

RIVEREAST

News Bulletin

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

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Honoring Veterans... A musket salute by Richard Swartwout and his friend Rose of the 6th Connecticut Regiment (Historic) marked the conclusion of ceremonies honoring armed services veterans at Andover Monument Park last Friday, Nov. 11.

Veterans Honored at Portland Dinner

by Elizabeth Regan

Veterans were elbow to elbow with other veterans and their most ardent supporters in the cafeteria of Portland High School last Friday night, as they were treated to a community dinner in honor of their service.

It was a vastly different reception than the one Higganum resident Arthur Wiknik Jr. said he received in Windsor Locks upon his return from Vietnam in 1970 as a veteran of the Battle of Hamburger Hill.

The controversial campaign resulted in 72 American and South Vietnamese deaths on a mountain that became known as a meat grinder.

Wiknik was a member of the Army's 101st Airborne Division.

"I arrived at Bradley International Airport in uniform, my chest full of campaign ribbons and bursting with pride befitting a soldier returning from war," he wrote in his 2005 book, *Nam-Sense*. "I sat in a large waiting area while travelers filtered in. I was the only soldier in the room. As the area filled, empty seats near me were left vacant until, eventually, people stood against the walls rather than sit beside me."

But on Friday, there wasn't an empty seat to be seen at the Veterans Day event as Wiknik joined approximately 100 veterans and their guests to partake in the dinner spread laid out by Seby Milardo of Melilli Caffe and Grill.

Veterans from World War II through the post-9/11 era sat at tables adorned with handmade

cards from students at Gildersleeve School.

Wiknik said he'd heard of the dinner thanks to a veteran from Middletown. Wiknik has built an extensive network of connections in the veteran community through his book, published by Casemate Publishers. He takes on a handful of speaking engagements each year, he said; he's also appeared on television and local radio stations.

Wiknik was one of 13 Americans featured in *Vietnam in HD* on the History Channel. Their stories comprise the six-part documentary that first aired in 2011 under the tagline "It's not the war we know. It's the war they fought."

"When I was 18, I bought a new car: a 1968 Camaro. I just got a new job at an aircraft company. I was making pretty good money. I had a girlfriend I was crazy about. Then I got a draft

See Veterans Honored page 2

Early Deadline

Due to the Thanksgiving holiday, the deadline for next week's issue (Nov. 25) of the *RiverEast* is a day early. All news copy – such as letters to the editor, weekly listings, press releases, etc. – **must** be submitted by noon Monday, Nov. 21. No exceptions will be made.

War Veterans Visit Bacon Students

by Julianna Roche

Nearly 100 juniors and seniors filled Bacon Academy's school auditorium this week, joining a panel of war veterans for a special Veterans Day Q&A session.

The event, held Monday and run by the student council, started three years ago when veteran and 1st Sgt. Dan Henderson approached Bacon Academy about hosting some kind of Veterans Day program.

According to Henderson, who served in Panama, Iraq and Afghanistan, the event has grown from just 20 to 25 students attending in its first year to 35 to 40 in 2015, and finally, around 100 this year.

"I'm very excited about this and I really appreciate the turnout," Henderson said. "This is what is really important – to make these days significant... Veterans Day is just not something we should take for granted."

The veterans recognized during the event were Henderson himself, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Alphonse Letendre, Seaman 1st Class Jim O'Connell, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Chris Gould, Col. Bob Kvederas, Seaman 1st Class Tom O'Meara, Pfc. Jack Bittman, Sgt. 1st Class Chris Emmerson, Airman 1st Class Neal Treecarton, Col. Victor Battaglioli, Pfc. Ray Ryan, Petty Officer 3rd Class Jon Mainella, 1st Sgt. James Mansfield, Seaman 1st Class Don Smith and Capt. Emily Hein.

After brief introductions, students were given the opportunity to ask the veterans questions, including what their most memorable experiences were.

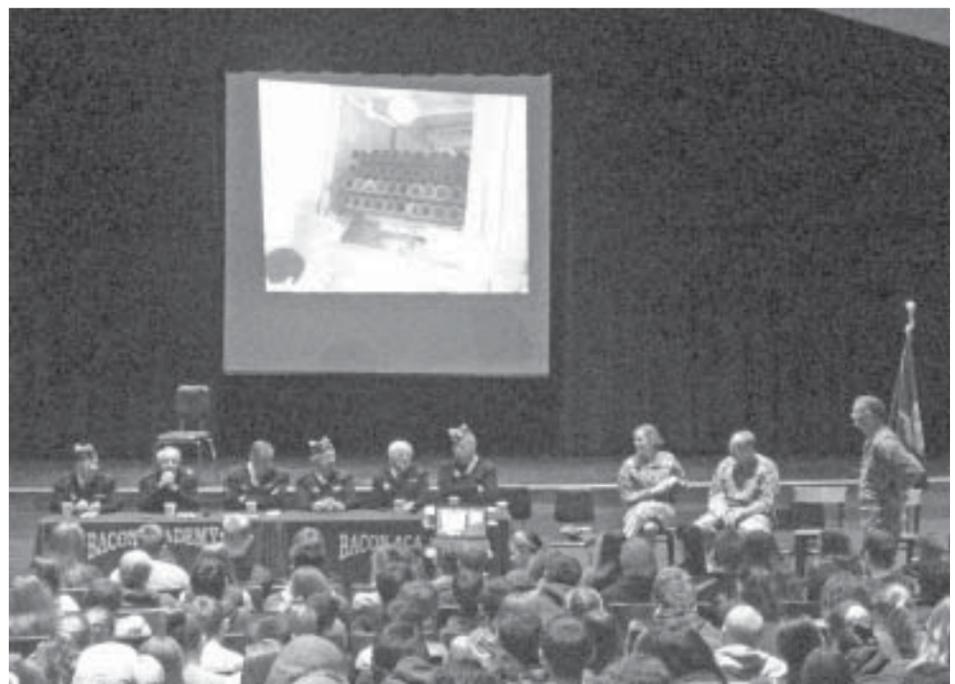
For Hein, she said it was during her time serving as a convoy commander in Afghanistan (which Henderson said is the most dangerous job, due to the high volume of improvised explosive devices they encounter while driving their convoys on the roads).

"We were approached by the USO [United Service Organizations] and they wanted to come along in one of our holiday convoys," she said, explaining that the day before Christmas Eve, they went around dropping off boxes of gifts (with everything from X-Boxes to gift bags packed by the Yankees and snowman costumes) to soldiers.

"It was cool, because some of the places [we went] were really remote and they had already had their last drop before the holidays," Hein continued. "To help out and see how much the USO does for people on the ground there... being able to make other people happy in a time like that was really awesome."

While Henderson said there were too many memories to choose from, he said his anniversary of enlisting in the Army (which is Nov. 13) is extra special every year since it's so close to Veterans Day.

See War Veterans page 2



Nearly 100 Bacon Academy students partook in a memorable Q&A session with a panel of war veterans on Nov. 14 during a special Veterans Day event hosted in the school auditorium, and organized by the student council and 1st Sgt. Dan Henderson (pictured on the far right).



Above, Art Wiknik Jr. and Betty Wiknik were among the many area veterans treated to a free dinner at Portland, hosted by Melilli's Caffee and Grill. Below, Dortha Cool Willetts stands and claps as the "The Army Goes Rolling Along" plays.

Veterans Honored cont. from Front Page notice. To me that was such a crushing blow, because I had everything I ever wanted and it was going to be taken away from me," he said in the film.

He was only in Vietnam for a month when the Battle of Hamburger Hill began. Known in Army parlance as a Shake 'n Bake Sergeant – or Instant NCO – Wiknik had gone through accelerated training to become a non-commissioned officer to supplement a rapidly depleting force.

Wiknik said Friday he was chosen for the leadership role after he managed to escape a mock prisoner of war camp during an escape and evasion training exercise at Fort Polk, La.

"I was the only guy who escaped that night," he explained. "So the Army figures, 'This guy has something on the ball. He has instincts. Let's send him to NCO school.'"

But rising to the level of a non-commissioned officer in such a short time with no wartime experience was fraught with its own challenges. He arrived in Vietnam as an infantry squad leader in charge of soldiers who had already lived through more than he'd ever seen.

"They didn't want to listen to me," he said.

That changed on Hamburger Hill, when the baby-faced sergeant proved on the field of battle that he could be trusted with the lives of his soldiers.

"So after that I had no problems," he said.

Wiknik is at work on a second book that picks up where his first left off, chronicling several years during which he said he drank to excess and dated wild women. It's a phase that ended when he met 20-year-old Betty on a blind date arranged by their sisters. While the chemistry was not instant, the two soldiered through their first few meetings purely to appease the familial instigators, according to Arthur Wiknik. The rest is history.

They've been married 39 years, with three daughters and two grandchildren.

On Friday, Betty was once again Arthur's date. Each veteran was invited to bring a spouse or significant other.

Seby Milardo has been catering the event for four years now, having taken over from Frank Cavaliere when he moved into the baker's former space in 2013.

Mellili's has been a presence in the area for almost 20 years, with previous locations in Cromwell and Middletown.

"We want to thank you guys for what you did for us. This is just a little that we can give back," Milardo told diners before they lined up



at the buffet to get their plates of pasta, meatloaf, potatoes, vegetables and salad.

Milardo assured the veterans he'd see them again next year.

Ret. U.S. Army Lt. Col. Reg Farrington, an active member of Portland's veterans community, said people came out from East Hampton, Cromwell, Middletown, Glastonbury, and East Hartford to enjoy the dinner.

"It was a fine meal and we all owe our thanks to Seby Milardo and his family," Farrington said.

Middletown veteran Dortha Cool Willetts, who served in the Air Force in the late 1950s and then as an Army reservist for almost 25 years, proudly donned her Army Green service uniform for the occasion.

