

RIVEREAST

# News Bulletin

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

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**Winter Wonderland....** Snow didn't keep people away but instead added to the atmosphere as Marlborough held its annual Gathering on the Green last Saturday. The event featured the lighting of the town's Christmas tree, as well as a fireworks show. A full story and additional photos are on page 33. Photo by Melanie Merritt.

## How Many Voted for Belltown Hub?

by Elizabeth Regan

It may never be revealed exactly how many residents and taxpayers voted in favor of the \$18.98 million municipal complex on the eastern end of Route 66.

This much is known: The question passed by 30 votes during the Nov. 7 municipal election. The tally was 1,766 'yes' votes and 1,736 'no' votes.

But that was before election officials discovered through the Nov. 13 recount process – which was triggered by close votes in Town Council and Zoning Board of Appeals contests – that all the ballots with write-in candidates on them had inadvertently been counted twice on Election Day.

A Nov. 20 request by the *Rivereast* to view all the handcounted ballots was rejected this week by town attorney Richard D. Carella, of Updike, Kelly and Spellacy.

Democrat Deputy Registrar of Voters Terry Latimer said after the recount that the error occurred because write-in ballots were run through the tabulator first and then handcounted as well.

The winners of the two seats in question remained the same after the recount, even though the number of votes changed.

Election officials were tasked with recounting only the two affected offices. Per state guidelines, none of the other contests – including the referendum question – were tallied again.

In the Town Council recount, it was revealed that Republicans pulled in about 20 extra votes on Election Day due to the error. Democrats and members of the Chatham Party received a smaller number of extra votes, ranging from three to 15.

Some residents, like Chatham Party member and Town Council candidate Kyle Dostaler, wonder why the moderator didn't call for a broader recount once the double-votes in the Town Council and ZBA races came to light.

But Rosenberg said that's not how it works. "If something is discovered during a recount,

the place that it would be dealt with is in court," Rosenberg said.

State statute gives eligible voters seven days to make a complaint with the Superior Court regarding any discrepancies that are revealed through the recount process.

Dostaler, who did not win election in November but has served two terms on the council, expressed shock that taxpayers don't know how many people voted for the referendum question and how many voted against it.

He said the possibility that some ballots were counted two times raises questions about whether or not the slim margin of victory would hold if every vote were only counted once.

"This is a \$19 million question. Did it pass? Residents need to know," he said.

The \$18.98 million, 33,400-square-foot town hall, police department and Board of Education hub would cost a taxpayer with a home assessed at \$200,000 roughly \$220 per year, based on average annual grand list growth of 0.50 percent.

Latimer said in November and again this week she could not be sure of the specific number of double-counted ballots because all the documents are on lockdown following the election. She said she thought there were about 22 ballots that included write-in candidates.

Election moderator Steve Maynard did not return multiple calls for comment.

According to Rosenberg, election officials are not required to report to his department the number of ballots that end up in the write-in bin during an election or recount.

While town meeting moderator Red McKinney said on election night that the referendum question's 30-vote margin was close enough to force a recount of the referendum question, subsequent review of state election law by town staff revealed a recount was not warranted.

A recount is triggered when the margin is less than 0.5 percent of the total vote, accord-

See **Belltown Hub** page 2

## Husband-and-Wife Team Self-Publish First Novel

by Julianna Roche

For years, Glastonbury High School English teacher Mark Dursin and his wife, Sheri – a freelance writer, speaker and retreat presenter – have written stories, poems, blogposts, speeches and more. But they've always done it separately.

In raising their twin sons, however, the dynamic duo, who live in Marlborough, explained that they learned "all good things come in twos" – and with that, eight years ago, the couple decided to sit down and embark on the journey of writing a book together.

"And after years of writing, revising, hoping, getting rejected, almost giving up, revising, and revising some more... we can finally say we did it," Mark said. "We have published our book."

The Dursins' debut novel, *Labors of an Epic Punk*, was released to Amazon last week and the pair is now working on a sequel – "which hopefully won't take eight years," Sheri joked.

Originally, Mark and Sheri had planned to work with a publisher; however, throughout the course of that process, they realized they had

spent too much time "looking for validation in the world of traditional publishing," Sheri explained.

"People loved the idea and were really impressed with our writing, but when it got to the point where realistically, is this [book] going to sell, just like everyone else in the world, that's when you start hitting the rejections," she said.

Mark said the rejections were "demoralizing," and while there were times the pair came close to giving up, they ultimately realized the book was doing no good to anyone just sitting

on their computer hard drive.

"It was sort of a mental leap we had to make, something within us, to say that the story was worth sharing," Sheri added.

The young adult fiction book is set in the time of Greek mythology directly following the Trojan War and tells the story of a 16-year-old rebellious loner named Mac – short for Telemachus – who must undertake a series of missions, not only to keep from getting expelled from school, but to march out of the oppressive

See **First Novel** page 2

**Belltown Hub cont. from Front Page**

ing to state statute. In this case, a half of one percent is equal to 18 votes.

**Access to Post-Election Ballots**

According to the East Hampton town attorney’s denial letter, the *Rivereast* is not entitled to view handcounted ballots based on precedent set in a 1997 case before the state Freedom of Information Commission.

In *Romeo v. Town of Greenwich*, the commission dismissed a resident’s request to inspect the voting machines used in the town’s municipal election because of state statutes requiring a judicial order to unlock voting machines after an election.

State statute requires recounted ballots to be retained for 180 days and then destroyed, unless a “court of competent jurisdiction” rules otherwise.

Carella said it is those laws “that set forth the process by which the public may have access to the actual ballots of a municipal election.”

The Freedom of Information Commission was established in 1975 to ensure public access to governmental meetings and records.

Carella argued that though the complainants in the 20-year-old case wanted to inspect the mechanical voting machine itself, the commission’s decision extends to “records of election as a whole” – including paper ballots. The state began rolling out electronic voting

machines in 2006.

Dostaler said he doesn’t think a case revolving around antiquated voting devices is relevant to handcounted ballots in 2017.

“This is not technical, nor is it mechanical. It’s pieces of paper,” Dostaler said. “If [the town] can’t produce pieces of paper as a public document from a vote, why should we vote?”

Freedom of Information spokesman Tom Hennick said he is not aware of any cases involving access to post-election ballots that have been brought to the commission since 1997.

Connecticut Freedom of Information law requires public agencies to allow access to all public records “[e]xcept as otherwise provided by any federal law or state statute.”

Public records include “any recorded data or information relating to the conduct of the public’s business prepared, owned, used, received or retained by a public agency.” The law goes on to specify the data can be “handwritten, typed, tape-recorded, printed, photostated, photographed or recorded by any other method.”

There are 28 exceptions to the law. Included in the exemptions are documents relating to arrests, collective bargaining, pending claims and certain personnel records.

None of the stated exemptions apply to election ballots.

The *Rivereast* is appealing the town’s denial to the Freedom of Information Commission.

**Observations & Ruminations**

by Mike Thompson

Reading Elizabeth Regan’s recent story on the Podium Players’ production of *Annie* put me in the mood to watch the movie of it. Yes, I know there have been a few *Annie* movies over the years, but I’m talking about the original, the one I grew up with: the 1982 film, directed by John Huston and starring Aileen Quinn in the title role, with Albert Finney as Daddy Warbucks.

So, finding myself a few days later at the local public library, I decided to peruse the DVD shelf to see if *Annie* were there. It was, so I happily checked it out.

I watched the film over the weekend, for the first time in I’m guessing well over 20 years, and I loved it. It was as much fun as I recalled – moreso since I was able to pick up on the political jokes sprinkled throughout, something I couldn’t quite pull off when I was 10.

