's presentation, are to: continue the same level of programming, address statutory requirements in a cost effective manner, continue to implement the Common Core and teacher evaluations, fund certain capital improvements and accounts that have previously been under funded, and implement a high-deductible health plan.

* * *

As usual, the largest portion of the budget, or 66.7 percent, is made up of salaries. This is

followed by benefits at 10.5 percent. Included in the proposed budget is a 2.8 percent wage increase for certified staff, and a 1.9 percent increase for administrators as per the second year of their contract. Non-certified staff, meanwhile, is currently in negotiations.

Administrator salaries total \$1,229,170 for the 2015-16 year while certified staff comes in at \$10,773,406 and as of now, non-certified staff totals \$2,591,924.

Major areas of increase in the proposed 2015-16 budget include a \$744,630 increase in special education; a \$381,325 increase in transportation; \$302,357 for operations and maintenance; \$51,276 for instructional supplies; and \$24,649 for textbooks.

Regarding some of those increases, Siminski said, "I think that as far as instructional supplies and textbooks [go] there are a couple things of note: in November/December the coordinators were before the board to talk about their departments. And at that time the board asked all budgetary needs be included in the budget and [the proposed] budget reflects that and so I think you'll see some areas of increase there."

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Woman's Product cont. from Front Page

She gave him some samples and marketing materials, not knowing what to expect. However, it turned out that his sister was Sylvia Ortega, who runs Sylvia Sylver PR in Los Angeles.

"He told her, 'This girl, my best friend's sister-in-law, has this awesome product with great branding and a great logo; it's been flying off the shelves,'" Mierzejewski said. "And she has an in with everyone in Beverly Hills and Hollywood, including the people at the gifting suites for Oscars, Grammys, Tonys, etc."

After showing them some samples, even though the contents of Oscar gift bags had already been finalized, Lip Luxe was allowed in last minute.

"They said, 'We want her to be a part of the gifting bags,'" she said. "It was just insane, I wasn't expecting this to happen, [Ortega] wasn't even expecting it to happen, it was very surreal."

Normally, the process of selecting products for the gift bags takes months, she said.

Mierzejewski hired Ortega to help them out, and before long, all of the lip balm had been delivered to California, waiting for Oscar weekend.

"We went from 0-60, and producing enough in time was hectic," she said. "But it's totally worth it, the exposure will be huge."

The gift bags themselves are each valued at roughly \$20,000, and will be distributed this weekend at the Roger Neal Style Hollywood Ultimate Beauty & Couture Suite at the Luxe Hotel on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills.

Mierzejewski says that over the past few weeks, she's been contacted and interviewed by a multitude of TV stations, newspapers and magazines in the state.

"The news in Connecticut got hold of what I've been doing, and it's just been crazy around here," she said, noting that she's also made appearances on morning news programs. "I'm not used to any of this media frenzy; usually I'm home, baking, cooking and cleaning and going to gymnastics or karate and whatever it might be that day."

"It's changed our lives," she continued, "but it's all kind of happened at a good time."

Mierzejewski also said whenever anyone purchases her lip balm, they'll be helping a local Cromwell chapter of a national non-profit organization, Little Hearts. She said she decided to do that because of her family's personal connection to the organization, she said.

"When my son Brady was four months old, [doctors] heard a murmur in his heart, and they thought it was benign," she said. "Still, we had it checked at Yale, and it turned out he had a very major heart defect."

Mierzejewski said Brady's congenital heart was known as a "one-in-a-million heart defect," and that it soon caused a second heart problem for him.

"So we learned he had two heart defects that needed to be remedied immediately or else we would lose him, possible in his sleep," she said. "He had no symptoms whatsoever; it was like a silent killer inside my son's body. We would never have known why, if something happened."

The Mierzejewskis took Brady into Boston for open-heart surgery, which saved his life.

"They really got us through this," she said of Little Hearts. "They provide a lot of resources



for families with members with congenital heart defects."

These include lists and reviews of hospitals and doctors, but also the practice of matching up families who had experienced the same types of defects in their families.

"They hook you up with another family that went through the same thing," Mierzejewski said. "They were able to find one family who went through the same thing as us, and I was able to talk to the mother and find out what she went through."

She said Little Hearts was "very, very helpful," and she's been looking for the past few years for a way to pay the organization back for all of their help.

"And now that we're doing this lip balm thing, I said, 'There's no way I'm not gonna do something for Little Hearts,'" Mierzejewski said. "I wanted it to be something big, too."

A portion of the proceeds from every purchase goes back to the Cromwell chapter.

"We write a check at the end of every month," she said. "It's a wonderful way to be able to really give back to them and finally really thank them."

Next on the horizon for Mierzejewski and Lip Luxe is a Kickstarter campaign to help build and grow the business's presence in Portland. Mierzejewski is hoping to launch the campaign this spring.

"We're looking at some industrial spaces in Portland to move it out of the house so we can expand and grow the business," she said. "We want to hopefully create some jobs in town for local people. It's a really big thing for us."

Mierzejewski said the town government has been supportive of the idea and has been "glad to help."

"We've talked to so many people in town; they're very supportive and they want to do whatever they can to help us get in somewhere," she said. "They really do support local businesses. There's a lot of opportunity here; Portland has a lot of manufacturing and industrial places to work with."

Even before that, though, Mierzejewski said Lip Luxe has another surprise in store for customers.

"We do have a new product coming out in March – a lip scrub. It's like the crème de la crème of what women want," she said. "And we still have plenty of things left in the pipeline."

But for now, Mierzejewski is enjoying her Tinseltown moment.

"This is something that I never would have expected to happen," she said. "I'm incredibly happy and still can't believe it's happening."

RHAM Chief cont. from Page 9

Siminski furthered language textbooks were needed as well as math textbooks that emphasize the Common Core.

Health insurance, meanwhile, which usually sees an increase, is expected to decrease \$36,387 over the current year, due to the implementation of a high deductible health plan for all teachers.

For the 2015-16 year, health insurance is listed at \$3,046,417.

As Siminski stated, the budget was presented differently this year, with the requests of coordinators and principals shown with no reductions made by Siminski. As a result of the changes, Siminski wrote in his memo "the budget as presented is substantially greater than a recommended budget."

The athletic budget includes a request for \$528,455 (with a \$105,422 offset from user fees and a \$7,959 offset from gate receipts). While club advisors requested \$117,322 (with a \$9,969 user fee offset).

Also impacting the budget is school choice, which allows students to opt out of attending RHAM schools for a magnet, vocational or agricultural school. For the 2015-16 year an

estimated 107 students will make use of school choice, which comes with a price tag of \$380,800.

* * *

The RHAM budget is funded through each of the three towns in the region– Hebron, Marlborough and Andover – and what each pays is based on how many students are enrolled at the two schools. Hebron continues to have the most students, and is responsible for the largest portion of the budget, at 55.83 percent. Marlborough follows at 29.65 percent, while Andover will account for 14.52 percent. If the budget were approved as presented, this would equate to \$4,084,429 for Andover (an increase of \$135,390); \$8,340,449 for Marlborough (an increase of \$547,079); and \$15,704,797 for Hebron (an increase of \$601,284).

But the budget process is far from over. Now that the initial numbers have been presented, a number of budget meetings have been scheduled to work through the items. The next such meeting is scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 28, at 9 a.m.

For information on the budget, go to reg8.k12.ct.us and click "Budget Info."

Marlborough Selectmen Look at First Draft of Town Ops Budget

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

The Board of Selectmen took its first look at an early draft of the town operations budget on Tuesday.

The draft, which has many placeholders and items that First Selectwoman Cathi Gaudinski stressed will change, is a proposed 2.88 percent increase for town operations totaling \$4,745,519. The 2014-15 approved town operations budget was \$4,612,856.

The draft budget features no anticipated layoffs, Gaudinski said. She also walked the selectmen through some of the largest proposed changes during Tuesday's meeting.

In the salaries line, the biggest increase is a proposed 13.33 percent bump for clerical work in the selectmen office, totaling \$43,056. The 2014-15 approved budget amount was \$37,993. According to Gaudinski, the increase is for the secretary in her office. Last year, Gaudinski proposed a 23 percent increase for the secretary, but that raise wound up getting cut to 10 percent. Therefore, the proposed 13.33 percent increase this year would add up to what it would have been if the 23 percent increase was passed last year. Gaudinski said this raise is to adjust the salary closer to that unionized employees receive.

There is also a new position included in the

proposed budget for \$4,992. This position would be the addition of a part-time financial clerk who would work six hours a week and aid assistant treasurer Hayley Wagner.

Gaudinski also said there has been a request to add four additional hours to the town clerk assistant, to total 24 hours a week. This would be a 2.47 percent increase, from \$21,617 to \$22,151.

In the tax collector line, there is a 12.94 percent decrease in clerical work, from \$21,180 to \$18,440. Gaudinski said this is because the person formerly working in the position had been there 10 years and a new person would be at a lower pay.

In the treasurer line, technology refresh went from \$1,000 to \$4,000 to operate the MUNIS accounting software. Wagner said the town only has one more year on their current edition of MUNIS before it no longer works.

In the legal line, it was decreased by \$10,000, from \$90,000 to \$80,000. Gaudinski said not many contracts are up so they felt safe decreasing the amount for legal.

The assessor line, Gaudinski said, is based off actual expenses. The amount increased by 1.55 percent from \$84,378 to \$85,690.

Another increase, Gaudinski said, is in com-

pensated absences. This account is proposed to rise from \$45,552 to \$68,764. Gaudinski said the account is to pay out vacation time and sick days to Town Hall staff members in the event they are not re-elected this fall. (2015 is a municipal election year.)

In the draft of the budget, Gaudinski said, there were a number of placeholders for amounts not yet determined. These included the number for electricity in town hall, insurance and bonds, the photo copier and contracted services for the land use department, electricity for the library, electricity for the senior center and electricity for the food bank. Other unknown items were professional costs for parks and recreation since they are moving around some positions and salaries, vehicle maintenance for the fire department, electricity for the firehouses, the amount for the resident state trooper, and electricity for the town garage.

The selectmen also have a chance to ponder \$22,000 requested by Jane Boston, chair of the Economic Development Committee. According to a letter Boston sent to Gaudinski, the committee is requesting \$16,500 for a marketing study, \$4,000 for consultant services and \$1,500 for events and sponsorships.