Willetts said she was one of the first women in the Army Reserves to be promoted to chief warrant officer 4, the second-highest warrant officer rank. Known at the time as "Chief Cool," she spoke highly of her role and responsibilities in military intelligence. She said she made sure she did the same things men were expected to do – and she was treated the same way because of it.

As guests were filing out of the cafeteria after Friday night's dinner, the wife of one of the veterans walked up to Willetts to thank her for her service.

"I wanted to go in the military and my dad wouldn't let me," the woman confided.

Willetts was both smiling and serious in her reply: "You should have run off and done it!"

War Veterans cont. from Front Page

"Coming to these events always strikes a chord because for guys in uniform, your anniversary kind of means something," he said. "You wear it as a badge of courage."

Henderson (who also happens to be Hein's husband) also added a highlight of his career was meeting his future wife in the Army and eventually marrying "the prettiest Army truck driver there is."

When asked how the veterans felt about their children enlisting in the military, there were mixed responses, with most saying it was up to their kids to decide.

Gould, who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, said he enlisted out of a sense of duty to his country and because so many of his family members had enlisted before him.

"There was a time in this country's history where we fought two great wars and half the country knew someone who was serving," he said, adding that both his uncles and grandfather were in either the Air Force or the Navy.

"I did it because I felt like it was an obligation. My family had done it [so] I felt like I had

to carry that torch," Gould continued.

One student then asked how they stayed in contact with their family while they were serving overseas. For many of the veterans, such as O'Meara (who was a submariner on the *U.S.S. Crocker*) or Ryan (who served in World War II in Germany), the response was the same – writing letters.

As the event came to an end, veterans left students with final words regarding their military service.

"I've been in a predominantly male-centric field," Hein said. "For me as a female leader, it's made me so much more confident."

Gould agreed that it was overall a positive experience, but it wasn't without its struggles.

"I'd just say that whether you want to join the military or not, that's your personal choice," he said. "In some countries you have no choice."

He continued: "But if you ever want to find out what you're made of or to push yourself physically and mentally, then the military is the way to do it."

Artisan Craft Fair Coming to Hebron

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Kicking off the holiday shopping season this year, an artisan craft fair is coming to Hebron – the first of what is hoped to be an annual event.

Economic Development Coordinator John Guskowski shared this week, "We're starting small and hoping this is an event that catches on and can grow into a real significant event for Hebron."

The fair, which is scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 3, from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. in the town center, will feature local artists, food vendors, and a holiday gingerbread house contest.

Guskowski explained of the decision to start the event, "The Economic Development Commission has sort of had a longstanding desire to increase the number of events that happen in Hebron center at the green and on Main Street. So we've been seeking ways to bring more events and activity."

He added, "One of the things we had talked about is promoting local artists and local craftsman, so this seemed like a good way to do both of those things."

Artisans from Hebron and the surrounding communities will have their work on display in the community room of the Douglas Library, at Old Town Hall and out on the green. Approximately 15 vendors have signed up for the event, and Guskowski said a few spots are still available – but to act quickly. The vendor fee is \$25, with proceeds going to the Douglas Library and the Hebron Historical Society (for more information email Guskowski at

hedc@hebronct.com).

Food vendors at the event will include kettle corn and barbecue, and breakfast sandwiches sold by the American Legion from 10 a.m.-noon.

In addition, gingerbread houses will be sold in a silent auction during the event, with the proceeds going to the Capital Campaign of the Historical Society to be put toward replacing the roof on Old Town Hall and painting the building. Anyone who'd like to join the holiday gingerbread house contest can bring their houses to the old Town Hall the day before the event, Dec. 2, from 10 a.m.-noon or 4-6 p.m.

The houses can be decorated however the participant wishes, and will be judged in separate categories based on age, and whether the house was made from scratch or a kit; creativity and technique will be considered.

Also at the Old Town Hall Saturday, Santa and the Mrs. will be working at the Historical Society's historic workbench along with some historic tools, which will provide a photo backdrop that's a little more unique than the traditional overstuffed chair; those who'd like a photo should bring their cameras.

"It should be a very nice sort of early holiday event," Guskowski concluded. "We're hoping that this is going to be an event that is fun for the vendors and fun for the public so that we have some reason to continue and make it an annual event."

East Hampton Voters to Consider \$85,000 Land Purchase

by Elizabeth Regan

The Town Council has agreed to spend \$85,000 on approximately 30 acres next to Memorial School.

The purchase will go to voters at a town meeting on Monday.

The property is made up of one 21.53-acre parcel and one 8.27-acre parcel. They are both held by the estate of Domenic DiDomizio, who died in 2015 at the age of 94.

The town has been in negotiations for the larger parcel for at least 10 years, according to Town Manager Michael Maniscalco. He said that property alone was being offered for around \$600,000 in previous rounds of negotiations.

Maniscalco said the purchase would provide “a plethora of options” for the town. Possibilities include open space, an additional water source, the expansion of Memorial School, sports fields, or space for “some other town facility,” among others.

Maniscalco said the smaller property, in particular, is being eyed as open space. It would be administered through the Middlesex Land Trust to be used for walking trails. The hatchet-shaped piece of land is behind the Royal Oaks

subdivision, where it abuts the Air Line Trail and the trust’s Sellev Preserve.

The site could also help provide water to supplement a limited municipal supply.

The land trust would be granted an easement by the town, according to Maniscalco.

The Middlesex Land Trust owns and manages more than 995 acres in 50 preserves, according to the group’s website.

The most recent negotiations on the property purchase began early this year, Maniscalco said. The council has held multiple meetings since then in executive session to discuss a potential property purchase. The state’s Freedom of Information Act allows officials to meet behind closed doors to discuss “real estate appraisals, engineering or feasibility estimates and evaluations” up to the point that a property has been acquired or the project is scrapped.

The larger property was appraised at \$140,410 in 2015, according to assessor’s records. The other was appraised at \$45,140 the same year.

The six councilors at a Town Council meeting on Nov. 8 voted unanimously to appropri-

ate the money from the general fund. Councilor Ted Hintz Jr. was absent. The Board of Finance had voted 4-2 the day prior to recommend the purchase.

The minutes said the majority of the board members thought the property could provide open space at a low cost, if nothing else. On a larger scale, it could help alleviate water issues at the Royal Oaks subdivision or allow for the expansion of the Memorial School campus.

Finance board chairwoman Allison Tokarz and member Alannah Coshov voted against the finance board recommendation, minutes said. Concerns included a lack of information about the quality and quantity of water on the property and the amount of usable land versus wetlands.

Some members lamented not having time to do a site walk before voting on the issue, according to minutes.

The purchase also earned the endorsement of the Planning and Zoning Commission, according to a Nov. 3 letter from Planning & Zoning Official Jeremy DiCarli to Town Manager Michael Maniscalco.

DiCarli said the commission found the purchase consistent with the town’s Plan of Conservation and Development, which includes a focus on the expansion of town facilities and the preservation of open space.

The commission also recommended the town retain water and mineral rights if the property ends up being sold to a different buyer, the letter said.

Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith said Wednesday that buying land contiguous to town property is a good idea.

“Any time the town has a chance to buy land that’s adjacent to the school, there’s all kind of opportunities – even if they’re 10, 20 years down the road,” Smith said.

The district’s business manager, Karen Asetta, indicated it’s a small price to pay to preserve all that possibility.

“Seems like a pretty small investment,” Asetta said.

The town meeting will be held at 7 p.m. on Nov. 21 in the East Hampton Middle School library.

Colchester Board Votes to Keep CES Name

by Julianna Roche

Colchester Elementary School (CES) will keep its name – at least for now, according to Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein – after the board Tuesday opted not to rename the building Jenny Contois Elementary School.

Goldstein said the board was approached by residents during a meeting back in January, who asked the board to consider renaming CES after the late Contois, who had a well-respected 14-year tenure as the town’s first selectwoman.

In 1991, Contois was elected to the position, where she was re-elected every two years until 2007, when she left to work with Congressman Joe Courtney. She retired from his office in 2014. She had also served on the Board of Finance from 1981-91.

Following her passing in October 2015, the town hall’s meeting rooms were dedicated as “The Jenny Contois Meeting Rooms” in her honor.

During the Nov. 9 special school board meeting to discuss renaming CES after Contois – a meeting that, incidentally, was held in one of the Jenny Contois Meeting Rooms – Goldstein

said the board saw a mix of support and opposition to the name change, both in advance of and at the meeting.

“We had comments on all sides of it as there always are,” he said this week.

According to minutes from the meeting, the board received 15 notes of correspondence opposing the name change (including a list of 30 CES staff member signatures) and eight in support prior to the meeting, and at the meeting itself the board received 11 public comments in support of the name change and just five in opposition.

No action was taken during last week’s special meeting – but at Tuesday’s regular meeting of the school board, the motion to approve the name change came up “and we denied that motion.”

“I think it’s important for people to know that CES has Colchester in its name and it came out to us very clearly that folks wanted that identity to remain,” Goldstein said, and the board “agreed with that.”

Goldstein, a longtime friend of Contois,

added that while he personally thought the name change had the potential to “enhance the identity” of the school, he thought ultimately, the board’s decision to keep the CES name was “exactly what Jenny would have wanted” and that she “would not have wanted the debate to continue.”

Goldstein added, however, that the board would continue looking for other ways “to honor [Contois’] legacy” as well as her “contribution to the Board of Ed, and to the building.”

Moving forward, Goldstein said it remains uncertain if the board will consider naming the school after someone else in the future.

* * *

Also at Tuesday’s meeting, the board discussed its application for a Nellie Mae Education Foundation grant, which is worth somewhere between \$150,000 and \$200,000.

