



RIVEREAST

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If I Had a Hammer... John Marcin of Marlborough was among a group of 20 student volunteers from Xavier High School in Middletown who spent their "spring break" building homes in Guatemala for families in need. Marcin is a junior honors student at Xavier. During their visit, the boys built a two-room house complete with a stove for cooking. They made and poured concrete, built and painted walls, windows and doors, applied a roof and handmade the stove. The boys also raised supplies for the local school "Kairos" and brought food on a daily basis to needy families.

Draining the Swamp in Belldown

by Elizabeth Regan

An East Hampton property owner who described the local beaver population as his personal ISIS has belatedly received the town's permission to drain a pond along Tartia and Collie Brook roads.

The Inland/Wetlands Watercourse Agency (IWWA) last Wednesday voted 4-1 to affirm the right of self-described farmer John Hanson to stanch the flood he said is overtaking his 26.42-acre property.

The lone 'nay' vote came from agency vice chairman Joshua Wilson, a wetland ecologist and certified soil scientist. Wilson argued evidence had not been presented to prove Hanson was exempt from the permitting process designed to preserve and protect the town's wetlands.

Hanson stood before the agency to explain his actions at a show cause hearing a little more than a week after the Building, Planning and Zoning Department became aware of the dam breach.

He told agency members he asked a tenant to "relieve" part of a beaver dam with an excavator so the water level would come down. The land was a meadow before the beavers took over, he said.

The 83-year-old blamed two decades of damming activity by an army of terroristic beavers

for the exponential growth of the pond.

"The beaver is the ISIS of me," Hanson said.

The land is a hay farm, Hanson said - except the beavers have made it so he "can't do any hayin'."

It's a literal and figurative "quagmire," according to Hanson.

The beavers built upon a man-made dam constructed in 1940 to create a small ice skating pond, according to Hanson.

He told agency members the farm has been in his family for 100 years.

The meadow used to be teeming with wood ducks, mallards, various birds, snakes and turtles, according to Hanson, who said: "All I'm trying to do is bring the farm, the ecosystem, back to where it's supposed to be," he said.

When asked by agency members what his plans are now that he's breached the dam, he said his goal is to contain the farm pond to a half acre or an acre.

But two complaints from Tartia Road neighbors said there was plenty of wildlife in and around the pond before Hanson drained it.

An April 16 email from Tartia Road resident Adam Dawidowicz to Town Manager Michael Maniscalco said he was alerted to the vanishing pond by a "low tide" smell. They said wild-

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RHAM Budget Defeated in All Three Towns

by Geeta S. Sandberg

It's back to the drawing board for the RHAM Board of Education, after the proposed \$28.86 million operating budget the board sent to referendum was defeated in all three of the sending towns Tuesday.

The spending package, which equates to a 2.96 percent increase over the current year's budget, was shot down by a vote 1,156-951: 696-653 in Hebron, 340-218 in Marlborough, and 120-80 in Andover.

If approved, the budget would have meant Hebron would be responsible for paying \$15,838,978 of that for an increase of \$569,207 over the current year. Marlborough, meanwhile, would have been responsible for \$9,084,163 for an increase of \$533,987; and Andover's share would have amounted to \$4,230,141 for an increase of \$533,987.

The \$289,960 capital budget, meanwhile, was approved 1,091-1,015.

RHAM Board of Education Chairman Danny Holtsclaw said Thursday he was pleased at least the capital budget was approved.

"I was definitely pleased to see that the capital budget passed because those represent some serious infrastructure repairs that need to be addressed immediately, so that was a positive," he stated. It was an "indication to me that the public is focused on what we're doing and making sure the classroom and school environment is maintained and kept in good order for the

students."

As for the operating budget's defeat, however, Holtsclaw said he was a little skeptical it would pass going into the referendum due to the addition of funds for athletics.

The RHAM proposal included \$32,619 for additional coaches.

"I was a little skeptical only because it included an expansion in the number of staff associated with athletics," he explained. "That's the only area where there's been an expansion of staff - over the last two years there's been reductions in staff because of lower student population - so whether or not that was a factor is something I'm hoping we'll get feedback for, because a lot of parents came to meetings looking for those additional coaches during the budget process."

Holtsclaw emphasized resident feedback would be important for the board moving forward, "So we can get more guidance from the public as to the things they want us to look at, because obviously we have our work cut out for us."

For some of the officials in the three towns that make up the district, Tuesday's budget defeat meant the opportunity to lower the overall number, something that was needed in an uncertain fiscal climate where the amount of state aid municipalities will receive remains un-

known.

Marlborough First Selectwoman Amy Traversa said this week now was not the time to be talking about bringing additional coaches to the district. (The proposed budget had called for an additional seven, including a strength and conditioning coach for all four seasons.) She added any cuts will be painful, but there are "difficult decisions that need to be made and people need to start accepting that they can't afford everything."

Traversa said that earlier in the week she had spoken to a senior who was moving out of town because they can't afford the taxes.

"There's nowhere to go and he can't afford to live in the town he called 'home' for 50 years and raised all his kids in. So it's not just about providing everything for the kids," she stated. "I'd absolutely like to see [the budget] lower - in fact, it *has* to be lowered. Every time a budget is defeated it needs to come back with a smaller number, I think. There's plenty of room to come down, I don't want to be so bold as to say where, but it's a rich program."

Traversa said by defeating the budget, there was also now more time to get answers from the state.

"We don't know what we're getting from the state" in terms of aid, the first selectwoman said. "I just don't want to take a shot in the dark, and if we locked in the RHAM budget then the state

said they're cutting this and that, we may not be able to go back and make those cuts."

She added, "With every day that passes we may have a better indication."

Andover Board of Finance Chairman Dan Warren also said this week he was "pleased" the RHAM operating budget was defeated.

"I appreciate the burden it places on [school] board members to go back to the drawing board," he said, "but I strongly believe the increased athletic spending, taken in combination with the cuts in academics and uncertainty of state funding, made the budget irresponsible. Hopefully this will be acknowledged by the board and they will reconsider."

Warren noted he was a former RHAM athlete and coach who had "a great appreciation for their value in youth development."

However, he added, "in the past 15 years I think the insular sports culture at RHAM has outpaced that of the surrounding community. Anyone who was around in 2001 [when I was a student] will tell you the facilities and resources available to students now are light-years beyond what were available to athletes then. We didn't even have an outfield fence for the baseball field. There's been an astonishing transformation in less than a generation, but I think it is time to show some restraint."

As for Hebron Board of Finance Chairman

See RHAM Budget page 2



East Hampton resident John Hanson breached a beaver dam on his Tartia Road property last month to keep a large pond from overtaking his property. The act, which incited a passionate reaction from both supporters and opponents, was ultimately affirmed by the local Inland/Wetlands Watercourse Agency.

Swamp cont. from Front Page

life – including peepers, turtles, ducks, beavers, Canadian geese and other migratory birds – seemed to disappear overnight.

Dawidowicz said he had “serious issues” with the lack of state and local oversight of the dam removal.

The news erupted on two local Facebook groups starting on Easter Sunday.

Members of “Let’s Talk East Hampton” were largely appalled at the perceived destruction of a natural habitat, while most of those on “East Hampton, CT Uncensored” supported the private landowner and his right to control his own property.

Hanson was the subject of an April 18 cease-and-desist letter after Maniscalco referred the complaints to Planning and Zoning Official Jeremy DiCarli. The letter said state statute requires the IWWA to review and approve any plans for the removal of beaver dams.

State and local regulations specify certain activities related to farming can be conducted without a permit. However, it is up to the property owner to approach the local wetlands agency to make sure the activity qualifies for an exemption.

The dam is under local control, according to the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

Hanson told the agency he didn’t know he needed to contact the town since he was told by knowledgeable people he didn’t need a permit to get rid of the dam.

Discussion among IWWA members revolved around a regulation stating property owners are allowed to have an unregulated farm pond less than three acres in size if it is essential to a farming operation.

Wilson argued it was Hanson’s responsibility to prove the pond was originally three acres or less. If so, the property owner would be within his rights to undertake maintenance efforts to keep the pond at that size.

Members did not dispute the pond was larger than three acres when it was drained. It was estimated at six to seven acres based on a 1992 survey on file in the land use department and has, according to DiCarli, grown “quite a bit” since then.

But six members agreed to issue their decision based on the intended size of the pond instead of the beaver-influenced reality.

Agency chairman Jeff Foran relied on personal recall from about 50 years ago to attest to the pond’s former size. He said there was hardly any standing water back when he used to check wood duck boxes with his father as members of the Sportsman Club.

“You had to wear boots because it was swampy and messy, but there was nothing like the water that was there the last few years,” Foran told fellow agency members.

Members Peter Wall and David Boule also remembered when the pond was under three acres.

When another member pointed to a 1960s-era map showing the pond looked at the time to be about a quarter acre in size, Wilson said that didn’t necessarily show the original size of the farm pond.

“Is that because he has a low level outlet open and he’s drained the pond?” Wilson asked.

Wilson suggested a more formal calculation would involve measurement of the spillway elevation of the full dam and then the perimeter of that area.

Hanson said he thought the pond was one acre when it was controlled back in 1940.

Another problem for Wilson was that Hanson

had not explained how the pond is “essential” to his farm.

According to IWWA member Scott Hill, the pond is essential because there won’t be a farm if all the land is under water.

“It’s expanded to the point his farm is becoming nonexistent,” Hill said.

Wilson maintained he needed more information about how the pond was “adversely affecting the essence” of Hanson’s farming operation.

Without seeking more information from Hanson about the nature and history of his farming activity, Hill made the motion to deem the dam breach an “as of right” – that is, unregulated – activity. It was affirmed by all members of the seven-member board except Wilson.

DiCarli, when asked Tuesday for more specifics about the farming regulations and how they apply to Hanson’s property, said he was not charged with researching questions raised at last week’s meeting because members had already decided Hanson’s pond didn’t need to be regulated.

Expressing surprise at the decision, he said he didn’t “expect that exemption to happen.”

Typically, the department consults with the tax assessor’s department to see if a property is recognized as a farm in order to determine if the farming exemption to the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act might apply, he said.

