

# RIVEREAST News Bulletin

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It may have been postponed a week, but the 25th annual Hebron Maple Festival has finally arrived. This Saturday and Sunday, the town will be filled with activities, demonstrations, plenty of maple-related treats – and the opportunity to learn about the maple syrup-making process, shown in this photo snapped at Wenzel’s Sugar House last year.

## Maple Fest on Tap for This Weekend

by Geeta Schrayter

It may be a week later than originally planned, but the time has finally come. The streets of Hebron will be filled this weekend with maple enthusiasts and cabin fever sufferers alike, for the 25th annual Hebron Maple Festival.

Although the event, which was originally scheduled for last weekend, was postponed due to the amount of snow in the center of town, it’s sure to offer up just as much enjoyment this weekend, with three sugar houses and around 40 participants hosting a variety of events and activities and dishing up all sorts of maple-related treats.

“Anything that has maple in it is going to be served,” said Maple Festival Committee member and Wenzel Sugar House owner Ron Wenzel.

He added the Hebron Maple Festival was “fun to do,” and fellow committee member Ellen Ludwig agreed.

“It’s just different,” she said, adding people “come from far and wide,” including places like New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, California – even other countries, such as China and Germany.

“We’re the only town-wide maple festival in the state of Connecticut,” Wenzel shared. “We’re one of two town-wide maple festivals in New England” and one of four in the northeast maple syrup corridor. This likely adds to the draw of an event that started modestly, with just a single man and a single sugar house sell-

ing sugar on snow to support the library.

“When we first started all we had was an 8.5x11 sheet of paper” to organize participants Wenzel said. But now, the event, which is traditionally held the second weekend of March, is much larger.

“Now we’re up to double the size – an 11x17 sheet of paper,” he said.

Wenzel also added “In the last 25 years we have showcased the town of Hebron. We only have local organizations and businesses; we don’t have anybody from outside the bounds of Hebron, and we do that to highlight” the town.

Both days of the festival start with pancake breakfasts – sponsored by the Knights of Columbus and Church of the Holy Family on Saturday, and by the Hebron Lions Club on Sunday.

Throughout the two-day festival, there will be events such as a farm tractor parade and show at Ted’s IGA Supermarket, a craft fair at Gilead Church, a quilt show in the Old Town Hall and a sled dog demonstration at Christ Lutheran Church.

Meanwhile, at Country Carpenters, visitors can watch a blacksmith craft hand forged items, see wood working demonstrations and candle making, as well as the use of early firearms and accessories, and sewing machines from the 1940s-50s.

And over at the fire department, sugar on See Maple Fest Page 2

## ‘Cinderella’ Coming to RHAM High School

by Geeta Schrayter

Last weekend, Disney’s live-action version of the classic fairytale *Cinderella*, became the number-one movie in the world, with critics using words such as “enchanted,” “exhilarating” and “a dazzling dream” to describe the film.

And this weekend, the RHAM High School drama club is hoping to get some praise of their own as they take to the stage to perform the Rodgers and Hammerstein version of the tale – with song, dance and laughs to be found.

On Tuesday afternoon, the cast was still perfecting their performance; they could be found in the high school auditorium receiving feedback from co-director Bailey Emerson and assistant director Andrew Hawes.

“Don’t rush your lines,” “ham up that imitation,” “project your voice,” “don’t clink the teacups too loudly,” “don’t step on Cinderella’s train,” and “remember your cues” were some of tips the cast was told. They were tips to take to heart – after all, the teens’ “midnight” was fast approaching, with just a few more rehearsals – and days – until show time.

Emerson also offered some hairstyle tips. “When I said a ‘low bun,’ that’s not a low, messy bun of 2014,” she laughed, addressing some of

the female cast. “We will have bun-making workshops at Wednesday or Thursday’s dress rehearsal,” she added, displaying an attention to detail that was sure to serve the performance well.

Soon after, the cast headed on stage for their curtain call, and began working their way through the scenes.

Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Cinderella* was written for television, making its debut in 1957. The play, which was later adapted into a number of stage versions, including Broadway in 2013, features such songs as “Impossible; It’s Possible,” and “In My Own Little Corner.”

Hawes, a senior, who took a seat in the audience to watch the goings-on and has himself acted in several plays, said this year he decided to view things from a different angle.

“It’s my senior year so I didn’t want too much stress and I was interested in what the other side of acting is,” he stated. And so, when a request was put out for an assistant director, he answered the call.

“So far things have been going very well,” he said. “I’m pleased with how far we’ve come. We received our costumes yesterday and it was really cool to see everyone dressed.”

See ‘Cinderella’ Page 2



Tuesday afternoon, members of the RHAM drama club were hard at work rehearsing their lines, running through the scenes, touching up the stage and focusing on the little details that will make this weekend’s performances of *Cinderella* a production to remember.

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The streets in the center of Hebron were bustling last March as residents and visitors alike enjoyed the annual Maple Festival, which is making its return for the 25th year this Saturday and Sunday.

### Maple Fest cont. from Front Page

snow will be available – just like that very first year – as well as tours of fire apparatus.

There will also be the chance to tour the town's World War II Observation Post as well as a local synagogue and, of course, the sugar houses.

In addition, there will be an obstacle course, bounce house, face painting and an ice cream eating contest sure to keep the kids happy, and enough treats to keep *everyone* happy.

Available fare with a maple flare include crepes with maple, maple cookies, maple ice cream floats and maple milk shakes, maple cotton candy, and maple cake with ice cream.

Other items to keep stomachs full throughout the day include cheeseburgers, hot dogs, chili, fried dough and French fries from the Hebron veterans' organizations, as well as barbecue from Smokin' Cattle Dog BBQ, and kettle corn.

Speaking on this year's event, Town Manager Andrew Tierney said the festival "has come to be a very large event within the town of

Hebron and a lot of people come to town and a lot of businesses get to showcase their property and what they do."

He furthered, "there's something for everyone," and said "if it's a good weekend weather-wise, it's like the first spring weekend people can really get out of the house."

Similarly, Ludwig said "I'm just glad we can do this for the community... it's something nice for the people of Hebron and the surrounding community. It gives people the opportunity to get out of the house."

Tierney concluded he was "very excited" about the event, and said, "I look forward to seeing everyone there."

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The 25th annual Hebron Maple Festival is free to attend and takes place this Saturday and Sunday, March 21 and 22 from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. both days. For more information, including a list of events, visit [hebronmaplefest.com](http://hebronmaplefest.com). An events map is also located in the middle of this week's *Rivereast*.

### 'Cinderella' cont. from Front Page

Hawes added his favorite scene was one between the stepsisters, where they sing about how perfect Cinderella is.

"They don't know it's Cinderella," he said. "They're wondering why the prince likes her – she's only perfect!"

As for Emerson, she said Thursday if she had to choose, her favorite scene would be the ballroom scene in the beginning of Act 2.

Emerson was hired as the middle school choral director at RHAM two years ago, at which point she began choreographing the RHAM musicals. She explained she then filled the high school choral position, which is when she became a co-director for the drama club.

"This is my first production as a director" she said, adding "I am very excited about our production of *Cinderella* – it's a whimsical fairytale come to life! Our stepfamily is hilarious and our Cinderella is elegant and sophisticated. Prince Charming as well."

Like Hawes, Emerson said things were going well, and furthered, "We are looking forward to an audience!"

Co-director Carl Jancis was likewise excited, and happy with the direction things had been heading in.

"It's been very, very good," he said. Jonas

stated snow had canceled some of the rehearsals, which was stressful, but, he added, "we have a really strong group this year so the plus side is they were able to work independently and on their own to get the job done."

Regarding his favorite part of the play, Jancis, who has been directing the RHAM Drama Club for the last 15 years, said "there's a bunch. Certainly the stepsisters – they're just hilarious. The comedic relief there is probably one of my favorite things to watch – but the choreography is as well. I think this year the amount of dance that we have in this play is a lot more than in the past and the choreography is really, really good."

Like Emerson and Hawes, Jancis was hoping for a full audience this weekend.

"I just hope we have a good turnout," he said. "I just hope a lot of people get the chance to see this. It's a tremendous production. This really is one of our better productions that we've ever done, so I hope we have a nice big group of fans to come out and watch."

*Cinderella* will take place tonight and tomorrow, March 20 and 21, at 7:30 p.m., and Sunday, March 22 at 2 p.m. Tickets cost \$10 for adults, \$5 for students and seniors and kids under 6 are free.

## RHAM Board Presented with Audit Report

by Geeta Schrayter

A financial audit recently performed on the regional school district turned up several items that needed attention, the RHAM Board of Education learned Monday – but many of those problems are already being addressed.

