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Is the door closing on the Elmcrest project in Portland? Despite the Board of Selectmen again rejecting a proposed tax abatement from the developer, property owner Fred Hassan is optimistic the sprawling campus – which includes the 1852 Brainard House, seen here – will still be successfully redeveloped.

Selectmen Approve Own Elmcrest Tax Break

by Elizabeth Regan

There are two types of negotiations, according to some Portland officials.

The first is when those on opposite sides of the table never have to look at each other again. The second is when they have to continue working together after the ink dries.

The Board of Selectmen last Thursday voted 4 to 3 to reject a tax abatement agreement submitted by developer Dan Bertram, as part of a plan to turn the former Elmcrest Hospital property into a neighborhood shopping center and 238-unit apartment complex. The selectmen opted to go with their own tax break instead.

The proposal from Bertram, which was presented earlier this month by property owner Fred Hassan in Bertram's absence, was a response to the tax abatement agreement hammered out behind closed doors by selectmen over the past few weeks. Those opposed to the developer's proposed agreement were Kitch Breen Czernicki, Brian Flood, Kathy Richards and Ben Srb.

Instead, selectmen approved the language they had agreed upon informally before Hassan came forward with the counteroffer. Six selectmen voted in favor of the board's agreement, with Brian Flood abstaining.

Economic Development Commission member Gregory Piazza stood during a public comment period before the board's deliberations to

ask members to accept the developer's tax abatement proposal so that the mixed-use project, which has broad support from the community, can come to fruition.

Piazza said the way negotiations are conducted can have far reaching implications for the project going forward.

"When you don't have to deal with the other side again, you can try to get everything you can; you can be outrageous and ask for outrageous things; you can negotiate a win/lose deal without any repercussions," Piazza said.

But when the other party stays involved after the deal, a heightened element of compromise may be advisable.

"You need to start by understanding what you really need, what would really be a win for you," he said. "Once you get what you need, you've already won. The trick then is to get some more while still leaving the other side with enough for it to be a win for them."

The difference between the two proposals is \$485,100 over the life of the tax abatement for the two-phase project, according to the town finance department. That amounts to \$34,650 annually for 14 years.

Under the rejected offer, Bertram would pay \$2.11 million in taxes on the new and improved property.

The selectmen's offer would have the developer
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RHAM Student Aims to Create Feature Film

by Geeta S. Sandberg

RHAM High School junior Bradley Plausse has known he's wanted to be a filmmaker since he was 12. It was then, he explained this week, that he saw the movie *Mud* starring Matthew McConaughey and Reese Witherspoon.

"It depicted a part of America I'd never seen before and it was so interesting," he said of the 2012 drama, which was set and filmed in Arkansas. "It felt like I was seeing the character of the place in addition to the actual characters and I thought that was so cool."

But Plausse, who lives in Andover, added even before that he'd delved into filmmaking in a way, when he'd make short movies on iPods with a friend who would then edit them on his laptop.

"They're still on Youtube but I'm not saying how to get them because I hope no one ever finds them," he laughed, adding "at some point I just stopped liking sports and started liking movies."

And now, Plausse is taking that interest and using it – along with skills and experience he's garnered as a half-day student at the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts and through involvement with the Community Voice Chan-

nel in Bolton – to make his very own feature film.

The movie, titled *Good Night (Or Good Morning)*, centers around a high school senior named Gareth as he deals with a home life that includes an emotionally-abusive father, and his interactions with an outspoken liberal girl he meets in his youth group one day who challenges him.

Plausse said he was inspired to write the script – which took five months to complete and another six to revise – after deciding last February that he wasn't going to date for the rest of high school.

Speaking to that decision he explained, "I thought [dating] was all a little silly."

A lot of Plausse's friends are already out of high school, he said, "so you don't even want to talk about it because in high school we're having all these problems but once you're out, there are much bigger problems and it makes those in high school seem much less important."

Plausse is also a Christian and said, "I think I'm a little too young to have a serious relationship." In addition he shared he's also "kind of a cynic" – even though his parents met at

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RHAM High School junior Bradley Plausse (middle) is currently in the midst of making a feature length film relating to the high school experience. With the help of friends Abram Hammer (left) and Josiah Edwards, Plausse is currently storyboarding the film, and said he hopes to begin shooting over the summer.

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oper paying \$2.60 million over the life of the tax abatement.

With no tax incentive at all, Bertram would pay \$6.24 million in property taxes over 14 years.

More than 100 people crowded into the Portland library's Mary Flood Room – and an overflow space with a live feed of the meeting – to see how a two-year-long debate about the tax incentive would play out.

A vast majority of the roughly 20 people who spoke or submitted testimony were in favor of approving the developer's proposal for a tax incentive. They agreed it's time to start moving on a mixed-use development where nothing has happened for over 10 years.

Proponents were also hoping to avoid a more adversarial option – referred to as a "threat" by some – that was broached by the developer in the form of a residential-only development with as many as 532 apartments. Such a plan, despite not conforming to zoning regulations, might be allowed under the state's affordable housing statute. The case would likely end up in court, where presumptions are in favor of developers.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield referred to Piazza's speech about negotiation strategy when speaking at length in support of Bertram's tax incentive proposal.

"Most people think in negotiation you have to get everything you can, and if you don't, you lose," she said. "They think that other people can't have anything left for them, because if they do, then you didn't get everything you could.

"But it doesn't work when you have to continue to work with that developer [and] that owner, because there's always going to be that residual animosity," she continued. "The other side will do things to perhaps cut their costs, and you're not partners."

Bransfield talked about fostering a relationship with Bertram as a way to ensure a mixed-use project that would include the preservation of three historic homes on the property, improvements to the water and sewer system, construction jobs, green space, economic development on Main Street and Route 66, and improvements to roads and sidewalks.

It would also result in \$4.2 million in revenue over 14 years, according to Bransfield. In addition to the \$2.11 million in taxes on new and improved property, she said the town would receive taxes on the improved land, motor vehicle taxes, and fees.

Most importantly, she added, the town would maintain control over the development through the Planning and Zoning Commission – which could be lost if Bertram goes the affordable housing route by proposing between 492 and 532 apartments on the site.

"There's nothing wrong with that kind of housing," Bransfield said. "What's wrong is the size of this community and the influx of additional housing that would require additional services that I can tell you, we don't have."

That's when Flood looked toward the property's owner, Fred Hassan, who was seated in the front row facing the selectmen.

"Do you intend to apply for this type of housing?" Flood asked, referring to the all-residential option.

Hassan replied that he intends "to develop the property."

"Sure. If the [tax abatement agreement] doesn't pass, do you intend to develop the other type of property we've been talking about?" Flood prodded.

Hassan said again that he intends "to develop the property."

"I'll take that as a 'yes,'" Flood said.

Hassan responded that he has to look at the options. "We have to develop the property. We can't go another ten years without developing the property," he said.

In the end, a majority of the selectmen remained unconvinced the board should cave to the developer's counter offer for a tax incentive.

Srb, the most outspoken opponent to Bertram's development proposal – not only at selectmen's meetings, but also as a member of the public in front of the Economic Development Commission and Planning and Zoning Commission – said the town could end up with affordable housing even if they think they're getting the mixed-use development that has

been described by Bertram.

