



RIVEREAST

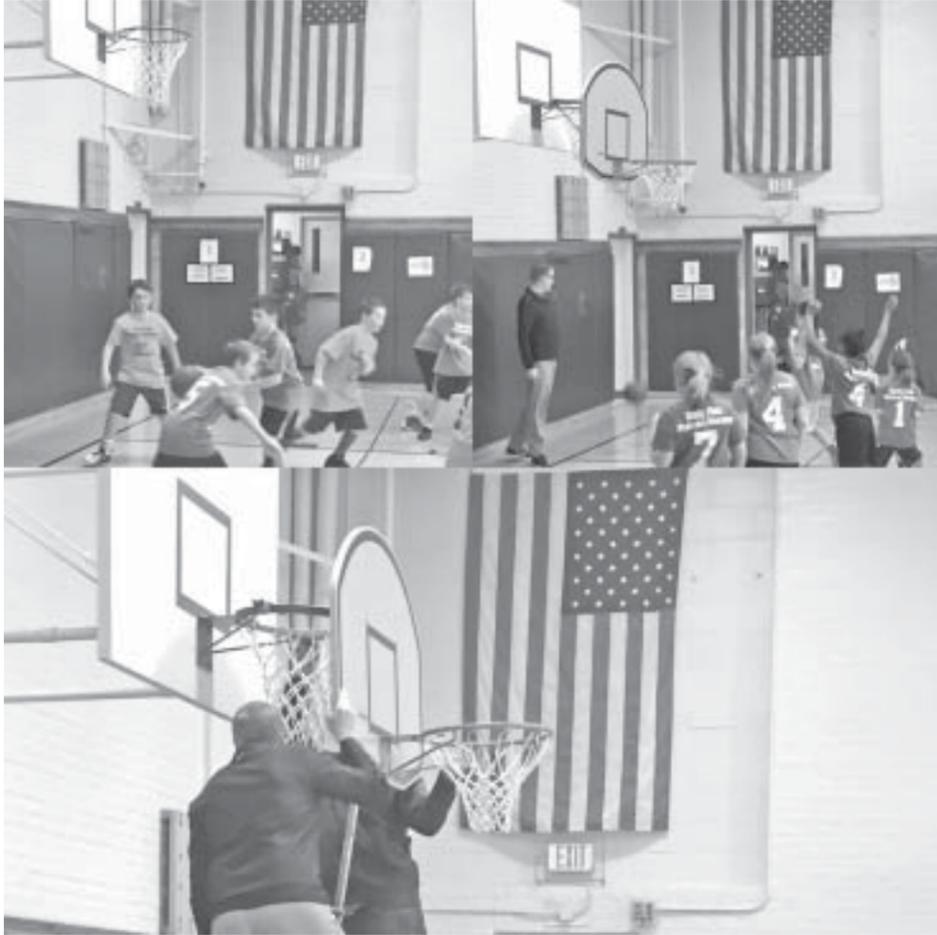
# News Bulletin

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

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In Portland, Parks and Recreation youth basketball officials lower the basketball hoop for third- and fourth-grade girls – but not for boys at the same grade level.

## Gender Discrimination for Portland Hoops?

by Elizabeth Regan

A complaint of gender discrimination against the town of Portland alleges that using different hoop heights for boys and girls in the youth basketball program sends girls the message that they “are not as good as boys.”

Meghan Hopkins-Pineda, a parent with a third-grade daughter in the program, submitted a complaint to First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield in January, two weeks into the eight-week winter session. She said the basketball hoop was being lowered for third- and fourth-grade girls – but not for boys at the same grade level.

“The girls have asked why their hoops are different, so they are aware they are being treated differently,” she wrote.

Hopkins-Pineda, who also has a son, said that’s the wrong lesson to be teaching children. In a phone interview, she said boys need to learn and spread the message that “you can’t treat girls differently than us.”

Male third- and fourth-graders in the Parks and Recreation Department’s youth league play basketball with the hoop set at 10 feet, while girls in the same grade level play with the hoop set at 8.5 feet.

The lower height is accomplished by using a backboard adapter to attach a portable net to the permanent 10-foot nets for games at Brownstone Intermediate and Portland Middle schools.

Hopkins-Pineda recounted the story of a friend who heard a female player say it’s okay that the hoop was lower for girls because they aren’t as good as boys.

“That’s a fail right there, because that one girl is going to walk away,” Hopkins-Pineda said.

Parks and Recreation Director Sean Dwyer pointed to a continually-increasing number of participants as the main reason he is hesitant to make a change.

“We don’t lose girls; we’ve been gaining girls,” he said in a phone interview.

Dwyer, who has directed the recreation department for eight years, said the program has grown from 190 players in 2009 to more than 500 players in 2015. In addition to the youth recreational league, the department hosts pre-season clinics and an afterschool basketball program at Gildersleeve School. There is a travel basketball club associated with the department, where the hoop is set at 10 feet for boys and girls.

“I think my biggest fear is we make a change and that change creates less kids to play,” he said.

The topic has been under consideration by Dwyer and the Parks and Recreation Commission for several months. Residents and com-

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## RHAM Budget Approved in All Three Towns

by Geeta S. Sandberg

It wasn’t exactly a mad dash to the polls, but voters in all three towns Tuesday passed the \$28.03 million RHAM schools budget.

The spending package of \$28,033,359 amounts to a \$262,584, or a .95 percent, increase over the current schools budget of \$27,770,775 – the smallest increase in more than five years.

Voter turnout fared best in Hebron, which also saw its own municipal budget voted on Tuesday (a separate story appears in this week’s *RiverEast*); in Hebron, the budget passed 737-687, with around 22 percent of the town’s electorate voting. In Marlborough, around 10 percent of the town’s voters cast ballots, and passed the budget 226-175 – while in Andover, the spending proposal passed 95-36, as just six percent of the town’s registered voters cast ballots.

In total, 1,058 voted in favor of the spending package, and 898 voted against.

The RHAM budget is paid for with funds from the three sending towns, as well as non-residents who attend school in the district; the amount each sending district pays is determined by the number of students who attend the two schools from each town.

For the 2016-17 school year, 236 students, or 14.84 percent, are projected to be enrolled from Andover, up from 14.52 percent during the 2015-16 school year. Meanwhile, 485 students, or 30.5 percent, are projected to be en-

rolled from Marlborough, up from 29.65 percent; and 866 students, or 54.47 percent are projected from Hebron, down from 55.83 percent. Three students are also expected from out of district.

Under the approved budget, the levy translates to \$4,160,150 from Andover for an increase of \$127,620 from the 2015-16 year; \$8,550,175 by Marlborough for an increase of \$180,933; \$15,269,771 from Hebron, which is a decrease of \$489,244; and \$53,263 from non-residents.

Included in the spending package is the reduction of four teaching positions stemming from retirements, which schools superintendent Bob Siminski had said was in line with declining enrollment at the schools; enrollment at the middle school is projected to decrease by 34 next year to 533 students, while enrollment at the high school is projected to drop by 28 students, down to 995.

In addition, \$91,352 is included for a School Resource Officer, the agreement for which is in the process of being finalized with the Town of Hebron.

The budget also reflects a .75 percent salary increase – plus step – for certified staff (“step” refers to the pay scale used to determine salary, which is based upon degrees held and length of time teaching), a 2.1 percent increase in the administrators’ salary per the third year of their

contract, and a 2 percent salary increase (plus step) for non-certified staff.

The budget also includes \$382,500 for vocational agricultural and magnet school tuition, and \$907,916 for special education tuition.

Meanwhile, health insurance is budgeted at \$2,126,802, for a decrease of \$572,626 from the current year; heating oil and diesel fuel are also budgeted as decreasing, down \$112,278 to \$205,621 for heating oil, and \$5,758 to \$127,742 for diesel fuel.

The spending package also includes \$314,500 for capital projects including \$130,000 to resurface and reline the track; \$60,000 to replace a 250-gallon hot water heater at the middle school; and \$20,000 for roof repairs.

Funds have also been budgeted to enhance the schools’ network, continue with the computer replacement schedule and the purchase of 1-1 computing devices for students in grades nine and 10.

The approved amount also allows for the implementation of an Inquiry Academy at the middle school, starting with seventh grade, which will provide students with a more individualized education; there are currently 40 students enrolled for the program, which will start in the fall.

In addition, \$19,450 has been budgeted for next year for high school math textbooks;

\$5,247 for high school social studies textbooks; \$4,940 for high school science textbooks; and \$3,592 for English textbooks.

Speaking to the budget’s approval this week, Board of Education Chairman Danny Holtsclaw said, “I thank my fellow members of the board and the administration and the community for their hard work and support for RHAM.”

The budget, he added, “recognizes some of the reductions in student head count and I think it’s apparent to the community how hard we’re working to try to minimize the cost of education without compromising the quality of the education.”

Siminski also spoke to the budget this week, sharing, “I think the budget allows us to go forward and continue our initiatives and ensure we continue to provide services so our students are able to perform in the 21st century.”

He added the budget also “addresses some of the capital needs in the district” and now that the budget has been approved, efforts will begin “as soon as possible” to get some of those projects underway.

“I think we’re going to start to get to work ASAP because some of the initiatives continue in the budget area, for example, resurfacing of the track,” Siminski said. “We know we’re not the only people who’ll be resurfacing tracks this season so we want to be sure we’ll get in the

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**Portland Hoops cont. from Front Page**

mission members at a special meeting in March spoke both for and against changing rim height, but no decisions have been made.

A review of *Rivereast* towns with youth basketball leagues run by Parks and Recreation departments – Andover, Colchester, East Hampton and Hebron – shows Portland is the only one that treats boys and girls differently when it comes to hoop height.

Dwyer acknowledged the town is “probably unique in that boys and girls do different heights.”

Rich Giveans, employed by the recreation department to oversee Saturday youth basketball games, said Dwyer was in contact every week during the session to ask if hoops should be raised for girls.

“Each week I said ‘no,’ because many of the girls were not able to reach the hoop,” Giveans said in a phone interview.

He cited a trial run this year during which the girls’ team shot at a 10-foot hoop instead of 8.5 feet. Each team tried either one or two games at the higher level.

“One of the games, the score was 8-3,” he said. “One girl on one team scored eight and one girl on the other team scored three.”

According to Giveans, lowering the hoop for girls gives them more opportunities to score a basket and “feel part of the team.”

