

RIVEREAST

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Put On a Happy Face... East Hampton High School students are going back in time with performances of *Bye Bye Birdie* scheduled tonight through Sunday. From left, Lily Cordeiro, Lena Bosco, Jessica Abbotts, Gabriella Crean and Emma Peltier are part of the show billed as a "loving send-up of the 1960s, small-town America, teenagers and rock & roll." See story on page 23.

Cops Urge Residents to Be Vigilant

By Julianna Roche

In response to a recent slew of home and vehicle break-ins and thefts, over 100 Marlborough residents gathered in the cafeteria of the town's elementary school Tuesday night for a crime prevention community forum hosted by Resident State Trooper Jeff Dunshee, Officer Randy Ransom and Sgt. Jae Fontanella.

The forum focused on what measures police were taking to prevent future crime, as well as what steps residents could take to protect themselves and "make it as difficult as you can" for potential burglars by leaving lights on outside the home, keeping cars and home doors locked, and communicating with your neighbors.

Dunshee said he and Ransom are the primary law enforcement officers for the town, and when neither are on duty, officers from State Police Troop K in Colchester are patrolling the area. However, he continued, "they're stretched thin."

"They work very hard, but [when you make a call to the Troop K dispatch barracks], you're not always getting the same person so the quality is a little different than when you're dealing with me or Randy," he said.

However, Dunshee explained that Troop K officers have been "very helpful" in "shifting around resources" to have other troopers "come out and help Marlborough" by "increasing [their] visibility" in town and stopping any suspicious cars, especially at early hours in the morning.

"The weekends we've done that, we've had no break-ins at all," he said, adding that "it's a ghost town in Marlborough at 2 or 3 in the morning" and not leaving lights on outside of homes at night can often attract potential burglars.

"That harbors an environment where people can creep around and go undetected," Dunshee continued.

He said, however, that the biggest cause of the recent car break-ins and thefts is residents simply leaving their vehicles unlocked or their keys, purses and other valuable items inside an unlocked car. In fact, Dunshee said, "we haven't had a single car break-in in which the car was locked... [the criminals] are not smashing windows. They're opening the door and grabbing stuff, checking door handles, looking for unlocked vehicles."

"If you're not going to keep your car locked, that's your prerogative... but at least take your belongings out of [the car]," he furthered.

Two weeks ago, for example, two unlocked vehicles were stolen from the driveway of a residence on North Main Street. During the forum, the victim of the crime said that she had left her purse and keys inside the vehicle – which she admitted was "stupid," but was also something she and her husband had been doing for more than 30 years with no issue.

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Complaints Arise Over Selectman's Sand Pit

by Elizabeth Regan

Portland selectman Ben Srb is not running a commercial excavation operation, according to multiple town officials – including Srb himself.

Instead, they say he is doing site work in preparation for a new house on the corner of Sage Hollow Road and Cornwall Street. The developer is about two-and-a-half years into clearing sand from the 1.18-acre, residentially-zoned property.

Srb's zoning application for a single-family home was approved by former Zoning Enforcement Officer Bob Spencer in May 2014. It's good for five years.

Some neighbors wonder how Srb can conduct business outside the special permit process that provides oversight for earth removal operations.

Carousel Drive resident Dave Murphy earlier this month said multiple trucks are in and out of the site every hour during weekdays.

But the town attorney, current zoning enforcement officer, land use administrator, building official and first selectwoman agree Srb is within his rights to haul sand and gravel off his property for the duration of the zoning permit.

Srb served for 12 years on the Zoning Board of Appeals before being elected to the Board of Selectmen in 2015.

Last fall, Murphy was one of two people to

file complaints alleging more than two years of truck traffic, noise, dust, and blight issues, as well as safety concerns related to high, steep slopes.

The Oct. 12 complaint from Murphy, who serves on the Board of Education, said five years is too long to be seeing and hearing the activity on the site.

Nicole Giampapa, of Carousel Drive, called the site an "eyesore and a hazard" in her Nov. 15 complaint. She asked why the public did not get a say on "something this major happening in a residential area."

In December, Murphy sent First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield and other town officials several photos of the site showing near-vertical slopes and a collapsed section. He said he was crossing his fingers nobody gets hurt.

Bransfield said she visited the site herself and asked Town Engineer Geoffrey Jacobson to make a site visit as well.

Srb said last week he resolved "multiple complaints" as they arose, an assertion supported by Bransfield, Jacobson and staff in the land use department.

Problems addressed by Srb include knocking down dangerous hills as well as making sure trucks don't operate between 6 p.m. and 7 a.m. or on weekends or holidays, according to land

use documents.

The bottom line, Srb said, is he has the appropriate permit as well as an easement to grade the northern portion of the property adjacent to Oakwood Soccer Club.

"I have a zoning permit to be doing what I've done," he said.

A March 2014 email from Spencer showed the former zoning enforcement officer had misgivings about issuing Srb the permit for a single-family residence.

In the message, obtained through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, Spencer told Bransfield that Srb's intention was to "use the lot to excavate sand and gravel."

"Should he apply for a permit to excavate sand and gravel he would have to satisfy different regulations," Spencer wrote. "With a house permit he could possibly excavate for the next 5 years without proper safeguards in place. We have already heard concern from the neighbors and want to talk with Kari [Olson, the town attorney] so we can get precise guidance and advice."

Olson, of the law firm Murtha Cullina, told the *RiverEast* she advised Spencer at the time that Srb's property is not subject to local rules governing earth removal excavation because of one particular exemption to the regulations.

While zoning regulations state "no owner, developer, excavator or other person" is allowed to conduct excavation, grading, removal or filling operations without a special permit, those rules don't apply to Srb in this case.

That's because of the regulation applying to "necessary foundation and trench work on a lot for which a zoning permit and a building permit have been issued and then not exceeding half an acre," according to Olson.

The roughly one-acre site is divided into two excavation areas.

There is no building permit for the house on file, however. Srb withdrew his building permit application April 17, 2014, before the zoning permit was even approved. He said in a handwritten message to the land use department he was taking back the building permit application due to the "amount of site work on the project."

A building permit would have to be renewed every six months, according to state building code.

Building Official Lincoln White said Wednesday he never issued a foundation permit, nor is there any record of one.

According to Olson, the absence of a building or foundation permit "would not make any

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difference” because the site plan clearly shows the intent to build a foundation and the zoning application was to build a foundation.

She added there may be legal recourse if the foundation never gets built or if there is convincing evidence Srb was never going to put a house there.

Spencer ultimately approved the zoning permit for a single-family house with the condition any excavation “be in concert with the spirit of” the town’s regulations on earth removal.

Spencer, reached by phone Thursday, said the condition was a way to acknowledge the extensive excavation aspect of the project even though it was being handled as a building lot.

“It seemed to me that what was really going to be happening was there was going to be an excavation and sand pit,” Spencer said. “So I thought it was prudent to try to incorporate the guidelines relevant to that kind of project into this one.”

The earth excavation regulations include a provision that excavation sites should be “in harmony” with the neighborhood and should not be “detrimental to established properties in the area.”

Spencer said he did not have any conversations with Srb about the condition or its meaning since Srb’s position “was very stridently that this was going to be a building.”

Olson said determining if something is in the “spirit” of the regulations is subjective and it would be difficult for residents opposed to the operation to mount a successful legal challenge based on that condition.

Much of Spencer’s concern was related to a deed restriction on the property prohibiting residential construction on the property.

Language in the deeds going back to 1924 prohibits building “of any kind whatsoever” on the property. It also forbids any business to be conducted on the site “except hauling of sand or gravel.”

While the specific language dropped off in the 2006 deed from Angelo W. Ortisi Sr. to Srb, the document did stipulate the property is subject to “easements, covenants and restrictions as of record may appear.”

Srb bought the property for \$20,000, according to the deed.

Srb appealed his property taxes on the site in

February 2016, citing the “no building” restriction as a reason. The Board of Assessment Appeals did not approve a change in his taxes.

But Srb said last week that bringing up the deed restriction in order to get his taxes lowered doesn’t mean he envisions any problems with constructing a house on the property.

“I think it’s buildable, but the value would be a little less,” he said.

According to Olson, it would be up to Ortisi’s heirs to claim the deed restriction has been violated.

Staff in the land use department said the town has no role in enforcing deed restrictions and construction would be at the owner’s risk.

Last week, Srb said applying for a special permit for an excavation operation was never an option.

“If people are thinking I could have applied for that, I couldn’t have,” he said.

Srb pointed to earth removal regulations requiring a 25-foot “buffer zone” of existing grade around the property, plus a gradual rise extending from 25 feet to 50 feet from the property line. He said the restriction wouldn’t allow room for much more than a swimming pool on the parcel.

Zoning Enforcement Officer Dan Bourret said Srb could have applied for a variance to the regulations, but it’s not guaranteed he would have received one.

This week, Srb said the site’s history as a sand and gravel operation would have allowed him to be grandfathered in under existing regulations if he hadn’t chosen to apply for a residential zoning permit.

“I could’ve just kept taking gravel. I didn’t have any restrictions because I predated zoning,” Srb said.

The land use department on Thursday was unable to find any record of permits issued for sand and gravel removal on the property prior to Srb’s purchase in 2006. Staff noted there were historical records in storage not readily available for review at the time.