John Accavallo from the certified public accounting and consulting company Michaud, Accavallo, Woodbridge & Cusano, LLC, was present Monday to share findings with the board. These findings were discovered during the audit on "the financial statements of the governmental activities, business-type activities, each major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information of Regional School District No. 8" for the year ending June 30, 2014.

As a result of the audit, Accavallo said, "We found certain items we have to bring to the board's attention."

In total, Accavallo mentioned nine findings – including a lack of double-entry accounting, which requires each entry to have a corresponding and opposite entry in a different account.

"You don't have accountability," he said. "And if you don't have that, there's the potential for errors in reporting."

According to the report, using a "double-entry accounting software system" would "improve the district's ability to detect accounting errors, provide the basis for monthly account and ledger reconciliations, and facilitate financial reporting for all funds and its long-term debt and fixed assets."

The firm also found certain revenues – such as grants – weren't being recorded when they should be. They should be "recognized in the accounting period in which they become avail-

able and measureable," Accavallo stated.

Other findings and recommendations include how cash receipts are handled during student activities. Accavallo mentioned in many cases receipts are collected, counted and remitted by just one individual, meaning there is a lack of adequate safeguards over the cash.

"If I had to focus on one thing and one major problem area it would be this one," said Accavallo. "More people need to get involved in the collection process, signing off on accounting – this is where I see problems hit the newspapers and people getting arrested. A formal collection process needs to be put in place where one person is counting, another is counting, and both are signing off."

Furthermore, the firm found the district lacks a formal monthly closing process.

Speaking on the finding, Accavallo said, "I'd like to see every month that the books and records get closed." This, he continued, would mean "the reports the board gets of profit and loss are actually tied out to meaningful numbers" which would allow the board to "look at the numbers and make management decisions."

Accavallo concluded, "I see a lot of areas for improvement." He added, though, "I believe [business manager Jane Neel] has put in a lot of measures already, but I'd say where you have internal controls and key positions, there's a lot of gaps."

Neel began as business manager August 2014. She replaced interim finance director Dave Lenihan, who in turn had replaced longtime business manager William Mazzara. Mazzara worked part-time from the district,

which actually purchased his services for the Hebron Board of Education. Mazzara parted ways with both the Hebron and the RHAM school board in 2013, after allegations surfaced former Hebron Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz had misappropriated thousands of dollars from the Hebron Board of Education during her time with the school system. An audit performed after Mazzara's departure had revealed glaring holes in RHAM's financial procedures during his time in the position.

"The key is to make progress on the findings and [Neel has] done that so then next year the findings" decrease, Accavallo said. "I have faith Jane can get the job done tackling some of the items and if she's in need of help we're available for some guidance."

Also provided at the meeting was a written response from Neel related to each of the firm's recommendations – which explained many of them had already been addressed to some extent.

Regarding the double-entry system, Neel said one was now utilized and there was now only one account – private grants – that isn't recorded in the system.

However, regarding the accounts receivable matter, Neel said, "This finding is accurate and reflects a limitation of the previous general ledger setup." But she added "we have started recording receivables on a more timely basis in conjunction with the new procedures developed."

Neel also responded to the finding regarding cash receipts during student activities. She wrote, "We currently have a staff member from

another department come in twice weekly to count and record receipts. This is not an ideal situation, but with the limited staff in the department it at least allows for collecting and counting of the funds to be separated."

In addition, relating to the recommendation that the books be closed at the end of each month, she wrote "the new bank reconciliation procedures address this need. In addition to reconciliation of cash accounts to the bank statements, the procedures integrate examination of revenues, expenditures, due to/froms and liabilities for accuracy and reasonableness, and require the balance sheet to be in balance."

In conclusion, Neel wrote, "Although deficiencies identified in the audit report by the auditor were being worked on as they were performing the audit, there is still much work to be done."

She added part of the issue was a lack of personnel to handle everything, explaining "work is now being done in the Accounting Services and Business Office that has never been done before, and with a smaller staff."

Neel furthered, "There is much wasted effort within our department and outside our department which I am working to fix, but we all know that change is oftentimes difficult for people to accept. As I tell my staff, we need to take 'baby steps,' as long as we continue to move forward."

\* \* \*

The next regular RHAM Board of Education meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 6, at 6:30 p.m.

# East Hampton Town Manager Proposes \$42.29 Million Budget

by John Tyczkowski

Town Manager Michael Maniscalco presented his proposed 2015-16 town budget to the Board of Finance Monday – a \$42.29 million spending package that would be an increase of 4.97 percent over the current year's budget.

Of the budget, \$10.05 million would go to town operations – a \$284,000 increase over the current year – and \$29.22 million would go to education – a \$958,000 increase.

Also, the budget includes \$1.8 million for capital expenditures and transfers to other funds, an \$858,000 increase over the current year, and \$1.203 million in debt service, or the payments on already-incurred debt. This would be a \$96,000 drop from current year spending.

The budget proposal calls for a mill rate of 28.91, an increase of 1.77 over the current year's rate.

Maniscalco said property owners with an average home value of between \$150,000 and \$200,000 could expect to pay an average of an additional \$22 to \$29 in taxes each month.

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The bulk of the extra \$284,285 in the town operations budget – \$240,531 of it, to be exact – would go toward salaries and wages. The remainder of the increase would go to purchased services, employee benefits, and dues and fees.

Maniscalco is proposing to add two new full-time employees – a new police officer and a new information technology position.

“As a local government, a lot of the work we do revolves around people,” town manager Michael Maniscalco said. “We put a lot of our funds and time into human resources.”

An additional \$42,808 would be allocated to the police to pay for a half-year salary for an additional officer, who would begin duty in January, and to create a fourth sergeant position in the department.

“Both positions will enable our department to start proactive patrolling measures, instead of solely reactive patrolling,” Maniscalco said. “And creating an extra sergeant position also addresses our department's problem with rank

structure.”

The new sergeant position would allow for each daily shift to be supervised by a sergeant.

Maniscalco said currently on average, more than 10 shifts have no senior officer supervising them. Instead, a patrolman is designated as an officer-in-charge for that shift, which in turn creates an additional expense per shift.

“This will put us in compliance with our department's standard operating procedures as well,” he said.

Regarding IT services, the proposed budget would allocate an additional \$30,087 toward the creation of a permanent in-house IT position.

“Too often now, the finance director is our IT guy,” Maniscalco said. “This new person could be more proactive about our computer problems.”

Maniscalco also said computer outages in town departments are “not an uncommon issue.” A dedicated position would allow for more timely data backup and software updates as well, he said.

The new position would shift IT maintenance duties off of the finance director and allow the town to bring its IT operations entirely in-house, as the town currently employs an outside IT consultant, he said.

In addition, Maniscalco said he wants to create a “virtual town hall,” which would allow residents to conduct town business, such as applying for permits and reporting potholes, from their computers.

“That's an effort we'd like to promote and do further,” he said. “So it makes sense to get someone on board who can help us in that direction.”

Adding those two new positions would bring the total number of town employees to 62.5. That's 3.85 percent lower than the town's high-point of 65 employees in 2007, Maniscalco said.

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Maniscalco also mentioned a “significant”

savings the town is forecast to see comes from the town and Board of Education locking in a low rate on gasoline and diesel.

The 2014-15 budget locked in per-gallon rates of \$3.02 for gas and \$3.04 for diesel. However, for 2015-16, Maniscalco was able to lock in rates of \$1.99/gallon for gas and \$2.23/gallon for diesel.

That translates to a \$45,000 savings for the town over the next year, he said.

In addition, converting the town buildings' boilers to run on natural gas instead of oil is projected to save \$250,000 annually in total, the town manager said.

However, Maniscalco reminded those in attendance that the conversion to natural gas boilers is projected to cost about \$250,000 over five years.

“At the direction of the Board of Finance and the nod of the town council, we are moving forward looking at that as a leased project,” he said. “We will be putting out a bid for that project soon.”

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On the revenue side, Maniscalco said money from state grants to the town are expected to decrease by \$209,553 for 2015-16, mostly due to the town receiving its last principal and interest subsidy payment on a large number of state grants during current fiscal year.

However, the town is doing well with property taxes, he said.

“You can see over the past years our grants have really gone down, but our property taxes have gone up and up,” the town manager said. “Little by little, we are no longer being as dependent on the state as we have been in the past.”

Maniscalco said he expects state aid to towns to continue to drop in coming years.

According to a presentation slide, property taxes in the town will make up an about 79 percent of total town revenue for the 2015-16 budget. A decade ago, property taxes only made up 70 percent of total town revenue.

At the same time, the town's investment income and revenues from licenses, permits and fees still have not recovered to their pre-2009 recession levels.

Licenses, permits and fees generated \$675,000 in revenue in 2007, and are projected to produce \$427,000 next year. Investment income contributed over \$400,000 in revenue in 2007, but is only projected to contribute \$22,500 for the 2015-16 budget year.