Hanson’s property is considered a “forest” for tax purposes. The state statute commonly known as “PA 490” allows farmland, forests, and open spaces to be assessed based on what the property is used for rather than its fair market value. The law is a land preservation tool to allow owners to keep land that would otherwise be too expensive to hold on to.

State statute includes “forestry” in its definition of agriculture.

According to the assessor’s department, a forester’s report from 1970 identified the land as a mixed hardwood swamp. Property owners with forest land must submit a forester’s report to qualify for the property tax program.

Hanson paid \$130.72 in taxes for the current fiscal year based on PA 490, according to the tax collector’s department.

Dawidowicz said Tuesday the IWWA disregarded local and state regulations when it decided Hanson could continue to breach the dam without a permit.

“They just condoned the behavior, and now anybody can do it,” he said. “Instead of a precedent of due process, we have a precedent of ‘anything goes.’”

DEEP spokesman Dennis Schain said local inland wetlands agencies have “broad discretion” in deciding if a property is a farm. He said the statutory definition of farming is so broad it could include anything from existing farms, to new farms, to hobby farms, all the way through “future thoughts of farming.”

George Krivda, a spokesman for the state Department of Agriculture, said “future thoughts of farming” might be a bit of a stretch, but he agreed with Schain that the definition is a broad one.

When it comes to regulations exempting farm ponds of three acres or less from regulations, Schain said that is up to the discretion of the local inland wetlands agency as well.

“The exact implications of size of pond and how that impacts need for permits is not absolutely clear in the law. If someone believes law has not been applied properly their recourse is to Superior Court – not to DEEP,” he said.

RHAM Budget cont. from Front Page

Mal Leichter, he said Thursday he was “disappointed” the budget didn’t pass “because I am a firm believer in a good education. I heard complaints from several folks within the Hebron community and most were opposed to adding coaching positions and reducing teachers.”

The budget proposal included a reduction of five teaching positions said to be in response to declining enrollment; 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.

Leichter said he’d also heard residents thought the increase was too high, citing that as the reason for its defeat.

“The direct reason I think it went down is the fact – at least in Hebron – that our budgets, both for the town and school board, were less expense dollars than last year and RHAM was a \$568,000 increase,” Leichter said, “The Hebron budget only went up \$562,000; the RHAM increase is what brought it up.”

But he noted there were issues with the two schools that needed to be taken care of.

“The RHAM issues are long-term issues,” he explained. “The issue is that building was never funded properly so they’ve been trying to catch up and the only way they’re going to catch up is to bond because no way are people going to pay what needs to be paid.”

Bonding, he furthered, “will get the dollars they need and do it at a cost that will be lower impact to the towns. The downside is that it will extend the debt service they currently have.”

Leichter reiterated, “As much as I don’t like to pay taxes, at some point somebody’s got to deal with” the issues at the two schools.

* * *

The RHAM Board of Education is expected to discuss the budget at a meeting scheduled for Monday, May 8, at 6:30 p.m. There will then be a district meeting Monday, May 22 followed by a second referendum May 23.

From the Editor’s Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

The always-enjoyable White House Correspondents Dinner was last weekend. Well, I find it enjoyable; others, most notably the president of the United States himself, do not. Trump did what no president had done since 1981 – he skipped the dinner.

Of course, back in 1981, Reagan skipped it because he was still recovering from an assassination attempt. Trump skipped the party last weekend so he could...hold a campaign rally. Sure, that makes sense.

Anyway, the show must go on, so the dinner continued, with *The Daily Show* correspondent Hasan Minhaj as its emcee. And while The Donald wasn’t there, an event called the White House Correspondents Dinner couldn’t very well let the president go unmentioned. As Minhaj put it, Trump was “the elephant not in the room.”

Minhaj may not have been the funniest emcee the event ever had, but he turned out several good zingers – many of which were cataloged by the folks at CNN and *Entertainment Weekly*. Among them:

“I would say it is an honor to [host this dinner], but that would be an alternative fact. It is not. No one wanted to do this so of course it falls in the hands of an immigrant. That’s how it always goes down.”

“Historically, the president usually performs at the correspondents’ dinner, but I think I speak for all of us when I say he’s done far too much bombing this month.”

“Every time Trump goes golfing, the headline should read, ‘Trump golfing. Apocalypse delayed. Take the W.’”

“The news coming out of the White House is so stressful, I’ve been watching House of Cards just to relax.”

“Sean Spicer’s been doing PR since 1999. He’s been doing his job for 18 years, and somehow after 18 years his go-to move when you ask him a tough question is denying the Holocaust.”

“Betsy DeVos couldn’t be here. She’s busy curating her collection of children’s tears.”

“Mike Pence wanted to be here tonight but his wife wouldn’t let him because apparently one of you ladies is ovulating, soooo...good job, ladies. Because of you, we couldn’t hang out with Mike Pence.”

“Every time I watch CNN it feels like you’re assigning me homework. ‘Is Trump a Russian spy?’ I don’t know, you tell me. ‘Tweet us @AC360.’ No, you tell me. I’m

watching the news, but it feels like I’m watching CNN watch the news.”

And last but not least:

“The president didn’t show up because Donald Trump doesn’t care about free speech. The man who tweets everything that enters his head refuses to acknowledge the amendment that allows him to do it.”

* * *

Speaking of politics, here are some one-liners and zingers I recently came across. Some are from politicians, others by authors or actors – and all of them are pretty funny.

“Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedies.” —Groucho Marx

“Reader, suppose you were an idiot. And suppose you were a member of Congress. But I repeat myself.” —Mark Twain

“If ignorance goes to forty dollars a barrel, I want drilling rights to George Bush’s head.” —Jim Hightower, former Texas Commissioner of Agriculture, referring to the elder Bush

“I don’t know whether it’s the finest public housing in America or the crown jewel of the federal prison system.” —Bill Clinton, on life in the White House

“There they are. See no evil, hear no evil, and...evil.” —Bob Dole, watching former presidents Carter, Ford and Nixon standing by each other at a White House event

“Outside of the killings, Washington has one of the lowest crime rates in the country.” —Marion Barry, former mayor of Washington, D.C.

“What right does Congress have to go around making laws just because they deem it necessary?” —Marion Barry

“In a recent fire Bob Dole’s library burned down. Both books were lost. And he hadn’t even finished coloring one of them.” —Jack Kemp

“I was recently on a tour of Latin America, and the only regret I have was that I didn’t study Latin harder in school so I could converse with those people.” —Dan Quayle

“Recession is when your neighbor loses his job. Depression is when you lose yours. And recovery is when Jimmy Carter loses his.” —Ronald Reagan

* * *

See you next week.

Portland Referendum Monday on \$33.65 Million Budget

by Elizabeth Regan

Portland's 2017-18 proposed budget sailed through a town meeting on Monday in a roughly five-minute meeting with no questions or comments on the \$33.65 million spending plan.

The next step is the budget referendum, which will be held Monday at the Portland Middle School from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. Residents transitioned last November to the new location after having voted for years at the Waverly Center.

The \$33.65 million proposed budget represents an increase of 3.59 percent over current expenditures. The associated mill rate increase comes in at 0.47 mills, or an increase of 1.46 percent, bringing the mill rate to 32.98.

A mill is \$1 tax per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Under the proposed mill rate, taxes paid on a home assessed at \$200,000 for the 2017-18 fiscal year would be \$6,596. That's an increase of \$94 over the current year.

The budget proposal includes \$12,969,579

in general government expenditures, 2.82 percent – or \$356,497 – more than current spending. The Board of Education's proposed budget is \$20,677,019, an increase of 4.07 percent, or \$810,179.

Portland's proposed budget does not reflect a \$966,127 payment for public school teachers' pensions that Gov. Dannel P. Malloy said he wants the town to pick up. While the state currently funds the entirety of the Connecticut Teachers' Retirement System, Malloy's recommendation would make each municipality responsible for about one-third of the cost.

But Malloy's plan has to go through the state General Assembly, where it is likely to change. It's unknown when lawmakers will vote on a state budget.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield, who also serves as president of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, said it doesn't look like Malloy's plan for sharing teachers'

pension costs has support among lawmakers.

"Information I had indicates both political parties are not inclined to move ahead with that," she said.

In the event that the governor's plan did go through, Bransfield has said the town could send out a supplemental tax bill to residents.

On the general government side, a capital lease program will cost about \$262,000 in the upcoming fiscal year. At a total cost of \$1.60 million over six years, items being financed include vehicles for the fire, police, and public works departments as well as a fingerprint machine, paver, wood chipper, and a large printer/scanner.

Selectmen last month approved shifting \$4,000 in social services program fees to help two of the town's most popular events. The Portland Fireworks Committee and Portland Fair Committee are slated to receive \$2,500

each, up from \$500 in the current budget.

Superintendent of Schools Philip O'Reilly in March said education costs in the coming year are driven by increased expenses related to special education, the lease program for office copiers, and the recently negotiated bus contract. It also includes repairs to aging buildings.

Board of Education Chairwoman MaryAnne Rode on Monday called the budget proposal fiscally responsible, adding that it allows the district to move forward with its initiatives.

Bransfield emphasized the new polling location, which is in the middle school at 93 High St. The main entrance is on the right side of the building it shares with the high school.

"The budget was approved unanimously by the seven selectmen," Bransfield said. "They worked very hard, as well as our directors. I think the budget is a good one and I hope that all of our voters come out and cast their ballots."

\$36.74 Million Hebron Budget Passes at Referendum

by Geeta S. Sandberg

There weren't many signs to be found throughout the center of Hebron this week, but the few that were strewn along Route 85 all encouraged residents to vote 'yes' on the proposed 2017-18 budget.

And ultimately, that's precisely what the majority of the 1,357 voters who took to the polls Tuesday – which equates to 15.83 percent of all registered voters – opted to do, when the \$36.74 million spending package was approved by a vote of 783-564.

Included in that amount is \$9.31 million for the general government budget – a 1.79 percent increase over current year spending – as well as \$11.59 million for the local board of education budget, which is a 1.45 percent decrease from the current budget.

