

RIVEREAST

# News Bulletin

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**Once There was a Tree...** Inspired by Shel Silverstein's children's classic, Colchester Elementary School second-grader Tyler Bergquist recently created "The Giving Tree," which stands in the school's entryway. He uses the tree to collect items for those in need, both at the school and in the community. See story on page 20.

## Elmcrest Tax Break Signed, Sealed, Delivered

by Elizabeth Regan

The Fed-Ex package arrived at the Portland Town Hall on Tuesday afternoon.

It was a signed tax abatement agreement for a \$30 million project to bring 240 apartments and 89,400 square feet of commercial space to the vacant Elmcrest Hospital property while preserving two 19th century homes and allocating land to relocate a third. The fresh signature belonged to B.J. Bertram, the manager of BRT DiMarco PPT LLC and the father of developer Dan Bertram.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said the document was immediately recorded in the town clerk's office.

The agreement had already been approved by the Board of Selectmen on March 9, with six members voting in favor and one – Brian Flood – abstaining.

Selectmen didn't know until Tuesday if Dan Bertram would accept their offer or, as he has said he might do, reject it and move forward with a plan for 532 apartments under the state's affordable housing statute.

Under the terms of the deal, Bertram will pay 15 percent of the property taxes on all new construction and improvements for the first two years. He will pay 20 percent the next two years, 30 percent in year five, 35 percent in year 6 and 40 percent in year seven.

The deal also ensures a 30 percent cap on two-bedroom apartments. The rest will be studio or one-bedroom units, according to the language of the tax abatement agreement.

The selectmen's vote came right after they rejected a version proposed by Bertram that would have had him paying 15 percent of property taxes on new and improved construction for seven years. The developer's offer was op-

posed by selectmen Kitch Breen Czernicki, Brian Flood, Kathy Richards and Ben Srb.

The news of agreement on the tax abatement language was welcomed by Bransfield. She has been an ardent advocate for revitalizing the property – as well as the Main Street and Route 66 business corridors that emanate from it – through a mixed-use development.

"What I'm very pleased about is its strong support from the town, strong support from the owner and strong support from the developer," she said Thursday.

She credited property owner Fred Hassan with convincing Dan Bertram the mixed-use project is worthwhile. She described Hassan, who has worked and owned property on the site for decades, as "strongly committed to the heritage of what once was the Elmcrest Hospital."

On the phone Tuesday, Bertram reiterated that credit for the signed tax abatement agreement should be given to Hassan. It was the owner who agreed to reduce the sale price of the property by \$240,000 so Bertram could put that money toward property taxes.

Bertram, who had been visibly irked by his interactions with some members of the Board of Selectmen in the past, stayed away from recent meetings during which the tax abatement agreement was discussed. By his own admission, he was ready to walk away from the project on many occasions.

But Hassan had been a faithful attendee at meetings involving the property.

"Fred cares deeply about that community and I care about him. So we'll do a project," Bertram said. He has described Hassan as a longtime friend of the family who is like an uncle to him.

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## 'Annie' Comes to RHAM This Weekend

by Geeta S. Sandberg

When the school day ended Wednesday, a different kind of work began for members of the RHAM Drama Club: rehearsing for this weekend's performance of *Annie*.

As the students worked through their scenes on stage and the orchestra practiced in the pit, director Bailey Emerson watched from the audience, taking notes and giving directions to the cast and crew.

"Listen to the conversation... Speak with your faces!... Can I have work lights on please?... Run through those lines a little faster... I need my microphones for back stage!"

With performances mere days away, Emerson had a lot to think about, and plenty of details to pay attention to in order to ensure this weekend's performances fully dress the audience – that is, by putting a smile on their face. Because as one of the hit songs from the show states, "You're Never Fully Dressed Without a Smile!"

This year's performance is based on the original Broadway production of *Annie*, directed by Martin Charnin. The story is in turn based on

the popular comic strip *Little Orphan Annie* that premiered in the 1920s in the New York Daily News, and follows the escapades of the fiery orphan of the same name who lives in a dreary orphanage in New York City.

After an unsuccessful attempt at running away to find her parents, Annie is chosen by Grace Farrell, secretary to the millionaire Oliver Warbucks, to stay in Warbucks' mansion for Christmas.

Much happens during that visit, including Annie's impact on the usually cold Warbucks, and her interactions with President Franklin D. Roosevelt as he deals with a country in the midst of The Great Depression. In addition, the story is ultimately about Annie's desire to find her real parents, and Warbucks' assistance in the search for them, even though he dreads the thought of losing Annie.

The original 1977 Broadway production of the show won seven tony awards including Best Musical, Best Book of a Musical, and Best Original Score. "*Annie*" has since been revived on Broadway twice – in 1997 and 2012 – and

See 'Annie' page 2



The sun will come out in Hebron this weekend as the RHAM Drama Club performs the award-winning musical *Annie*. Here at rehearsal Wednesday, cast members – including Sarah Aissis as Annie – practice the number "Tomorrow."



**'Annie' cont. from Front Page**

is the 13th longest running American musical in Broadway history.

Emerson shared of preparing for this weekend's performance, "This has been quite a whirlwind of a production! I am about seven months pregnant!"

Helping her through the process, she added, were "wonderful kids working as stage managers" Lindsay Covell and Charlotte Heersping, as well as Jenna Mercer as props manager, and Jen Vincenzo as dance captain.

All of them, she said, have "been a tremendous help to me throughout the process."

As far as the cast goes, acting as Oliver Warbucks in this weekend's performance is senior Jacob Lee. He said this week he was "very excited" to play Warbucks, and explained this was the first time he was playing a character who isn't the villain.

"My favorite thing about Warbucks," he shared, "is how quickly his character transitions from being a cold millionaire to a warm and optimistic man."

Lee added he was excited for the audience's reaction to the show.

"I look forward to putting on a classic, feel-good musical that'll leave the audience brimming with joy."

Meanwhile, taking to the stage this weekend in her first role is senior Claire Russo as Warbucks' secretary.

Russo said she was originally nervous about her role as Grace, but was "quickly calmed" by the directors and her cast mates.

Speaking to what she was excited about, she stated, "I am most excited to showcase everything we have worked towards the past couple of months."

As for senior Stella Maranos, who will be playing Miss Hannigan, she said she hoped the audience had fun watching the show the same way she's had fun being a part of the RHAM

Drama Club each year since she's been in seventh grade.

She added of her role, "I enjoy playing Miss Hannigan, I think she is a very fun role; I'm used to playing villains, but it's very fun being a complete train wreck."

Along with the lead characters, *Annie* is also chock-full of orphans, two of whom are played by junior Erica Day as Pepper and seventh-grader Catherine Chester as Molly.

Day shared between scenes Wednesday that she loved playing Pepper, "a very mean orphan."

"She's one of the bullies of the group and for me, I'm usually very respectful to people so I think it's kind of a change and it's nice to have a different character to play," she said.

Day added her favorite scene is in the beginning of the play, when the audience gets a peek at the harsh conditions of the orphanage "and it shows how angry they are and I just love their pure hatred for the orphanage."

As for Chester, who is with the drama club for the first time, playing Molly has been "a lot of fun."

"I enjoyed being her – being bratty, being a snob – it's a lot of fun," Chester said.

Chester added she was inspired to join the drama club because she looks up to her older sister who has been in "a lot of productions" in Glastonbury, and was looking forward to her family seeing her perform.

The public can see Chester as Molly, plus all the rest of the cast as well, when they perform *Annie* tonight, tomorrow and Sunday.

\* \* \*

Performances take place tonight, Friday, March 24, at 7 p.m.; tomorrow, Saturday, March 25, at 7 p.m.; and Sunday, March 26, at 2 p.m. in the RHAM High School auditorium.

Tickets cost \$10 for adults and \$3 for students and children under 18.



**President Roosevelt (Matthew Ziron) discusses the seemingly hopeless state of America during the Great Depression with members of his cabinet during Wednesday's rehearsal. Performances of the spring musical takes place tonight through Sunday.**

**Elmcrest cont. from Front Page**

Bertram said he will now submit a zoning application to the Planning and Zoning Commission. He will also work with Economic Development Chairman Elwin Guild, who is in the process of forming a nonprofit organization that will take ownership of the 1830 Hart-Jarvis property and move it to a parcel on the southwest corner of the site donated by Bertram.

The imposing Greek revival home, dominated by four massive pillars, will face out onto Main Street and will be visible from the Arrigoni Bridge. Its front lawn will be town-owned property deeded to Portland as open space by former car dealer Charles Wiltsie.

Guild, reached by phone Wednesday, said the plan to take over the Hart-Jarvis home as a nonprofit operation was critical to the success of the tax abatement agreement. It releases Bertram from the considerable expense of restoring it, he said, and added, "It's also fundamental to what the Economic Development Commission sees as the cornerstone to Main Street development since it will be the gateway to the town from the [Arrigoni] Bridge."

He said grassroots support has helped the project grow into something that will help ensure the preservation of the site's important historic homes and bolster economic development – but the project still has a long way to go.

In addition to the planning and zoning process, he cited traffic concerns and involvement by the state Department of Transportation as key to a successful project.

Planning and Zoning Commission alternate member Michael Woronoff, who has been critical of the density of residential construction in the proposed development, looks at the tax abatement agreement as a better deal for the town than previous drafts.

"I think it was good that four of our selectmen had some conviction in the deal they presented to the developer and they stuck with it. The developer agreed to it. Did they leave some money on the table? I guess, but they prevented leaving more money on the table," Woronoff said.

The deal has been whittled down significantly from Bertram's original request for a full property tax break on all new and improved construction for seven years.

Under the recently-inked deal, Bertram will be paying approximately \$2.60 million over the life of the tax abatement on the two-phase project, based on finance department projections.

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

According to Woronoff, the tax abatement goes further in ensuring the preservation of the historic homes on the property than language in a change to zoning regulations enacted by the Planning and Zoning Commission last year.

The zoning change allows developers to apply for a special permit increasing the allowable number of apartments in a development based on a ratio of 16 housing units for each 5,000 square feet of commercial space – but only if the proposal incorporates "the preservation of significant historic resources identified in the town's Plan of Conservation and Development."

Woronoff and other critics of the proposal have said the zoning regulation doesn't have enough specifics to force a developer to save the homes.

Selectman Brian Flood – the one member of the board who did not vote for the tax abatement agreement – said he wishes the deal could have saved taxpayers more money.

"I think I was open to some extent for a tax abatement, but this was clearly too heavily residential for my liking," Flood said.

Asked what he thinks about what the project means for the town going forward, Flood said that's hard to predict. He said he's had doubts about the development's viability since the days when Bertram said he couldn't pull it off without a 100 percent, seven-year tax break.

"But I really have never gotten involved in that sort of decision-making. I don't know that that's really in my province. I really just focused on the tax incentive side of this," Flood said. "I believe people have a right to make a living, and if they feel it's a viable business, who am I to say 'no'?"