According to Goldstein, if they are awarded the grant (they will find out at the end of December), the funds would go towards supporting the district’s “Innovation Nation” initiative,

which was introduced at the beginning of the school year as a new way of educating students through more personalized learning and the use of cutting-edge technology to promote creative thinking.

“[Innovation Nation] has been going exceptionally well,” Goldstein said of the initiative, adding that there is also a group of 30 teachers who have volunteered to be “groundbreakers” by doing additional work on the side to learn ways to teach other teachers how to integrate Innovative Nation principles into the classroom.

Goldstein offered as an example of this, “When you have a bunch of Chromebooks in a classroom, what does student-centered learning look like with the student using that tool?” He added that, with this initiative, “the curriculums don’t change; the approach [to teaching] does.”

* * *

The next Board of Education meeting is Tuesday, Dec. 13, at 7 p.m., in the cafeteria at CES, 315 Halls Hill Rd.

Family Decides on Colchester Property for Farm Brewery

by Julianna Roche

Craft brewers Heather and Sam Wilson are one step closer to bringing a farm brewery to Colchester after settling on a property on Cato Corner Road, where they plan to live with their family and build their brewery – Hop Culture Farms & Brewing Co.

(The couple announced their name change from Hoppyness Farms last month.)

“We wanted a name that would embody hops as a craft itself,” Wilson said, explaining that they believe there is an art that goes into growing good hops and using better ingredients will result in a better product.

The couple is currently under contract to purchase the property from its landowners; all that’s left to do, Wilson added, is set the closing date. The pair has even finished doing environmental testing on the land where they will grow their hops, which she said “came out great.”

“We fell in love with the property,” she continued, noting the about 35-acre parcel of land is also located on the same road as several other local farms, including Cato Corner Farm and Savitsky Farm.

Though the couple has been looking for the right property “for a long time,” Wilson said, with help from the town (including the Planning and Zoning Department, the Agricultural Commission and the Economic Development Commission), they were able to secure a piece of land they’re confident will be a good place for the brewery.

They are even considering converting an old barn sitting on the property, into the brewery itself.

While the couple was originally growing about 210 hops for their beer on a piece of town farmland owned by a local resident, Wilson said they have since ordered 3,000 hop plants which they plan to grow on their Cato Corner Road property as early as next year.

They are also still planning to open the brewery’s doors to the public in 2018.

In the meantime, however, Wilson said she wanted to let people know “we are still making lots of beer and perfecting recipes,” and that by next year, prior to opening, Hop Culture Farms & Brewing Co. may be able to host a tasting or sampling of their brews to the public.

Andover Education Board Appoints New Member

by Geeta S. Sandberg

The Board of Education last week unanimously appointed a new member to fill the seat left vacant when Christina Tamburro resigned in October.

Gerard Cremé, a former elementary school teacher, was appointed unanimously.

Speaking to his appointment, board chairwoman Shannon Loudon said, “We are fortunate to have such an enthusiastic and qualified new board member. Mr. Cremé was an elementary school teacher in South Windsor for 17 years and, since his resignation from such in June 2014, he has volunteered at Andover Elementary School. Our board will benefit greatly from his knowledge and experience.”

Cremé taught grades four and five at Pleasant Valley Elementary School in South Windsor from 1997-2014. He also spent time as a special education teaching assistant in West Hartford, and, prior to teaching, he owned and operated a floral business – also in West Hartford – for 18 years.

Cremé explained in his resume, “As a retired teacher, my goal is to remain active in education and to continue working for the benefit of elementary school children.

He elaborated in the letter of interest he sent

to the Board of Education Oct. 21, saying, “Having been a part of an elementary school community for many years, I am well-acquainted with the value and importance of school culture and team building in working with children, families, professional staff, administrators and the community. I am also experienced with the Common Core State Standards, Smarter Balanced Assessment, and current methods for teaching math and language arts.”

Schools Superintendent Sally Doyen said of Cremé, “I have known him since I started last year, because he has been a very visible volunteer in the school, so we’ve had a lot of very positive conversations about the school here, and his interest in just keeping in touch with education and what’s happening in his local elementary school, which I think is very admirable.”

She concluded, “I’m just very pleased. I think he is going to be a very positive addition to the board.”

Cremé will sit on the board for the remainder of Tamburro’s term, which runs through June 2017.

Hebron Students Learn About Baking

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Just in time for Thanksgiving, sixth-graders at Hebron Elementary School had the chance to learn about baking using math and science elements, while also being provided the opportunity to give to others.

Amy Driscoll from King Arthur Flour, a baking company founded in 1970, came to the school from the company's headquarters in Vermont Wednesday afternoon and, with the help of a couple student assistants, showed everyone present just what goes into the creation of a perfect loaf of bread – among other baked goods.

Driscoll came to the school after being contacted by sixth grade teacher Laura Quarticelli. Quarticelli explained this week she in turn was told about the program by Alex Smith, the parent of one of last year's students.

"We tried to coordinate this for last year and we were unable to, so over the summer Amy Driscoll contacted us to see if we still wanted to get this going. So that's how we got started," Quarticelli added, "We would love to encourage this more in school. It incorporates so many skills: math, science, reading – and giving back to the community as well."

Quarticelli also explained the district is following the theme of "bucket filling" based on the book "Have You Filled a Bucket Today?" by Carol McCloud, which is about filling the bucket (the mental and emotional self) of others – and the bread donation goes along with that.

She shared Wednesday, "This will allow us to bake bread that we can share with our families this holiday season, but also to bake bread that we can share with our community, to those people less fortunate than us."

Wednesday's program was one King Arthur has been offering since 1992. The 104 sixth-grade Hebron students who were present this week joined more than 300,000 students who have also participated since the program's start, from 42 states around the country.

The three main goals of the program, which is called Bake for Good, are for kids to "Learn. Bake. Share."

King Arthur Kids Program Manager Paula Gray shared in a release about the event, "In

the cross-curricular program students learn about baking while using practical applications of math, science, and comprehension skills. They're excited to take that knowledge home and *bake* two loaves of bread, which they then *share* with a community member in need."

As Driscoll, with the help of students Rowan Akerlind and Maddy Murray, showed the rest of the students how to take flour, salt, water, sugar and yeast and put them together to make dough, she explained about the process, and asked questions that called upon some of the skills students learned in school.

Driscoll talked about the "science experiment" that occurs when the dormant packet of yeast is mixed with warm water and sugar, providing the perfect environment of warmth, moisture and food for the yeast to become active. She talked about the need to use volume for measuring flour, and fractions for dividing up the dough; and she mentioned the importance of salt – which is hygroscopic, or water loving – for slowing down the yeast and adding flavor.

Also discussed was the makeup of flour, which, she explained, contains proteins that get stretchy and sticky and bind together when wet.

"What is this called?" she asked, adding that some people are very allergic to it; the students all exclaimed "gluten!" which, she furthered, acts exactly like it sounds – like glue.

Driscoll also talked about what makes bread dough rise when it sits: the carbon dioxide the yeast gives off.

"But the carbon dioxide is not escaping because the sticky web of gluten is holding it in," she explained.

Along with the science behind baking, students also learned a number of tips and tricks to remember while they're baking at home such as "fluff, sprinkle and sweep" to remember the correct way to measure flour, and "fold, push, turn" to help students remember the correct way to knead dough.

The students also learned a tip that at first left them confused.

"Want to know the secret to really good cinnamon rolls? Dental floss," Driscoll shared, to which there was an audible "what?" from the audience.



King Arthur representative Amy Driscoll stands with student assistants Rowan Akerlind (left) and Maddy Murray as they demonstrate how to bake bread to the rest of the sixth-grade class at Hebron Elementary School Wednesday.

She explained as she pulled a packet of floss from her apron, "Dental floss will give you a delightful smile and beautiful cinnamon rolls. And if you don't have dental floss at home – go get some because you should have dental floss at home," she said to laughter.

Driscoll then explained when trying to make circular cuts in a length of dough – such as for cinnamon rolls – wrapping dental floss around the piece that needs to be cut, crossing it at the top, and then pulling tight was a trick to cut it without flattening the dough.

Following the presentation, students were sent home with their new knowledge of baking and a goodie bag of ingredients that will allow them to make enough dough for two loaves of bread; half will be used to bake any number of goodies Driscoll demonstrated how to make,

whether it be bread, pretzels, garlic knots, pizza or cinnamon rolls for the students to enjoy with their families. The other half, meanwhile, will be used to bake a loaf of bread that will be brought back to the school Monday and donated to the Covenant Soup Kitchen in Willimantic.

"Hunger is a huge problem in our community, in our state and in our country. A lot of people – too many people – go to bed every night with an empty stomach, having not had enough to eat," Driscoll stated. "This is something you are going to do to address that problem, because you have the power to do that and it's a wonderful thing."

For more information on King Arthur's Bake for Good program, go to kingarthurfLOUR.com/bakeforgood.

There's an App for That in Hebron

by Geeta S. Sandberg

"The next generation of communication" was shared with the Hebron Board of Education last week, as a new district phone application was unveiled.

The app, which is available for download on Apple and Android phones, literally brings much of the school's information to the palm of the parents' hand.

"Websites are great for a purpose," schools superintendent Tim Van Tassel shared at the Nov. 11 meeting, "but you need to go out and search for that information on a website – the app brings it right to you."

Data Specialist Patricia Schiavi pointed out some of the app's features, including the ability to get districtwide information such as news or events, early dismissal days and days there's no school, the daily breakfast and lunch menu, and easy access to staff contacts; each staff member, she explained, will have a listing that includes their photo, title, department, and buttons to instantly call them or bring up a window to send an email.

Under the app's settings, users can also choose a default school if they have a student in one or the other, and will be able to receive notifications from one or both of the schools.

Information is still being uploaded to the app, and Schiavi added it will also eventually include a live feed of the district's Twitter account, and will be used to share communication regarding the budget process and snow days.