"The reality is, just so everybody's aware, we can't write in the abatement 'no low-income.' You can have low-income with the abatement. So be it. That's the reality, just so everybody knows the facts. So it's not one or the other. It could be all in one," Srb said.

Srb, who joined Flood in philosophical opposition to tax incentives for residential developments, was adamant that every resident in town should pay a fair share toward town services. He said it's not right to give the developer a break on 85 percent of his property taxes when there will be children living in those apartments over the duration of the tax abatement who are costing the town money in educational expenses.

After many residents during the public comment period had vehemently disputed Srb's analysis of the exact financial impact of new children in the school system, he said it's a basic truth that every student in the school system costs something. Srb did not directly respond to criticism of some of his more exaggerated claims about additional resources, such as teachers, that would be required as a result of a development of that size.

"My point was very simple," he said. "I think people should pay their fair share."

But while Srb ended up voting in favor of the tax incentive agreement the selectmen came up with, Flood said even that agreement wasn't good enough for him.

Invoking Srb's "fair share" mantra, Flood said the concept is fundamental to the United States of America.

"I believe that's the way it should be. I could get behind some sort of incentive, but this is a bad deal. I think it's a terrible deal," Flood said. "I just don't think it's enough money. I think we're giving too much away."

Flood said he has been consistent in his viewpoint even when it's unpopular, pointing toward his role last summer in rescinding a previous motion by selectmen empowering Bransfield to move forward with a 100 percent, seven-year tax abatement for Bertram.

"I chose that night to become the a--hole, and the self-designated a--hole, and I thought that was necessary because that was no way to negotiate a deal with a developer coming into town," Flood said. "I did not feel this was appropriate at all. I felt this was sending the wrong message to a developer, that we will give you anything you want. We will forfeit \$7 million."

The question now is whether Bertram will agree to move forward with the mixed-use development, given the selectmen's take-it-or-leave-it stance and a history of antagonistic behavior by some selectmen.

Hassan said after the meeting that he was a bit surprised by the board's vote.

"I mean, with that kind of support from the townspeople, the board is certainly not acting the way the voters want them to move," Hassan said. "You couldn't ask for a better testimony from the people."

He said he would discuss the decision with Bertram and "continue the march forward."

Hassan indicated there may be ways to proceed that could make up for the difference between Bertram's offer and the selectmen's offer.

"Maybe [the selectmen] don't want one of the buildings or something; who knows?" he said, referring to the two historic buildings on the National Register of Historic Places that Bertram said he would preserve and reuse as part of the abatement deal. A third historic building is slated to be moved by a nonprofit organization from the center of the property onto land in the southwest corner donated by Bertram.

When one reporter said it seemed that Hassan was not completely closing the door on the deal even though the developer's tax abatement proposal was rejected, Hassan chuckled at the idea of using an open door as a metaphor for these negotiations.

"How could I close the door?" he asked. "I've been in this doorway, and I don't think it has a door that opens and closes."

Bertram said Wednesday he is withholding comment on the board's vote or his plans at this time.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said Wednesday she expected to hear from Bertram later in the week.

Residents Weigh In on Elmcrest

by Elizabeth Regan

About 100 residents descended upon the Portland library last week to listen as selectmen discussed a tax abatement deal that could make or break a much talked about plan for the former Elmcrest Hospital property. The proposal would turn the vacant site into a neighborhood shopping center and 238-unit apartment complex that includes three restored 19th century homes. Here are some excerpts from the residents who stood up to plead both for and against the deal, as well as some who submitted their testimony in writing.

Frank B. Connolly: "Public officials often have to make decisions without the benefits of fully knowing the long term implications and impacts. Thus decisions are made with the available facts at the time. The current proposal is not everything the selectmen have fought for, but I have seen enough movement on the part of the owner and the developer to feel it now is in the best interests of Portland.

"I have watched the property deteriorate little by little over the years. In my career I have had responsibility for vacant buildings, and it is not easy: the trade-offs of trying to preserve vacant structures vs. the ravages of time and the elements. I believe if an affirmative decision is not made now, any hope of building preservation will be lost."

David and Amy Jahnke: "Time and time again we have gone back and forth with Dan Bertram trying to get this to work. I see we budge a lot, but he won't budge at all. If Portland is so awful to work with, why hasn't he walked away? Why hasn't the owner sold to another offer? Why won't he change the housing number when the overwhelming issue with moving this project forward is the number of units? Simple. Dan Bertram and Fred Hassan stand to make a ton of money off this project. Now there is nothing wrong with that from a business standpoint. But don't demand a tax abatement for a project that is not going to bring us enough business. That is what this town needs. How many of us have to leave town to grocery shop, run an errand or eat dinner because of the lack of options this town offers? And what business does Bertram actually want to bring? A coffee shop and a pharmacy! Yeah, because we don't have three of those already!"

Lou Pear: "I have seen bitter controversy over the development of the brownstone quarries. Fortunately, we had selectmen who shared a vision with the developers for added recreation and business growth. Because of their 'yes' votes, we have Brownstone Exploration Park that is visited by thousands of happy enthusiasts each summer – and revenue from the park that allows our town to reinvest those dollars.

I for one am deeply grateful for the selectmen who were brave enough to envision changes that, although unpopular at the time,

saw the possibility of a better Portland.

Think of those who also faced controversy but had the foresight to think beyond for a positive change."

Drew France: "Why would I question the intention of the developer? All you have to do is Google 'Dan Bertram' and you can question the intention of the developer. In Danbury, he proposed to put a similar project through and in the end, he turned it over to students from Western Connecticut State University which completely changed the outline of that project and completely changed the tax base for that project, and still walked away with a tax abatement.

"As far as the 500-unit low income housing development, it's an unknown. It seems like it's a strong arm: 'If you don't give me this, this is what I'm going to shove down your throat.' And I don't think that's how people should do business."

Alain Munkittrick: "If you vote to approve the compromise agreement, the Brainerd Place development will result in the following benefits to our town: earned fees for permits and reviews, ensuring that costs to the town are covered; town oversight of what gets built and assurance that what is promised gets built to the agreed-upon schedule; tax revenue that will grow to over a million dollars a year; local construction jobs [and] permanent jobs related to the development's ongoing operations; spin-off growth of business development around the site; revitalization of the town center with the activity and economic benefits that more residents in easy walking distance to our Main Street will bring; fulfilling of a strong market need for high-end residences for our empty nesters and millennials who have few options and therefore leave our town; historic buildings – Portland's cultural heritage – preserved and reused; and, finally, the end of an underutilized site and the beginning of the end of an attitude that has broadcast to everyone around us that Portland is not business-friendly."

Ellen Foster: "Support this: for growth, for people, for development, to keep your younger generation in town. I think that's what this town needs."

Marcia Scheu: "Although I would prefer a lower number of apartments, it is certainly better than even more units of public housing that could be built with little town input or control. I would even sacrifice one or two of the historic homes in order to have fewer apartments. I am not a builder, but I have been in the historic houses and was shocked at the mold and mildew. It is hard to believe they can even be saved.

"I urge you all to move this development forward. I know Portland will not get everything it would like, and in the best compromise, everyone is equally dissatisfied. But I think the time has come to do something with that property."

RHAM Student cont. from Front Page

their junior prom.

"I'm not even going to the junior prom, although I'll be filming there," he said, "which is great for me because I don't need to rent my own space and make all the decorations."