Public Works Director Rick Kelsey said he remembered the property being actively excavated, but not within the last few decades.

According to Srb, excavation work on his property will be completed “within the timeframe of the [zoning] permit.” The permit

expires in May 2019.

An email from the town engineer to Bransfield and Olson in January suggested Srb was “nearing the limit of the approved excavation footprint” for the northern half of the excavation, where steep slopes had been observed.

Jacobson said Srb told him the section would be finish-graded and covered with topsoil and seeded by this summer.

Most recently, the northern hill is causing light from the Oakwood Soccer Club to flood the neighborhood, according to Murphy and Giampapa.

“I used to have a beautiful view of a landscape that bloomed in the spring and changed colors in the fall. I now have a mess and the lights AND the noise of the soccer field,” Giampapa wrote in an email to the town Wednesday. The message was another of many received through a Freedom of Information request.

Murphy on Wednesday called the situation a safety issue, describing it in an email as “somewhat blinding when you drive down Carousel Drive towards the newly exposed lights.”

But Olson said the issue of light shining into homes seems to be “a private nuisance matter” not under the town’s jurisdiction.

“When it becomes a public nuisance, that’s a different story,” she said, citing Murphy’s concern about the lights affecting drivers’ vision on the road. “And I understand the town is looking into that.”

Olson maintained the town would have to

work with Oakwood Soccer Club to remedy the situation because the club owns the lights.

“Mr. Srb doesn’t own the lights,” Olson said. “There isn’t anything he can do about it.”

Giampapa’s email to officials expressed frustration that the situation was allowed to happen.

“Someone on Main Street puts up a deck and there’s a vote on it by zoning. This person takes several years to operate a commercial sand pit and removes an entire mountain to put in a foundation on a piece of property with a deed restriction in place forbidding a house and no one gets a say,” she wrote.

Olson reiterated those who believe the process is flawed should make an application with the Planning and Zoning Commission to get the zoning regulations amended.

“I’m sure the [Planning and Zoning] Commission, when approving the regulations, didn’t anticipate something of this magnitude and I’m sure they’re concerned about that now,” Olson said.

Planning and Zoning Commission Chairman Bruce Tyler said Wednesday no proposed changes to the regulations, known as text amendments, are on the table at this time.

Anybody who objects to an existing regulation can put in a text amendment application, he explained. Any commission member may do so as well.

“If they do, obviously we’ll consider it,” Tyler said.

Is Srb Threatening Sand Pit Neighbors?

by Elizabeth Regan

Documents recently obtained through a Freedom of Information request revealed a Carousel Drive resident got a surprise visit from the Portland Police Department after taking photos of a neighboring sand pit owned by selectman Ben Srb late last year.

In a December email to First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield, Dave Murphy said he snapped the pictures “to note the changes to the property.” The next day, an officer showed up at his door.

“Last time I checked it wasn’t against the law to take pictures outside, especially of a barren sand pit,” Murphy told Bransfield.

Murphy had filed a complaint with the land use department in October based on concerns about safety, fugitive dust and blight at the sand pit on the corner of Sage Hollow Road and Cornwall Street.

He said he could only assume the visit was orchestrated by Srb and wondered if it was the selectman’s way of “threatening or intimidating” him.

Portland Police Department Lt. Ron Milardo this week confirmed Srb called his cell phone to ask him to send an officer to Murphy’s home.

“Ben Srb did call, [but] not as a formal complaint, just to see why someone was taking pictures of his property,” Milardo said.

There was no report filed and no record of the officer’s visit, according to the police department.

Milardo said Srb is just one of many people who calls his cell phone with concerns.

“It’s not like he’s trying to get a favor,” Milardo added.

Milardo said he asked an officer – he thought it was Fran Ahlquist – to go to Murphy’s house to look into Srb’s claim. The officer quickly ascertained Murphy was within his rights to take the photos, according to Milardo.

It’s not unusual to get called to situations that don’t seem outwardly illegal, he said – especially in disputes between neighbors.

“We go to thousands of calls a year where we shake our heads and say ‘Why is this police business?’” Milardo said.

“If it all checks out, that’s the end of the story,” Milardo explained.

Srb last week said he didn’t remember calling Milardo, but didn’t deny the lieutenant’s account of events.

“I believe him,” Srb said.

Srb did recall, however, that “there was something with a truck driver.”

Srb went on to say a truck driver on his property may have “felt intimidated” by Murphy and his camera.

“Safety is first and foremost on that site, and if a driver feels threatened or bothered, it

needs to be looked into,” Srb said.

Bransfield reiterated it’s common for a resident to call Milardo on his town-issued cell phone to intervene in disputes.

“Neighbors fight,” she said. “A lot. And probably a good percentage of complaints that come to my desk are neighbors, maybe not fighting, but not agreeing. And they look to my office or a police officer to mediate and come out and take a look.”

Murphy’s email to Bransfield alleged Srb had previously called him on the phone and “threatened to put ten low income apartments on the property” if the neighbors continued to complain.

Srb last week confirmed he called Murphy, but said he did not threaten him. The affordable housing development came up as an example of different options he could have chosen, he explained.

“I could’ve applied for other things. Instead, I applied for a single-family house,” Srb said.

Another email accessed through the Freedom of Information request was sent to the town Wednesday by Carousel Drive resident Nicole Giampapa. She said a similar call from Srb led her to keep quiet about her concerns after she filed a complaint with the land use department in November.

“I did not like the landowner calling me from his truck in the grange parking lot where I could see him out my window and saying he could have put up section 8 housing. To say it deterred me is an understatement,” she wrote.

Srb downplayed the situation this week, further alleging Murphy has a finished basement for which he isn’t being assessed.

He brought up the fact that Murphy is a member of the Board of Education.

“Here he is, an elected official of Portland, and he doesn’t even pay his fair share of taxes,” Srb said.

Murphy said this week he has permits for everything from the finished basement to a shed, a pool, electrical for the pool, a gazebo and a propane fireplace.

He said he would assume the assessor’s department took the finished basement into account.

A Thursday morning call to the building department confirmed there is health department approval for a finished basement but a permit could not be located in the folder. According to the assessor’s department, there is no record of a finished basement on file.

Staff indicated it is not unheard of for discrepancies between the two departments to occur.

Murphy wondered where Srb’s allegations came from.

“He must have been in my file, digging dirt,” he said.

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“This is a huge, huge epidemic,” she said, adding that while both vehicles were recovered, she believes “somehow police in the suburbs need to form a task force” to help deal with the problem.

During the forum, some residents also expressed frustration and concern that they should have to lock their doors in a town like Marlborough, especially in the middle of the day.

One resident for example, who lives on Denler Drive, referenced a break-in that occurred last week at approximately 11:30 a.m. on her street – in broad daylight – during which an older woman was home at the time and the burglar stole some jewelry before he fled the scene on foot.

“From what I’ve heard, the burglar ran through our backyard,” she said. “My concern is that we are up close to the highway [and there’s really no safeguard for our community.”

The woman also expressed concern that the break-in occurred “in the middle of the day” rather than the middle of the night.

“Why should we have to lock the door at 11:30 in the morning?” she furthered. The break-in “doesn’t fit any statistic... I don’t like the idea I have to set my alarm on a beautiful day.”

Dunshee, however, explained that while some of the recent vehicle thefts have been by juveniles in the middle of the night, there are also many criminals who are “brazen” and “don’t care about your nice day” or “what time it is.”

“There’s no rulebook for any of this,” he furthered. “The same occasion that happened on Denler could happen again tomorrow. ... It’s going to boil down to a personal choice how you want to live in your home.”

In addition to locking doors, Dunshee said residents can also protect themselves by investing in technology – such as home alarm or camera systems and motion detectors.

“I have [a home alarm system] at my house,” he said, adding “you might say I’m a little paranoid and hyper vigilant, but I set it when I go to sleep and I set it when I leave my house.”

Dunshee added that technology has advanced to the point that there are now alarm systems which can be activated simply by using button on a keychain; however, even “the most base model” would help.

Lastly, Dunshee said reporting any suspicious incidents to law enforcement is helpful, as well as communicating with neighbors.

“We’re asking everybody to let us know everything,” he said, adding that anytime a resident feels “any imminent danger to their self or to others,” to call 911.

“If you [see] a weird car, or someone came up and knocked on your door ... it might seem like the most minor thing to you, but it sometimes breaks open a big investigation for us,” Dunshee continued. He said this is especially true if multiple residents report it.

During the forum, First Selectwoman Amy Traversa also brought up a game often played by high school seniors each spring called “Assassins” which has the potential to result in dangerous consequences.

In the game, an individual is assigned “a target” and has 48 hours to shoot the target with a squirt gun. While the game may seem fun, Traversa said she’s concerned that kids are putting themselves in unsafe situations.

“These kids are scaring people and putting themselves in dangerous positions,” Dunshee agreed, adding that two years ago, police received a 911 call from a woman who said she saw someone enter her open garage carrying a gun – which turned out to be a water pistol.

“It’s fair to say the climate today has changed,” Dunshee said. “You’re on high alert, you want to defend your family, defend your property.”

He added that residents and police could mistake the water gun for an actual gun – and that could have dire consequences.

