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Accentuate the Positive... Last Friday, staff members at Jack Jackter Intermediate School in Colchester gave students a special surprise after writing over 500 heartfelt messages on Post-It notes and hanging them on every student's locker as part of a "positivity movement." Fourth-grader Veronica Smith was all smiles when she found her note that reads "You are capable of AMAZING things!" See related story on page 10.

'Embarrassing' Conditions Frustrate Belltown Police

by Elizabeth Regan

Members of the East Hampton Police Department are fighting to keep their heads above water as they face a continuing barrage of natural and man-made setbacks.

One of the latest and most literal manifestations of the issues in the aging police station happened last month when a drain backed up, spewing brown water into the processing room and the offices of two sergeants.

The toilet in the department's sole bathroom began to bubble "like in *Poltergeist*," Police Chief Sean Cox said, "and then a brown, sewage-colored liquid began to pour out."

The clogged drain couldn't accommodate seven gallons-per-minute that cycled through as part of the station's water treatment system, according to Cox. The police station is housed in a lower level on the side of the East Hampton Town Hall.

He said the treatment system is required by the state Department of Health because the water in the town hall and police department isn't drinkable. Bi-weekly tests by the Chatham Health District continue to show the treatment system has not fixed the problem.

The resulting flood ruined newly-installed floors, carpeting and furniture while forcing the removal of an office wall. It also destroyed personal items belonging to officers like Sgt. Adam Brault.

"This stuff is bush league," Brault said Wednesday. "We want to be a professional department. We want to have the respect of the community. This is embarrassing. You look at

the brand new high school. You look at other towns' facilities. I've never been in another PD that looks remotely close to this. Ever. Go anywhere you want, you'll not find a facility that comes close to what we have here. These are not the right working conditions for a police department, especially in 2017."

The situation was compounded this week when rain from Monday's nor'easter came into the station through a hole in the roof, cascading into the building and flowing through the cell block, under a wall, into the garage and out the garage door.

But Brault appeared cautiously optimistic when he said he thinks the town may be "on the cusp of something really, actually happening." He arrived at that conclusion after five Town Council members on Monday enthusiastically supported a proposal to move the police station and town hall into the Edgewater Hill mixed-use development.

The developers have proposed donating the land to the town in exchange for a 4-percent project management fee. (A story detailing the proposal appears this week on page 24.)

Brault lamented, however, that there were two councilors Monday who opposed the plan.

"There are a few councilors that, because it's not their way or what they want, are not going to work together or bring the community together to finally get rid of a decades-old problem," he said. "This is a problem they've known about and has been repeatedly addressed and

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Book Inspires Chili Fundraiser for Fresh Water

by Geeta S. Sandberg

For RHAM High School freshman Sarah Cohen, figuring out a way to help combat the lack of clean water in South Sudan is something that's been percolating since sixth grade. It was then, she shared this week, that she read the book *A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park, which inspired her to take action.

The book, Sarah explained, follows the true story of a young man named Salva who journeys across the Sudanese desert to take refuge in Ethiopia. He spends a number of years in a refugee camp there, and is then able to come to the United States in 1996. Then, in 2005, he started an organization called Water for South Sudan – which is the organization Sarah's working to raise money for.

"The book follows him through being a refugee and then the epilogue talks about the organization," Sarah explained.

Salva is 11 in the book – the same age Sarah was when she read it – and she added, "the book is really powerful. I could never imagine going through something like that."

According to the website waterforsouthsudan.org, during the dry season most sources

of water in the area simply dry up.

"This forces millions of South Sudanese each year to leave their village homes in search for water. Some have to abandon their homes and move all together while others, usually women and children, are forced to trek miles every day to collect water from ponds, marshes, ditches, or hand-dug wells," the website explains. "This water is often contaminated with disease-causing parasites and bacteria. The results are pain, sickness, even death, especially among infants and children."

Since the organization was established, 282 wells have been drilled in South Sudan, and these wells lead to healthier children who are able to attend school, and women who don't spend their days trekking long distances for water, but can instead spend their time growing food, making more nutritious meals for their families, and participating in the small businesses that pop up at markets.

The website asserts, "Where safe water flows, life can blossom."

Sarah added, "Ever since I read the book I've just been thinking about [the water issue in

South Sudan] and I couldn't not do anything."

And that desire to make a difference for the people of South Sudan led to the decision to organize a chili cook-off fundraiser next month, to kick off a multi-year effort to raise enough money to drill a well.

"I started coming up with ideas for fundraisers and stuff at the end of seventh grade but I just couldn't get myself to take the first step and reserve the church [for the cook-off]," Sarah explained. "And then I figured the beginning of high school is like the start of something new – so I decided to add that to my to-do list."

She added of the fundraiser, "I'm doing this for multiple years so I'll probably do the chili cook-off again next year. The proceeds will go to the organization and then once I hit the goal of \$15,000 that I set for myself – they'll be able to drill a well."

Sarah's hoping she'll be able to reach that goal by the time she graduates high school, but said she's prepared to work at it even afterwards, if necessary.

Her mother Karen said she was proud of her

daughter's initiative, and added this week, "It's pretty amazing to realize the power that we all have to make a difference. It doesn't matter how old you are or what your experience is if you're willing to step out; I think Sarah has proven that people will rally around you and help you. She's gotten so much support from her church and from the community."

"It's amazed me," Sarah added.

"It seems to be a theme lately," Karen furthered, "that all of us have power – it's just a matter of taking that step."

Also proud of Sarah for her efforts was her sixth-grade teacher, Shelley Yerke.

"Sarah is one of those students that just leaves a lasting impression – she's a teacher's Christmas Bonus!" Yerke said this week. "As a sixth-grader, she greeted each day with an enthusiastic and positive outlook and an inherent sense of purpose."

"Sarah feels deeply and she was moved by the story of Salva Dut and inspired by his call to action," Yerke added. "Sarah Cohen is going to make good things happen in this world."

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Conditions cont. from Front Page

researched for decades.”

Councilman Ted Hintz Jr., who argued against the proposal along with councilman Mark Philhower, said he fully understands the need to get the officers out of their current facility.

“It has been that way for 20-some years. There is no question that something needs to be started. But haste makes waste also,” Hintz said over the phone Tuesday.

It’s not the best idea to put the new police station on the edge of town and giving developers control over how it looks, according to Hintz.

He maintained the ideal location for the police station-town hall complex is in the center of town. He continues to support turning the century-old Center School into a municipal hub, an idea that was abruptly and unexpectedly nixed by five councilors in September when they refused to fund a \$250,000 feasibility study.

Preliminary estimates had put the Center School project cost at \$36.22 million to \$44.40 million.

Both councilmen at the time told the *Riverast* they’d heard rumors that some members of the council had been exploring other location options even after they had agreed to send the Center School feasibility study to voters at town meeting.

The bipartisan majority, in sudden opposition to the expensive project, dropped any plans for Center School and any intention of sending the issue to voters. They did so amid vague references to “another option,” “a different direction,” and “windows of opportunity.”

Council Chairwoman Patience Anderson, when pressed in September about whether or not there was an alternative location already under consideration, said there was “no specific plan” she was aware of.

Through it all, Cox has maintained the town’s focus needs to be on the police department’s ability to attract and retain enough officers to effectively serve the community.

“Once again, it appears that for some elected officials, politics continues to get in front of progress,” he said. “We need to shift that paradigm; progress needs to go in front of politics.”

Brault said “disproportionate cuts” to the department’s budget are evident in not only the infrastructure concerns, but also in the refusal by the town to fund additional officers, replacement vehicles, training and equipment.

He cited an off-site parking area and locker room as a key example of what he sees as town officials’ disregard for their police force. The result is a decrease in the ability of officers to do their job.

“Us driving two miles back and forth multiple times a day is not giving [residents] the best service they can have,” Brault said.

East Hampton police officer and union steward Matthew Hanlon added that having a remote locker room can be a significant hazard when calls involve potentially hazardous substances.

He said officers routinely get covered in bodily fluids like blood and spit.

“In a normal police department there’s a place to decontaminate,” he explained.

In East Hampton, that decontamination chamber is a regular shower in the building’s single bathroom.

“And the problem is, our clean clothes are two miles down the street. I have yet to hear an explanation of how we can be covered in bodily fluids, come here, decontaminate properly and

then, I don’t know, go naked down to 205 East High St.,” he said.

The last time he was subjected to an unspecified bodily fluid, Hanlon said he took his uniform off in the remote locker room, put it in a bag and drove home in his personal car “with my legs still sticky from bad stuff being on me.”

He then ran the risk of contaminating his own home when he returned there to shower, he said.

“It’s totally unacceptable,” he said. “It’s just not right.”

Brault emphasized that he understands there are officials dedicated to improving the situation for the police department.

“I don’t want to come across as a complainer or disparaging to people who have worked hard to run the town, but to me it’s at the tipping point where it’s almost impossible to do our job the way it should be done,” he said.

