

RIVEREAST

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Precariously Perched... A delivery truck rolled over and spilled nearly 600 gallons of home heating oil on South Road in Marlborough late Monday morning. The incident led to the road being closed until Wednesday afternoon, while the mess was cleaned. No injuries were reported. See story on page 6.

GOP Hopefuls for Governor Face Off

by Elizabeth Regan

Nine Republican candidates for governor took to the stage Wednesday in Hebron for the second in a series of five debates being held in each of the state's congressional districts.

Immigration lawyer Peter Lumaj, who came over from Albania as a young man to escape the communist regime, was in the RHAM High School auditorium limelight as he railed against "professional politicians" and said he was the only true Republican running for governor.

He advocated cutting all state agencies by 14 percent, merging some of them, and eliminating the state income tax for people who make less than \$100,000 annually.

"Taxes kill jobs," he said, adding that there are some taxes in Connecticut that cost more to collect than they earn in revenue.

"What's the point of having those taxes? But geniuses like them, they pass those laws," he said, nodding his head back to state Rep. Prasad Srinivasan, R-Glastonbury, and state Sen. Toni Boucher, R-Wilton.

Srinivasan facetiously thanked Lumaj for the compliment. He joked that his mother, who has said wonderful things about him, has never called him a genius.

Lumaj used his rebuttal privilege to say Srinivasan's "mother was right."

In another exchange, Trumbull First Selectman Tim Herbst described Lumaj as the last candidate he'd want answering a 3 a.m. emergency call as governor of Connecticut. That

prompted Lumaj to accuse Herbst of not having held a job outside of government since he graduated high school. Then Herbst called Lumaj the "single biggest liar."

Mike Handler, chief financial officer in Stamford, stood up shortly thereafter to say that's not how candidates should behave.

"It's good theater. It's good red meat for everybody. It's good for the media. But it's not good for all of our taxpayers and the residents of Connecticut," Handler said.

The show was moderated by Susan Raff, political reporter with WFSB, and Christine Stuart, editor of ctnewsjunkie.com. They became the subjects of Srinivasan's ire after they told him time was up.

The Glastonbury allergist said Connecticut GOP party chairman J.R. Romano had informed the candidates they could speak without fear of interruption during rebuttals.

"I will warn you that you are not supposed to interrupt my train of thought, because what I have built up, you have lost for me, and I don't appreciate that," Srinivasan said.

Also on stage were Danbury Mayor Mark Boughton, former Comptroller General of the United States David Walker, Shelton Mayor Mark Lauretti and technology entrepreneur Steve Obsitnik of Westport.

According to CT News Junkie, wealthy businessmen Bob Stefanowski of Madison and

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Connolly Makes Governor Bid Official

by Sloan Brewster

Three months after launching an exploratory campaign, Hebron resident Sean Connolly on Tuesday made it official: he's running for governor.

The Democrat made the announcement at a gathering Tuesday at the American Legion hall in Hebron.

Connolly gave the *Rivereast* an exclusive interview before the announcement.

The East Hartford native stepped down last fall as commissioner of the state Department of Veterans Affairs, a position he'd held for the previous two and a half years. He also spent seven years on active duty with the Army, and is a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

An attorney who received his undergraduate degree from Bryant University and his Juris Doctorate from Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law, Connolly was prosecutor and legal counsel for the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Kentucky and in Kuwait and Iraq.

He also worked as the global and ethics compliance officer at Pratt & Whitney and is a 2017 graduate of the U.S. Army War College.

He first began to consider running for governor when he first took office as the commissioner of Veterans Affairs and met with veterans who had served all over the world, dating

back to World War II, Connolly said.

"Veterans started to encourage me, 'Hey Sean, you need to run for office. We could use your kind of leadership in Hartford,'" he said. "I said, 'No we got plenty to do around here.'"

Over time the idea "built and built and built," he said. Then he decided to talk with his wife Carol Connolly. After they hashed out the idea, he made the decision to go forward with it for a few reasons.

"One, I love Connecticut and two, we have two boys, Sean and Brendan, and we want the same opportunities for them that the last three generations of my family enjoyed," he said. "Third, I know we can do it, I believe we're in a crisis but I know we can change the narrative and write a new story in Connecticut ... It's a story of opportunity, economic opportunity, for all of Connecticut, it's not going to be overnight, there are no magic wands, it's a long-term plan but we will implement a long term plan that puts Connecticut on a trajectory that gives people in Connecticut the hope and optimism for themselves and for their children and grandchildren."

On Wednesday, Connolly released that economic plan.

In the plan, he puts the laser focus on the current economic climate and recommends the

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Hebron resident Sean Connolly is officially throwing his hat in the ring for governor. The Democrat made the announcement Tuesday at the American Legion post in town.



Republican candidate for governor state Rep. Prasad Srinivasan, right, shares a laugh with moderator Christine Stuart following Wednesday's debate.

GOP Hopefuls cont. from Front Page

David Stemeran attended neither Wednesday's debate nor the first debate in Windsor.

Despite the contentious moments scattered throughout the almost three-hour debate, the nine Republicans found several issues to agree on as the moderators asked a series of questions that each candidate had the opportunity to answer.

For example, it was unanimous that the state pension and healthcare system must be overhauled and that regionalization is a good idea only insofar as it is not forced on municipalities by the state.