“If you do have teenagers, you have to get it through to them one way or another that [Assassins] is a very, very dangerous game to play,” Dunshee said, adding that residents should report anything they see that’s “out of the ordinary.”

“You people are our eyes and our ears out there,” Fontanella agreed. “If you have blinders on, we have blinders. Let us come out and investigate, and determine if it’s legitimate or not.”

Another resident during the forum asked what exactly his options were in defending himself particularly with a firearm, if someone did break into his house and he felt threatened.

“I’m not your lawyer... I say that half-joking [but] it’s on your side as a homeowner, I’ll tell you that,” Dunshee said, adding that residents who own firearms can visit the state’s special licensing and firearm website (tinyurl.com/lv8fory) for more information.

A second resident echoed concerns about what to do in an active break-in situation and whether you should try to “get out of the situation” – to which Dunshee responded, “each situation is completely different.”

“You know your home layout, your physical capabilities better than I do,” he said.

For example, he furthered, if the break-in occurs in the back of the house and you’re towards the front with neighbors close by, it might make sense to leave the home. However, Dunshee said “the majority of people committing these offenses are looking for an unoccupied home.”

“They don’t want confrontation. They want to take your valuables and come right back out,” he said. “If someone is banging on your door, it’s best to announce your presence while you call us... let them know you’re there. Don’t put courtesy ahead of your own safety.”

Other residents made suggestions such as setting off your car alarm or owning dogs whose barking may scare off a potential intruder.

Dunshee agreed.

“It’s different for every person, but I think the vast majority of people in here would say a dog would be deferring” to a burglar, he said.

Dunshee said he has also received interest from several residents about organizing a neighborhood watch program, which he was “more than happy to get that ball rolling” on.

He furthered that residents can also visit tinyurl.com/n6ojm4t and fill out a “neighborhood watch observation notes” form if they see anything suspicious. Residents are encouraged to then drop the forms off at Town Hall.

“It’s up to us, the community to make it as difficult as we can,” Fontanella said. “The word is out that it’s easy pickin’ in the suburbs and it’s up to you guys to make it difficult.”

“The first step is to lock your cars, take your cars, don’t leave anything of value in your car,” he furthered. “Those are the ground rules. If you live by those ground rules, cars aren’t going to be entered.”

* * *

The issue with vehicle break-ins isn’t limited to Marlborough, however; the Hebron Resident Trooper’s Office shared this week Hebron officers have dealt with break-ins as recently as last weekend, when one car was stolen and there were reports from several neighborhoods of cars being gone through in the early morning hours of April 23.

Hebron Resident State Trooper Kyle Fitzgibbons called residents the “first line of defense” when it came to keeping the theft of unlocked cars and items from unlocked vehicles from happening.

He explained when parking their cars, residents should place items of value in secure locations such as the glovebox or trunk, remove car keys or key fobs – and lock their vehicles.

“By doing these seemingly insignificant things residents can help reduce/stop these crimes from occurring,” he said.

Fitzgibbons added, “If suspicious activity is suspected or observed we request that you get as much information as possible and contact the police. For your own safety do not confront perpetrators. We recommend that residents monitor the activity and keep police informed as they respond.”

While some arrests have been made in connection with the crimes, Fitzgibbons said perpetrators continue to return to steal and go through unlocked cars.

“We need the assistance of residents to reduce and or stop this type of activity,” he stated.

Observations & Ruminations

by **Mike Thompson**

Marches for Science was held last weekend in cities across the country, including Hartford. I didn’t go; I was busy marching for a Mets win, at Citi Field down in New York. (It didn’t work.)

But I admired the people who did march, and I fully support their cause. With a new president who seems keen on gutting the EPA and declaring global warming a hoax, now is indeed a very good time to march in support of science and facts. Yes, as I saw someone opine over the weekend, it’s a little odd to have to march in support of facts in the year 2017, but, here we are.

Of course, a good protest march needs signs. Clever signs offering phrases that stand out and make people think (and ideally draw a smile at the same time). Since this is, again, the year 2017, I was able to click through an online gallery of some of the best signs from the various marches. There were some real winners – some championing science, others warning the danger of denigrating science, and others simply attacking Trump and his administration. Several were, admittedly, pretty nerdy. And most did indeed elicit a chuckle. Highlights included:

“At the start of every disaster movie, there’s a scientist being ignored.”

“I’ve seen better cabinets at Ikea.”

“You know things are serious when the introverts arrive.”

“I flew United to get here. That’s how important this is.”

“More Newton; Less Putin.”

“Don’t piss off the nerds.”

“Without science, we wouldn’t have the McRib.”

“Keep an ion this administration; they take the facts and barium.”

“All we are saying is give bees a chance.”

“Got plague? Yeah, me neither; thank a scientist.”

“Society should worry when geeks have to demonstrate!”

“Like staph aureus, we will resist.”

“Science cures alternative facts.”

“Science makes America greater.”

“Empirical data trumps imperial alt-facts!”

“No science = no beer.”

“Climate change cannot be undone by tweeting.”

“We are not just resistors; we are transformers.”

“The revolution will be peer-reviewed.”

“Evidence isn’t the enemy.”

Lastly, more than once I saw this simple, yet very true sign: “There is no Planet B.”

* * *

It’s not uncommon to see food products get recalled by their manufacturers; usually it’s due to salmonella or some other type of bacterial contamination, or, say, nut pieces ac-

identally being mixed into a nut-free product.

But over the weekend I saw one of the strangest food recall notices I’d ever encountered.

McCain Foods USA announced it was recalling bags of Harris Teeter Southern-Style frozen hash browns sold at stores in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, District of Columbia, Delaware, Florida, Georgia and Maryland. It was also recalling Roundy’s Southern-Style frozen hash browns sold at stores in Illinois and Wisconsin.

Why the recalls? McCain said golf balls were “inadvertently harvested” along with the potatoes and chopped up.

Yup: golf balls.

It’s incredibly bizarre. How did it happen? Did McCain get its potatoes from a farm a little too close to the neighborhood golf course? The company’s not talking, probably because it hopes this whole embarrassing situation will go away. Alas, it’s not. It’s the sort of story that was picked up by media outlets far and wide because – well, how could you not? (Probably the best headline I saw came from TheVerge.com: “If your hash browns taste like golf balls, it’s because they have golf balls in them.”)

* * *

It’s not a moment I’m overly proud of, but I remember one time about a dozen or so years ago, frustrated by my inability to find a new pair of jeans that didn’t have custom holes in them, I told an employee at The Gap that “Back when I was a kid when you had holes in your jeans it meant it was time to go buy a new pair of jeans!” (Mind you, I was I think 25 or 26 at the time.) I’ve since come around to that fashion trend, but this week learned of jeans Nordstrom is selling that I can’t quite get my head around: a pair of jeans designed to make it look like you fell down in the mud. And they want more than \$400 for them.

Yes, for \$425, you can buy a pair of what Nordstrom calls “heavily-distressed” muddy jeans. According to CNN, the mud “has a shiny sheen to it, as if the jeans were dragged down a filthy hill and left in a wet ditch.”

In its product description, Nordstrom writes the jeans “embody rugged, Americana workwear that’s seen some hard-working action with a crackled, caked-on muddy coating that shows you’re not afraid to get down and dirty.”

The jeans are machine-washable – and indeed, the “mud” won’t come off, as it’s not actually real mud.

Geez; \$425 and you don’t even get real mud. At least those jeans at The Gap had real holes.

* * *

See you next week.

Marlborough Residents Urged to Vote Down Budget

by Julianna Roche

Town officials, including Board of Finance members, again urged residents at this week's public hearing about the 2017-18 budget to vote 'no' at the upcoming town meeting on Monday, May 8 – a move that if nothing else, would grant the board more time to get an idea of how impactful Gov. Dannel Malloy's proposed slashes to funding will be.

The \$24.58 million spending package, which the board presented Tuesday night calls for a 6.96 percent tax increase and considers most of the governor's proposed cuts to revenue, except for the \$840,959 in teacher retirement funds he has suggested the town pay.

If the retirement contribution were included in the budget, it would bump the tax increase to 12.03 percent.

"Vote [the budget] down, seriously for no other reason other than to give us time to see what's going to happen at the state level," finance board chairman Doug Knowlton said, adding that per the town charter, the board is prohibited from holding a town meeting on the budget past the second week in May.

"We can't delay it even if we don't know what's happening at the state level," he furthered.

Other officials also present in the audience at the meeting expressed similar sentiments, including Board of Selectmen member Evelyn Godbout, who said that in addition to giving the town more time to "set the budget accord-

ingly," voting the budget down would also "send the message" to the state that "the town can't take on the kind of liability that the state is asking towns to."

If the budget does not pass, Knowlton explained town meetings will continue to be called every three weeks until a budget is set. Once that happens, the finance board will be charged with setting the mill rate (which under the 6.96 percent tax increase would amount to 36.53 mills or 2.38 mills over the current year).

If no budget has passed by July 1, the Board of Selectmen would then set the mill rate based on the latest Board of Finance budget presentation.

One mill is equivalent to \$1 in tax per \$1,000 of assessed property, meaning with a 36.53 mill rate, a resident with a home assessed at \$250,000 would pay approximately \$9,133 in taxes, up from the current \$8,537.

During the budget presentation Tuesday, Knowlton emphasized that the finance board had "agonized over the budget" over the last few months and that it's a budget "that none of us are happy about presenting to the public."