Hebron's share of RHAM debt is also included in the amount at \$1.39 million, along with \$14.45 million for Hebron's share of the RHAM Board of Education budget.

That number, however, is bound to change as the RHAM budget was rejected in all three of the sending towns.

The town's proposed Capital Improvement Plan of \$1.23 million was also approved Tuesday by a vote of 847-497.

Resident Mary Suroviak was among those in favor of the spending package, sharing Tuesday afternoon, "We were definitely for the budget. With all the cuts in state funding and not knowing what's going to happen with that it was a pretty easy vote."

Donald Larsen and Andy Mackay also approved of the proposal.

"I thought it was fine," Larsen stated. "I know the population is going down in the schools but still things go up in price."

He added the general government increase of 1.79 percent was also "not too bad."

Mackay, meanwhile, said he "voted 'yes' for everything," explaining of the schools in par-

ticular, "year after year they do a very good job of being absolutely careful. Every year we see a 1 percent, 2 percent increase, and they're always fighting for ways to save money and they're very careful about how many teachers they have – notice as the population goes down the number of teachers goes down.

He added, "My kids have gone through the school system and it was excellent, so I trust the administrators."

But for resident Elizabeth Goshdigian, it felt like both the town and the state were trying to force out seniors.

"It's too high," she said of the spending proposal. "Every year they go higher and higher – who's going to afford the taxes? It's horrible. The kids are too spoiled."

She furthered, "I voted 'no.' Everything is too high and I think they're trying to force senior citizens out – they want to dump us off to Florida."

But seniors, she explained, played important roles in the community. "We work in the garden and keep our gardens nice; I'll pick up garbage on the streets – the young kids don't care. I've seen young people driving and throwing garbage out the window, and I'll go and pick it up. Who does that? Seniors. Young people don't want to do anything."

Goshdigian concluded of officials, "They only think about the children ... but we're all going to get old, and then what happens?"

But for the officials Goshdigian referred to, the budget's ultimate passing was something to be happy about.

Schools Superintendent Tim Van Tassel said Wednesday, "Creating a budget that meets the needs of our students and the community is a complex and difficult task that takes a tremendous time and effort to develop. At a time when there is tremendous uncertainty and concern as it relates to the State of Connecticut's fiscal challenges, it was a relief to see our budget



The signs encouraged Hebron taxpayers to vote 'yes,' and that's exactly what they did at the polls Tuesday – sending the town's proposed \$36.74 million budget to victory.

pass."

He added the town worked hard "to craft a total package that would meet the approval of the community, and we appreciate the collaborative approach taken to get the budget passed this year."

And with it approved, Van Tassel said the school system can shift its focus "to the legislature and governor to see how the state's fiscal crisis may impact municipalities."

Similarly, Town Manager Andrew Tierney

said this week he was "relieved" the budget passed so work could begin on other projects.

"Due to the state situation we had to put a lot more time and effort into this budget," Tierney said. "We're relieved that it passed and we're very thankful to the people that came out and voted."

He added, "We were very happy [the budget passed]. We've got a lot of work to do and this will let us start doing that and allow us to move forward."

East Hampton Residents Plead for No More School Budget Cuts

by Elizabeth Regan

Almost 200 residents, most of them proponents of the education budget, came out to last week's Town Council meeting to ask for the proposed budget to go to voters with no further cuts.

Town charter gives councilors the authority to make reductions or changes to the budget approved by the finance board. Councilors cannot increase the budget.

What's different this year is that the newly bifurcated budget, approved as part of the recent charter revision, will give voters the chance to vote separately on the general government and education budgets.

Some advocates for the \$30.05 million education budget proposal have said they voted for bifurcation based on the belief that the education budget would not be cut by the Town Council before going to voters at the budget referendum.

Former Charter Revision Chairwoman Melissa Engel has admitted that's what she told people last year. But she said last month she cannot, in good conscience, support "an outrageous budget."

Board of Education member Tania Sones spoke during the public comment period to say the school budget proposal is a responsible document that adheres to the council's budgetary guidelines. The council in November asked departments to minimize new personnel and limit budget increases to contractual obligations only when preparing their budgets.

"Now the Town Council's job is to send the budget being brought forward directly to the residents to vote upon," Sones said.

Resident Nancy Kohler stood up to say the council, for all its talk of fiscal responsibility, has not been using its resources wisely.

She cited "hundreds of thousands of dollars" in appropriations that weren't budgeted for, which contributed to the depletion of the mill rate stabilization fund created to mitigate the effects of the expensive high school renovation.

A document available on the town website's Rumor Busters page shows the current council has used \$1.25 million of the \$1.35 million mill rate stabilization fund since the 2015 election. The council put \$400,000 toward reducing the property tax burden from the high school project, while using \$717,099 for a ladder truck and \$128,000 for architectural services related to the proposed town hall and police department.

Councilors decided in late 2015 to pay for a ladder truck for the fire department outright instead of leasing it. The finance board and Finance Director Jeff Jylkka had recommended a lease program.

The council appropriated \$465,974 from the general fund during the same timeframe.

Kohler also decried the council's decision to reject the school administrators' contract and then send it to arbitration at a cost of approximately \$30,000. A three-member arbitration

panel came down in favor of the administrators as it affirmed pay raises of 2.75 percent in the first two years and 2.5 percent in the third.

The money spent on arbitration would have been better spent elsewhere, according to Kohler.

"The town didn't win, but it was our kids who are clearly the losers in all of this," she said.

Before the meeting was adjourned, several councilors countered comments by Kohler and Sones.

In response to the statements regarding bifurcation, Hintz called out Sones. He said she is well aware the council is authorized to make changes to the budget.

"We have every right to review it and make any kind of adjustment," Hintz said.

Councilor Mark Philhower adamantly denied an assertion by Kohler that the council declined to participate in budget negotiations for the school administrators' contract.

"I don't remember getting an invitation. To say that was just a point blank lie. We did not have an opportunity to speak and that's why we fought it," Philhower said.

While Board of Education Chairman Chris Goff told fellow school board in December that the council chose not to participate in the negotiations, Smith later said the chairman misspoke.

On Thursday, Smith told the *Rivereast* state

statute requires the school board to invite a representative from the Board of Finance to participate in negotiations – "which we did." The Town Council was not invited.

Smith said he thinks some people confused the "town" choosing not to participate with the "Town Council" choosing not to participate.

Engel joined Philhower in defending the council on the issue of arbitration. It's an issue she's opposed adamantly and for a long time.

"The Board of Education determines how that money is spent, not the Town Council," Engel said. "When you have an approved contract for administrators and/or teachers that exceeds local towns around you to the tune of over a million...don't talk to me about losing teachers and programs. You are top-heavy with pay on your administration."

Engel said after the meeting she stood by the council's decision to pay for the ladder truck outright instead of financing it. The Republican-dominated council voted along party lines back in November 2015 to buy the truck.

"We saved hundreds of thousands of dollars in financing fees," she said. "It was a low interest rate, but it wasn't like zero."

Jylkka said Thursday the interest cost to finance the ladder truck over ten years was estimated to cost \$80,000, or \$8,000 per year.

Council Chairwoman Patience Anderson, however, said she would have voted to finance the truck if she knew then what she knows now.

East Hampton Council Puts Budget Vote on Hold

by Elizabeth Regan

The Town Council last week put its budget-planning process on hold as it awaits information on how much municipal aid the town can expect from the state.

Councilor Melissa Engel, a Republican, acknowledged the move violates a town ordinance requiring a budget referendum to be held by the second Monday in May. But she said sending a budget proposal to voters at this point would be guess work.

"That means we're either going to be overtaxing the public – and you won't get a refund check – or we'll be undertaxing the public, and you will get a supplemental bill on a tax you never even got to approve," she said.

Members voted unanimously to "defer action" on the budget until they receive "a clearer understanding of our state revenues."

Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith said Thursday he completely understands the council's decision.

"East Hampton is in a position, unfortunately, that it could lose a great deal of state funding – more so than other communities around us," he said. "Without knowing the impact, I am concerned about the Town Council making a decision on our budget – whether to cut or send forward – without having complete knowledge of state aid."

A proposal by Gov. Dannel P. Malloy to change the way education funding is given out by the state means East Hampton could lose as much as \$1.63 million in education funding compared to the current year.

It's unclear how much, if any, of the governor's proposal will make it through the state legislature. It's also unclear when the state budget will make it to the floor for a vote in Hartford.

According to local officials across the *Rivereast* coverage area, word in Hartford is that a state budget may not be approved by lawmakers until August or even later.

State Rep. Melissa Ziobron, R-34, said Tuesday she can't say "with any certainty" when residents can expect lawmakers to vote on the state budget.

Ziobron serves as the ranking Republican on the powerful Appropriations Committee, which is charged with recommending a state spending plan.

"It is my understanding that leadership in both caucuses agreed to meet again with the governor in two weeks with updated budget proposals to match the new heartbreaking revenue consensus numbers released Monday," she said.

The latest revenue figures show a \$5.1 billion deficit over the next two years, according to CT News Junkie.

Ziobron said she "truly hopes" Republicans and Democrats come to an agreement before the legislative session adjourns on June 7, but added she "just cannot predict the future."

The Board of Finance last month presented the council a \$44.26 million proposed budget representing an increase of 3.05 percent – or \$1.3 million – over the current budget.

The finance board budget comes with a potential increase of 2.78 mills, which would bring the mill rate to 32.22 mills. That's 9.44 percent higher than the current year's mill rate.

The education side of the finance board's proposal comes in at \$30.05 million, a 3.41 percent increase over the current budget.

The proposed general government budget, including debt and capital improvements, amounts to \$14.21 million. The budget increase on that side comes in at 2.30 percent over the current year.

A taxpayer with a home assessed at \$250,000 would pay \$8,055 in the coming fiscal year, based on the spending and revenue numbers in the finance board's budget proposal. That's an increase of \$695 for the year or \$58 per month.

About 1.49 mills of the projected 2.78 mill increase to the mill rate is the direct result of anticipated revenue loss from the state, according to the finance board.

The budget does not account for a \$1.6 million payment Malloy wants East Hampton to make as part of his proposal to put the responsibility for one third of the cost of teachers'

pensions on municipalities. Many state and local officials believe it is unlikely the proposal will go through.