“Since 2007 we've lost about half a mill's worth of income in both categories,” Maniscalco said. “So that's something to think about.”

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East Hampton's grand list is projected to grow by 0.63 percent, or by about \$7.2 million. That would generate \$195,000 in new tax revenue for the town, Maniscalco said.

Eighty-nine percent of the grand list's assessed values come from real estate, nine percent comes from motor vehicles and two percent comes from personal property.

The 0.63 percent grand list growth for fiscal year 2016 is down slightly from last year's 0.65 percent.

The grand list's growth saw a sharp and steady decline from 2007 to 2012, followed by a sudden spike in 2013 and a sudden drop in 2014, before stabilizing for 2015 and 2016.

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There will be a Board of Finance special meeting on the budget Monday, March 23, at 6:30 p.m., at East Hampton Middle School, followed by a Board of Finance public hearing on March 30 at 7 p.m., also at EHMS.

On April 1, there will be a Board of Finance special meeting at 6:30 p.m. at the Middle School to adopt the budget, and the Board of Finance will submit the budget to the town council on April 7 at 6:30 p.m. at the town hall.

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For more dates and information, visit [easthamptonct.org](http://easthamptonct.org) and click on “2015-2016 Budget.”

## Marlborough Selectmen Talk Sidewalk Clearing, Culvert Repair

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

At a brief meeting Tuesday of the Board of Selectmen, First Selectwoman Cathi Gaudinski offered an update on the snowy sidewalk situation.

Gaudinski sent out letters March 4 to town residents and property owners who had not cleared the snow from their sidewalks. She said some have since complied – but there are still others who have not.

“I heard complaints from people that they didn't know what the responsibilities were,” selectman Denis Soucy said.

“Some [of those not compliant] were in the first phase of the sidewalks and shoveled last year,” Gaudinski said.

Gaudinski said she'd received responses to her letters from many homeowners, who said they accepted their responsibility and had tried to clear them – but the snow by this point had simply gotten too icy.

But warmer weather is here, and “they will work on it as it softens up,” Gaudinski said.

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Also Tuesday, the selectmen voted 2-0 (selectman Dick Shea was absent) to ask the Board of Finance to move \$35,000 from money set

aside for engineering South Road and the surrounding area to the general capital nonrecurring engineering line for culvert work.

In the town budget approved last May, the \$35,000 had been earmarked for the South Road area. However, after discovering that the Finley Hill culverts were in severe need of repair, Gaudinski asked the board to use those funds to go forward with bids for the culvert work.

“We need to ask for the transfer from the Board of Finance to use the funds,” Gaudinski said. “Otherwise we have no engineering funds to do the culvert work.”

The project is slated to go out to bid in April or May once the Board of Finance approves the transfer.

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The board also accepted Board of Finance member Torin Lee-Lewis' resignation and approved her position be filled with current alternate member Erik Young. Young was recommended by the Democratic Town Committee to fill the position.

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

## East Hampton Police News

3/1: Joseph Dunlevy, 24, of 91 Countryside Ln., Middletown, was arrested for DUI, East Hampton Police said.

3/3: Stephen W. Dubin, 47, of 136 Lake Dr., was arrested for failure to drive right and DUI, police said.

3/4: Dominick Sanzone, 35, of 66 Reservoir Rd., Colchester, was issued a summons for operating an unregistered and uninsured motor vehicle, police said.

3/12: Brandon Michael Kochuk, 18, of 65 Clark Hill Rd., was arrested and charged with third-degree burglary, third-degree larceny, third-degree criminal mischief, possession of less than half an ounce of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia, police said.

## Colchester Police News

3/10: State Police said David Zweigle, 22, of 1 Olde Pond Rd., Farmington, was arrested and charged with DUI and reckless driving.

3/11: State Police said Keri Golias, 36, of 6 Rondaly Rd., was arrested and charged with four counts of failure to appear.

3/11: State Police said Carlton King, 54, of 66 School St., East Hartford, was arrested and charged with DUI.

3/12: State Police said Christopher Moore, 41, of 123 Alger Rd., East Haddam, was arrested and charged with first-degree larceny.

3/13: State Police said Noel Irizarry, 36, of 113 Horsepond Rd., Salem, was arrested and charged with seven counts of failure to appear.

3/13: State Police said Joshua Parker, 26, of South Windham, was arrested and charged with six counts of failure to appear and fugitive from

## Portland Police News

2/22: Brandon Wyzykowski, 21, of 3 Quarry Ln., was charged with sixth-degree larceny, Portland Police said.

3/9: Andrew Vermiglio, 33, of 15 Grandview Terrace, was charged with first-degree failure to appear and second-degree failure to appear, police said.

3/12: Chad Latham, 22, of 150 Main St. Ext., Middletown, was charged with third degree identity theft, fifth-degree larceny, illegal use of credit card, credit and theft and fraudulent use of an ATM, police said.

justice.

3/13: State Police said Julie Desiata, 31, of 48 Harbor Rd., was arrested and charged with violation of probation.

3/14: State Police said Katherine Schwartz, 35, of 75 Shelley Rd., Middletown, was arrested and charged with second-degree forgery and illegally obtaining drugs.

3/15: State Police said Eugene Wright, 36, of 108 Clark Rd., was arrested and charged with DUI and failure to drive right.

3/16: State Police said Teshe Gray, 30, of 136 Stanavage Rd., was arrested and charged with risk of injury to a minor, DUI, improper turn, operating an unregistered motor vehicle, operating under suspension, and driving without insurance.

## Andover Police News

3/15: State Police said Michael Pastore, 49, of 4 Lake Rd., was arrested and charged with second-degree threatening.

3/15: State Police said Kyle Raymond Wood, 21, of 44 Wales Rd., was arrested and charged with failure to appear.

# Colchester Chapel to Hold Grand Opening Palm Sunday

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

While Christian Life Chapel has been a part of the Colchester religious community since 1997, it wasn't until this year the church had a permanent location. And now, after some winter weather delays, it is ready for an official grand opening.

The church was founded by Pastor Mike Brubaker and his wife, Linda. After launching in April 1997, the church first met as home groups, Mike Brubaker said. Public services began in 2000 in a small, rented site at 32 Norwich Ave.

In 2007, the church began holding services at Town Hall, and joined the Evangelical Free Church Association. It continued at Town Hall for the next seven years, before the church rented 392 S. Main St. this past January.

"The ministry here started by just getting to know people," Mike Brubaker said. "We were working on building a ministry without a building all these years."

Brubaker said what makes the ministry unique is that it's a "church that goes to the people, rather than people going to church." Brubaker stressed that, as a ministry, the group works to form long-term relationships and reaching into the needs of individuals and families.

"I've been a pastor for 30 years, most of the time in eastern Connecticut," Brubaker said. He said God directed him into this kind of ministry.

"There's extensive counseling that we do that I hadn't originally intended to do," Brubaker said. "The good things that God does in life [aren't] just for yourself. You have to reach out to love and care for others."

Brubaker said being a pastor was "more of a natural flow" for him.

"I don't set out every morning with an obligation to help people," Brubaker said. "It's more of a lifestyle."

He said he finds himself concerned about others – whether or not they will ever come to his church.

Over the years, as the church and its offer-

ings kept growing, Brubaker said Christian Life Chapel needed a consistent, 24/7 space that the church could afford – and ended up in the plaza on South Main Street.

"Two years ago, a new owner bought this plaza and brought it back to life," Brubaker said.

The new space includes an all-purpose room the church can use for worship, seminars and counseling along with a kitchen, children's room and crying room space. They also have a 12-foot projector screen that is actually painted on the wall with high-definition paint.

Some of the programs Christian Life Chapel offers include GriefShare, DivorceCare, programs for single parents, a program for engaged or married couples, an abortion program, men's and women's Bible study, and an Alpha course. The Alpha course, Brubaker explained, is a basic course for Christians which "provides a time for people to ask questions they can't ask in church." He said the program can be used by people questioning their faith, as well as those who are not.

The chapel also offers programs addressing such issues as addictions, loss and betrayal.

"There's a lot of struggles and brokenness," Brubaker said. "Not to say Colchester is a broken community; it's a good community. Whenever there are people, there are needs."

Many of the programs are in the form of DVD series, with lots of discussion afterward. Most of the programs are free to all participants.

Brubaker is a big fan of Christian Life Chapel's new home.

"We've enhanced our presence in town," Brubaker said. "We're more centrally located and the space is 24/7."

Brubaker said that as well as the ministry, the church has begun allowing other community organizations, such as the Colchester Collaboration for Children (C3), to use the space.

Brubaker stressed the church is much more than Sunday services.