Plausse has also gotten approval to film at a restaurant he frequents in Manchester, as well as various RHAM locations including in a classroom, the hallway and the cafeteria – and he hopes to get that filming underway over the summer.

"We're still in preproduction," he said of the film's status. "Filming will take place over the summer, then from September to May 2018 I'm hoping to be done with postproduction – I'd like to spend a lot of time on editing."

Currently, Plausse and two of his friends – Abram Hammer and Josiah Edwards – have been meeting up twice a week to storyboard the film.

"It's pretty strenuous," he said of the process of organizing and previsualizing a movie. "It's like running a marathon."

Plausse hopes to have that process, as well as the cast auditions, completed by May.

Regarding what made him think – at 17 – "I can do this," Plausse said it came down to realizing he had plenty of resources available to him, as well as a story to tell.

"I really want [the film] to be a picture of, not necessarily my life, but a life I don't think a lot of people get to see" he stated. "It's weird

living in Connecticut – which is very liberal – and being a Christian and a teenager at the same time. Those things are incompatible and yet I am all three."

He furthered, "I don't know how I do it and that's why I made a movie about it. Maybe I'll find out through the process."

But part of it, he added, is finding a balance between the secular world and the church.

"You need to be in both, because if you're only in the secular world you're probably not a very good Christian and if you're only in the Bible Belt you're probably a little weird and closed-minded," Plausse explained.

The main female character, Emily, represents being in the secular world a majority of the time, he furthered, while Gareth "is more in the middle."

Overall, Plausse stressed his movie centers around the themes of commitment, adulthood and faith.

"This movie is very much a reflection on high school dating, and how I wrestled with it as a Christian," Plausse concluded.

Anyone interested in learning more about Plausse's film or supporting his endeavor through donations can go to tinyurl.com/glkfozt. Plausse said he'll also be looking for extras for the movie, and anyone who might be interested can email him at bradleyplausse@comcast.net.

East Hampton Budget Calls for 14.57 Percent Tax Hike

by Elizabeth Regan

The budget proposed Monday by the East Hampton town manager and superintendent of schools includes a one-and-a-half million dollar question mark that could result in a 14.57 percent increase to the mill rate.

That's because Gov. Dannel P. Malloy wants to bill the town \$1.53 million to help address ballooning teachers' pension costs. While the state currently funds the entirety of the Connecticut Teachers' Retirement System, Malloy's recommendation would make each municipality responsible for about one-third of the cost.

But a final state budget must be approved by both houses of the state General Assembly and then signed by the governor. While the current legislative session ends on June 7, it could extend even longer if lawmakers adjourn without a budget and end up in special session.

As a result, Superintendent of Schools Paul K. Smith has tacked on a \$1.6 million "contingency for state budget uncertainty" line item to the \$30.15 million budget he recommended to the Board of Education in January.

Without the contingency line item, the school budget represents a \$1.09 million increase – or 3.75 percent – over the current year's budget.

Should the governor's state budget proposal go through unchanged and the full contingency line item be used, the impact would be a 9.26 percent increase over the current year's education budget.

East Hampton's total proposed 2017-18 spending plan comes in at \$45.96 million. That's 7.00 percent – or \$3.01 million – over the current budget. The general government side of the budget, including debt and capital improvements, amounts to \$14.21 million, an increase of 2.28 percent or \$317,021.

The hope among the leaders of school districts and municipalities throughout the state is that the teachers' pension payment is either eliminated or reduced by the time it gets through the state legislature.

In East Hampton, Smith explained that would mean the Board of Finance and Town Council could then reduce the contingency line item accordingly, while keeping the original 3.75 percent increase intact.

But the state's long and drawn out budget process presents a quandary for East Hampton

– and so many other municipalities – because town charter requires officials to have a budget ready for approval at a town meeting no later than the second Monday in May.

Municipal leaders all over Connecticut have raised concerns that the uncertainty will lead to overtaxing or undertaxing residents.

Town Manager Michael Maniscalco said Connecticut's Council of Small Towns, which is made up of 110 municipalities, has denounced the governor's teachers' pension plan on legal grounds. The Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents has also come out against the proposal.

The superintendents' association recommended that lawmakers instead create a team of education and municipal experts to study "structural changes in the retirement system so that it is rendered sound and sustainable."

The numbers out of Hartford show the East Hampton Board of Education stands to lose a total of \$3.15 million in education aid if all Malloy's proposed changes to education funding are approved. When the town's total municipal aid package is taken into account – both the general government and education sides of the budget – the town would see a total shortfall of \$2.38 million under Malloy's proposal.

If the governor's budget were to go through with no changes, Smith said the effect on East Hampton schools would be catastrophic.

He said the cuts would likely lead to laying off at least 25 teachers as well as eliminating the middle school world language program, middle school sports and all elective classes district wide. He said any activities and high school sports not fully funded by parents would also be axed.

But numerous supporters of the education budget who stood up during a public comment period at the beginning of Monday's finance board meeting did not talk about a 9.26 percent increase, instead referring to the budget as a "3.75 percent increase plus the contingency."

Board of Education member Tania Sones asked the finance board to send the school budget to voters "without reduction."

"I hope this board understands the due diligence the Board of Education performed while

assessing the education budget, including reviewing current obligations and discussing the true needs, to simply maintain the integrity of the education in East Hampton," she said.

The 3.75 percent increase in the education budget is driven by lower amounts of state funding and higher health insurance costs.

Both Smith and Maniscalco explained the town put its health insurance program out to bid when it was revealed rates could increase by almost 30 percent in the coming year. The selected program was the Connecticut Partnership Plan for municipal employees, which is cheaper than original estimates but which must be approved by the unions representing town and school employees.

The Board of Education's proposed budget estimates a 20 percent increase in health insurance.

To compensate for the increases, Smith said he cut one certified math interventionist at the middle school, reduced the middle school assistant principal from a 12-month to 10-month position, and cut some staff positions.

About \$150,000 in new positions and programs in the budget are balanced by expected savings from teacher retirements, according to Smith. While retiring teachers will be replaced, their seats will likely be taken by less experienced teachers at a lower pay grade.

Budget changes include seven new requests approved by the school board to help the district "move forward." Two of them – a special education program designed to reduce expensive outplacements and a new part-time technology position – will likely be accomplished at no additional cost by moving current staff around instead of making new hires.

The school board's budget includes \$35,000 as part of the 10-year accreditation process through the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The funds cover room and board for more than a dozen NEASC representatives who will descend on the school in March 2018 to make sure the school is meeting the organization's standards.

The education budget is also a response to pleas from administrators, teachers and parents to restore a Center School teaching position lost

to retirement last year.

Grade five class sizes range from 26 to 28 students currently; one additional teacher would result in class sizes of 22 to 23 in 2017-18, based on enrollment projections.

Additional requests include a part-time science teaching position, an increase in the hours for the part-time high school music teacher and the addition of high school junior varsity teams in cheerleading and volleyball.

The increase on the general government side was also driven by health insurance costs. Maniscalco estimated switching from the current Health Savings Account plan to the Connecticut Partnership plan would save \$146,132, cutting projected health insurance costs by about half, if approved by the unions.

Other expenses include a full-time police officer authorized halfway through the current year's budget. The East Hampton Police Department is currently in the process of hiring the officer. The proposed budget would continue to provide funding for the police canine program reinstated last year.