"It's very easy to use," Schiavi said of the new app. "I was so petrified when I started to use this... but it's very user-friendly."

Van Tassel pointed out the app, which was developed through the company Apptegy, is costing less than the current contract the dis-

trict has for the school website.

Apptegy, he added, "actually has a parallel website that works along with this, and we are switching over next year. It's in development now, and it costs about half the amount. So there's cost savings to this and the communication will really help us."

The app and website combination will cost the district \$7,500.

Van Tassel concluded, "It's the next generation of communication and we're really excited about this. It's free to download and it's open to anybody who wants to have the Hebron Public Schools app on there to get correspondence and communication."

To download the app, search for "Apptegy Hebron" in the app store.

Also last week, the board approved Capital Improvement Project requests for the 2017-18 fiscal year, as well as requests for several years out.

Those approved by the board for the upcoming budget season include the first phase of transitioning the pneumatic control system at the two schools to digital for \$70,000.

Van Tassel explained this week, "The pneumatic control system is our thermostatic controls for the schools."

An energy efficiency audit, he added, recommended the district switch from the current system, which runs on air compression, to a digital control module.

Also approved for potential inclusion in the 2017-18 budget is \$100,000 to redo the playscape at Gilead Hill School.

At the beginning of the meeting, Parent Teacher Association President Kerri Bruno

commented on the need for the playscape to be redone, and shared the PTA was willing to commit time and funds to the project if it was pushed through.

"Plans are in place to put together a larger-scale fundraising event at the end of May-June to raise funds for that; I can't commit a dollar amount because it's our first time doing it, but the need is definitely there," she explained. "I have letters from different parents stating the same – the backing is there, the necessity is there, and we can take care of some of the funds."

The board also voted to expand the breakfast program that's currently offered at Hebron Elementary School to Gilead Hill School, following an explanation by Food Services Director Chris Urban.

Urban explained the program at HES started with just three students, but had grown to 54 students who participated the morning of the meeting; the goal to break even in terms of the program cost was to have around 30 students participate.

"We wanted to make sure the Hebron Elementary School program was up and running smoothly; we feel it's growing the way we want it to," Urban shared. And so, he added, discussion was underway to bring the program to GHS as well.

To make the program effective for the younger grades, Urban said a kiosk would need to be purchased that would allow for the breakfast offerings to be in the entryway when students arrived at the school.

At HES he explained the kids enter the school, go to the cafeteria to get their breakfast

then merge back into the flow of students and head to their homeroom, but that process would be more difficult for the younger students, who would have to walk further off to reach the cafeteria.

The younger students "need an 'in your face' type of marketing," he explained, adding the kiosk would also be helpful in attracting "the kids we really want to get with this program – those who receive free and reduced lunch – kids that need the breakfast."

With the kiosk, students would get off the bus, come into the lobby, "and it's waiting for them."

The board voted unanimously to approve bringing the breakfast program to Gilead Hill School beginning Jan. 3.

Later in the meeting members also approved the transfer of \$7,018 from the insurance account to the non-instructional equipment account for the purchase of the kiosks for the program; the second kiosk will be used at Hebron Elementary School to further grow the program.

The board also approved the transfer of another \$20,000 from the insurance account for carpeting and asbestos abatement; \$2,000 from the computer equipment lease account to be used for the purchase of Chromebook cases; and \$5,400 from the certified account to be used for the CT Education Network – an item previously paid for by the state.

The next Board of Education meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 8, at 7 p.m., in the Gilead Hill School music room, during which time Van Tassel is expected to present the initial school budget proposal for 2017-18.

Marlborough Congregational Church Offers Free Breakfast with Santa

by Julianna Roche

The all-you-can-eat pancake Breakfast with Santa event at Marlborough Congregational Church is turning 30 this year, so to celebrate the church is offering a special treat: the event will be completely free to the public.

According to the church's pastor, the Rev. Bob Faulhaber Jr., Breakfast with Santa was formed in 1986 when several women in the church (including church administrator Alice Rowley) thought it would be nice to have "an activity or event that invited children and families here to the church" during Christmastime.

"It started out in a much humbler way in the beginning," Faulhaber said, adding that by the time he began working at the church in 2001 however, it had already grown to a community-wide event, offering about 300 residents a breakfast complete with pancakes and bacon (and a visit from Santa Claus) each Christmas.

In 2006, he said, the event's coordinators suggested opening the breakfast up to other organizations in the church – which was when the Youth Board and Senior High Youth Group took over.

The youth group (which, depending on the year, has about 20 members), along with its advisors and program director Scott Reid, now organizes and runs the breakfast each year – doing everything from transforming the church basement into a winter wonderland the night before the event to cooking pancakes and serving the breakfast the morning of.

Though the breakfast is free this year as "a way to give back to the community" and to celebrate its 30th anniversary, Faulhaber said normally the funds raised during the event – ticket prices typically range from \$5 per child to \$25 for a full family – are used towards supporting costs for annual mission trips the high school students in the youth group are sent on.

"It's a decent fundraiser," he said, adding that it typically raises a couple thousands of dollars which helps offset the costs of the mission trips, which he said "can cost a lot of money." The youth group, he explained, has gone on trips to places like Appalachia and New Orleans in the past.

This year, however, the breakfast is completely free – and Faulhaber expects there will be up to 300 guests to feed during two separate breakfast seatings (one at 8 a.m. and another at 9:45 a.m.).

In addition to the breakfast, which offers all-you-can-eat pancakes, bacon, milk, orange juice, coffee and tea, children attending the event will be able to have a visit with Santa Claus – and each child will also receive some kind of gift, such as a Christmas-themed coloring book.

"The people aren't actually there for the food," Faulhaber said. "Rather than go to the mall, they choose to come here so they can keep up with that tradition of seeing Santa in town."

Faulhaber also noted that he has seen a number of parents attending the event with their children, who actually attended the breakfast years before as a child themselves.

"We're a small enough community where you can build some community traditions that have some lasting power and also, there's a number of these families that are connected to the church," he continued, "so those people bring other families that are friends, and before you know it – if you do it well, if you do it right, if you put a little heart and soul into it, then those families are going to feel this is how and where we want to do Christmas and it isn't surrounded commercialism."

Though seats are filling up fast, Faulhaber also said that it was important to mention the church "would never turn anybody away," and



Senior High Youth Group members Kevin (left) and Jason MacDonald spend time with Santa Claus during Marlborough Congregational Church's annual Breakfast with Santa event, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary with a free all-you-can-eat pancake breakfast on Saturday, Dec. 3.

if "they called us up in advance and said they really wanted to bring their kids, but they didn't have the money," the church would do their best to accommodate them.

* * *

The free, community-wide Breakfast with Santa will be held Saturday, Dec. 3 at Marlborough Congregational Church, 35 S. Main St. Attendees can expect all-you-can-eat pancakes, bacon, juice, milk, coffee and tea.

Guests may arrive any time within the first or second seating, with the first seating from 8-9:30 a.m. and the second from 9:45 to 11 a.m.

Reservations are strongly suggested; email them to Terri at tr64@cox.net and include your name, phone number, which seating you'd like to attend and number of guests.

All children attending the breakfast will receive a gift from Santa and don't forget to bring a camera for photos.

Discord Over Contracts at Andover Selectmen Meeting

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Disapproval over the way contracts are being handled in town was expressed multiple times at Wednesday night's Board of Selectmen meeting, as several items came forward for approval.

The first was a contract the Planning and Zoning Commission crafted to hire William Warner as town planner.

After a motion was made to approve the contract, Board of Selectmen Vice Chairman Jeff Maguire said he was unaware the Planning and Zoning Commission had the ability to negotiate contracts on behalf of the town; he asked First Selectman Bob Burbank if he reviewed the Request for Proposal, and if three proposals had been received before settling on an individual. He also inquired as to whether or not the contract had gone before the town attorney, to which he was told it wasn't.

Burbank responded he hadn't reviewed the RFP beforehand, and mentioned the Planning and Zoning Commission is an elected board and he didn't have the expertise to go over the proposal.

"We have a zoning agent who worked with them," he stated.

That zoning agent, John Valente, was present at the meeting, and spoke in favor of the contract and Warner's hiring. He expressed frustration issues with the contract weren't brought

up sooner so they could be addressed in a timely manner, as Warner, if hired, has several projects that need to be completed before July.

Valente added, "I don't think every contract needs to go before the town attorney."

"I do," Maguire stated. "I want the motion to be that we'll approve the contract upon review by the town attorney. I have no problem with Warner; I have a problem with the charter being violated like it is all over."

According to the town charter, "The employment and dismissal of Town Personnel under the jurisdiction of the Board of Selectmen will be subject to the approval of the Board of Selectmen. The Board of Selectmen shall approve rules, regulations, qualifications, procedures or, changes thereto, for the hiring, dismissal and administration of Town Personnel under their jurisdiction."

In response, selectwoman Julia Haverl amended her motion, and it ultimately passed unanimously, but discussion over the way contracts are handled didn't end there, as the next item addressed a fuel contract Burbank signed Nov. 2 on behalf of the town.

"This contract is not in the package – why can't we get it emailed or see it?" Maguire asked.

Burbank explained when he negotiates a fuel price, "there's only a 24-hour window on the

price. I can't wait for a Board of Selectmen meeting."

"Do you know about email?" Maguire continued. "It could have been sent by email; you are in violation of the charter. This is a \$40,000 contract – I complained about this last year."

"There needs to be written procedure regarding contracts," commented Haverl.

"All contracts this size should come before the board," added selectman Jay Linddy.

And Maguire emphasized that should already be happening, because "it says so in the charter!"