In September, the Board of Finance and Town Council endorsed the mid-year hire of a new officer. The department is accepting applications and expects to administer written tests next month.

Brault said decades of recruits have been told they’d be in a new facility within four years. Some of them are now 20-year veterans with the department.

Cox, standing in the processing-room-turned-construction zone as a carpenter worked on repairing damage from the clogged drain and resulting flood, said the most “heartbreaking” part was that the department just spent the last year and a half remodeling.

Now he has to replace the floors again.

The improvements to the processing and evidence rooms were funded by \$75,000 in the capital plan budget. Cox said what’s left in that account will be applied to the repairs. There is a \$10,000 deductible on the \$50,000 insurance policy covering the flood.

To maintain operations during the few days taken up by floor installation and room setup, Cox said he is borrowing a specialty vehicle outfitted by the Connecticut State Police. The tricked-out camper has a holding cell, processing area, intoxilyzer, and video recording system. Dubbed the Breath Alcohol Testing Mobile Unit (or B.A.T. Mobile), it’s used primarily at DUI checkpoints but can also be put to work as a temporary command post.

The B.A.T. Mobile will likely arrive next week for its 2-3 day stint in town if the flooring comes in as scheduled. The department will be unable to process fingerprints for the public during that period.

Meanwhile, Cox said the most recent roof leak, like previous ones, can be fixed with caulk and other basic repairs. But the roof is still old and flat.

“Gravity takes the water somewhere else, and if there’s an opening that you haven’t identified, it’s coming in,” he explained.

Cox said an unofficial estimate put the cost of roof replacement at \$50,000; the project would have to go out to bid to get more specific pricing information from multiple companies. He acknowledged the idea is a tough sell in an economic climate that finds both state and local governments struggling to develop their budgets.

“My concern is, we’re about to put a new floor in. In good conscience, how do I do that without trying to fix what we know is a problem? I put this floor in less than a year ago, and it’s gone,” he said.

Cox speculated it would take about four years before a new police department facility would be move-in ready, if all goes well.



RHAM High School freshman Sarah Cohen is holding a chili cook-off fundraiser next month to raise money for the organization Water for South Sudan. The organization drills wells in areas of South Sudan where, during the dry season, villagers have to trek miles every day to collect water – that’s often contaminated – from ponds, marshes, ditches, or hand-dug wells. Photograph Copyright 2014 Water for South Sudan, Inc.

Chili Fundraiser cont. from Front Page

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The chili cook-off will be held Friday, Feb. 17 from 6-8 p.m. in the fellowship hall at Gilead Congregational Church, 672 Gilead St. in Hebron, and the cost to attend the event is \$5 per person or \$20 per family. Prizes will be awarded for best overall chili as well as the best chili in the beef, chicken, vegetarian and other category. Registration to participate is free, and participants are asked to bring 2-3 gallons of

chili to ensure all the attendees can have a taste – and it’s the guests who will determine the winners.

The deadline to register as a chili cook is Feb. 5, and registration forms can be found on the website smcwaterproject.wixsite.com/fundraising. Individuals who are interested in volunteering at the event or donating raffle prizes can contact Sarah at smc.waterproject@gmail.com.

Colchester Senior Center Property Purchase Moves to Town Meeting

by Julianna Roche

The potential purchase of a piece of property on Lebanon Avenue is moving to a town meeting set for Feb. 2, following the Board of Selectmen's unanimous approval last week.

If supported, the property, which sits adjacent to Congregation Ahavath Achim and directly behind Town Hall, will soon become the location for the new senior center.

According to Senior Center Subcommittee chairwoman and Board of Selectmen member Rosemary Coyle, the property would cost the town \$89,500 to acquire – money which would be appropriated from the fund balance and “would not raise taxes,” she said

Last September, the town had closed on its purchase of the current senior center on 95 Norwich Ave. from its previous owner, the Bacon Academy Board of Trustees. The building has since been used as a temporary location for seniors and veterans until the new center is built.

Once the building was secured, the Senior Center Subcommittee developed a list of criteria to be considered in selecting a site for the new center.

With help from the Planning Department, the committee narrowed down potential sites to two locations – a small parcel of land to the right of Town Hall, and the Lebanon Avenue property, which ultimately ended up fulfilling most of their established criteria, including its size, in having a connection to sewer and water, room for expansion and green space, good traffic pattern and flow, ample parking space, level to-

pography, and no demolition of an existing structure necessary.

“We went through each of the properties thoroughly,” selectman Stan Soby said at the meeting. “This one really rose to the top for a variety of reasons, including in comparison to the existing property the town does own.”

* * *

Also at last week's Board of Selectmen meeting, the board set a Thursday, Feb. 16, town meeting to vote on two separate issues – including the Board of Education's appropriation of \$117,960 worth of non-expended funds from their 2015-16 operating budget to be used towards capital purchases.

As a longstanding policy, the education board reappropriates any unused funds towards capital projects at the end of each fiscal year. This year's projects include building system repairs and upgrades to Colchester Elementary School (CES), replacing obsolete VAV (variable air volume) controllers in Bacon Academy, which help balance the air flow and temperature, and replacing a 10-passenger school van, which is used district-wide.

The second issue to be voted on next month is whether the town should move forward with a matching grant with the state that would be used to repair the Paper Mill Road Bridge, which sits over Jeremy River.

Obtaining the 50/50 matching grant however also hinges on whether the bridge passes in-

spection by the state this year. According to First Selectman Art Shilosky, if it doesn't pass inspection, the town is “on the hook for [paying for] the whole thing.”

Shilosky said if all goes as planned though, the state would offer the town the matching grant, which would save it \$150,000 in repairing the bridge. Engineers have estimated the repairs would cost approximately \$300,000.

Over a two-year span, Shilosky continued, the town would then set aside \$75,000 in its budget capital plan to match half the repair costs.

* * *

Also during the meeting, the board interviewed Darrell York, a potential candidate to fill one of the three vacant seats on the Police Commission.

During the interview, York, who also currently serves as a member on the Conservation Commission, said growing up as “a son to a cop who eventually became deputy chief of police” has given him “a lot of understanding” as to what's needed to fill the role.

“The goal is to provide as much comfort and security to the community as possible in an economic and feasible manner,” he said, adding that “putting a budget together and trying to get it approved” by those who don't have a strong understanding of police work would also be a mission of his if he were appointed.

When asked if he thought there should be

24/7/365 police coverage in town, York said he was “not sure it was necessary or beneficial” to a town of Colchester's size.

“We're a very small town and we don't require an enormous police force,” he continued, adding, however, that he'd always be open to discussion.

In addition to the 11-member Colchester Police force and Resident Trooper Supervisor Sgt. Martin Martinez, Colchester is also serviced by state troopers from state police Troop K – and in fact the Troop K barracks is located in Colchester, on Old Hartford Road. York noted this presence, and said, “if it really hits the fan and we really need police, we're going to get them.”

At the conclusion of the interview, Shilosky noted in his personal opinion, he felt “very comfortable” with York's responses, but that final decisions regarding appointments wouldn't be made until interviews with all applicants were finished.

According to the first selectman, another interview is scheduled for the board's next meeting.

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The next Board of Selectmen meeting is Thursday, Feb. 2, at 7 p.m. in Town Hall, Contois Meeting Room 1, and will feature the town meeting on the Lebanon Avenue property purchase. The Feb. 16 town meeting will also start at 7 p.m., at Town Hall.

Colchester Superintendent Proposes 1.33 Percent Budget Increase

by Julianna Roche

The Colchester Elementary School (CES) cafeteria was so packed Tuesday night that many were forced to stand as Superintendent of Schools Jeff Mathieu presented his proposed 2017-18 budget to the Board of Education.

And several of those in attendance expressed their dismay with the \$40.76 million proposed budget, a 1.33 percent, or \$526,304, increase over current year spending. The package calls for several cuts, including the reduction of eight teaching positions and the elimination of middle school sports.

According to Mathieu, tuition money from the 10 Norwich students attending Bacon Academy this year helped “put money towards the district budget,” allowing for the 1.33 percent increase – which is only about half as much as the 2.67 percent budget increase he said “most schools are coming in” at.

Mathieu added that next year, he anticipates Norwich will send an additional 15 freshman students to Bacon to total 25, which, at \$14,716 per student, will bring in an additional \$367,900 – with \$228,098 going to Bacon and \$139,802 back to the district.

According to Mathieu, Bacon will use the tuition revenue for a number of purchases, including new computers, a vinyl printer, projector and furniture for graphics lab, as well as new technology and/or furniture for the world language lab, Alternative Education, and the Library Media Center (LMC).

Thirty-five thousand dollars will also go to completing the Wi-Fi connection throughout the school to ensure a reliable wireless environment and starting in the 2017-18 school year, \$35,000 will pay for Advanced Placement (AP) tests for all students in all AP classes.