In contrast, selectman Ben Srb has been a vocal opponent of the project in numerous forums since Bertram came onto the Portland scene. Srb, elected in 2015, spoke several times last year as a member of the public at meetings and public hearings of the Planning and Zoning Commission and, at the commission's July 14 regular meeting, injected himself into deliberations to the point of being reprimanded by the town attorney.

Behind the selectman's table, he continued to oppose the developer's efforts to get a tax abatement until this month, when he voted with five other selectmen on the agreement.

Srb did not respond to requests for comment.

## Andover Grand List Falls by 3 Percent

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Following a revaluation of the town's property, the 2016 Andover Grand List, which represents the assessed value of all taxable property in town, has decreased by 3 percent – a drop that proved troubling to the Board of Finance chairman.

The Grand List dropped \$8.12 million, from \$269,077,100 to \$260,897,900.

Revaluation, which municipalities are required by state law to perform every five years, is the process of equalizing real estate in town based on current market values.

The values used to determine assessments are derived from data tables developed from sales that took place over the previous 18 months. These tables are then applied to all properties in town, which generates the "Fair Market Value."

Although real estate saw a reduction of \$8,699,200, personal property and motor vehicles – which are assessed each year at current market values – actually saw a slight increase.

Personal property went up \$56,600 to \$26,987,200, while motor vehicle assessments increased \$63,400 to \$6,779,000.

The Grand List is used by the Board of Finance to help set the mill rate for the upcoming fiscal year. This is determined by dividing the town's budget by the Grand List total.

The mill rate is then used to determine residents' taxes; one mill is equal to \$1 in tax per \$1,000 of assessed property. Therefore, going by the 2016-17 mill rate of 30.72, a resident with a home assessed at \$200,000 would pay \$6,144 in taxes.

The top three real estate taxpayers in town

for the 2016 year were Whispering Hills with an assessment of \$1,295,300; Marshall Martin at \$971,100; and the Eastern Connecticut Housing Organization at \$78,300. The rest of the top 10 was rounded out by: 84 Route Six LLC at \$765,600; Hillside Self Storage Center LLC at \$654,000; Kenneth R. & Katherine Marcia at \$545,800; Andover Plaza LLC at \$526,100; Pamela B. Hatem at \$516,500; Leeann Maier at \$506,600; and Connecticut Light and Power Co. – now known as Eversource – at \$506,400.

Meanwhile, the top three personal property taxpayers were: Connecticut Light and Power Co. assessed at \$4,250,560, along with Algonquin Gas Transmission LLC at \$484,520 and Scott Electrokrafts Inc. at \$425,520.

These are followed by: AT&T Mobility LLC at \$133,420; Andover Landscaping LLC at \$113,260; Drake Petroleum Co. Inc., at \$102,140; T-Mobile Northeast LLC. at \$82,980; Ronald Bisson at \$81,950; ICA Donuts LLC at \$73,460; and Cellco Partnership at \$65,480.

Speaking to the Grand List reduction this week, Board of Finance Chairman Dan Warren said the dreary look of the Grand List "just underscores what was concluded in our Plan of Conservation and Development and what's going on in the rest of the state. And as a town, we need to prioritize in such a way to make our town as desirable a place to live as we can."

He concluded, "The long-term deterioration of the Grand List should be of a concern to the residents" – not just because it means more tax revenue has to be made up elsewhere, but because it indicates fewer people are moving to town, and fewer businesses are setting up shop here.



# Andover Finance Board Working to Reduce Budget Impact

by Geeta S. Sandberg

“With the looming state cuts to our funding, I believe it is imperative the residents understand what is being deliberated and the difficult decisions that lay ahead. There is a lot of noise to cut through.”

So began Andover Board of Finance Chairman Dan Warren this week, when he sat down with fellow board member Adrian Mandeville to discuss the town’s budget status with the *Rivereast*. Armed with a stack of papers – the Board of Selectmen’s budget he explained he’d finally been able to get ahold of after weeks of badgering – he shared the finance board had their work cut out for them as they continued through the process.

“The big takeaway is that the governor’s budget, as currently proposed, is going to seriously reduce state municipal aid and we either have to make that up through revenue, taxation or spending cuts,” Warren stated.

Gov. Dannel P. Malloy proposed a two-year \$41.51 billion state budget in January that changes the way special education funds are disbursed and includes a reformulation of the way the state administers Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant funds; the new formula results in more ECS funds going to the poorer cities and less to smaller towns. The budget also asks municipalities to pay for one-third of the Connecticut State Teachers’ Retirement System.

Based on Malloy’s proposal, that would result in a \$665,899 decrease to Andover in combined ECS and special education funding from the current year, and a \$445,479 budget increase from the teachers’ pension payment.

Along with the above, Warren noted the value

of a mill dropped due to revaluation (an article on the Grand List can be found elsewhere in this issue) and “depending on how your assessment changed – or if it didn’t – you could get whacked pretty hard.”

But when looking at ways to minimize the impact to taxpayers as much as possible, Mandeville remarked “people don’t understand how much is off limits,” referring to the local and regional school boards’ budgets which are not set by the finance board.

“About 20 percent [of the overall budget] is the town and a little under 10 percent of that is essentially employee costs,” Warren added.

The duo explained bipartisan work was taking place on the finance board to try to identify ways to reduce the budget; ideas include tighter budgeting with line items as opposed to leaving any sort of “buffer” and potentially changing the hours at Town Hall. Ideas also include the possibility of eliminating the town’s resident state trooper; for the 2017-18 fiscal year, the position is expected to cost Andover \$203,000 – as the state will no longer be contributing any funding to towns’ resident trooper programs.

Looking at employee benefits was also mentioned.

“The local Board of Education has all school employees on a high-deductible health plan, but town employee benefits have not been evaluated in over a decade,” Warren stated.

Mandeville added, “We want all employees that are engaged with the town on par in terms of benefits and right now that’s not the case.”

In terms of capital projects, while the Capital Improvement Plan Committee received requests for the 2017-18 year totaling \$770,500, the finance board was only considering two new projects: roadwork, and the removal of an underground storage tank at the fire department plus a related upgrade to the department’s heating system.

The roadwork, which is expected to cost \$190,000, will be “entirely paid for by state municipal aid that we already have,” Warren explained.

Meanwhile, the underground storage tank is at the end of its legal life expectancy “so that’s got to come out,” he added. “We’re confident we’ll be able to perform that work with state grant money and be able to improve their heating and hot water system again through [Local Capital Improvement Program] grant money we’re entitled to.”

The work at the fire department totals \$85,000.

Mandeville and Warren stressed the finance board was working to bring down the budget impact because with the budgets that were proposed to the Board of Selectmen, “we’re looking at an overall increase in taxation by 11 percent,” Warren stated. “And that’s going to affect everyone different because of the revaluation.”

He furthered, “That’s what has been requested and proposed to us and now our job is to get that number down, and in order to do that we have to look at everything.”

Based on what the finance board has seen so

far, residents would be looking at an increase of 4.5 mills, and for a resident whose home is assessed at \$200,000 that would equate to \$7,044 – a tax increase of \$900.

“Constituents hear the big number and don’t hear that’s not what we’re going to give them... we’d like to see that number closer to 5 percent,” Mandeville stated.

Warren, meanwhile, said he was actually looking to get closer to 3 percent or a mill increase of around 1.5 - 2 mills.

“I think it’s going to be achievable but it will involve making difficult decisions,” he shared. “And we rely on resident feedback to help us guide those decisions.”

“We need guidance from the town,” Mandeville added. “If they say to us A, B, or C, is the most important thing on the docket to them we’re going to pay attention to that.”

But both members stressed they needed to receive that feedback prior to the town meeting or referendum.

To that regard, a public information session is scheduled for Monday, April 10, at 7 p.m., in the Town Hall Community Room, and residents are encouraged to attend.

“Show up at the public information session,” Warren encouraged. “That’s where things will be presented comprehensively and we’ll be looking to engage people.”

Mandeville concluded, “Given the current state of the budget and what’s going on, I hope we can try to answer questions too as opposed to just listening. ... We really do need as much input as possible.”

## Colchester Police News

3/11: State Police said Maria V. Patrusheva, 25, of 7 Latham Hill Rd., Columbia, was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol, operating an unregistered motor vehicle, and traveling unreasonably fast.

3/13: State Police said Douglas E. Wagner, 50, of 24 Wolcott Hill Rd., Wethersfield, was arrested and charged with third-degree burglary, first-degree criminal mischief and sixth-degree larceny.

3/14: Colchester Police said Christopher J. Angeli, 41, of 27 Michael Rd., Apt. G, New London, was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/

alcohol and breach of peace.

3/15: Colchester Police said at approximately 5:07 p.m., they responded to a report of stolen items from a residence on Westchester Hills. The victim reported that an unknown suspect allegedly stole two firearms and a key to a motor vehicle from the same residence within the last few weeks. Police said there were no signs of forced entry.

3/18: Colchester Police said Ronald Nelson, 61, of 156 Amston Rd., was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol, failure to drive in the proper lane of a multiple lane highway and drinking while operating a motor vehicle.

## East Hampton Police News

3/9: Kathleen Mary Taylor, 57, of 25 S. Main St., Marlborough, turned herself in pursuant to an active warrant for her arrest. Taylor was charged with second-degree failure to appear, East Hampton Police said,

3/13: William Marchinkoski, 47, of 167 Liberty St., Middletown, was arrested and charged with fifth-degree larceny, police said.

Also, between Monday, March 6, and Sunday, March 12, officers responded to 13 medical-related calls, 10 motor vehicle collisions and two reports of hazardous conditions, police said.

# Marlborough Selectmen Discuss Fracking Ban, Insurance Consortium

by Julianna Roche

Residents expressing concern about fracking waste in previous weeks spurred First Selectwoman Amy Traversa to present the Board of Selectmen with a draft of an ordinance proposal during its meeting Tuesday, which would ultimately ban the waste from being deposited in or transported through Marlborough if passed.

According to Traversa, because the town shares an attorney with Hebron – which is also in the midst of discussing its own ordinance banning fracking waste – she was able to acquire a copy of that town’s proposal, which she explained would be used for reference if the town moved forward on the issue.

“The steps after this probably would be to set a public hearing, but I don’t know if we’re ready to do that just yet,” Traversa said, adding the board was still taking the issue “very seriously.”

During the meeting, selectman Dick Shea again expressed apprehension about whether an ordinance was necessary, mentioning that acts already in place such as the Resource Conservation Recovery Act and the Toxic Substances Control Act, both already “would address pretty much anything having to do with someone transporting [or depositing fracking waste] through Marlborough.”

Shea furthered that even if an ordinance banning fracking waste was passed, which he con-

sidered to be “overkill,” the town “would have no means of enforcing it.”

“I can’t imagine [the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection] not electing to make their ban [on fracking waste] permanent and I can’t imagine the governor not signing it,” he said.

The state’s current three-year moratorium on the use of fracking waste products, which went into effect in June 2014, will expire this year – leaving DEEP charged with rewriting regulations on the import of fracking waste that takes place in neighboring states by July 1, 2018.