"We can do anything related to seminars," Brubaker said. "We just happen to meet here Sunday morning."

With the new place, Brubaker said the min-



**Pastor Mike Brubaker and his wife Linda have been operating Christian Life Chapel since 1997, but this year is the first year they are in a permanent location at 392 South Main St., a transition they'll be celebrating next weekend.**

istry has been growing, especially the weekly programs and counseling options because the group always has a space.

"It's nice to have [the space]," Linda Brubaker said, but added. "I don't think it's changed our focus or direction."

Mike Brubaker said he tried to make the space comfortable, pleasant and welcoming.

"It's been quite a success," Brubaker smiled. "It's hard to get people to leave."

"We're excited to be here and glad to serve the Lord in this region," Brubaker said. "We're blessed to be part of this community."

Brubaker also credited members of the ministry, who did all of the work on the new space

and envision more to come.

Although the church has been in the new space since January, Brubaker said he and his wife waited on a grand opening until the weather got better, officially celebrating next weekend during Palm Sunday.

The first event to celebrate will be Friday, March 27, at 6:30 p.m., with a potluck banquet. On Saturday, March 28 at 6:30 p.m., there will be a movie night – something Brubaker said he hopes becomes a monthly occurrence. On Sunday, March 28, which is Palm Sunday, there will be a special worship service at 10 a.m.

To learn more about Christian Life Chapel, visit [christianlifechapel.org](http://christianlifechapel.org).

## WJJMS Project Would Not Increase Mill Rate in Colchester

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

The good news about the William J. Johnston Middle School project? It won't raise the mill rate. The bad news? Something has to be done.

During a presentation to the public on Wednesday, building committee chairman Tom Tyler stressed "there is not a 'do-nothing' option" for the middle school. With its current level of disrepair, it has come down to a major renovation or a major patch job.

"Patching would cost more, and there's no state reimbursement," Tyler said.

After Barbara Joslin, the project's architect from Tecton, ran the numbers, the committee said patching and fixing up the school would cost \$29.75 million. Fixing up the school would include code upgrades, hardware, bathrooms, doors, minor site improvements for the travel path, replacing end of life equipment, replacing the roof and windows.

And that \$29.75 million would be entirely a cost to the town since there would be no state reimbursement.

Instead, the committee has proposed tearing down the old sections of the building, renovating some parts and building some parts new, which would be a total cost of \$48,656,713 with a cost to the town of \$20,664,232 – approximately \$9 million less than the patch job. The proposed project includes \$27,992,481 of state

reimbursement.

During a tour of the school Wednesday night, attendees got a chance to see in person the issues with the current building. These include no telephones in classrooms; only four to five sprinklers in the entire school, all of which are in closets in the gyms; plumbing encased in cement, requiring drilling anytime the plumbing needs to be worked on; one of eight sinks in a science lab working (the other seven are covered by a piece of desk drilled onto them to cover them up); and a water fountain that has caught on fire before.

School principal Chris Bennett, who led the tour, also said the building is at its "useful limit" of electricity and they can't add any more outlets and, therefore, technology. He also noted the heat in the sixth-grade wing upstairs has also required school to be canceled in the past.

Also a problem? Bennett said the school simply is simply not meeting code; the building was grandfathered into many code regulations.

"If you start renovating, you have to meet code," Bennett said. "Currently we're grandfathered in. If you start one thing, you have to finish everything."

Bennett said that, while the conditions haven't ruined school spirit or the level of academics, it's a bad situation.

And it's a situation some in town have been trying to address for quite some time.

Back in 2006, Bennett said, the school was first asked for educational specs for a potential new building. But then nothing was done.

Bennett said he isn't sure why the interest stopped, since he was only assistant principal at the time, but he speculated the economy crash had something to do with it. Whatever the reasoning, though, it wasn't until 2011 that a building committee was finally formed, which developed a renovation and expansion project that would incorporate the school, Colchester Senior Center and a new town community center in one space.

That project, which carried a \$57.26 million price tag, was rejected at referendum in 2013.

Board of Finance Chairman Rob Tarlov agreed with Tyler, that something needs to be done with the school – regardless of whether a future proposal passes at referendum.

"The choice isn't whether we do it or we don't," he said. "It's this or something else."

But on the finance side, Tarlov said, things are looking good.

He said existing town debt is going down, so the school project wouldn't add debt so much as replace it. Plus, he noted, "we don't bond all at once." Rather, he said, the project would be

bonded over a 25-year period, starting in 2019. The last bond payment on the school would take place in 2045.

In the 2015-16 year, the town is paying \$1,972,865 toward debt. The existing debt is slated to drop after that; however, if the town continued to put aside that amount toward debt, it will have enough money in reserve to pay for the school project without requiring a jump in debt service in the 2019-20 and 2020-21 fiscal years – the only two years existing town debt and debt from the potential school project would overlap.

Tyler said it's because of this ability to manage the town debt that the project is possible with no mill rate increase.

"We can fit the project in without the mill rate going sky high," Tyler said. "We managed the debt so well in the town it can afford us the opportunity to do a significant project and not increase the mill rate."

Tyler said as well that the price may drop a bit from its current number, since the state has informally said there may be some reimbursement for the second gym. Tyler stressed the current \$20.66 million impact to the town is the highest the impact could get.

The project is currently slated for a June 2 referendum.

# Hebron Board Appoints Interim Superintendent

by Geeta Schrayter

School staff was the focus of last Thursday's Hebron Board of Education meeting, where the board not only said farewell to superintendent Jeff Newton, who will be leaving the district March 31, but voted to accept the resignation of Hebron Elementary School Principal Amy Campbell at the end of the year, and appointed an interim superintendent.

Newton, who joined the district in April 2013 and announced in January he'd be leaving for a position in East Lyme, was the first order of business; Board chair Maryanne Leichter thanked Newton for everything he'd done for the district during his tenure.

"You've completed many goals while you were here at the helm of Hebron Public Schools and we're very appreciative of that," Leichter stated.

"You've brought more openness to [the superintendent's office] by having the open door and letting people drop in and visit with you," she said. "You've reached out to the community with [school board member Erica Bromley's] brainchild, the Communications Committee and community forums. You've developed a strategic operating plan with community groups, codified financial policy in the district – bless you, bless you – and have been transparent about the finances of the board as evidenced by the monthly postings on the website."

Leichter's praise continued as she said Newton had "collaborated with administration, staff and community leaders on behalf of Hebron Public Schools." She added the superintendent had "certainly supported the efforts of the child in our district by attending concerts, plays and

special events at the schools."

In conclusion, she said "it will be difficult to say goodbye because you not only have had a positive energy and been a conscientious worker but you have added dignity and class to the position."

"It's been an honor – it really has been a pleasure, an honor," Newton responded. There's "a wonderful staff [here]: paras, teachers, custodians – everybody in the district – and to have the surrounding administrative team that has been working with me... you couldn't ask for better people. You hire people that are better than you and that's what makes things shine and that's what's here in this district."

Shortly after, the board addressed the resignation of Campbell, who will be retiring at the end of the school year after five years with the district.

Board member Amy Lynch-Gracias spoke to Campbell's time.

"You were the first action I think I did as a Board of Education member; your hiring was that very first night, and I've got to say it's been a pleasure to work with you," she stated. "I'm very excited about the growth and changes that occurred under your tutelage and I'm proud to say I was a member of the board while you were working here. Thank you for your efforts – you will be sorely missed."

Board members Ramon Bieri and Carol Connolly also addressed Campbell.

"Thank you for trying to accomplish all you could for our school," said Bieri. "We appreciate all the hard work you did and wish you the best of luck for your future."

Connolly meanwhile, commented on the

length of Campbell's educational career – 35 years.

"I thought of that when I was watching baseball," she stated. "I thought of how they kept tipping their hats and how amazing that [length of time] is and if I had a hat I'd be tipping it to you."

Leichter shared former school board member Stephanie Raymond had contacted her and expressed her desire to let Campbell know she also appreciated all her efforts.

"She wishes you nothing but the best and said that our district is going to miss an exemplary person in the position and I kind of echo those sentiments," Leichter said.

Similarly, Newton added, "It's been a pleasure, it really has been. You are a professional by all means. You rank up there with one of the best principals I have ever worked with, met or interacted with. You've been such a leader at the school [and] it's going to be a struggle – your shoes are going to be extremely hard to replace."

Leichter said the board was "reluctantly unanimous" in accepting her resignation.

But immediately after discussion relating to individuals who would be *leaving* the district, an action was made to shepherd in someone new: Manchester resident Mark Winzler, who the board unanimously voted to appoint interim superintendent pending the finalization of a contract.

Winzler is no stranger to *Rivereast*-land; he was interim superintendent of East Hampton public schools from January-July 2013, when current superintendent Diane Dugas began. In addition, Winzler has a number of other interim

positions under his belt, as he mentioned at the meeting.