When the candidates were asked if they voted for President Donald Trump, each person willing to answer the question said they did.

Obsitnik, Lauretti, Boucher and Handler did not respond.

Lumaj said the president is doing a "great job," then told the audience that Boughton had listed his dog as a write-in candidate instead of voting for his party's nominee.

Boughton quickly stood to correct the record. He called his statement about his dog "a really poor attempt at being humorous."

"I love my dog. I do. But I didn't vote for him," Boughton said.

Herbst affirmed his voting booth support of Trump.

"The Democrats are going to try to make this election about Donald Trump in Connecticut. I want to remind everyone of one fact that is indisputable: Donald Trump is not the most unpopular person in the state of Connecticut. The most unpopular person in Connecticut is Dan Malloy," Herbst said.

Walker, who served as comptroller general under Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, acknowledged voting for John Kasich in the primary. But he said he voted for Trump in the general election.

"I voted for President Trump in the general election because I know that Washington is broken. We need a change agent," Walker said. "I don't like his style, but he is a change agent."

The candidates also found agreement in standing behind those who have faced sexual abuse and harassment.

The moderators invoked the #metoo movement when they asked the lineup if they had ever been accused of sexual harassment and what the state could do to help solve the problem.

Obsitnik, a veteran of the U.S. Navy who was deployed on a nuclear submarine, said he has never sexually harassed a man or a woman.

The father of two daughters cited a couple areas where the state could enact specific changes to its laws and policies: Ending the stat-

ute of limitations on sexual assault for victims of all ages and ending the backlog of untested rape kits in police departments across the state.

Handler invoked his four daughters when he said he hopes men have the courage to step up and change the culture of sexual assault and harassment.

"This has got to stop," he said.

The only woman in the field called sexual harassment the worst thing that can happen in the workplace.

"As women, mothers and daughters, we want to be judged by our capabilities first and foremost. To be respected for what our capabilities are, to be able to advance oneself in whatever career endeavor that they be in," Boucher said.

The candidates coalesced around a distaste for the legalization of recreational marijuana, but some left the car door open on the idea of tolls.

Srinivasan and Walker said tolls could help address the lack of funding for the state's transportation system – if done correctly.

Malloy, earlier that day, had announced the special transportation fund was on the brink of insolvency.

Srinivasan described transportation as an "economic engine" driving the state's success. He said he must be assured that money put into the transportation fund will not be raided in order to support tolls.

The topic of the income tax was revisited several times as Lumaj, Boughton and Boucher advocated for various methods of scaling back or eliminating the tax.

Boughton found himself defending his out-

spoken desire to eliminate the tax over ten years when Walker said anyone who tells people the state can do that without a viable plan "is 'not credible on their face.'"

Boughton harked back to the days before Gov. Lowell P. Weicker instituted the tax in the summer of 1991. It was a time when people wanted to move here and businesses wanted to stay, according to the Danbury mayor.

"For those of us that are calling for the elimination of the state income tax, that's the Republican Party I remember. It's the Republican Party that stood at the state capitol and rallied 30,000 people opposed to implementing the number one business-killing tax agreement," Boughton said.

Connolly cont. from Front Page

creation of an Economic Operations Planning Center. The center would be used much as state legislators use the Armory in Hartford to gather before a heavy storm and plan how to deal with the impending weather crisis.

"And our current [economic] crisis is our storm," Connolly said.

In the plan he discusses modernizing the state Department of Economic and Community Development, he said. Solutions for a better economy, he said, include investing in businesses of all sizes, building a competent and modern infrastructure and improving transportation.

First among the investments would be "Startups and supporting entrepreneurial Connecticut citizens in starting Connecticut businesses," he said.

Those investments would be in the form of grants, loans and incubators, which would be placed, in particular, in distressed communities, he said.

"Most businesses fail in their first year but when there's incubators, they survive," he said.

Connolly also wants to work with existing businesses to put them in a better position to grow and provide better jobs.

"For our larger businesses and larger employers, really a continued dialogue and not waiting for businesses to threaten to leave to have those conversations," he said. "That's what my laser focus will be on because if we don't get our economics on track everything else will fall apart."

After his one-on-one with the *Rivereast*, Connolly, flanked by his family, made the announcement, to a cheering standing-room-only crowd.

"Good afternoon everyone, I'm Sean Connolly and I love Connecticut," he said. "Today I'm here to tell you I'm no longer expecting a run. I am a candidate ... I am a candidate for governor of Connecticut!"

He said he was particularly proud of the timing of his announcement as it came three days after his father, Michael, marked the 52nd anniversary of his immigration to Connecticut from Ireland. Connolly said his father came here "for a better life."

Throughout the debate, little mention was made of the needs and concerns particular to the second congressional district in which the debate was held.

Boughton briefly invoked crumbling foundations prevalent in certain areas of the region and said tourism must be bolstered for the region to compete against Rhode Island, Massachusetts and other areas.

And Tim Herbst stood up to counter a metaphor employed by Walker to describe the state as a "sinking ship" called the U.S.S. Connecticut.

"The U.S.S. Connecticut was built here in the second congressional district at Electric Boat," Herbst said. "It has 101 sailors on it, and I assure you it's not sinking."

Like many of his constituents, Connolly's father opened his own business, he said. Michael Connolly made a success of his landscaping business, and his son said he wants Connecticut residents to have that same opportunity for success.