But Hopkins-Pineda said raising the hoop for two games isn’t a fair representation of what girls, who were being exposed to the added height for the first time, can do. She added that it’s not a main tenet of the youth league to keep score: “It’s supposed to be recreational skill teaching.”

Dwyer pointed out raising the hoop height for girls was met with vocal opposition from parents, and was not favored by any of the coaches.

Hopkins-Pineda said she’s not necessarily saying the girls should aim for 10-foot hoops, but that perhaps the boys’ rims should be lowered. The proposal would be more in line with recommendations from the American Sport Education Program, a widely-used coaching education model, which suggests an eight-foot hoop for third- and fourth-graders.

Both ideas have been controversial among parents, who say their children are thriving in the current structure.

But where the hoop sits isn’t as important as ensuring both boys and girls are striving to reach the same heights, according to Hopkins-Pineda.

Dwyer has not heard from any coaches telling him third- and fourth-grade boys should play with an 8.5-foot hoop, he said: “The boys’ program has never once asked me to lower the hoops.”

That argument loses sight of the core issue, according to Hopkins-Pineda.

“It is not about hoop heights but about the equal treatment,” she said. “Many of the parents do not realize that the boys’ and girls’ teams are treated differently within the same program.”

Hopkins-Pineda’s complaint indicates the town may be in violation of Title IX, a federal law prohibiting discrimination against women in federally-funded education.

The law demands equal playing opportunities for males and females and equal access to equipment and supplies, among other require-

ments. It applies to almost all public schools, private schools and public colleges and universities.

The Women’s Sports Foundation, an education and advocacy organization started in 1974, released a grassroots guide to achieving gender equity in community recreational programs that says Title IX also may apply to community recreational programs if they receive federal funds for the purchase of park land, improvement of facilities or operation of programs.

However, the Women’s Sports Foundation responded to a *Rivereast* inquiry about the situation in Portland with more specific information.

“In this instance, it is most likely that Title IX does not apply, as this is not an educational institution,” Sarah Axelson, advocacy and program manager, said.

Dwyer said he has been in contact with the Title IX coordinator for Portland Public Schools, Dr. Mary Morris, and the office of the state Title IX coordinator.

Adrian R. Wood, Title IX coordinator with the state Department of Education, told the *Rivereast* it is not within his scope of work to comment on Title IX as it pertains to non-school entities such as the Parks and Recreation Department.

Morris, reached over the phone, said she has spoken with the school district’s legal counsel from Shipman & Goodwin.

“The best I can tell you is our attorneys reviewed it and said it was not a Title IX violation,” she said. The legal opinion was not made in writing.

Other laws governing discrimination include the equal-protection clause of the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution dictating that no state can discriminate based on sex unless it can provide an “exceedingly persuasive” reason.

At the state level, the public accommodations law specifies it is illegal to deny someone full and equal enjoyment of goods, services or facilities offered to the general public because of gender.

Bransfield said Tuesday she’s been in touch with the town labor attorney, Joseph McQuade. He didn’t issue a written opinion at the time and said he wasn’t sure how the town needed to proceed, according to Bransfield.

“And I told him, what we’re going to do is have the Parks and Recreation Commission look at it, see if they would make some adjustments or change,” she said.

She cited a recommendation by Morris for the recreation department to send a survey to gauge parents’ views on the idea of equalizing the playing field for boys and girls.

A survey did go out in late April, but it did not include specific questions about hoop height or changes that could be made to treat all players equally. Instead, it was a general questionnaire asking parents to rate such elements as program organization, staff, communication and length of season. It also asked parents if their children had fun.

Dwyer indicated respondents can address the hoop height issue in the section for additional comments.

He said the topic remains under consideration as a standing item on the Parks and Recreation Commission’s meeting agenda.

Siminski concluded, “We’re very happy with the results and the support that we received from all three towns.”

# Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

I freely admit it’s one of my nerdier entertainments, but I do enjoy the White House Correspondents’ Dinner. This has especially been the case during Obama’s years in office. Much like Bill Clinton before him (though perhaps not so much like Hillary), President Obama is, I feel, a very charismatic speaker. He’s a natural in front of a crowd. So when it comes time for him to do his comedy speech in these things, he typically does a very good job.

Last weekend’s Correspondents’ Dinner was, of course, Obama’s last one as president – and I think he went out on a high note. Not all of his jokes landed, but many did. And along the way, he got in some jabs at Hillary Clinton, Ted Cruz and Donald Trump. Here are some highlights:

When starting his speech: “If this material works well, I’m gonna use it at Goldman Sachs next year – earn me some serious Tubmans.”

“Eight years ago, I was a young man, full of idealism and vigor. Look at me now: I am gray, grizzled, just counting down the days ‘til my death panel. Hillary once questioned whether I’d be ready for a 3 a.m. phone call. Now I’m awake anyway, because I’ve gotta go to the bathroom.”

“For months now, Congressional Republicans have said there are things I cannot do in my final year. Unfortunately, this dinner is not one of them.”

“Savannah Guthrie has left the White House press corps to host the *Today* show. Norah O’Donnell left the briefing room to host *CBS This Morning*. Jake Tapper left journalism to join CNN.”

“I love Joe Biden. I really do. I want to thank him for his friendship, for his counsel, for always giving it to me straight, for not shooting anybody in the face. Thank you, Joe.”

“What an election season. We’ve got the bright new face of the Democratic party here tonight: Bernie Sanders!”

Republican guests to the dinner “were asked to check whether they wanted steak or fish. Instead, a whole lot of you wrote in Paul Ryan.”

“Ted [Cruz] had a tough week. He went to Indiana – Hoosier country! – and stood on a basketball court and called the hoop the ‘basketball ring.’ ... But sure, *I’m* the foreign one.”

The Republican establishment says Donald Trump “lacks the foreign policy experience to be president. But in fairness, he has spent years meeting with leaders from around the world: Miss Sweden, Miss Argentina, Miss Azerbaijan...”

“There’s one area where Donald’s experience could be invaluable, and that’s closing Guantanamo. Because Trump knows a thing or two about running waterfront properties into the ground.”

After the jokes, Obama turned serious for a few moments, saying some nice things about the value of journalism – and of journalists in particular. Then he closed by saying, “I only have two more words to say: Obama out.” With that, he dropped his mic, to thunderous applause and cheers.

It was a good speech; like I said, not all of his jokes landed, but enough did. And along the way there were some things you really need to see for yourself, such as a delightful short film Obama made depicting him grappling with what to do the next two years, as he’s planning to stay in Washington until his youngest graduates from high school. The full speech is on YouTube, and I recommend seeking it out.

\* \* \*

An email floated through my inbox last week from North Stonington resident Cindy Coombe, looking for people to participate in what seems to me like it could be a pretty interesting, and rewarding, summer experience – hosting a foreign exchange student.

For the past three years, Cindy has worked with the DIXIT Private Language School, to find host families in southeastern Connecticut for students coming from the Barcelona, Spain, area.

This is a “live with you” program, Cindy said. The student living with you would do whatever you would normally do with your family. If you work and your kids hang out, then that’s what your host child can do with them.

Cindy told me she’s hosted students herself for the past five years, and “every year has been a completely different and enriching experience for my family.”

This year, the group arrives June 27 and stays until July 27. If you are interested in hosting, or simply would like some more information, call Cindy at 860-303-6709 or email her at [mcoombe@snet.net](mailto:mcoombe@snet.net).

\* \* \*

Area men: Looking to play some hoops this summer? Colchester Parks and Recreation can help you out – whether you live in the town or not.

Parks and Rec. is looking for teams for its men’s summer basketball league – and is also looking for individuals who want to join a team.

This is a 5 vs. 5 league, with two certified referees for each game. Each team will play the other seven teams once, and then be seeded into a single elimination playoff.

Games will be in June and July, weeknights at 5:30, 6:30, 7:30 and 8:30 p.m., depending on how many teams are registered. Games will be at Jack Jackter Intermediate School, 215 Halls Hill Rd., Colchester.

The league is open to anyone over 18 years of age, or those graduating high school this year. And, like I said, you don’t even need to be a Colchester resident to participate.

There is a maximum of eight teams allowed. Team fee is \$625.

For more information, call Parks and Rec. at 860-537-7297 or email [apizzutiello@colchesterct.gov](mailto:apizzutiello@colchesterct.gov). There’s also a Facebook group people can join to find more information about the league. In the Facebook search engine, type “Colchester Men’s Summer League Basketball.”

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Lastly, some of you may recall that, back in December, Amston resident Chris Opocensky passed away. I remember coming across his obituary at work; it was just tremendously shocking. Chris was very young – just 39 years old – and his death was extremely sudden.

During my time as a Hebron reporter in the early part of the 2000s, I’d gotten to know Chris. Even before he joined the RHAM Board of Education, I knew him from around town, and through his dad Jardo. He was always happy, always smiling, and always eager to talk with me about this and that – and oftentimes about the Mets; like me, he was a big fan of the team.

When Chris passed, he left behind a host of family and friends – including his wife Sherri and three daughters. And next weekend, Hebron veterans’ organizations and families are coming together to host a fundraiser, in memory of Chris, to benefit his children.

Chris was a charter member of the Sons of American Legion Post 95, so it’s only fitting the event will take place at Post 95 – which is located on Main Street (Route 66) in the center of Hebron, right next to the library – on Saturday, May 14, from 4-8 p.m.

Donation is \$10 per person or \$20 per family and includes food. There will also be karaoke and a silent auction. All proceeds benefit the Opocensky children’s fund.

This is truly a great cause, and I highly encourage all who are available to stop by. For more information, email Barbara Parkyn at [barb19@comcast.net](mailto:barb19@comcast.net).

**Budget Adopted cont. from Front Page**

queue so some of the work will get done prior to the opening of school. So we’re trying to make some of those arrangements as we speak.”

# EHHS Junior Headed to College

by Elizabeth Regan

When East Hampton High School student Signe Lee started 11th grade last fall, she didn't realize it would become her junior and senior year all rolled into one.

Then she decided to apply for a program that would allow her to enroll in the University of Southern California a year early.



Signe Lee

The acceptance letter came in the mail and now the 16-year-old will forgo 12th grade in East Hampton for freshman year in Los Angeles. She will start in August as a member of the university's Resident Honors Program.

The program, which accepts only 20-30 high school juniors each year, is for students with exceptional academic records and leadership experience. They are fully immersed in all aspects of university life from the beginning, when they are scattered throughout campus in residence halls with a mix of students from various programs.