Included in the spending package presented are a Board of Education budget of \$7.32 million – a 1.44 percent increase over current spending – and a capital improvement plan of \$82,265, which will be used for items such as repaving and lining the parking lot by the elementary school's cafeteria and replacing both

the boiler and roof.

The town operations budget, meanwhile, sits at roughly \$4.94 million, with \$893,675 set aside for capital and non-recurring expenditures, including \$160,000 to be used for culverts on North Main Street, \$115,000 for culverts on Finley Hill Road, and \$164,000 worth of other road improvements.

During the public comments portion of the meeting, First Selectwoman Amy Traversa said she also was an "advocate for people voting down the budget" – including both the town budget and the RHAM budget, of which Marlborough would pay \$9.08 million for its portion.

"I think it's too high, but [voting it down] also gets us closer to when the state will have numbers for us," she said, adding "what we're really doing is buying time."

Resident Larry Pryor also expressed frustration with the RHAM budget, proposing though that "instead of bemoaning it," town officials should focus on ways to prevent an overly high budget from being passed in the future.

The "RHAM [budget] is the huge elephant in the room," Pryor said. "We're toast this year."

Currently, selectmen and finance board members from the three RHAM towns – Andover, Hebron and Marlborough – have no direct say on the regional school district's budget. Instead, it's crafted by the RHAM Board of Education

and sent to referendum in each of the three towns; that referendum is scheduled for next Tuesday, May 2.

Pryor said, however, he feels the RHAM budget should be approved by each of the town's finance boards individually before it passes.

"Each of the towns [should] subject them to the same, rigorous review the [Marlborough] Board of Finance has done" to its budget, he furthered.

Resident Albert Daigle of North Main Street also expressed concern with the possibility that the town would be forced to take on teacher pensions proposed by "lame-brained Malloy."

Daigle told the Board of Finance members present, "I advise you people to talk to a few of the other towns, get together, and that teacher pension which he's throwing back at us, let him eat it."

Traversa then said she "couldn't agree with [Daigle] more," and that the town is indeed "fighting" the teacher pension plan.

"We're not going to accept the teacher pensions [and] if we have to go to the Supreme Court, there will be quite a fight," she said.

The annual town meeting and budget vote will take place in the Marlborough Elementary School cafeteria on Monday, May 8, beginning at 7 p.m. Check-in begins at 6:30 p.m.

RHAM Budget Vote Next Week

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Residents of Andover, Hebron and Marlborough will have the opportunity to vote on the proposed 2017-18 RHAM schools budget next Tuesday, May 2, which comes with a 3.99 percent increase over current year spending.

The spending package clocks in at \$28,863,321 for the operating budget – a 2.96 percent increase – plus \$289,960 for the capital budget, and seeks to achieve goals such as improving student achievement, offering challenging programming, and addressing statutory requirements and declining enrollment.

More than half of the budget – 53.6 percent, to be exact – is going to salaries, and included in that number for next year is a 2.2 percent salary increase for administrators as per their contract, and 1 percent increase plus step for certified staff ("step" is a way of determining a teacher's salary based on factors such as years of experience and education level). Negotiations for non-certified staff are also underway.

New for next year, the forwarded budget also includes funds to bring additional coaches to the district in the amount of \$32,619.

Middle school enrollment is anticipated to drop by 48 students next year, to 466, while the number at the high school is expected to decrease by 15, to 1,008. In response to declining enrollment, the proposal also includes a reduction of five teachers, which will reduce the number of middle school teams from six to five.

Meanwhile, diesel fuel has been budgeted at \$124,208, and \$205,662 is included for heating even though the actual heating cost for next year is anticipated to be \$105,662 as a result of the district switching over to natural gas.

The surplus will be given to Hebron for the cost of converting the school equipment so it's compatible with the change – a cost that amounts to about \$264,000 – but the district will realize those fuel savings once that amount is repaid.

The budget proposal also includes the cost of special education, which is anticipated to rise \$907,916 to \$1,814,231, while the cost for special education transportation is budgeted at

\$647,212 – up from \$422,437 in the current year.

The school district also has to foot the tuition bill for students from the sending towns who choose to attend magnet or vocational agricultural schools instead of RHAM; that amount is anticipated to decrease in the coming year from 78 to 74 students and the projected cost for those students is \$380,173 – a \$2,327 decrease.

In order to increase revenue in the district, the school board also made the decision to increase the cost of pay-to-play for athletics by \$15 for both middle and high school students; the cost is now \$165 for the middle school and \$200 for the high school which is expected to result in around \$10,000 in additional revenue.

In total, around \$300,000 in local revenue is anticipated.

Based on last year's numbers, around \$356,000 in federal grants is also expected.

Aside from the operating budget, the capital budget clocks in at \$289,960 and includes funds for fire separations, a loading dock lift plate, dust control system engineering, exterior insulation, resurfacing of the tennis courts, sidewalks repairs irrigation, and baseball and softball field engineering.

If the proposed operating budget is approved next week, Hebron will be responsible for paying the greatest share at 54.33 percent, which amounts to \$15,838,978. Marlborough meanwhile, will be responsible for 31.16 percent or \$9,084,163; and Andover's share of 14.51 percent will amount to \$4,230,141.

The referendum will take place in each of the sending towns Tuesday, May 2. Voting occurs from 6 a.m.-8 p.m. in Hebron at Hebron Elementary School, 92 Church St.; in Marlborough at Elmer Thienes/Mary Hall Elementary School, 25 Community Dr.; and at the Andover Town Hall, 17 School Rd.

Further information on the proposed RHAM budget is available online at reg8.k12.ct.us under "Budget Info."

East Hampton Police News

4/18: Gary Robert Pawloski, 56, of 68 Berlin Tpke., Berlin, turned himself in pursuant to an active warrant and was charged with violation of a protective order, East Hampton Police said.

Also, from April 10-16, officers responded to 12 medical calls, two motor vehicle accidents and 11 alarms, and made 35 traffic stops, police said.

Andover Police News

4/17: State Police said Gregory E. Bader, 22, of 64 Jerry Daniels Rd., Marlborough, was arrested and charged with fifth-degree larceny.

Colchester Police News

4/22: Colchester Police said Ryan Gagne, 26, of 332 West Rd., was arrested and charged with violating conditions of release, disorderly conduct, and third-degree assault.

Single-Vehicle Crash on Dr. Foote Road

by Julianna Roche

Police said a single-car crash left a Colchester resident injured on April 18 at approximately 5:28 p.m.

According to police, Lynette R. Ciochini, 30, of 312 Dr. Foote Rd., was driving her Dodge Caliber westbound on Dr. Foote Rd., about one-tenth a mile east of Cabin Road, when she lost control of the vehicle and drove right, leaving the roadway and subsequently striking a tree on the side of the road.

Ciochini was transported by Colchester EMS to Backus Hospital for minor injuries.

Hebron Dunkin' Donuts Robbed

The Dunkin' Donuts at 109 Main St. was robbed sometime in the overnight period of Thursday, April 20-Friday, April 21, according to state police.

Police said they received a report of a commercial burglary from the store at approximately 2:05 a.m. Police said a store employee arrived for work and discovered the business was not secure.

According to police, the suspect forcibly gained entrance to the store, before forcibly accessing an ATM inside of the building and stole "a large sum of money."

The burglary was one of several that took

Portland Police News

4/21: Linda Hilton, 54, of 92 Marlborough St., was charged with operating a motor vehicle under suspension, operating an unregistered motor vehicle and second-degree failure to appear, Portland Police said.

Hebron Police News

4/19: State Police said a 17-year-old juvenile was arrested and charged with interfering with an officer.

4/23: State Police said Brandon Haugh, 39, of 16 Wellwood Way was arrested and charged with fugitive from justice.

Marlborough Police News

4/20: State Police said Stevin L. Moses, 52, of 23 West Rd., was arrested and charged with risk of injury to a child, disorderly conduct and threatening.

4/22: State Police said Jahmal D. May, 30, of 115 Evergreen Ave., Hartford, was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol, traveling unreasonably fast for conditions, failure to drive in the proper lane of a multiple lane highway, and illegal operation of a motor vehicle limited license.

4/23: State Police said Ruby G. Steverson, 37, of 556 Ellis St., New Britain, was arrested and charged with violation of a protective order.

place at area Dunkin' Donuts recently. According to NBC Connecticut, robberies were reported at Dunkin' Donuts in: South Windsor on April 13; Glastonbury on April 14; Southbury on April 19; and Vernon and Coventry on April 20. NBC Connecticut said police were investigating if the burglaries were connected.

As for the Hebron robbery, the case remains under investigation by Det. Stephen McManaway and anyone with information is asked to call State Police Troop K at 860-465-5469.

Fracking Waste Ordinance Passed in Hebron

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Following months of work by the group “No Fracking Waste Hebron,” the Board of Selectmen last week voted to approve an ordinance that bans the storage, disposal or use of waste produced by hydraulic fracking – the process of extracting natural gas and oil from underground rock formations – in the town.

The selectmen voted unanimously in favor of the ordinance following a public hearing April 20. Hebron follows the *Rivereast* towns of Portland and Andover, which passed similar ordinances in June and October of last year, respectively, as well as other Connecticut towns including Ashford, Branford, Coventry, Mansfield, Middletown, Washington, Windham and Windsor.