The charter states, "The First Selectman, with the approval of the Board of Selectmen, in lieu of any appointment to any office under his jurisdiction, may enter into contracts for the performance of services, or perform duties of any office under his jurisdiction."

The fuel contract was also ultimately approved unanimously, with the clause that all future contracts would come before the board before being signed.

But there was more displeasure over town procedure to be voiced when a motion was made to accept an offer from the town's engineer Gerald Hardisty of Civil Engineering Services LLC to perform a survey of the town's road. Hardisty wrote a letter to Burbank with a pro-

posal for the services, which he explained he'd perform on an hourly rate basis, with the cost not to exceed \$20,000.

Maguire said the road survey was something that "needs to get done." But he added, "This is not the right way to do anything – just accept a letter as a contract."

Haverl, who made the motion to accept the offer added, "We're in transition – we can't go from how we've been doing things to just all of a sudden it's all correct." She furthered, "We need to get this going."

Maguire, who explained the Board of Finance requested the town have a road survey completed before money is allocated for roadwork, acknowledged the project needed to get started, even though he didn't believe procedure was being appropriately followed.

"Are we as a board okay giving the town engineer a contract – not done right – but giving him a contract to do something that needs to be done?" he asked, resigned. "It makes me so sad – to sit here and, in violation again, say 'yes.'"

The motion passed unanimously.

* * *

The next Board of Selectmen meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 13 at 7 p.m. in the town hall community room, 17 School Rd.

Colchester Police News

11/10: State Police said John C. Omeara, 54, of 92 Clinton St., Manchester, was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear.

11/12: State Police said Jeffrey Brayfield, 52, of 77 Oconnell Rd., East Haddam, was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol and failure to drive in the proper lane on a multiple lane highway.

11/13: State Police said Monica Piette, 32, of 164 Norwich Ave., was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and violation of a protective order.

11/14: State Police said James B. Burton, 62, of 226 Country Club Rd., Waterbury, was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol and failure to drive in the proper lane on a multiple lane highway.

Marlborough Police News

11/9: State Police said Brooke Ledwith, 37, of 37 Hodge Rd., was arrested and charged with failure to respond to an infraction.

Hebron Police News

11/7: State Police said a 15-year-old juvenile of Amston was arrested and charged with first-degree criminal trespass and third-degree criminal mischief.

Portland Ethics Commission Vindicates Residents

by Elizabeth Regan

The Portland Ethics Commission on Wednesday found no probable cause in a case lodged by Planning and Zoning Commission alternate member Michael Woronoff against Economic Development Commission chairman and community organizer Elwin Guild.

In an unusual move, Guild requested his hearing be held in public to promote transparency. Probable cause hearings are usually conducted behind closed doors to maintain confidentiality.

The complaint alleged that Guild failed to disclose his status as a member of the grassroots Elmcrest Campus Advisory Committee when he spoke in front of the Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of Selectmen in favor of a plan to turn the former psychiatric facility into a neighborhood shopping center and high-end apartment complex.

The Elmcrest Campus Advisory Committee's stated mission is to help the town plan for commercial development of the former Elmcrest Hospital campus.

Guild told the ethics commission he consulted its chairman, George Law, before agreeing to accept an appointment to the Economic Development Commission. Guild expressed concern that his role on the EDC could restrict his activity on multiple civic groups with which he is involved.

Guild said Law informed him conflicts of interest involve actions resulting in, or promising, personal benefit.

"He encouraged me to continue my civic engagements without concern for conflict of interest with my EDC responsibilities," Guild said.

The town's ethics ordinance defines "personal benefit" as any benefit that would be perceived by a reasonable person to be offered or received in order to influence a town official's actions. It hinges on trying to get a representative "to act in favor of some interest other than

the public interest" by offering some sort of private gain.

A second part of the complaint said Guild also should have disclosed that he received a grant from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation for renovations at his residence. The town received a \$50,000 grant from the historic preservation trust to fund a 2015 Vibrant Communities Initiative study cited frequently by proponents of the development.

The document was compiled with input from the municipal, business and volunteer community as well as through multiple focus groups of residents. Among the steering committee members were Guild, Elmcrest property owner Fred Hassan and developer Dan Bertram of BRT General Corporation. The final report recommended the town explore zoning changes, including an increase in residential units, as a way to support the community's shared vision for the property.

Guild said he received a \$5,000 matching grant to renovate an historic barn on his property in 2012.

"The town, not me, applied for and received the VCI study grant for Elmcrest's development in 2014," he said.

Citing the section of the ethics ordinance specifying that a conflict of interest occurs when "the personal interest of an individual or group takes precedence over the interests of the town of Portland and the welfare of all its citizens," Guild said he was confident the commission could not construct a case based on the circumstances described in the complaint.

During deliberations, Ethics Commission Chairman George Law said the complaint did not "cite a specific section of the ordinance alleged to be violated." He also said the summary comments did not give enough information about when and where the alleged violations occurred.

Woronoff said Thursday that he should not

comment at this time.

The hearing on the complaint was held in the Buck-Foreman Building after some confusion regarding the location of the meeting. A calendar listing on the town's website said the meeting would be held at the library, which is where approximately 25 people were waiting. The actual agenda for the meeting, which included the correct location, was not accessible on the town's website, due to a broken link.

The crowd, which included Guild, marched from the library to the old town hall in time for his hearing. The commission conducted the first five orders of business outlined on the agenda before the majority of the audience arrived.

Guild told the commission he believed the complaint constitutes harassment, based on what he believes were multiple complaints filed recently against other town representatives.

"When I say harassment, I think it is a concerted effort to dissuade me from being more active, or to discourage me, or to distract me, or to in some way obstruct my activity. And I would assume that would be true for the other [respondents] as well," Guild said.

Commissioners would not comment on other complaints due to confidentiality requirements in the ethics ordinance.

Guild asked the commission to address his concerns by examining "the public record concerned with the Elmcrest property over the past 18 months."

He said the examination would respond to "significant public concern about unethical behavior exhibited throughout the Elmcrest development process."

Law said after the meeting that his commission operates in response to formal complaints.

"That would be something we'd discuss once a complaint is filed on an individual basis," Law said.

Guild said he does not plan to file a formal complaint.

Meeting minutes from the Nov. 2 meeting of the Ethics Commission indicate members reviewed four complaints, not including the one against Guild.

Three of them were dismissed for lack of probable cause, minutes said.

Commissioners found probable cause in part of the fourth complaint lodged by Woronoff against Planning and Zoning Commission Chairman Bruce Tyler. A hearing is tentatively scheduled for Dec. 6 to address allegations of predetermination.

According to a legal opinion from town attorney Kari Olson issued to the Planning and Zoning Commission in June at Tyler's request, predetermination applies when "you are so committed to one point of view that it does not matter what the applicant provides, you have made up your mind before all the evidence has been submitted and you know how you will vote regardless."

In July, Woronoff asked the Board of Selectmen for their financial support in appealing a Planning and Zoning decision to the state Superior Court. The decision authorized an amendment to zoning regulations that helped pave the way for the redevelopment of the former Elmcrest Hospital with a higher density of apartments than had been allowed previously.

Woronoff was prohibited from participating in deliberations by Tyler and Olson because, as an alternate member, he was not seated for that particular meeting.

Woronoff detailed for selectmen half a dozen allegations, including a violation of his civil rights, spot zoning, bias and the inclusion of irrelevant testimony and false information.

Selectmen did not act on Woronoff's request following a meeting with Olson.

Details about the complaint against Tyler were not available as of press time.

Options Abound for Elmcrest Property in Portland

by Elizabeth Regan

Portland economic development officials have been meeting with developers interested in revitalizing the former Elmcrest Hospital property that continues to languish on the corner of routes 17A and 66.

But that doesn't mean the privately-owned site is for sale.

Property owner Fred Hassan said Wednesday that the project is moving forward with developer Dan Bertram of BRT General Corporation, the same Danbury-based businessman who came on the Portland scene over a year and a half ago with a plan to bring new life to the crumbling, 15-acre property and the town.

Hassan said that's the message he gives interested parties when they call him to inquire about the site.

"I tell them it's not for sale," Hassan said. "We're moving forward and that's it."

This news comes on the heels of Bertram's hasty exit from a meeting of the Board of Selectmen held in September during which members voted not to offer him a full, seven-year tax abatement. Bertram took his plans for a \$30 million neighborhood shopping center and high-end apartment complex with him — along with his promise to preserve the site's three most valuable historic homes.

Bertram has not been seen in town since.

When asked if Bertram might end up presenting a different proposal than the one put forth this year amid so much chaos and controversy, Hassan acknowledged the possibility.

"That's certainly one of the options," Hassan said.

He did not specify when officials or the public could expect more details about the developer's plan.

At a meeting of the Economic Development Commission Tuesday, Chairman Elwin Guild and economic development consultant Mary Dickerson said they have been in conversation with other development firms interested in putting up a mixed-use development on the site.

Guild said he met earlier this month with a representative from the Corporation for Independent Living, a Hartford-based nonprofit that provides housing opportunities for those who would otherwise be hard pressed to find affordable, accessible and independent living arrange-

ments.

According to the organization's website, priorities include building group homes for those with developmental disabilities, converting old factories into commercial and residential space, and redeveloping vacant sites to meet the needs of low- and moderate-income homebuyers.

Guild said the firm's representative was aware of "the whole scope and character of the Elmcrest saga" when they met, and left the meeting indicating he'd give the idea more thought.

"He affirmed my belief that the Elmcrest project is viable as a mixed-use development," Guild said.

The organization would probably consider about 100 to 120 residential units, Guild said. Bertram's plan had called for 238 units.

Dickerson told commissioners she'd met with Dream Developers, an East Hampton-based venture owned by Stephen and Lisa Motto. The team is behind the Edgewater Hill and Laurel Ridge developments in that town. The former is an ongoing, 80-acre mixed-use project on Route 66 while the latter is an 88-unit active adult community next door.