Traversa then asked resident Milton Davis, who had originally suggested the town consider instilling the ban at the board’s last meeting, if he had anything to add, to which he replied that “the more towns that get behind this, the better chance the state is going to get behind this and follow through, and not let anything harmful happen.”

“I don’t know whether or not there would be a need for this [ordinance] or if the state will go ahead and extend the ban on fracking waste,” Traversa furthered. “But it’s better to be prepared just in case.”

With Gov. Dannel Malloy’s potentially shattering proposal to cut millions in state aid to towns across the state, however, the first selectwoman emphasized that in terms of “levels of priority” between the fracking issue and

dealing with “the millions and millions of dollars in state cuts,” the latter would win out – at least while the town is “right in the thick of things.”

\* \* \*

During the meeting, the board also discussed the Region 8 Health Insurance Consortium’s decision two weeks ago to move ahead with switching to self-funded insurance, a move that’s expected to help control insurance costs.

The consortium is made up of the town and school boards in Andover, Hebron and Marlborough, as well as AHM Youth and Family Services.

Being self-funded, Traversa explained, means that rather than insurance companies collecting all the insurance money funded to various town entities (regardless of how many claims actually occur), the money would stay within the consortium if claims are less than what was originally appropriated.

Self-funding then would give the town the ability to build up a reserve, which the first selectwoman said has been estimated to potentially “get to be quite large [close to] \$1 million,” and could be used for both future premium increases and other related increases.

The various boards making up the consortium must approve the switch to self-funding individually by April 13. While the selectmen

did not set date for a vote this week, the board elected to hopefully set a date during its next meeting on April 4.

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Also at Tuesday’s meeting, the board set a public hearing date for its next meeting on Tuesday, April 4, to accept the town’s use of eCode360 – an online software program which provides municipalities with a codified web version of their town charter and ordinances.

Town Clerk Nancy Dickson explained that each year, the state awards the town with money set aside for particular projects.

The eCode360 software is one of those projects, she furthered, and is meant to provide citizens with an easier and faster way of gathering information and answers to questions they may have.

For example, Dickson said, “if someone wanted to know how many acres they need to have to have three horses, they can click on ‘horses,’” and find the answer quickly.

“It really is wonderful,” she said, adding that as regulations change in the future, the software could also be easily updated.

To use the software, visit [ecode360.com/MA3220](http://ecode360.com/MA3220).

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The next Board of Selectmen meeting is Tuesday, April 4, at 7 p.m. in Town Hall.



# 'The Giving Tree' Grows Kindness at CES

by Julianna Roche

As a second-grader, Tyler Bergquist is in his final months at Colchester Elementary School, but his mark will forever be left at the school in the shape of a nearly six-foot tall "giving tree" – a project meant to help those in need both at the school and in the community.

Standing underneath the faux-bushel of felt tree leaves in varying shades of green, Tyler explained how he came up with the idea – it all started during one of his "lunch bunch" groups, during which he and other students would meet with the school's then-library media specialist Maureen Schlosser to do "special things" like read books.

In one book, Tyler recounted a story "where baby turtles were on a beach and one day, a little girl was walking across the beach and saw the baby turtles trying to get into the ocean. She picked them up and helped them [by] putting them into the ocean."

The story led him to think about ways he could help others.

Then, last fall, inspired by Shel Silverstein's book *The Giving Tree*, and with the help of Schlosser and his mom Shannon, Tyler wrote a grant to Youth Service America and the Walt Disney Company about his idea of how to help CES and the community by building a giving tree to place in the school's entryway – giving those in need the ability to ask for specific items anonymously and others to donate them.

For example, Tyler wrote in the grant that the giving tree "can help [kids] get the stuff they need," such as clothes and sneakers for school, school supplies, lunch boxes and even healthy snacks.

"I think it would make them feel good and I think they would be more confident at school," he added.

According to CES Principal Judy O'Meara, anyone in Colchester who has a need can write it down on a leaf and hang it on the tree – with different shaped leaves correlating to different organizations. Items needed from the Colchester Food Bank (CFB), for example, are written on apples; Colchester Social Services items on butterflies and stars, and eventually, O'Meara added, there will be cardinals (CES' mascot) for CES items.

The needed items are also listed anonymously, with no child or family identified by name – instead, descriptions are "kid's snack food – CFB" or "girls socks, size 3-9 – CSS."

If people want to donate any particular item, O'Meara continued, they can take the leaf off the tree and leave the donation in one of the storage bins underneath it.

Tyler wrote in the grant that he felt the "Giving Tree" was important because "kids need to learn and it wouldn't be fair to them if they didn't have the stuff that they needed to do their best in school."

Included in the grant, Tyler and his mother also gathered statistics to demonstrate the existing needs of Colchester residents and students.

For example, in 2014, among a population of 16,143, Colchester had 33 families receiving Temporary Family Assistance and 492 people receiving aid from the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program. Of the 2,727 students enrolled in Colchester's school district, 20 percent of those students receive free/reduced lunches.

Furthermore, according to the 2015 Census Bureau, Colchester also has one of the state's largest proportions of individuals that are not in the labor force at 30.7 percent, with 8.8 percent of its families having no one who worked in 2015.

O'Meara said Shannon Bergquist told her she and her son were talking about those statistics and said "Tyler had never had that thought before – that someone [in Colchester] could have a need like that, and at that point he really wanted to help."

In November that became possible when Tyler received a notice from Youth Service America that he had won the \$500 grant and a month later, the check arrived.

The organization told Tyler, "We had an overwhelming number of wonderful applicants, but this giving tree project stood out as one of the best," O'Meara recalled, adding "there was a quick turnaround" from the time Tyler and his mother received the money to completing the project.

The grant money allowed Tyler to purchase craft supplies needed to make the tree – such as craft paper rolls, wood, construction paper and donation bins. It was also used to purchase 10 copies of *The Giving Tree* to place in the school's library.

Tyler then assembled a team of seven other second-graders, who worked closely with him and art teacher Stefanie Goodie during their integrated arts periods to brainstorm ideas for the giving tree and later build it.

"I helped facilitate getting the group down here and organizing," Goodie explained, adding that the students "really thought about a lot of things to make this work."

To make the tree, Tyler said, "We used a sonnet tube, fake moss and fake moss rocks, a



From left, CES social worker Amy Binezewski, art teacher Stefanie Goodie and principal Judy O'Meara each played a part in making Tyler Bergquist's giving tree a reality.

wooden platform, and a golf umbrella with a lot of felt and ribbons."

Volunteers from Colchester is Kind, which started as a Facebook group last year, will also be donating "kindness rocks" to place under the tree, Tyler said.

"We love Tyler's idea," said Michelle Noehren, founder of the group. "The teachers and administrators at CES, as well as at all the other schools in town, do such a great job focusing on teaching children about why kindness is important and Tyler's project takes that to a new level."

Part of the project also involved speaking with experts, O'Meara said, adding that the giving tree was "a great example" of the project-based learning taught at CES.

"We try to have kids come up with ideas, use experts and see where their projects can go," she explained. "This was a great example of Tyler being able to put those skills together and really go to fruition with the project."

O'Meara added that Tyler "gave a lot of time during his lunch" to finish the project and "was willing to donate after school time to meet with people [such as the fire marshal, CFB and CSS staff] to get ideas and make sure we were doing everything right."

Moving forward, he will work closely with the school, CFB, CSS and school social worker Amy Binezewski to help identify potential needs of students and community members.

"I think it's excellent," said Binezewski of Tyler's project. "It's such a great thing for our community because we do have so many different kinds of needs that can be addressed through this, so it's wonderful."

Tyler also has "big plans" according to O'Meara, who said he wants there to eventually be a giving tree at each of Colchester's schools. Next year, for example, Tyler will move to Jack Jacter Intermediate School to begin third grade, where he plans to build the second giving tree.

# Bacon Athletic Director Recognized for Work

by Julianna Roche

Athletics have always been a part of Kevin Burke's life – having played baseball, basketball and soccer as a high-schooler and later landing the title of captain of Central Connecticut State University's baseball team as a college senior.

After graduating CCSU, Burke, a Norwich resident, coached athletic teams at Middletown High School in New York and his alma mater, Norwich Free Academy. He's since called Bacon home for 18 years – serving the last 11 as the high school's athletic director after originally being hired on as part of the boys' golf coaching staff.

"What I really do enjoy more than anything is watching the kids play and seeing them have success on the field," he said of the job.

On Thursday, after press time, Burke was honored by the Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors (CAAD) for his distinguished work during the association's annual conference in Rocky Hill. It was an honor only a handful of athletic directors across the state receive each year.

In addition to being Bacon's athletic director, Burke is also the Eastern Connecticut Conference representative for CAAD, and has worked on Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic

Conference's boys' basketball and cross country committees. He explained CAAD often works closely with the conference and its various committees when the association is "looking to make changes to rules that govern athletics in the state."

"Being part of that process – it's a role I'm pretty proud to have," he furthered, adding that the drive to CAAD headquarters in Cheshire "does take some time," but the work is something he "really enjoys."

While his passion for athletics has never wavered, Burke explained that over the years, the athletic director and coaching positions have become more demanding and involved – including additional certifications and training needed in things such as concussion or cardiac arrest protocols.

"There's more to cover [now] for an athletic director," Burke explained, adding however, technology has helped make things like obtaining certifications or scheduling "much easier."

A growing issue over the years, he said, was finding coaches to hire within the Colchester school district. He said he often has to look beyond the district when taking on new staff.

"Coaches really don't get paid a lot of money to coach, which may explain" why it's difficult to find them, Burke said. "I don't think anyone

coaches high school athletics for the money to begin with. I don't think they ever have."

However, Burke emphasized that Bacon is "very fortunate" for "the coaching staff we do have."

"They do a terrific job and I'm hoping we can keep them on," he said. He added that when the Board of Education earlier this year proposed eliminating sports programs to cut the budget – a proposal the board has since backed off from – it caused concern among coaches and parents.

For Burke, athletic programs can play a vital role in a student's experience – and without them, students would lose more than just their favorite sport.

"There are hundreds of studies that exercise really helps make kids better students and helps them figure out how to budget their time to be successful in the classroom," he said. "These are good things to have later in life [as well]."

Burke said he's hopeful athletics will survive the budget season.

"Right now as far as where I think our budget process is, I don't think [cutting sports programs] is going to happen," he said. "I can't say that 100 percent for sure, obviously. ... But I'm optimistic that we're not going to lose any programs and that's a good thing for us."



Kevin Burke

As for what's next – Burke said he's just happy to be where he is.

"Working here – I have a ton of administrative support and that makes it easier for me to do my job," he said. "It's like a home away from home."



# Renovations Underway at St. Peter's in Hebron

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Renovations are underway at St. Peter's church in Hebron to expand Phelps Hall and allow the parish to increase its community outreach.

A groundbreaking took place in January and work has been taking place since that time inside the building. But now, those efforts have moved outside, and machinery could be seen digging the hole for the foundation Wednesday morning.

In a press release on the January groundbreaking, the church said it "is finally implementing a renovation plan that has been on the drawing board for a decade" to update the mid-century facility.