Although the town currently is over budget for snow removal for 2014-15, the number is staying the same in the town operations budget for 2015-16 at \$150,000.

Gaudinski stressed at the meeting this is a preliminary budget. The selectmen have yet to receive the local Board of Education budget, the RHAM budget, the AHM budget, the debt service amounts and anything regarding revenue.

* * *

Also at the meeting, the selectmen discussed sending letters to residents in town that have not cleared their sidewalks.

"We don't want to go and fine people," Gaudinski said.

The selectmen chose, instead of sending a public letter in the newspaper detailing the ordinance, to send the current offenders letters alerting them of town ordinances regarding snow removal.

Gaudinski also said Town Hall has received complaints about people pushing snow into the road after the plows have gone by.

* * *

The selectmen will be revisiting the town operations proposed budget Tuesday, Feb. 24, at 5:30 p.m., at Town Hall.

Marlborough Resident's Book Aims to Teach About 9/11 Attacks

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

A little over three years ago, Tracy Popolizio's daughter, Lexie, then 9, came home from school wanting to learn more about the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001; however, there were no age-appropriate books.

"I found one book for her Kindle, but it was completely inappropriate," Popolizio, a longtime Marlborough resident, said.

Popolizio began realizing there was no book of its kind for children ages 9-13, many of which weren't born yet, or were babies, when the Sept. 11 attacks occurred. A special education teacher who had written some poetry, Popolizio began diving into writing a book of her own for her daughter, something historical and inspirational for Lexie to learn about the attacks, which she called *The Longest New York Minute*.

"There was no personal connection to 9/11," Popolizio said. "That day affected me in a different way. I was expecting my daughter when it happened. I thought, 'What kind of world am I bringing her into?'"

Popolizio didn't tell anyone about writing the book and just began researching the topic.

"It was never something that was on my bucket list or a dream," Popolizio said of writing a book. "I found myself engulfed."

Popolizio – who said New York City has always been a special place for her family, since she visits there often with her mother – found herself in the city walking the streets and envisioning her main character, Jessica's, life.

"I picked out her apartment, her school, and her church," Popolizio said. "There was even a little café I put in the book too."

The book is centered around 13-year-old Jessica Bianchi, who has a close-knit Christian

family in New York City. Jessica's biggest problem is that her father doesn't seem to understand her anymore. However, her safe, secure world crumbles on Sept. 11, 2001, when her father goes missing. According to the synopsis, Jessica's faith is tested in ways that didn't seem possible and she is forced to survive the terror long enough to find her father and right the wrong between them.

"I have an opportunity to teach the whole next generation who weren't around or were just coming into the world," Popolizio said.

Popolizio said she's working on two other books – and that all of her books have a main character with some sort of trait that other kids can relate to.

"She did something courageous, even though she was terrified," Popolizio said of Jessica. "They can do that too."

Popolizio said she was surprised that writing came quite easily to her.

"I had all these different ideas and my fingers just kept going," Popolizio said. "[Jessica] became alive to me."

Popolizio found herself writing on airplanes and during the hour and a half her children were at gymnastics, squeezing in as much as she could in short periods of time.

"I didn't go in order," Popolizio said of her writing process. "I knew the end and filled the rest in."

Lexie was the first one to read *The Longest New York Minute* – and she was also its first critic.

"She didn't like the ending so I added an epilogue," Popolizio said. "I figured if she didn't like it, then others wouldn't either."

Lexie was also involved during the research

process.

"I showed her things during the research and she was speechless and disturbed," Popolizio said. "Her biggest question was if the main character's father was going to die or if she would find him."

Although the book is faith-based, Popolizio stressed people of all faiths will enjoy it.

"It can speak to anybody," Popolizio said. "I wanted to inspire people and make them feel like they were there."

Popolizio said naming her characters was also a special process for her.

"Jessica's last name is in honor of my husband's deceased grandmother," Popolizio said.

Overall, she's just excited to get the book to children.

"I'm getting a good book out there that they can be inspired by," Popolizio said.

Writing the book took until December 2013, then Popolizio began editing for another six months before finding somewhere to publish it.

"I did a lot of research and praying," Popolizio said. "Being a young adult, faith-based book, I didn't attempt secular companies. I compiled a list of Christian companies. I briefly explored self-publishing, but it was too expensive. As I was looking into hiring an agent, Tate Publishing popped up and it sort of fell exactly into place."

In July 2014, the book was accepted and has been in the publishing process ever since.

"It's been exciting and nerve-wracking," Popolizio said. "When going through the process with Tate, they asked if I was interested in speaking engagements and I said no way. As



Resident Tracy Popolizio recently published her first novel, *The Longest New York Minute*.

things progressed, I realized I needed to."

Popolizio's next public appearance will be Friday, Feb. 27, at 8:45 a.m., at Hebron Elementary School, for Read Across America.

"It's been a whirlwind," Popolizio said of the entire process, describing it as "just a fun thing to do. I don't feel any different."

Although the official release of *The Longest New York Minute* isn't until next Tuesday, Feb. 24, people can purchase the book through Popolizio or through Tate Publishing on tracypopbooks.com.

Colchester Budget Survey Sees Rise in Responses, Comments

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

Each year, when putting together the town budget, Colchester officials post an online survey, seeking input from residents on what they would like to see included or changed in the spending plan.

And this year, more people than ever before offered their two cents on how they'd like to see their cents – and dollars – spent.

Board of Finance Chairman Rob Tarlov said 659 people responded to the survey, an increase over last year's 634 responses, which was also a record. Tarlov said it's been great to see a large amount of people answering, and also writing in individual comments.

"I'm happy with the progress we're making," Tarlov said. "I feel we're beginning to get more and more citizens involved in providing feedback."

"The response was really good," First Selectman Stan Soby said. "More participation and more feedback is helpful."

Soby credited the budget survey subcommittee – comprised of members of the boards of selectmen, education and finance – with its hard work in coming up with the questions to try and get answers that were helpful.

The respondents "give us a good reflection of where we generally might be," Soby said. "It's a good set of data we can work with."

Tarlov said helping to spike the response total were Facebook pages reminding residents to answer the survey, and a 2,500 person email blast, that went out the week the survey opened.

After the original email blast, the survey saw a spike in respondents during the 18 hours that followed, Tarlov said.

The survey was available for residents to answer from Jan. 12 to Feb. 1.

Tarlov noted that last year, 1,800 people voted in the first budget referendum – so the survey respondents represent more than a third of the people actually voting on the budget.

One thing Tarlov said he was especially impressed with this year was the number of people who gave individual comments.

"Almost half provided comments somewhere," Tarlov said.

"Comments that were made were also generally helpful for us to know what people are thinking and what they're willing to accept during the budget process," Soby said. "It provides some guidance going forward as we build the budget."

Although with a diverse population, Tarlov said, all of that information can contradict itself and make creating the budget a true "balancing act."

"One comment says we don't need 24/7 police coverage, while another one says we do," Tarlov said. "We have a very diverse population with diverse needs and diverse wants."

Tarlov said it's difficult to create a responsible budget because "how do you create a budget to respond to the needs of so many people?"

When they first look at the budget, Tarlov said, they look at the cost of maintaining the

services the town currently has. Tarlov credited the department heads with finding innovative ways to cut costs and perform the services in a less-expensive way.

"How can you [maintain the services] as effectively and efficiently as possible?" Tarlov asked. "As a group, we don't cut services until the voter has a chance."

Tarlov said after Board of Finance members look at what it costs to maintain services, they begin looking at the additional needs that have been requested and sort through them by importance, urgency and cost.

"We've been very cautious of putting new things in the budget," Tarlov said. "Over the last five-plus years, we've done a remarkable job of trying to do things more efficiently and effectively."

"We're really trying to be able to deliver the services people want and expect and at a cost people can afford to pay," Soby said.

Tarlov said the Board of Finance looks at items that have historically been in the budget but may not be necessary, and also tries to do things more by email as to cut costs of paper and postage.

"It really is a balancing act to balance the needs of the population with the ability of the population to pay for those things," Tarlov said.

Two of the biggest things Tarlov said they saw come up with the survey results included building maintenance and road maintenance. Tarlov said they also saw an importance in pub-

lic safety and school security.

"I think the [William J. Johnston Middle School] building project opened peoples' eyes," Tarlov said, referring to the 2013 proposal to renovate and expand the facility. "They had an opportunity to tour the school during the first go-around, and were astounded on how things had gotten."

Tarlov said when cuts were made previously, maintenance was one of the first to get cut, but the town is now "paying the price to catch up."

"Last year, when the budget went down several times, we tried not to cut capital and maintenance," Tarlov said. "You only push it down the road."

"For some people, this has been a very slow recovery and we need to be mindful of that," Soby said. "We've also been trying the past few years to catch up on things that were put off."

Soby said the town has been trying to catch up on items in a way that people see as reasonable and affordable.

Continuing on the road to the final budget, Tarlov encouraged residents to attend the Tuesday, March 3, meeting where Soby and the Board of Education will present their respective budgets to the Board of Finance. That meeting will be at 7 p.m. at Town Hall.

Tarlov also encouraged residents to attend the Monday, March 9, public forum at 7 p.m. also at Town Hall, to further comment on the budget.

Despite Weather Delay, *Shrek the Musical* was "Shrektabulous" in Colchester

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

The fart jokes were smelly, Lord Farquaad was eaten by a dragon, a talking donkey gained a new friend and true love prevailed.

The cast of *Shrek the Musical* beat the hurricane-like winds to perform their final show at 4 p.m. Sunday, shining on stage and making adults and children laugh and forget the chilly weather outside. I was one of those that braved the weather to arrive at Bacon Academy ready for the show.

Presented by Colchester Community Theatre and sponsored by the Colchester Parks and Recreation, the cast and crew made it through all four performances beside for a two-hour delay on Sunday.

Using an arrangement by Music Theatre International, the musical is based on the Oscar-winning DreamWorks animation film and book written by William Steig in 1990. According to the synopsis for the musical, Shrek learns that real friendship and true love aren't only found in fairy tales.