"I've always wanted to go to college in a big city, and LA is pretty huge," Lee said. "I'm really excited for the new opportunities I can be offered at college."

Lee spent most of her formative years in China. She moved to East Hampton with her mother, Grace Jiang, at the age of 6.

"I dropped into first grade without knowing any English," Lee said. But she brought with her an ingrained sense of what she described as academic competitiveness.

"Coming from that sort of culture, education has just been really important to my family and that has sort of pushed me to be committed academically here," she said.

She pointed to her extracurricular activities

and leadership credentials as a more American pursuit. Such opportunities don't exist to the same extent in China, because the cultural focus remains fixed on academic success, she said.

Students in the United States need more than a great GPA to get into college, according to Lee: "You need to be a really well-rounded student. You need to have all sorts of things that contribute to your application."

But that's not all it's about, according to Lee. She sees extracurricular activities as a way to make friends and connect with people while doing things she enjoys. To that end, she decided last year to start a feminism club at the high school.

"I've always been about standing up for equality and the things that I believe in," she said. "I wanted a place where we could talk about those issues, where we could bring attention to those issues and where we could do something about those issues."

Feminism Club advisor Joseph Ochterski, a science teacher and team leader, called Lee a "natural and sophisticated leader" who makes sure all club members have a voice. Members feel valued and consequently are very willing to help out, he said.

As an example of Lee's effective leadership, Ochterski brought up a body image project the club is currently working on. The effort serves to raise awareness about the importance of accepting one's body and helping to make others comfortable with theirs as well, he said.

"The students created surveys, distributed and tallied them, and will begin the final, public phase next week, which will involve a display summarizing students' ideas about their bodies," he said. "The students have been working hard, but still having fun, in great part due to Signe's ability to balance getting them to work with the more social aspects of the club."

In addition to a 4.3 GPA, an SAT score of

2280, and membership in numerous clubs and societies, Lee's credentials include several recent honors.

EHHS Principal John Fidler said Lee has won the "trifecta" now that she has been identified not only as a USC Resident Scholar, but also as a Governor's Scholar and a National Merit Scholar.

She was informed through a letter presented to her in March by Fidler that she'd been selected as one of 30 students to receive the Governor's Scholars Award through the Connecticut Association of Schools.

Fidler, in consultation with the high school guidance department, nominated Lee, for her academic record and focused world view.

"She takes initiative. She's engaged in the world. She does it all in a very humble manner, too," Fidler said.

That unique focus was evident in the essay portion of the Governor's Scholars Program, which was scored by judges alongside class rank and SAT results.

Lee said she was given one hour to write about the first issue she would address if she were elected president in 2016.

"I said I would address the controversy over Planned Parenthood," she said. "There's a lot of issues that America has right now, but I feel like that is something that has caused a lot of party divisions. It almost shut down the government again this year."

She said defunding Planned Parenthood would limit women's health care options and women's rights.

As a National Merit Scholar, Lee was selected out of 1.5 million applicants as one of the 50,000 students with the highest PSAT scores in the nation.

Lee will bring 16 years of background, experience and achievements as she sets out on a pre-law track of study at USC. Her classes will be part of a highly-selective interdisciplinary

core curriculum that addresses foundational requirements like literature, history and science while encouraging students to look at the way those subjects combine to answer life's biggest questions.

"What is truth? What is justice? Can there be any sort of peace?" Lee asked, illustrating the kind of topics she will be covering. "You really get a connected approach to your education and I think that's important because all of those things in the real world are linked and you can't just have separate ideas of those different disciplines."

One logistical issue that remains involves Lee's high school diploma.

According to the USC website, some high schools offer diplomas or honorary diplomas after students complete the first year in the resident honors program. Other students finish their high school requirements during the summer or take the GED exam.

Fidler said administrators haven't yet determined the exact route by which Lee will complete her high school graduation requirements.

"We will absolutely be working with her to determine the most meaningful route and will ensure that she receives her high school diploma and not a GED," he said.

Looking out on the next phase of her life, Lee hasn't yet settled on her major. Right now she is trying to decide if she should build her pre-law studies around philosophy and politics or culture and history.

It's a decision that weighs on her, she said.

"I do feel pressure to have my life figured out," she said. "We have all sorts of college fairs and career fairs and everyone asking, 'What do you want to do with your life?' I don't know. It's the rest of my life. Just years and years. And I really haven't got that figured out yet."

Still, she expects to have the answer by the time she starts college – after just having turned 17.

# All Signs Point to 'Yes' in Hebron

by Geeta S. Sandberg

The signs scattered around Hebron Tuesday urged residents to vote in favor of the \$36.18 million spending package for 2016-17 – and after all was said and done, that's exactly what the majority opted to do.

The budget passed by a vote of 764 to 657, with 1,433 voters – around 22 percent of the total number registered – casting a vote.

The budget amounts to \$36,177,949, for a decrease of \$203,852 or .56 percent from the current spending package, and will result in a mill rate of 36.17, up from 36 mills.

The mill rate is used to determine a resident's real estate and personal property taxes (the state recently passed Public Act 15-244 which prohibits municipalities from using a mill rate greater than 32 mills to tax motor vehicles) and, under the proposed mill rate, a resident with a home assessed at \$250,000 would be responsible for \$9,043 in property taxes on it, up from the current \$9,000.

Included in the spending package is \$11,758,954 for the Board of Education budget, which is a \$231,500 decrease from the 2015-16 budget; \$15,269,771 for Hebron's portion of the RHAM Board of Education budget for a reduction of \$489,224 from the current year due to a decrease in the number of students attending the two schools (the RHAM budget was also approved Tuesday; a story about that vote appears on the cover of this week's issue); and \$9,149,224 for the town government budget which is a \$337,301 increase over current year spending.

The \$9.15 million town government budget consists of a \$770,911 contribution for Capital Improvement Projects; a \$140,000 contribution to Open Space and Land Acquisition; an \$8,800 contribution to capital non-recurring items; a \$62,100 contribution to capital projects; a \$50,000 contribution to revaluation; a \$54,000 contribution to debt management; \$928,988 for debt service and \$7,209,425 for town government.

Also approved Tuesday, by a vote of 858 to 562, was a Capital Improvement Plan budget of \$999,816. Included in that amount are

projects such as road resurfacing and improvements for \$260,946; partial funding for the replacement of breathing apparatus for the fire department at \$117,000; \$75,000 for air conditioning in the town office building; \$47,000 for a tractor for the Parks and Recreation department; partial funding in the amount of \$20,000 for an upgrade to the HVAC system at the Douglas Library; and funds for the first phase of flooring replacement at the senior center for \$25,000.

On Wednesday, town leaders said they were pleased with the results.

Board of Selectmen Chairman Dan Larson shared, "I was happy that it passed the first time. As I've been saying right along, I was overall satisfied, especially with the town's portion of the budget. It was sad that the Board of Finance cut it in the first place, but I think it's a workable budget that we can all make due with."

Following news that Gov. Dannel P. Malloy had reduced the amount of Educational Cost Sharing funds municipalities would receive under his budget proposal – the amount coming to Hebron was cut last month by \$267,010 (which was on top of a February ECS trim of \$30,001) – the Hebron Board of Finance cut the town budget proposal by \$75,000 and the Board of Education proposal by \$38,500 at a special meeting April 15.

Town Manager Andrew Tierney said the budget's approval "means we can get to work; I'm already busy trying to give the Board of Selectmen three different scenarios of the \$75,000 in cuts that will need to be made due to the reductions by the Board of Finance. It's going to be painful but I think we can come up with those."

Board of Finance Chairman Malcolm Leichter said he's glad the budget passed.

"The people made the decision, and we tried to make them aware of all the issues with the state," he said, "and I think we had a good budget."

He added, "The real issue is to get going on next year. We need to find ways to consolidate because we need to find ways to lower expenses. We have been talking to officials in



Signs sprinkled across town Tuesday urged residents to support the Hebron and RHAM budgets. And in the end, both spending packages passed.

other towns and looking to see if there are ways to share services and equipment. If we're not able to do that then there's going to be some significant cuts, in my opinion, based on the condition of the state and the probability that revenue will go down."

Speaking to the budget this week, schools superintendent Tim Van Tasel said, "We're very happy with the result and we're looking forward to beginning our planning for next year."

Similarly, Board of Education Chairwoman Erica Bromley stated, "I'm happy that the budget passed and I was really pleased with the turnout. People used their voice and they voted and now the focus is just going to be on making the reductions to next year's budget based

on that number passed by the voters."

Van Tasel added the Board of Education will, at its meeting next Thursday, May 12, discuss possible areas to trim to satisfy the \$38,500 cut the finance board made. But, the superintendent noted, "I don't anticipate that there's going to be any significant program changes."

Larson concluded, "I'm glad of the turnout. I would be very interested of course in what's happening with the state, as is everybody else. We're so tied in – all the communities are – with state monies. But overall, I'm happy. I'm happy that it passed, and I'm happy that the citizens of Hebron had faith in their elected officials to present something that was honest and fair."

# Colchester Taxpayers to Vote on \$54.29 Million Budget

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

Colchester taxpayers will go to the polls Tuesday and vote on the proposed town budget and the proposed Board of Education budget.

The two spending packages are voted on separately at referendum, and combine to total \$54.29 million, up from the current year's \$53.56 million. The town operations budget proposal is \$14.39 million, while there is \$39.90 million proposed for education.

The budget proposal features a mill rate of 31.05, up from the current year's 30.76. This translates to a 0.95 percent tax increase. The mill rate is used to determine residents' taxes; under the proposed mill rate of 31.05, a resident with a home assessed at \$250,000 would pay \$7,762 in taxes.

The Board of Finance voted to move the proposed budgets to town meeting April 6. The board was unanimous in moving the town budget forward; however the school budget was a 4-1 vote with Andreas Bisbikos against. At a town meeting on Tuesday, taxpayers voted to move the budgets to referendum; the town bud-

get was unanimously moved, while one person was against the school budget.

After the originally presented budgets in March, the finance board voted to increase the school budget by \$100,000 and reduce the town operations budget by \$50,000.

The \$14,389,712 total town operations budget is a \$636,411 increase, or 0.46 percent, over current year spending. The budget includes \$1,842,266 in debt. Finance board chair Rob Tarlov explained the \$50,000 decrease in First Selectman Art Shilosky's original budget is not a reduction since the town will be spending the same amount as allocated on roads.