The songs were, of course, fantastic – well, most of them. There were a couple less-than-great ones along the way, and I wasn’t entirely shocked to find later that those were the songs written especially for the film, and didn’t come from the Broadway play. The Broadway ones – such as “Tomorrow,” “Hard-Knock Life,” “I Think I’m Gonna Like it Here” and the just-about-perfect “Maybe” – were, like I said, fantastic, and really planted themselves in my head.

The film was big-budget all the way, and it showed with some sumptuous setpieces. The acting (and, most importantly, singing) was solid across the board – with the standout performance being Carol Burnett’s hilarious turn as the evil Miss Hannigan.

I just had a great time watching the film – so much so that, when I took to the Internet after the movie was over to read more about it (something I often do with movies I enjoy), I was sad to see that, when *Annie* first came out in 1982, the critics savaged it.

While I enjoyed the lavish feel to the movie, critics thought it was overproduced. I felt the direction was very nice, with creative shots and choreographic decisions along the way, but instead Huston was blasted for not knowing how to shoot a musical. The performances were panned (except for Burnett, who was almost-universally praised as the best part of the movie), the ending was slammed, and in short the whole thing was seen as a misfire. Perhaps the kindest review from the time came from the late Roger Ebert, who wrote, after sharing several faults, “And yet I sort of enjoyed the movie.”

I just don’t get the beef. Was *Annie* perfect? No. For example, as I said, some of the songs written just for the movie were stinkers, and some of the new characters, such as Warbucks’ butler Punjab, don’t quite work. Yes, the ending is vastly different from the original play; whereas the play features FDR and the Secret Service exposing Rooster and Lilly as frauds and not Annie’s parents, the movie has a dramatic chase sequence, with

Rooster following Annie up a giant ladder; Annie nearly falls, but is rescued by Punjab.

The movie ending is much more action-packed than it sounds like the play one was (I’ve actually never seen *Annie* in play form), but you know what – if you’re making a big-budget version of a play, why not? Having read what the original ending is, I wouldn’t mind seeing a movie version of it, but it’s not like the ending of the film is a clunker.

Does my fondness for the 1982 *Annie* have something to do with the fact that, as I said before, I grew up on it, watching the VHS tape of the film several times? Yeah, I’m sure that plays a part. But mostly, the film just is a lot of fun: the actors are obviously having a ball, the production values are top-notch and, again, the songs are terrific.

So, here’s my verdict: If you’ve never seen *Annie* and the library in your town has it (it’s not on Netflix; I looked), get down there and pick it up. The critics in 1982 may not have liked it, but I think you’ll have a grand time.

\* \* \*

We’re fully ensconced in the Christmas season now – it’s just 10 days away – and I got an email this week from the Portland Knights of Columbus, Freestone Council 7, encouraging people to head down to New Haven to check out a pretty cool-sounding seasonal display.

The Knights of Columbus Museum, located at 1 State St. in New Haven, is, for the 13th straight year, displaying artistic representations of the birth of Jesus from all around the globe. The Christmas exhibition, entitled “Peace on Earth: Crèches of the World,” will be available to view through Feb. 19, 2018.

According to the Knights, this art form, referred to as a nativity scene or crèche and attributed to St. Francis of Assisi in Italy during the 13th century, is now a focus for artists around the globe. The museum is displaying a variety of crèches that the Knights say “showcases the diversity of cultures that created them and a faith history seeking to unite people across the world in concord despite global differences.”

“Peace on Earth: Crèches of the World” features more than 70 items, including the museum’s recent acquisitions of Polish szopki, stone sculptures from Zimbabwe, and Hummel figurines.

Also going on right now at the Knights of Columbus museum is the annual Christmas Tree Festival, a display of two dozen Christmas trees featuring ornaments and trim handmade by elementary schoolchildren across the state.

The Knights of Columbus Museum is open daily 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is free and so is parking. For more information, or to schedule a group visit, visit [kofcmuseum.org](http://kofcmuseum.org) or call 203-865-0400.

\* \* \*

See you next week.

**First Novel cont. from Front Page**

shadow of his famous father, Odysseus.

“We feel our story has a mix of adventure, romance, humor, and heart,” Mark explained. “Think *Clash of the Titans* meets *The Breakfast Club*.”

Sheri explained that the pair also took inspiration from the myth *The Labors of Hercules* and *The Odyssey* by Homer – where readers are introduced to the character of Telemachus when he is just an infant and his father goes off to war.

“You don’t see him again until he’s 19 and then the story picks up again, so there’s this whole unmined story [of what happened in the years between],” she furthered, adding the hope is their novel “bridges the gap.”

“The mythology is a metaphor,” Mark added. “We always thought for a teenage boy asking a girl to dance can be just as scary as fighting a minotaur.”

He said the novel’s characters, which range from misfits and social outcasts to popular kids and good students, are just normal teenagers with normal teenage problems – only they’re wearing tunics.

“The myth is just a means to tell a story... it always amazes me how kids love mythology, [but] they hate reading *The Odyssey*,” Mark said, adding that the classic tale is on his ninth-grade English classes’ reading list.

“They hate it because they think it’s boring... but when I explain it, they agree it’s a good story,” he furthered. “So if [*Labors of an Epic Punk*] in any way can sort of bridge the gap to trigger some interest in some of these stories, then that’s great.”

Sheri agreed. “The hope would be either readers who already love mythology might turn to this because they love the subject matter or someone who just happened upon it, read it and loved it, might be tempted to go back and explore [mythology],” she said.

Both the Dursins also noted that scattered throughout the novel are homages to some of their own favorite classics, including allusions to *The Canterbury Tales*, *The Wizard of Oz* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Admittedly, Sheri said the late 1990s teen drama *Dawson’s Creek* and sci-fi Netflix show *Stranger Things* also played a slight influencing role.



**Husband and wife duo Mark and Sheri Dursin recently self-published their first co-written book together, a young adult fantasy novel titled *Labors of an Epic Punk*, which is available for purchase in paperback or e-book form on Amazon.**

“Everything comes back to *Dawson’s Creek*,” she laughed, adding that they consider *Labors of an Epic Punk* to also be a “very accessible” and “optimistic” story for anyone age 12 and older.

“If you want to take a chance, we think it’s a good book and we think you might enjoy it,” Mark said. “We believe in it. It has adventure and romance, and humor, and as much heart as we can stand.”

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*Labors of an Epic Punk* can be purchased on Amazon at [tinyurl.com/y7e6w4nh](http://tinyurl.com/y7e6w4nh); paperback is \$14.99 and e-book is \$3.99. More information and the first chapter of the book can be found at [epicpunk.com](http://epicpunk.com).

# Committee Proposes \$1M to Fix Ailing Sidewalks in Portland

by Elizabeth Regan

The town's Sidewalk Committee last week released a proposal to spend \$1 million on sidewalks in the center of town, amid lingering questions about contradictory provisions in the local sidewalk ordinance.

The cluster of streets slated for the bond funded repair project was described by Sidewalk Committee Co-Chairman John Hall as "the least controversial" and the most "justifiable" way to begin fixing deteriorating walkways in town. He spoke last week at the Board of Selectmen's regular meeting.

Voters approved sidewalk improvements last November as part of a \$10 million bonding package to fund the Route 17 recreation park and to address infrastructure needs in town.

The core area of sidewalks was chosen as a way to promote safety and walkability in the most heavily trafficked areas of the town center, Hall said.

But some residents and officials have expressed concern about paying for sidewalk repairs as a municipality when the town's existing ordinance requires homeowners to foot the bill for the maintenance and repairs of their own sidewalks.

The ordinance, portions of which date back to 1934, authorizes the town to make repairs and charge them to homeowners who fail to keep them in good condition.