The salaries line in the proposed budget has

a 1.33 percent increase or \$327,113, to total \$24.88 million. Both the employee-related insurance and workers' compensation insurance lines also increased by 17.32 percent (or \$790,093 to \$5,352,961) and 26.70 percent (or \$57,631 to \$273,473), respectively.

Mathieu said funds for regular transportation and fuel both also saw “normal increases” of 2.59 percent and 52.01 percent to total \$1.21 million and \$111,995 respectively.

To partially offset these increases – and to get the budget down to 1.33 percent over the current year – Mathieu said “we needed to make cuts – not that we agree with those cuts.”

Instructional supplies, which account for 2.29 percent of the budget, saw a 12.21 percent decrease in the proposed plan – including a 4.33 percent decrease in classroom supplies, a 23.51 percent decrease in pupil services and no funds for library books.

Mathieu said that while the pupil services decrease seems like a lot, it's due to the formerly contracted Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) hired last year moving to the salary account.

According to Mathieu, two teachers are retiring this year and there are three proposed additions to the School Readiness Classroom, including a speech and language pathologist reallocated from second grade, one paraprofessional reallocated from kindergarten, and one Child Development Associate (CDA), which would add a cost of \$38,868 to the budget.

However, there will also be a total of nine full-time equivalents (FTE) staff reductions district-wide – including a mix of paraprofessionals and teaching positions.

These cuts include a full-time regular education paraprofessional from Jack Jackter In-

termediate School (JJIS) and reduced hours for an LMC paraprofessional at CES. Additionally, at Bacon, a full-time special education paraprofessional and three part-time teaching positions were cut, including a world language, social studies and math teacher.

At William J. Johnston Middle School (WJJMS), three full-time special education paraprofessionals and a full-time Scientifically Research-Based Intervention (SRBI) Interventionist English position were cut, and hours were reduced for an LMC paraprofessional.

The ninth reduction comes in the form of postponing the filling of a vacancy for an informational technology (IT) person.

Meanwhile, the athletics department is seeing \$78,638 in cuts – including the elimination of the entire middle school sports program, for a savings of \$33,696. Also on the chopping block are, at Bacon Academy, freshman basketball, freshman soccer, indoor track, tennis and golf.

During public comments, outrage at the cuts was expressed by several individuals, including one of Bacon's Spanish teachers, Christine Zeiner.

“[I'm expressing] my anger concerning cuts proposed tonight, not just in my own department but across all disciplines in the district,” she said, adding she “would not consider” sending her own child through a school that didn't have a language program.

Bacon Academy senior Emily Donahue agreed, arguing that world language courses played a large role in her development as a student and have furthered her education.

“That's why I've been so successful,” she said.

WJJMS boys varsity basketball coach Tom

St. Louis, meanwhile, expressed similar sentiments about cuts to the athletic program, stating that while he understood cuts were necessary, he considered track and field to be a “no-cost sport,” as there aren't very many meets in the first place.

Plus, he added, “Definitely in terms of soccer and basketball, there are other outlets in town for middle school students [but] there's no other outlet for competitive track and field for students that age in town.” He also said every kid who tries out for track makes the team, so “there is something for everyone.”

Mathieu said the staffing cuts were a result of declining enrollment, adding that between 2012-13 and 2017-18, student enrollment has decreased by 469 students and 36.34 staff positions, which is a student to staff reduction ratio of 12.9 to 1.

From last year, the total student enrollment is expected to drop by 65 students in 2017-18 to total 2,407 among the district's four schools.

And while few at the meeting seemed to like Mathieu's proposed cuts, the superintendent added that things could be worse. He said that if he made the budget a zero percent increase – completely flat with this year's spending – he'd need to make an additional \$544,575 worth of cuts, including the elimination of the entire world language program at WJJMS.

Moving forward, the next step for the proposed spending package is to be discussed by the Board of Education at its next meeting, who will then approve the budget and pass it along to the Board of Finance

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The next regular Board of Education meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 14, at 7 p.m. in the Colchester Elementary School cafeteria.



At left, Jack Jackter Intermediate School staff, including teachers, paraprofessionals and custodial staff members, wrote positive and uplifting messages on over 500 Post-It notes, which were then hung on students' lockers for them to find the next morning. The Post-It notes, shown at right, included heartfelt and personalized messages to students.

Colchester JJIS Teachers 'Pass on the Positivity' to Students

by Julianna Roche

Last Friday morning, as Jack Jackter Intermediate School (JJIS) students arrived at their lockers to unload their backpacks and start their day, they were met with a surprise extending down the entire hallway – their lockers littered with brightly-colored Post-It notes, each reading a positive, heartfelt message handwritten by JJIS staff members.

The idea for the surprise stemmed from a suggestion by Michelle Noehren, creator of the Colchester is Kind Facebook group turned volunteer project.

According to Noehren, she'd read a news story about a "pass the positivity" movement started by students at a Michigan high school in Lapeer, Mich.

Back in November, students on the Lapeer High School's yearbook staff established the initiative by creating a "wall of positivity" filled with uplifting notes and messages written on Post-Its for students and staff.

Because the Colchester is Kind's mission is

"to foster a community of kindness and compassion in town," Noehren said she reached out to Director of Youth and Social Services Valerie Geato to see if something similar could be done in one of Colchester's schools.

"Michelle had presented an idea about doing this wall of kindness, and while the kids [at JJIS] were younger than the ones in the original story we had read, we presented it to the principals thinking something could be done as a follow up," Geato said.

Geato contacted JJIS Principal Elise Butson, who then invited the entire staff of the school to participate in the project.

According to Butson, the night before the surprise, members of JJIS staff – including full-time teachers, paraprofessionals and custodial staff – stayed after school to write the notes, which included messages like "Guess who's special? You!" or "I believe in you."

"You could tell how much effort they put into the Post-It notes... they were really thinking

about each kid receiving that message," Geato added. "It was nice to see that level of compassion and energy."

Butson agreed, adding that within 10 minutes, the group had written over 500 positive messages for students, which they then posted on the students' lockers.

"The kids were so overjoyed and excited about it," she continued, adding the feedback from both teachers and students has been all positive.

"If you came into the school now, you'd still see notes hanging up," Butson said, adding that the kids are continuing the "positivity" now by leaving teachers handwritten notes of their own, or adding positive Post-It messages for other students to a "Throw Kindness Like Confetti" bulletin board that was also put up.

According to Butson, the notes were also a fitting follow-up to an anti-bullying assembly students attended the week before, which was sponsored by Youth and Social Services.

The assembly included an interactive presentation on the "I Will Defend" Bullying Prevention Initiative, which focuses on the 90 percent of students who are neither the bully or bullied, but are instead bystanders of such incidents.

"It's not so much about bullying and more about anti-bullying," Butson explained. "It's what to do when you see someone being unkind to someone else."

According to Butson, "I Will Defend" teaches students to not be a bystander, but instead "if you hear or see something, don't just listen and walk away; try to help out if you can."

She furthered that students were also encouraged to seek help from an adult, such as a teacher, if they felt uncomfortable intervening.

"It's always a good thing to remind students, especially at this age, that words really do carry a heavy weight and they matter," Butson said. "The real message is putting positivity out there and being thoughtful about the words you say."

Hebron's Got Talent Returns Next Week

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Area talent will take to the stage next week as the Hebron's Got Talent show, benefiting the children's scholarship programs of AHM Youth and Family Services and Hebron Parks and Recreation, returns Feb. 3 for the fourth year.

And with it comes, along with the talent, a change in voting and country singer Frankie Justin Lamprey as celebrity judge.

The event will feature 10 acts showcasing their various gifts including singing, dancing and comedy routines – all with the hope of taking home the \$250 grand prize.

However, for Stephanie Haines, minister of missions and faith formation at Gilead Congregational Church – which sponsors the event – what's most important is not necessarily who wins, but that participants have the chance to foster and share their talents, and that the proceeds will go toward ensuring other children have the same opportunity.

"We believe every child is born with special gifts and talents and that they should have the opportunity to discover and develop those regardless of their socioeconomic status. In our backyards are children who will cure diseases, advocate for peace, teach future generations, and make a profound, positive difference in our world," Haines said. "Shouldn't every child have the opportunity to explore their strengths and pursue their passions?"

"The proceeds from this event will make that possible," Haines continued, "through local children's scholarships in which children can participate in educational camps, take music lessons, attend leadership workshops, explore science and so much more."

Also looking forward to the upcoming event and the opportunities it helps provide is Jennifer Sauer, Gilead Congregational Church Board

of Missions chairwoman.

The event, she said, "has become a wonderful community event over the past few years. With everyone's support we have been able to help children explore their talents and strengths who might not otherwise have the monetary ability to do so. The participation from Hebron residents, and surrounding communities, has been overwhelming and we are so grateful."