Tarlov previously explained town officials had thought the \$50,000 would be needed for snow and transferred the money from roads in the 2014-15 fiscal year. However, the funds were replaced by money from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and will be spent on roads.

Some highlights in the proposed town budget include increasing the fire marshal's hours,

24/5 police coverage, placing additional grass seed on recreational fields, and extended Saturday hours for the library.

The \$39,895,363 school budget is a \$99,993 increase, or 0.24 percent, over current year spending.

The school budget was originally proposed by Superintendent of Schools Jeff Mathieu in January as a 0.61 percent increase or \$40.04 million of spending. However, in February the school board adopted a \$39.80 million, zero percent increase budget. The proposal, which was exactly \$730 less than the approved 2015-16 budget, called for cutting teachers, as well as several other reductions.

Since that budget was presented to the finance board, the community came out and spoke to the finance board, requesting money be put back in. The finance board voted to add \$100,000 and in March, the school board did vote to add the teaching positions back in.

Tarlov said he is hoping for a good turnout

of taxpayers on Tuesday for the referendum.

"I am hoping that some of the great voter engagement we saw in the [state presidential] primary carries over to the referendum and that we get a better turnout than in the past," Tarlov said. "On first referendums, only about 10 percent of the voters decide if a budget fails or passes."

Tarlov said the finance board has worked hard to balance the town's needs and what taxpayers can afford in the proposed budgets.

"With a diverse population with many different needs, we listen to the input we receive and try to respond with a budget that meets as many needs as we can, while at the same time attempting to minimize the tax increase," Tarlov said.

Voting will take place Tuesday, May 10, from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m., at Town Hall, 127 Norwich Ave.,

To find out what district you are in, call the registrar's office at Town Hall, at 860-537-7204.

# \$34.49 Million Budget Heads to Portland Voters

by Elizabeth Regan

Portland taxpayers on Monday will get their yearly opportunity to cast ballots for or against the proposed budget.

The \$32.49 million combined budget proposal represents a 1.15 percent increase over current year spending. The Board of Education budget comes in at \$19.87 million, an increase of 0.87 over the current year, while the town operations proposal amounts to \$12.62 million, an increase of 1.60 percent.

If the budget is approved, the mill rate of 32.34 would rise by 0.32 mills – or 0.98 percent – to a total mill rate of 32.66 mills.

A mill is \$1 tax per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Under the proposed mill rate, taxes paid on a home assessed at \$200,000 for the 2016-17 fiscal year would be \$6,532. That's an increase of \$64 over the current year.

The budget includes approximately \$130,000 in cuts to the town operations side and \$140,000 in cuts to the education side, compared to proposals submitted by First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield and the Board of Education earlier this year.

At a town budget meeting Monday, Bransfield explained the state budget situation that precipitated the cuts.

Most of the cuts were the selectmen's reaction to an April revision by Gov. Dannel P. Malloy to his state budget proposal originally released in February. The governor's revised numbers indicated Portland could be receiving \$414,518 less in state revenue than municipal leaders thought they would be getting when they crafted the town budget proposal earlier this year. That's \$182,554 less in funding for the

schools and \$231,964 less in funding for the town.

But the governor's proposal was far from the last word on the matter, being that the state legislature must approve a budget before Malloy signs it into law. Whether lawmakers would restore some or all of the governor's cuts – and when they would take their final vote on the matter – remained a big question mark as selectmen deliberated on the town's budget in April.

So the selectmen, uncertain how things would play out but hopeful at least some of the state funding would be restored, decided to reduce their original revenue estimates by about \$200,000 instead of more than \$400,000. They assigned \$200,000 in cuts to the proposed budget, evenly divided between town operations and education.

On Wednesday, Democratic lawmakers and Malloy struck a deal on a new state budget proposal that would restore most of the education cost sharing funding and some of the municipal revenue sharing funds.

While the legislature has not voted on the budget, the document was released Wednesday. The new proposal restores all but \$2,505 of the education cost sharing funding the town was slated to lose in the governor's revised budget, according to the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities.

The amount of municipal revenue sharing dollars restored in the new budget proposal was unavailable at press time. The funding comes from an account set aside by the legislature to

provide property tax relief for municipalities.

The news outlet CT News Junkie reported Wednesday that House Majority Leader Joe Aresimowicz, D-Berlin, said the legislature will reconvene for a special session to vote on the budget, possibly as early as next week.

Neither the selectmen nor the Board of Education have specified where the respective \$100,000 in cuts will come from.

The town operations budget proposal currently includes funding for a 12th police officer to start in January and a new entry-level position for the highway department. It does not replace retiring supervisor of Public Works operations Donald Powers.

The proposed education budget supports the district's emphasis on technology by eliminating the current technology assistant position and replacing it with two full-time positions: an Information Technology Specialist and a Tech Integration Specialist. The proposal adds two full-time, certified library media specialists so that there will be a librarian with teaching credentials in each of the three elementary schools. It also eliminates three non-certified library positions to avoid redundancy and alleviate the cost increase, two of those through attrition.

The school spending proposal also adds a preschool classroom for 3- and 4-year-old students with and without disabilities in support of the district's special education program.

At a school board meeting Tuesday night, Superintendent of Schools Phillip O'Reilly and Chairwoman MaryAnne Rode expressed optimism the district can absorb the \$100,000 cut.

O'Reilly said contract negotiations yield the opportunity for health insurance savings. He also pointed to enhancements to the town's special education program that may result in some outplaced students coming back to the district, where they would be served at less expense to the town.

The hiring process is another area through which the district can achieve savings.

"We budgeted \$57,000 per teacher [but] probably not all new teachers are going to be hired at \$57,000," O'Reilly said.

He told school board members more solid figures should be available by mid-June.

Rode reinforced to board members that she and O'Reilly are doing their best to come up with \$100,000 in savings without compromising positions, programs or initiatives.

"I think that we have heard the cry of poverty from the state, from the town, and we are working diligently to see where we can get creative without compromising the educational opportunities we are providing," Rode said.

Bransfield said Wednesday the budget proposal represents a prudent approach bolstered by effective collaboration between the selectmen and the school board.

"I think we're doing a fabulous job in our schools and a fabulous job in our town, and we try very hard to make sure we're very careful with how much we ask people to pay," she said.

The budget referendum will be held Monday from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Waverly Center (formerly the senior center) on 7 Waverly Ave.

# RHAM Board Approves Bid for Safety Nets

by Geeta S. Sandberg

The RHAM Board of Education last week voted to accept a bid for the installation of safety netting between the baseball and softball fields at the school – but there’s more kinks to work out before the project moves forward.

Safety concerns over the possibility of baseballs being hit into the tennis courts and striking players have been discussed for more than a year (those concerns proved valid when a member of the boys’ tennis team was struck by a home run hit by one of the baseball players hit a home run during batting practice March 31). In March of last year, the installation of 30-foot netting between the two fields was unanimously approved at a cost of \$45,000. However, the project didn’t move forward due to various concerns from board members including the placement of the poles for the netting and the impact it could have on the baseball field. And, following last week’s meeting, that concern remained.

During the meeting, Eric Roise from the design and engineering firm BSC Group reviewed the proposal for the netting system which was received by Eagle Fence and Guardrail.

According to the minutes from that meet-

ing, Roise explained the poles for the netting would be on the side of the baseball field, which reignited some of the board’s initial concerns over the placement of the posts.

Board of Education Chairman Danny Holtsclaw explained this week, “The posts to the netting were drawn in the plans to be in the baseball field and they present a safety concern.”

He added “the intent of the netting was to protect tennis players, and now the installation could cause a safety concern in the baseball field.”

As a result, he said, board members decided they needed additional specifications from the design firm as to what type of safety material they should put around the posts to ensure no baseball players would injure themselves.

“What came up in discussion was that [BSC Group] said, ‘You can just buy padding and put it around the post,’ and I think the concern of the board was that the design firm should be the person responsible for the design specifications in terms of what type of padding is sufficient,” Holtsclaw said.

He added that BSC and the school board’s

facilities subcommittee are “reviewing what those specifications are, because we don’t want anyone running across the field to catch a fly ball and running into a pole. We want to make sure it’s sufficient and we want the design professionals to say what’s adequate.”

The school board voted 6-2 (Dave Gostanian and Carole Shea opposed, while Holtsclaw abstained), to approve the safety netting contract with Eagle Fencing and Guardrail, with \$3,000 added to cover the cost of adding padding to the posts, and the understanding that Schools Superintendent of Schools Bob Siminski would get back to BSC Group and request project specifications for the padding.

Shea explained this week she had supported the project when it was voted on last spring, but since that time she’s taken issue with the design and the placement of the poles.

She said that when she saw the design Roise presented, “it was obvious the poles, which are quite large – over six inches in diameter – were on the baseball side of the field, so that didn’t really solve the problem that became an issue last summer; both coaches were against having the poles on their side, so it didn’t solve the

problem.”

Shea noted, however: “I’m not opposed to [the netting] from a safety standpoint.”

“I think the right design could be of value, but I do not feel that this particular design is going to be effective,” she said. “I’m afraid we’re trading one problem for another, because [Roise] said ‘Well, you can wrap the poles in padding,’ but that wasn’t even in the specification.”

“I thought the plans and specifications needed to be better,” Shea continued. “They needed to include the engineering fees and engineering stamp and they needed to include the specifications for the padding if that’s what he is proposing. I really feel that maybe there is a better solution too, than what is shown.”

Holtsclaw added this week while the installation was approved by the board, the project wouldn’t move forward until the safety concern over the posts was worked out. He said he expected there would be “at least a report” on the project by the facilities subcommittee at the next Board of Education meeting, scheduled for Monday, May 16.

# AHM Forum Focuses on Area Drug Use

by Geeta S. Sandberg

What do a state commissioner, a doctor, a police officer, an EMT, an insurance representative and an individual in long-term recovery have in common? No, this isn’t the start of some joke, but some of the expert panelists who met in the RHAM High School Auditorium last Thursday, April 28 to discuss a serious topic: prescription drug abuse and heroin use.

There weren’t many people in the audience for the community forum – but there should have been, because the information discussed is something that, as presenter Rebecca Allen said, “affects all of us.”

During the event, which was sponsored by AHM Youth and Family Services, the AHM Coalition for a Healthy Empowered Community, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the regional action council ERASE, the panelists shared a plethora of information from all different perspectives.