While the ordinance has been discussed at length – including in January at a public hearing on rescinding it – no definitive action has occurred.

The board last week agreed to assign selectmen Jim Tripp, Lou Pear and Mike Pelton to a newly-formed sidewalk ordinance subcommittee to discuss the issue.

The newest recommendation for sidewalk improvements does not include a previously-discussed proposal to remove portions of sidewalks on Freestone Avenue and Cross Street. Residents at an October public hearing were largely opposed to the removal of any existing sidewalks.

Public Works Director Rick Kelsey told selectmen the current plan is a "logical approach" that will set the tone for continued improvements.

"I'm just trying to get a sense if we should move [forward] or not," Kelsey said. "The shame of this thing is you finally have momentum to do something with your sidewalks,

which have been in neglect."

He emphasized the importance of sticking to a January or February deadline for putting the project out to bid. He said securing a deal when contractors are most eager for the work would likely yield savings of 10 percent, compared to waiting until later in the season.

While a definitive go-ahead was not given by selectmen, none of them objected to Kelsey continuing to lay the groundwork for the sidewalk improvements as recommended by the committee.

"I'm just going to proceed," he said this week.

Selectmen must give the ultimate approval when it comes time to put the project out to bid.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said this week that the sidewalks on local streets are part of the town's right of way.

"It makes some sense that the town would go in and get this done so that the public right of way is properly maintained for your safety and your enjoyment," she said.

One idea discussed in general terms at last week's meeting involved a possible cost-sharing arrangement between the town and homeowners adjacent to the affected sidewalks. A 50-50 split was one idea tossed around by selectmen.

As the Sidewalk Committee co-chairman, Hall said there are a lot of unanswered questions that need to be addressed before the recommendations can be successfully implemented.

"If the town went out and just repaired someone's sidewalk in front of their house and didn't ask them to share that cost at all, then isn't the town by [doing] that almost making a commitment to do that to the next house, and the next house?" he asked.

But he acknowledged that there are complications to deal with related to language in the bond resolution and the ordinance.

It is unclear how cost-sharing could affect the allocation of the bond dollars.

Bransfield said this week she spoke with town bond counsel, Bruce Chudwick of Shipman and Goodwin, who advised her that it is appropriate to look into a possible cost-sharing arrangement.

"It's something we've never done before," she said. "But is there a mechanism for doing it? Yes. We have to be careful the spirit and intent

of that bond resolution is adhered to and we proceed appropriately."

She emphasized there will be another public hearing to gauge resident opinion on the issue. She said she hopes selectmen will set a date for the public hearing when they meet again on Dec. 20.

A review of sidewalks in a half-mile radius of the town's schools by Public Works Director Rick Kelsey in August revealed it would cost \$3.22 million to replace approximately 7.8 miles of walkway.

Selectman Ben Srb expressed concerns about several issues, including whether language in the bond resolution allows the town to install new sidewalks in addition to repairing old ones.

Kelsey said the committee's recommendations include about 500 feet of new construction at the east end of Freestone Avenue and approximately 200 feet at the southern end of High Street to fill in gaps between existing sidewalks.

Srb asked for clarification from town legal counsel regarding concerns raised at the meeting, but did not say the project should be called off.

"We have a lot of sidewalks. We need to start somewhere," Srb said.

The newly-formed sidewalk ordinance subcommittee of the Board of Selectmen met Monday morning for about two hours, according to meeting minutes. Members elected Tripp as chairman. Bransfield, Kelsey, Hall and selectmen Rick Sharr and Ralph Zampano were also in attendance. Pelton was absent.

Tripp said Tuesday the subcommittee reviewed the current ordinance and discussed what needs to be updated. Members will look into how other towns handle sidewalk concerns before they meet again on Monday.

"What it boils down to is trying to figure out the best way to accomplish getting the sidewalks completed, including how the current bond project is going to be managed as well as



**The sidewalks in the center of Portland have seen better days – and last week the town's Sidewalk Committee released a proposal to spend \$1 million to repair them.**

what are the smart changes that need to be made going forward," he said.

Town Charter explains it is up to the Board of Selectmen to approve any new or amended ordinances, but only after a public hearing. A petition signed by at least 5 percent of qualified voters can trigger a referendum to overrule the board's endorsement of any ordinance.

## Sidewalk Replacement Plan

The following streets may see revitalized sidewalks if a plan by the town Sidewalk Committee to utilize \$1 million in bond funding comes to fruition:

- Both sides of Waverly Avenue and Fairview Street between Main Street and East Main Street.
- The north side of Spring Street west of East Main Street; repairs to sidewalks on the south side of the street between High Street and East Main will be funded through bond money reserved for sewer and road improvements.

ments.

- The south side of Freestone Avenue between Main and High Street and the north side of Freestone between Main and East Main where existing sidewalks are in poor condition.
- Additional portions of sidewalk on the north side of Freestone and both sides of East Main between Freestone and Waverly are prioritized for replacement if there's enough money left over.

# State 'Holding Back' Additional ECS Money in Andover

by Sloan Brewster

The state of Connecticut is "holding back" more Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding from Andover, Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen told the Board of Education at its Wednesday meeting.

"The state has put out what they're calling a 'hold-back,'" she said. "They're not calling it a cut."

"Call it what it is," Shannon Loudon, board chair, chimed. "It's a cut."

ECS funding will be reduced by an additional \$200,000 – bringing the total cut from the grant to \$316,000. Of this amount, \$153,000 will come out of the allocation to the Andover district, Doyen said. The other half will come out of the allocation for RHAM, the regional school district covering Andover, Hebron and Marlborough.

Previously, the board had anticipated a total cut of \$116,000 from the grant, about half of which, or \$58,000, would have come from

Andover.

As of the meeting, the board had not heard from the town about whether it would cut the funds from the school budget, Doyen said. ECS funds come to the town from the state and are then disseminated to the board.

The district is doing alright this year despite the cuts because it has been able to achieve some savings, Doyen told board members.

It was able to save \$60,000 in tuition funding for a special education student for which the district no longer has to pay. A \$40,000 savings came with the resignation of the Andover Elementary School assistant principal and another \$40,000 was saved by reducing the speech language pathologist at the school from fulltime to part-time.

"All together, it's about \$140,000," Doyen told the board. "So far for this year we look fine in spite of these cutbacks."

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In other board news, there have been problems with the heating system at Andover Elementary School.

A 209-gallon duplex steel tank is corroded on the bottom and needs to be replaced, Doyen told the board. She showed them pictures depicting the damage.

"This tank, as you can see is in pretty rough condition and needs to be replaced immediately," she said. "I wanted the board to be aware that we'd have the expense."

The district is getting quotes for the tank and anticipates a six to eight week turnaround to have a new one installed, Doyen said. She anticipates the project will be completed during February vacation.

Doyen said she did not expect the tank to fail before it is replaced and asked for permission to get the new one.

"There's no dollar amount on this motion," she said.

When the board asked for a ballpark figure, Doyen shared the amount of the first estimate she has received but asked that the number not be published as she does not want it to affect the other estimates she has yet to get.

The board gave her the permission to get the new tank as soon as possible.

In addition, a pump in the heating system has been malfunctioning and had to be shut down Wednesday, in spite of the cold temperatures, Principal John Brody said.

"There are two pumps, one of the pumps has been failing," he said at the meeting. "With the cold temperatures today we were maintaining but we weren't able to keep the heat up where we want it."

Because of the problems, "the sixth-grade wing was pretty chilly," Brody said.

The pump has since been repaired and, according to Brody, was set to be back online Thursday.