In previous installments of Hebron's Got Talent, participants in the show have been given feedback by a panel of three judges, but the winner has been determined by an "Applause-O-Meter." This year, however, that method has changed.

Sauer explained, "Every year, we showcase three judges who have passion in the industry and are able to offer their expertise to evaluate the talent. We thought it would be fun to mix it up this year and also allow the judges to have even more influence on who wins aside from just providing commentary."

And so, this year the acts will perform and the judges will decide on the top three finalists at the end of the show.

"Then we will once again use the 'Applause-O-Meter' so the audience can cheer for their favorite act out of the top three," Sauer shared. "The act that gets the most noise out of the audience wins."

The judges determining those top acts this year include Caitlynn Lessard, representing last year's winning group, RHAM Youth Cheer, and country singer and Colchester native Frankie Justin Lamprey.

Lamprey, who is 17 years old and performed last year as the opener for the group Parmalee during the Hebron Harvest Fair, shared he won his first singing contest at the fair when he was 12 years old, so when he was invited to judge

the talent show, he was all in.

"Hebron's been great to me," he said. "So when they asked me to judge I said 'definitely.'" Lamprey, who recently returned from Nashville, Tenn., where he'd been recording, said he was looking forward to seeing the different talent.

"It kind of comes full circle. I won a competition at the Hebron Harvest Fair and the community's been great to me – Hebron, Colchester and the whole area where I'm from has been great and I'm real excited to see what more talent is out there," Lamprey said. "There's so much talent in our community; I'm looking forward to seeing what comes out."

Also sharing his thoughts on the upcoming event was Marlborough resident and event emcee Mark Dursin, who said the event has become one of his favorite nights of the year.

"My favorite part of the night is something not many people get to see," he said. "Stephanie Haines assembles all of the performers backstage in a circle and she leads us in prayer. It's just a very calming, centering exercise, and it just reminds us where all of these talents come from."

And, he added, "it's all for such a wonderful cause."

Along with supporting the children's scholarships, he added what made the night so great was that it's all about celebrating talent.

"Yeah, we see a lot of singers and dancers, because those tend to be the talents that translate well to this sort of setting," Dursin said. "But the fact is we all have talents. Maybe you can make great YouTube videos. Maybe you're a great parallel parker. Maybe you make a mean shepherd's pie. Whatever your talent is, you should celebrate it... and make sure you celebrate the talents in others. Hopefully, this night



Frankie Justin Lamprey

reminds us all to do just that."

Hebron's Got Talent takes place next Friday, Feb. 3 at 6:30 p.m. in the RHAM High School Auditorium, 85 Wall St. Tickets cost \$8 for an individual or \$25 for a family of four and are available at Ted's IGA Supermarket, AHM Youth and Family Services, Hebron Parks and Recreation, Gilead Congregational Church, or at the door. For more information, call Gilead Congregational Church at 860-228-3077.

Hebron Selectmen Appoint Board of Education Member

by Geeta S. Sandberg

At last week's Board of Selectmen meeting, the board voted to appoint Republican Phil Booe to fill a vacancy on the Board of Education – but not everyone was happy with the decision, as Board of Education member Carol Connolly told the selectmen they'd made "a very grave mistake."

Following last November's resignation of unaffiliated member Jessica Rainville from the school board – who was in turn filling the seat left vacant by Democrat Ramon Bieri after he resigned to be on the Board of Finance – the selectmen were tasked with choosing between two candidates to fill the position through November: Jeremy Moore – a Democrat – and Phil Booe – a Republican.

Both candidates received support from their respective committee chairs, with Moore receiving a letter of backing from Democratic Town Committee Chairman Ted Bromley, and Booe receiving a letter of support from Republican Town Committee Chairwoman Catherine Marx, who mentioned Booe received unanimous endorsement by the RTC for the appointment.

In addition, both candidates were mentioned by the selectmen as being highly qualified for the position, but in the end, only one could be appointed. And by a vote of 4-1, the appointment went to Booe, who is also pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in town.

Selectman Brian O'Connell was the dissenting vote; in a prior motion he had voted, along with selectman Mark Stuart, in favor of appointing Moore. O'Connell explained he took issue with Booe saying he'd recuse himself from

board discussions surrounding preschool, since Christ Lutheran Church offers a preschool program through its early childhood center.

In conversation with the candidates prior to the votes, comments Booe made at a Board of Education forum last month were brought up by the selectmen. At that time, Booe mentioned the school system's preschool program was taking revenue from the preschool program at the church, and in light of that, Booe was asked by Chairman Dan Larson what he'd consider conflicts of interest, and how he'd handle them.

"I don't see much of a conflict, although admittedly we have been impacted by the preschool program at the town level," Booe stated.

He added, "With that said, before I put my hat in for this position I thought about what any conflicts might be. I think since preschool makes up such a small part of overall education, I think it would be a small part of what the Board of Education would be dealing with. That being said I'd have no problem recusing myself in those instances that I would fear there might be a perceived conflict of interest."

But O'Connell said he'd "prefer not to appoint someone who will have to recuse themselves right off the bat" – and opted to go with Moore.

He added he also thought the seat should remain with a Democrat. Similarly, Stuart also said he thought the seat should remain Democratic, since that was the party of the candidate elected by voters. But after the motion to appoint Moore failed, he added he choose to vote

for Booe's appointment because he didn't have an issue with either candidate, and considered them both qualified.

Someone who did have an issue with the outcome, however, was Connolly, who was not present for the appointment but showed up to the meeting later, and spoke after Town Manager Andrew Tierney brought up Christ Lutheran Church's interest in purchasing a senior van from the town for charitable work.

The church recently started a non-profit ministry called "Hands of Grace: Caring Shepherds" to serve the physical needs of people "without any sort of discrimination," Booe explained.

He continued, "The purpose of us using the van would not be for transportation but to carry food, clothes, hygiene and other types of things. ...As soon as it's available, and we might have access to it, we'd be happy to purchase it with cash," Booe shared.

But Connolly took issue with the church purchasing the van considering Booe had just been appointed to the school board. She also expressed issue with Booe's aforementioned comments surrounding preschool revenue being taken from the church by the school district.

"I think this board has made a very grave mistake," she said. "You appointed a public official tonight after he said publically on the record his business would lose money. I'll ask to call the board lawyers, I ask Andy to call the town lawyer – you cannot enter into a business relationship with an elected official to bring

cash to purchase a van. You can't. Does anyone else see anything wrong with that?"

Connolly, a Democrat, added before leaving the meeting, "The seat was stolen from a Democrat. You have to be ethical."

Before the selectmen moved on to other agenda items, Booe explained, "I'm not a business owner. I don't own Christ Lutheran Church; I'm an agent of the group... and if any other taxpayers have an interest in using the van to help the needy, I'm certain that the Board of Selectmen would be happy to hear them out, and we certainly wouldn't be against anyone else putting forth ideas to help people in need."

Stuart meanwhile, pointed out Connolly never objected when Professional Electric Corp. – which Larson helped found and is still affiliated with – bids on work for the town.

"If a voter is going to come forward and raise questions of an ethical issue or a conflict of interest then you should be here all the time," Stuart stated. "I think the only reason this came up tonight is because of Mrs. Connolly's disappointment with who we appointed. I think that colored her comments and I do believe she was out of order."

Tierney also pointed out no transactions had been made with Booe or Christ Lutheran Church, and said the church had expressed an interest in the van for months, and the information was given to the board "for talking points."

The senior van is set to be discussed again during the Feb. 2 Board of Selectmen's meeting.

Hebron Selectmen Forward Gas Expansion to Town Meeting

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Following a relatively quiet public hearing last week on the natural gas expansion project, the Board of Selectmen voted to forward the proposal to town meeting Feb. 2.

The Connecticut Natural Gas (CNG) project would bring natural gas to the center of town from a gate station on East Street via around eight miles of pipeline. The majority of town buildings along the expansion route – including the town office and the Horton House, Gilead Hill School, Hebron Elementary School, the Douglas Library, the Fire Department, and the Russell Mercier Senior Center as well as RHAM Middle and High School – will make the switch to natural gas as part of the project.

In addition, residents and businesses along the route will also have the option to connect, should they wish.

The total construction cost of the project amounts to \$5,589,700 of which the town will contribute \$758,800. The remaining cost will be paid for with \$2,706,800 in anticipated off-setting revenue collection to CNG from private homes connecting to the pipeline, and \$2,124,100 in a CNG non-firm margin contribution. Non-firm credits represent revenue earned by CNG that in the past were returned to customers as a credit to their bills. However, the gas company is now permitted to use a por-

tion of those credits to offset expansion costs.

In addition to a portion of the construction charges, the town will also be responsible for \$1,081,541 in conversion costs – this includes the \$264,000 it's expected to cost RHAM to make changes to the schools so they can connect to the pipeline as well, and will be paid back to the town via Region Eight's expected fuel savings.