While Connolly spoke, his smiling father listened attentively, applauding his son when he said he wanted senior citizens to be able to retire closer to their families.

"Thank you Sean," the elder Connolly shouted.

Connolly said he was not running for governor to get his next job or "for a forever job." Rather, he said it was because of the people of Connecticut.

"I'm running for governor because people are frustrated," he said. "They believe opportunity in Connecticut is slipping away. Well, it has been; we are in a crisis."

He pointed to the decreasing population in the state and said it was a trend that needed to be stopped but that college graduates were leaving to seek opportunities in other states because of the poor economy.

"I could make you empty promises that I know I can't fulfill but I won't do it, not today or in the future," he said. "I will speak to Connecticut like I do to my family, honestly and with compassion."

He said he would work hard to bring opportunities for jobs and businesses and to restore opportunity in Connecticut, but insisted he could not do it alone.

"We can and we will do better, if we do it together, but only if we do it together," he said.

Then he started a round of shouts.

"When I say 'Connecticut,' you say 'Together,'" he said.

"Connecticut," he shouted.

"Together" the crowd roared.

After the announcement, Michael Connolly meandered through the crowd, shaking hands and encouraging bystanders to go out and vote when the time comes.

"Don't forget to vote for my son," he said. "I tell you he's a great guy all around. No bulls—t."

East Hampton Town Manager Gets 7.14 Percent Pay Bump

by Elizabeth Regan

The Town Council this week, under the direction of Chairwoman Melissa Engel, approved a 7.14 percent raise for Town Manager Michael Maniscalco in unexpected mid-year performance review.

After the evaluation and salary deliberations were held behind closed doors at the beginning of the past two council meetings, members came out of an executive session on Tuesday to authorize an increase from \$128,883 to \$138,000. They also brought his monthly car stipend from \$500 to \$600.

The raise takes the place of the salary increase that would typically be given during the summer in conjunction with the town manager's annual review, according to the motion.

The lone 'nay' vote came from Mark Philhower, who described the raise as "excessive" given a precarious state budget situation that has resulted in significant reductions in funding to municipalities.

After the meeting, Engel used the words "overdue" and "well-deserved" to describe Maniscalco's raise. She said the move was an effort to make up for what was a low salary to start with.

"He would never catch up without a bump, and this is his bump," she said.

Maniscalco was 30 years old when he was hired in 2012 at \$115,000. He followed several interim town managers who came on board in the wake of Jeffery O'Keefe's resignation from the position. The resignation was part of a tu-

multuous couple of years highlighted by very public disagreement between O'Keefe, Police Chief Matthew Reimondo, members of the Town Council and the people of East Hampton.

O'Keefe's starting salary was \$120,000 when he was hired in 2008.

Holding the evaluation behind closed doors was a departure from Maniscalco's last several reviews, which were open to the public at the town manager's request.

Maniscalco asked for his first public review in March 2015, when the council, led by Barbara Moore, held a mid-year evaluation that Maniscalco said violated his contract. The contract specifies an "annual review" be held around his July 1 anniversary date.

Evaluations by the previous council were characterized by procedural confusion and negative job performance feedback from former Councilman Ted Hintz Jr.

Maniscalco received a 1.5-percent salary increase in 2016 and a 3-percent raise last year.

According to Maniscalco, Engel sat down with him to request that he allow this evaluation to be held in executive session.

"She laid out very clearly what she was planning on doing, and it wasn't the wild west like it was in previous instances," Maniscalco said.

The decision worked out for the young town manager, according to Engel.

"We have new council members," she said. "And his review went very well. It certainly warranted a raise."

Republicans retained the council majority in the November election after Hintz withdrew from contention and was replaced with Mark Philhower, who did not initially plan to run for re-election.

The Republicans lost one seat, resulting in four Republicans and three Democrats. Five current councilors served on the previous council.

The scores from Maniscalco's January review, which were provided after the meeting, showed he earned an above average rating. It was a 3.1 on a scale of 1-5, with 1 meaning "needs improvement" and 4 meaning "superior."

His highest scores were a 3.4 for fiscal management and a 3.3 for professionalism. His lowest score was a 2.8 for communication.

Maniscalco received a 2.6 during his June 2017 evaluation, which was conducted by the previous council based on the same criteria.

When asked if she had reason to believe Maniscalco was looking for another job, Engel said she believes he is happy in East Hampton.

"I think the only thing that might've sent him away is if he's not making what he knows he should be making," she said.

Maniscalco said after the meeting that the council was "very kind" to give him a raise.

He said he provided the council with data about comparable town manager salaries at Engel's request.

"They obviously sat down and took it seri-

ously, and I'm very appreciative of that," he said.

The data from the Connecticut Town Manager's Association provided by Maniscalco showed an average salary of roughly \$138,000 for town managers in municipalities with populations of 11,000 to 15,000, based on 2017 salaries. Those five towns are Coventry, East Hampton, Granby, North Branford and Tolland.

The data shows Maniscalco's current salary remains the second-lowest out of the five comparable towns, a trend he said has held steady since he took his position in 2012 – but the raise brings him closer to catching up to the Tolland town manager's \$141,000 salary.

The highest salary among the five towns came in at \$166,000, according to the 2017 data; it went to Granby's town manager. The lowest salary was \$116,000, paid to North Branford's town manager.