From a medical standpoint, Dr. Donald Timmerman from the Rushford center, a Hartford Healthcare partner that provides addiction and mental health services, spoke about the changes in medical practice that attributed to the rise in heroin use.

He explained until the latter part of the last century, there was mostly fear surrounding the use of opioid medications, “which were limited in type and number.” Doctors, he explained, rarely prescribed them. Then, in 1984 Vicodin came out, followed by Oxycodone a year later, and Percocet in 1999.

The arrival of these prescription pain medications was coupled with the release in 2000 of a pain scale – where patients indicated to their doctors how much pain they were in, on a scale of zero to 10 – and strong recommendations from a drug committee “on what needed to be done to stop unneeded pain.”

The basic premise of health care, Timmerman explained, has always been to reduce suffering, not necessarily eradicate it.

However, with the rise in the use of the pain scale, the purpose shifted toward achieving that “zero,” and, Timmerman stated, “there was a general public and professional interest in using these medications in an intensity of numbers that had never been seen before. Suddenly, pain was to be a zero score, which contradicts the basic medical meaning.”

So, he said, “there became an epidemic of overprescribing.”

And that overprescribing, and the availability of these medications in homes across the country, attributed to the rise in heroin use, as Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, explained.

“We see nationally that for many of the indi-

viduals addicted to heroin, it started with prescription pain medications,” she stated. “It started with an injury or something that started them on prescription pain meds and then they graduated to opiates.”

Nationally, Delphin-Rittmon said there’s been more than a 150 percent increase in heroin use, and the number of 18-25 year olds who are using has doubled since 2007.

“So we really are grappling with this crisis nationwide,” she said.

Delphin-Rittmon explained the DHMAS system of care is also seeing increases in terms of the number of people entering the system, “and that’s a good thing.”

Delphin-Rittmon went on to talk about some of the changes that are taking place at the state level to address the issue, as well as some of the services DHMAS provides.

She mentioned a law passed that increases the availability of Narcan, a medicine that can block the effects of opioids and reverse an overdose; and efforts to curb prescription drug laundering by requiring pharmacists to input prescriptions they give out into a database that physicians are also required to check.

DHMAS, she added, “Offers a range of services and supports for individuals grappling with mental health as well as addictions. There are detox services around the state, residential services, also a range of long-term recovery services and supports and we know that’s really important as well.”

Also available to help are local law enforcement.

Hebron Resident State Trooper Dan Greenwood shared at the forum, “We like to help prior to the problems but we don’t get a lot of people coming asking what we can do to help.”

Adding on to what Timmerman shared, Greenwood discussed the path that often leads to heroin use, sharing if any prescription medications that are opiate derivatives “are sitting in your cabinet and you’re not keeping an eye on them, it could ultimately lead to heroin or some sort of addiction” if a family member were to get into those prescriptions and start taking them.

In addition, he said, even those who the prescription was for run the possibility of becoming addicted and when the prescription runs out, that’s often what leads to heroin.

“Those prescriptions are expensive, so users turn to the street, and unless they have a job or other income, they’ll be running out of money quick; the standard 60 mg of Oxycodone costs \$60 on the street,” Greenwood said. “They’re not going to be able handle that financially for a long amount of time, so something has to replace that high.”

And heroin, he continued, “is very cheap.”



**Hebron Resident State Trooper Dan Greenwood shares some statistics regarding heroin use in the area at an April 18 community forum. The forum also featured presentations by several experts including, sitting from left, Rebecca Allen of the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery; paramedic Lt. Cody Porter; Dr. Donald Timmerman of the Rushford center for addiction and mental health services; Mary Painter of the Department of Children and Families; and Miriam Delphin-Rittman, commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.**

“It’s cheaper than marijuana right now,” he said, pointing out that, for that \$60 in Oxycodone on the street, people can get the same amount of heroin for roughly \$10.

“But the problem is, Oxy was at least coming from some sort of pharmacy company where there are standards,” Greenwood said. “There’s no standards for street-level narcotics, so whether it’s being made overseas and cut here or made here, they only care about profit; they’re not going to care about the user.”

Heroin use is everywhere, Greenwood continued, sharing some of the stats related to heroin in AHM communities from 2015. These were, in Andover: one overdose and one emergency committal; in Hebron: two overdoses, one untimely death, one DUI, one emergency committal, a warrant involving heroin, a larceny by a heroin user and one criminal investigation; and in Marlborough, one overdose, one emergency committal, three untimely deaths, three larcenies, one motor vehicle accident, and four traffic stops.

“That’s from just a little over a year, and just searching [in a computer database] for the word ‘heroin,’” Greenwood said, adding, “It’s out there. It’s not just on the news it’s not just in New London, Hartford or New Britain – it’s right here in our backyard.”

Also sharing information at the forum was

Allen, who works with the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery and is in long-term recovery herself.

Allen shared she was the typical girl next door growing up in Columbia, but she found herself addicted to heroin at 22. Now drug-free for 18 years, Allen said her purpose “is to share some of my story as a former heroin user but also to let someone who might know someone with addiction – a friend or family member – know that recovery is possible.”

She added, “An estimated 23 million people in the United States are living in long-term recovery right now and you wouldn’t know that because it’s kept quiet. ... There’s a lot of stigma attached to it so I try to use myself as an example, and my story to let people know that people can recover.”

Allen stated, “I just want people to know that there is help out there. The window of opportunity to help someone is very small. So to be there for somebody, to be a support, is important.”

And breaking the stigma surrounding heroin use and recovery, and hosting discussions like last week’s forum is vital, because, as Allen furthered, “This affects all of us. It’s everywhere. It’s no longer an inner-city problem – it’s really reaching everybody.”

# Mitchell Named Director of Chatham Health

by Elizabeth Regan

Don Mitchell has been named director of health for the Chatham Health District, as the district works to regain its footing following a series of missteps under previous leadership.

Mitchell had served as the interim director since embattled former director Thad King stepped down in December. A settlement agreement between King and the state Department of Public Health forced the resignation.

King had been the director of the regionalized public health organization since it was created in 2002. The district serves the *Rivereast* towns of Colchester, East Hampton, Hebron, Marlborough and Portland.

Prior to King's departure, Mitchell served as the district's deputy director.

Hebron Town Manager Andrew Tierney, chairman of the nine-member Chatham Health District Board of Health, called Mitchell a "calming influence" who is respected by employees and board members.

The health board offered him a one-year contract, according to Tierney. Board members and Mitchell will create a list of goals against which to measure his performance when the contract expires.

"We're working to improve our image," Tierney said.

The district had been plagued by customer service concerns, which led the town of Haddam to decide late last year to withdraw from the district once its contract expires at the end of June. Residents complained of delayed inspections, lack of callbacks and rude em-

ployees.

Mitchell cited openness and responsiveness as the keys to the district's vitality going forward.

"The Board of Health will establish goals for me as director, but I have goals for myself already," he said in an email. "I want to improve the image of the Chatham Health District and be more a part of the fabric of the community. I also hope to build a stronger health department that can better respond to the needs of the community."

He said his commitment to better serving customers of the health district has been conveyed to staff members.

"I believe this has been embraced but if that is not perceived to be the case, I want to hear directly from the public to find out why," he said.

Mitchell has also been visiting town officials and governing boards since he stepped up as interim director from his former role as assistant director. He plans to schedule more of those visits while adding local economic development commissions to his list of stops so he can hear their concerns and share information about the district's role in the community.

The district's problems were exacerbated by transparency concerns in the aftermath of a conflict of interest investigation by the state stemming from King's work as a private certified water operator at the same time he was serving as director of the Chatham Health District.

The investigation resulted in the settlement agreement that resulted in King's resignation. The agreement required King to pay \$100,380 in restitution for what the state has called "the improper and/or fraudulent" use of its laboratory for private business purposes. He is also barred from working as a health director anywhere in Connecticut or from working in any capacity in a health jurisdiction funded by the state public health department.

King has since said the restitution amount is inflated and inaccurate. The state public health department declined comment based on ongoing settlement negotiations.

Mitchell said the district has been cooperative with state agencies and he has no reason to believe there will be adversarial relations going forward.

According to Tierney, the board would like to meet with representatives of the state public health department on a quarterly basis, if possible, "to make sure we're doing exactly what is required by them."

Mitchell cited food service inspections as another area of focus for the district. Last September, the state released a report stating the district fell short of the number of inspections that should be conducted and that re-inspections were not being conducted as required.

"We will soon (within a month) launch our Food Advisory Committee with the food service industry to better understand the concerns of industry and help us both to keep eating out

as a safe and pleasant pastime," Mitchell said.

Susan Bransfield, Portland First Selectwoman and a member of the Board of Health, called Mitchell a gentleman with extensive experience and education in public health.

"He's certainly a very skilled technician when it comes to the ability to understand water systems, septic systems, the general improvement of health of our community and he has a good understanding of the towns in our district," Bransfield said.

Mitchell served as the Portland sanitarian from 1989 until the town joined the Chatham Health Department in 2004. He received his master's degree in public health from Southern Connecticut State University.

He also served as an adjunct public health professor at Goodwin College in East Hartford, but has given up the position in accordance with his contract as director of the Chatham Health District.

King's departure left the state public health department vigorously enforcing a provision in state law requiring health district directors to devote their "entire time" to the position. The state public health department has interpreted the statute to mean a health district director may not "engage in any other employment or work."

The district Board of Health revised its employment contract for the position of director to explicitly reinforce the prohibition on outside work. The update is a condition of any future funding from the state.

# Marlborough Officials Concerned About Private Meetings

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

At Tuesday's Board of Selectmen meeting, town officials criticized First Selectwoman Amy Traversa for participating in informal, private meetings with Hebron and Andover officials.

The criticism was sparked by a letter to the editor in last week's *Rivereast*, which criticized the RHAM schools budget. The letter was signed by Traversa, Marlborough finance board chair Doug Knowlton, Hebron Board of Selectmen chair Dan Larson, Hebron finance board chair Mal Leichter, Andover First Selectman Bob Burbank and Andover finance board chair Daniel Warren.

While the letter identified the signers' positions in their towns, it did not state that they were speaking as individuals.

Marlborough Board of Finance member Ken Hjulstrom told the selectmen Tuesday the letter "implied" that the group was speaking for their respective boards; however no board approved the letter by a vote in a meeting.

"My understanding is a board member is a board member at the table," Hjulstrom said. "To write a letter and identify as a board member is inappropriate."