The play, which was directed by Wallis Johnson, opened with the childhood tales of Shrek and Fiona, both cast away from their homes by their parents when they were only seven years old. Austin Brown played Little Shrek while Little Fiona was played by Katarina Bromkamp. Bromkamp surprised with her singing ability, and she definitely shined in "I Know It's Today."

Then the large cast of fairy tale creatures were introduced and their peril of being cast out of Duloc and into Shrek's swamp after an eviction notice signed by Lord Farquaad. Led by Amy Polek playing Pinocchio, the group rallied behind Shrek who agrees to go to Farquaad to get the swamp back and the creatures back into their homes.

However, the character that really made the crowd laugh was Donkey, played by Steve Sabol. After being saved by Shrek from the Duloc guards, Sabol stole the show with his humor and jibes at topics ranging from Stepford

wives to tourists decked out in souvenirs.

Mike Byrne, a fourth-grade teacher at Jack Jackter Intermediate School, perfectly portrayed Lord Farquaad and his struggles to find a princess. Together with his guards and right-hand man Thelonius, played by Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein, he tortures the Gingerbread Man, played by Kelsey Gamble, and sends Shrek and Donkey along to save Fiona from her dragon-guarded castle. It was also revealed later in the show that Farquaad's father is one of the seven dwarves, Grumpy, hence the line that men like him are in "short" supply.

A strong voice of the show was Dragon, voiced by Chelsea Kelle. Manned by four people, Dragon is described as a "babysitter" to Fiona, fed up with never finding love herself. She came alive on stage, and winds up falling in love with Donkey.

After a short intermission, there were two full minutes of burps and farts, and then Shrek, played by Kevin Shirey, and Fiona, played by Elizabeth Shapiro, finally began falling for each other on the way back to Duloc. Those two minutes, though, in the song "I Think I Got You Beat," had everyone in the audience laughing, whether they were 2 years old or 60.

With Donkey's encouragement, Shrek wanted to confront Fiona about his love; however, he overhears a conversation and misunderstands it. Instead, he leads Farquaad to Fiona, handing over the princess, getting his swamp back, and potentially losing his one true love. Shirey was great in his rendition of "When Words Fail," portraying a lovestruck ogre with no idea how to handle his feelings. Shirey's performance all around was spot on, including adopting a Scottish accent to sound like Shrek.

The fairy tale creatures then led a riot when they were thrown out of the swamp, but not given a place to live. They ended up crashing the wedding of Farquaad and Fiona along with Shrek, Donkey and Dragon. Farquaad was then



Kevin Shirey, who played Shrek in Colchester Community Theatre's performance of *Shrek the Musical* last weekend, is photographed here singing "When Words Fail."

eaten, Fiona and Shrek were able to figure out they love each other and the fairy tale creatures get their home back.

The cast had perfected the transformation of Fiona from a human into an ogre through the use of a stunt double, played by Emma Filosa.

The cast of *Shrek the Musical* had a lot of fun with the ending, dancing to "I'm a Believer." Some of the cast members entered the audience, dancing and stirring up cheer.

Throughout the play, the choreography by Lesley Gallagher was excellent with dancing

rats, the Duloc greeters and the three blind mice especially. The music was directed by Nathaniel Baker, a newcomer to the CCT family. Baker managed on Sunday to pull off amazing music with a pit orchestra that was down by a few people due to the delay. I do hope that Baker continues with CCT in next year's performance.

CCT performances never fail to disappoint, and *Shrek the Musical* was loved by everyone. It was lighthearted and family-friendly, with lots of humor and love. It will be exciting to see what play CCT does next in 2016.

EHHS Building Committee Tosses Project Manager

by John Tyczkowski

At its meeting last Thursday, the East Hampton High School Building Committee voted unanimously to direct Town Manager Michael Maniscalco to send a letter of dismissal, for cause, to the Capital Region Education Council (CREC) within 30 days.

Maniscalco declined to comment on the exact details of the reasons for dismissal until after the letter had been drafted and sent.

However, allegations circulated at a special Town Council meeting two weeks ago, and at an earlier committee meeting, that the state received some key paperwork from CREC months after the specified deadline.

Committee members said they only learned of the required paperwork around Thanksgiving, when CREC told them it had not been submitted yet.

In addition, the committee members said CREC had told them it would take care of re-submitting the document, and that they were caught unaware by the renovation status change last month.

East Hampton hired CREC before the 2013 referendum on the \$51 million high school renovation project to serve as manager.

CREC communications specialist Amanda

Falcone said the committee was “disappointed in the town of East Hampton’s decision.”

“As our clients, East Hampton is important to us,” Falcone said, “and we would have liked the opportunity to continue to work with the town to help resolve any issues concerning the high school building.”

Falcone added, “We will continue to provide the best possible service to the town of East Hampton until the end of our agreement.”

Building Committee Vice Chairwoman Michele Barber said the committee has formed a two-member sub-committee, consisting of Cynthia Abraham and Stephen Kearney, to begin the search for a new project manager.

“They’re going to do their due diligence, which includes a request for qualifications and a request for project proposals,” she said. “They’ll be looking at individuals and companies. Once they come up with options, we’ll discuss it as a committee and it’ll go through the hiring process as required by the town.”

The EHHS building project is in jeopardy due to its reimbursement class being changed from renovate-as-new to extensive alteration/roof replacement, which necessitates its area be cut from 118,000 square feet to below 99,000

square feet. This is because the state believes the high school is oversized relative to its student body size.

If those 19,000 square feet aren’t cut from the project, the town could lose out on \$7 million in state reimbursement funds.

(The state’s Department of Administrative Services reserves the right to change renovation status at any time during a project, for any reason.)

In the meantime, state Sen. Art Linares and state Rep. Melissa Ziobron have included East Hampton in a comprehensive education bill alongside language that would exempt the high school from DAS’ reimbursement standards.

This legislative remedy is patterned after several other fixes for similar cases around the state in the last two years, Linares and Ziobron have said. They said the bill is likely to head to the General Assembly floor near the end of the session in May.

However, to prepare for the worst, Glenn Gollenberg, a principal with the project’s architects, the SLAM Collaborative, has presented the committee with a plethora of possible options for the building.

These options range from demolishing the

school library to even adding eighth-graders to EHHS, thus increasing the student body and rendering the school not as oversized in the state’s eyes. However, Barber stressed these are not concrete courses of action.

“The options SLAM presented are only options we could utilize if the legislative remedy or other fixes don’t come to fruition,” she said. “It’s a necessary exercise to see how we could meet both state requirements and hold to the referendum amount for the taxpayers.”

In addition, Barber said the communications subcommittee will be working with Superintendent of Schools Diane Dugas to create a fact sheet detailing the progress of the renovation project, as well as clarifying state regulations and town obligations.

“It’ll be for public consumption: on the website, in the newspaper, we want residents to be fully informed about all the facts,” she said.

Barber also encouraged interested residents to attend the Town Council meeting next Tuesday, Feb. 24, which she anticipated would have an agenda item pertaining to the high school building project. The meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. at Town Hall.

Portland Group Aims to Make Town Pedestrian-, Bike-Friendly

by John Tyczkowski

The state of Portland’s sidewalks and roads are about to change for the better, if one citizen’s group has anything to say about it.

“At our core, we want to make Portland an easier and safer place to get around,” Kathy Herron, chair of the eight-member Complete Streets Group (CSG), said.

In the group’s own words, the CSG is dedicated to improving Portland’s streets and making them safer and accessible for all users, from pedestrians to cyclists to motorists and more. The group also seeks to promote non-motorized modes of transportation, as well as healthy living.

The Complete Streets movement has its origins in a 1971 law enacted in Oregon, which aimed to make pedestrian and bike accessibility along town roads mandatory. Sixteen other states enacted similar laws by 2005, when the National Complete Streets Coalition was established.

Connecticut enacted its Complete Streets law in 2010. Under this legislation, all state-funded transportation projects must consider integrating Complete Streets principles into their plans, and the state encourages towns to implement local laws introducing Complete Streets principles.

The state Department of Transportation also adopted its own Complete Streets policy based on that law last October. The policy lays out specific objectives for increasing access to safe, reliable and ubiquitous transportation, as well as promoting transportation conducive to a healthy lifestyle and improving access to municipal activity centers, among others.

The CSG also enjoys a close relationship with the Air Line Trail Steering Committee (ALT steering committee) because of their overlapping goals. Since one of the CSG’s goals is to increase pedestrian accessibility in town, the collaboration is a natural one, Herron said.

In fact, the CSG became an independent group to focus on the issue of increasing non-motorized transportation accessibility to not just the Trail but also to other parts of town not easily accessible to pedestrians and cyclists.

“We decided a big part of bringing the Air Line Trail to town would be having good routes to it and good access,” she said. “We were originally going to be a subcommittee, but [First

Selectwoman Susan Bransfield] thought the scope would be too wide, so we became our own citizens’ action group.”

So far, the CSG has documented sections of town infrastructure that require immediate attention. This chiefly consists of damaged and unsafe sidewalks along the state highways in town, Herron said.

In a planning document from the CSG, the group lists some of its goals over the next year as compiling a list of all sidewalks in town, gathering public input on issues to address and enlisting the Board of Selectmen in creating a town-wide Complete Streets Plan.

“Creating a Complete Streets Plan is a major goal of ours for the year,” Herron said. “There’s a variety of transportation issues in town we want to address.”

She said the CSG is also planning to become very involved in providing input for the town’s process of updating its Plan of Conservation and Development.

“The idea is once we’ve completed our Plan, we’ll be able to pass along all or part of it to [the Plan of Conservation and Development] through [Town Planner] Deanna Rhodes,” Herron said.

Along those lines, the CSG will be working with Kevin Grindle of Anchor Engineering, who also works with the ALT steering committee.