# Meet New St. Peter's Pastor

by Sloan Brewster

The Rev. Ron Kolanowski, the new pastor at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, had dreams he was preaching there before he ever applied for the post.

When Kolanowski learned the Rev. Everett "Perry" Perrin, a good friend of his, was retiring from the priesthood and that his position as pastor of St. Peter's was opening, the memory of those dreams came back to him.

"I literally had dreams about myself standing at the altar at St. Peter's doing Mass," Kolanowski said. "I thought maybe I should have a conversation with the bishop about my vision about being here."

Ultimately, he put his hat in the ring and the congregation, which has the decision making authority over such matters, selected him.

The priesthood was not Kolanowski's first career. In fact, the 60-year old has only been a priest for 10 years. Prior to donning the cloth, he lived in Washington D.C., working for the National Association for Home Care, which represents home health care agencies, VNAs and hospices across the country. While living in D.C., Art Engler, Kolanowski's partner of 37 years, was commuting via airplane to a position as a professor of the University of Connecticut School of Nursing.

"We realized that was not a long-term solution," Kolanowski said.

As they pondered their options, Kolanowski became a lay chaplain at a senior retirement community in Maryland. A former Catholic, in 1970 he had contemplated the idea of becoming a priest, and studied for a time in a Roman Catholic Seminary.

"I thought I was completely done with that, but it was really being this lay chaplain, that they kept calling me in this retirement community to stand in that place, that reawakened a call to priesthood," Kolanowski said.

There are some similarities and some clear differences between the Catholic and Episcopal churches, according to Kolanowski.

"The Episcopal Church is often called the

middle way; we are both Catholic and Protestant, so theologically we're Catholic in our approach but we govern ourselves and run ourselves like a protestant church," he said.

Some differences include that women may not be ordained in the Catholic Church and priests may not marry or be partnered, he said. In addition, in the Episcopal Church, the lay people of the congregation hold the accounts.

As he began to reconsider the priesthood, Kolanowski and Engler were thinking about relocating to Connecticut.

"We decided to explore my ordination and did we really want to move to Connecticut," Kolanowski said. "So, long story short, the answer became yes across the board."

They made the move to Storrs in 2002, and in 2005 adopted their first child, a 14-month-old baby boy.

Kolanowski was ordained in 2007; in fact, he marks the 10-year anniversary of his ordination this Sunday, Dec. 17. He spent his first eight years in the priesthood at St. James Episcopal Church in Preston, where he was an assistant priest.

"I loved those people; it was hard to leave, yet with my children getting older, I wanted to be closer to home," Kolanowski said.

Kolanowski said he and Engler still live in Storrs and do not intend to leave the neighborhood. Their reason for staying goes back to an important moment in December 2007, when they were hoping to adopt another child so their son could have a brother or sister.

"Our social worker drives up to our house and has two stuffed animals," Kolanowski said. He soon learned why there were two.

"We have premature twins at St. Francis Hospital, if you pick them up tomorrow," he said the social worker told him and Engler. "This is, by the way, three days before I'm ordained as a priest. I'm in shellshock right now. We had 12 hours."

In his frenzy, he called a neighbor and asked him to make a list of everything he would need to go buy at Walmart for the babies, who were

less than four pounds each.

The neighbor never called back. Rather, at 10 p.m., there was a knock at Kolanowski and Engler's door.

"The entire neighborhood went to Walmart and bought everything we needed, which is why we don't want to leave this neighborhood," Kolanowski said.

Three days later – and the father of unexpected twins – Kolanowski was ordained.

Kolanowski took over as pastor of St. Peter's on Nov. 1. His first Mass was a celebration of the Feast of All Saints.

"I wanted people to focus on the saints in their own lives," he said.

The idea was that all people are saints and so he asked the congregation to think of their loved ones and light candles for those they thought of as saints.

"All people at all times, those who came before [and] those who are here and now, are bound together in God's time," he said. "If we believe that everyone goes back to God then we're all part of God's body, this mystical body."

As the congregants lit candles and brought them to the altar, many became emotional, Kolanowski said.

"It was a very powerful moment for people who had never envisioned their loved ones as saints," he said. "So their first experience with me was that they're to participate fully in liturgy."

Parishioner Jack Gasper was at that Mass. "We lit a candle and my wife was very moved by it, by the service," he said. "It had some visual association. It's very personalized."

Kolanowski said he makes a practice of including the congregation in services. On his second week, they talked about veterans and passed out flowers for them.

"The week after that, I put Kleenex in all the pews because I want to send a message that it's okay to have feelings here," he said.

Ray Litwin has known Kolanowski for seven years; he went to St. James in Preston when he



Rev. Ron Kolanowski

was a priest there.

"He's the real deal," Litwin said. "He's passionate, he's creative, he's incredibly generous, he's always there for his parishioners."

Litwin and Gasper said they enjoyed the way Kolanowski includes folks in services.

"He makes everybody a participant instead of being an observer," Litwin said. "It's wonderful. Everyone ends up feeling better about themselves, their lives, their role in the mission and with God and reaching out to the community."

"I find him to be very uplifting and eager to try new things and make your spiritual experience more meaningful," Gasper said.

Kolanowski is now a month and a half into his stint at St. Peter's – and things have gone well.

"I've just had a ball; I'm really having fun here," he said.

# Outgoing East Hampton Chief Praised for Restoring Normalcy

by Elizabeth Regan

As East Hampton Police Chief Sean Cox prepares to embark on a private sector job in the defense industry, he said this week he is leaving the department with two big regrets.

"First, that I was unable to return Officer Burgin to his family in the same condition that he left for work that fateful Labor Day," Cox said during an interview in his office this week. "While I hope for his recovery, he's still got a tough road ahead of him."

Hardie Burgin was struck by a car last year while directing traffic on Route 66, receiving multiple fractures to the shoulders and arms, a torn ACL, and a head injury. He is recuperating from the most recent of several surgeries after having returned to light duty several months ago.

Cox's second regret is that he was not successful in diversifying the police force to better represent the East Hampton community.

He expressed optimism that the construction of the recently-approved municipal hub, including a police department, town hall and Board of Education offices, will be more attractive to a diverse array of recruits.

Cox has long pointed out that the lack of separate locker room facilities has stymied efforts to recruit women.

Without identifying the private sector defense company for which he will be working, Cox said he has always envied those who have served their country.

"At my current age and experience level, this new venue will allow me to fulfill that need," he explained.

Cox will officially vacate his post on Jan. 1, with his last day in the office scheduled for Dec. 22. He will be on call through the end of the year.

Town Manager Michael Maniscalco said this week he is exploring several options for temporary leadership while the town searches for Cox's replacement. He expects to announce an interim plan next week.

Maniscalco hopes to hire a new chief by the beginning of April, according to a recruitment timeline shared with the council this week.

Burgin, recuperating at home this week, told

the *Rivereast* that the department has seen a 180-degree turnaround under Cox's leadership.

"He inherited a police department that was by no means normal," Burgin said. "We were crumbling. He brought a lot of stability and order."

Citing Cox's efforts to increase staffing, re-establish the canine program and advocate for a new police facility, Burgin said the chief's progressive thinking has helped the town open up to the idea of modern policing.

"I'm going to be personally sad to see him go. Since my accident, he's been there for me every step of the way. But it'd be selfish of me to hope that he stays when he's going on to a new job," Burgin said. "I wish him the best."

Cox, a 21-year member of the Connecticut State Police, arrived on the East Hampton scene four years ago as the town began its recovery from a tumultuous couple of years highlighted by very public disagreement between Town Manager Jeff O'Keefe, Police Chief Matthew Reimondo, members of the Town Council and the people of East Hampton.

When asked by the *Rivereast* if he took the job back in 2013 because he thought he had the skills and experience to help the town heal from the political and organizational trauma, he shied away from the idea.