Maniscalco said he's shared with Engel that he has been contacted by recruiters "on a pretty regular basis" based on accomplishments that have garnered attention from people outside of East Hampton.

"At some point, the right offer would come through the door," he said. "But I think with the decision they made [Tuesday], I'll probably be willing to finish out the town hall project and look forward to what our next project is and see where East Hampton is going. Because we do have a lot of work left to do."

What to Do with East Hampton Village Center?

by Elizabeth Regan

The Town Council this week discussed a proposal to earmark a portion of Village Center property taxes expressly for revitalization projects in the heart of East Hampton over the next 20 years.

A draft of the Village Center Tax Increment Financing District Master Plan, prepared by Planning and Zoning Official Jeremy DeCarli, was received enthusiastically by the council's four Republicans and less so by the three Democrats.

Most members agreed, however, that the idea may have merit as just one component of a more comprehensive effort to rejuvenate the center of town.

DeCarli said preliminary estimates indicate the proposal would generate approximately \$3.5 to \$4 million by 2037.

The funds may be used for any projects identified in the master plan, which include expansion of the existing water system, remediation or demolition of several contaminated mill buildings, and streetscape and facade work.

Councilor Josh Piteo said the Village Center has been languishing for decades while officials studied the problem but did not achieve a successful resolution.

"We've been waiting for something like this for 35 years, maybe 40 years," Piteo said. "Many councils over the years have tried different things. Some have worked, then they failed and faded. This is the first time we have a blueprint of how to do it."

Known as Tax Increment Financing (TIF), the program would freeze property taxes in the designated Village Center area for 20 years based on each property's Oct. 1, 2016 assessed

value. While affected taxpayers would still be subject to the same increases as everyone else in town, the new revenue would be placed in a special account to be used for one-time or long-term economic development efforts.

The frozen assessed value – also known as base revenue – would support the local annual budget. The term "increment" refers to the taxes received each year in excess of that base revenue.

The master plan includes provisions to promote private development with the creation of a revolving loan fund. It would also support a program to rebate a portion of an individual taxpayer's contribution to the TIF district if the property is being rehabilitated or redeveloped.

No more than half of the incremental revenue can be used for the rebate program, according to the master plan.

The TIF district would cover the area along Main Street between East High Street and Edgerton Street, Summit Street between Flanders Road and Main Street, and Skinner Street between Main Street and Middletown Avenue.

But Councilor James "Pete" Brown said diverting tax dollars to one area of town means the rest of the town will need to make up for the lost revenue.

Brown, like his fellow Democrats, was also skeptical that the amount generated over 20 years would have any impact on the center's most pressing need.

"The one thing you have to do about [the Village Center] in order to make it a vibrant place is you have to get water," Brown said.

The existing Village Center Water System

was mandated by the state in 1989 and built in 1991 to alleviate serious chemical contamination in the center of the town, according to the East Hampton Plan of Conservation and Development.

In 2006, following a consent order from the state related to contamination and insufficient water capacity, the town proposed a \$28.49 million municipal water system that would have served 5,300 people. The plan was quashed by voters.

The town is currently studying ways to interconnect the town's two existing water systems in the Royal Oaks subdivision and the Village Center.

Council member Dean Markham said the slow, incremental growth of the fund does not appear to be sufficient to address the area's issues.

"I think it's possible this is an avenue: One of other things that could be done," Markham said. "But I think this is, in and of itself, going to do virtually nothing to change the Village Center."

The area needs more of a capital infusion to "jumpstart" redevelopment efforts, he added. He suggested that proceeds from the sale of town-owned property, like the old mill at 1 Watrous St. or the Board of Education building that will go vacant upon the completion of the new municipal hub, be used to benefit the town center through a revolving loan fund.

Council member Mark Philhower said he'd rather see money from the sale of those properties be used for a water system in the Village Center.

Councilor Kevin Reich called for more in-

put from affected residents and business owners.

Council members agreed to revisit the issue at their next meeting on Jan. 23, when they will be prepared to vote on a motion to send the concept to the Planning and Zoning Commission for approval.

DeCarli said neither the Planning and Zoning Commission nor the council is required to hold a public hearing, but added that "it is prudent, absolutely" to invite the public to weigh in.

If rejected by the Planning and Zoning Commission, the proposal would need to be passed by a supermajority of the council in order to be implemented. DeCarli said a supermajority amounts to six out of seven members.

The master plan builds on decades of studies about how to revitalize the Village Center, from a 1968 plan to focus on the area as a business and civic hub all the way through a 2010 effort to promote multi-family, townhouse, duplex and single-family housing in the area. Interspersed in that timeframe were studies initiated by the Economic Development Commission and Brownfield Redevelopment Agency to clean up historic mill buildings and help the district thrive again.

According to the 2006 Village Center Revitalization Assessment, the Village Center rose up in the mid-1700s around the First Congregational Church and gained prominence as a bell-manufacturing center in the 1800s. The Belltown Historic District was recognized in 1985 on the National Register of Historic Places.

Blackledge Offers Winter Activities in Hebron

by Sloan Brewster

Blackledge Country Club hopes that you celebrate the new-fallen snow by cross-country skiing on the club's groomed trails or playing some golf with simulators.