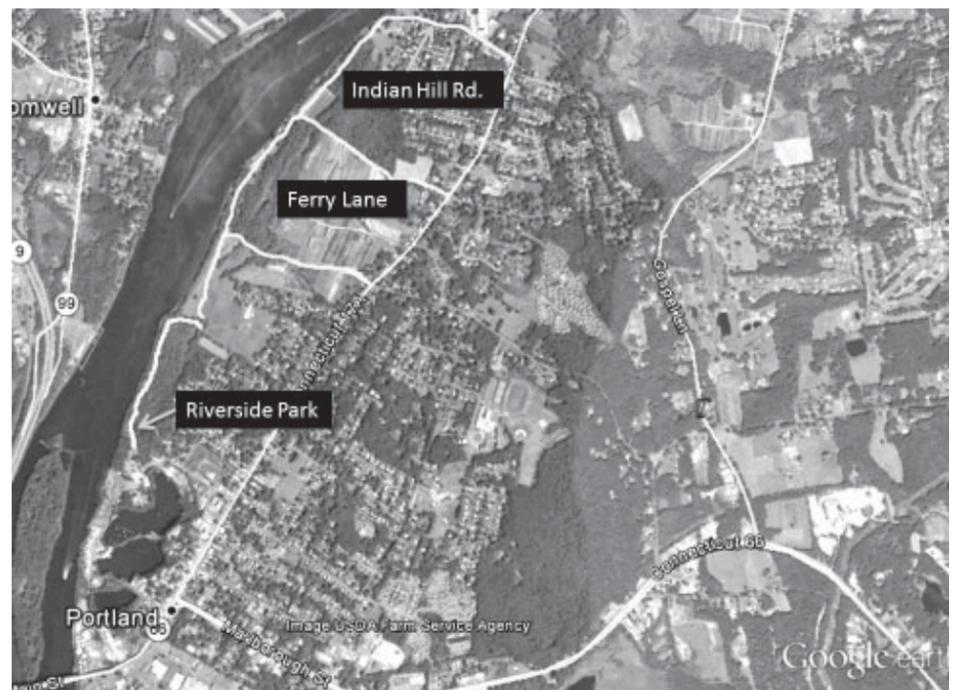
“He’ll be putting together a base map of the town over the next six months, which identifies key areas which we want worked on,” she said. “These ‘nodes of interest’ will be ranked most to least important so we can create a checklist.”

Herron said another major goal of the CSG is to increase cooperation with the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments (RiverCOG), a regional governing body.

Last month, the CSG submitted a Regional Transportation Plan to the RiverCOG consisting of three long-term goals.

These include attempts to enforce speed limits on Main Street and make the street friendlier to bicycles, and a study of a 2.5-mile stretch of Route 66 between Main Street and the entrance to YMCA Camp Ingersoll.

The final and most ambitious long-term goal would be to create a trail from Portland to



Above, a map showing a section of proposed trail along the river from Riverfront Park to Glastonbury, including possible access routes from Main St. Below, a section of sidewalk in need of repair on Fairview Street, across from Brownstone Intermediate School.

Glastonbury, following the river.

“That came about because some folks suggested to the ALT steering committee that they hike from Riverfront Park to Glastonbury,” she said. “The members that went thought said it was an awesome resource, and that it would be great to have that as an official trail.”

Herron said the CSG always welcomes more public input, both regarding its planned projects and anything else residents think warrants a look. Specifically, she said, the group will hold a public meeting in the spring for that purpose.

The group’s next meeting is Thursday, March 19, at 6:30 p.m. at the Portland Public Library.

Group members are chairwoman Kathy Herron, Dave Berthiaume, Chantal Foster, John Hall, Chris Darby, Jon Johnson, Bob Herron and Alice Schumacher.



March Looks Promising for Elmcrest Development Process in Portland

by John Tyczkowski

Residents of Portland will have two opportunities next month voice their opinions on how the Elmcrest Campus property should be handled.

At the Elmcrest Campus Advisory Committee's monthly meeting Monday, committee member and de facto chair Elwin Guild said these opportunities will come March 5 and March 17.

"We want all of the citizens to know that they have an important role in shaping development," he said. "These are two times everyone will have the chance to make themselves heard publicly."

On Thursday, March 5, the town will hear input from residents regarding its Plan of Conservation and Development, which is up for revision and replacement in 2016. The meeting will take place at 7 p.m. at the Portland Waverly Center (formerly Portland Senior Center) on Waverly Avenue.

The plan is a document designed to guide development in Portland, and to serve as an advisory document for the town's Planning and Zoning Commission. It's updated every decade, and each town and city in the state is required to have one.

The over-150-page document contains sec-

tions on everything from environmental conservation around town to village center revitalization plans to residential and business district expansion, and more.

The contractor working with the town on the document will be Avon-based Planimetrics, who previously handled the 2006 plan.

What to do with the 14-acre Elmcrest campus has been named as one of the plan's top priorities, Guild said.

The Elmcrest Campus, vacant since 2006, has had its development status in limbo for the past six years. The 2008 recession stalled plans for the proposed Portland TownPlace mixed-use development residential and commercial space.

The three historic properties on the parcel are the Hart-Jarvis House, the Erastus Brainerd, Jr. House and the John H. Sage House. Development plans for the proposed Portland TownPlace had called for the destruction of two of these structures.

However, a grant from the Connecticut Vibrant Communities Initiative the town obtained last fall provided for their preservation and incorporation into development alongside modern buildings at the campus.

"It's an important plan to provide input for because it's all for the betterment of the town,

economic, environmental, or in some other way," he said. "I would love to see a huge turnout there, not just for Elmcrest but for all issues in town."

The Tuesday, March 17, public meeting will focus solely on the Elmcrest property's future, and will include ECAC members and town officials. It will take place at 7 p.m. at a location to be determined.

The Boston-based Cecil Group is working with the town as a consultant for the Elmcrest project. The company has headed up similar redevelopment projects in Massachusetts in Salem, Newburyport and Lowell.

The Committee also established its first Facebook page this week. Linked to the group's main website, ElmcrestPortlandCT.com, the Facebook page will serve primarily as a way to keep interested residents up-to-date on meetings and new developments in the process.

"It's another way to get our message out, and to help people participate in the process," Guild said. "And we want it to grow."

The page has nearly 50 'likes' as of press time.

In addition, Guild said the town established a steering committee to work with the Cecil

Group, the developers selected to work on the Elmcrest Campus property.

A sampling of the committee's membership includes stakeholders from the ECAC, Portland Historical Society, Shelton-based property owner Fred Hassan, a developer representative and town planner Deanna Rhodes. The committee will meet on a monthly basis to provide an additional source of information alongside public input.

"The group's not too large but it's very diverse," he said. "I think it's another important step, a very significant step. We've been hearing all along from the town that 'We want your input along the way,' and they're sticking with it."

The Elmcrest Campus Advisory Committee's Facebook page can be found at facebook.com/PortlandECAC. The Facebook page is also accessible from the main page of the website.

Also, the town's 2006 Plan of Conservation and Development can be found at portlandct.org/Portals/12/Departments/LandUse/PDF/PlanofConservation.pdf.

Portland Group Marks 25 Years of 'Healing Power of Music'

by John Tyczkowski

Joyce Ghent was working as a nurse in the Middlesex Hospital ICU one evening when she started singing softly to an unresponsive patient.

And then, the Portland resident saw a response.

"I've always known music has a great healing power," Ghent said. "It was amazing to see that in action."

Ghent has been a nurse at Middlesex Hospital for 57 years, and she also has a "very, very strong" musical background.

"I was a musician long before I was a nurse," she said. "I was a piano player for years."

Ghent said while she's seen music used in her professional life that way, such as for triggering memories in Alzheimer's patients, she's also used it personally.

"I took care of my mother-in-law for the last three months of her life, at home," she said. "I had soft music on all the time. It was so soothing for her; it's medicinal."

And that's why she founded the Middlesex Vocal Chords music group in February of 1990.

"My husband, Paul, was a big encouragement. He said 'The idea is there, but you have to make it grow,'" she said. "I can't give him enough credit. He supported me, critiqued, took tickets, stored risers in our garage, he was wonderful."

Also, Ghent wanted to give credit to Ann Masselli of Portland, the friend who actually referred her to Gina Fredericks, who became the Vocal Chords' music director.

"She was very instrumental in the very beginning, she's a beautiful person and was a big help starting the group," she said.

Masselli also served for several years as the group's accompanist and junior director.

Lastly, Ghent wanted to extend "a huge thank you" to Middlesex Hospital.

"You wouldn't have [the Vocal Chords] at all if it wasn't for them," she said. "They believed in me, and they believed in my idea."

The group, currently at 87 members, draws mainly from the immediate area, but there are members from Lebanon, Madison and Burlington as well.

Over the past 25 years, the group has performed in venues ranging from Disney World to the U.S. Senate chambers to the Vatican, singing for the pope.

"We've just touched so many thousands of people over the years," Ghent said. "And as for the group, they're just extremely dedicated, devoted, committed. The camaraderie here is phenomenal."

"They are the most caring, giving and warm group of people I've ever met, and that comes from my heart," she said.

One of Ghent's personal favorite concerts was when the Vocal Chords performed a 10th

anniversary 9/11 patriotic tribute and commemoration at the Bushnell in Hartford.

"The firefighters came in from Middletown, from Hartford, the mayor of Hartford was there, the CEO of [Middlesex Hospital] was there, the first selectwoman [Susan Bransfield] was there, Rev. Doyle, our chaplain at the hospital ... everyone was there," she said. "When those firefighters came in, that audience never stopped clapping, and they didn't sit down. It was unbelievable."

From the proceeds of the concert, the hospital and the Vocal Chords donated more than \$17,000 to the benevolent fund in Hartford for the families of firefighters and police who have died or been injured in the line of duty.

"It was the single largest donation in the fund's history," Ghent said. "That concert was very dear to me."

Jack Matthews of East Hampton said he's been a member of the Vocal Chords for a couple of years, and a friend introduced him to the group.

"I sing in a church choir with someone who sings with the Vocal Chords," he said. "She told me how wonderful it was so I decided to come check it out."

"I've come to find out that they're really an extraordinary group of people here," he said.

Matthews said he loves the fact that the group is all volunteers, and that they give back to the community on a regular basis through scholarships and contributions to the Amazing Grace Food Pantry in Middletown.

"You get to do something you love, and help others at the same time. It's a perfect combination," he said. "The group has a mission and a purpose, and I think that makes it very special."

Mary DeCoursey has been a member of the Vocal Chords for a year, though she's worked for Middlesex Hospital for 30 years.

"I've heard about it through work, I've had many friends who were in it. They recently invited me, so I decided to join," she said. "I'd only been to one performance, but I'd heard so much else about them, and I've always loved to sing."