"The size of the community I think is what attracted me the most," he said.

Cox's 21 years with the Connecticut State Police put him in several towns east of the river, including Stafford Springs, Mansfield and Tolland.

He said being part of a small, family-focused community gives officers more opportunity for daily interaction with the residents they serve.

He gauges his own success as a chief by that sense of approachability.

"When I first started here, the barometer I had for being accessible was whether or not I could get a gallon of milk in uniform after shift. If I was stopped, then I was doing my job because people felt comfortable," he said. "Five years later, I can barely get to my car."

Maniscalco said this week the town will be looking for the same quality in its next chief.

"We need somebody who can take the time



East Hampton Police Chief Sean Cox, who has helmed the police department since 2013, is stepping down, leaving at the end of the month for a job in the defense industry.

to see what East Hampton really is, and work with the community. I think our residents are very responsive to that," he said.

Maniscalco described Cox's legacy as one that will last for generations.

Officers didn't have computers in their old Crown Victoria cruisers back when Cox started, according to Maniscalco.

Now the vehicles have been updated, technology has improved, a new police dispatch arrangement has been forged with the Town of Glastonbury and there's a new police canine in town.

"It's just really remarkable when you think of the mark [Cox] has made on the police department," he said.

Members of the town council are sad to see the chief go.

Council Chairwoman Melissa Engel said his departure caught her off guard.

"He's the best chief we've had in 30 years,"

she said.

Council member James "Pete" Brown described Cox's departure as East Hampton's loss.

"He's done a lot in the time he's been with the department, beyond what I thought anyone could do," Brown said.

Cox said he has been guided – and, in turn, guides his department – by the belief that every interaction with law enforcement is somebody's "Thanksgiving story."

It's what people talk about over the dinner table at holiday gatherings, whether they are describing a traffic stop, an arrest or a tragedy.

How that officer conducted himself is always an integral part of the conversation, according to Cox.

This is the idea he imparts in his officers: "If you treat each person you encounter like they were going to be sitting at your table for the holiday, how would you want that story to be told?"

# Hebron Finance Board Asks Town, School to Set Aside Funds

by Sloan Brewster

With the state pulling back more money than anticipated, the town of Hebron is looking at a \$1,004,000 shortfall in its budget – and the Board of Finance is taking steps to help mitigate that impact.

The Board of Finance, at its Nov. 30 meeting, asked Town Manager Andrew Tierney to set aside \$200,000 in the general government budget, and requested the Board of Education set aside \$350,000 in its budget.

Tierney this week noted a supplemental tax bill isn't entirely off the table either.

"We're trying not to expend those dollars," Finance Director Elaine Griffin said. The plan is to reserve the funds through a spending freeze, savings and attrition.

Superintendent of Schools Timothy Van Tassel said this week he would recommend that the Board of Education, at its meeting that occurred last night after press time, set aside the \$350,000.

The board has had a spending freeze in place since August, so it has some savings, Van Tassel said. There have also been staff changes, resulting in savings.

"At this point in time, based on the request for \$350,000 we do not foresee that we're going to have to make any reductions in staff," Van Tassel said. "This conversation could be different if we find out there's more cuts to be made."

While the board will set the funds aside, that does not mean it will not spend them if it comes to a point of need, the superintendent added.

"If there are any emergencies that happen between now and the end of the school year, the board's going to have to take a look at the budget and determine if the board can cut the costs or utilize the \$350,000," he said. "For now, we're comfortable with [setting aside] the \$350,000."

According to Tierney, even with the funds the town and school board are reserving, the

town will need to find \$450,000 more.

Initially, based on figures from the budget passed by the state legislators, the town anticipated a \$446,000 shortfall, Tierney said. But when Gov. Dannel Malloy announced his budget, an additional \$557,000 was taken out for a total of just over \$1 million.

"When the legislators finally approved a budget we got those numbers and we immediately went to work," Tierney said. "We thought we could fix it in house."

Tierney and his staff are looking into possible scenarios to come up with the money, he said. Those ideas could mean a supplemental tax bill or a cut to services.

"At that kind of money you're into services," Tierney said.

Another possible solution is to use funds in the town's unassigned fund balance, said Griffin.

"The Board of Finance wants to try to get the shortfall without further reductions to ex-

penses, we may do a supplemental appropriation from the fund balance and possibly a supplemental tax bill," she said. "I'm working on different scenarios to see how much we would need to do."

Possibilities include taking \$1 million, a half million or a quarter million from the fund balance and getting the rest in a supplemental bill, she said. The fund balance currently is 16 percent of the town's budget or a little more than \$6 million.

Griffin, who has been with the town since 1999 and has never seen it send out an extra tax bill, said it was too soon to say how the bill would be implemented.

"So it's a work in progress," Tierney said. "We're just putting the numbers together. ... I just don't think we're going to be able to do it without cutting services."

Tierney and Griffin will present options to the Board of Selectmen at its Dec. 21 meeting and to the Board of Finance on Dec. 28.

# Ransom Retires After Serving Marlborough for Three Decades

by Julianna Roche

A friendly and familiar face in Marlborough, Randy Ransom has served as town constable for the last 31 years. But tomorrow the 62-year-old will be hanging up his police badge as he settles into his first year of retirement.

Having originally grown up in Manchester, Ransom said he always wanted to move to Marlborough for its "country setting" and when he landed a constable position in town in 1986, he made the move while also continuing his then full-time job as a traffic manager for Hartford Office Supply Co.

Being constable "is a demanding position for someone to work even part-time, especially if they have a full-time job," he explained, adding that the necessary certifications and training requirements are the same for both part and full-time officers.

Municipal officers, Ransom added, are also charged with 65 hours in service training every three years, as well as an annual qualification for firearms, if they want to keep their police certifications.

"It's a very demanding schedule," he said, adding that members of the Marlborough Volunteer Fire Department have to follow similar requirements. "[They] get nothing back other than the reward of the satisfaction of being on the fire department."

Looking back on his own career, Ransom said he spent most of his time focusing on crime prevention and being "aggressive in patrol coverage."

"You have to be very visible. That's deterred a lot of crime," he said, adding that he's been constable for so long that he can recognize if a car in someone's driveway belongs to the homeowner or not.

"I never know what kind of crimes I'm deterring [by patrolling neighborhoods]," Ransom

continued, noting that as of late, however, he's found most of the crimes taking place in Marlborough have been involving car burglaries.

"I'm [also] shocked unfortunately at people's driving habits," he added. "The amount of accidents I've had to do over the years is enormous." Ransom estimated 30 percent of his cases have involved car crashes.

Throughout his career, Ransom explained that he's worked with countless troopers who have come and gone through the years, and that the constable's responsibilities and caseloads have also changed in that time.

For example, he explained that today the town needs a considerable amount of traffic enforcement, but that "unfortunately, we [local law enforcement] have the least amount of time to do that."

Police technology has also evolved, Ransom said, explaining that when he first started out in the '80s, computers were only used in the offices and barracks. Now, his police vehicle comes equipped with a computer, radio and camera.

After 31 years of catching burglary and armed suspects in the act and wrong-way drivers, Ransom said one thing he won't miss are the awkward, but occasional instances when someone he knows personally has a run-in with the law.

"Living here and working here has also been uncomfortable sometimes because I know everybody," he said, adding, however, that he was "spoiled" working in an overall safe community like Marlborough.

Ransom explained 10 years ago for example, a former resident state trooper was investigating a crime and interviewing a suspect who said, "I don't do anything in Marlborough because



After serving as Marlborough's town constable for the last 31 years, Officer Randy Ransom has decided to retire.

in Marlborough there are officers all over the place."