Engel emphasized repeatedly the council needs a better understanding of how much education funding it will receive and whether or not the town will be slammed with a share of the state Teachers Retirement System.

"Without clear numbers, we are guessing and we would be making cuts based on a guess," Engel said. "And that's not fair to anybody."

The audience of about 200 people – most of them supporters of sending the education budget to voters with no further reductions – hissed at Engel's statement.

"Then don't make cuts," someone in the audience could be heard saying.

But councilors reiterated almost half of the 2.78-mill increase to the mill rate attached to the finance board's recommended budget comes from Malloy's proposed cuts to education aid. They said it's premature to rush into a vote based on a costly scenario that may not come to pass.

Democrat James "Pete" Brown said there's no need to hurry.

"I don't want unnecessary cuts. I don't want unnecessary increases," Brown said. "We need to figure this out. We have time. We can do this."

Finance Director Jeff Jylkka said the council would need to set a temporary mill rate by June 13 in order to get tax bills out by July 1. In the most likely scenario, those tax bills would be based on the current mill rate.

When the budget is ultimately approved by voters at referendum, the finance board will set a permanent mill rate.

Jylkka said the difference between the temporary mill rate and the permanent mill rate could be addressed in several ways, depending on the size of the deficit. Chief among them are sending out a supplemental tax bill and taking money from the fund balance.

Jylkka said the fund balance is currently at \$5.06 million, or 11.8 percent of the budgeted expenditures. He said the industry standard for a healthy fund balance is usually around 8 to

15 percent.

Republican Ted Hintz Jr. agreed with holding off on a vote, but only for so long.

"I would not want to see this drag into the end of summer, handcuffing the superintendent as to who he can and cannot hire for the upcoming school year," Hintz said. "While I'm in support of putting this off, we cannot put it off indefinitely."

Members of the council glanced over the issue of violating the town's budget ordinance when council Chairwoman Patience Anderson asked what the risks might be.

Town Manager Michael Maniscalco put it this way: "Somebody, I guess, could take us to court."

Jylkka has said in previous meetings that violating town charter or ordinance could open the door for a lawsuit. The legal remedy known as a "writ of mandamus" allows citizens to ask a state Superior Court judge to force the council to follow its own rules. But Jylkka and Maniscalco suggested the town would likely pass a budget by the time such a filing could make its way through the court.

Melissa Engel brushed off the idea when she said she didn't know "why anybody would have incentive to do that."

That, too, elicited a hiss from the audience. This week, Anderson said the council is "between a rock and a hard place" in its budget planning process.

"As a Town Council, we want to be sure we have all the bases covered and put forward a responsible budget that you can support," she wrote in a Facebook post. "One that takes into account the REAL loss in revenue we will need to adjust for. It's hard to plan without knowing what we have to work with."

Last year, in the midst of another uncertain state budget process, the council disregarded local ordinance by holding a referendum after the second Monday in May. Officials said the decision was made because the voting machines were locked up, per state statute, for 14 days following the primary elections.

Colchester Dance Teacher Passes Prestigious Ballet Exam

by Julianna Roche

It's hard to believe there was a time when Alison Durham despised ballet, especially considering in January of this year she passed the final diploma exam of the Cecchetti USA (CUSA) Ballet Examinations – an esteemed accomplishment achieved by only a handful of dancers worldwide.

Durham runs the Cecchetti Ballet Program at Doreen's Dance Center (DDC) in Colchester and also teaches a wide range of classes – including jazz, hip hop, tap and contemporary (just to name a few) – to students from age three to adults.

It's ballet however – particularly the Cecchetti method – that Durham explained serves as the base for all other forms of dance.

The Cecchetti method, originally devised by Italian ballet master Enrico Cecchetti in the early 1900s, is a rigorous training method used to teach the essential skills of dancing including balance, poise, strength, elevation, elasticity and ballon, which is a dancer's ability to appear effortlessly buoyant when performing movements during a jump.

"I definitely agree that ballet is the foundation of everything," Durham said, explaining it's that fact which made her start appreciating this particular style of dance. She added even at dance competitions, judges will most often give dancers feedback such as "pay attention to your technique" or "take more ballet classes."

Durham's relationship with dance started at age five and six when she took classes through a local recreation program, but she shared it eventually became too costly to continue. Then, in both eighth and ninth grade, she and a group of girlfriends decided to make up a dance and audition for their school's talent shows – which eventually spurred Durham to beg her mom to "let me dance!"

At age 15, she started taking classes at DDC, where owner Doreen Freeman suggested she take ballet and jazz.

"So I did," Durham said, adding "I was in

class with kids who were 12 because I knew nothing, but [Freeman] didn't want to start me with the little ones."

Durham still "hated ballet" at that time though, so she quit and continued with lyrical and jazz classes, where she was quickly "bumped up" to the highest-level classes.

But when Freeman decided to start a dance company school (which differs from a studio in that dancers, in addition to practicing, also compete), she told Durham to participate and said she'd have to take ballet, tap and jazz, which she agreed to do.

Durham stuck around DDC and after graduating from Eastern Connecticut State University with a major in accounting and a minor in dance, was asked to take over the ballet program as the former teacher was retiring. The studio also started implementing the CUSA exam system, which tests dancers and teachers on various levels of the Cecchetti method.

The CUSA system has ten "grades" and examinations dancers must pass before they can take the final diploma exam – which according to Durham is the equivalent of "getting your doctorate" in school.

"It's not like school exams where you can sit down and study," she continued. "You have to physically be up with the music. You have to be musical. You have to have the right dynamics of your movements and you need to know your sequences, because if the examiner says 'plié, ready, go' and the music starts, you're expected to know it and go."

Each exam lasts two hours, during which 15 to 20 minutes is spent testing barre work, while the remaining time dancers are tested on memorized dance sequences. In the diploma exam, Durham explained there are 88 exercises which range between 30 seconds and two minutes each.

"You have to be prepared for all 88 exercises because you never know what the examiners are going to ask for," she said, adding that she spent hours preparing for the final diploma

exam both in and out of the studio.

While working her way through each CUSA grade, Durham, who lives in Griswold, started practicing at Cheshire Dance Centre where Betty Seibert, a Cecchetti examiner, works on staff. During the hour and a half drive to and from the studio, she explained she would be "playing the music" for the exam and "running exercises in my head."

That music, she explained, "was ingrained in my head... I was ready for all of this."

However, Durham's plan took a turn for the worse during Seibert's five-week intensive program to prepare for the diploma exam.

"I got to the first class June 20 and I feel great... I'm going through my barre, doing pirouettes in the center. Then I prepare to do a jump exercise. I take off for my jump and rip my calf muscle," she recalled with tears in her eyes. "It was awful. I thought 'there goes my exam.'"

Durham spent the next five to six weeks teaching classes on crutches.

"It was a struggle," she said. "It's still hard to talk about."

By September however, and after weeks of physical therapy and intense training, Durham was ready to give the diploma exam another go.

"I was dancing three days a week for two hours until Christmas, when I took a little time off," she explained. "As soon as I got back from the holiday, I practiced 12 days in a row, every day for two hours... that's what it took."

In January, Durham successfully passed the exam.

"It's not that everything was perfect, because it certainly wasn't," she said. "But it was that accomplishment of 'okay, I memorized this whole thing' and when I walked in there to take the exam, I thought 'if I fail, I'm ready to do it again'."

As for what's next, Durham said there's "always more to learn," which includes three different CUSA certifications for teachers who



In January, Alison Durham of Doreen's Dance Studio passed her final diploma exam in the Cecchetti USA (CUSA) ballet organization – the highest rank of student examinations it offers. Photo courtesy of Becca Rose Photography.

teach the Cecchetti method to students in their own studios.

Durham has already passed the associate exam and plans to eventually obtain her licentiate and fellowship certifications.

"I try to encourage my students to take the Cecchetti exams. I tell them [they] can get feedback from somebody besides me who knows what they're talking about," she explained. "It's also a check for me as a teacher, because I get a report back too... I'm learning from them just as much as they learn from me."

Commission Presents Proposed Charter Changes in Colchester

by Julianna Roche

The Charter Revision Commission spoke to residents this week in a public forum about its recommended changes to the charter, which will be sent to vote in November and will include six separate questions on the ballot.

The charter, which is the town's foundational document, outlines the roles and responsibilities of elected and appointed officials, and provides the framework for how government operates. While state statute requires towns to revisit their charters at least once every 10 years, Greg LePage, the commission's chairman, said towns do have the option to review it every year.

The chairman explained that in 2014 a Charter Review Commission was established and initially met for about a year, thoroughly going through the current town charter word for word and discussing possible recommendations.

Last April however, the commission expanded from five to seven members and became the current Charter Revision Commission (CRC). Since then, LePage said, the commission has gone through the charter even more in-depth and discussed potential changes or revisions, which are included in their finalized draft proposal.

During the presentation, LePage explained the first two questions on the ballot would ask whether the positions of tax collector and town clerk, which are currently elected, should be appointed positions instead. As separate questions on the ballot, residents would have the option to vote differently on each position if they choose.

"Our thought here was that you may agree one way or another, or you may think one should be appointed and one should [stay] elected," LePage said. "We want to give townspeople the option to make that decision."

Currently, both are elected positions, with each elected to a four-year term. LePage furthered that there are no qualifications to run for office other than being a Colchester resident.

Furthermore, if the candidate does not have the qualifications, the town must fund the certification process for employees that may not get re-elected.

The current town clerk and tax collector – Gayle Furman and Michelle Wyatt, respectively – were present during the forum, and expressed concern during the public comments portion of the meeting about their positions.

The town clerk position "is so diversified," Furman said. "People think the town clerk just does marriage licenses, dog licenses... but what I really want to get across is my office in particular holds very personal information, [including] birth, death, marriage records."

She furthered that the electoral process "enables people to vote for someone they trust, not just someone who's going to come from another town and not be so invested."

However, CRC member Don Phillips said this should not be seen as a commentary on "how good of a job" Furman and Wyatt are doing in their roles.