DeCoursey said that she's been touched by the volunteer singing the group does, such as for cancer patients at the hospital, at hospice services and at the veterans' home in Rocky Hill.

"You don't have to come do it, but almost everyone shows up for that, and it's a beautiful event," she said. "Also, I had a patient come up to me one day in a waiting room, and they said 'We saw you singing, we were so moved by it!' It was awesome to hear."

Eighteen-year member, and recruiter, Val Greco of East Hampton agreed.

"It's the things we do outside of the concerts that mean the most to me," she said. "One time



The 87-member Middlesex Hospital Vocal Chords rehearse for their 25th anniversary spring concert in May at Portland High School. The group has performed for a variety of audiences including hospital patients, the public at large and the pope.

we sang for the veterans in Rocky Hill during their dinner hour around the holidays. They were so touched; they came up and hugged us. It was very moving, and rewarding."

Fredericks, a Middlefield resident, has been serving as the group's music director for the full 25 years, and is currently the cantor and music director for St. Sebastian Church in Middletown.

Fredericks, well-known in the music community as, among other things, one of the founders of the Greater Middletown Chorale, was contacted by Ghent early on.

"Joyce called me and asked me to be the director, and at first I said I wasn't interested, I had enough to do," she said. "But Joyce is very tenacious, and I finally decided to begin with the group, 25 years ago."

"It's been a wonderful ride ever since then," she said.

Fredericks said the Vocal Chords give two regular performances a year, in the spring and the fall. The spring concert will take place Saturday, May 16, at Portland High School, and will feature a repertoire selected from the past quarter-century of Vocal Chords favorites.

"It'll be a retrospective [of] our favorites. And let me tell you, I had music spread out all over my bed trying to figure out what to select," she said, laughing. "It was very difficult to take 25 years' worth of music and distill that down to around 20 pieces."

"I'm hoping that this concert is going to be really super-special," she said.

Fredericks also elaborated on the supportive atmosphere of the group, especially when mem-

bers had lost their spouses.

"Several people have told me, 'You saved my life; if not for Vocal Chords, I don't know what I would have done,'" she said. "People tend to unfold you in this group, you become very close; there's a special feeling here."

Sandy Zajac of Portland has been a member for 15 years. She joined the group in order to give back to them.

"My mom passed away, and the Vocal Chords sang at a hospice service. It was very comforting to me, and I said, 'Someday I'm going to give back,'" she said. "The opportunity came up and I've been with them ever since."

The group also awards anywhere from two to four \$1,000 scholarships a year, depending on the availability of funds. These are awarded at the spring concert to eligible high school students intending to study either music or nursing.

Zajac said that the group has to date given out around \$64,000 in scholarships.

"We've had kids come back after they've gotten their degrees to thank us," she said. "And we're very glad to be able to make a difference in their lives."

Ghent said that she's happy to see the Vocal Chords through many more years.

"The healing power of music lifts the spirit and heals the soul," she said. "That's my motto now, and it's been my motto from the beginning, and it's our mission."

Visit the Vocal Chords' website for more information, at vocalchords20.org.

Elmcrest Development Moves Ahead in Portland

by John Tyczkowski

Wednesday evening, the Board of Selectmen approved the next step in the development of the former Elmcrest Campus property in the center of town.

Dan Bertram of Danbury-based BRT Corp. presented to the board to request a freezing of the real property tax assessment on the Elmcrest property to make the site more attractive to prospective investors.

“It’s essentially a tax incentive. It stops the increase in the property tax assessment after the project is built,” Bertram said.

“It creates a time period not greater than seven years under which investors won’t have to pay taxes on their investments in the property,” First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said. “There are other fees and other taxes that will come in, however.”

The agreement is governed by the relevant state statute, she said.

Bertram has been involved with the Elmcrest process for several months, and has attended regular meetings related to the Vibrant Communities Initiative funding opportunity the town received for the property last fall.

The master plan for the Elmcrest property specifies 150,000 square feet of commercial space and 85,000 square feet of residential space for multi-family housing, along with parking.

Bertram clarified to the selectmen, however, that exactly how that square footage will be arranged throughout the property has not been definitively set.

“The agreement we’d be drawing up would commit in writing the parameters for the project,” he said. “You’d set parameters that are lower in allocation than those in the master plan, which would give you some flexibility as you receive input for tweaking the businesses at the site.”

However, Bertram said the parameters

shouldn’t go too far from the master plan in order to avoid scaring off potential businesses, and to be able to satisfy planning and zoning requirements.

In addition, the plan provides for the preservation of the three historic houses on the property: the Hart-Jarvis House, the Erastus Brainerd, Jr. House and the John H. Sage House.

Bertram also reaffirmed his commitment to development while preserving the character of the site, and of the town.

“I’m from New England; I understand this,” he said. “And [BRT Corp.] has worked on projects before where preserving historic buildings was a priority.”

He also said the Elmcrest property was looking attractive for development at this point due to the stabilization of the country’s economy.

In addition, Bertram mentioned the property was well-suited for “any use under the sun,” and that the location right off the Arrigoni Bridge was optimal.

“It’s an appropriate place for commercial, retail, office and resident development,” he said. “It’s a very attractive corner, and bridge is a funnel right into this property.”

There will be a series of meetings in March both between the property stakeholders, the developer and the town, and with the public, the town, the property owner and the developer.

However, Bertam said talks with potential businesses for the space will continue while those meetings occur.

“The whole idea is to move this forward quickly,” he said.

BRT Corp. will be working with Rochester-based DiMarco Constructors to develop the Elmcrest property.

Currently, both are engaged in a project in Brookfield, a luxury residential community

named Barnbeck Place, slated to open later this year.

That project involved the issue of a historic barn. It had to be moved to a different location on the property and partially reconstructed, but stands there today, Bertram said.

* * *

The board agreed to hold a public hearing Wednesday, March 4, regarding updated water and sewer rates.

After feedback from the last public hearing, selectmen decided to lower the flat rate for usage on five-eighths and three-quarter inch meters to \$30 from the proposed \$35.

“That equates to a loss of about \$50,000 in the water area, and about \$30-35,000 in the sewer area,” Bransfield said. “So we took those numbers and found the difference, and added that number to the per hundred cubic feet rate, and raised that rate to distribute that cost.”

In addition, the flat rate usage for one-inch meters was lowered from \$45 to \$40.

The other change involved the fact that upon consulting with the town attorney, Bransfield found the town did not have the authority to issue fines for various water violations.

“We cannot issue fines because we don’t have an ordinance associated with fine assessments on this,” she said. “That has been taken out; if [the board chooses] to put that back in, [the board] would have to pass an ordinance first.”

At a question from selectman Ryan Curley, Bransfield said that while the town had issued invalid fines in the past according to water and sewer rates information last updated in 1996, no one had ever paid them.

Selectman Fred Knous wanted to delay going to a public hearing in order to put in language specifying a phased introduction of the new water and sewer rates plan over two to three

years.

“We need to give time for folks to do a little planning so adjusting to the new rates won’t be as big of a difficulty for them,” he said.

At the same time, he said the board should step up collections of delinquent accounts to generate extra revenue to offset the delay due to phasing.

Selectmen agreed on collecting delinquent accounts, but were not united in phasing in the new rate plan.

“We’re already in the red continually, and the whole point of these increases is to fix this problem,” Curley said. “I just don’t want us to kick the can down the road any further.”

“It’s true, we really are in the red, and this needs to be taken care of right now,” selectman Brian Flood said. “I’m really not in favor of phasing this in.”

However, Bransfield pointed out the board could put the revised water and sewer rates on the table to a public hearing as proposed, and address the phasing concerns after the March public hearing.

“Adoption isn’t imminent after a public hearing, it’s up to you, the water and sewer authority,” she said to the board. “We want to explore concerns but don’t want to stop the process; we want to keep it moving along.”

Selectmen decided to hold a public hearing on the water and sewer rates as presented four to two, with Knous and Bransfield as the dissenting votes.

* * *

The next Board of Selectmen meeting will take place on Wednesday, March 4, at 7:30 p.m. in the Mary Flood room of the Portland Public Library.

There will be a public hearing on water and sewer rates that same day at 7 p.m. in the same location.

DOT Commits to Placing Rumble Strips at the Ledges in Portland

by John Tyczkowski

Last week, Department of Transportation Commissioner James Redeker agreed to construct centerline rumble strips in an especially dangerous area of Route 66.

In response to January letter from state representatives Christie Carpino and Melissa Ziobron asking for a traffic safety study of that section of the state highway, the strips will be placed on Route 66 between Payne Boulevard and the Portland/East Hampton town line.

“This stretch of road has been the site of multiple fatalities and serious accidents over the past year,” Carpino (R-32nd District) said in a statement. “I hope the installation of rumble strips will help save lives and keep people safe. There is no room for error on the section of Route 66, and while we must all use caution, rumble strips may prevent a head-on collision.”

Ziobron (R-34th District) said in a statement that the Ledges impacts residents in her district greatly as well.

“While this dangerous stretch of road is within Portland boundaries, thousands of East Hampton and area residents travel it daily,” she said.

In the past two years, there have been three fatal car crashes at the Ledges, as well as one non-fatal rollover crash.

According to a statement from the DOT, the rumble strips’ installation will take place later this year.

In a statement, Portland Fire Chief Bob Shea

thanked Carpino for her work.

“Your request and approval by the DOT for the installation of rumble strips as well as additional signage is a critical start in the process of making Route 66 in the area known as the Ledges a safer area of travel,” he said.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said the upcoming installation was an “important step” toward safety on that section of the state highway.

“I’m very grateful to the state of Connecticut for implementing this new safety feature,” she said. “I think it’ll be a very good thing for all of us across several towns.”

However, Bransfield said, there’s still more to do.

“We have to assess the improvements that are necessary, partner with the state of Connecticut because it’s a state highway, and optimize everything we can for that road,” she said. “It’s something I’m very familiar with, with some of the improvements we made to the Arrigoni Bridge.”

Most recently, Portland partnered with the state for the third stage of some ongoing major construction work on the bridge during 2012.

In 2013, Carpino and Ziobron began working with state and local governments to update and replace traffic signs at the Ledges, an effort completed last year.