Vestry member Jack Gasper, who is acting as the renovation project manager, explained "the building has not been upgraded for almost the entire time it's been in existence. The only upgrade recently was to put more energy-efficient windows in, but it was never upgraded to modern building codes."

But the renovation project will bring the building up to code and includes the addition of a new, larger and modern commercial kitchen.

Gasper said of the renovation, "Our main purpose in doing all this is to be able to expand our monthly community dinners."

In addition, he furthered, "We want to increase our participation in the community with other types of events and by expanding the size of this building it's opened up some opportunities for us to have different types of meetings and dinners and so forth which will allow us to reach out further into the community — not only in church."

Gasper concluded, "We want to grow as a Christian church but we also want to be able to

bring our resources out into the community."

Robert Mangiafico, co-warden at the church, shared similar sentiments regarding the project.

"We are excited about the upcoming renovations planned for our hall and kitchen," he said. "Phelps Hall is starting to show its age, and is in need of updating. The renovations will allow us to further our mission of engaging with the community through dinners, non-profit use of our hall, and open up new opportunities to serve those around us."

By June, Gasper said, the project is expected to be "not totally completed but well along."

"The goal is to try to do a complete project with the finishing touches but of course that depends on the amount of money we take in above our goal," he said.

The original fundraising goal for the project was \$160,000, but that amount has increased to \$200,000. The church is about three-quarters of the way there, with \$47,000 left to be raised.

"Achieving [the \$200,000 goal] will allow us to put in all the things we want and probably a little more," Gasper explained.

As far as the features included in the renovation go, Gasper said there's a new heating and ventilation system, the power coming into the building has been upgraded, there will be new insulation, a new water system, and all-new commercial appliances — "all kinds of things you have in some kind of a commercial kitchen." He said that "right now we're doing dishes by hand, and that's not the way the sanitarian wants it done."

Along with the above, Gasper added the parish was paying "very close attention" to energy conservation, and would be tapping into the new natural gas expansion that's coming to the center of town.



Workers gather on a chilly Wednesday at the construction site for the expansion of Phelps Hall at St. Peter's Episcopal Church.

As the January press release concluded, "A modernized meeting hall with a new kitchen addition will amplify St. Peter's various ministries, fundraising efforts, and volunteerism as we seek to integrate our church community within the greater community in the service of God."

"We're hoping our building is much more inviting," added Gasper.

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Donations for the renovation project can be made out to St. Peter's Episcopal Church and mailed to P.O. Box 513, Hebron, CT 06248. Donations can also be made online at [gofundme.com/StPetersHallProject](http://gofundme.com/StPetersHallProject).

For more information on the church, visit [stpetershebron.com](http://stpetershebron.com).

## Icy Roads Cause Crash in Colchester

by Julianna Roche

Icy roads last week led to a one-car crash that left a Rhode Island man with minor injuries, state police said.

According to police, at approximately 8:05 a.m. Wednesday, March 15, a Ford F150, driven by Donald A. Lambert of 35 S. Killingly Rd., Foster, R.I., was traveling westbound on Route 16 when it lost control on the icy road and subsequently struck a tree along the road shoulder approximately one-tenth a mile east of Penee Lane.

Lambert was given a warning for making an improper turn and was transported by the Colchester Hayward Fire Department to Middlesex Hospital for suspected minor injuries to the head, neck and spine, police said.

## Marlborough Police News

3/15: State Police said Krystyna M. Kabara, 38, of 101 Jones Hollow Rd., was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol and making an improper turn.

## Andover Police News

2/23: State Police said Russell Collin, 57, of 124 Mott Hill Rd., East Hampton, was arrested and charged with third-degree criminal mischief and disorderly conduct.

3/11: State Police said Joseph E. Gansziniec, 35, of 46 Old Andover Rd., Hebron, was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol and failure to drive at a reasonable distance.

## Hebron Voters Approve Nearly \$1 Million in Appropriations

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Three questions presented to Hebron voters were approved last week, when around 50 residents gathered for a special town meeting to address the issues, all related to spending.

Town Manager Andrew Tierney said the process moved forward "in record time" with no questions asked by those in attendance.

The items up for vote had to do with the approval of supplemental appropriations from the Undesignated Fund Balance to be used for various items. Among them is the purchase of a piece of property located on the south side of Main Street.

The 4.4-acre parcel abuts the Russell Mercier Senior Center and Tierney explained the hope is to use the property to expand the amount of affordable senior housing in town.

"This is something that was long thought about and one of the goals of the selectmen was to increase more affordable senior living," Tierney stated. "There's approximately 20 units there now, and we're going for a grant to rehab those, but statistics show we need more affordable assisted living."

Tierney added the town was "lucky" an assisted living facility is currently being built in the Village Green district, but he noted those units aren't income based.

"This would be a program for people that would need help with some living arrangements as a senior, so we see the need."

The purchase will be funded through a supplemental appropriation in the amount of \$385,000.

Moving forward, Tierney said the selectmen are also planning to make it a priority to apply for Small Town Economic Assistance Program grant funds to potentially pay for engineering and the installation of some utilities in the area.

"Then we could possibly apply for a [Competitive Housing Assistance for Multifamily

Properties] grant for up to \$2 million to help assist us and build another 20-22 units," he stated.

The other items brought up during the March 16 town meeting included the approval of a supplemental appropriation in the amount of \$404,133 to fund capital projects in the 2017-18 Capital Improvement Plan budget; and the approval of a \$203,429 supplemental appropriation to be used for the first debt payment owed for the natural gas expansion that was approved for the center of town.

Tierney said the appropriations "were a measure we took to try to help the bottom line of [the proposed] budget with all the uncertainties coming from the state."

Relating specifically to the CIP projects he added, "There was a goal to fund about 5 percent of the total [CIP] budget and we've clearly not done that but the process the town has in place — it seems to work; we've always gone to the Undesignated Fund Balance the past few years to help support some of these capital projects."

Tierney concluded, "We feel we can do this to take some of these long-term projects and get them funded through CIP to move forward without burdening residents with extra taxes."

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Also last week, the Board of Selectmen voted to schedule a public hearing for the purpose of addressing an ordinance request to ban waste produced from hydraulic fracking from being disposed of or used in the town, as well as to consider amending another ordinance to waive building permit fees for homes impacted by crumbling foundations.

The public hearings are scheduled for Thursday, April 20, beginning at 7 p.m., in the community room at Douglas Library, 22 Main St.

## East Hampton Police Investigate Reported Carjacking

by Elizabeth Regan

Police are looking for information about a possible armed carjacking reported last Friday on Haddam Neck Road.

According to an East Hampton Police Department press release, a resident said she left a car running at the end of her driveway when she and a friend saw someone run up to it and get in.

The resident told officers she approached the car with her friend, the press release said. They were trying to get the suspect out of the vehicle when he displayed a firearm.

Police said the resident and her friend received minor injuries during a short struggle.

Police said the abandoned vehicle was located a short time and a short distance away on Basket Shop Road in Haddam Neck.

Local and state canine teams responded to search for the suspect, according to police.

The suspect was described as a tall, thin, white male wearing jeans and a gray hoodie, police said.

East Hampton Police Chief Sean Cox said Wednesday that his department recovered some evidence at one of the scenes and is "chasing all possible leads."

The evidence, which he hopes will yield some productive clues, has been sent to a lab.

Cox noted that the 14-member department, with another hire soon to be made, does not have a designated investigator for cases like this.

"Without detectives, [investigations] tend to be less than effective," Cox said.





The Maple Festival returned last weekend – and brought a spate of activities to the center of town. At left, Hebron Town Manager Andrew Tierney goes for a ride along Main Street as part of the tractor parade. At right, enthusiastic cow mascots beckon visitors to try the Hebron Historical Society’s “udderly” delicious old-fashioned maple milk.

## Despite Winter Forecast, Maple Fest Deemed a Success

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Forecasters predicted wintry weather that kept some attendees — and vendors — away from this year’s Hebron Maple Festival, but overall last weekend’s event was considered a success.

Oh, and that predicted snow? It never materialized, meaning those who dared go against the warnings of the sometimes-overly impassioned weathermen had — what else? — a great time.

“We were pleasantly surprised,” Windham Chamber of Commerce President Diane Nadeau said this week. “Comments at the event and on the Facebook page were that people really, really enjoyed things being in one location.”

Some of those commenters included Hebron resident Jen Person Merkent who wrote, “We live in town and have come to the Maple Fest for years — this year’s set up was the best we’ve seen. Having all the vendors in the library parking lot was fantastic! Even with the cold and mud it was so much more enjoyable with all that space.”

Similarly, Christi Adames Tilton commented, “We have been going to the Maple Festival for years and have always enjoyed it. I liked the layout of it this year of having the majority of it at and around the library.”

Nadeau added, “We weren’t sure how things would take but they liked it and used the shuttle bus which was really good.”

This year, the festival’s main downtown events were all located in the area of the Douglas Library as opposed to spread out along Main Street, and attendees were asked to park at nearby RHAM a take a shuttle to the event.

“The one bad thing,” Nadeau furthered, “was the weathermen forecasted 5-6 inches of snow so some vendors chickened out at the last minute and I think some other people who might have come otherwise.”

Even so, she said the chamber went through 5,000 programs, meaning at least that many people attended.

Meanwhile, Hebron Town Manager Andrew Tierney said of the event, “It was a hit and I think it would have been better but the weather

kept saying we were going to get a couple of inches of snow and that never happened.”

Those that did attend, he added, “had a good time. There was plenty to do and the vendors were happy... overall we thought it was good and it’s something we want to continue.”

And as the event continues, Nadeau said one of the things she’d like to do is find a way to bring some sort of demonstration to the center to show how maple trees are tapped to get sap, along with more information on the syrup-making process. She said she’d also like to see more involvement from community groups.

“I’m disappointed not more community groups take advantage of this as a fundraiser,” she explained. “I think this is a great opportunity for youth groups like sports and little leagues to come out and meet the community and make a little money. We’re open to anyone wanting to participate.”

As the event planners, Nadeau explained the Windham Chamber of Commerce and Windham Arts would also like to have more maple-related items at the event — something

which seemed to be lacking this year, as Nadeau said some of the vendors who backed out because of the weather forecast were supposed to come with maple-y foods — but she added there were other factors at play.

“1. We need to pay the bills so we need vendors and 2. We need to make the public happy and they said they wanted a larger variety of stuff so we brought in more food trucks and tried to get more activities,” Nadeau stated.

Nadeau encouraged people to begin thinking about what they could do next year. She reiterated, “this is a great way to get the message out and make a few dollars. Every vendor except one said sales were above their expectations and better than last year.”

And while the event was deemed a success, Nadeau said there was always room for improvement.

“We are always looking to improve. The major focus is to educate people and also to ensure the people involved are successful.”

And of course, she concluded, “Really our hope is that people come and enjoy it.”

## East Hampton Finance Board Postpones Budget Hearing

by Elizabeth Regan

The East Hampton Board of Finance has postponed its public hearing on the \$45.96 million 2017-18 proposed budget by a week amid state budget uncertainty and the possibility of devastating financial impacts to the town.