The method of fracking involves drilling through rock and injecting a mixture of water, sand and chemicals into the ground at high pressure to shatter – or fracture – shale and release trapped oil and gas. The concern over the waste from this process stems from, among other things, the amount of chemicals used in the process. According to information from the D.C.-based public interest organization Food and Water Watch, more than 1,000 chemicals are used in the water mixture that’s injected into the ground – many of which are toxic or known carcinogens – and not all of the chemicals used in the process are known; the oil and gas in-

dustry is allowed to withhold chemicals considered proprietary, or trade secrets.

Water and sludge returns to the surface as fracking waste and needs to be disposed of – and the 828 residents who signed a petition in favor of the ordinance don’t want Hebron to become dumping grounds for said waste.

Each well can produce more than a million gallons of liquid waste and thousands of tons of solid waste, which is often more toxic than the solution initially injected because the solution mixes with naturally- occurring ground contaminants including volatile organic compounds, radioactive elements, and heavy metals such as arsenic, lead and mercury.

According to a study by researchers with the Yale School of Public Health, many of the chemicals used in and created by fracking “have been linked to reproductive and developmental health problems, and the majority had undetermined toxicity due to insufficient information.”

Along with the above there is also concern over the waste runoff contaminating water supplies and agriculture lands, and the radioactive material eventually making its way back to humans through the ingestion of contaminated crops or animals.

There is currently a moratorium on the use of fracking waste products in Connecticut, but

that temporary embargo is set to expire this year, and the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) has been charged with devising its own regulations to control the substance as a hazardous waste.

Lisa Eldridge, who represents the group “No Fracking Waste Hebron” and worked to provide information, acquire signatures for the petition and move the process forward, shared this week she was “very excited” the ordinance had passed, especially because what route the state will take is uncertain.

“We’re not sure what the state is going to do – they have from July 1 to June 30 of next year to submit regulations on what they want to do with fracking waste and because of that uncertainty we felt that we needed to protect the town of Hebron,” she stated.

“It took a lot of people to make this happen,” Eldridge added, including individuals who helped collect signatures, everyone who signed the petition, and several local businesses that allowed the group to leave petitions for patrons to look over and sign, including Gina Marie’s, Something Simple Café, FennAgains, Hebron Ace Hardware and Plaza Package Store.

In addition, Eldridge said Ted’s IGA allowed the group to sit in their vestibule to gather signatures.

“They were all very helpful with that,” she stated.

And while the group’s original intent to have an ordinance passed in town was a success, Eldridge isn’t finished yet, as she shared it’s important support be expressed for a ban at the state level as well, noting if the state doesn’t move forward with one, fracking waste could still travel through the town on state roads.

“Right now there is a statewide bill that’s working its way through the house to ban fracking waste but it’s a very slow process and it would be helpful if people could call state Rep. Robin Green and also state Sen. Cathy Osten” to express support, Eldridge explained.

She added of the bill, “it’s not worded strongly enough so we’re asking people, if they do call, to leave their name and town and say ‘please support a strong writing for House Bill 6329 banning hydraulic fracturing and all oil and gas drilling and extractions wastes.’”

Eldridge said “it would be excellent if we could get Connecticut to ban fracking waste,” concluding a state ban is the only way the town would be “100 percent protected.”

The complete text of the ordinance is available in the Hebron town clerk’s office or online at hebronct.com.

Following Hearing, Andover Budget Proposal Increases \$50,000

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Following a public hearing Wednesday night at which the Board of Finance presented a budget proposal for 2017-18 totaling \$11,686,987, a couple of last-minute requests increased that amount by \$50,000.

The hearing lasted 20 minutes, with few comments from those in attendance on the proposal, which at the time equated to a 1.62 percent increase in the amount to be raised by taxation – up \$134,259 – to \$8,406,408 from the current year, and an anticipated mill rate increase of 1.50.

But following the additions made after the hearing, that amount became \$8,456,408. The additional \$50,000 will be used to increase the treasurer’s salary, as well as to reinstate \$10,000 to the amount originally included for the town administrator the municipality is currently working to hire.

Speaking to the budget in general, finance board chairman Dan Warren explained during the hearing – as with most of the towns in the state – the “biggest factor to this budget are the changes that are in place for our municipal aid.”

In Gov. Dannel P. Malloy’s February budget proposal, Andover stood to lose around \$1 million in revenue. Coupled with that was an increase in the cost of the resident state trooper program the town would be responsible for – from 70 percent to 100 percent – which meant an increase of about \$203,000.

He added, however, that the board had been told by state officials just last week that while they should continue to be conservative in their budgeting, they “could anticipate restoring about 60 percent of the proposed cuts from the governor.”

“So we took that into account and that’s how

the budget in this hearing was crafted,” Warren explained, adding the news meant a shift from an “austerity budget” because the tax increase had the potential to be as high as 11 percent, to one that doesn’t quite further the “status quo,” but is “value-based” and takes into account areas “of efficiency and value” – including the reinstatement of the town’s resident state trooper, which had initially been cut for next year.

That news is also what led finance board member Jeff Murray to ask for the \$10,000 to be reinstated for the town administrator. He explained some resumes had already been received, but when the job had been posted, the original salary range of \$75,000-90,000 had been the assumption.

“Now that we’ve been told there’ll be some restoration, I would like to make a motion to reinstate that \$10,000 we cut and make it ‘up to \$85,000.’” Murray stated. “I’m not saying we’re going to spend it but I would like to have it in there – I’d hate to lose any of the qualified candidates we already received.”

The finance board voted unanimously to restore that amount with no issue, but expressed more frustration when it came to the amount requested by the Board of Selectmen to be added for the treasurer’s salary.

First Selectman Bob Burbank shared the acting treasurer had said the town’s finances needed some work and the accounting system needed to be updated.

“She made it pretty clear we need someone fulltime in that position to make those changes,” he explained. “The Board of Selectmen listened to her and our recommendation is to increase that salary to make the position a fulltime or

30-hour-per week job.”

Warren and other finance members, however, expressed frustration with the last-minute addition. He said he didn’t argue there were areas that needed to be dealt with, but he took issue with the last minute decision, especially since issues with the treasurer’s office had been known since the beginning of the year.

“This never came up once during budget preparations and we had a meeting where we asked the Board of Selectmen if we could reduce the number for the treasurer because it included \$24,000 for special projects,” he stated. “So my frustration is this is being dropped on us at the eleventh hour in front of everyone and it’s 40 grand, and we spent a lot of time crafting a budget that was palatable to the people.”

Murray agreed, saying “I think given the time we had to discuss this, I don’t think it’s prudent to add a fulltime position this late in the game. This should have been done months ago.”

But in the end the board voted to add the money the selectmen requested 5-1 with Robert England against.

With the additional \$50,000, the proposed budget now equates to \$11,736,987, with \$8,456,408 to be raised by taxation, which is \$184,258 or 2.23 percent more than the current year.

The proposal will result in an anticipated mill rate increase for real estate and personal property of 1.75, up from 30.72 in the current year to 32.47. Included in that amount is a local board of education budget that totals \$4,275,821 and is a \$45,000 or 1.04 percent decrease from the current year’s budget, as well as the town’s

portion of the RHAM Board of Education budget which amounts to \$4,276,288, for an increase of \$116,138 or 2.79 percent.

Also included is \$665,945 for capital expenditures, which Warren said the board limited to “critical items.”

Funds for general government personnel make up 50 percent of the operating budget and clock in at \$1,064,446, and, along with the above, the finance board instated a wage freeze for non-union positions.

At the same time, however, the board created a \$10,000 pool to be used as incentive for employees who embrace cross training and the changes that will come under the town administrator, effectively creating a more “merit-based” reward system.

Murray explained, “Usually we just give a blanket increase and with our new town administrator coming in we thought employees that are really willing to embrace the new administrator and take advantage of training should be rewarded.”

Warren added, “Raises, in my opinion, weren’t accompanied with any sort of record of why they were being proposed. So this is an effort to institute a system of evaluation that’s more merit-based as opposed to just putting out a budget and giving raises.”

The annual town meeting vote on the budget takes place Thursday, May 4 at 7 p.m. in the Andover Elementary School gym, 35 School Rd. Paper copies of the budget are available in the town clerk’s office at Town Hall or online at andoverconnecticut.org, under “Town Departments” and “Finance.”

Beloved Teacher, Colchester Farmer Dies at '90'

by Julianna Roche

A widely-recognized face in the Colchester community – Ira Wasniewski – a local farmer and former agricultural science teacher died in his home April 19 at age 89, six months shy of his 90th birthday.

But according to his wife Nancy, Wasniewski – who was better known as “Bob” by close friends and family – had actually been telling people for the last several months he was 90 years old.

“He really wanted to live until 90,” she laughed, adding that his odd nickname “Bob” stemmed from a German neighbor he had growing up who called him something like “bobola,” which means “little boy” in German.

“So that turned into ‘Bobby’ and it worked a lot better for a cute little two-year-old running around than Ira,” she said.

Born Oct. 18, 1927, Wasniewski was the last surviving sibling of 11 children – who all grew up on his family farm on Marvin Road, which was purchased by his parents in 1912. He also left behind five children of his own: David, Dorothy, Julianna, Edward and Sylvina.