"They really sat down and got excited about the prospect of what could be there," Dickerson said of the couple's introduction to the Elmcrest property.

They talked about preserving and working around the main historical structures by building an entrance off Perry Avenue instead of having traffic enter directly from Route 66 where the Brainerd House currently stands, according to Dickerson.

"Their ideas weren't focused so much on the hurdles as they were on the opportunity," Dickerson reported.

She said the Motto's vision revolved around a mixed-use development with fewer housing units than Bertram had proposed; it would also use "historic preservation as a marketing tool."

Earlier this summer, Bertram had stated publicly he would be giving Hassan the name of an affordable housing developer if his own plan fell through.

Town attorney Kari Olson explained in a legal opinion requested by the town's Planning and Zoning Commission earlier this year that

the state's affordable housing law is often used to circumvent local zoning regulations.

The affordable housing statute, commonly known as 8-30g, makes it possible for developers to build a high number of apartments for which they might not otherwise get approval — but only if less than 10 percent of the housing stock in town is "affordable."

A developer proposing an affordable housing complex in town can appeal any rejection to the superior court, where presumptions are in favor of the development.

Dickerson told selectmen in September that an affordable housing developer looking at a property the size of the Elmcrest site would likely present a plan for about 400 housing units.

That's about 160 more units than in Bertram's proposal to the selectmen, with no commercial component and no guarantees the property's three most historic homes would be saved.

Oponents of Bertram's development have said the plan had too many apartments and too many unknowns. They worried about the effect of the development's large-scale residential component on the school system, the volunteer fire department and the small police department, among other services.

One of most vocal critics was selectman Ben Srb, who over the past year spoke as a taxpayer at multiple meetings of the Planning and Zoning Commission while railing against the project as a selectmen whenever it came before the board.

Ultimately, Srb was joined by his mother-in-law, selectwoman Kathy Richards, as well as selectmen Kitch Breen Czernicki and Brian Flood, in voting against the tax abatement.

Srb and Richards are both minority members of the limited liability corporation behind Chris Cote's Golf Shop, which received a tax abatement in 2013.

The Economic Development Commission Tuesday spoke about the importance of revising the town's tax abatement policy to make sure it is administered fairly. They said there should be a comprehensive list of conditions that merit a tax incentive for developments that would be difficult to get off the ground without

the assistance.

Commission member Edward J. "Rick" Sharr Jr. said the policy should not be applied arbitrarily, but should be available to any development that meets those stringent and clearly defined set of criteria.

It should not be "up to the whim of certain selectmen that, dammit, can sway the vote," he said.

Commissioner Gregory A. Piazza agreed the current policy "allows capricious votes." He emphasized the tax abatement program should be "available to anyone meeting the requirements."

The commission was considering a draft policy presented for their review by First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield.

The draft specified an abatement of 100 percent of real property value for the first three years for a development with improvements of \$3 million or more. The incentive would fall to 80 percent in year four, 60 percent in year five, 40 percent in year six and 20 percent in year seven.

Bransfield said Wednesday she created the draft after looking at policies from numerous other towns. It was also a response to the concerns voiced by selectmen over the past year.

She emphasized the ultimate decision about whether or not to grant a tax abatement is up to the selectmen.

State statute allows municipalities — "by affirmative vote of its legislative body" — to forgive up to 100 percent of the property tax on new construction and improvements valued at more than \$3 million.

It's called "fixing the assessment." As described by the state legislature's Office of Legislative Research, it allows the owner to develop the property for a certain period of time without paying taxes on the improvements.

As the members of the Economic Development Commission discussed how to word their response to Bransfield's draft tax abatement policy, they acknowledged it was the start of an important conversation.

"Let's stop dancing around it," Sharr said. "Let's tell [the Board of Selectmen] we're unhappy with the way they acted."

Obituaries

Colchester

Peter Scott Vizcaino Sr.

Peter Scott Vizcaino Sr., 62, of Lake Hayward, passed away at Hartford Hospital Saturday, Nov. 12, with his family by his side. Born in New London Oct. 18, 1954, he was a son of the late Peter and Jean (Hubbard) Vizcaino.



Peter was a proud veteran, leaving high school early to serve in the U.S. Marine Corps and retiring after becoming disabled. Many years later, Peter resumed his education and was a very proud graduate of Three Rivers College. He volunteered his time and talents at the Veterans Center of Norwich and as a literacy volunteer to troubled adults and others. He enjoyed reading, woodworking, boating, fishing and swimming. Most importantly, he will be remembered by his family and friends as an easy going man, quick with a joke, never to anger, who loved to make people laugh.

He will be sadly missed but always remembered with love by his children and their spouses, Peter Vizcaino Jr. of East Haddam, Kristen and husband Shane Emigh of Haddam and Jennifer and husband Mike LaBombard of Salem; a sister, Sherry and husband Gary Rautenberg of Manchester; a brother, Richard Vizcaino of Florida; four grandchildren, Liam, Shylee, Mason and Owen; and numerous extended family and friends.

In addition to his parents, he was predeceased by a brother, Paul Vizcaino.

A celebration of his life was held Wednesday, Nov. 16, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A memorial service was observed that evening at the funeral home, followed by full military honors.

Donations in his memory may be made to the Disabled American Veterans, P.O. Box 14301, Cincinnati, OH 45250-0301.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Catherine Julia Starkweather

Catherine Julia Starkweather, nee Wilson, of Colchester, formerly of Manchester, passed away peacefully Wednesday morning, Nov. 16, at the age of 98. Born Oct. 4, 1918, in Dundee, Scotland, she was the daughter of the late David and Alice (Turville) Wilson. The family settled in the United States shortly thereafter.

Catherine was the widow of the late George Nelson Starkweather, with whom she shared 63 years of marriage before he predeceased her Sept. 27, 2001. She leaves two children, George W. Starkweather of Navarre, Fla., and Joan Soboleski and her husband, Gerald of Colchester; seven grandchildren, Patricia McKelvey, Kevin Soboleski, Mary Stockwell, James Soboleski, Janet Soboleski, David Starkweather and Brenda Bachand; eight great-grandchildren, Kristen, Michael, Shelby, Kate, Jeffrey, Caroline, Adam and Jake; and five great-great-grandchildren, Hannah, Owen, Ben, Emily and Madison.

In addition to her parents and husband, she was predeceased by three brothers, David, Frank and Robert.

Contributing to the war effort during World War II, Catherine worked for Pioneer Parachutes through 1950. She went on to work as a facilities assigner for SNET. Following her retirement in 1961, she was active with the Telephone Pioneers of America Club for many years.

At her request, services will be private and she will be laid to rest alongside her husband at East Cemetery in Manchester.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to Masonicare Hospice, c/o The Masonic Charity Foundation of Connecticut, P.O. Box 70, Wallingford, CT 06492, in recognition of the compassionate care extended to Catherine and her family.

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

Hebron

Michael John Dill

Michael John Dill, beloved husband and partner-in-adventure of Margaret-Ann Dill, and loving father of Brian and Jeffrey, died Saturday, Nov. 12, following a brief but courageous battle with pancreatic cancer.



The son of the late Matthew and Grace Dill, Michael was born in New York, N.Y., Jan. 23, 1945. He earned his degree in engineering at Rutgers University, where he also completed the Army ROTC program. He went on to become an Army Ranger and proudly served his country for many years. Mike also enjoyed a long career with Pratt & Whitney Aircraft.

Mike was an upbeat, "can do" guy, ready with a quick smile or a helping hand for anyone. He was happiest outdoors – working on the house and in the yard; surfcasting, canoeing and enjoying the beach on the Cape; swinging a hammer with his Habitat for Humanity crew; riding "Suzie" his motorcycle; and spending time with his family. An avid traveler, he enjoyed many adventures with Marge.

In addition to his wife and sons, Michael is survived by his sisters, Carol Schriber and Jennifer Martin; brother-in-law, Robert Schriber; and many other beloved family members and friends. In addition, he leaves his special "family", the Arestis: Larry, Roger and Susan, and goddaughters Maryann and Elizabeth.

Calling hours will be held today, Nov. 18, from 4-7 p.m., at Mulryan Funeral Home in Glastonbury. A funeral Mass will be held Saturday, Nov. 19, at 10 a.m., at the Church of the Holy Family in Hebron. Burial will follow in Gilead Cemetery in Hebron.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Windham Area Habitat for Humanity at windhamhabitat.org.

To leave online condolences, visit mulryanfh.com.

Hebron

Dorothea Ruth Holme

Dorothea Ruth (Silvernail) Holme, 89, a life-long area resident, died peacefully Wednesday, Nov. 9, at River Ridge at Avon, following a lengthy illness. Dottie worked as an engineer for the Raytheon Corporation in Massachusetts for many years prior to her retirement.

Born July 2, 1927 in Millerton, N.Y., she was the daughter of the late Russell Sage and Lydia (Schreiber) Silvernail. She attended high school at Roeliff Jansen Central School in Hillsdale, N.Y. and received a bachelor's degree from the State University of New York at Albany. Dottie resided in Hebron for nearly 18 years and Harvard, Mass., for over 20 years.

Dottie was a longtime member of the Gilead Congregational Church in Hebron, where she enjoyed singing in the choir and attending many church functions. She enjoyed spending time with her family and many friends and enjoyed doing yard work and crossword puzzles in her spare time. She will be dearly missed by her loving family and her many friends and caregivers at River Ridge.

Survivors include her two nieces, Gail Silvernail-Blood (Rick) of New Hartford and Terri Nunes (Dave) of Oldsmar, Fla.; two nephews, Wayne Silvernail (Lise) of Colchester and Mark Silvernail of Manchester; her cousin, Ruth Dunning of Vermont; six great nieces; and a dear friend, Wilma Suprynovicz.