The public hearing, originally scheduled for this Monday, will now be held on April 3.

While it’s unlikely the delay will yield any answers to the looming state budget questions, it will allow time for more solid health insurance cost projections to come through.

When original estimates from the town’s health insurance provider came in almost 30 percent higher than the current year, officials put the health insurance program out to bid. They selected 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.

Based on the new plan, the municipal side of the proposed budget is looking at an 11.8 percent decrease in health insurance costs compared to the current year, according to Finance Director Jeff Jyllka.

Town Manager Michael Maniscalco told finance board members he anticipates about \$125,000 in savings from the new provider on the general government side of the budget, but should know more around April 1.

On the school side, the Board of Education budgeted for a 20 percent increase in its proposal. Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith said his group is also in negotiations to move to the Connecticut Partnership Plan, but they have not been “as fortunate” as the municipal side when it comes to rates.

He said claims on the Board of Education side have been outside the norm this year, which drove up the price quote from the current provider and which will affect quoted rates in the new plan. He estimated costs would be about

twenty percent higher than those paid currently based on current projections.

Jyllka said the town is also seeking quotes for workers’ compensation and liability insurance, but won’t have solid figures until the end of April or beginning of May. He’s anticipating an increase of about \$87,000 over the current year.

But there are bigger question marks than insurance looming over the finance board’s deliberations: the possibility of a \$1.53 million bill for teachers’ pensions that Gov. Dannel P. Malloy has proposed passing along to municipalities, along with a \$1.5 million reduction in East Hampton’s municipal aid.

The \$30.15 million proposed education budget includes a \$1.6 million “contingency for state budget uncertainty” line item to set aside funds in case Malloy’s plan makes it through the state legislature.

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

Finance board members expressed doubt that Malloy’s idea to assign one-third of the Teachers Retirement System to cities and towns would go through as proposed — if it goes through at all.

Municipalities do not pay for teachers’ pensions currently.

Though no local budget decisions were made at Monday’s meeting, finance board member Alan Hurst said he feels the \$1.6 million contingency line item should be removed from the education budget proposal.

Hurst suggested the town should send out a supplemental tax bill if the state ultimately decides to make municipalities cover a portion of

the Teachers’ Retirement System.

“It’s really something we can’t budget for today, and we don’t want to budget for today, because we don’t think it’s fair to add it to the mill rate. But if we have to pay it — if the legislature passes it — then we will pass it along in a supplemental tax bill,” he said. “But we think it will be a very small number, or zero. And we’ll deal with that when we get to it.”

State Rep. Melissa Ziobron, R-34, who came to the meeting to discuss the state budget, opened by saying she had been diagnosed with influenza that morning.

A tweet she posted earlier that day said her recipe for success included “Tamiflu, Vicks Tissues, cough drops and an ornery personality.”

Ziobron told finance board members Malloy’s teachers’ pension proposal is “pretty much reviled” by lawmakers in Hartford.

But she said state legislators are likely to wait until the last day of session on June 7 to vote on a budget. She said the actual policy language used to implement the budget — known as the implementer bill — may not be filed until even later, in a special session.

Last time the legislature voted on the state’s biennium budget in 2015, they didn’t pass an implementation bill until June 30.

Ziobron added she’s concerned some of the other revenue-building concepts floating around the capitol — such as installing highway tolls — will show up in the implementer bill.

Implementer bills aren’t subject to public hearings or approval by legislative committees. “That’s where the real policy is happening,” Ziobron said.

Finance board members noted that the situation is grim even if the state doesn’t make the town pay for a portion of the Teachers’ Retirement System.

Without a \$1.6 million contingency line item in the proposed budget, the town is still looking at an increase of 2.85 mills if the proposed budgets went through as presented last week by Maniscalco and Smith.

The mill rate is currently 29.44. A mill is \$1 in tax per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

That means an East Hampton resident with a home assessed at \$200,000 would owe \$6,458 in taxes this year, which is \$570 more than the current year.

But there’s still a long way to go in the budget season. The proposed general government and education budgets have to go through both the finance board and Town Council — and some officials are showing an appetite for more cuts.

Finance board member Alannah Coshow said she would be advocating for a “very carefully crafted budget” with “even more scrutiny than usual.”

Member Steve Ritchie said he’d like to see \$154,000 cut from the education budget.

The finance board will hold a special meeting on Monday to go over the budget line by line in preparation for the rescheduled public hearing on April 3. They will make their final recommendation on April 10.

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The town council has appointed Republican Michael Rose to replace Republican Alison Tokarz on the Board of Finance. The appointment was made according to the recently revised town charter, which directs the council to fill vacancies with a member of the same political party as the member who vacated the seat.

Tokarz resigned on Feb. 27 due to health and work reasons, according to her resignation email.

The vacancy was not announced publicly or published, according to the town council.



# Hintz's Claims Cause East Hampton Council Consternation

by Elizabeth Regan

Tempers flared at this week's Town Council meeting as some members took councilor Ted Hintz Jr. to task for what they described as attempts to obstruct the legislative process.

At the center of it all, Hintz claimed action by the council at its last meeting to appoint a project manager for the construction of a new municipal complex was invalid.

A March 2 email from Hintz to members of the council showed he spoke with town attorney Duncan Forsyth of Halloran and Sage – racking up a bill of \$900 in legal fees, according to Council Chairwoman Patience Anderson – before he ever communicated his concerns to the town manager and his fellow councilors.

Council policy dictates members must contact the council chairman or the town manager with any request to obtain legal information from a town attorney, in part to keep costs down.

On Feb. 28, councilors voted to use an exemption in the town's purchasing ordinance that allows them to select a "uniquely qualified" contractor without asking for any other bids – if a written justification is provided.

Hintz said in the March 2 email that there was no written justification.

But Town Manager Michael Maniscalco said the justification was included in his "Town Manager's Report" provided to the council prior to the meeting during which they approved Steve and Lisa Motto as project managers.

Maniscalco's report stated the Mottos, operating as C&E Enterprise LLC, were the "single entity" best suited to provide the service.

The Mottos, who own the 59-acre Edgewater Hill development on Route 66, donated to the town a 5.4-acre parcel within the development so a town hall and police department could be constructed. They also offered to serve as the owner's project managers for a 4-percent cut of the total project cost. Their proposal won out over seven other submissions in a competitive bidding process.

Four councilors voted in favor of the Mottos as project managers; Hintz and council member Mark Philhower voted against the motion.

Hintz's allegation of an illegal vote was met with numerous pages of legal opinions to the contrary.

Separate legal opinions from Brian R. Smith of the law firm Robinson and Cole as well as

Duncan J. Forsyth and Richard P. Roberts of Halloran and Sage stated Maniscalco's report was sufficient "written justification" to meet the purchasing ordinance requirements.

The Halloran and Sage firm acts as general legal counsel to the town, while Robinson and Cole represents the town hall complex project, according to Maniscalco.

When Hintz asked the cost of the Robinson and Cole opinion, which was requested by the council, Maniscalco said he hadn't received the bill yet.

Hintz noted it was much lengthier than the opinion he'd requested, and probably more expensive.

The town pays attorneys from Halloran and Sage \$190-\$210 an hour, while Robinson and Cole attorneys are paid \$375 per hour, Maniscalco said Wednesday.

The Robinson and Cole opinion stated "the fact that two of the Town Council members disagreed with the majority is simply part of the legislative process with which they must abide."

Smith cited legal precedent from a 1992 Connecticut Supreme Court case in which the judges said decisions reached by legislative bodies won't always satisfy all the members.

"This is the essence of the legislative process, a process that should not be compromised by ready access to a supplemental forum for those dissenting members who are disappointed in the outcome," the court's decision stated.

The same idea conveyed in such lofty legalese was put forth in plainer English by council member James "Pete" Brown at Tuesday's meeting.

"We cannot waste any more time going back and forth over what could be, should be, should have happened," Brown said. "We picked a direction. My problem right now is this: In a democracy, we take votes. Some people lose, some people win. Generally, when some people win, the people who lose kind of go along with it."

Emphasizing that he was not saying councilors shouldn't ask questions, he suggested those questions shouldn't be posed with the goal of obstructing the process.

Brown said he hasn't always agreed with council votes and he's had questions about some of them after the fact: "But that's a different

matter than what's going on here, in my opinion. I'd like to move on, period. We're wasting the town's money, resources, our energy. We picked a direction. Let's go with it."

The tension at the Town Council table was evident during conversation about the selection of the project manager when Hintz attempted to say the Mottos were not the actual owners of C&E Enterprise LLC, based on his reading of the Secretary of the State's business database. However, it appears he was looking at the listing for C&E Enterprises, not C&E Enterprise.

The principal for C&E Enterprise, which is the correct name, is listed as Stephen J. Motto.

By that point in the meeting, multiple council members had objected to Hintz's continued line of accusations.

Anderson put an end to the discussion, but Philhower and Hintz asked that the issue be brought up again at the next meeting.

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The meeting also included a combative exchange between Hintz and Maniscalco when the councilman asked what evidence the town manager had to say that town property at 1 Watrous St. couldn't be turned into a police station.

The property, recently acquired through foreclosure, sits next to the town-owned brownfield site at 13 Watrous St., which is slated to become a parking lot. Remediation efforts at 13 Watrous began with state funding over ten years ago and continue today.

Hintz had posted on the "Let's Talk East Hampton" Facebook page that the 1 Watrous St. site could be turned into a police department for \$2 million to \$3 million.

When someone submitted a question to the "Rumor Busters" page on the town website to ask if Hintz's idea was feasible, Maniscalco responded in the site's Q&A format that the site is a brownfield, a river flows under it, and the building could not be brought up to code without being torn down and built again.

At Tuesday's meeting, Hintz asked for a structural engineering report from Maniscalco to back up those assertions.

Maniscalco said he didn't have one, having based his response on experience and conversations with construction managers and design teams familiar with building police stations.

## East Hampton Council Pushes to Include BOE in Hub

by Elizabeth Regan

Members of the Town Council on Tuesday did an abrupt about-face on their decision not to include the Board of Education offices in the new town hall complex planned for Route 66.

Last month, the council had voted 5-1, with Ted Hintz Jr. objecting, to direct the building committee to consider the probate court and health district for inclusion in the proposed municipal hub, but not the Board of Education.

This week, members decided including the Board of Education was actually their highest priority when it came to those three options.

They voted unanimously for the building committee to ask an architect to provide a range of costs based on a town hall and police department plus the Board of Education, probate court and Chatham Health District, "in that order."

Melissa Engel acknowledged the turnaround by saying she had been wrong not to advocate for bringing the Board of Education into the municipal complex. She said the current Board of Education building on 94 Main St. is not accessible to those with disabilities and has other issues.

"The fact is, it's not going to serve us well in 10 or 20 years," Engel said.

Councilor Kevin Reich also spoke of the need to think ahead. "I believe as a town council we need to be making decisions that are more than two-, three-, four-year decisions. This is a major one, and I believe it should be incorporated

into the new facility, because from my perspective, that's a 50-year decision," he said.