“When his sister died a year ago, we thought he’d be awfully sad and he just said ‘Well, I beat them all,’” Nancy laughed, explaining Wasniewski had quite the sense of humor.

His personable nature and confidence were other qualities Nancy said made her fall in love with Wasniewski when she first met him at a friend’s wedding reception, where she was the bridesmaid.

“He asked if I’d like to go with him to some get-together after this wedding, so I went and changed clothes, and went with him,” she recalled. “It turned out we knew a lot of the same people and that was just it for me.”

The two were married in 1954, celebrating 62 years of marriage.

“A lot of people were intimidated by my family [when they met them], but he was just so at ease. It was just in his nature,” Nancy added of Wasniewski. “So many of the other boys I dated were stumbling over their own feet, and it just made me feel good how confident he was.”

Also described as a “very patriotic man” by Nancy, Wasniewski enlisted in the Army by choice to serve in World War II after he graduated from Bacon Academy.

“He didn’t have to serve because he had a

farm, which was common [then]... they needed farmers to stay at home,” Wasniewski’s son Edward said.

During the war, Wasniewski was involved in the occupation of Korea where he achieved the rank of corporal. Following the war, he obtained his bachelor’s degree in agriculture from the University of Connecticut and later his master’s degree in education.

Wasniewski then spent over 30 years teaching agricultural science at Norwich Free Academy and as an advisor to the Future Farmers of America (FFA) program – acting as a mentor to hundreds of students interested in agriculture. He also served on the first zoning board in Colchester.

Over the course of his teaching career, he also worked as a farmer, raising poultry, cattle and crops.

“He had some really outstanding students that climbed the ladder that became state and national FFA officers,” Nancy said, adding “these guys have come back through the years to visit him and thank him for mentoring them.”

And while farming ran in his blood, teaching also became a lifelong passion.

“He was a non-stop teacher,” Nancy said. “We’d be driving down the road and he’d be telling us the names of the trees.”

His son David agreed.

“At any given moment, you could go into a classroom of his and [he’d be] giving a lecture on everything from why it’s important to be well-groomed even as a farmer to why you don’t soup up your hot rods, but that always led into why you should be saving your money to buy land or tractors,” he laughed.

Wasniewski became so close with some of his students that Nancy said she remembers even taking one of his vocational agriculture students into their own home because his family life “was not very good.”

Nancy recalled with a laugh that the student “was in his senior year and a good student, and my husband said to me, ‘He needs a place to live’ and I said, ‘Well I could at least meet him.’ And he goes, ‘He’s in the car right now with all of his belongings.’”

“He looked out for people, he really did,” Wasniewski’s daughter Sylvina said. She added that, on her father’s obituary page on the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home website, she was



Ira Wasniewski, 89, who died April 19, will be remembered for his love of farming and family, and his passion for teaching others about agriculture. Photo by Sylvina Rollins.

moved to tears by a condolence left by a girl she used to babysit for.

“It said, ‘Your dad was so kind to me that after my dad died, he made sure I had a valentine every year,’” Sylvina said. “Dad just thought she was probably missing her dad.”

Nancy agreed, adding that her husband “would talk to some old guy walking down the road and then bring him into lunch.”

“He was so gregarious,” Sylvina furthered. “He could talk to anybody and would find out that he knew somebody he went to school with or taught with, or he taught their son.”

In addition to his wife and five children, Wasniewski left behind numerous grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

“All his nieces and nephews would come back to the farm on summers and weekends, and they would just have a total ball,” Nancy said, adding “this is why we’re having a ser-

vice on the farm. ... The farm was his place.”

Daughter Julianna, who lived next door to the farm, said she’ll always remember watching her father “hay and working the land.”

The Wasniewski family will receive guests from 4 to 7 p.m. Friday, April 28 at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Road, Colchester. On Saturday, April 29, family and friends are invited to join them at the Wasniewski Farm on 167 Marvin Road at 1 p.m. for a celebration of Ira’s life.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his memory to the “Bacon Academy Board of Trustees”, P.O. Box 67, Colchester, CT 06415 and/or to “The Colchester Farm-to-School Council”, c/o Leslie Curtis, Treasurer, 110 Cato Corner Road, Colchester, CT 06415.

Wasniewski’s obituary appears this week on page 31. To make online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Bye Bye Birdie Croons Its Way to EHHS

by Elizabeth Regan

What’s the matter with kids today?

That’s the refrain of a group of eight faculty members from across the East Hampton school district as they join the cast of the East Hampton High School production of *Bye Bye Birdie* for its show-stopping number, “Kids.”

The show chronicles the trail of laughter and heartache after the Elvis-inspired, 1960s-era teen heartthrob Conrad Birdie finds out that he’s been drafted. His managers decide his parting move should be a televised goodbye kiss to a typical American girl from Sweet Apple, Ohio.

It’s when Conrad Birdie treats some of the Sweet Apple teenagers to a wild night out that their parents – played by the faculty members – lament just how out of control the new generation is.

The song “Kids” is introduced by seniors Bailey Evans and Ally Giza, who play Harry McAfee and his wife, Doris.

Evans said it’s been fun working with his former teachers, like middle school theater director Pamela Penn and elementary school art teacher Suzanne Fausette.

He said they’re really good at acting, but not so much with the dancing.

“They don’t move as well as they used to,” he laughed.

Ensemble member Ailish Frost, a junior, is joined this year by her father, Craig. He’s a third grade teacher at Memorial School.

She said it’s funny to watch her dad, who’s more the sports type, try to act, dance and sing.

“He has one line. I’ve worked with him at home and he’s done it different ways. He’ll ask me if I think certain things are okay,” she said with a laugh. “He has no idea what’s happening.”

Frost described the opportunity as a bonding experience.

“I think he also wanted to be in it with me because I don’t do sports, and he does the sports with my sisters,” she said.

The faculty members in the cast also include Sheryl Adams, middle school special education teacher; Cyndi Buchan, middle school principal’s assistant; Jason Lehmann, middle school principal; Mark O’Donnell, high school English teacher; and Jon Searles, middle school social studies teacher.

Director Rachel Mansfield said she gave the teachers one song to perform so they wouldn’t get overwhelmed.

“I wanted to do something where they could just come in, have a great, big, fun number, and

be done,” she said.

And even though she warned all the teachers they would need to sing and dance, Mansfield said there was a lot of surprise at the first rehearsal when they realized they’d have to do both at the same time.

“They’ll stop me in the hallways at school and they’ll be like ‘Am I doing it right?’ And they’ll dance for me. It’s just been great,” Mansfield said.

On the other end of the spectrum, the show includes a group of eighth-grade boys to supplement the school’s small drama club.

Mansfield explained that while she wished she could’ve brought up eighth-grade girls as well, “boys are always hard to find in theater, so that’s why we asked them.”

According to Mansfield, the drama club is in the process of rebuilding after a large group of seniors graduated and the club took a year off from mounting a musical, while Mansfield finished graduate school.

Giza, who plays the nervous Mrs. McAfee, said she enjoys watching the younger kids perform.

“They’re so energized, and it just makes you feel good watching it,” she said.

Like so many East Hampton High School productions, the program is enhanced by many cast members’ experience through the Young People’s Center for Creative Arts. The local nonprofit puts on popular summer musicals for youth.

Juniors Riley Pawlewitz, who plays Conrad Birdie, and Shaina Dunn, who plays Rosie, are YPCCA alumni with several performances on their resume.

Pawlewitz cited *Chicago*, *Rent* and *West Side Story* as his favorite musicals from among those he’s been involved in.

But Conrad Birdie is his first lead role, which he said gives him the chance to bring out a character in a way he never has before.

He described the cocky and charming Birdie as totally unlike himself – “but it’s fun to put myself into someone I’m not normally.”

Dunn said Rosie, however, is not such a far stretch from her own personality.

“Rosie is very sassy. She’s got some spunk and she’s not afraid to speak her mind,” Dunn said.

Bye Bye Birdie will be performed tonight and tomorrow at 7 p.m. and on Sunday at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$10.

Obituaries

East Hampton

Frank Arthur Mott III

Frank Arthur Mott III, 52, of Moodus, passed away Sunday, April 23, in his home, surrounded by his loving family. Frank was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., to the late Frank Arthur Mott Jr. and Margaret (Zeuner) Mott on March 15, 1965.

He went to school in Brooklyn until age 10 when he and his family moved to East Hampton. He graduated from East Hampton High School in 1983, where Frank met his high school sweet heart Karen (DiStefano) Mott. Frank and Karen married April 28, 1990. They had four beautiful daughters together, Nicole, Amanda, Carrie and Jessie. Frank worked for the State of Connecticut in the Department of Transportation for over 30 years.

He loved to be outside. Frank enjoyed fishing with his brother and nephews, canoeing and kayaking, and he loved to take his family camping. Frank was the kindest person you could have ever met and he would have done anything for anyone. He will be deeply missed.

Frank is preceded in death by his father Frank Arthur Mott Jr. and his nephew Scott Edward Evans. Frank is survived by his wife Karen (DiStefano) Mott; his four daughters, Nicole, Amanda, Carrie and Jessie; his siblings, Kim (Mott) Moon and Kenneth Miner of East Hampton, Lisa (Mott) Seymour and Whitman Seymour of Colchester, William Mott and Deborah (Lanzi) Mott of East Hampton, his mother Margaret (Zeuner) Mott; and many nieces and nephews.