In addition to her parents, she was also predeceased by her loving brother, Russell S. Silvernail Jr. and his wife, Janet (Fitting) Silvernail, of Glastonbury.

There are no calling hours. Private funeral services and burial will take place at Irondale Cemetery in Millerton, N.Y., at a later date.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Children's Tumor Foundation, 120 Wall St., 16th Floor, New York, NY 10005-3904. Arrangements are under the care of Scott D. Conklin Funeral Home, 37 Park Ave., Millerton, NY 12546.

To send an online condolence, visit conklinfuneralhome.com.

Portland

John R. Stewart

John "Jack" R. Stewart, 82, of Portland, beloved husband of Barbara "Bobbi" (Riggin) Stewart died Tuesday, Nov. 8, at Apple Rehab Middletown. Jack was born in Laurel, Miss., Jan. 19, 1934, to the late Basil Ogden Stewart and Jewel (Byrd) Stewart.



They moved to Buffalo, N.Y., in 1945, where he attended Kenmore High School, then Purdue University, where he received a B.S. in metallurgical engineering. While at Purdue, he joined the Army ROTC and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant. Jack met his wife Bobbi, at Aberdeen Proving Ground, where they were married. He was stationed in Germany with the 710th Ordnance Battalion, attached to the 85th Infantry Regiment, 10th Mountain division.

After serving in the Army for three years, Jack went to work at Kaiser Aluminum Corp. at their rolling mill in Spokane, Wash. He moved to Connecticut in 1958, where he worked for the Connecticut Aircraft Nuclear Laboratory (CANEL), a government top-secret project to develop nuclear-powered aircraft. Jack received a master's degree in Engineering Science from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) and went on to work for Combustion Engineering in 1965 in their Nuclear Power Systems Group as manager of materials. Other jobs held at Combustion Engineering included director of materials and chemistry, resident engineer at Siemens in Erlangen, Germany, director of R&D sales, director of proposal engineering, director of financed projects, and president of power projects. As an accomplished engineer, he also published several technical papers and was a member of ASM and AIME.

When ABB purchased C-E back in 1989, Jack took an early retirement and started his own consulting business, J.R. Stewart and Associates, Inc. After working for over 55 years, he began his retirement in 2005.

Jack was a true renaissance man. He was an adjunct professor at the University of Hartford, where he taught a course in metallurgy. He enjoyed singing bass in the church choir. Jack was a talented craftsman, being able to design and build his home in Ludlow, Vt., having built fine pieces of furniture, and was an accomplished maker of antique pewter reproductions. He enjoyed playing golf, tennis, and he was an avid skier, and taught all of his grandchildren how to ski at Okemo Mountain, where he had skied for over 40 years.

Jack also enjoyed sailing on his 25-foot Sirius sailboat, and loved to cook and bake bread at home. He was a proud member of the Connecticut Escoffier Society for many years and was on the Committee 'de la Bonne Bouche'. He always made a special Lemon curd for the Abigail Tea Party at the Third Congregational Church. Jack was very active in the church community, serving for many years as chairman of the stewardship committee, and also served on the town of Portland Planning and Zoning Board and was the commissioner of the town of Portland Housing Authority.

Besides his wife of 60 years, Jack is survived by his two sons, Kevin Raymond and Keith Philip, and six grandchildren: Kaitlyn, James, Kylie, Ryan, Patrick and Brianna. He also leaves behind an older brother, Robert, and his wife Carol and their two sons, Russell and Douglas.

He was predeceased by his oldest son, James, who died of cancer at the age of 24.

Family and friends paid their respects Tuesday, Nov. 15, in the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland. Burial with military honors will be in Maryland.

In lieu of flowers, donations in memory of John Stewart may be made to the Parkinson's Disease Foundation (PDF) at pdf.org or to the Third Congregational Church memorial fund in Jack's name, 94 Miner St., Middletown, CT. 06457.

To send an online expression of sympathy, visit portlandmemorialfh.net.

Marlborough

Louis J. Papolizio

Louis J. Papolizio, 95, of Marlborough, formerly of Hamden, passed away peacefully Thursday, Nov. 10, at home, with his family by his side. He was the beloved husband of the late Louise E. Bianchi Papolizio.



Louis was born in New Haven Feb. 15, 1921, son of the late Louis and Emma DeFalco Papolizio; served his country faithfully in the U.S. Army during World War II and worked as an electrician for the Southern Connecticut Gas Company for many years until his retirement. He enjoyed playing pool, fishing, hunting, cooking and was an avid golfer.

He was the father of the late Richard L. Papolizio; father-in-law of Marilyn Papolizio; grandfather of Nicolas (Tracy) Papolizio, Kimberly (David) Wills and Kelly (Michael) Diana; great-grandfather of Alexis, Daniel, Owen, Gwendolyn, Lydia and Taylor; brother of Helen Ruggiero, Edward Papolizio and the late Harry, Rose and Eugene "Gene" Papolizio Sr. and Lillian Striano; brother-in-law of Etta and MaryAnn Papolizio.

He was predeceased by his stepmother, Mary Carrone Papolizio, and stepbrothers Anthony and Henry Carrone.

Funeral services were conducted in the North Haven Funeral Home, 36 Washington Ave., Monday, Nov. 14, with the Rev. Timothy Meehan officiating. Family and friends called before the service. Interment with full military honors followed in All Saints Cemetery.

For online condolences, visit northhavenfuneral.com.

East Hampton

Jeremy Dean Harris

Jeremy Dean Harris, 43, of East Hampton, passed away Sunday, Nov. 7. He had been working hard to overcome drug and alcohol addiction but in the end was overwhelmed. He was a gentle, compassionate, sensitive man who left a positive impact on so many people who knew him.

He graduated from Haddam Killingworth High School where he participated on the track and swimming teams. While in high school, Jeremy spent one summer at Wesleyan University's Center for Creative Youth on a music scholarship. After high school, he spent two years at Berklee College of Music in Boston. He enjoyed his work at the Norwalk Veterinary Hospital, where he was employed for over 10 years.

Jeremy loved the outdoors, working with animals, and caring for his dogs. He was musically talented, creative and deeply introspective.

He is survived by his wife, Wendy, of Easton; his father, Jack; his siblings, Tom and Kay; and three nephews.

His family is grateful for the love and support given him by his many friends from AA circles and for all the people who serve from their hearts every day to promote wellness and restore hope.

Friends attended calling hours at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, on Thursday, Nov. 17. A memorial service will be held today, Nov. 18, at 11 a.m., in Haddam Neck Covenant Church, 17 Haddam Neck Rd. East Hampton, CT 06424.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Hebron

Cryrilla Bergeron

Cryrilla Bergeron, 71 (Oct. 31, 1945 to Oct. 31, 2016), of Hebron, passed peacefully with her family and her dog Cujo by her side, after a battle with cancer. Cryrilla was born in Framingham, Mass to George and Virginia Etzel.

She is predeceased by her parents and her stepmother, Jean M. Etzel. She is survived by her husband, Ron Bergeron; her two sons, Geoffrey Willis (Tracy Mason), Michael Willis (Summer Willis); and her grandchildren Samantha Willis, Eva Jane, Jacob Willis and Zachary Plourde. She is also survived by her nine siblings.

A Celebration of Life will be held Saturday, Nov. 19, at 11 a.m., at the Open Door Baptist Church, 475 Pequot Trail, Stonington, CT 06378.

Obituaries continued

CourantPortland

William T. Harvey Jr.

Born Jan. 5, 1924, in Roanoke, Va., the first born of William Thurmond Harvey and Helen Lindsay Barger Harvey, born so late her sisters teased that she was putting them on. He attended public schools in Stollings, W.Va., where his mother was too often his teacher.



He graduated in 1940 from Logan High School and attended Bluefield College in Bluefield, Va., transferring to Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VA Tech) in Blacksburg, VA then, in the Navy's V-7 program, finished at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute ("called that because they didn't know how to spell 'euuyeuuck'"), then Midshipmen's School at Great Lakes near South Bend, IN from which he graduated as an ensign. At the end of the war, he returned to his beloved VA Tech for graduate school.

He met the love of his life, Charlotte Cordes Skinner, on March 30, 1947, and after completing his master's degree in chemical engineering they were married Nov. 29, 1947, in Jacksonville, Fla., at the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd. They moved to Alexandria, Va., where Bill worked for the American Lime Association, then moved to Stollings, W.Va., where he worked in the coal mine his father managed. In Logan, their first child, Helen Lindsay Harvey, was born. The young family moved to Camden, S.C., when Bill started working with the textile division of Dupont. While in Camden, Ann (Nan) Cordes Harvey and William Thurmond Harvey III were born.

Dupont transferred the up-and-coming Bill to their headquarters in Wilmington, De., in 1958 but, ever restless, Bill left to start Christiana Fibers in 1959. Unsuccessful but undaunted, Bill found a sales position at Atlantic Research in Alexandria, Va., so the family, with the newly-added Charles Skinner Harvey, moved to Alexandria in 1960.

While in Alexandria, Bill held a variety of positions: researcher in fluidized bed coal combustion at Pope Evans and Robbins, top salesman at Univac, small business owner of PartTake selling franchises and then at the newly-formed Atomic Energy Commission, which became the Department of Energy. He was a presidential appointee on the House of Representatives Science and Technology Committee, where his understanding of scientific and engineering principles and processes and his clear communication capabilities made him a favorite Congressional speechwriter, explaining often-arcane new technologies to the Congressional constituents. In 1986 the political mire encouraged him to retire. He nearly completed an MGB kit car when a massive stroke slowed him down.