"Coming from a burglar suspect, that's quite the compliment," he laughed.

While Ransom will be leaving his full-time post as town constable, he said he does plan to continue staying on part-time in an administrative type of position.

"More paperwork, but that's okay," he said, adding jokingly, "I was hoping I could stretch

it out a little longer. ... I'm not saying I'm too old, but I'm too old."

Less time patrolling neighborhoods also means Ransom will have more time for his personal hobbies, which include restoring his collection of old trucks and target hunting.

"It's been a great opportunity for me to serve the town," he said. "I've had offers elsewhere over the years, but I decided never to leave. I always wanted to be here."

# State Changes Mind on \$230K Grant in Hebron

by Sloan Brewster

The state has declined to give the town of Hebron funding it had previously promised.

Town Manager Andrew Tierney was recently notified the town would not be receiving a \$229,420 Main Street Investment Fund grant.

The town first received notification in an October 2016 letter from the state Department of Housing (DOH) of its intent to award the grant. However, the promise was not binding, Dimple Desai, community development director for DOH, wrote in a letter to Tierney dated Nov. 27.

Desai told Tierney that, since its October 2016 letter, DOH had sought approval for the funding from the State Bond Commission, but to no avail. Then came the new 2017-18 state budget – which made clear the funding wouldn't be coming.

In the budget, signed into law Oct. 31, DOH's bond authorization for its Main Street Investment Fund grant program was slashed from \$8 million to \$2 million.

As a result, Desai told Tierney, "the DOH will be unable to move forward with your project due to lack of an available bond autho-

rization."

The project, which was proposed by the Main Street Enhancement Plan, consisted of two initiatives: a Main Street lighting project and a Pendleton Drive pedestrian project.

According to the project plan provided by Town Planner Mike O'Leary, the lighting project would have extended the colonial lighting that already exists on a portion of Main Street from Route 85 to Route 316 further east throughout the rest of Main Street. This would "unify the whole town center commercial district using this strong design theme of colonial street lights," according to the project description.

The Pendleton Drive project would have connected the Douglas Library parking lot to the Pendleton Drive cul-de-sac via a pedestrian bridge and walkway. The walkway would then have extended as a sidewalk on Pendleton Drive to another parking lot across the street from AHM Youth and Family Services and connected with another walkway back to the sidewalks on Main Street.

Despite the rejection of the grant funding, Tierney said the town would keep the project "in the works" and would continue to apply for alternative funding in the hope something will come through eventually.

"It's not really a surprise in the fiscal climate were in," he said of the DOH not moving forward with the grant. "We're disappointed that it got cut but we're envisioning it at some time."

At around the same time the town was first notified of the DOH grant, it was also approved for an \$880,400 Department of Transportation (DOT) grant, applied for through the Local Transportation Improvement Program, to install sidewalks elsewhere in town. The town is still set to receive the DOT grant.

The plans for the project, 90 percent of which is funded through the grant, are to install approximately 6,000 feet of sidewalks along Church Street from the intersection with Main Street to the Sunnyside Shopping Plaza. According to the grant application, submitted last December, the sidewalks will be located on the west side of Church Street (Route 85) from the

intersection of Hebron Elementary School.

The new walk will provide access to the United Brethren of Hebron Synagogue and St. Peter's Episcopal Church as well as the St. Peter's ballfield, the Russell Mercier Senior Center, and Stonecroft Village.

The sidewalk will cross over to the south side just after the intersection with Kinney Road, which according to the application, is significant because "this is a future signalized intersection in the long-term Village Green Master Concept Plan."

The sidewalk will then continue until reaching the Sunnyside Shopping Plaza, providing access along the way to the town's Church Street Park, Church of the Holy Family, and "a relatively densely-populated residential" area along Hope Valley and Brennon Road.

The town has fulfilled the requirement to hold a public hearing on the sidewalk project, which is currently under review by the state, Tierney said. Once the state completes its review, construction will begin.

"We're hoping in the spring," he said.



The Gathering on the Green, held last Saturday, was a big success, in appropriately-wintery conditions. Fire trucks were decked out in holiday lights and decorations for the annual fire truck parade, which ran down North Main Street in the center of town. Meanwhile, at right, selectman Evelyn Godbout (right) and sister Debbie enjoy the snowy celebration.



# Snow Adds to Fun for Gathering on the Marlborough Green

by Julianna Roche

It was a picturesque moment for those who attended Marlborough's annual Gathering on the Green event last weekend – which featured a holiday fire truck parade and a spectacular firework show, all amid a backdrop of faintly falling snow continuing throughout the evening.

The holiday celebration, held Dec. 9 on the Town Green, "went great," according to Marlborough Volunteer Fire Department Rescue Captain Mark Merritt, despite the town getting hit with just under a half-foot of snow.

"We kept getting asked probably 100 times, if it was still on," he continued. "I think some people were disappointed it wasn't postponed because they don't venture out in the snow, but we had to do it. We had to take advantage of that Hallmark moment."

Fire Chief Kevin Asklar agreed.

"The snow definitely added a new element to it," he said. "It really made it feel like a special holiday event with the snow coming down."

And while trucks from some fire departments couldn't make the parade due to the weather, Merritt said it was still a hit with the 1,500 residents who did make it out to the event.

He added the Marlborough Volunteer Fire Department (MVFD) "showed up in full force," he said, and that the fire department was also able to reach their \$5,000 goal needed to put on the annual holiday celebration, with enough leftover to be put toward next year's Gathering on the Green.

As per tradition, the night also featured pictures with Santa, holiday games and activities, music, refreshments and cookies.

Then just a few minutes shy of 6 p.m., resi-

dents merrily gathered around the dark Christmas tree sitting in the center of the Town Green, before chanting a countdown to the tree-lighting, which was done by the Coffield family – chosen by the MVFD to flip the light switch this year.

As the snowy evergreen branches lit up with holiday lights, wide-eyed children climbed atop shoulders of parents and families with hot chocolates in hand lined up along the stone wall facing North Main Street for the firework show kickoff, which Fire Marshal Joe Asklar described as being "an even bigger firework show than in the past."

For the remainder of the night, Marlborough residents sat joyfully watching explosions of color blast over the town green while snow-

flakes continued to fall around them.

Selectwoman Evelyn Godbout described this year's event as "fabulous," particularly the firework show.

"To be honest, when it started snowing with the fireworks, I thought it was just so magical," she said.

"We do this event for the community," Asklar said. "We think we got a real special thing going on here with the town and we hope to continue seeing even more residents come out next year."

Merritt agreed.

"We try to make it a free, fun event for everyone," he said, adding "a huge thank you" goes out to "everybody who came out and everybody who donated."

# Colchester Man Killed in San Diego

by Julianna Roche

A local 24-year-old man with a lengthy criminal history was shot and killed Sunday by a San Diego, Calif., police officer after he broke into a home there and armed himself with a knife.

According to a news release issued by the San Diego Police Department (SDPD), police received a call at approximately 6:07 a.m. on Dec. 10 reporting that a male – later identified as Kyle Zahacefski of Colchester – was attempting to gain entry into a residence in the Sunset Cliffs portion of the city by banging on the front door and windows “demanding a knife so he could kill himself.”

When SDPD officers arrived on scene, they found Zahacefski in the front yard of a residence directly next to the house where the original 911 call had come from.

According to the news release, Zahacefski began throwing rocks at the officers who were parked on the street below before running toward the residence, at which point the officers lost sight of him.

Police said they then heard the sound of breaking glass, believing the suspect was breaking into a residence. Following the sound of the breaking glass, officers found a glass door to the residence that had been shattered and upon entering the home, found Zahacefski standing in the kitchen with a fixed blade knife pointed at his throat, according to the news release.