He emphasized he would like to see both the probate court and health district office remain in East Hampton, but said the space could be leased from another provider in the community.

Both agencies currently lease space. The health district is located in the privately-owned Middletown Avenue building that serves as East Hampton's town hall annex, while the probate court operates out of Marlborough.

Anderson said her hope would be to include all three groups, if it could be done "without increasing the cost exponentially."

She listed the Board of Education as her first priority for inclusion and the probate court as her second. If it doesn't prove cost-effective to include the probate court or health district, she said, they "could rent space in the Edgewater development or elsewhere."

The health district, currently in the Middletown Avenue annex, serves the *Rivereast* towns of Colchester, East Hampton, Hebron, Marlborough and Portland, as well as East Haddam.

Chatham Health District needs about 2,500 square feet of space, according to an assessment conducted by Friar Associates in 2015. Town Manager Michael Maniscalco said the health district pays \$35,000 a year in rent.

The probate court pays \$25,000 a year for 1,860 square feet, on the edge of a district that

also includes East Haddam and Portland. Judge Jennifer Berkenstock told councilors this week she would prefer to be in East Hampton because it is more central.

Philhower advised his fellow councilors to stick to the basics: the town hall departments and the police station.

"The more you put into this building, the higher the price goes, the less chance it has of passing," Philhower said. "If you put everything in there, you're probably ensuring the building will not get built."

Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith said Wednesday he does not want to do anything to slow down the project or burden taxpayers with "unwarranted costs."

"If it is prudent to put the Board of Education in the new facility, I would support it. But if it turns the project into something that's going to become unpalatable to people, the Board of Education can stay on 94 Main St.," Smith said.

Chatham Health District Director Don Mitchell said in a phone interview Wednesday he has not been involved in what he would describe as conversations with the town on the subject. He said Maniscalco has made inquiries about how much square footage the agency would need and how much rent it pays, but that was the extent of the communication.

He added that it is beneficial for a health

department to be housed in a town hall, and said he would welcome a sit-down discussion with the council on the matter.

"Since he's putting it out there that it's a rumor and it's busted, I want proof it can't be used as a police department," Hintz told his fellow councilors.

That elicited a fiery response from the town manager.

"If we're going to go off what people put on the Internet, I believe you put out there [the Watrous Street property] could be renovated for \$2 million. So I'd like to see your cost breakdown for \$2 million," Maniscalco said.

"I will get you that information," Hintz said.

Maniscalco has said the police station slated for the Edgewater Hill development will comprise 66-80 percent of the total municipal complex project cost, which is estimated to come in between \$12 to \$18 million.

Police Chief Sean Cox said Wednesday that he has not been contacted by anyone for or against the idea of building a police station on 13 Watrous St., which strikes him as odd.

He said he could not comment on the cost of such a renovation since construction is not in his "wheelhouse" and he has not been inside the existing building.

"My concerns at first blush would be the references to a river running underneath," Cox said. "And when you say you're going to cap a brownfield, I would like to know what reason and what toxins before I would ask any employee under me to work there."

A 2015 inventory of local brownfield sites conducted by the environmental engineering firm Fuss & O'Neill said there was a 100-gallon fuel oil spill sometime between 1998 and 2001.

Cox also cited concerns about sight lines in the area that could compromise safety for emergency vehicles and patrons, and which could be costly to rectify.

"What I can say with confidence is the longer we drag this process out, the more money we pay in rent for parking and changing," he said, referring to the department's satellite locker room and parking area two miles east on Route 66.

He said the department pays \$1,050 per month in rent.

\* \* \*

Councilors also voted to approve a \$128,000 appropriation for architectural services for the construction of the town hall, police department and whatever else may end up in there.

Hintz was the lone 'nay' vote. He argued the money was being transferred from the mill rate stabilization fund, instead of appropriated from another account, in order to sidestep the town requirement that large appropriations go to voters at town meeting.

Maniscalco said the decision to transfer funds from the mill rate stabilization fund was made because continued "additional appropriations," as opposed to transfers, could jeopardize the town's credit rating.

The mill rate stabilization fund is a set-aside in the capital reserve fund to help offset future debt increases – in this case, the high school renovation debt.

The bidding process for architects closed Tuesday. There were seven proposals submitted, Maniscalco said.

The list will be whittled down to five finalists by town staff and the project manager. Those firms will then be interviewed by the building committee in the coming weeks, he said.



# Pirates of Penzance Comes to Portland

by Elizabeth Regan

When the directors and producer of this year's Portland High School musical realized they would be going into this year with an abundance of male actors, it became clear that *The Pirates of Penzance* would be a great choice for their annual production.

The 19th century Gilbert and Sullivan comic opera features a diverse costume spectrum ranging from head scarfs and swords to petticoats and umbrellas. According to Music Theater International, the production tells the story of the orphan Frederic and his accidental apprenticeship with a band of pirates. Then he falls in love and chaos ensues.

The production features the song "I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major-General," which is well-known for its fast pace and flourishes.

Drew Tammaro, a senior, plays the Pirate King in his theatrical debut. He said he played drums in the pit band in last year's production of *Mary Poppins*, but was lured on stage this year by his friends.

"They convinced me it would be a lot more fun to be out there with them, dancing and singing, even though it's not my strong suit," he said.

Junior Jessica Black, who plays Frederic's love interest, Mabel, said the show relies more on singing than the spoken word. That suits her just fine, since she describes herself as "a music person, through and through."

Black has had roles in *Mary Poppins* and *Oklahoma!* at the high school, as well as *West*

*Side Story* with the Young People's Center for Creative Arts in East Hampton.

She said performing on stage is so special because it allows her to become someone entirely different.

"Normally, you're running around school just trying to exist, and not fail. Except when you can get on stage and you can act, it's an entirely new world," she said.

The role of Frederic's nanny, Ruth, is taken by junior Emily Bradshaw. She said the opera style is demanding. A conversation that might be spoken in other productions is instead sung on one single note throughout.

It's challenging and fun, according to Bradshaw.

"This is honestly one of my favorite casts of people that I've done a show with. We're a big family here. Everyone's been so warm and accepting," she said.

She also pointed to the costumes as a high point of the production.

"Ruth comes back as a pirate in Act Two, so she gets the whole corset, pirate boots, high heels," she explained. "It's the best the costume I've ever had."

Costumes are designed by Caroline Wilcox.

Producer Sarah Ketterer said the show was a particularly good pick because this year marks the inaugural run for a new team of set designers. With only two sets, the workload allowed John and Meghan Guilmette to ease into their new roles.

The Guilmettes, active members of the Portland music scene, have taken over for longtime



Portland High School senior Drew Tammaro rehearses "I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major-General" from *The Pirates of Penzance*, the musical the school is mounting this spring.

set designer and art teacher Stu Noelte.

Ketterer described the musical as a departure from those that have been performed in the Portland in the past.

"We put a glossary in the program for a reason," she said. "Most of what gets put on for high schools is more modern, and this is much

more of the opera side of a musical. So it's a lot of old English."

*The Pirates of Penzance* will run Friday and Saturday at 7 p.m. at the Portland High School auditorium. A Saturday matinee will be held at 1 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$8 for students and seniors, and \$6 for children.

## Portland Selectman Urges Resident to Sue Town Over Tax Issue

by Elizabeth Regan

One resident's request for a property tax refund has yielded a passionate response from some members of the Board of Selectmen, one of whom alleged the town is effectively "stealing" from residents and another who suggested the wronged taxpayer should sue the town.

Resident Donald Snyder Jr. went before the Board of Selectmen in February to request a tax refund of \$4,837. The issue goes back to 2011, when Snyder purchased property on Middle Haddam Road. That's when he said his bank submitted a third property tax payment in one year. The payment was received by the town on Dec. 31, 2011, though Snyder said it was supposed to be applied to the next calendar year.

"The escrow folks probably never in their right minds thought anyone on Dec. 31, on New Year's Eve, is going to be working at the tax collector desk and apply that to the last year," Snyder told councilors in February.

Discussion since then has revolved around legal opinions from town attorneys Adam Cohen of Pullman and Comley and Kari Olson of Murtha Cullina, who said state statute prohibits the town from issuing a refund if three or more years have elapsed since the payment was due.

But Snyder contended the statute refers to overpayments. He said his situation is not an overpayment; instead, he described it as a "misapplication" of a check that should have gone toward the 2011 Grand List instead of the 2010 Grand List.

Selectmen Ben Srb and Brian Flood were adamant returning the money to Snyder is the right thing to do.

At a March 1 selectmen's meeting, Srb told his fellow selectmen and finance director Tom Robinson a policy should be developed to make sure this doesn't continue to happen.

"The reality is, we need a system in place that returns money," he said on March 1 at a selectmen's meeting. "And [while] you may be saying you can't give it back, it's stealing."

Robinson balked at the accusation.

"That's not true. I can't let you say that. The state statute says it's the town's money," Robinson said.

An email from Theo Horesco, staff representative for the Municipal Employees Union Independent representing Tax Collector Nancy DiGirolamo, showed the union took offense to the allegation of stealing as well as the suggestion that there was a "misapplication" of funds.

"The union would request that at the next

board meeting it be made clear that there was no misapplication of funds by the collector of revenue," Horesco wrote. "It should be stated that the amount paid was the exact amount of a current bill, there was no other bill that the payment could be applied to at the time it was received, and per statute, the town can't accept advance payments until a [mill] rate is set."

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield read Horesco's message at the selectmen's Mar. 15 meeting, emphasizing "there was no misapplication of funds by the collector of revenue."

"I want that to be clear, and I'm saying it in public session for the record," Bransfield added.

Srb said he was "not implying that either of the two ladies that work in the tax collector's office...did anything wrong."

Instead, he repeated the problem is the lack of an established protocol for notifying residents of excess payments.

"I do believe the policy was the issue, and I believe the policy still is the issue," he said.

However, before Srb acknowledged the intent behind his own use of the term "stealing," he said perhaps it was actually Bransfield the union was upset with. He said she made a comment on Feb. 15 that refunds are given when errors are made.

Such a statement, if taken out of context, could be interpreted as saying the tax collection department makes mistakes, according to Srb.

But he emphasized he and Bransfield were both adamant during that February meeting that the issue did not involve any wrongdoing on the part of staff in the tax collector's department.

Bransfield told Srb she would prefer he quote her accurately if he was going to attribute any statements to her.

A review by the *Rivereast* of meeting audio from Feb. 15 showed the board's discussion included an explanation by Bransfield about the process of issuing tax refunds, which have to be approved by the Board of Selectmen. There is standing item on the Board of Selectmen meeting agenda for selectmen to review and then vote on requests for a refund of excess payment on their property taxes.

"Sometimes when they are sizable, Don, there is an explanation given by the tax office that it is an error that's been made. And we have to approve any overpayment," she said to Snyder and the selectmen.

Srb did not return multiple calls asking him

to confirm whether or not that was the statement he was referring to at last week's meeting.

Horesco also did not return multiple requests for comment.

Bransfield explained Tuesday that she asks DiGirolamo for explanations of the larger requests so selectmen understand the circumstances behind the overpayment before they vote to return the money. The requests are usually the result of overpayments by banks and finance companies, according to Bransfield.