Coupled with \$20,000 in legal fees and \$9,659 in contingency, the total cost to the town for the expansion is \$1,870,000.

Board of Finance Chairman Malcolm Leichter explained at the hearing this would be paid for with a 10-year short note through Webster Bank to be paid annually with a 2.4 percent interest rate. At the end of the repayment schedule, the town will have paid \$2,090,217.33.

However, he added, the total estimated 10-year revenue from CNG for the pipeline and energy savings is \$2,551,640; the total average annual energy savings from using natural gas versus heating oil is \$135,330.

Leichter furthered funding the project will equate to less than \$10 annually to taxpayers' real estate tax bills.

Following the presentation on the project, a couple of residents asked some logistical questions about the project, while one took a firm

stance against the expansion.

Resident Chris Ambrose told the selectmen while he recognized the tough economic times, that natural gas came with a more efficient delivery system than oil and would result in a reduction in fuel costs as well as CO2 emissions, "this just doesn't seem right to me."

"First, natural gas is a fossil fuel," Ambrose continued. "I believe the continued use of all fossil fuels is an enormous risk to life as we know it. I believe catastrophic events associated with burning fossil fuels are not centuries away but mere decades in our future – and some say they're already upon us."

In addition he stated the methods of obtaining and distributing all fossil fuels "are causing their own immediate catastrophes."

"Let's just look at fracking, which is the source of natural gas," Ambrose continued. "It's not even allowed in the state of Connecticut at this time and states that have allowed fracking have experienced contaminated drinking water, huge sink holes, and even earthquakes – these are things happening in dozens of towns just like Hebron to thousands of people just like us."

Going ahead with the proposal, he concluded, would put the town on a dangerous path.

"Saying 'yes' to this proposal at this time just feels wrong to me," he said. "I believe there are

technological advances that are worth waiting for. And because of that, I say 'no' at this time."

In his closing remarks, Town Manager Andrew Tierney stated he wasn't trying to change anyone's opinion as to what they think is the best source of fuel or energy, "but economically for Hebron this is the way to go, and this is going to benefit businesses already in town and those that aren't built yet" such as the senior living facility that's being constructed in the Village Green District.

"This is an economic tool we're trying to do to benefit the town as a whole, get more of a tax base in here, to try to get some of the tax burden off the community," Tierney continued.

Meanwhile, Leichter added before he closed the hearing, "As a member of the Board of Finance and a member for a long time, we are looking at some of the toughest budgets ahead – and that's no news to anybody. The fact we will be able to pay for this primarily without increasing our budget more than a few thousand dollars year to year and eventually, once the loan is paid off, take advantage of all these savings, will help us be able to continue the services that we deliver."

The town meeting on the proposal is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 2, at 7 p.m. in the Douglas Library.

Unexplained Police Activity Alarms East Hampton Residents

by Elizabeth Regan

The search for a local man accused of felony assault and strangulation alarmed neighbors in the Barton Hill section of town Monday, as police combed the area after the suspect fled a motor vehicle stop on foot.

Gary Messier, 41, is currently at large, according to East Hampton Police Chief Sean Cox.

The attempted arrest fell apart at approximately 5:30 p.m. Jan. 23. Police said Messier took off on foot in the vicinity of Hayes Road and Forest Street as the evening's sleet and wind storm was moving in. After an extensive search, police determined he fled the area.

Officers were attempting to serve an arrest warrant for first-degree strangulation, first-degree assault, second-degree threatening and disorderly conduct.

According to the state judicial branch website, Messier is currently facing a felony charge of violation of a protective order as well as several misdemeanors for drug and traffic-related offenses.

The police department is working with other agencies to locate Messier, Cox said.

While Cox said officers don't know if Messier was armed when he fled, he added that "the charges reflect the serious nature of the crime committed."

Some residents took to Facebook to find out if anyone knew what the police were doing in their neighborhood. They also wondered why the community hadn't been alerted to the potentially dangerous situation.

Cox said Wednesday that residents wouldn't be informed before an arrest because that could alert the suspect as well.

After the fact, it's a question of available resources.

The emergency alert system is typically used for severe weather alerts, according to Cox. But it can also be put into place when the police or fire chief gets the approval of the emergency management coordinator or town manager or, in their absence, the Town

Council chairperson.

But "it's hard when the chief is circling the neighborhood trying to catch the bad guy, too," Cox said.

He said the process of getting permission, drafting the announcement, entering the announcement into the system and then targeting it to a specific area was not possible with the number of officers on hand.

Cox held over two officers from the day shift to supplement the efforts of the night-shift personnel in order to make the arrest happen, he said. That means there were a total of six officers, including Cox, either chasing down Messier or taking care of routine police and medical calls.

According to Cox, the level of service is directly related to the staffing level. And he's long maintained it's not high enough in East Hampton.

"You can't have champagne taste on a Budweiser budget," he said. "You staff the mini-

mum, you fund the minimum, you get the minimum."

In September, the Board of Finance and Town Council endorsed the mid-year hire of a new officer. The decision was spurred largely by an accident that is expected to keep officer Hardie Burgin out of work for many months as he recovers.

The department is accepting applications and expects to administer written tests next month.

A new school resource officer has been requested in the education budget proposed this month by Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith. He said the town would cover 30 percent of the cost if the full-time position is approved.

"While we strive to do our best to keep the community informed, sometimes logistically, with our limited resources, we are unable to meet those expectations," Cox said.

He said two officers remained in the neighborhood for several hours after the search.

East Hampton Council Looks at Options for Municipal Hub

by Elizabeth Regan

Plans to relocate the outdated and undersized East Hampton Town Hall and Police Department, more than two decades in the making, are moving toward the construction of a new facility near the Marlborough border.

The Town Council on Monday looked at eight possible locations spanning Route 66 as submitted by local residents, real estate companies and developers. The two properties favored by a majority of councilors were both located in the north end of town.

The submissions were a response to a request for proposals issued by the Town Council in November. The document said eligible properties must have a minimum lot size of 2.75 acres for the town hall, with approximately 60 to 100 parking spots. The police department would need at least 2 acres with 27 to 45 parking spots.

The most highly-ranked proposal is 5.4 acres of land within the Edgewater Hill mixed-use development. The proposal from Stephen and Lisa Motto, of Edgewater Hill Properties and Dream Developers, would turn the town hall and police station into a key component of a livable, walkable and shoppable community hub.

The Mottos said they would donate the land to the town in exchange for a 4-percent construction management fee and the ability to choose the architect.

The parcel is currently owned by George and Mary Loos, who have given the Mottos the right to acquire the land and who joined the Mottos in submitting the proposal.

The Mottos have completed phase one of their mixed-use project, which includes a daycare, an insurance agency and 40 apartment units. Lisa Motto said Tuesday they are in negotiations with a restaurant to go in next to Educational Playcare on Route 66.

Motto described the proposed town hall and police station as a welcome addition to the couple's vision for restaurants, shops, offices, single-family homes, townhouses, condominiums and apartments all in one development. She said she expects the total project to take up to eight years to finish – though the developer's proposal specifies construction of the town hall and police station would start within 24 months

and “be diligently prosecuted to completion.”

Motto said the municipal campus would be situated within the development instead of directly on Route 66.

“You will see [the town hall campus] from Route 66 – it will have direct access to Route 66 – but it's not that front building,” she explained.

Leaving commercial space in the forefront would bring in “tremendous” revenue that the town might not receive if the prime real estate was taken up by the tax-exempt municipal hub, she explained.

The Mottos confirmed a suggestion made several months ago by finance board members Dean Markham and Alan Hurst that the Edgewater Hill property has a “significant aquifer” that could potentially help accommodate town water needs along Route 66 – but the couple said additional wells would have to be drilled.

Councilors evaluated all eight property proposals based on a scoring process that took into account the completeness and scope of each proposal, as well as the location and access to utilities like water, sewer and natural gas.

Chairwoman Patience Anderson and members Melissa Engel, Josh Piteo and Pete Brown gave the Edgewater Hill proposal the highest possible rating.

Anderson described the plan as “a very creative use of that property,” while Engel said it offers easy access, good sight lines and is only 1.2 miles from the town center.

For councilor Kevin Reich, the proposal is a civic benefit as well as an economic one.

“I could see this increasing the tax base if the town hall were located on that site,” Reich said.

Brown said the Mottos' submission won him over despite initial reservations about the location.

“I really, really wanted to fight for the center of town,” Brown explained. “I thought the town hall should be there. Now I think this is the best location.”

Councilman Ted Hintz Jr., however, still had some fight in him as he accused the rest of the council of having made up their minds before

they discussed all the proposals.

“I think it's a futile point of even going through [the proposals], Chairman, when you already have a predetermined outcome,” he told Anderson.

Hintz echoed concerns by council member Mark Philhower that the site is too far on the edge of town and too far removed from the road. It also includes too many variables – like the construction management fee and the developers' involvement in architect selection – that would have to be negotiated, according to Hintz.