Police said Zahacefski repeatedly refused their orders to drop the knife and instead began pointing the knife in their direction and quickly walking toward them, which led one SDPD officer to fire several rounds from his AR-15 rifle and another officer firing one round from his bean bag shot gun.

The news release states that Zahacefski was struck at least one time by an AR-15 round before collapsing to the floor. Officers attempted to provide first aid to the suspect; however, he was pronounced dead at the scene.

Police stated that two adults were asleep in the residence at the time of the shooting and neither were injured.

Police also learned that Zahacefski had traveled to San Diego one day prior to his death by bus, though the reasons for his trip remain unknown.

Leading up to his death on Dec. 10, Zahacefski spent years in and out of psychiatric and correctional facilities, beginning in 2009 after he allegedly threatened to kill his then-classmates at Norwich Technical High School, where he was studying as a junior in the heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) program.

In 2010, he was charged with manufacturing a bomb and possessing a sawed off shotgun, criminal attempt, reckless endangerment, threatening and an act of terrorism.

After spending eight months in a psychiatric hospital for young people and two months in prison following his arrest, Zahacefski was then charged with five years’ probation and a 10-year suspended jail term, according to a 2010 article from *The Day* of New London.

In 2012, he made headlines again being charged with third-degree assault and second-degree strangulation after allegedly head-butting a woman in the face during a domestic dispute, according to an article in *The Norwich Bulletin*, to which he was sentenced in 2014 with four years for probation violation and one year in jail to run concurrently on a charge of second-degree failure to appear.

## East Hampton Police News

11/30: After an investigation during a traffic stop, Julie Desiata, 34, of 48 Harbor Rd., Colchester, was arrested and charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of a controlled substance and interfering and resisting an officer, East Hampton Police said. Christopher Millette, 30, of 8 Lakeview St., was arrested and charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of a controlled substance, failure to drive right and operating a motor vehicle while under suspension, police added, and Jean Mahue, 30, of 48 Harbor Rd., Colchester, was arrested and charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, police said.

12/3: James S. Jarzabek Jr., 27, of 19 Collins Ln., Haddam Neck, was arrested and charged

with interfering with an officer, police said.

12/5: Edward Michael Brazauskus, 50, of no certain address, was taken into custody pursuant to an outstanding warrant for his arrest stemming from an incident that occurred in September 2005. Brazauskus was charged with issuing a bad check and fourth-degree larceny, police said.

12/6: Antonio Prozano, 33, of 503 W. Main St., Amston, was arrested and charged with driving under the influence and failure to drive right, police said.

Also, from Nov. 27-Dec. 3, officers responded to 17 medical calls, four motor vehicle crashes and five alarms, and made 15 traffic stops.

## Portland Police News

12/7: Amanda Roy, 31, of 138 Washington St., Middletown, was charged with sixth-degree larceny, Portland Police said.

12/9: Vrian Hunter, 25, of 72 Summer Hill Rd., Middletown, was charged with failure to respond to infraction, police said.

## Hebron Police News

12/9: State Police said Jason Goss, 42, of 122 Slocum Rd., was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol and making an improper turn.

## Colchester Police News

12/5: Colchester Police said at approximately 9:03 a.m., they received a report of a residence break-in on Cirillo Drive. According to the victim, someone broke into their vacant home within the last week and stole their Samsung refrigerator. The case is currently under investigation.

12/6: State Police said Johnny A. Bello, 23, of 212 Mountain Rd., West Hartford, was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol and reckless driving.

12/6: State Police said Gilbert Corriveau, 51, of 118 Benson St., New Britain, was arrested and charged with speeding, operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol,

and drinking while operating a motor vehicle.

12/8: State Police said Benjamin Wall, 19, of 1 Scalon Terrace, Lebanon, was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear.

12/9: Colchester Police said Robin Espeleta, 46, of 20 Balaban Rd., Apt. 603, was arrested and charged with failure to carry a license, traveling unreasonably fast for conditions, operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol, and risk of injury to a child.

12/11: State Police said Tyler Vashalifski, 25, of 8 Jan Dr., was arrested and charged with fourth-degree larceny, credit card theft, second-degree failure to appear, and violation of probation.

## Marlborough Police News

12/5: State Police said Daniel A. Pensak, 22, of 84 S. Hollister Way, Glastonbury, was arrested and charged with second-degree harassment.

12/5: State Police said Nathaniel E. Rodgers, 27, of 38 Lee Ave., New London, was arrested and charged with third-degree larceny.

12/5: State Police said Brittany Rondeau, 30, of 18 High Meadow Rd., was arrested and charged with third-degree larceny and third-degree forgery.

12/6: State Police said that Kathleen M. Taylor, 58, of 25 South Main St., was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear.

# Obituaries

## Hebron

### Keith LaRoe

Keith LaRoe, 65, of Hebron, passed away suddenly at home Monday, Dec. 11.

Keith was born July 5, 1952, to Edward and Rosalie LaRoe. He then married his soulmate and high school sweetheart Karen DuBois. He was a devoted husband for 34 years before Karen's passing and doting father to Wendy.



He was a mechanic and loved muscle cars. He was predeceased by his wife and parents.

He leaves behind his daughter Wendy and husband Brian of Hebron, brothers Edward and wife Geraldine of Massachusetts, Gerald and Carol of Tennessee, Alan and Sherri of Iowa, Dave of Ashford, Brian and partner Mark of Marlborough, Craig and partner Carl of Pomfret; and twin sister Karen and Don of Chaplain. Along with his beloved princess dog, Maggie.

There will be no calling hours per his wishes and a service will be held at the convenience of the family.

Since he loved Maggie and they spent hours together, donations can be made to PAWS of New England, c/o Marie Klinch, 15 Whittier Place, Haverhill, MA 01832 or donations can be made online at <https://pawsnewengland.com/donate>.

Wendy would like to thank her family and Keith's friends who have reached out during this difficult time.

## East Hampton

### Debora Ann Ryan

Debora Ann Ryan, 49, passed away unexpectedly in her residence in East Hampton Saturday, Dec. 2, while both of her children were away at college.



Debora was born Dec. 16, 1967, in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. Attempting at a better life for her children, Debora moved to East Hampton with her two children in 2005. Debora was a caring and compassionate woman with a lot of drive and determination. She was dedicated to her children and would do anything for them. Debora cared much for her friends and coworkers and was devoted to helping everyone around her.

Her life was committed to helping her children become the best they could be. She took the greatest pride in her children and all of their accomplishments, whether it was academics or athletics. She was so proud of the man and woman they are today. She wanted nothing but the best for them and was so excited to see them following their dreams in obtaining a higher education. Debora enjoyed watching her children grow up and play Little League softball and baseball. She also enjoyed the company of many animals in the household.

Debora was employed at Riverside Health and Rehabilitation in East Hartford, where she always enjoyed helping others alongside some of her closest friends and coworkers. Some of her best memories were spent at the beach with her family, or on vacations with her children, but her fondest memories were spent with her children in their home in East Hampton.

Debora is survived by her daughter, Kaylie Ryan, 20, of East Hampton, a junior at the University of New Haven and her son, Christopher Ryan Jr., 19, of East Hampton, a sophomore at the University of Connecticut.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, Dec. 16, from 10 a.m.-noon, at Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, with reception to follow at St. Patrick Church Parish Center. Donations can be made to either the Ryan Children Family Fund, c/o Liberty Bank; 2 West High St., East Hampton, CT 06424 or the Ryan Children Family Fund on [Gofundme.com](https://www.gofundme.com).