In the early 1990s, he and Charlotte moved to Jacksonville, Fla., until his beloved Charlotte died Feb. 24, 2003, and he moved to Portland, to be near his children Lindsay and Charles and grandchildren. Because of increasing mobility issues, he then moved in February 2016 to One MacDonough Place, Middletown, where he died Nov. 5, exactly two months shy of his 93rd birthday.

During his long and productive life, Bill taught his chessmaster son Thurmond to play chess, he grew grapes and produced award-winning wine, becoming vice president of the American Wine Society in 1978. An early adopter, he designed and installed a solar water heating system at his home in the early 1980s and held a patent for controlled-atmosphere storage of apples. He ended a 30+ year smoking habit cold turkey at 46. He learned to ride a bicycle in his 50s, with all the resultant skinned knees; learned to sail and shared that passion with his daughter Nan, crewing for her down the IntraCoastal Waterway (ICW).

He taught himself framing, then designed and built a complex hip roof addition though he always had a woodworking project in progress (Christmas presents, super-secret sewing cabinet for Charlotte, shed, wine cellar to name a few). A voracious reader, he was always well known at every public library he lived near. He was good at everything he put his mind to, could fix anything, had an insatiable intellect and a repertoire of favorite jokes.

Always curious, always interested in the people around him, Bill was a stalwart Christian and active member of every church he ever joined, including Bethesda Presbyterian in Camden, S.C., Old Presbyterian Meeting House in Alexandria, Va., South Jax Presbyterian in Jacksonville, Fla., and Congregational Church, South Glastonbury. His powerful bass voice was a welcome addition to many church choirs and his harmonies created the success of the Camden barbershop quartet.

Bill was a loyal husband, loving and supportive father and cheerful to everyone he ever encountered, responding to the rote question "How are you?" – before Parkinson's disease robbed him of his ability to speak – "Never better!"

The planet is a poorer place for this loss, but he will be missed most by his surviving brother, Robert Lindsay Harvey of Kingsport, Tenn.; his children, Lindsay (Robert Spencer), Nan (Ernest Howard Flynn), Thurmond, and Charles, his grandchildren, Samuel Elder Spencer (Cassandra Silvia), Elizabeth Harvey Spencer (Josh Gage), Jessica Eileen Harvey, and Maxwell Charles Harvey. His step-grandson, Shannon Dion Flynn (Amy Corrigan Flynn), remembers his warm welcome into the family. Fortunately, he spent some of his last moments with his great-granddaughter, Willa Aurore Spencer.

His remains will be cremated and a service will be held at Congregational Church of South Glastonbury Saturday, Dec. 10, at 11 a.m.; a reception will follow.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his honor to Habitat for Humanity International or Congregational Church of South Glastonbury would be appreciated.

To share memories or send condolences to the family, visit doolittlefuneralservice.com.

East Hampton

Ronald Cook

Ronald Cook, 57, of East Hampton, died Monday, Aug. 1, at home. He was born Sept. 26, 1958. He is survived by his son, Kenneth Cook.

A 10 a.m. funeral service will be held today, Nov. 18, at Colchester Federated Church, 60 Main St., Colchester. Burial will immediately follow at Lakeview Cemetery in East Hampton with his brother Randall, who died in 2008.

Belmont Funeral Home has been entrusted with Ronald's care.

Portland

Jennie Bartolotta Ostergren

Jennie Bartolotta Ostergren, 101, died Tuesday, Nov. 15. A daughter of Italian immigrants, Jennie was born in Cromwell, and lived most of her life in Portland. Her work took her to many venues, from typewriter factory to greenhouse to the local high school cafeteria.

A good-looking Swede named Walter won her heart and together they shared life and a marriage lasting fifty-five years. When Walter died, Jennie continued caring for their beloved home, with help from kind neighbors. Another constant in Jennie's life was love of family. She outlived her three sisters and two brothers by many years but her deep attachment to her siblings remained strong throughout her life.

Jennie loved crocheting, cooking Italian specialties and especially watching the birds and squirrels who called her yard home. No one ever left Jennie's and Walter's home hungry and every songbird, grey squirrel and stray cat found sanctuary within their welcoming yard. Five wonderful women – Holly, Tammy, Lucinda, Sharon and Mary – brought Jennie companionship and happiness through her 90s and beyond.

A private graveside ceremony, arranged through Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, is planned at the Swedish Cemetery in Portland, the Deacon Dana Garry officiating.

Rather than flowers, raise a glass of fine Chianti to Jennie and be happy knowing that a reunion will now take place that will make Heaven sing with joy.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

In the days following Trump's election last week, I heard multiple people tell me to "give him a chance; how bad can he be?" I've bristled a bit at that – the man's not a new steakhouse in town; he's president of the United States – but the fact of the matter is, I've got no choice *but* to give him a chance.

It's important to hope for the best – but also important to hold him accountable for what I'm afraid will be an awful lot of terrible, terrible decisions.

A pretty big terrible decision happened earlier this week, with Trump's naming of Steve Bannon as his chief strategist. Who's Steve Bannon? He's head of the "news" site Breitbart and one of the leaders of the so-called "alt-right" movement (people who are actually even further right than established right-wingers). His appointment was praised by the head of the American Nazi Party, the former head of the Ku Klux Klan, and other white nationalists.

In other words, anyone hoping Trump's campaign of hate speech and fear-mongering was all just for show, and that he'd soften once actually elected..... well, sorry, that might not be the case. (I had my doubts anyway about Trump's hardline stance being all for show when he chose virulently anti-gay Mike Pence as his running mate.)

Almost as soon as the nomination of Bannon was announced, a movement to get it reversed started. Concerned citizens have been calling their Congressmen to voice their disgust with it. As I write this Tuesday night, the public outcry has gotten pretty loud..... and who knows, maybe by the time you read this Trump will have changed his mind and replaced Bannon. I'm hopeful, but I wouldn't bank on it. Trump seems to like sticking to his guns. (Well, sort of. After meeting with the president, Trump decided there are parts of Obamacare he likes after all, and when it comes to his appointees, he's not exactly "draining the swamp" so far.)

The appointment of Bannon is not a good sign. There are other not-good signs as well. But, it's early yet. The election was a little over a week ago, and there's still another two months left of the Obama administration. I'll continue to give Trump a chance – again, not because I want to, but because I frankly have no choice.

(Now's a good time to point out there's a movement afoot to urge the Electoral College to, when it meets Dec. 19, give the presidency to the candidate that actually won the popular vote – which was Clinton. It's the longest of long shots – but people are making a case for it (one petition I've seen already has more than four million signatures), and it's one built on more than just sour grapes. One of the key reasons the Electoral College was created was precisely to prevent the election of people like Donald Trump; Alexander Hamilton said the Electoral College was designed to ensure "the office of president will never fall to the lot of any man who is not in an eminent degree endowed with the requisite qualifications." While that language is a little subjective, it's not a stretch to argue that Trump, who hasn't spent a second in political office or in military service, doesn't have those "requisite qualifications." I highly doubt the movement will change anything, but it'll be interesting to see, on Dec. 19, how many – if any – Electoral College members flip.)

Speaking of Clinton, I was doing a lot of thinking over the weekend about why she lost the election. As I mentioned last week, I think

a lot of it had to do with the stupid letter FBI head James Comey sent to Congress. Though certainly not all of it. There are a host of reasons, really, why someone as eminently qualified as Clinton lost to a sexist, racist reality show host.

It's been easy for Clinton supporters to dismiss all Trump supporters as sexists and bigots. But that's simply not true. I know far too many Trump supporters who are neither of those things. Rather, I think one of the big difference-makers is that Trump talked to them, in a way Clinton, frankly, didn't.

Trump understood the working class, and their fears. He may have sold them a bill of goods, but at least he talked to them, made them feel like their worries counted. Clinton really didn't – at least not to the degree he did. This is not to say she didn't care, or that she didn't have ways to help them, but she wasn't out in the suburbs, taking her message to the people, quite the same way Trump was. Obama himself said Monday, "I believe that [the Democrats] have better ideas, but I also believe that good ideas don't matter if people don't hear them."

There are large swaths of people across this country that probably felt they weren't being talked to – and if the Democrats just dismiss the Trump voters as just a bunch of racists and sexists, they run the danger of looking at this almost as an anomaly, and not as an indicator they need to change the way they do business. And change is needed in order for the Democrats to make a comeback in 2018.

It's hard to believe that Thanksgiving is almost upon us. This year has truly flown by. And with Turkey Day coming up, here are a few Thanksgiving facts I recently came across, courtesy of CNN.com:

– Thanksgiving is actually responsible for TV dinners. In 1953, the folks at Swanson greatly overestimated the number of frozen turkeys it would sell that year. To be more precise, they were off by 26 tons of turkey. So, they decided to slice it up, place it on an aluminum tray alongside some frozen veggies, and sell pre-packaged complete meals. And just like that, an entire industry of frozen meals was born.

– Black Friday is of course known as one of the busiest shopping days of the year – and it's also the busiest day of the year for your neighborhood plumber. According to Roto-Rooter, often the reason is for this is guests show up and "overwhelm the system." (Eeeeeew.)

– Though the first Thanksgiving was celebrated in 1621, it wasn't until well over 200 years later that President Lincoln made it a national holiday – and that was due to the persistent efforts of a magazine editor named Sarah Josepha Hale, who also wrote the nursery rhyme, "Mary had a Little Lamb."

– Turkeys are known for their gobble. But it's actually only male turkeys, toms, that gobble. Female turkeys, called hens, cackle.

– If Ben Franklin had it his way, the turkey would be our national bird. An eagle, he said, has "bad moral character." A turkey, on the other hand, is "a much more respectable bird."

– In 2013, Thanksgiving actually matched up with the first day of Hanukkah, the first time that had happened since 1888. And scientists estimate it won't happen again for another 70,000 years.

See you next week – and happy Thanksgiving from all of us at the *Rivereast*.