Bransfield reiterated DiGirolamo is an excellent revenue collector with extensive training and experience who "operates in compliance with state statutes."

In an email Tuesday, DiGirolamo said she has been the Portland tax collector since July 2010. She has been a Connecticut Certified Municipal Collector since 1983 and has served as tax collector in four municipalities.

DiGirolamo notified Robinson at the beginning of the month that she had, "in light of the current situation," instituted a new practice for ensuring notification of overpayments.

"Each spring, as a courtesy, taxpayer overpayment notifications will be mailed," DiGirolamo wrote.

Robinson said Tuesday the department has not previously sent out such notifications.

"We're not required to alert people about overpayments," Robinson said. State statute puts the onus on residents to keep track of their payments.

But while a new department practice may help clear up confusion going forward, Deputy First Selectman Brian Flood has said the only way for Snyder to find resolution to his problem is to go through legal channels. That's if the Board of Selectmen won't offer him a refund.

"I think Mr. Snyder should go to Middlesex [Superior] Court tomorrow and file a lawsuit," Flood said at last week's meeting of the selectmen.

He added the board should reconvene at their next regularly scheduled meeting to discuss the lawsuit, if one were to materialize.

Then Srb suggested Bransfield should also add an executive session item to the agenda so the topic can be discussed behind closed doors.

Town Attorney Kari Olson, who was at the meeting to address the issue, indicated the state's Freedom of Information law does not

allow executive session for claims or lawsuits that haven't yet been filed.

While Flood and Srb maintained Snyder's written request for a refund was enough of a "claim" to justify meeting behind closed doors, Olson said the appropriate threshold had not been met.

"I have to say, I'm almost a little uncomfortable with the discussion at this point because I feel like we're basically inviting somebody to sue the town and telling somebody how to do it," Olson added.

Flood, a lawyer himself, said he has a history of advising residents to sue the town when that's the only way an issue is going to get resolved.

When pressed by Flood, Olson agreed the case could be settled.

"I don't think there's legal authority to settle this claim, but I can't predict what would happen if [Snyder] went to litigation. I know the judge who presides over most of these administrative appeals takes the position, legal or not, that you can settle cases even if the statute is clear on its face," Olson said.

But Flood maintained the best solution is for the Board of Selectmen to vote on a refund – even though doing so would violate state statute.

"We could pay all kinds of legal costs and everything else and then be forced to pay the claim anyway. So now we've wasted all this time and money. When we could've paid \$4,000 to resolve it, we're now paying \$10,000, when everyone agrees the right thing to do is return the money," Flood said after the meeting.

Resident Dave Murphy, who is a member of the Board of Education but said he was speaking as a taxpayer, stood up during the public comment period at the end of last week's meeting.

"I'm a little shocked this board is recommending a citizen to sue this town," Murphy said. "Especially with our press here; they should be writing an article saying 'Hey, if you've got a problem with the town, sue, because they just told you that in executive session they're going to come up with a settlement and you're going to get some money.'"

Snyder said Tuesday he has been in contact with his attorney since the tax refund issue first came to his attention. He has not yet filed a lawsuit, but said he is in the process of evaluating his legal options.



# Obituaries

## Marlborough

### Beth Ellen Page

Beth Ellen (Preissner) Page, 54, of Waterford, formerly of Marlborough, passed away peacefully Saturday, March 18, with her family by her side. She was a lifelong Connecticut resident.

Born in Hartford Feb. 27, 1963, daughter of Victor E. Preissner of Marlborough and the late Jeanne (Quinn) Preissner, she was raised in West Hartford. She attended St. Thomas the Apostle School where she was honored for her studies in math, and after moving to Marlborough, she graduated third in her class from RHAM High School in only three years. She was president of the French Club and a member of the National Honor Society.

Beth graduated from UConn with a Bachelor of Science in nursing and worked as a visiting nurse before staying at home to care for her family. Her greatest wish in life was to have children, and she was blessed with three, whom she called her "miracles." She loved spending time with her children, traveling with the love of her life, Jon, and enjoyed weekends at the beach. She loved any reason to celebrate and was always the life of the party.

Beth lived in Ashford for many years, where she raised her family. Always with a positive outlook, she engaged in a brave fight with her childhood disease of diabetes, and had a courageous and strong spirit until the very last day of her life.

She was a loving and devoted mother, and in addition to her father, she leaves her son, Edward M. Page Jr. and his partner Julie Braisted of West Hartford; two daughters, Danielle Trombly and her husband Jason of Suffield, and Nicole Page and her fiancé David Rioux of South Windsor. She is also survived by her loving partner of many years, Jon Guzallis of Salem, and their cat Toni; her brother Mark Preissner and wife Lynn of Vernon; two sisters, Mary Fuller of Rocky Hill and Lauren Roche of Wethersfield; and many loving extended family members. She is also survived by her stepmother, Ann C. Preissner, her children and their families; as well as her former husband, Edward M. Page Sr.

Her funeral service began Thursday, March 23, at the Newington Memorial Funeral Home, 20 Bonair Ave., Newington, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial that morning at St. Mary Church, 626 Willard Ave., Newington. She was laid to rest beside her mother in St. Mary Cemetery, East Hartford. Relatives and friends called Wednesday, March 22, from 5-8 p.m., at Newington Memorial.

Memorial donations may be made to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF), 20 Batterson Park Rd., 3rd Floor, Farmington, CT 06032.

Since pink was Beth's favorite color, we encourage you to celebrate her life with the color pink. To share a memory, visit [newingtonmemorial.com](http://newingtonmemorial.com).

## East Hampton

### Robert Walter Klemba

Robert Walter (Kenneth) Klemba, a.k.a. "Yukon Jack," "Uncle Kenny," "Bill's Bait," "Day Old," "Big Polak" of Cape Coral, Fla., formerly of East Hampton, passed away Monday, March 13. Bob was born June 13, 1933 to Mary (Marsalek) and George Klemba, the youngest of 13 children.

He is survived by his wife, Ruth; his six children, Debra (Ferrara), Diana (O'Leary), Robert, Ronald, Raymond and Denise; his stepchildren, Brandon and Tamara; 11 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews.

Kenny was pre-deceased by his 12 siblings and the mother of his children, Josephine.

Bob worked for 30 years at New Departure Hyatt Bearing with his lifelong friend, Dick Kaika, who together owned K&K Antenna for 20 years.

Bob was an avid hunter, fisherman and gardener. He was a larger than life character who will be missed by all who knew him. "I see what you did!" To know him was to love him.

A celebration of the life and times of Bob will be held at a later date.



## Colchester

### Delina Ferretti

Delina Ferretti, 72, of Colchester, passed away early Wednesday morning, March 8, at the Marlborough Health Care Center, after a courageous battle with cancer. Born in Glasgow, Scotland, on April 3, 1944, she was the daughter of Gino and Helen (Hamilton) Ferretti.

At age 15, Delina scored highest in scholastic and academics in all of Scotland. After emigrating from Scotland to America in 1962, she continued her education at Trinity College and received a BS in biology with high honors. She was offered a four-year scholarship at Yale to continue her education. However, her career would bring her to California and to Stanford University Hospital, where she ran the hematology and oncology clinics at the hospital. Her career culminated as an oncology research consultant in the medical field. She retired a few years ago and as a final gift to the advancement of oncological studies, Delina became an organ donor for the purpose of medical research.

Prior to moving to California, Delina was an avid bowler. In 1970, Delina won the Eastern Ladies Tournament; in 1975, at the 47th annual Connecticut State tournament held at Holiday Lanes in Manchester & Gillette in Middletown, she won second place doubles with Kathy Wickham and took women's all events and team triples; in 1977, at the 40th annual National held at Skokal Lanes in Waterbury she won New England Singles A Division with 451. She also ranked 17th (1975-76) and 19th (1976-77) in Connecticut.

She enjoyed gardening, socializing with friends, music and dancing. Most importantly, she loved her children and grandchildren, family and her dear friends and extended family both here and in Scotland and will be sadly missed by all of them.

She leaves to mourn her passing Donna McLean of Colchester; Elena and husband Jerry Musselman, Michael and Diane Rock, all of Campbell, Calif.; an "adopted" daughter, Risa Gerrish of Granby and her beloved friend and "adopted sister" Kit Russell of New York; five siblings, Gino (Marianne) Ferretti and John Ferretti, both of California, Louis Ferretti, Yvonne (Eloi) Noel, Helena Trey, all of Connecticut; six grandchildren, Mark and Anthony Vidunas, Jason and Lauren Musselman, Sarah and Stephen Rock; many other children whom she was fondly known as "Grandma."

The family wishes to extend a warm 'thank you' to those who were able to visit and care for Delina during her valiant battle, and her daughter Donna wishes to extend heartfelt thanks to Nadine Tuck, Delina's goddaughter, and to Kathy (Wickham) Pontes, and to Kit Russell, for their love, care and support to mom and her during the past several months.

A memorial service will be held Friday, May 5, at 5 p.m. The Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester has been entrusted with care of her services. The family will host a buffet dinner in Delina's honor at the St. Joseph's Polish Club in Colchester immediately following the services. The family hopes to celebrate Delina's life and share the so many fond memories of Delina.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to The Friedman Brain Institute, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, at [icahn.mssm.edu/research/friedman](http://icahn.mssm.edu/research/friedman) or 1 Gustave L. Levy Place, New York, NY 10029-5674.

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



## Hebron

### Russell Alan Billard

Russell Alan Billard, 30, formerly of Hebron, passed away in a severe winter storm in Lake Tahoe, Calif., Tuesday, March 7. Son of Roger and Paula Billard of Hebron, he was born Oct. 29, 1986, and grew up in Hebron. He attended Hebron Elementary School and graduated from Howell Cheney Technical High School in 2005.

After working in the local area, Russell moved to Arizona and worked there for several years until an injury caused him to return to Hebron. He stayed in Hebron for about a year when a close friend urged him to come to Alaska with a promise of a job. He flew to Alaska in April 2009 and found out there was no job. That didn't faze him for long; he soon found work elsewhere and never looked back, only forward. Russell's positive, 'can-do' attitude soon found him employment building and maintaining communication towers all over Alaska, traveling to remote villages and islands, including some places only accessible by ferry boat, airplane, or helicopter. He spent one winter maintaining towers in Hawaii.

In the summer of 2011, Russell was accepted to the State of Alaska's forest fire training school in Tok, Alaska. After graduation, he went out with a forest fire crew for the remainder of 2011 forest fire season, and then returned to communication towers. In 2012, he was accepted into an IBEW electricians' apprenticeship program and graduated in May 2016, receiving his journeyman's license in June 2016.

The friends he met throughout these journeys meant the world to him. Russell's free time was filled with cherished friends and many incredible adventures, including hiking and camping in the Alaskan mountains, backcountry snowboarding, parasailing, kiteboarding, whitewater kayaking the wild and frigid Alaskan rivers, and sea kayaking, including the open waters off the Kenai peninsula. He caught salmon in a dry suit with a net at the mouth of the Kenai River. He loved exploring the natural world with friends.