Also included are additional hours for part-time staff in a building department, which has been seeing a steady uptick in permit applications.

The general government budget includes increased municipal pension obligations, workers compensation and liability insurance, and a community contribution for the natural gas project

The capital improvement budget includes a lease program to cover a plow truck that caught fire in the town garage last year and expenses related to the natural gas conversion project.

For the first time, voters at this year's budget referendum will vote on the general government and education budgets separately. Referred to as bifurcation, the change was codified last November through the charter revision process.

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The Board of Finance continues to meet with various departments for budget workshops through tomorrow, March 18. The finance board will convene Monday, March 20, to deliberate on the budget, with a public hearing scheduled for March 27.

Resident's Hobby Yields Gratifying Finds

by Elizabeth Regan

East Hampton's Mike Lyman picked up metal detecting last year after he decided he needed a new hobby – and the rest is history.

He said he was inspired by YouTube videos in which metal detecting aficionados shared their discoveries and advice. He saw people bring up relics from deep down and long ago; he saw them recover expensive jewelry of the most recent vintage.

But what appealed to him most were the stories about those who unearthed invaluable mementos, like engraved rings, that they were ultimately able to return to the owners.

"I thought, how cool would that be?" he said.

It didn't take long for him to come up with his personal holy grail: a 2002 class ring with the name 'Nicole' engraved on the side. It was just six months after he first picked up his Garrett AT Pro metal detector. With the help of Channel 3 News, he was able to locate the ring's owner and give it back in a segment televised from the same East Hampton Middle School sports field in which he'd discovered it four inches deep in the dirt.

The ring belonged to Nicole Krucelak of East Hampton, according to Channel 3 News. She slid on the ring, which had been missing for 14 years, and commented that its return was nothing short of amazing. She never even knew where she'd lost it.

Before the class ring reunion took place, Lyman told Eyewitness News he was probably more excited to return it than the owner would be once she received it.

The gratification is still there.

"I'll tell you what, that class ring return was probably one of the top five things in my life"

he told the *Rivereast* last week. "Just that feeling of finding something that belonged to somebody, and you have the chance to give it back."

Another highlight in his first year as a metal detection hobbyist was the discovery of a King William III copper half penny from 1700, which was buried ten inches below ground in the middle school field.

"I didn't know what it was. I thought it was a knockout from an electrician's electrical panel. So I put it in my scrap pile," he said. "I got home, I started cleaning it off with a toothbrush. I said, 'Hey, that's a face.' Then I said, 'Hey, those are words.'"

He wondered how it got there: "Was it lost in the late 1700s? Early 1800s? I have no idea."

He surmised it could've been part of someone's collection that was lost in more recent times, but he doubted it.

"It was down pretty far," he said. "I'm going to say it was there for a couple hundred years."

Lyman said other finds include a total of \$137 in change, 14 rings, three silver earrings, a hundred year-old watch, a .50-caliber musket ball, and various items he keeps in a display case.

"After about 300 hours and 5,000 targets I've dug up, you come across some cool stuff," he said.

Some of the finds continue to stump him, like a gold gilded button emblazoned with a lion wearing a crown and holding an anchor that he found in Hurd State Park. The back of the button is too rusty to see.

"If someone could let me know what that is, that'd be great," he said.

Lyman is looking forward to embarking on his second year of metal detection as he continues to explore locations like the high school



Mike Lyman of East Hampton embarked upon the hobby of metal detection last year as a way to help preserve the town's history and to fill in the missing pieces of residents' personal histories. The twin goals are exemplified by his two most fulfilling finds: a 300-year-old coin and a 14-year-old East Hampton High School class ring.

field, Hurd State Park, Sears park and Day Pond State Park.

And he's not done with the middle school field that yielded his most rewarding finds, either.

"I passed up over 2,000 targets in that field last year. I have to go back and get them out this year," he said.

Lyman can be found online at [youtube.com/malyman24](https://www.youtube.com/malyman24).

Colchester Finance Board Talks ‘Hypothetical’ Budget Scenarios

by Julianna Roche

With the governor’s looming proposal to shift one third of teacher pension costs onto communities, many finance boards in small towns across the state – including Colchester – have reached a standstill in setting a final budget to send to referendum in May.

At its budget workshop Wednesday night, Board of Finance Chairman Rob Tarlov presented the board with 10 “hypothetical options” for what the budget could look like. The scenarios took into consideration, to varying degrees, Gov. Dannel Malloy’s proposal to shift \$2.15 million in teacher retirement payments to the town, as well as to cut \$2.28 million in other school funding from the state.

Ultimately however, the board’s consensus was that it was too early to assume the town would have to take on the full amount proposed by the governor.

“I don’t think we can talk about the top line until we figure out what our assumptions are on those other two lines [both the town and education budgets],” Board of Finance Vice Chairman Thomas Kane said, adding they were “two entirely different conversations.”

Andreas Bisbikos and Andrea Migliaccio were also in agreement, with Bisbikos noting however “it would be irresponsible” if the board didn’t at least “look at” the potential cuts.

“I think this [list of scenarios] was to start the thought process,” Tarlov said, adding the hope was to “start eliminating options” from the scenario list as May approaches.

“We have to give serious thought as to when we’re going to set that first referendum date and then we have to make a decision [on] what do we include on the revenue side in terms of ECS

changes [and] teacher retirement,” he continued, adding that even if for now the board opts to take the teacher retirement off the table, “that doesn’t mean it’ll stay out.”

Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein, who was also present at the meeting, added that Malloy’s proposed changes have also left many communities debating whether his controversial plan to pawn off \$400 million worth of additional costs to the towns raises legal issues.

“The towns had no [original] involvement in negotiating those pensions or setting the contribution rates. This is a state issue, so it must stay as a state issue,” he said, adding the proposal was “dreamed up as a way to shift responsibility away from the state” and further questioned “whether [the state] was legally allowed to do that.”

Board of Finance member Stefani Lowe remained on the fence however, adding that when state representatives Melissa Ziobron, R-34th District, and Linda Orange, D-48th District, spoke to the board during a meeting two weeks ago, they made it clear the town would not know with full certainty whether the governor’s proposal will pass “until it’s too late” – or past their budget referendum date on May 2.

“I don’t want to ignore this issue because this issue could mean a lot of hardship for our town,” Lowe said, suggesting instead the board discuss the town and education budgets separate from the governor’s proposal, but keep in mind “we might have some additional costs coming our way.”

“Until we come up with our town number and Board of Ed number – those are our priori-

ties – and this is kind of just looming over our heads,” she said.

Board of Selectman member Rosemary Coyle added that she felt by the end of April, the town would “be looking at what kind of pushback really is coming out of the legislature” in terms of whether teacher retirement costs will really become the town’s responsibility.

“[We’ll have] a much better picture of what we’re facing [then],” she furthered, adding that she felt the discussion of hypothetical scenarios, while “constructive,” was “a little premature especially if [the board] hasn’t gone through the budgets.”

“If it comes to mid-May and it looks more solid that teacher pensions will be in [the budget], we can adjust then,” Kane agreed.

Goldstein shared similar sentiments, stating he felt that it wasn’t a decision of whether to react to the proposal, but “it’s just a matter of when.”