East Hampton Police News

2/4: Janet Carter, 30, of 5 Prout St., Portland, was issued a summons for operating a motor vehicle while suspended and operating an unregistered motor vehicle, East Hampton Police said.

Bolton Man Dies in Hebron Crash

by Geeta Schrayter

A 22-year-old Bolton man was killed in an accident early Tuesday morning between a vehicle and a box truck.

Christopher Passera was pronounced dead at Middlesex Hospital after the 4:30 a.m. crash at the intersection of Wall Street (Route 316) and Main Street (Route 66), state police said.

According to police, Esad Kelecija of Wethersfield was driving west on Main Street in a box truck while Passera and his passenger, 22-year-old Sarah Guay of East Hartford, were traveling south on Wall Street in a 2010 Honda Fit.

Police said both vehicles approached the intersection around the same time and Passera drove into the path of the truck, which struck

the car on its left side.

Both vehicles sustained heavy damage, according to police.

The intersection was closed for about four hours, until around 8:30 a.m., as police investigated the crash, according to Town Manager Andrew Tierney.

As a result of the accident, Guay was also transported to Windham Hospital for non-life threatening injuries, police said. She was not listed at the hospital as of Wednesday afternoon.

The accident remains under investigation and any witnesses are asked to contact Trooper James Olson at Troop K at 860-465-5400.

Colchester Police News

2/11: State Police said Kyle Rutkauski, 21, of 107 Main St., East Hampton, was arrested and charged with two counts of failure to appear.

2/11: State Police said Jeffrey Wallner, 35, of 416 Farmington Ave., Hartford, was arrested and charged with failure to appear.

2/11: State Police said Nick Omani, 47, of 236 Mansfield Ave., Willimantic, was arrested and charged with second-degree criminal mischief.

2/12: State Police said Patrick Lachappelle, 27, of 116 Broadway, was arrested and charged with violation of a protective order and viola-

tion of probation.

2/12: State Police said Lindi Kramer, 31, of 52 Perry Hill Rd., Ashford, was arrested and charged with failure to appear.

2/12: State Police said Roman Fein, 27, of 122 Antrim Rd., Coventry, was arrested and charged with speeding, DUI and failure to reduce speed.

2/13: State Police said Michael Cavanaugh, 32, of 73 Main St., East Hampton, was arrested and charged with fifth-degree larceny.

2/15: State Police said Kimberly Biondi, 59, of 54 Dock Rd., Chester, was arrested and charged with DUI.

Marlborough Police News

2/12: State Police said George Yanclas, 56, of 375 Mansfield Ave., Willimantic, was arrested and charged with possession of narcotics, narcotics not kept in original container, DUI and failure to drive in the proper lane.

2/14: State Police said Richard Webster, 52, of 55 Emily Rd., was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct, third-degree assault, third-degree strangulation and first-degree unlawful restraint.

Hebron Police News

2/11: State Police said Joseph Hudock, 54, of 1503 Portland Cobalt Rd., Portland, was arrested and charged with violation of a restraining order.

2/13: State Police said Jessi Clark, 33, of 63 James Dr., North Windham, was arrested and charged with DUI and traveling unreasonably fast.

Obituaries

Marlborough

Doris W. Shorey

Doris W. Shorey, 75, of Enfield, Maine, formerly of Marlborough, died Friday, Feb. 6, at the Penobscot Valley Hospital in Lincoln, Maine. She was born July 31, 1939, in Lowell, Maine, the daughter of Franklin O. and Violet W. Wakefield.

Doris graduated from USM with a B.A. in education and had a certificate in physical therapy. She married Roland B. Shorey in 1958. Doris was a cook at Colonial Acres in Lincoln, Maine; culinary arts teacher for 25 years at Region III in Lincoln; and substitute teacher in Maine area schools.

She enjoyed many different clubs, organizations and churches both in Connecticut and Maine. She was very active in fund raising for various cancer related organizations. Doris loved the outdoors and had many happy kayaking and camping trips with her friends The Wannabees, and outings with her ski group Bangor Ski and Board Club. Doris was active in her local Grange, including organizing music jams that have been enjoyed by many. Music was important to Doris, listening and participating, and she also sang with a community choir.

Doris is survived by her husband, Roland B. Shorey; children, Michael Shorey, Angela Shorey and Beth Shorey; sisters, Joyce Murchison and Helen Harris; brother, Ivan Wakefield; grandchildren, Andrea Knights, Ashley Shorey, Brittany Shorey, Violet Lancaster and Dylan Lancaster; great-grandchildren, Tyler Comeau and Bridgette Comeau; many loving nieces and nephews and their children.

She was predeceased by her parents.

A Celebration of Life was held Sunday, Feb. 15, at the Ammadamst Grange, Route 188 (Lowell Road), Enfield.

Those who wish to remember Doris in a special way may make gifts in her memory to Sarah's House, care of EMHS Foundation, P.O. Box 931, Bangor, ME 04401-0931 sarahshouseofmaine.org.

Arrangements are by Memorial Alternative, 205 Center St., Bangor, Maine.

Hebron

Ethel L. Lusky

Ethel L. Lusky, 99, of Greenwood, S.C., formerly of Hebron, died Friday, Feb. 13, at the Piedmont Hospice House in Greenwood. Ethel was predeceased by her husband of 66 years, Joseph A. Lusky.

Ethel was born in Bridgeport to Sarah Blamey and Charles Herbert Laister. She grew up in the Milford area, graduating from Milford High School. She married Joseph in 1941. Ethel began her career as a secretary at Remington Arms during World War II. At the end of the war, she and Joseph moved their family to Columbia. She worked at the Willimantic Bank and Trust and at the Federal Land Bank in Windham. In 1979, she was elected treasurer of the Town of Columbia.

She was active in the community, serving as president of the Columbia PTA, during the transition from four one room schools to a consolidated school and helped to establish the school lunch program. She was a member of the Windham Hospital Auxiliary volunteering over 1000 hours. She received recognition from the Columbia chapter of the American Red Cross for 50 years of service. A member of St. Peter's Church in Hebron, she served as clerk in 1991.

Throughout her life she kept busy with the Windham Whirlers Square Dance Club, Prime Time Bowlers, Senior Center Sunshine Singers and Friends of Hebron Seniors. Ethel and Joe traveled extensively, visiting Europe, Scandinavia, the South Pacific, and all 50 states. She enjoyed, skiing, river rafting, and racing their sailboat on Long Island Sound.

Ethel will be missed by her family. She is survived by her daughters Carole Eller and her friend Charles Murphy of Marlborough, and Pamela Cicaloni and her husband John, of Greenwood, her grandchildren Wendy Hastings and husband Douglas, James Eller and fiancée AnneMarie Munn, Brett Hungerford and wife Brenda and her great-grandchildren Evelyn Eller and Noah Munn; Cole and Seth Hastings; and Eric Hungerford.

Ethel's family will receive relatives and friends today, Feb. 20, from 4-6 p.m., at Potter Funeral Home, 456 Jackson St. (Route 195), Willimantic. Her funeral services will be held at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Hebron Saturday, Feb. 21, at 11 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made in her memory to Piedmont Hospice House, 408 West Alexander Ave., Greenwood, SC 29646 or St. Peter's Church, 30 Church St., Hebron, CT 06248.

For an online memorial guestbook, visit potterfuneralhome.com.

Marlborough

Shirley Wolf

It is with great sorrow that we announce the passing of our beloved mother and grandmother Shirley S. Wolf of Marlborough, formerly of Colchester and Wethersfield, on Wednesday, Feb. 11, at Marlborough Health care Center, shortly before her 91st birthday. She was born in Hartford the daughter of the late David and Beatrice (Condron) Spedding.

Shirley was the loving wife of the late Alfred Wolf. She leaves to mourn her son and daughter-in-law, Fred and Debbie (Nericcio) Wolf; her beloved granddaughter and light of her life April E. Wolf; her sister and brother-in-law, Gertrude and Ernie Hull of East Hartford; her sister-in-law Elsie DeGrandi of Wethersfield; as well as several nieces and nephews.

She enjoyed eating out and going to the casino with her longtime friends "The GGs," Jean Zito, Dottie Murray, Helen Bassano, and the late Ellen Garner. Prior to her retirement Shirley was employed at LIMRA in Windsor.

She was predeceased by her brothers, David, Willie, Teddy and Bob, and her sisters, Martha Sears and Eleanor Pisch.

Funeral services were held Saturday, Feb. 14, and burial will be private and at the convenience of the family. Rose Hill Funeral Home has care of arrangements.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Marlborough Healthcare Center Recreation Program that Shirley enjoyed while living there.

East Hampton

Kenneth Brown

Kenneth Brown, 78, of Fairfield, passed away peacefully Friday, Feb. 13. He was born June 28, 1936, in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., the only son of the late Edward and Loretta (Fetzer) Brown, later moving to East Hampton. He was the beloved husband of the late Elizabeth Brown.

Kenneth was a graduate of East Hampton High School, Class of 1955, afterwards proudly serving in the United States Army, 1958-1961. He was employed as a store manager for Sherwin-Williams in Westport for over 25 years. He then opened his own business, Colour Source & Interior Design Showroom in Westport, where he worked until retirement.

In his free time he enjoyed hunting, fishing, horse racing, blackjack, jai alai, playing the lottery, classic cars and the New York Yankees. He traveled extensively - annual trips to Disney World, Hawaii, Caribbean, Costa Rica and Maine. In his retirement, he enjoyed a life of leisure and hanging out with his friends, Didier & Carey, John P., Jack, John C. and Chuckie, along with his friends from Solmar Restaurant in Bridgeport. He adored his faithful furry four-legged friends - dogs Hoover, Crystal, Snuggles and Patches. He was a proud former member of the Kiwanis Club of Westport.

He is survived by his cherished daughter, Doreen Ann Brown and her husband Clifford Tyler, of Fairfield, and many friends.

A special thanks to the staff of St. Vincent's Hospital, Bridgeport; Prime Healthcare, Fairfield; Justin Persico, MD and the staff of Smilow Care Center, Fairfield; and Christine and Walter Kalakay Jr., Myrna and Walter Kalakay Sr. and Maryellen Kline.