Unlike most country or golf clubs, Blackledge doesn't shut down for the winter, Kevin Higgins, director of operations, said. Rather, the club takes advantage of the snowy season to offer some unusual activities.

"All stuff that, really, you can't find anywhere else all in one spot in this area," he said. "I think in the winter time we really turn into kind of a neighborhood gathering spot."

Sure, there are bigger crowds in summertime, with hundreds of people coming to golf and then dine in the tavern but in winter, locals nestle around the fire, dine, play a round or two on one of the golf simulators or head onto the ski trails.

On Wednesday, Donna Jenks of East Hampton took a morning spin on the trails. Jenks, who hits the trails at the country club every year, said it was her first time this year.

She generally grooves on the trails at Hurd Park, in East Hampton, or treks to Gay City State Park, where she was headed after she completed the loop at Blackledge.

"That'll be more in the woods, a little bit more extreme," she said of Gay City. "[Blackledge] is really very well-groomed, nice and hilly, some nice downhill terrain, peaceful, very surreal. Love the snow."

Hitting the two- to three-mile loop around the property at Blackledge is a free activity, and like everything at the club, open to the public, Higgins said. In addition to being groomed for easy access, the trail offers beautiful views.

Staff hopes folks will come inside to the Blackledge River Tavern & Sports Bar and sit by the fire after trying out the trails, Higgins and Brian Folkes, food and beverage director, said. They can warm up over a bite to eat, have a drink or sip some hot cocoa, perhaps with a shot of Schnapps.

They can also check out the golf simulators, which simulate about 20 famous courses in the U.S., Canada and the Caribbean.

Kevin Hastings of Colchester comes once a week with a group of golf buddies to practice on the simulators. On Wednesday, they were playing on the simulated Arnold Palmer Bay Hill course.

"It allows you to keep your swing," Hastings said. "Keep practicing your swing and it allows you to keep in shape for golf."

Folkes is also working on bringing a new and different activity to the trail, fat biking, which Jenks also does. She pointed out her fat bike as she loaded her skis into the back of her truck. Thick spiky tires help mountain bikers to hit snow covered trails, she explained.

"We just started working with [a group of fat bikers] to create trails," Folkes said. "They've already started going out trying it."

The tavern offers craft beers on tap, dinner specials and musical entertainment on Fridays or Saturdays, and sometimes both nights. Local musicians are there regularly and on occasion, nationally-known names come out, including Jeff Pitchell, who will play there on Friday, Jan. 19, at 7 p.m.

The club is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. and Sunday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.



Golfing in the winter is no problem at Blackledge Country Club. The facility offers a golf simulator that lets customers hit the virtual links – such as this simulation of the Arnold Palmer Bay Hill course in Florida – no matter how cold it may be outside.

New Committee to Think of Andover's Long-Term Future

by Sloan Brewster

A new committee in the town of Andover will look at the needs of the town going forward.

Like all towns in the state, every 10 years Andover is required to update its Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), a document that states goals and recommendations for the town for the following 10 years.

The last time the town completed a POCD was 2015 and before that 2005, said Planning and Zoning Chairman Eric Anderson.

"The problem the town has had is going from a plan to action, executing and taking the recommendations and turning them into changes on the ground," Anderson said.

The plan is that the Long Term Planning Committee – for which half the members have been appointed by the Board of Selectmen and half will be appointed by the Planning & Zoning

Commission – will recommend ways to make these things happen, including through funding, Anderson said.

"We need to look at what we do really require as a town going forward," he said. "The commission will get buy-ins from all the boards in town and the Board of Selectmen to understand what the long term problems are and how do we get to where we need to be as a town in both infrastructure and staff."

One thing the commission will likely look into will be filling the needs of a quickly-growing elderly population, Anderson, who will be on the committee, said.

"The biggest problem we face in town is the changes in demographics and the aging," he said. "We need to do better at meeting the needs of a much more elderly faction."

The aging population in the state of Con-

necticut is growing faster than on a national level, Anderson said – and Andover's aging population is growing even faster than the rest of the state.

"We don't have any kind of reasonable community center, we've known for years that that was what residents wanted," Anderson said, adding that one has not yet been funded or executed. "I suspect that's going to be a part of it."

The committee will also look at funding needs. For example, the Andover Fire Department's ladder truck is out of service and the department will need other equipment, Anderson said. There are also infrastructure needs in the town.

The Fire Department and the Fire Commission are working with the Capitol Improvement

Planning Committee on what equipment the department will need in the next couple years, Fire Chief Ron Mike Jr. said. They have removed the ladder truck from the list as it would cost approximately \$1.5 million and the town does not have enough fires to justify such an expense.

"While I'm still chief, I'm not going to spend the town's money foolishly," he said.

In an emergency, fire departments from Hebron, Coventry and Bolton can bring a ladder truck to town in 10 minutes, Mike said. For 14 years, the town had a ladder truck donated by the town of Glastonbury, which was a good deal, he added.

The Planning and Zoning Commission will appoint the last half of the members to the Long Term Planning Committee at its next meeting.

Colchester Students Spread Holiday Cheer to Seniors

by Julianna Roche

Each December for more than 30 years, Colchester students have helped support seniors in their community through a lesser known, but certainly longstanding tradition – the Holiday Box Program, an initiative where students from Jack Jackter Intermediate School collect and deliver gifts in boxes for senior residents in need.