Anderson reiterated the purpose of the meeting was to review all submissions and make a recommendation on one or more properties.

The RFP outlining the selection process said the council has the right to negotiate with the chosen respondents.

“We came to this meeting, Mr. Hintz, with the direct purpose to zero in on one of these or two of these properties that we could then investigate further,” Anderson said. “That was our mission this evening. So just because people scored a particular property higher than the others, does that mean you're going to now just throw out the rest of the process? We have not finished the process. We need to continue.”

The second highest-ranking property is situated less than a mile from the Marlborough border on Route 66, abutting Bear Swamp Road and across from Loco Perro Mexican Restaurant and Banquet Room.

Property owner Ronald G. Wallace said in his submission he has no plans for developing the 7.85-acre property that has been in his family since 1960. Instead, he and his wife would like to see it “put to good use by the town in which we grew up.”

“The size and location of this property makes it a perfect fit for what you are looking: a location on the main corridor of the town but not in the midst of the extreme high traffic area like the present two buildings have to deal with daily,” Wallace wrote.

He described the site's easy access to the center of town and even easier access to the north end's growing population as factors in his proposal's favor. It has 240 feet of frontage on Route 66.

During discussion, Philhower and Hintz reiterated they didn't approve of properties so far removed from the town center. Engel brought up the presence of wetlands on the site, while Brown noted the property drops off in the back.

Others, like Piteo and Reich, said they thought the proposal would meet the community's expectations.

The rest of the properties failed to glean much support due to insufficient acreage or access to utilities, as well as undesirable sight lines or traffic ramifications.

Several of the potential sites were submitted by prominent local developer Wayne Rand. One is 3 Main St., a 1.84-acre property on which sits a home built in 1875. The yellow colonial is a contributing resource to the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Belltown Historic District.

Such homes are protected from “unreasonable destruction” under the Connecticut Environmental Preservation Act. The council received blowback last year when members proposed knocking down a different home within the historic district to make way for expanded parking next to Center School. Councilors ultimately recanted the idea.

Engel said demolition of the house on 3 Main St., which would be necessary to accommodate a town hall complex, would not be in keeping with the town's character.

“I can't be party to taking that building down,” she said.

Rand filed a lawsuit one year ago against the East Hampton Planning and Zoning Commission for denying his application to turn 3 Main St. into a commercial zone. According to court documents, the commissioners rejected the request because of concerns about increased traffic in the area as well as the need to protect “the integrity of historic resources” as outlined in the town's Plan of Conservation and Development. The legal action is ongoing.

Councilors will meet with the owners and representatives of the Edgewater Hill and the Ronald G. Wallace properties on Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. in the town hall before making a final decision.

Drug Sting Nets Cobalt Postmaster

by Elizabeth Regan

The Cobalt postmaster is facing drug charges after he was caught in a sting operation last month involving drug shipments he allegedly agreed to make in return for cash.

An arrest warrant affidavit on file at Middlesex Superior Court said Gregory Sturges, 48, sent and received packages he thought contained hallucinogens and prescription drugs on two occasions last year. Unbeknownst to him, he was ferrying fake drugs for a confidential informant with the Connecticut State Police Statewide Narcotics Task Force.

The affidavit further alleges Sturges attempted to steal the non-existent prescription drugs shipped to the Cobalt facility before turning over the opened package to the informant.

Sturges was arrested by state police on Dec. 19 and released from custody on a \$15,000 bond.

According to the state judicial website, he was charged with one felony count of attempted sale of certain illegal drugs as well as misdemeanors for possession of a small amount of a cannabis-type substance; attempted possession of drugs near a school, high school, or day care; and third-degree criminal mischief.

He has not yet entered a plea, but is slated to appear in court Thursday after press time.

Sturges, reached by cell phone, declined to comment.

A spokeswoman for the United States Postal Service said Sturges is “still on the rolls, but is not working with customers at this time.”

The investigation was conducted by the narcotics task force's south-central field office in cooperation with the United States Postal Inspection Service, according to the affidavit. The south-central field office covers the New Haven area.

East Hampton Police Chief Sean Cox said there is no record of any local officers participating in the arrest.

It is not clear if any other agencies were involved.

There are no federal charges pending, according to the spokesman for the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Connecticut.

The details in the nine-page affidavit allege a confidential informant working with the narcotics task force told investigators Sturges had voluntarily approached him/her “about assisting in the mailing of illicit substances through the U.S. mail in exchange for cash and/or cocaine.”

The affidavit states that on July 25 of last

year, investigators arranged for the confidential informant to give Sturges a package containing fake LSD and Psilocybin mushroom material to be delivered to an undercover address in Florida. After the transaction was made, the informant talked with Sturges about the possibility of having a package sent to the post office for pick-up. Sturges agreed and told the informant they could talk about the details later, the affidavit said.

The agreed-upon specifics included a \$100 cash payment to Sturges for accepting “an initial test package” at the Cobalt post office, according to the affidavit. Sturges told the informant to send the package to “Bobby Smith” at the post office's 371 West High St. address.

On Sept. 30, 2016, the decoy package containing what Sturges thought was prescription narcotics arrived in Cobalt and the postmaster scanned it as delivered, the affidavit says. The informant, after calling Sturges to find out if it had arrived, went to the post office to pick it up in exchange for \$100.

Upon the informant's return to a pre-arranged meeting location with the investigators, the affidavit states, they saw it was not the same package they had mailed from Florida. Investigators sent the informant back to the post office,

where Sturges gave back the \$100 along with a ripped box he said someone else had accidentally opened.

The affidavit includes a transcription of a call Sturges made later to the informant during which he explained another employee in the Cobalt post office was already having packages sent to “Bobby Smith,” which is why the co-worker opened it.

The transcription includes a third participant in the phone call labeled as “unknown male.” Identifying himself as the one who opened the package, he told Sturges to use the name “Bobby Johnson” next time, according to the transcription.

According to the affidavit, Sturges is the only known employee of that location.

In the affidavit, investigators allege Sturges “attempted to pilfer” what he thought was illicit narcotics.

“Sturges tracked and intentionally destroyed the contents of the target parcel when, having no reasonable ground to believe that he had a right to do so, and solely in an attempt to locate and steal the contents, caused damage to the parcel,” the affidavit states.

Sturges was due in court Thursday, Jan. 26.

East Hampton Bridge Dedicated to Jim Morris

by Elizabeth Regan

The bridge over Christopher Brook on North Main Street is getting new life as the John “Jim” Morris Memorial Bridge.

The idea, proposed by the East Hampton Ambulance Association and affirmed by the Town Council on Tuesday, is a way to honor the active community volunteer who died in 2014 when he was struck by a car on his daily walk.

Jim Morris’s wife, Kate, was at the Town Council meeting when the resolution naming the bridge was approved. She was joined by her daughter and son-in-law, Beth and Mark Byers, and their two daughters, Hayley and Anna. Kate Morris said the couple’s two sons live out of state, but they were there in spirit.

“I can’t tell you how overwhelmed we are, how grateful,” Kate Morris said.

The idea was initially broached to the council by ambulance association president John

Tuttle.

Tuttle explained that Jim Morris had walked each day from his home on Lake Pocotopaug to McDonald’s, traversing the bridge. He would get his morning coffee and connect with friends, many of whom he’d cultivated over the previous two decades through his volunteerism.

Jim Morris’ history of civic involvement included membership on the East Hampton Planning and Zoning Commission, the Facilities Evaluation Committee tasked with helping to find a new home for the town hall and police department, and the Knights of Columbus. Jim joined his wife in support of the ambulance association, becoming a member of the board of directors and then its president.

“When there was a need for a new building for the association, Jim worked tirelessly to help acquire funding, and he used his construction

expertise to make sure the building was built correctly. Jim and Katie also led the fund drive that raised over \$125,000 in donations to close a funding gap to make sure the project was completed,” Tuttle said.

The new name over Christopher Brook reflects a deep sense of community support evident in the aftermath of Jim Morris’ death. Hundreds of letters poured into the Middlesex Superior Court speaking to his character when Jennifer VanWycke was sentenced to 33 months in prison and five years’ probation for second-degree manslaughter.

VanWycke was driving her 4-year-old son to school on Oct. 17, 2014, when she veered into the opposite lane of traffic and up onto the North Main Street sidewalk.

The prosecution said VanWycke admitted to taking prescription oxycodone and crushing the

pills to ingest them before the crash.

Kate Morris said recently that the bridge over Christopher Brook is an appropriate place for a memorial.

“It is where he walked every day,” she said. “He crossed that bridge.”

According to Tuttle, it’s also a place where so many residents remember seeing Jim Morris each day.

“This simple but long lasting acknowledgment would serve as a reminder to his family, and to all of us, of Jim’s dedication to his community,” he said.

For Kate Morris, that’s what it’s all about: the commemoration of a special place, oft-traveled, where those who knew him can think “about the way he lived, not the way he died.”