Calling hours will be today, Feb. 20, from 4:30-7:30 p.m., at Benjamin J. Callahan Funeral Home, 318 Burnside Ave., East Hartford. Funeral services will begin Saturday, Feb. 21, at 10:30 a.m., with the funeral liturgy at 11 a.m., all at the funeral home. Burial with military honors will follow in Hillside Cemetery, East Hartford.

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

For the complete obituary, visit callahanfuneral.com.

East Hampton

Marilyn Baillargeon

Marilyn (White) Baillargeon, 85, of East Hampton, passed away surrounded by her loving family Saturday, Feb. 14, at Middlesex Memorial Hospital. She was the wife of the late Charles Ernest Baillargeon. She was born July 10, 1929, in Middletown, the daughter of the late Charles and Doris (Jones) White.

Marilyn loved gardening, quilting and was an avid reader. She loved the beach and the sunshine, but most of all her family was her pride and joy. She cherished the time she spent with them.

She is survived by six children, Annette Phillips of Florida, Denise Heller of California, Michelle Cook of East Hampton, Celeste Higgins of West Hartford, Paul Baillargeon of Chaplin and Edward Baillargeon of East Hampton; 11 grandchildren, Marin, Janna, Kyle, Kristin, Cheryl, Ed, Hailee, Nicole, Meredith, Caitlin and Shannon; and four great-grandchildren, Caleb, Norah, Landon and Zoe.

She was predeceased by a sister and brother-in-law, Barbara Briggs and husband Bill.

The family would like to thank the staff at Middlesex Memorial Hospital for all their loving care.

Services and burial were private and held Wednesday, Feb. 18. There were no calling hours.

Donations may be made to the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society 300 Research Parkway, Meriden, CT 06450 or the Alzheimer's Association, 2075 Silas Deane Highway, Suite 100, Rocky Hill, CT 06067.

The DellaVecchia Funeral Home, 211 N. Main St., Southington, is assisting the family with the arrangements. For online condolences, visit dellavecchiafh.com.

East Hampton

David William Ostergren

David William Ostergren of East Hampton died peacefully with his family by his side Sunday, Feb. 15. Born June 28, 1941, in Middletown to the late Mary (Bentham) and Robert N. Ostergren Sr., David was predeceased by his brother, Robert N. Ostergren Jr.

He graduated from East Hampton High School, Upsala College, and earned a Master of History from Wagner College. What became David's lifelong passion for history, literature, classical music and the arts led him to teach history at Brookfield High School. Subsequent to obtaining a Master of Library Science from Southern Connecticut State University, he became a reference librarian at Wilton Public Library, where he worked until retirement.

David volunteered for many years as a docent at the Hill-Stead Museum and the New Britain Museum of American Art. He was an avid reader and attended musical and other cultural events throughout the region. He traveled extensively worldwide, often with his dear friends the Carlson family.

David will be remembered with love by his sister, Rita Ostergren Jackson, his four nieces, Karen Asetta, Kristen Jackson, Laura Patrick and Lynnae Smith, and numerous great nieces and nephews, all of whom appreciated his interest in their lives.

Many rousing hours were spent playing competitive games and building jigsaw puzzles on India Street, Nantucket.

A memorial service will be held at a time and date to be announced.

In lieu of flowers, please make donations in his name to the Wilton Library Association, 137 Old Ridgefield Road, Wilton, CT 06897.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

Rose Goulart

Rose (Medeiros) Goulart, 86, of Lebanon, formerly of Colchester, beloved wife of Richard, passed away Friday, Feb. 13, surrounded by her loving family, after a sudden illness. Born Oct. 30, 1928, in Swansea, Mass., she was a daughter of the late Manuel and Anna (DeJesus) Medeiros.

Rose was wed to Richard on April 1, 1954. She worked for the former Levine & Levine Coat Factory in Colchester for a time, but her greatest passion and "vocation" was found in caring for her family, whom she loved so deeply. Whether it be cooking, gardening, and always maintaining a warm and inviting home, to boating and traveling, she always wanted her family around.

In addition to her loving husband of nearly 61 years, she leaves her daughter, Kathleen Saltonstall of Lebanon; her daughter-in-law, Debbie Goulart of Brooklyn; four grandchildren, Tanya and Jeremy Goulart (and wife, Jessica), Ashley Saltonstall (and husband, Brock Littlefield) and Steven Saltonstall; three great-grandchildren, Haley, Bailey and Jackson; and numerous extended family members and friends.

She was predeceased by her son, Richard, Jr. on Feb. 19, 2006, as well as her four siblings.

A Celebration of her Life will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 28, at Gilead Congregational Church, 672 Gilead St. (Route 85), Hebron. There are no calling hours and burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Lebanon Senior Center, 37-R West Town St., Lebanon, CT 06249.

Care of arrangements has been entrusted to the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester. For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

East Hampton

Esther McCann-Leopold

Esther McCann-Leopold of East Hampton, formerly of Middletown, died Saturday, Feb. 14, at Marlborough Health Care Center. She was born in Southbridge, Mass.

Esther Lenti married William McCann at the outbreak of World War II and was widowed in 1975. Esther and William McCann Jr. were cofounders of the dry cleaning chain, Best Cleaners.

Esther remarried 22 years ago to Carl Leopold. Esther leaves a proud legacy of her family: daughter, Kathleen Lynch and spouse Frank Lynch of Sanibel, Fla.; son, William McCann III and spouse Susan Beckley McCann of Middle Haddam; son, Timothy McCann and spouse Ann Herman McCann of Haddam; daughter, Margaret McCann Wilcox and spouse Dr. David Wilcox of Glastonbury; son, Patrick McCann and spouse Polly McCann of Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.; and son Charlie McCann of Boca Raton, Fla. She is survived by two stepdaughters: Dawn Cotrone and spouse Kenneth Cotrone of Hamden and Lynne Leopold of Hamden. She is survived by 22 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren and her sister, Margaret Cousins of Portland, Maine.

Esther was predeceased by six other siblings.

Esther was a charter member of the Westfield Wrens, established a Women's Investors Club, and was in the Women's Guild for St. Pius X Church. She will always be remembered for her generosity, positive attitude and kind words for everyone she met. In recent years, she wintered in Sanibel, Florida and volunteered at the Sanibel Shell Museum. Esther shared her love of the marine life and nature with her grandchildren and their classmates in their schools.

The family extends special thanks to her longtime caregiver, Maria Kulig.

Her funeral liturgy will be held Saturday, Feb. 21, at 10 a.m., at St. Pius X Church, 310 Westfield St., Middletown. Burial in Miner Cemetery will be in the spring. Friends may call at Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown, today, Feb. 20, from 4-7 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the CFMC, memo the William McCann and Best Cleaners Fund, 211 S. Main St., Middletown, CT 06457.

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



Obituaries continued

Colchester

Robert James Crossley

Rob Crossley, beloved son and father, passed away suddenly at home in Windham on Friday, Feb. 13. Rob was born April 25, 1983, and grew up in the Lebanon and Colchester areas. He attended Bacon Academy.

He was a full-time devoted father of two daughters, Aliyah Janeice Crossley and Kaydence Leanne Crossley, also both of Windham. He also leaves behind his mother and step-father, Lori (Larkin) LaSalle and Alvin LaSalle of Windham; his father and step-mother, Alan and Donna Crossley of Marlborough; his sister and brother-in-law, Jessica (Crossley) D'Atri and Christopher D'Atri and their four children of Lebanon; his paternal grandmother, Helen Crossley of Waterford; as well as an aunt and uncle, Cathy and Steve Negri of Waterford, and maternal uncles James Larkin Jr. of Wisconsin, Michael Larkin of Massachusetts, Terry Larkin of North Carolina and Timothy Larkin of Pennsylvania.

He was predeceased by his maternal grandparents, James and Lucille Larkin of Florida (previously of Middle Haddam), as well as his paternal grandfather, Robert Crossley of Waterford (previously of Marlborough).

Rob was an avid fisherman, animal lover and Red Sox fan. He had a wonderful sense of humor and loved to make others laugh. The biggest loves of his life were his two daughters, who he loved with all his heart and soul.

Although we know he rests in the hands of God in heaven, his loving tenderness and laughter will be forever missed.

A service of remembrance will be held Saturday, Feb. 28, at the First Congregational Church of Windham, Windham Center, at 11 a.m. Interment at Lakeview Cemetery in East Hampton will be planned in the spring.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Connecticut Humane Society in his honor.

Colchester

Carol Kleina

Carol (Ashley) Kleina, 72, of Colchester, beloved wife for 50 years of Joseph L. Kleina, Sr., died peacefully Friday, Feb. 6, after a long, courageous battle with cancer. Born in Hartford March 9, 1942, she was the daughter of the late Kenneth Cecil and Norma (McGrath) Ashley.

She was predeceased by her beloved son, Joseph L. Kleina Jr. In addition to her loving husband Joe, Carol is survived by her daughter, Elizabeth Kleina and her partner Karen Flynn of East Hartford; her sister, Joan Gray of Melbourne, Fla.; her sister and brother-in-law, Nancy and Robert Gosselin of East Hartford; and her dear friend, Francis Ewing of Windsor; as well as several nieces and nephews and their families.

A special thank you to all Carol's caregivers at Hartford Hospital, Conklin Building, Floor 2. Your kindness and empathy will always be remembered. Thank you also to Carol's extended family, the Flynn/Brainard family, who always made her feel like she was part of them.

A ceremony celebrating Carol's life will be held Sunday, March 22, at 1 p.m., at the Irish American Home Society, 132 Commerce St., Glastonbury.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Carol's memory may be made to the Cancer Research Institute, One Exchange Plaza, 55 Broadway, Suite 1802, New York, NY 10006.

The D'Esopo Funeral Chapel, Wethersfield is assisting the family. To share a memory of Carol with the family, visit desopo.com.



Marlborough

Walter George Vogel Jr.

Walter George Vogel Jr., 92, beloved husband of the late Frances (Vario) Vogel, passed away at Marlborough Health Care Center Sunday, Feb. 1. Walter was born in San Diego, Calif., and was the son of the late Walter and Mary Vogel. Walter was affectionately known by many as "Bill" and "Dadpa" by his grandchildren.