Other town officials were also upset by the letter.

"There was no meeting to discuss it and no mention of an open letter," Louise Concodello, a Marlborough school board member, said Tuesday. "Was it necessary?"

Sue Rapelye, also a member of the local school board and a member of the RHAM

school board, said she previously was encouraged by the Marlborough boards of selectmen and finance working together. The letter published last week, however, "couldn't be further from working together."

Midge Denno, a finance board member, said she wished there had been more time for a rebuttal. (The letter published just days before this week's referendum on the RHAM budget.)

After the letter was published, town officials said they learned the group of six, along with Hebron Town Manager Andy Tierney, had been meeting to discuss different issues in the towns.

Selectman Dick Shea added a discussion on what he called the "task force" to the selectmen meeting agenda Tuesday, and Traversa began by explaining her side of what was going on.

"We have been meeting four to five times now," Traversa said. "The reason we started meeting was with the [animal control officer] situation. We had to make a decision quickly."

In February, Marlborough's selectmen voted not to renew the contract of the town's then-animal control officer, Bill Paul. After the vote, the board went forward and signed a 60-day renewable contract with Hebron to share its animal control officer.

Traversa said the meetings started as only the three towns with their finance chairs and either first selectmen or Board of Selectmen chairs. However, Colchester First Selectman Art Shilosky has asked to be part of the discussions as well, she said.

The meetings are not open to the public, and there are no minutes taken – and, Traversa said, no action taken either.

"We talk about dog catchers to public works and the schools," Traversa said. "There is nothing binding and nothing illegal. We are learning from each other."

She also suggested she enjoys being able to meet with other officials outside of a public meeting.

She said it has been "nice to have people to bounce things off of without it being printed in the paper," and that the group discusses mostly "day-to-day operations stuff" and chances to regionalize to save money.

Marlborough selectwoman Evelyn Godbout said Tuesday that while she thinks it is great to have those discussions, "I don't get the benefit of what's discussed."

"It's good to build a relationship, but we are completely left out," Godbout said of her and Shea.

"When a group of public officials is meeting privately, there is always a concern for the public and for public trust," Shea said.

When asked by the *Rivereast* Wednesday if they were aware of the meetings, both Andover selectman Jeff Maguire and Hebron selectman Brian O'Connell said they were not.

"It would be nice if we were informed," Maguire said.

Traversa pointed out to the Marlborough selectmen that they do not know every conversation that occurs in her office – and said that if

the meetings between the three towns were public, it could become an "unwieldy-sized group."

"As things come up to implement, I have every intention to tell you," she told Godbout and Shea.

Larson, who participates in the private discussions, said the meetings have been the town leaders "sharing some thoughts and concerns."

He added there is "no one trying to do anything behind closed doors" and that there are "no deep, dark secrets being exposed."

Larson said he is in favor of the discussions taking place so the towns can better prepare for tough economic times.

"We as a community really need to work and pull together to come up with some solutions or at least have some game plans on how to deal with some of the things coming down the pike," Larson said. "If these informal meetings are a way to get some discussions going and possibly some items that we can raise as discussion points [with] our boards and commissions, I think it's a great thing."

Tom Hennick, public education officer with the state Freedom of Information Commission, said the meetings were a "gray area" as to if the meetings have to be public and that state attorneys said there is "not a concrete answer."

Hennick said since the group of town officials did not formally establish a committee, it is "harder to pin down as a public agency" – meaning the meetings would not need to be public.

# Marlborough Voters to Decide on \$23.74 Million Budget

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

Taxpayers will vote on a \$23.74 million spending plan Monday night at the annual town meeting including \$862,326 in capital expenditures.

A 2.93 percent increase – or \$675,082 – over 2015-16 spending, the proposed budget features \$8.55 million in Marlborough’s portion of the RHAM budget; \$7.22 million for the local school board; \$4.76 million for town operations; \$100,000 for contingency; \$862,326 for capital; and \$2.24 million for debt service.

The spending package would bring the mill rate to 34.15, an increase of 1.26 mills over the current rate. This would translate to a 3.84 percent tax increase.

The mill rate is used to determine a resident’s real estate and personal property taxes (the state recently passed Public Act 15-244, which prohibits municipalities from using a mill rate greater than 32 mills to tax motor vehicles) and, under the proposed mill rate, a resident with a home assessed at \$250,000 would pay \$8,537 in taxes on it.

The proposed town operations budget totals \$4,764,125 – a 1.73 percent increase over 2015-16 spending.

Highlights of the proposed town operations budget include: \$8,000 for an office clerk floater in Town Hall; \$9,900 for weed control on the lake; and a \$4,700 contribution to make the Parks and Recreation director full-time. (The remaining money needed to make the currently part-time position a full-time one would come from the Parks and Recreation program fund.)

But one of the biggest changes in the town operations budget is the proposed reduction of one of the town’s two resident state troopers, and adding either a full-time constable, or two part-time constables, instead. The move would result in a savings of \$82,000 – and was made after the Board of Finance cut the initial town operations proposal by \$90,000. (The other \$8,000 came from \$5,000 in legal fees and \$3,000 in snow supplies.)

Marlborough’s portion of the RHAM budget is \$8,550,175 – an increase of 3.84 percent from 2015-16. The RHAM budget was passed by all three towns Tuesday, with Marlborough passing it by a 226-175 tally. Of a total of 4,133 registered voters in town, 10.3 percent voted in the referendum.

The local school board’s proposed budget totals \$7,222,854 – a decrease of 2.34 percent from current year spending.

After a \$200,000 reduction from the finance board, the school board made adjustments to its proposed budget. Those changes include reducing by one full-time teacher, decreasing hours for a preschool teacher, reducing by one bus, reducing facilities contingency funds, and cutting one office professional while reducing the hours of an administrative assistant in the superintendent’s office.

The \$862,326 set aside for capital includes a number of projects such as \$195,000 for the Jones Hollow Road Bridge planning, design, and engineering; \$186,926 for road and culvert improvements; \$150,000 for phase II of the

water system; \$144,500 for the Finley Hill Culvert of Flat Brook; and \$82,000 for the South Main Street to South Road paving and rehabilitation.

That amount also includes \$53,400 for future capital reserves; \$13,000 for energy improvements at Town Hall; \$12,500 for security upgrades; \$10,000 for revaluation; \$10,000 for the Plan of Development update; and \$5,000 for the UTV fire department equipment.

The increased contingency of \$100,000 over the usual \$20,000 is because of uncertainty in state revenue. On April 7, the finance board voted to add \$80,000 to make up for some expected loss of revenue from the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) and the Municipal Revenue Sharing Account (MRSA). (ECS revenues are state dollars provided to towns to help offset some of the costs of education while MRSA is a share of the sales tax revenues to help towns not rely solely on property taxes along with making up for the motor vehicle mill rate cap.)

When the town put together the budget earlier this year, the proposed budget included \$188,000 in MRSA along with \$3.22 million in ECS.

However April 12, Gov. Dannel Malloy released his proposed budget which included reductions in MRSA and ECS money. With those reductions, Marlborough would be set to lose \$157,000 in MRSA money and \$133,000 in ECS money.

On Wednesday, Democratic lawmakers and Malloy struck a deal on a new state budget pro-

posal that would restore most of the education cost sharing funding and some of the municipal revenue sharing funds.

While the legislature has not voted on the budget, the document was released Wednesday. Under the new proposal, Marlborough would lose just \$29,000 in ECS funding and \$57,000 in MRSA money, according to the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities.

The news outlet CT News Junkie reported Wednesday that House Majority Leader Joe Aresimowicz, D-Berlin, said the legislature will reconvene for a special session to vote on the budget, possibly as early as next week.

Marlborough finance board chair Doug Knowlton said Tuesday he’s waiting to hear what the legislature will do before trying to predict how the budget vote will go.

“We may need to consider a combination of further cuts, use of contingency and a tax increase to create a balanced budget,” he said, stressing that nothing is certain until the state passes its budget.

“The boards of selectmen and finance have worked together to craft a budget that meets the needs of Marlborough’s citizens while increasing taxes as little as possible, and we will work together to resolve any issues which might arise when a final state budget is announced,” First Selectwoman Amy Traversa said Tuesday.

The town meeting vote will be Monday, May 9 at 7 p.m. at the Marlborough Elementary School at 25 School Dr., in the cafeteria.

## Man Allegedly Peeked at Woman in Colchester McDonald’s Bathroom

by Kaitlyn Schroyer

A registered sex offender was arrested and charged with criminal trespass after allegedly trying to peek at a woman under a bathroom stall at McDonald’s in December.

Colchester police said Thomas Walden, 67, of 145 Boston Post Rd., Waterford, was arrested April 29 and charged with second-degree criminal trespass.

According to an arrest warrant affidavit, the woman told police she stopped at the McDonald’s at 375 South Main St. at around 4:20 p.m. Dec. 10. She said she noticed what she felt was a suspicious-looking dark truck in the parking lot. When she began walking toward the building, a man jumped out of the truck and began following her, the affidavit said.

After entering the McDonald’s, the woman went to the ladies’ restroom. She told police she was seated in a stall when she heard the door open. The woman looked under the stall walls and saw men’s jeans and men’s hiking boots and upon closer look, she realized it was a man. The affidavit said she told police when she looked under the stall wall, the man was right next to the stall, trying to peek at her. According to the affidavit, she banged on the stall wall and shouted “Hey!” because, she told police, she was afraid something further was going to happen.

At this, the man ran out of the bathroom, the woman told police. She said she reported the incident to the store manager, and that as she was doing so, two patrons told her they saw the man come out of the bathroom, get in the dark truck, and drive away.

The woman told police the manager looked

for the truck, and spotted it in the parking lot of the Wendy’s across the street. The woman then got into her car and left McDonald’s – but, she told police, she saw the exact same truck pass her, driving in the opposite direction. She identified the driver as the same man who had been in the parking lot and followed her.

The woman told police she was able to turn around and catch up with it, close enough to read its license plate number. She continued to follow him for a bit, until he got onto Route 11. She then turned around and went home, the affidavit said.

The woman reported she was able to get the license plate and police traced it to Walden. Walden is a registered sex offender, convicted in April 2005 in South Carolina.

Police reported they tried to contact Walden and he said he was in Los Angeles. Shortly thereafter, the police received a call from an attorney claiming to represent Walden. Police said they could not reach the attorney again and on Feb. 1, spoke to Walden on the phone.