The chairman added that on the education side, the board has already publicly talked about what it would take to reduce the total budget by that much – including massive teacher cuts and slashes to clubs, programs and sports – and “it’s not pretty.”

Kane furthered that talking about cutting \$400,000 or \$500,000 from the education budget was one thing – but “when it gets to cutting \$3 million from the Board of Education,” he didn’t feel comfortable making that decision.

He furthered that cuts of that scale would “forever change the way the town educates our kids [so] when it comes to fundamentally

changing education in town, the people who put us in these chairs should have a say on it before we do.”

Bisbikos then chimed in, adding it was “also important that everyone knows what those cuts mean specifically.”

“Sometimes we just see numbers and we don’t see what’s really being lost,” he said.

* * *

During public comments, several residents expressed concerns with the board’s discussion, including Deanna Bouchard, who said she felt to “discount” the proposed addition of \$2.15 million in teacher retirement funds was “[not] a smart thing to do.”

“I don’t think Melissa [Ziobron] could have made it any clearer... the bottom line was the state can’t afford it and they have no money,” she furthered, adding that it would ultimately become the town’s responsibility.

She also agreed with Bisbikos, stating she felt the board was not accurately communicating “the grim picture” to “the audience.”

Resident Amy McClafferty, who is also the Colchester Youth and Social Services coordinator, said she thought the finance board needed to also focus on “reevaluating what we’re spending our money on... especially for seniors and [people] on fixed income – how do you expect them to absorb this increase? I don’t have all the answers, but this is a big portion of the discussion that never gets talked about.”

* * *

A public hearing and information meeting to further discuss the budget will be held Monday, April 3, at 7 p.m. in Town Hall.

Hebron Budget Proposal Drops Following Preschool Tuition Hike

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Following a decision by the Board of Education last week to raise tuition rates for preschool, schools superintendent Tim Van Tassel shared the budget proposal for 2017-18 amounts to a 1.45 percent decrease from current year spending.

The tuition rates were increased from \$500 to \$600 per month for the full-day program, and to \$240 per month for the half day program which runs four days per week; previously there was no cost associated with half-day.

The increase was explained at the March 9 meeting as a response to some families’ ability to pay a higher rate, as well as concerns from some community members that the Board of Education shouldn’t cover as much of the cost as they have been.

In the current year the board is paying for 35.1 percent of the program or \$177,572. Parent tuition, meanwhile, currently covers 36.9 percent or \$187,000. The remainder of the program cost – \$141,219 – is paid for through grants.

Director of Educational Services Patricia Buell shared at the meeting there are currently 30 full-day Hebron Public School preschool slots and 18 School Readiness slots in the program, along with 25 half-day students.

Speaking to the importance of the program, she stated “the brain develops 90 percent of its capacity in the first five years of a child’s life.”

What that means, Buell furthered, is that “they need to be stimulated and enriched in an environment where they can develop and be prepared for learning as they move on. We do know sometimes children who don’t have the opportunity to participate in high-quality programming sometimes come in with limited exposure to language and readiness skills.”

But through the preschool program at Gilead Hill School children garner increased “academic, social and behavioral readiness.”

“So many skills are taught all day in these classes that prepare these kids for the future,” Buell stated.

She added the current program configuration is expected to remain the same next year for an estimated program total of \$570,487, and adjusting the tuition rate was suggested to help fund the program.

Parents, Buell continued, “are aware of the current fee schedule and have some idea fees could potentially be adjusted.”

She concluded, “The tuition is very fair. It’s a reasonable price for an exceptional program.” Board members agreed.

Member Maryanne Leichter stated “\$600 a month for a full-day program is a bargain – an absolute bargain.”

She furthered, “Our granddaughter goes to [Eastern Connecticut State University] and my kids pay \$600 a month plus for a half-day program five days a week. This is a bargain...and it’s just such an important step for our children for their future education.”

Meanwhile, board member Geoffrey Davis said, “This is a great program. I think this is something we need to continue to offer the students and the families, and if it’s to where we think we do need to raise the cost then I think we need to do it.”

Van Tassel shared his thoughts as well, explaining, “It is an excellent program that this community has to offer. ... It was not an easy decision to come up with an increase but it’s still what I consider to be a reasonable tuition.”

He furthered, “I do hope the perception in the community is that we are making strong efforts to try to respond to some of the concerns about the program, but also making sure we don’t compromise the integrity of the program.”

The board approved the motion to increase

tuition 3-0-1 with Leichter, Davis and Erica Bromley in favor and Phil Booe abstaining.

Kathy Williams, Kevin Williams and Carol Connolly were absent from the meeting.

As a result of the tuition hike the board approved, and in conjunction with savings in insurance, Van Tassel then explained last week that the proposed budget for 2017-18 would actually be a reduction of 1.45 percent.

The school board adopted a proposed budget for 2017-18 in the amount of \$11,743,132 in January, which is a decrease of 0.13 percent from the current year.

However, Van Tassel stated, “With the insurance adjustment – it’s now at a ‘not-to-exceed’ amount of 6.3 percent instead of 10 percent” as well as the tuition offset and the use of a grant that can be used to pay for a paraprofessional salary, the budget now amounts to \$11,588,546 for a 1.45 percent decrease from the current year.

That equates to a \$154,586 decrease, which the superintendent said “is a significant amount to share with the Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen, especially as we’re still trying to determine what we would do in the event that we lose additional monies from the state.”

Andover School Board Tries to Prepare for Budget Unknowns

by Geeta S. Sandberg

At a special meeting Wednesday, the Board of Education voted to transfer several items and projects from the proposed 2017-18 budget into the current year's budget.

The move was in an attempt to decrease next year's budget proposal – which was approved by the board in February and is flat with current year spending at \$4,320,821 – due to the current uncertainty at the state level and unknowns as to how much state funding will be cut from municipalities, or what other costs they might be responsible for.

At last week's regular board meeting Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen had explained, "I'm proposing moving some items from next year to this year's budget because we will have funding left at the end of the year."

The projects and purchases that were moved include upgrading plumbing for \$17,000; the purchase of classroom computer equipment for \$14,700; the purchase of IT equipment for \$10,000; and striping of the parking lots for \$4,000.

Two capital items not included in the operating budget were also added to this year's budget. These were: the replacement of a fire panel for \$25,000 and the purchase of a water tank control panel for \$20,000.

Together the transfers total \$90,700.

The savings in the current year's budget that will be used to pay for the above items in-

clude \$30,000 in magnet school tuition, \$25,000 from unemployment, \$30,000 from health insurance savings and \$5,700 from salaries.

Doyen's explained where some of those savings came from last week, sharing there were four students who left magnet programs this year "so we are not having to pay that." The unemployment savings came, she added, because "we hired those people back so we didn't incur that expense."

Meanwhile the salary savings came from a grant reimbursement for the preschool program.

Doyen added this week, "With the board's approval we would go ahead this year, and purchase these items and pursue these projects. I think it's going to help next year's budget because obviously, as you know, we have no idea what's going to happen, so it'll reduce next year's proposal."

Board members chose not to vote on the transfers at last week's meeting so they'd have time to look over the presented items, but on Wednesday the move was unanimously approved.

* * *

The next regular Andover Board of Education meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 19 at 7 p.m. in the Andover Elementary School library, 35 School Rd.