"We're trying to look at these positions [in terms of] are they policy making positions or are they more administrative and management positions," he continued. "I hope our role is really just to give the town the opportunity to consider the change."

First Selectman Art Shilosky, who was also present during the forum, agreed. He added that if the two positions are appointed and the individuals are doing a good job, they wouldn't lose their job – which could happen in an election.

"We have the best two people [in those positions] that we've had in many years," he said. "But the point is... if you got good people, you want to keep them. You don't want to lose them to an election."

The third question posed on the ballot would propose the elimination of the town treasurer position.

According to LePage, a former Colchester town treasurer himself, the position's functions are very redundant of those done by the town's chief financial officer (CFO).

"The CFO would assume the duties of the treasurer," he explained, which include transferring money between bank accounts, reviewing check registers, and handling investments. Eliminating the position, LePage added, would also save the town \$4,500 annually.

Additionally, the commission included a fourth ballot question asking if all elected positions should have four-year terms. Currently, elected positions range from between two-, four- and six-year term lengths.

"We have elected boards and elected positions with terms of different lengths," LePage explained, adding that for example, the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Assessment Appeals have two-year terms, while Board of Finance members have six-year terms.

"For a two-year term, like the first selectman, by the time you get up to speed and comfortable with the process, it's time to get re-elected again," he explained. "Two years is just not enough time to overcome that learning curve."

Conversely, LePage said, it's difficult for the finance board to find members who will make it the entire six-year term.

During public comments, Board of Education member Don Kennedy asked how the commission envisions transitioning from staggered terms to four-year ones, if the charter change were approved.

LePage explained that people up for election this year would continue to serve their two-, four- and six-year terms – but from then on, everyone would get four-year terms. Phillips added "it would take a few years" for all the positions to wind up with the same terms, but it eventually would happen.

The fifth question includes technical modi-

fications to the charter, which would be explained in detail on the ballot. LePage said these include changes meant to "streamline and organize" the charter to increase its "effectiveness."

One such modification includes updating the list of town departments to make it more consistent with current practices. For example, the description of the functions of each department would be removed from the charter, and instead included in an operations manual. Secondly, the commission suggested adding definitions in the charter to clarify what exactly is included in the general government budget, the Board of Education budget and the town's combined budget.

Other technical changes include: Lowering the threshold to reconvene for an annual budget meeting; closing loopholes on borrowing to ensure all borrowing agreements above the threshold go to a town meeting; adding an emergency contingency plan for public safety; requiring the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance to approve transfers between adopted town department budgets; and requiring a town meeting for any appropriations above 2 percent of a department's budget.

"Say public works has a \$1 million budget," LePage explained. "[The appropriation] would have to be more than \$20,000 in order to require a town meeting. We're just trying to reflect the changes in the overall budget for the town."

The CRC now has plans to have all charter changes finalized and submitted to the Board of Selectmen for review by June 2017, at which point the commission will then schedule two public forums and several informational sessions over the summer regarding the revisions to give residents an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback.

Former White House Butler Speaks in Colchester

by Julianna Roche

When Alan DeValerio moved from southern Florida to Washington D.C. in 1979 to pursue a career in political humor writing, he knew he needed to first find a part-time job to at least help pay the bills.

Having worked as a banquet server throughout college, DeValerio landed a job at Senate Restaurant on Capitol Hill and would often walk by the White House on his way home from work – during which he fondly remembered a book he had once read titled *Upstairs at the White House* by J.B. West, a former White House chief usher.

The book detailed three decades of West's experience working for various presidents and their families, directing state functions, planning parties, weddings and funerals, and overseeing a staff of nearly 100 employees including maids, butlers, chefs, plumbers and electricians.

With help from a former Rhode Island senator, DeValerio decided to apply for a job as a White House butler – a contracted position he eventually held from 1980 to 1990, during the tail end of Jimmy Carter's presidency, through Ronald Reagan's, and part of George Bush Sr.'s.

This week, DeValerio, who lives in Frederick, Md., shared his experiences as a White House butler to a packed room at the Colchester Senior Center, which included everything from the time he watched Frank Sinatra perform to when actress Maureen Stapleton asked him to serve her wine in a tumbler glass.

DeValerio explained that on a Saturday morning six months after applying for the position, he received a call from the White House's head butler asking if he could work a state dinner the following Monday. At the time, President Jimmy Carter had already been defeated by Ronald Reagan and was hosting farewell dinners.

"I said 'Of course, what time?' and asked what I should wear," DeValerio said. "He said 'Oh, just a tuxedo'."

But DeValerio didn't own a tuxedo and couldn't start work until he did, so he went to a local tux shop to get fitted before the tailor told him it would take two weeks to have it ready. Once DeValerio explained he needed it for a job at the White House however, the tailor said, "Well, that's different!" and made sure the tux was ready for his first day of work.

During his speech, DeValerio recollected the first time he served Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, during an outdoor Christmas party in December 1980. His job was to serve hot chocolate.

"At the president's request, the staff had

erected a skating rink on the White House lawn and he invited [Olympic figure skater] Peggy Fleming to perform," he explained, joking that he remembers the day being "so cold" he even "saw a congressman with his hands in his own pockets."

To keep warm, DeValerio poured hot chocolate on his hands throughout the night. Soon enough, the Carters walked over and asked for some, so he tilted the container above Rosalynn's mug only to find it was completely empty.

"It was my first chance to serve the first lady and president, and I blew it," he said.

Over the next 10 years, DeValerio would have plenty more chances however, including during Reagan's first White House function after he became president Jan. 20, 1981.

"If you remember, [the Reagans] had ties to Hollywood, so you can just imagine the guest list," he explained, adding that the first three guests he served that night were baseball broadcaster Vin Scully and entertainers Lou Rawls and Ray Charles.

By that time, he explained, state dinners had evolved from serving predominantly American food and wines to a much more European-style menu.

"When the Kennedys came in, Jackie Kennedy changed the entire look [of the state dinners]," DeValerio furthered. For example, she changed the "E"-shaped tables typically used to round tables that sat eight people, increased the guest list from 100 to 110, and reduced the number of courses from six to four. Wives and husbands also sat separately to "make conversation better," he said.

Every table also had its own tin box filled with mixed nuts and Godiva chocolates – which DeValerio remembered fondly.

"I would sit in the back room with boxes and boxes of Godiva chocolates," he said – adding that while most chocolates made it to the table, many also made it into his pocket.

During Reagan's presidency, DeValerio said one of his best memories was when he had the chance to see Sinatra perform following a state dinner.

Ol' Blue Eyes "requested that the butlers were allowed to come down to the East Room and listen to the entertainment," DeValerio recalled. "So there I was in the White House, listening to Frank Sinatra... it was pretty special."

According to DeValerio, guests were usually welcome to stay after state dinners until the president and first lady left.

"That was their cue to leave," he said, adding that it also meant the butlers' day was over. "I was lucky because the Reagans were not late people. It was almost like clockwork. By 11:30



Alan DeValerio served as a butler at the White House from 1980-1990. The experience provided him a chance to meet many celebrities and political luminaries – including President Ronald Reagan.

[p.m.] they were gone and I was out by midnight."

Not all butlers were as fortunate, however.

"I had one full-time butler telling me when he worked for Lyndon Johnson, he liked to dance" until 2 in the morning, DeValerio said, adding that he also heard Johnson was "very stubborn" and was particular about his scotch and sodas.

"If he came to your bar, you had better open a brand-new bottle of soda even if you just opened one 10 seconds before," he said.

DeValerio recalled another standout memory was when he met Academy Award-winning actress Stapleton.

"She ordered a glass of wine and I started to pour, but she picked up a tumbler and said 'No, I want it in this'," he laughed, adding that she then tried to hand him a \$5 bill, which he tried to refuse.

"But she said 'No I may want more later'," he said, adding that later he saw her lifting her dress up. "I thought to myself, she must have drunk that whole glass."

In addition to state dinners, DeValerio said he also served during "working luncheons" for the president and visiting heads of state – exposing him to an even broader range of notable people, which included the president of Senegal, football player Frank Gifford, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Gromyko,

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, comedian Bob Hope, composer Marvin Hamlisch, boxing great Muhammad Ali, and basketball players Oscar Roberts and Bill Russell.

At the beginning of Bush's administration, DeValerio was offered a full-time job elsewhere, bringing his days of serving as a butler to an end in 1990.

Those dreams of being a political humor writer – which brought him to Washington to begin with – never panned out.

"I'm not a believer in fate, but the only thing I can say about my writing career is that it just wasn't meant to be," he said.

But that doesn't mean he has regrets; he loved his job at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.

DeValerio said the best part of the job "was the people I worked with" – which included former White House maitre d' John Ficklin and White House butler Eugene Allen, who inspired the 2013 movie *The Butler*.

"Imagine going to work every day and not knowing who in the world might be there," DeValerio added. "Anybody could be at the White House at any particular time. ... It was a dream job and a unique experience."

To learn more about DeValerio's experience as a White House butler, his book *A History of Entertainment in the White House* can be purchased on Amazon.

Quiet Elections for Andover

by Geeta S. Sandberg

There was nary a peep to be heard about this year's municipal elections, which could be contributed to the fact each of the seats was uncontested – meaning all who ran are now members of their respective boards and commissions.

Among them are Jeffrey Murray, Robert T. England and David Hewett on the Board of Finance.

Murray will be returning to the board for his second term.

He's an engineer at Pratt and Whitney and has been an Andover resident for the last five years, sharing "I got involved immediately when we got to town."

For Murray, his decision to join the finance board had to do with its importance when it comes to running the town.

"I think the selectmen are more of a policy board," he said, "and I think the Board of Finance is actually a more important role because we're basically setting the budget and moving it to the town."

He mentioned how the board is also able to take into account residents' sentiment and alter its decisions accordingly to address their wants.

"We originally cut out the resident trooper and after outcry – people were upset about losing that individual – I changed my mind," Murray said. "I was originally against it but since residents came forward I decided to change my opinion of it and support the trooper in the budget."

Moving forward Murray added the finance board was going to work "to grow the town with as little financial impact to the residents as possible; we really want to take advantage of grants, and position ourselves to be more grant

friendly."