According to the affidavit, Walden told police he didn’t know why they would be calling, and stated he does not lend out his truck. After police asked Walden to come in and speak with them, he told them he’d need to speak with his attorney first. The attorney called police the next day, the affidavit said. He told police that he advised his client not to speak with them – but also asked that, when police charge Walden, they contact the attorney first, to arrange for Walden to turn himself in.

Walden is scheduled to appear at Norwich Superior Court May 10.

## East Hampton Police News

4/18: Mohamed Elkalawy, 28, of 90 Hope St., Willimantic was issued a summons for speeding, East Hampton Police said.

4/19: Jeffrey Allan Wright, 47, of 100 Edgewater Circle, Unit C, was arrested and charged with third-degree criminal mischief, police said.

4/27: Brennon Gibbons, 23, of 83 North Main St., was charged with four separate counts of second-degree failure to appear, p

## Portland Police News

4/16: Matthew McKinney, 21, of 44 Crestwood Dr., East Hampton, was charged with simple trespass, Portland Police said.

4/16: Daniel Wall, 21, of 4 Markham Rd., East Hampton, was charged with simple trespass, police said.

4/17: Todd Siwik, 22, of 25 Ralph Rd., Manchester, was charged with driving under the influence and failure to drive right, police said.

5/1: William Anderson, of 65 Church St., Middletown, was charged with three counts of second-degree failure to appear, police said.

# Obituaries

## Colchester

### Wayne Potvin

Wayne Potvin, 60, of Colchester, formerly of Rocky Hill, passed away Thursday evening, April 28, at Yale New Haven Hospital, after a sudden illness. Born in New Britain, he was a son of the late Lionel and Stella (Smoluk) Potvin. He married his beloved wife, Holly Norris, in 1984.



Wayne retired in 2011 after a distinguished career as an officer with the West Hartford Police. Wayne was an avid outdoorsman and conservationist who enjoyed working on his property with his dogs, Pete and Lady, by his side. He was active in his community, most notably supporting the Colchester Rotary Club.

Wayne was many things to many people, but most importantly, he will be remembered by his family as a devoted and loving husband and father and an adoring grandfather.

In addition to his wife Holly of 32 years, survivors include his son and daughter-in-law, Kenneth and Michele Roe of Wallingford; his precious grandchildren, Lucas and Ella Roe; a brother, Jeffrey Potvin of Arkansas; two sisters, Debra Potvin Repscher of Middletown, Tammy Potvin of Southington; a niece, Dawn Parris of Middletown; and numerous extended family and friends.

Memorial calling hours were held Monday, May 2, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. All other services will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to the Colchester Land Trust, PO Box 93, Colchester, CT 06415.

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

## Colchester

### Audrey Peterson

Audrey Peterson, 90, of Colchester, formerly of Willimantic, passed away early Friday morning, April 29, at Apple Rehab in Colchester. Born Dec. 27, 1925, in Newport, N.H., she was a daughter of the late George B. and Gladys G. (Clark) Farley.



She married her beloved Karl Edwin Peterson Jr. in 1956.

Soon after, the couple moved to Willimantic where they made their home and raised their family. They shared 49 years of marriage before he predeceased her on March 5, 2005.

When her children were young, Audrey volunteered assisting the youth baseball league as secretary and also with attending the concession stand during games. She was an avid sports fan, rooting for the Yankees baseball team, UConn basketball teams and Cowboys football team. Audrey enjoyed gardening, also loved to gather around her swimming pool with her family and she loved to bake, especially desserts, which her family enjoyed tremendously. She was a devoted wife and mother who took great pride in her home and family.

She will be sadly missed but always remembered by her children, Karl and wife Christine Peterson of Coventry, Kathy and husband Thomas Durante of Colchester, with whom she made her home after her husband's passing; a sister, Sandra and husband Alan Rannisto of Newbury, N.H.; Barbara Partlow of Newport, N.H.; four grandchildren, Thomas Jr. and Chelsea Durante, Kaleen and Karl Peterson IV; and numerous extended family and friends.

In addition to her husband, she was predeceased by a son, Roger Peterson, and two siblings, George B. Farley Jr. and June Carron.

Calling hours were held Tuesday, May 3, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral service was held that evening at the funeral home. Burial was in the Pine Grove Cemetery in Newport, N.H., Wednesday, May 4.

Donations in her memory may be made to the Apple Rehab Recreation Department, 36 Broadway, Colchester, CT 06415 or the Colchester Hayward Volunteer Fire Department, 52 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, CT 06415.

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

## Marlborough

### Alexander Cragnotti

Alexander George Cragnotti, 89, of Montauk, N.Y., Marlborough and Glastonbury, beloved husband of Doris (Wegener) Cragnotti, departed this life Monday, May 2, at Glastonbury Health Care Center.

He was born in the Bronx, N.Y., son of the late George and Josephine Cragnotti, and resided in Connecticut for the past year, having formerly lived in Massapequa and Montauk, N.Y.

Alexander served in World War II as a Seaman First Class aboard the USS Dayton and was stationed in the Pacific. During his lifetime, Al belonged to a number of service organizations, beginning with the Bluejackets Corps of Naval Cadets, which he joined as a youth and later served in as a leader. He was a member of the St. George society and the U.S. Navy Light Cruisers Association. Al was a member of St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Farmingdale, N.Y. He also attended Montauk Community Church and the Congregational Church of Marlborough.

Over the course of his lifetime, Al held numerous jobs; he sold Fuller Brush and Prudential life insurance, owned a gas station, repaired boat engines, and worked for the United States Postal Service. These were followed by a long career working with the Nassau County Police Department's fleet service as an automotive mechanic and shop supervisor. After retiring he continued to work as an apartment superintendent, a church sexton and a handyman.

Al was an energetic, hard-working man who was never happy sitting still. He built china cabinets and bookcases. He replaced roofs, laid ceramic tile and carpets, installed plumbing fixtures, and repaired anything broken – appliances both large and small.

Al was devoted to his wife of 65 years, whom he met at a USO dance after the war. Together, he and Doris created a loving home and enjoyed camping and numerous trips across the United States with their daughters, and later their grandsons. After retirement, he and Doris visited Italy and Germany to see their parents' native countries.

Alexander moved fast, spoke his mind, and was always ready to help someone in need. He taught his family the value of hard work, doing your best and caring for others. He was the ultimate host: always welcoming someone into his home and giving them the best. He will be remembered for his vitality, his outgoing, engaging personality, and his wonderful sense of humor. He will be greatly missed.

Al is survived by his daughters and sons-in-law, Katherine Cragnotti and Warren Thime, Doreen Cragnotti and Greg Severance; five grandchildren, Jason and Adam Thime, Korrina, Morgana, and Chanda Cragnotti; and several nieces and nephews.

He was predeceased by his sisters, Mary Walsh, Lily Herrick and Gloria Pilger.

A memorial service will be held today, May 6, at 2 p.m., at the Congregational Church of Marlborough, 35 South Main St., Marlborough. Burial will be in Montauk, N.Y., at the Fort Hill Cemetery Sunday, May 8, at 2 p.m.

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

## Portland

### Charles E. McNiff

Charles E. McNiff, 69, of Portland, passed away Saturday, April 30, at home. He was the son of Phyllis (Galvin) McNiff of South Carolina and the late Charles E. McNiff and Donald Hanson.

Born Oct. 12, 1946, in Boston, Mass., he grew up in Durham and lived in Middletown and most recently Portland. He was a U.S. Army veteran and loved fishing, hunting, and canoeing with his brother.

Besides his mother, he leaves the love of his life for 35 years, Gail Waters of Portland; brothers, Robert McNiff of Panama, Don W. Hanson of Maine and Drew Hanson of Texas; and several nieces and nephews and his best feline friend, Scooter.

He was predeceased by his sister, Donna Nielsen.

Graveside services will be held Saturday, May 7, at 11 a.m., at the State Veterans Cemetery, Bow Lane, Middletown.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Connecticut Humane Society, 701 Russell Rd., Newington, CT 06111.

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

## Portland

### Herbert Lawrence Keech

Herbert Lawrence Keech, 85, formerly of Portland, died peacefully Monday, April 25, at Hartford Hospital in Hartford.

Born and raised in Newark, N.J., Herb left school at age 16 to support his mother, sister and brother. In 1951, he served in the Army during the Korean War and was stationed in Germany. Herb worked in the auto industry for over 50 years, starting as a parts boy in the 40s and retiring as president of Queen City Pontiac-GMC Truck, Inc. in Green Brook, N.J.

In 1962, he married Norma Jordan Keech, and they made their home in Watchung, N.J. Norma died in 2005. In 2008, he married Jackie LaBella, and they made their homes in Clearwater, Fla., and Portland.

Since 1956, Herb was a Giants football season ticket holder, seldom missing a home game and being privileged to have attended 14 Super Bowls. He also loved to walk, and until the last few years, walked five miles daily in his Clearwater neighborhood. When this became difficult, he walked in the parking garage of his condominium in Florida. Travel was a big part of his life, taking him to many places in this country, Europe and the Caribbean. After his marriage to Jackie, travel adventures continued, including trips with the Giants Road Crew for the away games.

Herb valued loyalty and ethics above all, and it was said that if he were to become your friend, he would be a friend for life.

He will be greatly missed by his wife, Jackie Keech of Clearwater, Fla., and Portland; his sister, Loretta Kedzierski and her fiancé Lou Moretti of Clearwater, Fla.; his brother, Fred Keech and his wife Linda of Waretown, N.J.; nieces and nephews Virginia and David Muscarella of Toms River, N.J.; Mary Jane and Patrick Rush of Cocoa, Fla.; Holly and Stan Gola of Jackson, N.J.; Kelly and Albert Litte of Parlow, Va.; Douglas Keech of Bellbrook, Ohio; Jackie's children, Peter LaBella and his wife Marcy of Durham, Michael LaBella and his wife Cathy LaBella of Cobalt, David LaBella and his wife Ginger of Higganum; grandchildren Hannah and Coby LaBella of Cobalt; plus many grandnieces and nephews and many very grand friends.

Calling hours were held at Higgins Funeral Home, 752 Mountain Blvd., Watchung, N.J., Sunday, May 1. Funeral services began Monday, May 2, at the funeral home, followed by a funeral service that morning at Calvary Episcopal Church in Summit, N.J. Interment was at Hollywood Memorial Park in Union, N.J.