East Hampton Crashes Highlight Dangers of Drunk Driving

by Elizabeth Regan

A spate of collisions on Route 66 over an eight-hour span last weekend caused multiple injuries, closed down a portion of the road for nine hours and called attention to the dangers of drunk driving.

By the end of the harrowing night, three people had been arrested for driving under the influence in separate incidents, according to an East Hampton Police Department press release.

The first crash was called in around 5:30 p.m. Saturday. Police said they responded to the area of Keighley Pond Road to find a vehicle on its roof approximately 25 feet down a steep embankment south of the eastbound travel lane of West High Street. The vehicle's only occupant, Alyssa Jeffrey, 19, of East Hampton, was helped out of the vehicle and taken up the embankment to await the East Hampton Fire Department and East Hampton Volunteer Ambulance Association.

Jeffrey was taken to Marlborough Medical Center to be treated for minor injuries, according to police. She was later charged with driving under the influence and failure to drive right.

Police said the second collision occurred around 9:30 p.m. near the Tavern on 66 when a car hit a utility pole and rolled over. While officers were responding to that call, a second car collided with the overturned vehicle and then struck a third car. Police said there were multiple injuries.

The driver of the rolled-over car, Richard Schofner, 28, of Meriden, was arrested for driving under the influence, police said. He was released to the Norwich Police Department for an active warrant. The warrant stemmed from a February 2015 larceny, according to the state judicial branch website.

Police said the three-car crash closed down the road for approximately 9 hours in that area. It is an ongoing investigation.

The third incident occurred at 1:30 a.m. Sunday in the area of the road closure, police said. Officers were assisting Frontier Communications when Kathleen Laindraitis, 64, of Cromwell drove through the construction area, over cones, and under the downed utility pole and power lines. She ultimately came to a halt as a result of a second officer's signal to stop.

Laindraitis was charged with disobeying the

signal of an officer and driving under the influence.

East Hampton Police Chief Sean Cox said drunk driving is a widespread problem best addressed by a regional approach.

"Clearly, the volume of our interaction with the intoxicated motorists in such a short amount of time, where the majority resulted in motor vehicle collisions, highlights the problem we're having," Cox said.

Collaborating with other towns and the state would be the most effective way to get funding the small, understaffed department needs to address drunk driving, according to Cox.

The events of that night, which occurred on one main thoroughfare, showed the problem "is crossing through our town, not necessarily generated in our town."

He said identifying grant opportunities and then applying in collaboration with area towns could lead to DUI checkpoints throughout the spring and summer.

He cited potential partnerships with Portland and Marlborough for enforcement on Route 66 and with Colchester and East Haddam in the area of Route 16.

"Shared resources with a shared goal would also share expenses," he said.

Cox pointed to an effective collaboration addressing dangerous traffic conditions on Route 66 in the area of "The Ledges" and St. Clements Castle in Portland, which had support from local officials and state officials.

But more needs to be done, he said.

"With the resources I have and the challenges I face, both infrastructure-wise and call-for-service-wise, we haven't moved as fast as I would like," Cox said.

Cox, a former state trooper, said the Connecticut State Police is a valuable partner as well.

In January, the department borrowed a tricked-out camper called the BAT Mobile from the state police for use as a temporary command post when a leaking roof and drainage problems forced the closure of the police station for a couple of days.

The BAT Mobile is primarily used as a Breath Alcohol Testing (BAT) Unit, which Cox said could potentially be put on the road at a local DUI enforcement checkpoint.

"I think a joint effort is really the best way to move forward," he said.

East Hampton shade box

Police: Man Assaults, Runs Over Victim in East Hampton

by Elizabeth Regan

A local man is being held on a litany of charges after police say he threatened several people with a metal pipe, assaulted one of them, and then ran over the victim with his vehicle.



Banning

According to a press release from the East Hampton Police Department, officers were called on Sunday at about 1:47 p.m. to Coughlin Road. That's where witnesses identified the suspect as Alex Banning, 24, of East Hampton.

Police said witnesses told them Banning fled the scene in a white and black Chevrolet pickup truck after the assault.

Officers treated the 30-year-old victim at the scene before he was transported to Middlesex Medical Center in Marlborough, police said.

Banning was taken into custody a short time later when he was discovered in the parking lot of the East Hampton Stop and Shop, ac-

ording to police.

Banning was held on a \$50,000 bond until his court appearance the next day at Middlesex Superior Court. He was charged with second-degree assault with a motor vehicle, third-degree assault, first-degree reckless endangerment, possession of a dangerous instrument, second-degree threatening, two counts of third-degree criminal mischief, disorderly conduct, driving under the influence, two counts of evading responsibility, misuse of marker plates, failure to carry minimum insurance, operating under suspension, operating an unregistered motor vehicle, and operating a motor vehicle without a license.

Banning remains in custody, according to the state judicial branch website.

The database said he was arrested by East Hampton police in December on multiple counts, including felonies for third-degree burglary and conspiracy. In November, he was arrested by Middletown and Portland police for numerous charges including driving under the influence, evading responsibility, failure to drive in the proper lane and driving the wrong way.

East Hampton Police News

2/24: Amy C. Leitch, 37, of 12 Lakewood Rd., was issued a summons for operating an unregistered motor vehicle, failure to carry minimum insurance and failure of emissions standards, East Hampton Police said.

3/2: Justin Passanisi, 19, of 1006 Ridgewood Rd., Middletown, and Sean Pedevillano, 19, of 59 Clark Hill Rd., were each issued summonses for sixth-degree larceny, police said.

On 3/3, Pedevillano was arrested and charged with failure to drive right, driving under the influence and possession of a controlled substance, police said.

3/3: Brian Allen Cherry, 28, of 9 N. Main

St., was arrested pursuant to an outstanding warrant and charged with second-degree failure to appear, police said. He was also arrested and charged with carrying a dangerous weapon and possession of drug paraphernalia, police added.

3/5: Daryl Lminggio, 27, of 29 Watrous St., was arrested and charged with third-degree assault, driving a motor vehicle while under suspension and disorderly conduct, police said.

Also, between Feb. 26 and March 5, police responded to 24 medical related calls, six motor vehicle crashes and six reports of hazardous conditions.

Colchester Police News

3/6: State Police said Richard J. Vichas, 52, of 16 Meadow Dr., was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol and failure to drive in the proper lane of a multiple-lane highway.

3/9: State Police said Shane Borrelli, 36, of 30 Old Kent Rd., Willimantic, was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear.

3/10: Colchester Police said at approximately 3:22 p.m., they received a report of a shoplifting incident at the Stop & Shop on Linwood Avenue. Police said upon their arrival, the shoplifter had left the store with approximately \$150 worth of assorted meats. The case is currently under investigation.

3/10: Colchester Police said Matthew Daniels, 33, of 405 Linwood Cemetery Rd. was arrested and charged with use of drug paraphernalia, illegal possession of a narcotic, interfering with an officer: simple assault, and violation of probation/conditional discharge.

Marlborough Police News

3/11: State Police said Jamie A. McGaw, 37, whose last known address was 7 Cider Mill Ln., was arrested and charged with fifth-degree larceny.

Andover Police News

3/9: State Police said they are investigating a burglary into a residential home on Birch Drive, which occurred at approximately 1:20 p.m. Police said forced entry was made and several undisclosed electronic items were stolen. Anyone with information is asked to contact state police at 860-465-4500.