England, meanwhile, will be starting his first elected term after filling a seat left vacant following the resignation of Nathaniel Houle last year.

England has lived in town since 2007 with his wife and two daughters. He's a Trinity College graduate and has worked for Travelers since 1998 handling pollution claims.

He shared recently he'd been thinking about doing some kind of public service for some time, and after noticing there was a vacancy on the Board of Finance, he spoke to Chairman Dan Warren and "I threw my hat in the ring, so to speak."

England was appointed to the board to fill that vacancy last July and "since then, I think I've worked well with the other board members as we have been working on the fiscal year 2017-18 budget" – something he said has been difficult due to financial uncertainties at the state level.

"This has given me some experience, as well as confirming that I'm ready and willing to put in the necessary work for a full four-year term," England shared. "My priority is to help produce budgets that are responsible in both the short- and long-term."

New to the finance board come July will be David Hewett, who has lived in Andover for 17 years. And, making public service to the town of Andover a family affair, Hewett's wife Lisa was also elected this week for another term on the Andover Board of Education.

David Hewett shared this week his primary reason for running is because the town is facing "some serious issues due to the policies that are a result of leadership from the people elected

at the state level and D.C."

He added, "Unfortunately, as a town we have to find ways to pay for many of these unfunded mandates and tax policies. With some of the highest taxation in the nation, many people in our Connecticut towns are finding it difficult to pay their bills."

He furthered, "The Board of Finance decisions will get increasingly difficult as future years come. As a small business owner making tough decisions with limited funding is something that is done on a regular basis. This experience will be useful on the Board of Finance."

Lisa Hewett, meanwhile, said in her initial bid for a seat on the school board that she was looking to help maintain the quality school system that already existed in town. She added she also wanted to be a voice for parents and students.

She added this week, "I look forward to continuing to serve the town on the Board of Education. We have consistently been ranked among the best small schools in the state. That is something to be proud of. The future lies in our students and we want to be able to continue to provide them with the best education possible while being accountable to the budget we have to work within. It is rewarding to work with the administrators and Board of Education members who put so much time and effort into making Andover Elementary School the great school that it is."

Current school board member Gerard Cremé, who has lived in town since 2005, will also be returning after filling a vacancy left when Christina Tamburro resigned last year.

He shared, "I've enjoyed the time I've spent

as an interim and I've enjoyed the people and participating on the Board of Education and I think it's really cut out for me because it's in the field that I was in."

Cremé is a retired teacher who taught in South Windsor for 17 years. He also spent time as a special education teacher – and all that was a second career, following 18 years as owner of a flower shop in West Hartford.

He said of being on the board, "I'm interested in the overall issues and looking and thinking about what's best for the kids and the community."

Cremé added, "With Andover being a small town I want to be more than just a taxpayer; I want to build the community and contribute to the community the best I can and make it the type of community people want to be in."

Along with the above, Murray's wife Cynthia will also be joining the education board. She shared this week she chose to run because "I thought it was time to get involved in town and meet more people and invest in our future – which is the kids."

The Murrays also have a son of their own, who Cindy said they're hoping will be able to attend preschool in town next year.

"The few times I've been to the school I've been quite impressed with what I've seen so I'm excited to be a part of" the Andover school system.

Other individuals elected to terms on boards and commissions this week include: Robert Hamburger and Leigh Ann Hutchinson on the Planning and Zoning Commission; Jonathan Yeomans as a Zoning Board of Appeals Alternate; and Scott Yeomans and Gerry Wright for the Board of Fire Commissioners.

Fortin Found Guilty of Manslaughter in Andover

by Geeta S. Sandberg

The man accused of fatally shooting Andover resident Jason Marchand following a 2015 altercation was acquitted of murder last week – but was found guilty of first-degree manslaughter with a firearm.

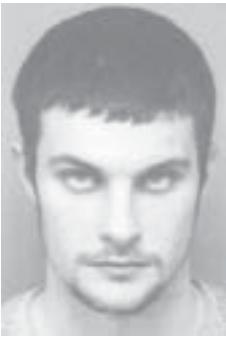
Michael Fortin, 23, learned his verdict last Thursday, April 27, and now faces up to 50 years in prison.

The difference between manslaughter and murder, according to law.com, lies with intent. Murder involves killing another person with some level of premeditation or “malice aforethought,” while manslaughter is the unlawful killing of another person without premeditation; many cases of the latter are referred to as “heat of the moment” or “passion” killings.

Fortin was charged in relation to the shooting death of Marchand, 38, the night of July 3.

According to an arrest warrant affidavit unsealed in December 2015, police interviewed numerous witnesses who described what happened the night Marchand was shot and killed.

One witness shared they were with Marchand when he headed toward Andover Lake with his 6-year-old son via a right of way located at the intersection of Lakeside Drive and Island Street, across the road from Marchand’s home. It was then that a white-and-blue motorcycle was



Michael Fortin

found parked in the middle of the road.

Both the witness and Marchand confronted the driver – who was later found to be Fortin – about the bike, which the witness said was blocking the fire department’s access to water; the witness said Fortin didn’t listen at first, causing Marchand to become “very irritated,” according to the affidavit.

Marchand and Fortin were said to have then “exchanged words” before the driver got onto his motorcycle and took off, kicking up rocks as he went. According to the affidavit, Marchand was said to have chased Fortin up the right of way as he left.

At that point, according to the same witness, they went with Marchand and his son back to Marchand’s home at 38 Lakeside Dr. where they drank beer, started a small campfire and roasted marshmallows with Marchand’s son.

They were there for about an hour when the witness said Fortin came back down Island Street towards them. According to the affidavit, Marchand got up from his chair and headed toward the motorcycle driver. He was then shot multiple times and the witness called 9-1-1 before returning to Marchand to wait for police.

Upon arrival, police found Marchand on the ground, suffering from “at least two apparent gunshot wounds to the torso,” according to the affidavit; his son was found hiding in a bedroom at their home.

Marchand was transported to Windham Hospital where he was later pronounced dead. His

cause of death was listed as “gunshot wounds of torso with injuries of the liver and right kidney” and certified as a homicide.

According to published reports in *The Hartford Courant*, Tolland State’s Attorney Matthew Gedansky argued to jurors during closing arguments last Monday that Fortin shot Marchand for disrespecting him.

“He went back for retaliation,” Gedansky said. “That’s what this is all about.”

But Tolland Public Defender David Channing claimed Fortin shot Marchand in self-defense.

“This is a case about a small young man who’s sorry he had to use a gun to defend himself against a larger, intoxicated man,” Channing reportedly told jurors.

Although he said Fortin shouldn’t have had a gun, according to the report he said if Fortin didn’t, “he could have lost his own life or been beaten to within an inch of it.”

In response, Gedansky argued the self-defense claim only emerged after Fortin realized the state had too much evidence linking him to the crime to continue claiming he had nothing to do with it.

Along with manslaughter, Fortin was also found guilty of carrying a pistol without a permit and use of a firearm during the course of a felony, but was found not guilty of murder and acquitted of the charge of risk of injury to a minor.

Gedansky did not return calls to comment on the verdict this week, while Channing de-

clined comment citing ethical reasons.

Andover First Selectman Bob Burbank, however, said this week, “I wish the best for the affected family and hopefully this will put a closure to some of the grief that they are going through, although I realize this is something you never completely get over.”

He added, “I’m glad that we had some good investigative work from our resident state trooper as well as the assistance with the detectives from the Connecticut state police department.”

Burbank called the entire situation “an extremely isolated incident for the town, and hopefully we won’t have a situation like that again.”

He concluded, “This has always been a quiet community with very little trouble, but something like this shows that it can come anywhere.”

Former Andover and current Hebron resident Ryan Price – who went to high school with Marchand – also shared his thoughts this week, saying, “Was justice served in the recent verdict? The answer, most likely, is yes. There is a fine line between justice and revenge, and we must rely on our faith to be on the right side. Children lost a father, and that is the true injustice; a vengeful verdict would not have changed that.”

Fortin faces up to 40 years in prison for the manslaughter charge, five for the gun charge and another five for using a gun during the course of a felony.

He is scheduled to be sentenced June 29.

Marlborough Budget Vote Monday

by Julianna Roche

Marlborough residents will have the opportunity to vote on the proposed 2017-18 budget of \$24.58 million at the annual town meeting next Monday, May 8.

And if town officials have their way, that budget proposal will get rejected.

The spending package amounts to \$24,584,816 for a 3.57 percent increase, or \$847,748 over the current year’s budget. Included in that amount is \$4,940,050 for the town operations budget – an increase of 3.69 percent – and \$7,326,938 for the local board of education budget – an increase of 1.44 percent.

Also included in the budget is Marlborough’s portion of the regional board of education budget, which totals \$9,084,163, as well as \$82,265 for the local board of education’s capital improvement plan and \$893,675 for the town operations’ capital non-recurring projects.

Last week, various town officials – including First Selectwoman Amy Traversa – publicly urged residents to shoot down the budget. Traversa said Thursday that’s exactly what she thinks will happen.

“I expect [the budget] will be voted down and I’m okay with that,” First Selectman Amy Traversa said this week.

She also explained that the “budgets” presented are “nothing more than spending plans” until the town receives more information from the state regarding how much revenue it will receive.

Until that happens, the town is “buying time” and that it would be “irresponsible” to move forward with the proposed numbers, she furthered.

The town operations budget includes \$1,729,039 for appointed and elected officials’ salaries, \$1,524,359 for public works, and \$586,151 towards health and public safety. Also included were increased bridge and culvert maintenance, equipment repairs and building maintenance, and an added part-time social services assistant, which Traversa explained is the only staff change the town is currently looking at.

The largest items in the town operations capital plan include \$160,000 to be used for culverts on North Main Street and \$115,000 for culverts on Finley Hill Road, as well as \$164,000 worth of road improvements. The library parking lot will also be restored for \$50,000 and Blish Park will see sewer upgrades marked at \$64,475.

The capital plan for the local education board includes repaving and lining the parking lot by Marlborough Elementary School’s community room entrance for \$54,000, as well as replacing both the boiler and roof marked at \$10,000 each. Also included is \$6,000 toward replacing air conditioning units and \$2,265 to replacing air conditioning motors and transformers.