"I thought when I retired five, almost six years ago, that it would be the end, and I got called out of retirement very subtly," he shared. "When a colleague had a herniated disc they said 'could you fill in just for six weeks?' and six weeks turned into ten, then another district called and another district called."

Winzler has held interim positions in "Granby, Berlin, Watertown, Rocky Hill, East Hampton, Columbia, Windsor, and Plymouth where I am right now – yes, *that* Plymouth – and now Hebron" he said.

By "that" Plymouth, Winzler was referring to the town former Hebron Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz went to after leaving Hebron in 2012. She resigned from Plymouth last September, after she was arrested for allegedly misusing district funds during her time in Hebron. Winzler has been manning the district ever since.

"I'm pleased to be here and I thank you very much," he said to the board, adding "the role of the interim [superintendent] is not to do anything new, just to keep the train rolling. We'll get you through June 30."

Newton added "I'm relieved that I'm handing the torch over to you Mark because the district will be in excellent hands – so thank you for taking on that role."

Winzler begins April 1.

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The next regular Hebron Board of Education meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 9, at 7 p.m. in the Gilead Hill School music room.

# Hebron Nine-Year-Old Publishes Poetry Book

by Geeta Schrayter

At first, Hebron resident Ava Roulier seems like an average 9-year-old. She likes to play, talk and eat. She goes to school, where she said she enjoys gym – specifically the dodgeball that's going on right now – and music, and takes piano and Tae Kwon Do lessons. She likes to read, and her favorite books of late include those by Roald Dahl and the *Girl Meets Ghost* series. She has a younger brother, a dog named Chloe, an American Girl doll called Mary and a plethora of stuffed animals she likes to create stories about, as though they were living creatures with favorite colors and pastimes.

And it's that aspect – seeing things not as they are but as they could be – that sets Ava apart. For it's a trait that's guided her when it comes to another activity she enjoys: writing. And that, in term, has led to the publication of her first book of poetry, *With Cherries on Top*, which released in December.

Ava started writing poetry when she was just six years old. The inspiration, she says, came from her grandfather Daniel Pels, or "Papa," who also writes poetry and has self-published a number of books.

"He kind of inspired me to write," Ava said, and her mother Laurie Roulier elaborated.

"Papa is a big force behind her writing and being published," she said. "He would write down what she was saying [before she did so herself] and say, 'Ava, expand on that!'"

And it was actually Pels' books that led to Ava's own publication; Laurie explained her father had included some of Ava's poems in one of his books, and Mary Custereri, the president of Taylor and Seale Publishing LLC, heard them and expressed an interest in publishing Ava's work.

*With Cherries on Top* is a collection of 31 poems that takes readers into Ava's highly imaginative and unique world, the inspiration for which she said she often finds outside.

"I look outside and everything outside gives me ideas and I just kind of look at things in an upside down and backwards way," she explained, adding one of her favorite poems in the book is "All of Me, Half of Me," which she described as "these little phrases but they kind of fit together."

"An empty fridge is a thermometer," the poem begins, and continues with such lines as "a picture frame without a picture is just a file," and "a mango with music is a tango."

Although Ava officially began writing poems just a few years ago, her mother said she should have known from even earlier that writing would be a big interest.

"She's always been good with words and expressing herself and she's always had a unique point of view," Laurie stated, adding, "She's always liked writing – ever since she could write she's liked writing. I used to buy those blank books and she used to fill them up with pictures and make stories."

Likewise, Ava's father Ken Roulier said, "She's very creative. She'll be sitting around and things come to her head and she just blurts them out."

He added, "She likes all arts; drawing and music and acting" – to which Ava agreed, chiming in with, "I don't know what I want to do when I grow up!"

"Don't worry, we won't pressure you just yet," her father laughed.

But with a book published at 9, it's safe to assume Ava will likely be successful at whatever she chooses. And in the meantime, Ava said she was interested in writing more books.

"I want to [write another one]," she said. "I want to make it happen – I'm writing more



Hebron resident Ava Roulier is all smiles as she holds up her debut book of poetry, *With Cherries on Top*, which released last December. Ava has been writing poetry since she was 6, and said she hopes her book will inspire others to write as well.

poems."

Speaking on the publication of his daughter's first book, Ken said, "I'm just very excited. It's a great opportunity for her not only to be published but to share her writing with others and learn about selling books."

In addition, Ken said, "It also shows her that her writing is good – she can be her harshest critic at times."

"I wish I had the opportunity when I was her age. I hope she keeps writing," Laurie added. "It seems kids are reading less, so it'd be great to inspire them to read and write" through Ava's book.

Ava has that hope for her book as well. "I hope that people like it when they get it, and that they get inspired and try to write," she said.

And for those who *are* interested in writing, Ava had some advice to offer up: "Write what your heart tells you to write and look at things

like they're not what they are – like they can be something else."

Like a school bus that's made of chocolate, as she writes about in "Chocolate School Bus."

"I was riding on a chocolate school bus taking me to Candy Cane Lane," she writes. "The candy-lane guards stopped the bullies from eating the bus. They had to walk to school. All the other children got hot chocolate."

*With Cherries on Top*, as Custereri wrote on the book's jacket, is "a delight," that introduces readers to Ava's "highly imaginative world in which she manipulates words that sometimes conjure up surprisingly in-depth images."

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The book is available through Ava's publisher's website, [taylorandseale.com](http://taylorandseale.com) as well as websites such as [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) and [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com).



Above, Ava reads from her journal, which she's filled with pictures and stories she's created about each of her stuffed animals.

# Portland Public Schools' Art Reception Wows

by John Tyczkowski

Last Thursday afternoon saw this year's Portland Public Schools art reception held in the Mary Flood Room of the Portland Public Library, an annual Friends of the Library-sponsored event for more than two decades.

While the room may be more familiar to residents for most of the year as the location of town board meetings, last week it was filled with dozens of parents and children, admiring their own art pieces and those of others.

Paintings, drawings, scratchboards, metalwork, ceramics and other media were on display from all schools in the district representing students from kindergarten through grade twelve.

Student pianists provided background music for the event as well.

Tricia Allen, who teaches art to fifth- and sixth-graders at Brownstone Intermediate School and third- and fourth-graders at Gildersleeve Elementary School, said she loves that the library holds this event each year.

"It's a celebration of all the arts, including visual art and music," she said. "I love that it represents all learning levels and learning types."

She also said several pieces on the walls integrated writing alongside visual media.

"We're really asked to bring writing into the students' work," she said. "Common Core asks every teacher to bring writing into their subject."

Allen said pieces called 'story quilts' that involved both a drawing and a short written text to delve into the story behind the art, were an example of that integration of art and writing.

Allen also said she'd love to have a way to display more students' art as well. To that end, she says Gildersleeve has its own art show alongside its book fair. This year's is on March 24 from 4 to 6 p.m.

However, she said Brownstone doesn't have the space for a student art showcase, so she takes a different approach to displaying student art there.

"We celebrate students' art by putting pieces in every school's conference rooms, in the Board of Education offices," she said. "I'm always looking for where in the town I can spread out more art."

Allen said the students' pieces are changed out each year to make sure students get continual exposure, and chosen students receive certificates.

Also, she said the selection, labeling and framing process takes months, and that staging the gallery at the library, which takes a few weeks, is a lot of work in itself.

Stuart Noelte, the art teacher at Portland High School, said he enjoys seeing the continuum of different ages' art in once place.

"You look at the younger kids' pieces, and they're pretty intense color-wise, and they're a lot of fun," he said. "And then you have the more technical pieces at the older levels."

Noelte said his perspective is different than the other teachers because only at the high school level is art an elective.

"I have a really nice, really dedicated group of kids this year, it's good to see their work here," he said.

Valley View Elementary School second grade student Beth Nedobity said it took her two days to make her piece in the art show, and that she felt "great" about being featured.

She stood next to her piece, an Henri Matisse-inspired collage featuring colorful abstract shapes, and showed it off to her family in attendance.

"I drew the shapes then cut them out," she said. "Then I put them on the paper. They're natural shapes."

Lynn Follis, art teacher at Valley View El-



**Beth Nedobity, a second-grader at Valley View Elementary School, displays her artwork at the Portland Public Schools art reception, held at Portland Library. Her piece is inspired by neo-impressionist painter Henri Matisse and focuses on intense shapes and bright colors.**

ementary School (kindergarten and grades one and two), said she always tries to "pick a sampling" of all the art students are doing at the school.

"It's good to show a bunch of examples of all skill and grade levels at the school," she said. "Especially because we focus on art formation at Valley View. We help them learn the art tools to express themselves."