Obituaries

Colchester

Shirley Grayce Pugh

Shirley Grayce Pugh, of Colchester, formerly of Cuba, N.Y., and South Pasadena, Fla., widow of the late Frederick Pugh, passed away peacefully Friday morning, March 10, at the age of 91. Born Dec. 28, 1925, in Buffalo, N.Y., she was the daughter of the late Clarence and Mildred (Wasasier) Blanck.



Mrs. Pugh had taught elementary school in Cuba, N.Y., for many years before her retirement in 1990. While living in Cuba, she was a member of the Order of the Eastern Star as well as the United Methodist Church. In later years, Shirley had moved to Connecticut to be closer to her children. Mrs. Pugh loved music and had been an organist for the Franklin (CT) Congregational Church and was also a member of the Red Hat Society.

She leaves three children, Lynda Casey of Norwich, William Parker (and his fiancée, Norma) of Vernon and Jeanne Bussiere and her husband, Daniel of Colchester; seven grandchildren, Jennifer Lacy, Elizabeth Casey, Zachary, Calvin and Brandy Bussiere and Kathryn and Courtney Pugh; four great-grandchildren; as well as many extended family and friends.

In addition to her husband and parents, she was predeceased by her brother, Donald Blanck.

A memorial celebrating her life will be observed at 1 p.m. Saturday, May 20, at the Palmer Opera House, 12 West Main St., Cuba, N.Y. Burial will be private in Cuba Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to The Palmer Opera House or to the Cuba Circulating Library.

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

Courant

Amston

Virginia Ingalls Snell

Virginia "Ann" Ingalls Snell, 78, of Cape Coral, Fla., formerly of Gales Ferry and Amston Lake, passed away Wednesday, March 8, after an 18-month battle with cancer. Ann was born in Santa Barbara, Calif., Oct. 23, 1938, the daughter of Harold and Virginia Ingalls. She attended Santa Barbara High School and Long Beach State College.

While in Gales Ferry, Ann was an active member of the community, involved in the schools, PTA, her church, Our Lady of Lourdes, and various town committees. She served on the Ledyard Town Council in the early 1980s. She was actively involved in the Ledyard High School Improvement Foundation. More recently, Ann was an active member of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Fort Myers, Fla.

She will be remembered for her passion for many causes, her enthusiasm for life, and her caring toward others. Ann loved her family, and she truly adored her grandchildren. Ann also loved animals, and she was known to take in orphaned animals. She adored her many pets, most recently her precious pup, "Benny." She also enjoyed camping, fishing, sailing, bowling, and was an avid fan of the UConn women's basketball team.

Ann is survived by Wendell, her husband of 54 years, who provided devoted care to her during her long illness. She is also survived by her son, Duane Snell (and Yvonne Downes) of Plymouth, N.H.; her daughter, Cheryl Freeman (and Darin) of Ottawa Hills, Ohio; and her daughter, Beth Sponauer (and John) of Southington. She is also survived by six grandchildren, Austin, Maddie, Amelia, Zack, Nolan and Ryan.

Ann was predeceased by her parents, her sister Donna, and her very special Auntie Addie.

Donations may be made in her memory to National Brain Tumor Society. Private services will be held.

Courant

East Hampton

Julia Mary Jones

The UConn women's basketball and Boston Red Sox nations felt a significant tremor in the Force Friday, Feb. 10, when Julia Mary (Shermeta) Jones, 78, of East Hampton, took her final journey.

Julia was born Dec. 29, 1938, in Northampton, Mass., and passed away following unexpected complications from surgery in Atlanta, Ga.

She was preceded in death by her daughter, Meredith Moore, and her parents, Stanley and Mary (Shea) Shermeta, of Northampton, Mass., where she will be interred.

She is survived by her longtime partner, Fred Osterholtz of East Hampton; her sister Martha, brother Daniel of Northampton; sons Christopher Jones of Atlanta, Ga., and Jonathan Jones of Sarasota, Fla.; son-in-law Daniel Moore of Marshfield, Mass.; grandchildren Bryan Price, Mary Jones, Susannah Jones, Gretchen Moore, and Nathan Moore; and the loving family of her partner, Fred, including his son Fred, his daughter Louise, and their children, Ben, Kate, and Petra.

Julia graduated from Northampton High School in 1956, and attended Bates college prior to starting her family. She re-entered the work force in the early 1980s, eventually retiring from Hoffmann-La Roche Pharmaceuticals and forming her own company, Human Resources Systems Alternatives, which operated successfully until she retired for good.

Julia enjoyed travel, spending time with her family (both of those at the same time, especially), gardening, cheering for the Lady Huskies and Red Sox, and advocating for women's rights and the preservation of North American Wolves. She organized some spectacular vacations for her family and introduced her sons to their Irish heritage and family in southwest Kerry, as her mother had done for her.

During her lifetime, Julia's family, and extended family, came to know her as a force of stability, radiant joy, unwavering warmth, and genuine kindness. She spent countless, selfless hours caring for her daughter during a long battle with cancer and spent many more caring for those that loved her during her own battle with the disease. Julia made everyone around her feel they were the center of her world and empowered them through her strength and love. She demonstrated that each of us is important and that each of our accomplishments and chosen fields are something of value – that we should never be afraid to stand tall, to make hard decisions, and to stand for what we believe in. Her love and devotion enriched our world.

A celebration of Julia's life will occur Saturday, March 18, at the Garden House, Look Park, in Florence, Mass., at 11:30 a.m., with a reception and luncheon to follow at the Hotel Northampton.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to The Hope Lodge, Boston.

East Hampton

Scott Robert Minor

Scott Robert Minor, 53, of East Hampton, beloved husband of Victoria Tory (Man) Minor, died Monday, March 13, at Marlborough Health Center. Born Dec. 14, 1963, in Meriden, he was the son of the late Marc and Nancy (Logozzo) Minor.

Scott grew up in Meriden and spent his summers on Lake Pocotopaug before moving to East Hampton, where he and his wife built their home on the lake. He spent many hours on the lake that he loved, teaching his boys how to operate boats and avoid the rocks. Scott was a graduate of Wilcox Tech and was the owner and operator of Scott Energy, Inc.

Besides his wife Tory, he is survived by his sons, Tucker Scott Minor and Shawn Victor Minor of East Hampton; his brother, Timothy Minor of East Hampton; his beloved grandson, Ryder Minor; Trudy (Minor) and Roger Hart, Will and Betsey (Logozzo) Wright; and several cousins, nieces and nephews.

Friends may call at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, Monday, March 20, from 3-5 p.m. A memorial service and prayers will be held at 4:30 p.m.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.



East Hampton

Glenda Strickland

Glenda Strickland, 70, of East Hampton, passed away at Marlborough Rehab, surrounded by family.

Glenda loved being near the water, even if it was just a little stream. She would have given the shirt off her back to anybody in need. She went through a lot in her life, losing her son Matthew to muscular dystrophy in 2007. And even through all of the pain she still managed to smile, just to make sure her friends and family were okay. She would spend hours every day on the phone talking to her sister Frieda in Maine. Even though she lives in Maine, Glenda's face would light up just knowing that she would be talking to her sister. Glenda would tell everybody how much Frieda meant to her.