To send condolences, go to [higginsfuneralhome.com](http://higginsfuneralhome.com).

## Colchester

### Alice B. Moran

Alice B. Moran, 99, of Waterford, passed away Saturday, April 30, at Lawrence + Memorial Hospital in New London, following a brief illness.

She was born in Colchester July 7, 1916, the daughter of Allen H. and Gertrude M. Brown. After graduating high school, she moved to New London where she attended and graduated from the nursing school at Lawrence + Memorial Hospital. Following graduation, Alice worked as a nurse at Lawrence + Memorial, Kimball Hall Nursing Home and New London Convalescent Home.

On July 28, 1939, Alice married her husband of 64 years, Herbert F. Moran. Herbert passed away on Nov. 10, 2003.

Alice is survived by a son, Allen T. Moran of Salem, and a sister, Ida Brown of Colchester. She was a beloved grandmother of five grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

Besides her husband, she was predeceased by a son, Herbert A. Moran; a daughter, Vianne L. Moran; her brothers, Lawrence, Arthur, Gilbert and Allen Brown; and sister, Winifred Von Roemer.

A graveside service was held Tuesday, May 3, at Cedar Grove Cemetery, Broad Street, New London. There were no visiting hours.

Donations in her memory may be directed to a charity of the donor's choice.

Visit [byles.com](http://byles.com) to sign the guestbook or share a memory.

## Hebron

### Bernice B. Romak

Bernice B. (Suskie) Romak, 90, of Hebron, peacefully passed away Saturday, April 30, with the support and in the presence of her loving family.

Bernice was the beloved wife of the late Leo Romak. She resided in East Hartford for 60 years. For the past 10 years, she lived with her daughter and family in Hebron.

She was born July 19, 1925 in Shenandoah, Pa., a daughter of the late Enoch J. and Nellie (Besparis) Suskie. She was a graduate of the Pottsville Hospital School of Nursing in Pottsville, Pa., and worked as a registered nurse at Hartford Hospital for 17 years. She devoted her life to caring for others to include her mother, husband and sister. She was an avid reader and great story teller often amusing family and friends with her many Grandma-isms. Bernice was a parishioner of St. Rose Church.

Bernice will be dearly missed by her family: daughter Ellen L. McGuire and her husband Dennis of Hebron, son Joseph L. Romak and his wife Marion (Penny) of Newtown; grandchildren Timothy D. McGuire, Daniel R. McGuire, Jennifer R. Siegel and her husband Michael, Jonathan J. Romak and his wife Lindsay; great-grandchildren Maren and Frances Siegel, Elle Romak and Kayla McGuire; brother-in-law, Mihran Hagopian; nephew Edward Gacek and his wife Margie; nieces Janet Deits and her husband Stewart and Kathy Bednarski.

Visitation was Thursday, May 5, at the Benjamin J. Callahan Funeral Home, 318 Burnside Ave., East Hartford, CT 06108. Funeral services will begin today, May 6, at 9:30 a.m., at the funeral home, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial at 10:30 a.m. in St. Rose Church, 33 Church St., East Hartford, with burial to conclude services in St. James Cemetery, Manchester.

To leave an online condolence, visit [callahanfuneral.com](http://callahanfuneral.com).

## Portland

### Louise Catherine Pitruzzello

Louise Catherine (Augeri) Pitruzzello, 98, loving wife of the late Emanuel J. Pitruzzello Sr. of Middletown, passed away peacefully Tuesday, April 19, at Middlesex Hospital. She was born Aug. 24, 1917, in Portland, daughter of the late Angelo and Catherine (Murphy) Augeri.

Louise was a devoted Catholic and a member of St. Sebastian's Church, the Sacred Heart Society, Saint Theresa Guild, and Anita Garibaldi Society of Middletown. She attended local schools and had been employed by the Auburn Manufacturing Company.

Louise enjoyed knitting, crocheting, and gardening and was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother to her family. She was a loving and nurturing woman who always cared about others.

Louise is deeply missed and loved by her family, three sons and daughters-in-law, Emanuel and Ann of Higganum, Thomas and Marilyn of Cromwell, Michael and Monica of Old Saybrook; six grandchildren and their spouses, Joseph and Lowrey Pitruzzello, Michele and Dario Lombardo, Michael and Amy Pitruzzello, Stephen and Erin Pitruzzello, Helen and Shaun Sullivan and Patrick and Karla Quinn; 10 great-grandchildren, Tiffany, Gillian, Lorenzo, Ava, Maya, Emily, Andrew, Owen, Maureen and Meaghan; two great-great-grandchildren, Max and Allison.

She is predeceased by her brother, Michael Augeri; her daughter, Anita Louise Pitruzzello; and grandson, Anthony Louis Pitruzzello.

The family would like to extend a heartfelt appreciation to the kind and caring people of Wadsworth Glen, her roommate Ann Ross, and the hospice team at Middlesex Hospital for their compassionate care and kindness shown to their mother.

Family and friends called at the D'Angelo Funeral Home, 22 South Main St. in Middletown, Monday, May 2, with a Mass of Christian Burial at St. Sebastian Church. Burial was held in the family plot in Calvary Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to the charity of the donor's choice.

## Obituaries continued

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### Portland

#### Eugene P. Kowalski Sr.

Eugene P. Kowalski Sr., 85, formerly of Portland, husband of the late Virginia (Durinick) Kowalski and Jennie (Zajatz) Kowalski, died Tuesday, May 3, at Chestelm Health Care in Moodus. He was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., son of Edward and Eva (Wawrzynski) Kowalski. Prior to his retirement, Eugene worked for Lewis Boyle and later for Stop and Shop.

Eugene is survived by his daughters, Linda Pandolfo and her husband Sebastian of East Haddam, and Laura Clayson of Palm Coast, Fla.; son, Robert Durinick and his wife Lucy of Amarillo, Texas; daughter-in-law, Belinda Durinick of East Falmouth, Mass.; as well as 10 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.

He was predeceased by his sons, Eugene P. Kowalski Jr. and George Durinick. The funeral liturgy will be held Saturday, May 7, at 11:15 a.m., at St. Bridget of Kildare Church, Moodus-Leesville Road, Moodus. Burial will be held at St. Mary Cemetery, Portland. Friends may call prior to the service on Saturday from 9:30-10:30 a.m. at Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown.

In lieu of flowers, those who wish may send memorial contributions to Alzheimer's Association, PO Box 96011, Washington, DC 20090-6011.

To share memories or express condolences online, visit [biegafuneralhome.com](http://biegafuneralhome.com).

### Portland

#### John Murray

John (Jack) Murray, 81, of Middletown, went to meet his beloved wife Anne in Heaven Friday, April 29. He was born in Middletown, son of James and Mary Murray. He lived most of his life in Middletown and Portland, where he served on many boards and commissions including the Board of Selectmen.

Jack was an all-state athlete at Middletown High School, lettering in track and football all four years. He went on to play football for Boston University and semi-pro teams in Middletown. He also played football with the 7th Army in Germany. He was an inductee in the Middletown Sports Hall of Fame in 1997 and attended every awards dinner since. In his later years, he loved playing and watching golf. Jack was a member and past president of the Middletown chapter of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, receiving the honor of Irishman of the Year in 1982.

Jack worked at several jobs in his career, including helping his father as a stone mason, as a salesman for Roytype, Burroughs Corp. and Beres Industries, before he found his true calling as a judicial marshal in the Middletown courthouse.

Jack met the love of his life, Anne Glynn, in Hartford, and they were married in 1960. They loved traveling and dancing together, and are sure to be enjoying their final trip and turn around the dance floor.

Jack leaves his brothers and best friends, Jim, Richard and wife Maureen, and Denny and wife Mary Ellen, all of Middletown. He also leaves his sister Eileen and her husband Lyle Mark of Braintree, Mass. Jack leaves his children, Kathy and Dan D'Amelio of East Haddam, John and Mary Beth Murray of Meriden and Fiona and Mark Egan of Murphy Texas. He also was the loving "Poppy" to his grandsons, Cpt. Andrew D'Amelio, Pfc Alex Gondek and Colin D'Amelio, and two great-grandsons, Archer and Alden D'Amelio.

A funeral liturgy will be held Monday, May 9, at Saint John Church, Middletown, at 11 a.m. Burial with military honors will be held at the State Veterans Cemetery. Friends may call at Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown, Sunday, May 8, from 6-8 p.m.

Those who wish may make memorial contributions to St. John's Church Renovation Fund, 19 St John's Square, Middletown, CT 06457.

To share memories or express condolences online, visit [biegafuneralhome.com](http://biegafuneralhome.com).

### Portland

#### Catherine Bisson

Catherine (Warzecha) Bisson, 84, of East Berlin, formerly of Portland, wife of the late Roland Bisson, died Sunday, April 17. She was born in New Haven, daughter of the late John and Florence (Bozar) Warzecha.

Catherine was a veteran of the U.S. Army, attaining the rank of sergeant. During her Army career, she was a drill sergeant, recruiting sergeant, and had Special Intelligence clearance. She was the first woman inductee of the American Legion Post 105 in Cromwell. She has been a member of the American Legion for 49 years. She loved sports and played basketball for St. Mary's in Middletown. She assisted the Portland Ancient Fife and Drum Corps for many years when her children were members. She was an avid fan of the UConn women's and men's basketball teams.

Catherine is survived by her sons, John-Paul Bisson and his wife, Diana, of East Berlin, with whom she made her home, Bruce Roland Bisson, of Branford; daughters, Regina Cinque and her husband, John, of Branford, Suzanne Cramer and her boyfriend, Lee Smith, of Las Vegas, Nev.; sister, Helen Borriello, of Killingworth; four grandchildren, Kyle Bisson, Nicholas Cinque, John Cinque, and Kristen Cinque; and several nieces and nephews.

The family would like to thank the following people for their care of Catherine: The Veteran's Administration and the Home Base Primary Care Unit, The Hospital of Central Connecticut, Gaylord Hospital, and Ledgecrest.

Funeral services were held Saturday, April 23, from Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown, followed by a funeral liturgy at St. Paul Church, 485 Alling St., Kensington. Burial with military honors were held at West Cemetery in Cromwell.

Those who wish may send memorial contributions to Connecticut Breast Health Initiative, 185 Main St., New Britain, CT 06051.

To share memories or express condolences online, visit [biegafuneralhome.com](http://biegafuneralhome.com).