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Ugh.

That’s my reaction to the first few days of the Donald Trump presidency. Sure, I’ll continue to hold onto that hope I wrote about last week – but it becomes a little bit tougher with each passing day, as we see that, yes folks, Trump really may be exactly what he advertised.

Which is good, I suppose, if you voted for the guy. But, if like me and the majority of Americans you did not, it leaves a little something to be desired.

By this past Tuesday evening – a whopping five days into his presidency – Trump had, among other things: signed an executive order suspending a mortgage rate cut that would’ve benefited low- and middle-income first-time homebuyers; signed another executive order to already start rolling back the Affordable Care Act; proposed privatizing the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and cutting the National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities altogether; nixed the Spanish-language version of the White House website, which had been around since George W. Bush was first in office;

issued a gag order for Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Agriculture staff, barring them from talking to the media about, well, anything (or posting on social media); signed an executive order to push forward with the controversial Keystone and Dakota Access pipelines; and continued to act more like a candidate than a president, peddling baseless accusations about massive voter fraud in the election that cost him the popular vote and still hitting “send” on too many petulant, childish tweets.

And again, all this was through Tuesday.

It goes without saying Trump is not my cup of tea. I’m not even sure he’s my cup of antifreeze. As I wrote last week, I had hoped he’d prove me wrong about him – but so far he’s done nothing of the kind. Nor has he done anything, or showed any signs he will do anything, that will “make America great again.”

It’s early yet, I know. But things are off to a bad start.

* * *

I had family members and several friends participate in the various women’s marches that took place across the country last weekend. I was proud of them, and happy that they marched. And I was delighted with the turnout; from coast to coast, it was huge; for example, many more people turned out in Washington, D.C., for the women’s march than for

Trump’s inauguration the day before.

Trump took to Twitter twice Sunday morning to write about the previous day’s protests – in two tweets that carried very different tones. The first, posted at 7:47 a.m., read, “Watched protests yesterday but was under the impression that we just had an election! Why didn’t these people vote? Celebs hurt cause badly.”

The second, sent out about 90 minutes later, was much more diplomatic: “Peaceful protests are a hallmark of our democracy. Even if I don’t always agree, I recognize the rights of people to express their views.”

This isn’t the first time something like this has happened, where a classic, angry, childish Trump tweet is followed up a little later by a more professional – and very un-Trumpish – tweet. I’m guessing the first tweet was all Donald, while the second one was something one of his staffers posted when Trump hopped into the shower or something.

Anyway, one of the marks of a good protest is signs. And I saw pictures of some real winners, from New York to Los Angeles. Being a musical theater fan, one of my favorites was this *Mary Poppins*-flavored sign I saw at the D.C. protest: “Super callous fragile ego, Trump you are atrocious.”

* * *

In other news, I chuckled a bit when I came across this story in *The Connecticut Post* Tuesday. Who among us hasn’t accidentally left their cellphone behind someplace? But most of us, I would assume, aren’t committing a burglary at the time.

Nicholas Bruner, 31, of Stratford, was charged with third-degree burglary and second-degree criminal mischief, after allegedly breaking into a veterinary hospital in the town, looking for drugs.

Last October, officers responded to a burglar alarm going off at The Pet Hospital, and when they got there they found a rear window broken and blood on the frame, the *Post* reported. They found a trail of blood on the floor – as well as a set of keys and a cell phone.

Police traced the cell phone back to Bruner, who admitted it was his phone, as well as his keys – but said he had lost them, and couldn’t remember where.

Officers apparently didn’t buy the story, as Bruner was arrested last Saturday. He was released on a \$10,000 bond, the *Post* reported.

* * *

See you next week.

East Hampton Police News

1/14: Gina Gianni, 42, of 391 West St., Hebron, was arrested and charged with driving under the influence and failure to drive right, East Hampton Police said.

1/17: After an investigation into a three-car motor vehicle accident with no injuries on East High Street (Route 66), Peter Overbaugh, 57, of 69 South Stony Brook Dr., Marlborough, was issued a summons for operating an unregistered and uninsured motor vehicle, police said.

Portland Police News

1/2: Michael Cichon, 35, of 32 Tuccitto Rd., was charged with improper use of marker plate, insufficient insurance and operating an unregistered motor vehicle, Portland Police said.

Colchester Police News

1/17: Colchester Police said Jonathan M. Adams, 24, of 335 Lebanon Ave., was arrested and charged with first-degree failure to appear.

1/17: State Police said Andrew Harris, 23, of 98 Tower Ave., Hartford, was arrested and charged with possession of a controlled substance and interfering with an officer: non-assaultive.

1/17: State Police said Jakar U. George, 23, of 683 Bloomfield Ave., Windsor, was arrested and charged with operating an unregistered motor vehicle, improper use of license/registration,

Car Breaks Down, Then Stolen

A man whose car broke down on Route 2 returned to the scene the next day to find the vehicle had been stolen, State Police said.

Police said the alleged victim reported to them at around 10 a.m. Jan. 15 that his white 2004 Ford F350 had broken down the night before, Jan. 14, on the side of Route 2 westbound near Exit 15. When he returned the following morning to remove the car, the man told police, it was gone.

Police said the vehicle bears Connecticut license plates 4343CZ, and the case remains under investigation.

operating a motor vehicle when license/registration is suspended, allowing a person under 18 without insurance to operate a motor vehicle, reckless driving, engaging in a police pursuit, evasion of responsibility in operation of a motor vehicle, operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol, and failure to drive in the proper lane on a multiple lane highway.

1/21: State Police said Robert J. Nicolini, 31, of 11 North Dr., Carmel, N.Y., was arrested and charged with failure to respond to an infraction.

Obituaries

Colchester

Richard Quintin Kelly

Richard Quintin Kelly, 56, of Colchester, passed away Wednesday, Jan. 18, at home, surrounded by his loving family and friends after a courageous battle with pancreatic cancer. Born July 18, 1960, in Hackensack, N.J., he was the son of Charles Frank Kelly of Waterville, Maine, and the late Carol Munson (Windrum) Kelly.



In addition to his father, he leaves his beloved wife of 30 years, Pamela (Torgersen) Kelly; two daughters, Nicole Davis and her husband, Steven, of Melrose, Mass., and Melinda Kelly and her fiancé, Mateo Pacheco of Sante Fe, N.M.; his son, Jeffrey Kelly of Boston, Mass.; four siblings, Janet Kelly and her partner, Mary Madden of Atlanta, GA, Roger Kelly and his wife, Joan of Bluffton, S.C., Gail Abel of Manchester, N.H., and Cathy Vlastakis and her husband, Kirk of Clemmons, N.C.; his mother-in-law, Jean Torgersen of Hackettstown, N.J.; and numerous extended family members and friends.

Richard has worked as the Director of Print Procurement for MassMutual in Springfield, Mass., for many years. He loved golfing, boating and spending time on the back deck. He cherished his purple Dodge Challenger, affectionately named "Plum Crazy," as well as family vacations in Maine – as his greatest joy was found in his family, to whom he was ever devoted.

A memorial service celebrating his life was observed Sunday, Jan. 22, directly at the Marlborough Congregational Church, 35 S. Main St., Marlborough. There were no calling hours, and burial was private in the Linwood Cemetery, Colchester.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network, 1500 Rosecrans Ave., Ste. 200, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266 (pancan.org).

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

Portland

Robert M. Darna

Robert "Bob" M. Darna, 70, of Punta Gorda, Fla., formerly of Portland, passed away peacefully Friday, Jan. 20. He was born March 18, 1946, in Middletown, to Maurice and Bernice Darna.

Bob served in the U.S. Navy onboard the *U.S.S. Walworth County (LST 1164)*. He was a member of the Portland Volunteer Fire Department, where he served as EMT and Captain of Engine Company 3. Bob was a lifelong resident of Portland, and retired from Portland Public Works after 38 years. He was a member of the Royal Order of Ponce de Leon Conquistadors, the Peace River Sail and Power Squadron, Deep Creek Elks Club, and recently elected as chairman of Section 22 Design Review Committee.

He had a love for boating, fishing, shelling, racing, UConn Women Basketball, animals and the Grinch. There wasn't a person Bob would meet who he didn't talk to.

Bob is survived by his loving wife, Sandra Darna; sons, Kevin, Mike (Katie) and Brian; stepsons, Tyler Semrow and Ryan Semrow; brother, Ronald (Debra) Darna; sister, Gail (Dr. Arthur) McDowell III; grandchildren, Nathan, Emma, Rhea and Aurora. He will also be deeply missed by his extended family and many friends.

He was preceded in death by his brother, Richard Darna.

At Bob's request, there will be no service. Burial will be private. A celebration of life will be held at a later date by the family.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Bob's memory to Portland Fire Department CO #3, P.O. Box 571, Portland, CT 06480.