She is predeceased by her son, Matthew. She is survived by her husband Paul of 50 years and their children Tonya, Kevin and Paul. She's also survived by her grandchildren Michael, Katie, Nick, Nathan, Stacy, Linnea, Benji, Paul Jr., Jeromy, Marcus and Nicole. She's also survived by her great-grandchildren Michael Jr, Wyatt, and Linnea, and many, many friends.

Friends may call Saturday, March 25, from 10-11 a.m., at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, followed by a service at 11 a.m. Burial will be private in Swedish Cemetery in Portland.

In lieu of flowers memorial donations may be made to the Muscular Dystrophy Association at mda.org.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Colchester

Richard C. Jonah, Sr.

Richard C. Jonah Sr., 69 (aka Dickey), formerly of Colchester, passed away Saturday, Feb. 18, after a long battle with multiple illnesses resulting in cancer that claimed his life, with his family by his side. He was born the son of the late David and Marian (Lester) Jonah on July 31, 1947.



In addition to being predeceased by his parents he also lost his first-born son, Richard Jr., and his last-born son, Luke, along with his second wife, Diane, and brother, Robert Jonah (aka Bobby). He leaves his two sons, Jonathan and Dominick, and first wife, Lillian Jonah, all from Colchester.

Dickey lived his last 39 years totally blind and disabled from a tragic car accident as a passenger.

His ambitions, even blind, led him to create beautiful hand-crafted wooden ships like the USS Constitution and the USS Arizona, to name a couple. This caught the eye of the news media, which was televised and is on display at Cragin Memorial Library in Colchester.

Prior to his accident, he spent most of his career at Electric Boat at his favorite job: instructing. He started out as an electrician and later was selected one of two nuclear reactor instructors at Electric Boat. He taught all of the personnel, including management, the fundamentals of the reactors and safety measures working with them.

Dickey was very knowledgeable and talented, pushing himself to succeed and excel in whatever he put his mind to.

Dickey was a soft-spoken guy who saw the good in most people. Most friends would say he overcame his disabilities and accepted the challenges he faced with a bright smile.

He will be missed by many family members, cousins, nieces, nephews and numerous friends.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Sometimes, on some level, if I squint just hard enough, I can maybe feel a little bad for Sean Spicer.

Maybe.

The White House press secretary is, after all, faced with the unenviable task of having to make sense of his boss' lies and ludicrous claims. Last week, you may recall, I shared Trump's unbelievable series of early-morning tweets claiming that President Obama had tapped his phones at Trump Tower in the weeks leading up to Election Day. The claim was utterly unsubstantiated, of course.

Not surprisingly, the press wouldn't let Trump's preposterous claim go, so Spicer, in his daily briefing this past Monday, finally cleared things up: Turns out when Trump said "wiretapping," he didn't actually mean "wire-tapping."

The Donald, it seems, was talking about surveillance in general, not specifically wire-tapping.

"I think there's no question that the Obama administration, that there were actions about surveillance and other activities that occurred in the 2016 election," Spicer said Monday. "The president used the word 'wiretaps' in quotes to mean, broadly, surveillance and other activities."

Okay, yes, it is true in Trump's tweets he put "wiretaps" in quotes. But if he was talking about surveillance in general, as Spicer claims was the case, why couldn't he have said that? Why did, in his multiple follow-up tweets on the subject, did he go back to the word "wiretapping" over and over? Heck, why did he specifically come out and state, "How low has President Obama gone to tapp my phones during the very sacred election process"? (I know I mentioned this last week, but it bears repeating: our president misspelled tap.)

And the most obvious question: Why, when word spread he was accusing Obama of tapping his phones, did Trump himself not take to Twitter to clarify things? (He certainly is adept enough at using the thing.) Why did it take over a week for Spicer to clear up the matter, to let us all know that *of course* the president didn't mean what he said?

And here's the most obvious answer: Because the White House had to concoct a cover story. Because Spicer once again had to twist himself into angry pretzel knots to try to make some sort of logic come out of Trump's tweets.

Like I said, it's enough to almost make you feel a sorry for Spicer. Almost.

* * *

Also in this space last week, I made reference to Attorney General Jeff Sessions' contact with Russia during 2016. Lots of late-night comics, from Seth Meyers to John Oliver, talked about it as well, and I was disappointed that every one of those takedowns of Sessions that I saw included a cheap jab at the man's physical appearance.

I'm far from a Sessions fan, and I think it was terrible he was confirmed as our attorney general, but I wished the comics could've left his physical appearance out of it. It just came across as childish. Jeff Sessions provides more than enough reasons – through comments and through actions – to mock and criticize him. It's more satisfying, and more meaningful, to pick on him for one of those than it is to make middle school-level swipes at his physical appearance, particularly when he can't do anything about it.

Yes, Trump got elected despite a litany of similarly juvenile jokes about his enemies'

physical appearance. That doesn't mean it's the right thing to do.

* * *

While there were parts of the state – particularly the northwest section – that got hammered, for a lot of us Tuesday's snowstorm wasn't quite the blockbuster that was predicted. While the ice and sleet complicated things immensely – wedging my car out of its parking space at my apartment Wednesday morning was no cakewalk – in terms of inches, Tuesday's storm was more of your garden-variety heavy Connecticut snowfall. Granted, it occurred in the middle of March a mere week before the start of spring, so in that regard it was unusual, but it didn't bring the two to three feet many were fearing/hoping.

We weren't alone. The storm didn't materialize quite as expected in such places as New York City and Boston either. In NYC, for example, 18-24 inches of snow was predicted, but by late Tuesday afternoon there were only about seven inches reported in Central Park, with sleet and rain falling.

A snowstorm not going quite as predicted is of course nothing new. What's interesting is a story the Associated Press reported Tuesday evening. It turns out the National Weather Service, mere hours before the first flakes fell, realized the latest computer models were calling for dramatically less snow than was initially thought.

According to the AP, National Weather Service meteorologists in Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Washington held a conference call Monday afternoon to discuss those latest computer models. Though the story now had changed, the weather personnel decided to keep their warnings about the heavy snow intact.

Greg Carbin, chief of forecast operations at the Weather Prediction Center in suburban Maryland, told the AP the meteorologists felt that if they made a last-minute change down-grading snowfall totals, it would lead many people to believe the storm was no longer a threat. And it was; Carbin just stressed it was shaping up the threat would come more from sleet and ice than from snow itself.

And I feel that what we got here in Connecticut, while it may not have reached the February 2013-level proportions some of you may have hoped for (although I must ask, between friends: what's wrong with you?), was still significant. In my town of Manchester, when it was snowing on Tuesday it was snowing *heavily*, with the wind really blowing it around. The term "white-out conditions" gets thrown around a lot these days, but it wasn't an exaggeration at all. I believe the governor's decision to close state roads was the right call.

Would he have still made that decision had the National Weather Service forecasters changed their tune Monday night? We'll never know.

The bottom line is Tuesday still brought people a significant storm – a point University of Georgia meteorology professor Marshall Shepherd, host of the television show *Weather Geeks*, drove home in an email to the Associated Press.

"The perception of 'bust' is that it didn't materialize for New York in the manner expected. Much of the expected snow fell as sleet," Shepherd wrote. "To me, ice is a far greater hazard. If a pitcher throws a strike down the center of the plate or just off the outside corner, it's still a strike."

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See you next week.