Of the library showcase, Follis said it's always "really exciting" to see how happy the students are about showing off their art.

"Kids so desperately need art in their lives,

and this is one very rewarding way we help keep the arts alive," she said. "It's a nice event for the kids, and it's nice for the town too."

Superintendent of Schools Philip O'Reilly was on hand to view students' art and to talk with parents, students and the art teachers at the gallery showing.

"I'm moved by the deep nature of the students' art pieces, I'm really brought into the pieces here," O'Reilly said, discussing some specific pieces he enjoyed. "The arts are so key to so many kids. It becomes the vehicle for their learning, and that is very evident here."

# Oklahoma! Comes Sweeping Down the Plain in Portland

by John Tyczkowski

More than 80 Portland High School students have been working hard since January to present a production of Rogers and Hammerstein's classic *Oklahoma!* – and their hard work will come to fruition this weekend, as the musical makes its bow in the school auditorium.

The play runs over two and a half hours, and contains lots of dancing and singing. So the rehearsals have been intense, but PHS music teacher and the production's director, Samuel Tucker, has high hopes.

"These guys' energy is really coming along; it's going to be a very entertaining show," Tucker said. "There's going to be some great songs and a lot of great performances."

The high school currently stages a musical every other year; its last production was *Anything Goes* in 2013. However, an item in the proposed 2015-16 Board of Education budget would provide funding for an annual musical.

"I'm hoping that will go through; we all are," Tucker said.

Tucker, in his third year of teaching at PHS, said this is his second musical he's directed there, but his third total drama production, since he directed the drama *Arsenic and Old Lace* last year.

Tucker said he decided on *Oklahoma!* because it was an optimum combination of the right size of actors needed and pit orchestra needed and its classic nature.

"Since we only have a musical every two years we like to do plays that are the main go-tos in the theatre world," he said. "Also, I was actually in (*Oklahoma!*) when I was in high school so I'm really familiar with it."

The play is set just outside the town of Claremore in 1906, and tells the story of the romance between cowboy Curly McLain and farm girl Laurey Williams. The musical, which made its Broadway debut in 1943 and became an Academy award-winning film in 1955, is known for such classics as "Oh What a Beautiful Mornin'," "The Surrey with the Fringe on Top," and the title number.

An interesting aspect of the production was the large amount of dancing involved, compared to an average musical, Tucker said.

"We've got a great choreographer, Rayna Bailey, who has her own studio in Chester; she's amazing," he said. "She does a great job. She adapts it for the kids but she sets the bar high.

And they've all been doing very well."

Tucker also said another challenge for the actors was learning how to speak in the 'Okie' accent, but an even bigger obstacle was just finding enough rehearsal time around the numerous January and February snowstorms – storms that ultimately forced the cancellation of eight rehearsals.

"We missed a lot of rehearsals because of [the weather], and we've been playing catch up, but I feel we're ready for this weekend," Tucker said.

PHS band director Kristin Novak, serving as pit orchestra director, said the students "really stepped up" despite the loss of rehearsal days.

"They've just taken that challenge and risen to it," she said. "All of the kids have also been very good about staying later at rehearsals to make up for that time."

Another special aspect the pit focused on this year was syncing up with the actors for dance sequences.

"That really just takes a lot of finesse and communication back and forth," Novak said. "The pit has to get used to the tempo they want to dance to, and sometimes the actors need to meet our capabilities. It's a process of getting used to one another."

However, staging was another process that was just as involved as acting and dancing, junior Brooke Townsend, on the stage crew, said.

"We had to come in on Saturdays to work on the sets and make sure everything was ready," she said. "We built all the sets in a few months, from the shed to the house to the corn."

Townsend said she had done backstage work previously in middle school, but this was the first time she was involved with set creation.

"It was a lot of work, especially building the corn. That was a process," she said. "We had to paint brown paper, and cut it and fold it and draw leaves on it, crinkle it a bit and then stick it on the backdrop with a paperclip."

"Building all the sets was complicated but it was a lot of fun. I'd do it again," she said.

Senior Emily Dillon plays Laurey in *Oklahoma!*. She said this was her first time on stage for a musical.

"I was in the pit for the last musical, *Anything Goes*," she said. "I kind of joked around about being the lead when I was in the pit, and then I joined the [school's] a capella group the



**Laurey Williams (Emily Dillon), left, is unamused as Curly McLain (Josh Arroyo) attempts to woo her, while Williams' Aunt Eller (Kiley Lord), center, looks on. More than 80 high school students participated in this year's musical production, including actors, pit orchestra and stage crew.**

following year, and I was like 'Oh, I actually like this.'"

"So I tried out this year, and then Mr. Tucker told me 'congratulations!' and I found out I was Laurey," she said.

Dillon said she "loves music," and would be happy to continue on with it in an extracurricular way while in college, where she plans to major in nursing.

She also said that everyone should come and see the play.

"We've all been working super hard, actors, pit, crew, the teachers. We have a lot to showcase," Dillon said.

Junior Josh Arroyo plays Curly. He said he's a veteran of musicals, having been involved in them since fifth grade, and that he's been singing since he was 7 years old.

Arroyo added he's a big fan of Westerns, and "had a lot of fun" getting into the part.

"I love *Bonanza*, and Clint Eastwood movies, and all those old westerns," he said. "I found the setting very familiar to me."

Dancing was something fairly new to him, Arroyo said, but it wasn't something insurmountable.

"It's not too hard as long as you pay attention," he said. "I don't have the best rhythm, but I can do well enough, and the pit helps out as well."

Arroyo emphasized that the production appeals to a wide variety of people and that it's "fun for the whole family."

"Whenever we rehearsed in the auditorium, we always had people come in from the hall to watch. Students, teachers, staff – and they're of all ages, and they've all liked it," he said. "It's going to be a wonderful show."

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Portland High School will perform *Oklahoma!* tonight Friday, March 20, at 7 p.m., and tomorrow, Saturday, March 21, at 1 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors and students with an ID and \$6 for children under 6.

# Large Turnout in Portland Discusses Elmcrest's Future

by John Tyczkowski

The next phase of development for the former Elmcrest Hospital campus development has begun, and more than 75 people turned out Tuesday evening to provide their opinions.

Founding principal Steve Cecil of the Boston-based Cecil Group, the project's planning and design firm, led the discussion along with colleague Josh Fiala, an architect and urban designer with the group.

The Cecil Group's specialty is working to develop sites in "communities with underutilized properties with historic assets," Cecil said.

Maura Cochran, of Bartram and Cochran, the project's Hartford-based real estate consulting firm, also spoke during the presentation, detailing the type of real estate investment Elmcrest would need to attract to be economically viable.

Those in attendance included First Select-woman Susan Bransfield, Town Planner Deanna Rhodes, members of the Elmcrest Campus Steering Committee, the Elmcrest Campus Advisory Committee, property owner Fred Hassan and numerous members of the general public.

The study presented that evening was funded by a \$50,000 grant the town received from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation's Vibrant Communities Initiative.

Cecil outlined the basic idea guiding the development of the site of the former hospital, which involved finding a balance between the competing demands of the owner/developer's needs, the town and community's wants and the market and site potential of the campus.

The 15-acre property is located at the corner of routes 17A and 66. In addition to housing the former hospital, the site is known for its featuring three historic homes.

"There's a strong interest in trying to find a route for the future that would maintain the historic resources that are here, while allowing for the best in redevelopment," he said. "I think we all can probably agree that what's there today is not the best answer, but we may not all agree on what is the right answer."

Cecil said later in the night, he, Fiala and Cochran would lead discussion groups to gather information from residents as to "what Elmcrest should be."

Cecil reviewed the pre-recession plans for Portland Town Place, which included 150,000 square feet of commercial space, more than 80 housing units, and over 500 parking spaces.

However, the plan would only have preserved the Sage House, built in 1884, as the other houses would have been demolished to make room for additional parking.

The plan received zoning approval in 2009, but the recession and subsequent real estate market slump derailed development plans.

Cecil also displayed alternate community proposals from the same meeting in 2009, which decreased parking spaces down to

slightly over 400. That was done to preserve additional historic buildings, such as the Brainerd House, built in 1851-1852 and the Hart-Jarvis House, built in 1829-1830, as well as historic trees on the property.

Fiala spoke about Elmcrest's assets in terms of redevelopment, which included its "gateway location" at the intersection of routes 17A and 66, as well as its "relatively-secluded nature" due to its thick growth of trees and its "unique" location amid industrial, commercial and residential zones, and bordering the Town Village District Zone.

In addition, Fiala said one of the site's major assets is the traffic volume that comes through across the Arrigoni Bridge. The average daily traffic volume from Middletown on Route 17A is just over 33,000 vehicles. From that, roughly 25,000 vehicles turn onto Route 66 and the rest continue up Main Street.