A private memorial service will be held at the convenience of the family.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.



East Hampton

Allan Buckland

Allan Buckland, 62, of East Hampton, beloved husband of Kristine (Nelson) Buckland, died peacefully Tuesday, April 25, at Middlesex Hospital Hospice, after a courageous battle with cancer. Born Sept. 25, 1954, in Middletown he was the son of Bessie (Ablehouser) Buckland and the late Donald Buckland.

Allan grew up in Portland and graduated from Portland High School. He had worked as a tractor trailer driver for Bailey's Express and had recently retired after 30 years of service. He was a proud member of the Teamsters and was proud to drive Big Green No. 72.

Allan's family would like to thank the doctors and staff of Middlesex Hospital Hospice Unit for the compassionate care they gave to Allan during his illness.

Besides his wife and mother, he is survived by his two sons, Mark Buckland and his spouse Nick of Middletown, Jeffrey Buckland and his wife Jessica of East Haddam; his daughter, Linda Buckland Pierini and her fiancé Brett Trepanier of East Hampton; two brothers, Donald Buckland (Terry) of California, Larry Buckland (Mary) of Portland; sister-in-law, Bev Cochran (Allen) of East Hampton; four grandchildren, Mathias Buckland Pierini, Marley "Pumkin" Pierini, Preston Buckland, Patrick Buckland; and several great-nieces and nephews.

A celebration of Allan's life will be held Sunday, May 7, at 2 p.m., in the VFW post in East Hampton.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Middlesex Hospital Hospice Unit, c/o Middlesex Hospital Dept. of Philanthropy, 55 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.



Portland

Myrna Geiges

Myrna Ethelyn (Goldberg) Geiges passed away peacefully at Middlesex Hospital Hospice in Middletown Sunday, April 23, at the age of 82. Myrna was born in Hartford Feb. 3, 1935, and she grew up in Portland. She was the daughter of the late Meyer Goldberg, owner of Red Wing Oil Company, and the late Bertha (Goldstein) Goldberg Fass of Old Mill Road in Middletown.

She graduated valedictorian from Portland High School in 1953. Myrna was educated at Connecticut College in New London and graduated in 1957 with a major in zoology. She married Edwin Jay Geiges in 1958, and she worked at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary before she became a mother and homemaker. She was the president of the Portland Garden Club and loved to paint.

Some of Myrna's favorite things consisted of a love for the arts, including going to the theater, museums and attending live music. She also had an appreciation for old and current movies and loved watching the Oscars every year. She enjoyed collecting antiques and costume jewelry and always enjoyed finding new shopping treasures. Myrna was a big fan of the Boston Red Sox and the UConn women's basketball team.

For many years, she and her companion Sal spent time enjoying the sunshine of Florida, where her parents relocated and her daughter lived. They enjoyed good food, fine wine, and taking road trips to new and familiar places. She got great pleasure from her monthly lunches with her high school buddies where they shared their lives with each other. She was a longtime member of Congregation Adath Israel Synagogue in Middletown, where she was married and both her daughters celebrated their Bat Mitzvahs.

Myrna was a generous and loving person whose smile could always brighten up a room. Myrna took much joy in being with her family, and she will be greatly missed.

She is predeceased by her husband, Edwin Jay Geiges from New Jersey. She is survived by her daughters, Heidi Jane Geiges of Redwood City, Calif.; Beth Susan Katz and her son-in-law Allen Katz of Weston, Fla.; her longtime companion, Salvatore Bongiorno of Portland and his children Paul Bongiorno of Portland, Susan Bongiorno of Portland, and William Bongiorno and his wife MaryAnn Bongiorno of Madison.

A funeral service was held Thursday, April 27, at Congregation Adath Israel Synagogue, 8 Broad St., Middletown, followed by interment at Adath Israel Cemetery, 714 Pine St., Middletown.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be made to Middlesex Hospital Hospice & Palliative Care Unit, 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457. Myrna was well taken care of by all of the hospice nurses, doctors, nurse practitioners, and volunteers. Contributions can also be made to Congregation Adath Israel Synagogue, P. O. Box 337, Middletown, CT 06457 and the American Heart Association at donatenow.heart.org.

Doolittle Funeral Home handled all of the arrangements. For additional information, questions and messages of condolence to the family, visit doolittlefuneralservice.com.



Portland

Margaret Milardo

Margaret (Sandoro) Milardo, 94, of Portland, wife of the late Frank L. Milardo, died Monday, April, 24, at Middlesex Hospital. She was born in Woodbridge, daughter of the late Alexander and Rosina (Fatone) Sandoro. Prior to her retirement, she worked at Goodyear Rubber Company and later at Durham Manufacturing.

She is survived by several nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her husband as well as brothers, Frank, Nicholas and Peter Sandoro, and sisters, Susan Cassidy and Constance Wilmer.

Funeral services will be held Monday, May 1, at 11 a.m., at Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown. Burial will be at St. Mary Cemetery, Portland. Friends may call prior to the service on Monday from 10-11 a.m. at Biega Funeral Home.

Those who wish may make memorial contributions to Middlesex Hospital Hospice and Palliative Care Unit, 28 Crescent St. Middletown, CT 06457. Margaret was well taken care of by all of the nurses, doctors, nurse practitioners and volunteers.

To share memories or express condolences online, visit biegafuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Ira H. Wasniewski

Ira H. Wasniewski, "Bob," died quietly at his home Wednesday, April 19, with his wife of 62 years, Nan (Nancy Norton), by his side. Ira died on the same Marvin Road farm where he was born 89 years ago. Born to Frank and Julia Wasniewski on Oct. 18, 1927, he was the last surviving sibling of 11 children – all born on the farm.

Ira was father to David Wasniewski (Sara), Dorothy Brett Dimberg, Julianna Cameron (Mark), Edward Wasniewski (Georgia), and Sylvina Rollins (Kevin). He was grandfather to one grandson, Tim Cameron, and six granddaughters, Kristin, Lauren and Allison Dimberg, Sophie and Attabelle Wasniewski, and Sierra Cameron; and step grandchildren, Mark Rollins and Annys White. He is survived by many nieces and nephews as well as numerous students who he mentored during his long teaching tenure.

Ira graduated from Bacon Academy in 1945. After graduation, he enlisted in the Army to serve in World War II. He was involved in occupation of Korea, achieving the rank of Corporal. After the war, Ira he enrolled at the University of Connecticut and earned a bachelor's degree in agriculture in 1952 and a master's degree in education in 1955. At UConn, he was a member of the Air Force ROTC, graduating at the top of his class and earning the rank of 1st Lieutenant. Ira taught agricultural science at Norwich Free Academy for 30 years. As an advisor to the Future Farmers of America (FFA) program, he became a mentor to many students interested in agriculture and encouraged their participation in state and national FFA leadership roles.

In addition to his teaching career, Ira was also a full time farmer and raised poultry, cattle, and crops during his lifetime. He also operated a sand and gravel quarry on the farm. He was happiest working the land for which he had a deep respect and infinite knowledge. He shared his passion for the farm and all it meant to his children, grandchildren and nieces and nephews who, like him, find the family farm a place to renew love of family, land and nature. In 2012, he took pleasure in hosting the Centennial Anniversary of the Wasniewski Farm that his parents purchased in 1912.

Ira was very active in Colchester. He was a member of the first Colchester Zoning Board, and a charter member of the Colchester Rotary Club. Ira and his sons, David and Ned, also belonged to the YMCA-sponsored Indian Guides.

The family will receive guests from 4-7 p.m. today, April 28, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. On Saturday, April 29, family and friends are invited to join them at the Wasniewski Farm on 167 Marvin Rd. at 1 p.m. for a celebration of Ira's life.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made in his memory to the "Bacon Academy Board of Trustees," P.O. Box 67, Colchester, CT 06415 and/or to "The Colchester Farm to School Council," c/o Leslie Curtis, Treasurer, 110 Cato Corner Rd., Colchester, CT 06415.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.



East Hampton

Ruth Somma

Ruth Guilbeau Somma, 73, of East Hampton, died peacefully at home Saturday, April 22. She was the daughter of the late Amanda and the Rev. Samuel Guilbeau of Hartford.

Ruth was a graduate of Weaver High School in Hartford, Russell Sage College (B.A.) and the University of Hartford (M.A.). Ruth taught for a number of years at Mark Twain School in Hartford and was a foster mom to many children for over 30 years. Ruth loved and practiced ballet at Creative Dance Studio for almost 40 years with her dear friend Cindy Baloga, where she was also the costume seamstress. Ruth loved music of all kinds and played her piano and/or harp almost daily.

Feeling blessed with plenty, Ruth always gave generously to her favorite charities: The United Negro College Fund, the East Hampton Food Bank, Save the Children and many others.

Ruth leaves Mike, her husband of 50 years, and three children: a son, Tunji Somma and his wife Aynsley, a daughter, Pilar Montalvo, her husband Luis and grandchildren Miles and Ella, and youngest son Frederick; her sister, Mary Miller and niece, April Miller; sisters-in-law Patricia Towne and her husband Allen; and Lynn Grace and her husband Larry; lifelong friends Cindy Baloga and Eileen Packard; and, because Ruth was an avid doll collector, her cherished collection of hundreds of dolls and stuffed animals.