Just before their holiday break last month on Dec. 22, JJIS students and faculty gathered for a schoolwide assembly to hand boxes for 26 different seniors over to Director of Senior Services Patty Watts, who described the program as "heartwarming" and "special" for both students and the senior community.

"We supply Jack Jackter School with a list of seniors who need a boost during the holidays and each class collects items to bring some holiday cheer," Watts explained, adding that the criteria for being selected as a holiday box recipient requires that the individual is a Colchester resident, a senior aged 60 or over, and has demonstrated economic need.

"The school, staff and parents are so generous that each recipient typically gets at least

two copy paper boxes full of gifts and the senior center staff hand deliver the boxes to the recipients," Watts furthered.

JJIS Assistant Principal Jennifer Reynolds, who has helped coordinate the program for the last five years with Watts, explained that each classroom "adopts" a different senior and spends the weeks leading up to the holidays collecting various items for them.

"When I was new [to JJIS], Patty was new too, so it was an adventure for both us to take on," Reynolds said. "She takes care of whatever requirements are on her end for seniors [and] then she gives us their first names, and things they are particularly interested in or just items they may need and can't afford."

Students in each classroom also decorate the boxes for their "adopted" senior, she continued.

"What's nice is that the kids, in addition to bringing in things to celebrate the season and to give seniors something, they make cards to let the seniors know they're thinking about them," Reynolds said.

Senior Center administrative assistant Donna Paty – who has participated in the program for the last 18 years – noted that seniors are always overjoyed to receive the "heartfelt letters" from students and that it's "wonderful collaboration" between students and parents for seniors in the community.

"Some of the seniors are on fixed incomes and so there's things people can't purchase [on their own]," she explained. "Many have hardships during the year or they don't have family nearby, so for some of these seniors, these boxes are the only gifts they get for the holidays."

Paty explained that the senior center staff works closely with the seniors selected for the program to figure out what types of items they may need, which may include socks, slippers, robes, blankets, hats or scarves, but also items they may want.

For example, if one senior citizen has a pet, students might collect pet food or pet toys in addition to needed items.

"It really brightens their spirits that somebody in the community is thinking of them,"

Paty said, adding that seeing how much joy the boxes bring to seniors is also a gift to her.

"I love it because I get to hear how happy they are," she said.

Watts explained that while the senior center works to maintain the anonymity of the seniors in need, many expressed their gratitude this year – with one senior noting that the boxes were "very heartfelt and generous."

"The gifts lifted my spirits during the holidays," they added.

Another holiday box recipient agreed.

"The boxes were wonderful and so special to me," they said. "I thank them all - the students, parents and teachers – so much for thinking of me."

A third senior said they felt "grateful" for the "overwhelming generosity" from students, their families, and faculty.

"It is special to know how the children of this town are being taught to give and be kind to others," they said. "I applaud the parents' work and thank the senior center for their efforts as well."

Regionalization Hot Topic at Marlborough Forum

by Julianna Roche

Nearly 30 town officials and residents gathered Wednesday in the Marlborough Elementary School (MES) media center for the Board of Education's community forum to raise concerns and discuss school-related issues – a turnout school board Chairwoman Ruth Kelly said she was “very pleased” to see.

Regionalization and ongoing school building maintenance issues were among the hot-button topics reviewed – with one resident asking school board members how likely a regionalization of the Marlborough, Hebron and Andover school districts might be.

The three towns had already been a regionalized school district once before, with one superintendent for the Marlborough, Hebron and Andover elementary schools as well as the RHAM schools. The arrangement lasted from the late 1970s until 1998, when Marlborough withdrew and hired its own superintendent.

Kelly responded that at present time, regionalization “has not become a board issue” for Marlborough and she has only heard it talked about among the general public.

However, RHAM Board of Education Chairwoman Judy Benson-Clarke confirmed that she has attended meetings in Hebron where the topic has been discussed.

“Because it’s to their benefit,” chimed in Board of Finance member Ken Hjulstrom.

“If regionalism is explored, I think it needs to be carefully looked at,” Benson-Clarke furthered, adding that she felt Marlborough has done just fine on its own.

“I have always marveled at Marlborough and thought of it personally as an example of one

of the lowest per pupil costs in the entire state, while producing just amazing students [who are] well-spoken, and kind, and bright,” she said.

Board of Education Vice Chairman Wes Skorski, speaking as an individual, said he believed if regionalization were to be looked at again, the school board should also look at bringing back seventh- and eighth-graders to MES.

“We certainly have enough room for it,” he said.

Board member Sue Rapelye agreed, adding that in the state’s current economic climate, nothing should be off-limits.

“Everything is on the table now,” she said. “We should all collaborate together and see if it [regionalization] is an option again [and] if it’s not the right thing, we should move onto the next topic. Nothing should be done in a vacuum.”

Not all town officials shared similar sentiments, however, including Hjulstrom who also served on the Board of Education from 1998-2003.

“I honestly can’t recall any benefits to being part of a central office,” he said. “Andover and Marlborough were the poor stepchildren that got totally ignored.”

Hjulstrom added that on top of the school building falling apart during that time, school policies had not been updated since the 1970s, which led to a poorly-run school system.

“We took on all those tasks once we had our own administration,” he furthered, adding that within four to five years, those issues “that had

fallen to the wayside when we were part of a central office” were taken care of.