Traversa explained that if the town is forced to make cuts to either of those budgets, it would be “very difficult” and “would require some painful cuts.”

But reductions, she said, “will have to be made because it’s the responsible thing to do.”

Altogether, the recommended budget, is approved, would result in a 6.96 percent tax increase over 2016-17, which projects the mill rate to be set at 36.53, 2.38 mills higher than the current year.

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.

Also being voted on at the town meeting are two resolutions, including repealing the \$370,000 bond authorization – which was originally going to be used for the planning, design and engineering services for the Marlborough business park – and repealing of a \$305,000 bond authorization for the acquisition of the Route 2 and Route 66 intersection land acquisition project.

Voting on the budget takes place at the annual town meeting and budget vote next Monday, May 8, at 7 p.m. in Marlborough Elementary School’s cafeteria. Check-in begins at 6:30 p.m.

Colchester Police News

4/24: Colchester Police said Jose Ayala, 49, of 93 State Pier Rd., Apt. G4, New London, was arrested and charged with violation of probation/conditional discharge.

4/26: State Police said Ricardo L. Alcover, 22, of 88 Texas Ave., Bridgeport, was arrested and charged with evading responsibility, failure to drive in the proper lane of a multiple-lane highway, possession of a controlled substance, and possession with intent to sell.

Andover Police News

4/27: State Police said Michael R. Anselmo, 20, of 320 Leonard Bridge Rd., Lebanon, was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol, failure to wear a seatbelt in the front seat and failure to drive upon right.

East Hampton Police News

4/16: Jason Scott Scaplen, 28, of 24 Flanders Rd., was arrested and charged with misuse of the emergency 911 system, East Hampton Police said.

4/24: Daniel Felgate, 39, of 1 Brush Pasture Ln., Portland, turned himself in pursuant to an active warrant and was charged with first-degree identity theft, third-degree larceny and possession of an ID device.

Also, from April 17-23, officers responded to 10 medical calls, five motor vehicle crashes and six alarms, and made 22 traffic stops.

4/26: Colchester Police said a 16-year-old juvenile was charged with breach of peace and third-degree assault.

4/26: State Police said Joseph E. Leblanc, 51, of 350 Route 354, Salem, was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear.

4/26: State Police said Michael Elliott, 47, of 140 Harvest Ln., East Hartford, was arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit a crime.

Hebron Police News

4/28: State Police said they received a report of a theft from a resident’s unsecured shed on Wall Street. The resident reported that his chainsaw and weed-wacker were taken, both of which are Stihl tools and orange and white in color.

Portland Police News

4/25: Daniel Felgate, 39, of 1 Brush Pasture Lane, was charged with second-degree identity theft, fifth-degree larceny, criminal impersonation and third-degree larceny, Portland Police said.

4/25: Vittoria Amenta, 30, of 183 Rose Hill Rd., was charged with second-degree identity theft and criminal impersonation, police said.

4/28: Mary Ayala, 53, of 23 Mead St., New Britain, was charged with evading, police said.

4/29: Michael Stefanski, 21, of 1 Cedar Terrace, was charged with driving under the influence and failure to drive in established lane, police said.

5/1: Lavar Lombardo, 38, of 53 Skyler Ave., Middletown, was charged with second-degree reckless endangerment and second-degree breach of peace, police said.

Obituaries

East Hampton

Carl H. Sundell Jr.

Carl Hilding Sundell Jr., 72, of East Hampton, died peacefully holding his wife Charmi's hand Saturday, April 29, after a brief but valiant battle with leukemia. He was born May 13, 1944, in Hartford, the firstborn son of C. Hilding and Eleanor (Cashman) Sundell.



He was raised in Portland, on the shores of Great Hill Lake, and attended St. Mary's School. After spending his freshman year at Notre Dame High School, West Haven, he graduated Portland High School, class of 1962. Carl studied at UConn and later earned his BA degree in creative writing from Goddard College Adult Degree Program in 1979. He worked for the State of Connecticut, DCF starting in Children's Service of CVH and retiring 32 years later as superintendent of Riverview Hospital.

Carl married Charmian Anderson in 1972 and they moved to East Hampton in 1976 where they raised their family along with a few goats and some chickens. He served on the East Hampton Board of Education for multiple terms, including four years as chairman.

Carl was truly a man of the water, fishing almost daily since his retirement in 1997. Be it fly fishing at Salmon River with all his buddies, angling for the salmon in the Shetucket River, boating on Long Island Sound, "Fish Camp" with the gang at Moosehead, the beach at Cape Canaveral, family vacations at Lake Mattawa, sitting by the pool, or just soaking in his hot tub, he was happiest by the water.

Carl was also an avid sports fan and cheered on the Boston Red Sox, New York Giants, and UConn teams, especially UConn women's basketball. Carl had a voracious appetite for books and words. He was a superb writer and was asked to speak at almost every event he attended. He wrote and delivered more eulogies than most people have even listened to. He fed the birds, squirrels and chipmunks in his yard and tended his gardens. He truly enjoyed his retirement.

Carl is survived by his wife, Charmi; sons, Dan and wife Kim, Ethan and his girlfriend Katie Cascio; daughters, Rachel and Jessica. The special lights of his life were his grandchildren, Vivian, Jace, Evelyn and Kaia, as well as his faithful dog Kota. He is also survived by his brothers, David, Peter and wife Kay, George and wife Pauline; sisters, Judy Sundell, Mary Kuskey, Marlou French and husband Larry; and sister-in-law, Phyllis Sundell. Also left to mourn his passing are his Anderson-in-laws, Gayle and Stephen Grimm, Jeffries Anderson and wife Shali Sanders, Robyn and Don Bertling, and Mike Conners. He leaves many special friends, neighbors, fishing buddies, cousins, nieces and nephews.

Carl was preceded in death by his parents, his brother Brian, sister Anne, brother-in-law Bob Willett and sister-in-law Joan Conners.

His family would like to thank the staff of Hartford Hospital CB2 and Bliss 10 Step Down, Dr. Chu, Dr. Premkumar and Dr. Lawlor for their outstanding, compassionate care. Memorial donations may be sent to Helen and Harry Gray Cancer Center Fund at Hartford Hospital or East Hampton Food Bank. Please reach out to someone with an act of kindness in Carl's memory.

If Carl had written his own obituary it would have been filled with jokes, tall tales and anecdotes of a life well-lived and well-loved. Friends are invited to honor Carl at a celebration of life on his birthday, Saturday, May 13, from 2-6 p.m., at his residence, 14 South Main St. in East Hampton, where the stories of Carl's life will be retold, shared and humorously exaggerated.

Colchester

Debra May Johnson

Debra May Johnson, 60, of Willimantic, formerly of Colchester, passed away peacefully Sunday, April 30. Born March 3, 1957, in Morgantown, W.V., she was the daughter of the late Rose Marie Johnson.

Debra leaves her beloved of 18 years, Wilfrid Soucy, as well as his family.

Deb grew up in Florida and graduated from North Miami High and had worked for Publix for 15 years. In 2004, she and Wilfrid moved to Kentucky for nearly 10 years and returned to Connecticut, settling at Ponemah Village in Colchester. In 2015, the couple purchased a new home in Willimantic, where she loved to sit out on the big red porch and enjoyed watching the birds and their dog, Izzy, run around the yard.

Debra was an Elvis fan, doing word puzzles and going out to the movies. She also felt very blessed to have been welcomed so warmly by Wilfrid's large extended family and treated like one of their own.

Visitation will be from 1-3 p.m. Saturday, May 6, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, with a chapel service at 2:45 p.m. Burial will be private.

Special thanks to the staff at DaVita Dialysis in North Windham for their caring concern over the years.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the charity of one's choice.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.



Marlborough

Arthur A. Foster Sr.

Arthur A. Foster Sr. of Marlborough passed away peacefully at his home Sunday, April 30, at the age of 76. Art (also known as "Whitey" or "G-PA") was born in Newton, Mass., Oct. 17, 1940, to the late Leslie and Priscilla (Kendrick) Foster.

He grew up in Cornish, N.H., and later lived in Claremont, N.H. He then moved to Colchester and settled in Marlborough for the last 37 years. Art joined the United States Navy in 1958 and served until 1961. One of his proudest moments was transporting the first astronaut after his return from orbit. He was very proud to be an American and all that it stands for.

Art is survived by his children, Arthur Foster Jr. and his wife, Karen of Salem, Trevor Foster and his wife Lisa of Lebanon, and Janet (Foster) Lawley of Colchester; their mother, Ginger Boughton and her husband, Ernie of Colchester; 11 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; his brother, Donald Foster & his wife, Debbie of Claremont, NH; his sister, Adele Bohannon and husband Glenn of Contoocook, N.H.; and numerous nieces, nephews, extended family members and countless friends.

He retired from Pratt & Whitney in 2006 after 40 years - 20+ of those years with perfect attendance. Art enjoyed working on jet engines and took pride in everything he did. For those who knew him well, they knew his ultimate passion was car racing. He loved racing with all of his being. Whether he was driving the car, working beside his son while he drove, or just watching, he was the happiest when racing was involved. He will be remembered for his love of racing, his crazy stories, his quick wit, a Dunkin' in hand, and countless hours of talking about it all.

The family will receive guests from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Sunday, May 7, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A chapel service celebrating his life will follow at 1 p.m. Burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to the Shriners Hospitals for Children - Boston, 2900 N. Rocky Point Drive, Tampa, FL 33607 (to benefit the Burn Center), or visit shrinershospitalsforchildren.org/en/Donate.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.



Portland

Kenneth E. Clark Jr.

Kenneth E. Clark Jr., 79, formerly of Portland, died Saturday, April 29, at Apple Rehab, Cromwell. He was born in New London, the son of the late Kenneth E. Clark Sr., and Louise (Greene) Clark.

Prior to his retirement, he was a foreman with Vulcan Radiator in South Windsor. He loved his family, family gatherings, fishing, NASCAR racing and country music. He was a very loving and kind man, who was loved by all.