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

## Colchester

### Helen Mary Whitcomb

Helen Mary (Konopka) Whitcomb, 89, of Colchester, formerly of Lebanon, widow of the late Earl Wayne Whitcomb, passed away peacefully Tuesday, Dec. 12. Born Jan. 16, 1928, in Manhattan, N.Y., she was the daughter of the late Joseph and Marcella (Gorniak) Konopka.



Sharing 61 years of marriage before Earl's passing in 2009, Helen was ever devoted to him and their family. She always prided herself on caring for them and creating a warm and inviting atmosphere at home – especially with her talent for cooking.

She leaves her daughter and son-in-law, Carol and John Mulready of East Hampton; two grandchildren, Pamela A. Mulready of Middletown and John W. Mulready of East Hampton; her sister, Katherine Terpilak of Silver Spring, Md.; her brother and sister-in-law, Frank and June Konopka of Lebanon; and numerous extended family.

In addition to her husband and parents, she was predeceased by a sister, Florence Bowen.

The family will receive guests starting at 10 a.m. today, Dec. 15, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, before a chapel service at 11 a.m. Burial will follow in the New St. Andrew Cemetery.

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

## East Hampton

### Frances Sheila Klein

Frances Sheila Klein (Petruzzo) completed her magnificent life peacefully at sunrise, her favorite time of day, on Tuesday, Dec. 5. Born and raised in Hartford, she lived in East Hartford, Bloomfield and retired to East Hampton, where she loved her view of Lake Pocotopaug and her wonderful neighbors.



Fran's deep connections to people and passion for helping others filled her with life and love that she generously shared with family and anyone who came into her life. She had a remarkable ability to find the good in everyone. She was a force of positivity and wisdom, recently called "larger than life." She graduated from the University of Connecticut as a social worker and became a highly respected educator in the East Hartford Public Schools. She was innovative, accomplished and a master teacher, administrator and mentor. In retirement, she volunteered as a student advocate, making life-changing positive impact on children and their families.

Frances is survived by her daughter and her husband, Rhea Klein and Jack Ziemak; her son, Jeffrey Klein and his four children; her grandchildren, Farrell and husband Brian Hendrickson, Harrison and wife Laura Klein, Frederick, and Evan; cousin, Lionel L. Tulin, who was like a brother to her. She maintained close relationships with the nieces and nephews of her husband and their families: Peter Miller and Charles Douglas, Susan and Jolyan Butler, Danny and Susan Miller, Janey Lackman. She was a support and inspiration to her cousins' children: Roslyn and Brad Fitzgerald, Gary Vermet, Nancy and Frank Pych, Heidi Alexander, Susan and Ellie Kanner.

She was predeceased by her husband and soulmate, Frederick Klein; loving parents, John and Ethel Battalion Petruzzo; cousin, Susan Tulin; aunts and uncles, Eva and Max Chipman, Joe and Edith Battalion.

On Sunday, Dec. 10, a graveside ceremony at the Zion Hill Cemetery in Hartford was conducted by Rabbi Alan Lefkowitz, followed by a celebration of Frances' life at the Manchester Country Club that afternoon.

## Marlborough

### Lucille M. Gobar

Lucille M. (Shefcyk) Gobar, 85, formerly of East Hampton and Marlborough, died Tuesday, Dec. 12, at Marlborough Health Care with her loving daughter by her side. Born June 5, 1932, in Middletown, she was the daughter of the late John and Helen (Kilanowski) Shefcyk.



She was a 1950 graduate of Middletown High School, where she played basketball. Lucille had worked at Whiting Forensic Hospital as a secretary before her retirement.

She is survived by her daughters Susan Pitkin and her companion Arthur Grogan of Amston, Lynda Banning and her husband William of East Hampton; a brother, Robert Shefcyk of Middletown; five grandchildren, Jesse Banning, Neil Banning, Dylan Banning, Evan Silberquit and Ross Silberquit; and three great-grandchildren, Bowie Banning, Bellamy Banning and Benjamin Banning.

She was predeceased by her daughter, Heidi Silberquit.

Funeral services will be private at the convenience of the family.

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

## East Hampton

### Philip Thomas Pitts

Philip Thomas Pitts, 78, of East Hampton, beloved husband of Eleanor "Ellie" (Samuelson) Pitts died peacefully Saturday, Dec. 9, at Marlborough Health and Rehab. Born May 4, 1939, in Quincy, Mass., he was the son of the late Jeremiah and Mary Pitts.

Philip had proudly served his country in the U.S. Air Force. He had retired from Pratt & Whitney Aircraft where he had worked as an inspector.

Besides his wife Ellie he is survived by his children, Charles Pitts, Lisa Rodgers and Julie Blanchette, and many loving grandchildren.

Funeral services will be private at the convenience of the family.

The Spencer Funeral Home has care of arrangements. To leave online condolences, visit [spencerfuneralhomeinc.com](https://spencerfuneralhomeinc.com).

## East Hampton

### Hugo E. DeSarro

Hugo E. DeSarro, husband of 71 years to Marietta (Randazzo) DeSarro and a resident of East Hampton for 38 years, passed away Tuesday, Dec. 12, at the age of 98. He was born in Hartford April 19, 1919, to the late Joseph and Louisa DiSarro.



He was predeceased by his 12 brothers and sisters Ada DeMaio, Carmella Sylvester, Olga DeMaio, William, Angelina Trotta, Guy, Lydia Cullen, Doris Sassano, Elsie DiSarro, Alvin, Conrad and Joseph.

Hugo served in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Connecticut in 1950 and his master's degree from Trinity College. His collection of related short stories titled *For the Mare* was the first piece of creative writing Trinity College accepted as a master's thesis.

Hugo worked for 25 years for the City of Hartford Personnel Department until his retirement in 1975. He was a member of the Connecticut Coalition of Poet Laureates and a member of the Connecticut Poetry Society and was appointed poet laureate of East Hampton by the Town Council in 2015. He is the author of *Stone Steps*, a collection of poetry which he published at the youthful age of 96. It was a moment of great pride and personal achievement when this book was placed in circulation at the University of Connecticut library.

Hugo received numerous first place awards for his writing from the Altrusa International Poetry Society and in May of this year was honored with a Certificate of Recognition for his 19 years of participation. He published poems, stories and essays in a wide variety of publications worldwide and has received numerous local and national honors. In addition, Hugo penned "A Point of View," a weekly column for the *Riverast News Bulletin*, for over 30 years.

Hugo was a devoted family man who shared his love of art, literature and music with the community. Although he also played other instruments, he was best known for his talent at the piano. He entertained his many friends at the East Hampton Senior Center on a regular basis and was a frequent volunteer at other local facilities and community events. He carried with him at all times his notebook full of song titles he could play by memory, and would never pass by a piano without stopping to play a tune or two.

Hugo is survived by his wife, Marietta; his three daughters, Doreen DeSarro, Nancy Carbone and her husband Frank, and Anita Bellows and her husband Warren; six grandchildren, Jesse Carbone and his wife Margherita, John DeSarro, Emily Silva and her husband Claudiano, Raymond Bellows, Michael Bellows and Janet Kellum; and two great-grandchildren, Evalynn Kellum and Leo Kellum; as well as many beloved nieces and nephews.

The family will receive relatives and friends Sunday, Dec. 17, from 2-5 p.m., at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton. A funeral liturgy will be held Monday, Dec. 18, at 10 a.m., at St. Patrick Catholic Church, West High Street, East Hampton, followed by a burial in Mt. St. Benedict Cemetery in Bloomfield.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the East Hampton Senior Center, 105 Main Street, East Hampton, CT 06424.

To send online condolences and directions, visit [spencerfuneralhomeinc.com](https://spencerfuneralhomeinc.com).