Selectman Dick Shea – who stressed he was speaking as an individual – agreed, adding that there are “two drivers” behind regionalization, which include pressure from the state and pushing from the town of Hebron.

“When the state starts cutting things, it’s very good at suggesting to municipalities what they should do to economize,” he said.

As for Hebron, Shea said: “From their point of view, regionalization is a great thing and we should just pursue it. [But] we did that before and it was a disaster.”

He admitted that “maybe it wouldn’t be the same” if it were done again, but worried that Hebron would just be “oblivious” to the other two towns.

* * *

Shea also weighed in on the discussion regarding where the responsibility for maintaining the school building and grounds should fall – an issue that has been deliberated between MES and the town for months, and has ultimately been absorbed by the school, whose 2018-19 budget currently consists of \$35,000 set aside for that purpose.

In September, First Selectwoman Amy Traversa – who could not be reached for comment Thursday morning – explained that while the public works department would continue providing snow plowing services and mowing the soccer fields as in-kind services for MES, the town did not have “the capacity” to provide any additional services.

However, Shea said he felt “the town is going in the wrong direction.”

“It has a highly-influential [first] selectman and I can’t seem to do anything about that,” he continued. Shea explained that originally, the town had hired one full-time facilities and grounds foreman, Tony Gallicchio, and one full-time highway supervisor. However, when the highway supervisor position fell through, the town hired John Jones as a part-time public works director.

“The town only has one and a half positions to pay for and has realized handsome savings,” Shea added. “However, the downside now is that [Gallicchio] doesn’t have time for the school, so it’s easy for the town to say ‘I guess you gotta fix your school,’ but it benefits the taxpayer to have two [full-time] positions. The school is our most expensive and important facility by far.”

MES Principal Dan White explained that school administrators are currently managing the entire building themselves.

“We are running the facility [and] managing the building, the heating, and the cooling and doing that without any help from the town,” he added.

“We’re penny-pinching why the [school] budget is going up by 1 percent, but the bigger problem is how the administration of the town is dealing with things as well,” said Board of Finance member Liz Gorgolione. MES administration “should be focusing on our education rather than dealing with pouring salt on the walkways.”

No Increase Proposed for Portland School Budget

by Elizabeth Regan

Portland Superintendent of Schools Philip O’Reilly this week proposed a level-funded education budget after the Board of Education told him they are willing to explore “all options” to come up with a spending plan that is palatable to taxpayers amid continued funding reductions from the state.

Short-term solutions like eliminating teaching positions and big-picture ideas such as closing a school were among the topics broached at the school board’s Jan. 2 meeting, during which O’Reilly initially proposed a 2.34 percent increase over the current education budget.

He came back on Tuesday with a proposal for a level-funded spending plan that matches this year’s \$20.68 million education budget.

The proposal eliminates three elementary school teachers, one in the secondary schools, one special education teacher, and one teaching position that hasn’t been identified yet. The budget also cuts two paraeducator positions and one library position.

The budget proposal reduces the technology department, athletic department and building budget line items by 10 percent each, while the special education is cut by \$12,000. A plan to purchase an \$18,000 floor scrubber that has been requested for years was scrapped again.

Board of Education Chairwoman MaryAnne Rode said members need more time to figure out how best to balance the educational needs of students with the ability of taxpayers to withstand an increase.

The school board asked for additional details on the cuts to the departmental budgets in preparation for their next meeting, she said.

The school board will meet again on Tuesday. She said it’s not yet known if they will take a vote at that time or if they will schedule a special meeting for further deliberation and action.

“Any time you’re talking about cutting staff and raising class sizes, the board gets concerned about what that impact is going to have on students,” she said. “It’s something we can’t enter into lightly but we need to be fiscally responsible and responsive to the deficit.”

Rode has described current kindergarten and first grade class sizes as “amazing.” She said the six kindergarten classrooms have 14-16 students, while the six first grade classrooms have

16-17 students.

The highest number of students is 23 in one fifth-grade classroom, according to current enrollment figures presented to the school board.

A 2015 study on racial, socioeconomic, and geographic disparities in class size from the advocacy group Connecticut Voices for Children said research shows students tend to exhibit higher achievement when they’re in smaller classes.

Rode credited the district’s focus on class size at least in part for accolades and high test scores the school system has received and the successful graduates it has produced.

Portland is currently slated to receive \$855,953 less from the state than local leaders accounted for in the 2017-18 budget approved by voters last May. The state revenue estimates were based on municipal aid figures included in Gov. Dannel P. Malloy’s proposed budget back in February, which ended up being much more optimistic than the package that he ultimately signed into law in October.

The funding reduction from the state this year compared to last is \$616,323.

The two-year state budget includes a similar reduction for fiscal year 2018-19, according to O’Reilly. He said about \$400,000 to \$500,000 of that figure comes from a decrease in Education Cost Sharing funding.

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield confirmed this week that she encouraged O’Reilly to put forth a level-funded budget for the school system. She said she expects “the same thing” on the general government side of the budget.

Brownstone Intermediate

When members brought up the possibility of closing a school at last week’s meeting, Rode emphasized the idea was not a new one. It’s also not a popular one.

“I want to remind the board that this topic of closing a school in the district has been visited on a number of occasions. Studies have been done and there have been data presented to say things could be consolidated and ultimately the townspeople have said no,” she said.