Walter was a proud veteran of the Merchant Marines, having served in the Pacific Theater during World War II. Walter married his wife Francis and the two settled in New York, where he resided for more than 50 years. He was the owner of Dimension Plastics and Tool and Die for over 35 years in the South Bronx until his retirement.

Walter took great pride in his business accomplishments. His property was always guarded by his faithful German Shepherd companions. Walter was an avid hot rodder and owned numerous hot rods that had won many awards at events and created extensive family moments and memories. Walter also had a passion for travel. Walter and his daughter Julie made a memorable trip to eastern Europe and he also went cross country with his grandson Alex.

Walter is survived by his son Richard and his wife Barbara of Bronx, N.Y.; his sister, Margaret Hoffman of California; and his son-in-law, Dr. Richard Cohen and his wife Mary Burke Boland Cohen of Manchester; as well as his grandchildren, Alexander Cohen, Devin Cohen, David Vogel, Kristen Vogel; and his great-grandson, Corbin Cohen; as well as many nieces and nephews.

Walter was predeceased by his daughter, Julie Ann Cohen, and his brother, LeeRoy, and sister, Dorothy May.

A memorial Mass was celebrated at St. Bartholomew's Church, 736 Middle Tpke., Manchester, Thursday, Feb. 19. There were no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the ASPCA.

For online expressions of sympathy, visit desopo.com.

Hebron

Christopher M. Passera

Christopher M. Passera, 22, of Bolton, formerly of Hebron, died unexpectedly Tuesday, Feb. 17. Chris was born Aug. 19, 1992, in Manchester, son of Simone J. (Gilbert) Passera of Bolton and Christopher M. Passera of Colchester.

He was a 2010 graduate of RHAM High School and was currently working for his mother's company, Simone's Cleaning Services. Chris was a beautiful spirit and will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

In addition to his parents he is survived by his sister, Ashley Nicole Passera of Colchester; his maternal grandparents, Frieda and Maynard Gilbert of Galway, N.Y.; his paternal grandmother, Esther Louise Edwards of Norfolk, Va.; and his longtime companion, Sarah Guay of Bolton.

Other survivors include his aunts and uncles, Katherine Espada, Ken Gilbert, Trudy Gilbert, Kathleen Clark and David Passera, and numerous cousins and many close friends.

Calling hours will be held today, Feb. 20, from 3-7 p.m., at the Watkins Funeral Home, 142 East Center St., Manchester. Funeral services and burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Meriden Humane Society, 311 Murdock Ave., Meriden, CT 06450.

To sign the online register book, visit holmes-watkinsfuneralhomes.com.

Portland

Donald Donnelly

Donald Edward Donnelly, 86, of Westerly, R.I., passed away Thursday, Feb. 12, at his home. He was the husband of the late Gloria (Rossi) Donnelly. Born in Malden, Mass., on Feb. 9, 1929, he was the son of the late Leo and Sarah (Wilder) Donnelly.

Following his graduation from Bentley College, and his service in the United States Marines, Donald began his long and successful career in financial management and banking. His devotion to living an active life was enduring and an inspiration for all that knew him.

Donald leaves two loving daughters, Dian Martin and her husband Craig of Quonochontaug, R.I.; Laurie Guilmette and her husband Donald of Portland.

He was the grandfather of Katherine Martin and her husband Andrés Boza Arce of Heredia, Costa Rica; Tyler Martin of Waitsfield, Vt.; Sarah Cihocki and her husband Walter of Middletown; Rachel Wells and her husband Joshua of Portland.

In addition, Donald has the great joy of being the great grandfather to Layla, Abel, and Jack. He will be dearly missed.

A private memorial service will be held in the spring.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

First off, congratulations are in order, to Portland native Brian Vibberts. Vibberts recently took home his fifth Grammy award, for mixing the jazz album *Trilogy*, by Chick Corea (on piano), Christian McBride (acoustic bass) and Brian Blade (drums).

The three-disc album won Best Jazz Instrumental Album.

Back in 2012, the *Rivereast* did a cover story on Vibberts, who at that time was up for his fourth Grammy, for mixing the album *Forever*, which was also up for Best Jazz Instrumental Album. (Spoiler alert: He won.)

A 1986 graduate of Portland High School, Vibberts began his career in New York City before relocating to Los Angeles, where he now lives. And even if you're not a jazz buff, you've heard of some of the artists Vibberts has worked with over the years – an eye-popping list that includes such names as Ke\$ha, Sara Bareilles, Michael Jackson, Paul McCartney, Eric Clapton, Mariah Carey, Elton John, Green Day, Tony Bennett, Aerosmith, Jay-Z, Dave Matthews Band and Billy Joel.

Not a bad resume.

Vibberts' latest endeavor is his new indie label Metro 3 entertainment, which he co-founded with Alex Houton and Adam Wake. The label has offices in Los Angeles, New York City and London, and recently signed up artist Kayla Griffiths. Before that, Vibberts co-founded, with Houton, Spotlight 87, a full-service music production and artist development company for major label and independent recording artists.

So Vibberts is definitely keeping busy – and he keeps adding Grammys to his mantle. Congratulations, Brian.

* * *

It's a tough time to be a cop.

After the non-indictments last year in Ferguson, Mo., and New York City, there were protests not just in those two places, but across the country. Which was fine. But what wasn't fine was all cops, everywhere, began to be painted with the same broad brush, leading to unwarranted confrontations and some downright scary scenes. (A group of people walking down the street chanting, "What do we want? Dead cops! When do we want it? Now!" is a scene that sends chills up your spine.)

It's tremendously unfair to police officers, who are out there risking their lives day in and day out, to paint them all as racist thugs. And yet, a lot of people seem to be doing just that these days. Cops have become the bad guys, and that's sad and plain not right.

Which is why I was pleased to read a story in the *Hartford Courant* recently about passing motorists who came to the aid of a Norwalk police officer who was under attack.

According to the *Courant*, on Wednesday, Feb. 11, Norwalk Police Officer Kyle Lipeika saw two people engaged in what appeared to be a drug sale. As Lipeika approached the two people, one of them, a man later identified as Michael Schanck, 53, of Norwalk, tried to hide drugs in his sweatshirt, police said.

Lipeika attempted to arrest Schanck, but Schanck violently resisted, police said. Lipeika tackled Schanck into a snow bank, but, police said, Schanck continued to fight back.

That's when two motorists who were driving by in separate cars saw what was going on, stopped and intervened. They came to Lipeika's aid, and helped him take Schanck into custody, police said.

The *Courant* reported police seized nine bags of heroin and crack cocaine from Schanck, who was arrested on charges including possession of narcotics, possession within 1,500 feet of a school, possession with intent to sell, assault on a police officer and interfering with police.

In the incident, Lipeika was injured, and sent to Norwalk Hospital for treatment.

Police Chief Thomas Kulhawik praised Lipeika's work – and also thanked the motorists who stopped to help him. According to the *Courant*, Kulhawik plans to formally recognize the motorists for their "quick and selfless action" at an upcoming police commission meeting.

At a time when police nationwide are being unjustly looked at as suspect, it was nice to see people come to the aid of an officer in need.

* * *

Over the years, Bob Wanagel of Andover has stopped in the office from time to time to drop off news of various trips Andover seniors were going on. His wife Virginia gave me a call the other day to let me know that last Saturday, Feb. 14, Bob turned 97 years old.

Those of you who live in Andover saw a photo in that town's section of the paper last week featuring various Andover seniors blowing out birthday candles to celebrate their February birthday. Bob wasn't there because, at the moment, Bob's at a convalescent home in Mansfield, having recently broken his hip.

Turning 97 is quite the achievement – and I'm quite happy to say happy birthday, Bob.

* * *

My mom, and her entire side of the family, is from Alabama, and I spent a lot of time there growing up. I'm always the first to come to the state's defense. Is it a red state, deep in the Bible belt? No question. But it's not full of backwards, bigoted hillbillies who would eagerly marry their siblings if only it were legal. There's an awful lot of good, educated people down there – people who don't fit the stereotype commonly held by the rest of the country.

So I was rather displeased last week when my "Alabama's not that bad!" stance got dinged a bit – when the Heart of Dixie made its way into the news for all the wrong reasons.

After federal judge Callie Granade struck down Alabama's ban on same-sex marriage, Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore said "not so fast." On Feb. 8, Moore prohibited any of the state's probate judges from issuing same-sex marriage licenses, saying that Granade's ruling did not apply to the state's probate judges.

Moore is, as you may have guessed by now, not a fan of gay marriage – and told ABC News last week "a redefinition of the word 'marriage' is not found within the powers designated to the federal government."

I was already shaking my head at Moore's decision to defy federal order, to deny people who love each other the chance to bind themselves together in matrimony. But my jaw really dropped when Moore said to ABC News, "Do they stop with one man and one man, or one woman and one woman? Or do they go to multiple marriages? Or do they go to marriages between men and their daughters or women and their sons?"

Yes – parents marrying their children. Moore seems to think this could be next if you allow gay people to get married.

Moore told ABC News he is "absolutely not" worried he will wind up on the wrong side of history here – but I must disagree. The issue of gay rights is the landmark civil rights issue of our time. I firmly believe one day we'll look back at the way gay people were once treated in this country and cringe. And that'll be a great day.

I'm a big supporter of gay marriage. Love should be the most important factor in a marriage, not what gender the spouses are. I remember in 2008, when the Connecticut Supreme Court voted 4-3 to give same-sex couples the right to marry, I was quite proud of my state. One of the eight couples who'd sued the state for that right, leading to the Supreme Court's ruling, was from Colchester, and I was quite happy to put their story on the cover of the newspaper, and spotlight that court decision.

Flash forward to 2015 and Connecticut is no longer an outlier. I'm happy to report that, with Granade's decision to reverse Alabama's ban, there are now 37 states allowing same-sex marriages.

I'm also happy to report Moore's defiant stance against Granade's decision isn't having quite the effect he probably hoped. Recognizing that federal law trumps state law – a fact President Obama himself mentioned last week when talking about the issue – more and more county probate courts began issuing same-sex marriage licenses as last week wore on. As of last Friday, Feb. 13, at least 47 of the state's 67 counties were allowing same-sex marriages, the Associated Press said.

It's a number that I hope will only grow.

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See you next week.