Arrangements are by Larry Taylor Funeral Home.

Marlborough

Robert H. Greene, Jr

Robert H. Greene Jr., of Marlborough, passed away peacefully Saturday morning, Jan. 14, with his children by his side, at the age of 81. He was born in Beacon, N.Y., to Gladys Ambery Greene and Robert H. Greene Sr.



Bob grew up in Melrose, Mass., and attended Melrose High School, graduating in 1952. He went on to MIT, from where he graduated in 1956 with a BS in Chemical Engineering. He later received an MBA from the University of Hartford. After a year of service in the U.S. Army and a short stint at Dupont in Louisiana, he moved to Connecticut and worked at Pratt & Whitney, first as an engineer, then as the Manager of Engineering Human Resources. After retiring in 1993, he went on to work at NLC Insurance for 10 years as vice president of human resources.

Bob was an enthusiastic golfer, an avid and gifted crossword puzzler, and a true sports fan. (He was a lifelong subscriber to *Sports Illustrated*, beginning with their very first issue in 1954.) He spent many happy hours researching family history, and enormously enjoyed socializing with friends as well as playing bridge. He especially loved spending time with his family at their home on Kezar Lake, in Lovell, Maine.

He leaves behind his beloved wife of 47 years, Janine King Greene, to whom he was deeply devoted, and his children, Jennifer B. Greene (Mark Maguire) of Montclair, N.J., and Robert Derek Greene (Christine Vranka) of Louisville, Colo. He also leaves behind three adored and adoring grandchildren: Lucy Maguire, George Charles Maguire, and Zahra Greene, as well as a treasured first cousin, Sally McCloskey, and many other cherished family members and friends. All will miss his kindness, his dry sense of humor, and his deep intelligence and curiosity about the world.

He was predeceased by his sister, Margaret "Peggy" Sullivan (Edward "Ned" Sullivan).

A memorial service will be held at Marlborough Congregational Church, 35 S. Main Street, Saturday, Jan. 28, at 1 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donating in Bob's memory and in honor of Janine to the Cure Alzheimer's Fund or to the Kezar Lake Watershed Association.

For online condolences, visit mulryanfh.com.

East Hampton

Elizabeth Ann Jordan

Elizabeth Ann "Betty" (Miller) Jordan, 92, of East Hampton, beloved wife of the late Raymond G. Jordan, died Sunday, Jan. 22, at Cobalt Lodge. Born Jan. 25, 1924, she was the daughter of the late Anna (Zenuich) and George Miller.

Elizabeth was a graduate of Windsor High School and a resident of East Hampton since 1945. She had formerly worked as a medical secretary having been employed at Pratt & Whitney and Liberty Mutual Insurance Co. Elizabeth was an avid cook, baker and homemaker. She was a member of St. Patrick Women's Guild and the former Blue Jeans Homemakers Group and a volunteer food judge for over 25 years at several Connecticut State fairs.

She leaves three children, all of East Hampton: son Gregory R. and wife Terry Jordan, son Christopher and wife Pamela Jordan, daughter Jean-Marie and husband Richard Lapiene and grandson Patrick Lapiene.

She was predeceased by her daughter, Barbara Jordan, and her brother Stanley and wife Jennie Miller.

Elizabeth was a communicant of St. Patrick Church since moving to East Hampton. Elizabeth spent the last year as a resident of Cobalt Lodge.

Friends called at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, Thursday, Jan. 26. A funeral liturgy was celebrated that day in St. Patrick Church. Burial followed in St. Patrick Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to St. Patrick Church, P.O. Box 177, East Hampton, CT 06424.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

Malcolm Whiting Graves Jr.

Malcolm Whiting Graves, Jr., 89, of Lisbon, and formerly of Colchester, widower of the late Mary Rose (Daniels) Frost Graves, passed away peacefully Saturday, Dec. 31, surrounded by loved ones. Born July 31, 1927, in Mt. Desert, Maine, he was the son of the late Malcolm and Lillian (Falkenstrom) Graves.



At the age of 17, he enlisted in the Navy and served proudly aboard both the USS Portsmouth and Portland during World War II.

Mr. Graves worked at Electric Boat from many years before retiring as a nuclear shielding supervisor in 1989. He was a longtime and faithful member (and greeter) of the historic Second Congregational Church of Griswold in Jewett City.

Survivors include five children (and their spouses), Peggy (Richard) Braman of Hebron, Cheryl (Edward) Libitzki of Bucksport, Maine, Sally (Scott) Hadley of Lamoine, Maine, Christina (William) Krenicki of Trenton, Maine, and Mary Belinger of Southwest Harbor, Maine; two stepchildren, Lesley de Labry of Groton-Long Point and Stephen Frost of Salem, Ore.; 13 grandchildren, Christopher Braman, Elizabeth Gallant, Jennifer Zibuda, Rachel McCabe, Andrea and Chelsea Libitzki, Daniel Hadley, Anya and Wm. Preston Krenicki, Andrew, Phillip and Marc de Labry and Eric Frost; 11 great-grandchildren; a sister, Nancy Trask of Old Saybrook; a sister-in-law, Mary Jane Graves of Ellsworth, Maine; and numerous extended family and friends.

In addition to his loving wife of 41 years, Mary, who predeceased him on May 17, 2009, and his parents, he was predeceased by Robert, Richard, Betty and Dorothy.

A memorial service will be announced by the family and observed in the spring at the Second Congregational Church of Griswold, 129 East Main St., Jewett City. Committal with military honors will follow at Maplewood Cemetery, Norwich. There are no calling hours.

Donations in his memory may be made to his church.

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

East Hampton

Matthew Bailey

Matthew Bailey of East Hampton died Thursday, Jan. 19, at the age of 27. He was born in Middletown, and is survived by his brother John Bailey and his grandmother Connie G. Markham.



Connie raised Matthew from the age of 1 1/2, since his mother, Helen Bailey, known as "Sis," was killed in a car accident. Matthew loved his grandmother very much and was so thankful for all her love and support in his life.

Matthew is also survived by Josh Markham and Cori Whiterly, Robin Markham, William and Susan Markham, Penny Markham, Debra and Dave Westcott, Vinnie and Cathy Garofalo and many more cousins and family.

Matthew was an artist and was very proud of his artwork. He graduated from Middletown Adult Education and was attending Middlesex Community College. Matthew was a kind person with high hopes of finishing college, moving out of state and reaching his full potential as an artist. He was loved by many friends, teachers and students who were a huge part of his life.

A service will be held at Hope Church, 230 East High St. (Route 66), East Hampton on Saturday, Jan. 28, at 1 p.m. A reception will be held immediately following the service at Epoch Arts, 27 Skinner St., East Hampton, with a special display of his artwork in the gallery as we celebrate and honor the life of Matthew.

East Hampton

Richard G. Brady



Richard G. Brady, 65, of East Hampton, beloved husband of Coby S. Hinkens, died Wednesday, Jan. 18, at Marlborough Rehabilitation Center, after a brief illness. Rich was born May 6, 1951, in Hartford. He is the son of the late George and Mary (Mosakowski) Brzezinski.

Mr. Brady graduated from Fairfield University in 1973 and began his career as an engineer at Pratt & Whitney in 1973. He continued to support engine modeling and engine testing operations with both Pratt & Whitney and with Computer Sciences Corporation until his retirement 41 years later, early in 2016. Rich is fondly remembered at Pratt for his knowledge and his extraordinary efforts to support his engineering customers as well as for his monumental dedication to his employees. He was very active in dog rescue. Rich and Coby rescued countless Special Needs Homeless Golden retrievers throughout their life together.

Besides his wife, he is survived by his children, his son, Gregory Brady (Brooke) of Roslindale, Mass.; his daughter, Kristin McLaughlin (Michael) of Old Saybrook; his son, William Knotek (Alison) of Frederick Md.; his daughter, Sarah Goncalves (David) of Wethersfield; his grandchildren, Zachary Miller, Grayson McLaughlin, Graham Knotek, Charlotte Knotek, and Hudson Goncalves; his sister, Katherine Safai (Abbas) of Ramsey, N.J.; several nieces, aunts and cousins.

Richard is also survived by his beloved Golden retrievers whom he loved dearly: Cody Bear, Samantha, Barnabas, Noah and MacGyver Brady. Barnabas, our certified therapy dog, was at his dad's side as he passed.

Richard was also dedicated to the acquisition of a K-9 officer for our town.

At Richard's request, there will be no funeral or public service. Donations may be made in his honor to Audrey Karamourtopoulos, DVM, Attention Golden Retriever Rescue and Stray Fund for Homeless dogs located at 125 South Road, Fremont, NH 03044. During their years together, Coby and Rich adopted countless special needs Golden Retrievers with many medical issues, mainly canine epilepsy, under the wonderful medical care of Dr. Audrey.

The family wants to thank Dr. Christopher Bentley, who has been his loyal physician and friend throughout the years.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.