In 2015, Russell met the love of his life, Bethany Day of Anchorage, Alaska. Their love grew ever stronger as they shared hiking and camping adventures in the mountains and along the rivers of Alaska.

In addition to Bethany, he is survived by his parents, Roger and Paula Billard; sister, Ashley Holland and husband Ian, their two sons, Fredric and Benedict; and his brother, Paul (Gus) Billard. He also leaves behind his grandparents, Michael and Mary Aronne, and many aunts, uncles, cousins, and dear friends across the country.

A memorial service and celebration of his life will be observed at 11 a.m. Saturday, April 22, at the Gilead Congregational Church, 672 Gilead St. (Route 85), Hebron, with the Rev. Dr. Denise Esslinger and the Rev. Ron Thompson officiating. Burial will be private in St. Peter's Cemetery, Hebron.

The Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester is assisting the family with arrangements. For online condolences, visit [auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com](http://auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com).



## East Haddam

### Linda O. Dill

Linda O. Dill, 67, of Ellensburg, Wash., born in East Haddam, formerly of Seattle, Wash., and Ocala, Fla., died Saturday, Jan. 28. Linda was born June 26, 1949, to Gus and Shirley Dill. Linda graduated from Nathan Hale-Ray High School and Highline College in Des Moines, Washington where she got her bachelor's of automotive parts.

Linda was always full of life and she had a spirit that could light up a room. Linda was a kind-hearted, giving, very loving and caring person. Linda was always smiling and laughing. She devoted her life to caring for and helping others as she was a caregiver/companion to several people over the years. Linda loved animals, making people laugh, to bake, to listen to music, go to concerts, crochet and be with family. Linda's kind heart and beauty extended well beyond her "home," to everyone through her endless patience, her smile and her sassiness.

Special thanks to her nieces Tammy Nelson and Tina Gorman of Ellensburg, Wash., for taking care of Linda these last six years, as well as to her wonderful caregivers at Prestige Post-Acute and Rehab Center in Ellensburg, Wash. You could make her dance and smile.

Losing Linda wasn't just a loss for her family but a loss for everyone who knew her, because if you knew her, you loved her, and she loved you.

She is preceded in death by father, Gus Dill Sr. and brother, Gus Dill Jr., both of East Haddam.

She is survived by her son, David Pixley of Auburn, Wash.; three grandchildren, James (Washington), Michayla (Florida) and Sophia (Washington); mother, Anna Shirley Dill-Brown of East Hampton; sister, Carol Kedalo of Vancouver, Wash.; brother, Rudy Dill and his wife Shirley of Moodus; sister, Lois Judkins and her husband Joseph of East Hampton; sister-in-law, Brenda Dill of Middletown; several nieces and nephews, as well as great-nieces and nephews.

Services will be at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 1 E. High St., East Hampton, at 11 a.m. Saturday, March 25, with a reception to follow in the gathering hall in the downstairs of the church.

Visit the Brookside Funeral Home and Crematory website at [brooksidefhc.com](http://brooksidefhc.com) to share a memory about Linda.

## Andover

### Loretta Ann Palliardi

Loretta Ann (Onorato) Palliardi of Andover passed away unexpectedly Friday, March 17. Loretta was born and raised in an Italian community in Paterson, N.J. She was the daughter of James and Raechel (Portella) Onorato, also of Paterson, N.J.

Loretta was very proud of her Italian heritage and upbringing. A devout Catholic, she spent much of her spare time helping or teaching at the church. She earned a master's in education from Michigan State University and taught home economics at the Academy of The Holy Family in Baltic for many years. She also owned and operated her own cleaning business.

She is survived by her former husband and best friend, Leopold Palliardi Sr.; their four children, Laurie, Leo Jr., Mary and Christine; six grandchildren, PJ, Kyla, Jack, Ivy, Sofia and Dominic; her brother, Jim; and a beloved extended family of in-laws, cousins, nieces and nephews, friends and neighbors.

She is predeceased by her parents and dear brother, Frank Onorato.

Family and friends are invited to attend calling hours Friday, March 31, from 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m., at Watkins Funeral Home, 142 East Center St., Manchester, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial at 1 p.m. at St. Maurice Church, 32 Hebron Rd., Bolton. Burial will be private in Townsend Cemetery, Andover.

Memorial contributions may be made to The Academy of the Holy Family.

To leave a message of condolence, visit [holmes-watkinsfuneralhomes.com](http://holmes-watkinsfuneralhomes.com).





## Obituaries continued

East Hampton

### Jayne Calvert

Jayne Abbott Melbourne Butler Calvert 85, of Stamford, Lebanon and East Hampton, passed away peacefully Friday, March 10, at the Water's Edge Nursing Home in Middletown. She was born Nov. 8, 1931, in Stamford, daughter of the late Francis and Alice Melbourne, Darien.



Jayne owned Glenbrook Deli in the early '70s, where she loved making salads and her huge meatballs for the many customers that came in. She spent her time enjoying her mini farm in Lebanon for over 15 years, and then resided at the Bellwood senior complex in East Hampton.

She is survived by son and daughter-in-law Gregory and Bonnie Butler of East Hampton, daughter Shari LeMaire of Middletown. She is also survived by eight grandchildren, Daniel and Lisette Butler of East Hartford, Richard Butler of East Hampton, Gregory and Amber Butler of East Hampton, Senesta and Adeniken Campos of Vernon, Jesse Reynolds of Hawaii, Nicole Lemaire of So. Hartford, Jaime LeMaire of Meriden, Michael Lemaire of Jewett City; and is survived by five great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren.

She was predeceased by a great-grandson, Jason Gregory Butler.

The family wishes to thank the entire nurse's staff and CNAs on the third floor of Waters Edge, especially Sandy Everett, who had a special place in Mom's heart. Also, at Beacon Hospice, one person in particular was very special to Mom: Angela Carucci.

Jayne will join her parents in the family plot at Fairfield Memorial Cemetery, Stamford. A private family service is planned.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Jayne's name to Beacon Hospice, 111 Founders Plaza, Suite 1803, East Hartford, CT 06108.

*From the Editor's Desk*

## Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Trump's first proposed budget as president was released last week, and let's just say it was pretty horrible. It calls for massive increases in defense spending, and big cuts in many, many other areas, from the Environmental Protection Agency to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Now, I know this is just a "budget blueprint." This can, and hopefully will, change a lot in the coming months. But it reveals a lot about The Donald's priorities...and I don't find those priorities encouraging. At all.

Other outlets have spent much ink and air-time and bandwidth dissecting the budget over the past several days, so I won't rehash it. But I will share this moment from *Meet the Press* last Sunday.

Trump's budget director, Mick Mulvaney, was being interviewed by Chuck Todd, and defending this proposal. He said the administration simply could no longer ask people to support some of these programs. He told Todd, "Could we as an administration go to the coal miner in West Virginia and say 'I want you please to give some of your money to the federal government so that we can give it to the National Endowment for the Arts'?"

It was such an infuriating comment. Anti-intellectual but also insulting – and more insulting of coal miners than arts supporters, frankly.

For what Mulvaney was basically saying was: How could coal miners – those slack-jawed yokels – possibly care about the arts?

I mean, honestly. The disdain these people have for their own supporters is just amazing.

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Closer to home, I was intrigued to learn this week state Rep. Christie Carpino, who represents Portland and Cromwell, is co-sponsoring an interesting bill that would provide official state designation to various days, weeks and months of the year – and even designate a state dinosaur (the dilophosaurus).

Carpino's bill, known as SB-1002, would call for the governor to, each year, proclaim:

Oct. 7 to be Trigeminal Neuralgia Awareness Day, to increase public awareness of the associated presentation and available treatments for trigeminal neuralgia;

May 29 to be Bob Hope Day, to recognize Hope's efforts across the globe in support of United States military service members;

May 1 to be Purebred Dog Day, to honor purebred dogs and their breeders;

March 13 to be National K9 Veterans' Day to honor federal, state and local law enforcement K9 Corps units and their service to local communities, and the state and country;

Nov. 26 to be Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva Awareness Day, to raise public awareness of the rare connective tissue disease;

The third week in October to be Male Breast Cancer Awareness Week, to heighten public awareness of the associated presentation and available treatments for male breast cancer;

The month of May to be Lyme Disease Awareness Month to heighten public awareness of the associated presentation and available treatments for Lyme disease;

The second Friday in December of each year to be PJ Day, to raise awareness of all of those children being treated and cared for in

hospitals across the state;

The third Monday in April of each year to be Patriots' Day, to commemorate the anniversary of the Battles of Lexington and Concord during the American Revolutionary War.

And finally, in a cause that's particularly meaningful to Hebron folks this time of year, the bill would have the governor proclaim the month of March of each year to be Connecticut Maple Month, in order to, the bill states, "recognize the continued contribution of maple producers in the state who perpetuate a cherished New England tradition and who positively impact our economy, environment and way of life."

As an old-time radio and movie buff, I was particularly intrigued by the inclusion of Bob Hope Day. Near as I can tell, there's no specific Connecticut tie to Hope; he was born in England, grew up in Ohio and lived the bulk of his life in California. But, as the bill's language notes, Hope was big supporter of the military, and for generations flew overseas to entertain the troops. The bill would honor Hope for that – and I must say, that's a great reason to recognize him.

State Sen. Cathy Osten seems to agree. The legislator, whose multi-town district includes Hebron and Marlborough, testified on Monday in support of the bill – and specifically the recognition of Hope.

"Bob Hope brought joy to so many soldiers, often during one of the most stressful and dangerous periods of their life. It's difficult to appreciate just how much a little humor and a home-style stage show can make in the morale for troops overseas," Osten said. "I never got to see Bob Hope perform, but I've spoken to people who have. It's something that a veteran never forgets, and Connecticut is home to about 200,000 veterans and their families."

Now, state lawmakers of course have many, more-pressing issues on their plate this legislative season. But it'll be interesting to see, when all is said and done, how this bill shakes out. I'll keep you posted.

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As many Belltonians may know, this year is East Hampton's 250th anniversary. The town was founded, under the name of Chatham, in 1767. (In case you're wondering, the name was changed to East Hampton in 1915.)

And to help celebrate the occasion, several restaurants in town have banded together for a neat little promotion. During the week of April 3-9, the eateries will be offering special \$17.67 meals. Each restaurant will serve a different meal off their menu priced to commemorate the town's founding.

As of this past Tuesday, the current list of participating restaurants includes: Rossini's, Main Street Pizza, The Dublin, Loco Perro, Po's Rice & Spice, Waves, Angelico's Lake House, Route 66 Snak Shak, Pizzeria Da Vinci, Tang Asian Bistro and Tavern on 66.

What are their \$17.67 specials going to be? Well, you'll have to call the restaurant and find out – or stop in and be surprised.

Like I said, it's a cool idea for a promotion. Hopefully lots of people will be intrigued during the week of April 3-9 and stop by one – or more – of those eateries, and help celebrate East Hampton's sestercentennial.

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See you next week.