"Elmcrest is a very versatile site that can offer a lot to the town," he said. "And in particular, the traffic volume is a major benefit to the site as well."

The easiest access to the property is from Route 66, Marlborough Street, in a break in the divided highway, Fiala said, but there is no easy access from Route 17A, Main Street.

Cecil then gave an overview of the structural status of the three main historic properties, the Brainerd House, the Hart-Jarvis House and the Sage House.

He characterized them as "in pretty good condition relative to use in the past" regarding their exteriors, but he said all houses had heavily-modified interiors that were not up to modern code standards.

"The interiors are unfortunately not elements that can be thought of as easily being reused," Cecil said.

However, that would not necessarily preclude keeping the houses on site as planned, he said.

Cochran then spoke about the real estate and marketing challenges the site faces, which were chiefly anchored on the fact that much of Connecticut's population density lies west of the Connecticut River, and the east is largely rural.

According to a chart Cochran presented of Portland's "market area," or population centers located within at most a 30-minute drive, the highest population densities are located in Middletown, Wallingford, and parts of Berlin, Meriden, Hartford, West Hartford and Farmington.

Northern Glastonbury, as well as parts of Manchester and East Hartford, also showed higher densities, though not as high as those on the western side of the river.

"The Connecticut River is gorgeous, but it acts like a big divide," she said. "You would think you were crossing an enormous body of water. Density really drops off to the east."

As such, Cochran said the idea would be to make the Elmcrest campus a "destination place"



**More than 75 residents, representing many parts of town, showed up Tuesday for a public meeting on the future of the former Elmcrest campus. Progress on developing the site has been stalled since the 2009 recession and real estate market slump.**

that people would be deliberately drawn to from other communities through the quality and uniqueness of its businesses and its historic character.

To that end, Cochran said dense housing, such as apartments, would be a good choice for the property, as well as flex space, which could be rented out as needed depending on the renter/buyer's needs.

"It costs less to put in, and the space is very versatile," she said. "It could be build-to-suit, and in other communities, such as Winbrook Business Park in Rocky Hill, it's been doing very well."

She also said regular office space would probably be a bad choice, citing Glastonbury's 26 percent vacancy rate across its office properties and a lack of new dedicated office space in nearly a decade as a sign to steer clear of that use.

Regarding retail space, Cochran said unique restaurants would be a good choice, as well as smaller, non-chain and non-"big box" stores to attract visitors from farther-out towns.

Cochran also addressed the idea of a hotel, given the site's proximity to the Brownstone Exploration & Discovery Park. She said she conducted research into a Marriott-sized hotel, totaling around 108 rooms, as well as into a smaller Comfort Inn-sized hotel, totaling 76 rooms.

The problem from she found from talking to a hotel owner in East Hartford would be achieving the required 75 percent occupancy on a daily basis to make the hotel economically viable.

"He said he's never gotten higher than 65 percent in hotels he owns east of the river," she said. "I'm putting calls into three other owners, but it's not looking good."

Concluding the presentation, residents broke

into three groups of about 25 people to discuss their ideas for the property. Cecil, Fiala and Cochran led the groups.

After about a half hour of discussion, the meeting reconvened to present each group's findings.

Common and major themes for each group included making Elmcrest the focal point of the community in terms of creating a village common and a defined center of town.

Also important was creating better traffic access to the site on both Route 66 and on Route 17A, as well as calming traffic through the addition of a traffic light at the site entrance on Marlborough Street.

"High-quality and unique" restaurants were a common priority for the site, as well as small cafes and a microbrewery, as were smaller specialty stores, such as Trader Joe's, and non-chain specialty stores.

Residents also talked about creating riverfront access from the site, as well as giving it Air Line Trail access and creating a clear walking and bike path between Elmcrest and the quarries.

In addition, many residents also agreed they were in favor of attracting young families to town, and voiced support for some apartment space at the site.

After reviewing residents' ideas, Cecil said another public meeting would follow in May and would explore developments based upon the feedback residents gave at this meeting. The final conclusions of those developments would be related at a public meeting in June, he said.

"Thank you very much to everyone for coming out tonight," Cecil said. "This is an important step for the community, to make sure there's an overall path to follow for Elmcrest's development."

## Obituaries

### East Hampton

#### William F. Briggs

William Frederick Briggs, Jr., 85, of East Hampton, and Sarasota, FL, formerly of South Glastonbury, passed away on Sunday, December 21, 2014 in Sarasota, Fla.

A memorial service celebrating his life will be held Saturday, March 28 at 11 a.m. at the Marlborough Congregational Church, 35 South Main St., Marlborough. A reception at the church will follow the service.

Born in Waterbury on July 5, 1929, Bill was the son of the late William F. Briggs and Dorothy (Porteous) Briggs. He was predeceased by his wife of 57 years, the former Barbara White.

In the late 1950s, Bill moved to South Glastonbury, where he raised his family. He was the president and co-owner of Valley Oil Co. in Portland.

Bill was an avid golfer and a charter member of the Glastonbury Hills Country Club where he was the Senior Club Champion several times. He truly cherished all of the summers spent with his family at his cottage on Lake Pocotopaug in East Hampton.

He is survived by his brother Robert Briggs of Haddam, his sister-in-law Marilyn Baillargeon, his daughters: Cynthia Thierfeld and her husband Jeffrey of Portland, Cathleen Glynn and her husband John of Marlborough, Carolyn Aubin and her husband David of Hebron, and his son William of Middletown, as well as numerous grandchildren.



### Portland

#### Joseph Patrick Keser

Joseph Patrick Keser, 59, of Portland, died Wednesday, March 11, at Hartford Hospital, surrounded by his loving family. He was the son of the late John Bransfield Keser and Mary E. (Cawley) Keser.

Born Feb. 3, 1956, in Middletown, he lived in Portland for all of his life and attended St. Mary's Parochial Elementary, Xavier and Portland high schools, and Middlesex Community College where he earned an Associate degree in Marketing. He was a life-long asset to the five-generational family floral business; serving as vice president since 1986.

Joe loved sports – especially baseball and football. He was a die-hard Yankee fan from the time he could hold a wiffle ball. No Sunday was complete without a friendly wager, followed by a nice steak. In his glory days, he played for local teams such as the Wizards and the Space Cowboys. Many friends were made.

Throughout his life, whether in business, sports or socially, Joe's word was his bond. His integrity was uncompromising and he took great pride in doing the right thing in the right way. Joe's love of family and loyalty to his brothers and sisters was unconditional. We will always remember his unique combination of sheer determination and total dependability coupled with his dry Irish humor.

He leaves his sisters and brothers, Celia Keser; Eileen K. Sullivan and her husband, John; James Keser and his wife, Jennifer; and Kevin Keser and his wife, Margaret all of Portland as well as beloved nieces and nephews, Meagan Salinsky, Patrick Dill, Moira Dill, Colleen Keser, Brian Keser, Elise Keser, Mary Keser, and his loyal and constant canine companion, Bobo.

Besides his parents, he was predeceased by his brother "Chumley."

Funeral services were held Saturday, March 14, from Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., with a Mass that morning at the Church of St. Mary, 51 Freestone Ave. Burial was in St. Mary Cemetery, Portland, and was private and at the convenience of the family. Relatives and friends called Friday, March 13, at the funeral home.

Memorial donations may be made to the Connecticut Humane Society, 701 Russell Rd., Newington, CT 06111.

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



### Hebron

#### Sharon Christine Fracchia

Sharon Christine (Weeks) Fracchia, 68, of Hebron, beloved wife of David, passed away Friday morning, March 13, at Hartford Hospital. She was born on March 9, 1947 in Portsmouth, N.H.

In addition to her husband of 46 years, she leaves two daughters and their husbands, Melissa and Jeff Ackerman of East Hampton and Bianca and Dennis Thompson of Lebanon; four grandsons, Kyle, Zachary and Brandon (who called her "Mimi"), and Christopher (who called her "Lally"); and numerous extended family members and friends.

She was predeceased by a daughter, Nichole "Nikki" Fracchia.

Over the years, she enjoyed spending time with her girlfriends – bowling and playing cards. In her spare time, she loved to crochet, work in ceramics and go shopping. Her greatest joy was found in caring for her family.

Visitation was Wednesday, March 18, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. Services and burial were private.

For online condolences, visit [auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com](http://auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com).



### Hebron

#### George Walwyn

George "Tommy" Walwyn, 73, of Hebron, passed away Thursday, March 12, after a short illness. Born Nov. 17, 1941, in New York City, he was the youngest son of the late George Wellington and Blanche Elizabeth (Perkins) Walwyn.

Tommy served in the US Navy during the Vietnam War and was a proud veteran and member of the American Legion. He married Letheria "Lisa" Pollard on September 26, 1970. The couple moved to Hebron, where they made their home and raised their family.