Ken is survived by his daughters, Cecile Larson and her husband Howard of Newington, Cynthia Plourde and her husband Albert of Middletown; his sons, John Clark and his wife Kimberly of East Hampton, William Clark of Middlefield and his former wife Jeanne Clark of Middletown; also his step-children, Elaine Thayer of New Hampshire, George Thayer and his wife Mary of Vermont and Scott Thayer and his wife Catherine of Middletown; his sisters, Edna (Frances) Bogue and life partner Jack Tobin, Grace Taylor and her husband David of Montville; several grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

He is predeceased by his wife Nancy (Murray) Clark; brothers Newton and Malcolm Clark; sister Bernadine Tobin; and stepson Brian Thayer.

The funeral service will be held today, May 5, at 6:30 p.m., at Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown. Burial will be at the convenience of the family. Friends may call at Biega Funeral Home today from 5-6:30 p.m., prior to the service.

Those who wish may make a memorial contribution to Middlesex Hospital Hospice, c/o Dept. of Philanthropy, 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457.

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

Colchester

Raymond E. Desrosiers

Raymond E. Desrosiers, 85, of Colchester, passed away peacefully Monday, April 24, at Chestelm Healthcare. Born Nov. 8, 1931, in Fall River, Mass., he was the son of the late Ludger and Bertha Desrosiers. He lived in Fall River until joining the U.S. Marine Corps in 1949.

Following the service he settled in Hartford, taking a job as a machinist with P&W Aircraft, where he retired after 39 years with commendations.

Aside from his family, Ray's primary passions in life were painting, woodworking, 50's music, and the Boston Red Sox. His paintings will be treasured, and his enduring loyalty to his team will be carried on. He was a loving husband, father, grandfather and great grandfather and his memory will be cherished by all who knew and loved him.

Ray was predeceased by his wife Mary Elizabeth in 2013. He is survived by his sons, David Desrosiers of Windsor and Rodney Desrosiers and his wife Liz, and his daughter, Rosemarie Lorentson and her husband Bob of East Haddam; his brothers, Bob Desrosiers and his wife Mag of California, and Dick Desrosiers and his wife Del of Massachusetts; and grandchildren, David, Daniel, Ryan, Adam, Justin, Jessica, Victoria, Joshua, Rachel, Cody, Alex and Evan; and great-grandchildren, Syrina, Nolan and Whitney.

Ray will be remembered and celebrated in a private memorial at the family's convenience.

Memorial contributions may be made in his name to the American Cancer Institute.

Portland

Barbara E. Hill-Gagne

Barbara E. Hill-Gagne, 56, died Saturday, April 8, at the Hospice House in Cape Coral, Fla., after a courageous battle with cancer. "Barbie" was born to Fred Hill of Cape Coral, Fla., and the late Janet Hill, formerly of Portland.

She is survived by children, Amber Gagne of Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., Dustin Gagne of Seattle, Wash., and Colton Wright of Ft. Myers, Fla. She is also survived by a sister, Cynthia Snalbm of Denver, Colo.; brother, Jeffrey Hill (Claudia) of Durham; niece, Brittany Hill and nephew, Daniel Hill; beloved aunt, "Bert" Edwards; best friend, Janet Wells-Oliva; and several cousins.

"Barb" was an accomplished artist and generous beyond her means. She will be sorely missed.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, May 6, at 11 a.m., at Trinity Church, 345 Main St., Portland. A reception will follow at the church after burial in Trinity Cemetery. There are no calling hours.

Portland

Barbara Wright

Barbara Wright of Newington died peacefully, with her son, Jim, on Thursday, April 27, at the age of 81. Barbara was born April 15, 1936, in Waterbury, Vt., to Beatrice Louise (Emerson) Murphy and Charles Edward Murphy. Barbara was raised in Portland.

Barbara was a devoted mother who, despite the untimely death of her husband, Vincent Joseph Wright from Magherafelt, County Derry, Ireland, never relented in her drive to improve her family's lives. While single-handedly raising her two sons, she often worked two jobs but still made time for family vacations across the United States, Central America and the Caribbean.

Barbara is survived by her two sons, both currently living in Huntsville, Ala., after 26+ year careers with the U.S. Army: James Joseph Wright with his wife, Barbara, and their three children; Daniel Vincent Wright with his wife, Renee, and their two children.

Barbara was preceded in death by her parents, her husband, her brother, and a host of beloved four-legged companions: Spuddy, Lad, Ty, Waldo and Dillon.

A family memorial for Barbara will be held later this summer at Rye Beach, N.H., at her request.

In lieu of flowers, she requested donations be made to either the Aussie Rescue & Placement Helpline (aussierescue.org), the Connecticut Humane Society, or the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Portland

Josephine Doherty

Josephine (Moncada) Doherty, of Portland, wife of the late James T. Doherty, passed away peacefully after a long battle with Parkinson's disease Wednesday, April 26. She was born in Middletown, the daughter of the late Salvatore and Angelina (Salafia) Moncada.

Prior to her retirement, Josephine was a secretary with the City of Middletown Public Works Department. Josephine enjoyed cooking, as well as entertaining family and friends, especially around the holidays. She was very family-oriented and loved spending time with her children and grandchildren.

She is survived by her two sons, Jeffery Doherty of Middlefield and David Doherty and his wife Deborah of Middletown; a daughter, Nancy Jo Warnat, of Bristol; a sister, Lorraine Otfinoski of Middletown; her beloved grandchildren, Jeffery, Ryan, Kevin, Tyler, David, Jacob, Nick, Peyton and Kaitlyn; her great-grandchild, Noah; and several nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by a sister, Anna Moncada.

A funeral liturgy was held Tuesday, May 2, at St. Francis of Assisi Church, Elm Street, Middletown. Burial will be in Saint Sebastian Cemetery. Friends called at the Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown, Monday, May 1.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research.

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

East Hampton

Robert Klemba Celebration of Life

A celebration of the life of Robert Walter (Kenneth) Klemba of Cape Coral, Fla., formerly of East Hampton, will be held Saturday, May 13, from noon-4 p.m., at Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5095, 20 N. Main St., East Hampton. Please come to share your memories.

Bob passed away March 13 at the age of 83. He was born June 13, 1933, to Mary (Marsalek) and George Klemba.



Obituaries continued

East Hampton

Martha D. Hitchcock

Martha D. "Pepper" Hitchcock, daughter of Kenneth E. and Eleanor (Mackey) Hitchcock, died peacefully Wednesday, May 3, at Middlesex Hospital Hospice Unit. Born in East Hampton June 16, 1936, she was a lifelong resident. She was an alumnus of East Hampton High School Class of 1954 and the University of Connecticut, and had been an employed by the Vernon Board of Education.



"Pepper" was a founding member of the Blackledge Women's Golf Association, president and public relations director of the Southern New England Women's Golf Association, and also a member of the Connecticut State Amateur Golf Championship Committee from 1972-1990. She entered politics in 1974, serving on local, state and national campaigns. She herself ran for the Board of Selectmen in East Hampton in 1979 and was elected and then re-elected to eight terms. She was vice chairman of the Board of Selectmen and Town Council during the terms of 1983-85, 87-89 and 91-93. During that time she was the first Democratic woman and first woman vice chairman.

She retired from the council in 1994. She was on the Charter Revision Commission in 1986-87, whose work was adopted into what is now the council and Town Manager form of government. She was an active member of the council working on projects with citizens groups. She was a liaison on town commissions and was active in the building of the town community center and library. She was also a member of the Goff House Museum Restoration Committee.

She once remarked that her vocation and avocations seemed to all begin with the letter "P," perhaps for "Pepper," "A pupil, physical education teacher, publicist, politician, public servant and a sometime poet." In 1995, she turned to photography and developed a line of photo postcards highlighting the history and seasons of East Hampton and the surrounding area. Her photography provided an outlet of creativity and expression. She loved to travel to Stowe, Vt., and Saratoga Springs, N.Y. She was also a very active volunteer at the Goodspeed Opera House.

She leaves behind her friend of many years Pat Logan, her beloved cat "Puddin'" and her favorite dog "Logan."

A memorial service will be held Wednesday, May 10, at 11 a.m., in the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, with the Rev. Mary Ann Osbourne officiating. Burial will follow in Lake View Cemetery, East Hampton. Friends may call at the funeral home Wednesday from 9-11 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the East Hampton Ambulance Association, P.O. Box 144, East Hampton, CT 06424, or to the Goodspeed Opera House, 6 Main St., East Haddam, CT 06423.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Marlborough

Sophie Margaret Wrobel

Sophie Margaret (Vashalifski) Wrobel, 94, of Manchester, widow of John A. Wrobel, died Saturday, April 22, at her home, with her family by her side.

Sophie was born July 1, 1922, daughter of Martin and Frances (Piotek) Vashalifski, and one of nine siblings. She was raised in Marlborough, graduated from Glastonbury High School, and has been a resident of Manchester for the past 70 years. Prior to retiring, Sophie was a retail associate for many years at the former Kings and Bradlees department stores in the Manchester Parkade. She was a longtime parishioner of St. Bridget Church. She loved growing flowers and working in her garden.

She is survived by four children, Loretta A. Wrobel and her partner, Sharon Wood, of Ashford, Linda E. Schmidt and her husband, Mark, of Tolland, Andrew A. Wrobel of Stafford Springs, and Timothy J. Wrobel and his wife, Corinne, of Manchester; five grandchildren, Marylynn Harding and her husband, Darryl, Caleb Wrobel, Paul Schmidt, Taylor Wrobel, and Peter Schmidt; several nieces and nephews.

Sophie was predeceased by all eight of her siblings.

Visiting hours were Wednesday, April 26, at the Holmes Funeral Home, 400 Main St., Manchester. The funeral began Thursday, April 27, at the funeral home, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial that morning at St. Bridget Church, 80 Main St., Manchester. Burial followed in the East Cemetery in Manchester.

Memorial contributions may be made to WJMJ Radio, 15 Peach Orchard Road, Prospect, CT 06712-1052, which broadcasts daily Masses; or to the Archbishop's Annual Appeal, P.O. Box 28, Hartford, CT 06141-0028.

For online condolences, visit holmes-watkinsfuneralhomes.com.