Her family will celebrate her life privately and in lieu of sending flowers; if you wish to pay tribute, please make a generous donation to your favorite charity in Ruth's name.



Colchester

Joan Cynthia Bonenfant

Joan Cynthia Bonenfant, 76, of Colchester, formerly of Hebron, passed away Wednesday, April 26, at Middlesex Hospital Hospice. Born in Hartford Nov. 5, 1940, she was a daughter of the late Leo and Laura (Bergeron) Fortier.

Joan married William Joseph Bonenfant in 1961. The couple raised their family at the home they made in Amston. They also taught Jukido Martial Arts together and they shared 35 years of marriage before he predeceased her in 1996.

Joan was a homemaker and Certified Nurse Aid. She also worked at Yankee Pastry in Moodus and she had her own business, making concrete lawn ornaments at her home in Hebron. She enjoyed traveling to Nova Scotia with her family every year but most importantly, she will be remembered as a devoted and loving mother and grandmother.

She will be sadly missed by her four children, Billy Bonenfant, Lori Langan of Florida, Kathy Wysoski and husband Ron of Colchester and Marie Barros of Hebron; two brothers, Raymond and Allan Fortier; three sisters, Ellie Fox, Yvonne Fortier and Betty Fortier; three grandchildren, Kevin, Shawn and Trisha; and three great-grandchildren, Samuel, Matthew and Rayne.

In addition to her husband and parents, she was predeceased by an infant daughter, Lisa, and a brother, Leo Fortier.

Calling hours will be held Saturday, April 29, from 9:30-11 a.m., at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral service will follow immediately at the funeral home at 11 a.m. Burial will be in the New Hebron Cemetery.

Donations in her memory may be made to Lewy Body Dementia Association, Inc., 912 Killian Hill Rd. S.W., Lilburn, GA 30047. (lbd.org)

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.



Obituaries continued

East Hampton

Mary F. Brahen

Mary F. Brahen, 84, of East Hampton, wife of the late Harry W. Brahen, died Friday, April 21, at Middlesex Hospital surrounded by her family. Born Aug. 17, 1932, in Portland, daughter of the late Emanuel and Concertina (Milardo) Fazzino.

Mary had lived in East Hampton for 50 years and was a member of St. Mary's Church, Portland. She retired in 1987 from Pratt & Whitney.

Mary is survived by her loving family, two sons and daughters-in-law Michael and Jacqueline Brahen of Thompson, Patrick and Teresa of St. Augustine, Fla., and three daughters, Debra Brahen, Mary Leighton, and Connie and son-in-law Robert Mata, all of Portland. She is also survived by eight grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren, and several nieces and nephews.

She is predeceased by three brothers, Sebastian Fazzino, Salvatore Fazzino, Frank Fazzino, and three sisters Anna Rossitto, Josephine Mazzotta, and Angeline Grimaldi.

The funeral was held Wednesday, April 26, at the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial in St. Mary Church. Burial was in the family plot in St. Mary's Cemetery, Portland. Friends called at the funeral home Wednesday morning.

Those who wish may make memorial donations to the Middlesex Hospice Unit c/o Development Office, 55 Crescent St. Middletown, CT 06457.

Andover

Mildred H. McLaughlin

Mildred H. McLaughlin, 79, of Andover, beloved mother, passed away Thursday, Feb. 9, at Apple Rehab in Colchester. She suffered from a long illness and battle with emphysema and COPD.

She was born in New York City daughter to the late Rudolph and Henrietta Dobias Jan. 4, 1938. She moved to Connecticut, where she was employed at Brownell & Co. in Moodus as a supervisor for more than 30 years. Her remaining time was spent as a resident of Andover, where she resided with her daughter Laura and granddaughter Crystal.

She enjoyed her many loving animals that she had during her lifetime, but especially Gizmo. Family was everything to her. She loved to collect Boyd's bears and anything to do with the color purple, carnations were her favorite flowers. She always signed all her cards as Moms or Grams, something I will never forget.

She is survived by her four children, Laura McLaughlin of Willimantic, Dawn Willette of Colchester, Kevin McLaughlin of Wallingford and Patrick McLaughlin and daughter-in-law Penny McLaughlin of New York; also, her six grandchildren, Amber, Matheau, Crystal, Tanya, Emily and Allison; and her two great-grandchildren, Aiden and Payton.

She was a loving mother, grandmother and great-grandmother and she will truly be missed.

The family wishes to thank all of those who cared for her over the last few years of her life.

There will be a private gravesite service at the convenience of the family.

Colchester

T. Fay A. Boyden

T. Fay A. (Walker) Boyden, 89, formerly of Greenfield, Mass., passed peacefully Sunday, April 23, at the Harrington Court Genesis Health Care Center, Colchester, following a period of declining health.

A celebration of her life will be observed Saturday, April 29, with a gathering to take place in the Terrace Room of the Deerfield Inn, in Deerfield, Mass., from 1-4 p.m., with a remembrance service at 2 p.m., with Mr. Jack Cooper as the celebrant. Interment services will be held privately in the Springdale Cemetery, Turners Falls, Mass. Visiting hours are omitted.

Expressions of affection in the form of a charitable contribution in Fay's memory are suggested in lieu of flowers to the Alzheimer's Foundation.

Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to the McCarthy Funeral Homes of Greenfield and Turners Falls, Mass., and are currently incomplete.

For further information, visit www.mccarthyfuneralhomes.com.

Colchester

James A. Valliere II

James A. Valliere II, 49, of Salem, passed away Wednesday, April 19, at his home. Born Oct. 8, 1967 in Hartford, he was the son of Carolyn (Congdon) and Theodore Grey of Colchester.

Jimmy was a talented mechanic, working as an auto mechanic in several garages, learning his trade in the Congdon family garage since the age of 14. He was also accomplished at building muscle cars.

He enjoyed hunting and fishing and was formerly a champion at darts. Most importantly, he will be remembered by loved ones for his great sense of humor and for all he did to help others.

In addition to his mother and stepfather, he leaves his cherished daughters, Tori Grey of Colchester and Ivy Valliere of North Grosvenordale; a brother, Christopher Grey of Colchester; two sisters, Lisa Long and Jackie Nichols; a granddaughter, Penelope Grey; and numerous extended family and friends.

He was predeceased by his biological father, James Valliere Sr.

The family received guests Tuesday, April 25, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral service was held Wednesday, April 26, directly at the Congregational Church of Salem, 260 Hartford Rd., Salem. Burial followed in the Salem Green Cemetery.

Donations in his memory may be made to the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, 101 Centerpoint Dr. Ste. 107, Middletown, CT 06457.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Hebron Town Budget Vote Tuesday

by Geeta S. Sandberg

Residents will have the opportunity to vote on the proposed 2017-18 budget of \$36.74 million next Tuesday, May 2.

The spending package amounts to \$36,740,238 for an increase of \$562,289 over the current year's budget. Included in that amount is \$9,312,714 for the general budget, an increase of 1.79 percent, and \$11,588,546 for the Hebron Board of Education budget, a decrease of 1.45 percent.

The bulk of the proposed budget – \$15,838,978, to be exact — is for the town's portion of the RHAM schools' budget, which totals \$28,863,321 for the operating budget plus \$289,960 for the capital budget, and is paid for by residents in the three sending towns (a story on the RHAM budget appears elsewhere in this issue).

Meanwhile, the recommended general government budget of \$9.31 million includes \$7,221,076 for general government expenditures, a \$100,000 contribution to Open Space Land Acquisitions, a \$41,000 contribution toward the cost of revaluation which takes place every five years, and \$3,050 for Capital Non-Recurring projects.

The general government budget also contains a \$770,911 contribution toward Capital Improvement Plan requests, and a \$44,260 contribution to Capital projects that cost between \$5,000 and \$25,000; the spending proposal includes \$1,234,260 in Capital Improvement Plan requests, and the difference would be paid for with \$59,216 leftover from previ-

ous appropriations, and an anticipated \$404,133 contribution from the Fund Balance.

Of the total \$36.74 proposal, \$27,921,545 is proposed as coming from taxes, which is an increase of \$325,552 – or 1.18 percent – from the current year.

Along with the overall spending increase, also impacting the budget proposal is a decrease in the grand list due to the October 2016 Revaluation. As a result of that process, which is used to value all of the property in town on an equalized basis, the grand list decreased \$30,937,720 or 4.1 percent; that translates to an increase of 1.49 mills – before the rest of the budget is even taken into account.

Altogether, the recommended budget, if approved, would result in a 2.52 mill increase, which would bring the mill rate for 2017-18 to 38.16.

For an average house in Hebron with a market value of \$300,000 that would mean a tax bill of \$8,033 – however, whether that amount is an increase, a decrease, or the same as the current year's taxes depends upon what impact the revaluation had on a resident's assessment.

A document containing the proposed changes in the 2017-18 tax bill for every address in town is available at town hall or online at hebronct.org, along with detailed budget information.

Voting on the 2017-18 proposal takes place next Tuesday, May 2, from 6 a.m.-8 p.m. at Hebron Elementary School, 92 Church St.