Tommy was a retired machinist for Carlyle Johnson Machine Company in Bolton. He enjoyed duckpin bowling and collecting the latest DVDs, but most importantly, he will be remembered as a devoted brother, husband, father, and grandfather.

He will be sadly missed by his beloved wife Lisa; his daughters, Nyissia and her husband Brandon Littles of Manchester and Sherell and her husband Greg Riley of Sumter, S.C.; his brother, James Walwyn of Hebron; sisters, Joan Johnson of Marlborough and Ena Carrington, Clarissa Green and Virginia Hayward, all of New York; and grandchildren, Braelyn Littles of Manchester, Rio and husband Corey Dwyer and their son Corey Mekhi of Columbia, S.C.; his dear friend, Jake Deas of New York; and numerous extended family members and friends.

He was predeceased by his brother, David Walwyn.

The family is grateful to Pastor Kevin Zufall for ministering to him during his last days.

Calling hours were Thursday, March 19, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, before a chapel service with full military honors, with Pastor Kevin Zufall officiating. A repass will immediately follow the service at the Hebron Church of Hope. Burial will be private.

Donations in his memory may be made to the Hebron Church of Hope, 1 Main St., Hebron, CT 06248.

For online condolences, visit [auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com](http://auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com).

### Portland

#### Joseph N. DeLucia Jr.

Joseph N. DeLucia Jr., 63, died peacefully Sunday, March 8. Born in Norwich July 30, 1951, he was the son of the late Joseph N. Sr. and Loretta M. (Poyerd) DeLucia.

The Woyasz & Son Funeral Home, 141 Central Ave., Norwich, is in charge of arrangements.

### East Hampton

#### Corinne E. Meagher

Corinne E. Meagher, 85, of Vero Beach, Fla., passed away Monday March 9, 2015 at VNA Hospice House.

Corinne was born July 21, 1929 in Middletown, the daughter of the late Walter and Dorothy Moard. She was born and raised in East Hampton, and resided there for 28 years before moving to Glastonbury.

Corinne worked as a customer service representative for U.S. Airways for 30 years before retiring. She enjoyed traveling, had a great passion for tennis, both playing herself and watching it professionally.

She had been a resident of Vero Beach, Fla., for the past 20 years, coming from Glastonbury, and had been a resident of Heron Cay Retirement Community.

Corinne was preceded in death by her husband, William J. Meagher and is survived by two daughters, Karen Armero and husband Juan and Marilyn Soward and husband John, all of Vero Beach; five grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; one sister and one brother, Donna Marsden and husband Arthur of Bluffton, S.C., and Dennis Moard of northern Pennsylvania. Corinne is also survived by her loving companion, Robert Haughian of Vero Beach.

A graveside service and interment of her ashes will be held this summer at Rosehill Memorial Park in Rocky Hill.

The family requests that expressions of sympathy take the form of donations to VNA Hospice House of Vero Beach and can be made at 1110 35th Lane in Vero Beach, FL.

An online guestbook may be signed at [coxgiffordseawinds.com](http://coxgiffordseawinds.com).



### Colchester

#### Greta Markiewicz

Greta Markiewicz of Colchester, recently of Scottsdale, Ariz., passed away peacefully Friday, March 13. She was a wonderful mom, special lady, and a great friend. She was always willing to volunteer and was generous with her time. Greta was born and educated in Zablocie-Zywiec, Poland (south of Krakow).

Greta was a Holocaust survivor. She met her late husband, Leonard Markiewicz in a Nazi German Arbeitslager (labor camp) and they were married shortly after they were liberated by the Russians in 1945. In June 1995, Greta and Leonard celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with family and friends.

While in Colchester, she was an active member of Congregation Ahavath Achim, the Sisterhood, a life member of Hadassah, and participated in Jewish Federation events, as well as being a past member of the Grange. She also spent time at the Colchester Senior Center.

Greta and her late husband owned and operated a farm on Lebanon Avenue in Colchester. They were both active in the Central Connecticut Co-Op Farmers Assoc. In their retirement, they spent their winters in Delray Beach, Fla.

She was predeceased by her husband Leonard (1995), her granddaughter Korye Nicole (1999), and her great-granddaughter, Caitlin Korye (2009).

Greta is survived by her daughter, Sally of New York City, her son, Henry (Nancy) of Phoenix, Ariz., and grandsons, Joshua (Tracey) of Apex, N.C., and Brad (Arielle) of Springfield, Va. Greta is also survived by her two great-grandchildren, Sean Ryan (8) and Madison Kate (3), both of Apex, N.C.

Funeral services will be held at Congregation Ahavath Achim, 84 Lebanon Ave., Colchester, on Sunday, March 22, at 1 p.m. with Rabbi Ken Alter officiating. Arrangements have been made through Weinstein Funeral Home.

Donations can be made to Congregation Ahavath Achim, or the U.S. Holocaust Museum, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW, Washington, DC 20024, or to a local charity of your choice.



### Portland

#### Assunta R. LaRosa

Assunta R. "Sue" (Rinaldi) LaRosa, 90, of Portland, formerly of Middletown and Meriden, beloved wife of the late Frank LaRosa, died Tuesday, March 3, at the Middlesex Hospital.

Assunta was born in Middletown, daughter of the late Umberto and Anna (Acquarula) Rinaldi. She was a member of St. Pius X Church.

Assunta is survived by her two daughters, Theresa A. Dauphin and her husband Alan of Spofford, N.H., and Elizabeth Celella and her husband Lawrence; two grandsons, Ryan Fleming of Connecticut and Alan F. Dauphin and his wife Kelsie of Derby, Vt. and her great-grandchildren, Caleb, Aliya and Alan "AJ" Dauphin, also of Derby, Vt.

She was predeceased by four brothers, James Rinaldi, Giro Rinaldi, Pat Rinaldi, her twin brother Salvatore Rinaldi; and a sister, Connie Fazzino.

A memorial Mass will be held Saturday, March 21, at 10 a.m., at St. Pius X Church, 310 Westfield St., Middletown. Burial will be at a later date.

Memorial donations may be made to the Middlesex Hospice Unit, c/o Development Office, 55 Crescent St., Middletown, Ct. 06457.

The Coughlin-Lastrina Funeral Home, 491 High St., Middletown, is in charge of arrangements.

### Colchester

#### Jessy Paul Doucet

Jessy Paul Doucet, 25, of Colchester, climbed the "Stairway to Heaven" Wednesday, March 11. Jessy was born on the U.S. Air Force Base in Fort Worth, Texas, on Jan. 18, 1990; the only child of Sara Doucet of Pleasant Garden, N.C., and Stacey Doucet of Colchester.



Jessy graduated from Overhills High School in Spring Lake, N.C., and was employed at Norwich Lumber. Jessy had a special quality about him; he was not only kind and brave, but possessed the integrity to stand up for other people without a second thought. He cared about people and history all around the world and kept up with the latest current events doing his own research on the subjects.

Jessy had a passion for music, he played both guitar and drums, he loved being outside sitting around a bonfire with friends and he also enjoyed gaming, skateboarding, and aviation.

In addition to his parents, Jessy is survived by his maternal grandparents, Tony and Caroline Greening of the U.K. and his paternal grandparents, Ronnie and Becky Doucet of Louisiana; numerous aunts, uncles and cousins He will be greatly missed.

Calling hours were Thursday, March 19, at the Belmont-Sabrowski Funeral Home, 144 S. Main St., Colchester. Burial will be at the convenience of the family.

### Colchester

#### Holly Daigle-Mooers

Holly J. (Brotherton) Daigle-Mooers, 67, of Colchester, wife of Donald Mooers, passed away Sunday, March 15, at Cobalt Healthcare. Born in Hartford, daughter of the late Harry and Catherine (Rozycki) Brotherton, she was a former Vernon resident moving to Colchester 14 years ago.



Besides her very devoted husband, Donald, she leaves two sons, Lucien J. Daigle and his wife Chris of Stafford Springs and David Daigle of Manchester; a sister, Gail Meyers and her husband Edward Jaworski of Windsor; a granddaughter, Amber Daigle; two great-grandchildren; a niece, Meredith Meyers of Bethesda, Md.; and a nephew, Erik Meyers in Germany.

Funeral services were Thursday, March 19, at Carlson Funeral Home, 45 Franklin Square, New Britain. Burial followed in Fairview Cemetery, New Britain. Calling hours were Thursday, March 19, before the service at Carlson Funeral Home.

Donations may be made to the American Cancer Society, 825 Brook Street, I-91 Tech Center, Rocky Hill, CT 06067.

Share a memory or note of sympathy at [carlsonfuneralhome.com](http://carlsonfuneralhome.com).