But members should put all ideas on the table in the coming weeks, she said: “We should absolutely explore all options.”

In 2009, the community discussed the fate of the fifth- and sixth-grade Brownstone Inter-

mediate School when officials suggested moving fifth grade down to Gildersleeve School and sixth grade up to the the middle school.

It was not clear at the time what the old brownstone building would be used for if the students moved out.

BIS was built in 1931-32, followed by additions in 1954 and 1967.

Rode cautioned that taking the building out of service as a school would not change upkeep costs to taxpayers if it remains a property of the town.

“Unless they demolish a building and absolve themselves of all responsibility, it just shifts costs,” she said.

Member Meg Scata used what O’Reilly described as “outside of the box” thinking when she suggested turning the building into a magnet or charter school.

She described a focus on computer coding as “a hot ticket” that could lure students from out of town.

“It seems to me, and I could be wrong, that the state has continued to give money to magnet schools and charter schools. The federal government seems to like that as well,” she said. “We’re shipping kids out who think that they’re going to get a better education by going to Glastonbury or Hartford to specialize. Why can’t Portland open up a school for coding?”

O’Reilly said enhancing special education offerings could also generate income by bringing in students who need specialized services not available in their districts.

“These are all options we’re going to look at,” he said.

A Question of Capital

At last week’s meeting, O’Reilly and the school board emphasized the importance of a capital plan that acknowledges the needs of the school system.

O’Reilly pointed to continued asbestos removal at Valley View and Brownstone Intermediate schools as well as window replacement at Brownstone as key long-range projects that must be completed, as well as the resurfacing of the secondary school running track.

“In Portland, we must not forget the needs of our infrastructure,” O’Reilly wrote in a letter introducing his original budget proposal to the school board. “Our five schools have ongo-

ing maintenance and capital needs and our attention should never be drawn from these worthy buildings.”

Member Dave Murphy said the amount of school-related capital funding that’s been approved by selectmen over the past few years is “a poor return on what we’ve asked for.”

The Board of Education line in the current capital budget includes \$50,000 for technology upgrades only. The board was allotted \$112,000 in 2016-17, \$50,000 in 2015-16 and \$46,000 in 2014-15.

Board members lamented that school needs were not included in the \$10 million bonding package approved by voters in 2016. The package allocated \$6 million for the park, \$2.5 million for road improvements and \$1 million to fix sidewalks on streets adjacent to town schools. It also sets aside \$500,000 for miscellaneous projects including repairs to roofs on the town garage and Fire Company 2 as well as police station windows.

“We got zero,” Murphy said. “I think it’s now our time to go to the well.”

Bransfield said this week that general government needs were not addressed in bonding projects for many years while the town started paying down the debt for the \$40 million secondary school project, which was completed in 2004.

“That’s a huge amount of money for schools,” she said.

But she said a total of \$477,114 in school building and grounds work was completed in fiscal years 2016 and 2017 using the Board of Education building maintenance fund.

Bransfield said she hopes to schedule a tour of the school facilities for all selectmen and school board members this spring so the officials can see capital needs firsthand.

“When we’re presented with needs, we do our best to achieve them,” she said. “We’re not in competition. What we’re trying to do is achieve a well-run town, a healthy town, as well as one that’s looking toward the future.”

Rode reiterated that sense of cooperation when she said the school board wants to “continue to foster the positive relationship” between the two boards.

“[The selectmen] have worked with us and we want to work with them. We know they’re in a difficult situation,” Rode said.

Andover Superintendent Proposes Decrease to Budget

by Sloan Brewster

The Andover schools superintendent is proposing \$80,000 in budget reductions for the next school year.

At Wednesday's Board of Education meeting Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen gave her budget presentation.

"We are down by about \$80,000," she said.

The \$4.19 million budget proposal is 1.89 percent less than last year's \$4.27 million budget, she said. The reduction reflects an anticipated \$58,000 in Educational Cost Sharing Grant [ECS] cuts from the state this year and \$22,000 in expected ECS cuts for next year, she said.

"So that \$80,000 takes care of those ECS reductions, in case we have to make them," Doyen said.

An additional \$95,000 in ECS hold backs is not in the budget as Doyen said she hasn't heard more from state on that. At the board's December 13 meeting, Doyen said the state had announced the \$95,000 ECS reduction but was not calling it a cut.

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

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

Overall, the budget is a maintenance budget, Doyen said.

"Not a lot of new initiatives," she said. "We are happy and hoping that we can maintain the

staff and programs that we do have already."

The budget covers the costs to continue working on ongoing projects that have been underway for the past two years, Doyen said. It pays for some new Google Chromebooks, software, technological upgrades and brings a literacy program, which started this year in kindergarten, to first grade.

Administration costs are down with the elimination of the already-vacant assistant principal position at Andover Elementary School.

"Those responsibilities have been picked up by other people," Doyen said of the position, which has been empty since Suzanne Guglietta left in November.

Additional administration cuts are due to the consolidation of building administrator positions, she said.

Other reductions include the elimination of a speech and language position – a cut that was made last year but not reflected in the budget – and the departure of an outplacement student.

The teacher line item is going down because she is funding some positions through grants, Doyen said.

All told, salaries are down by \$250,000 for next year, she said.

The retirement of a teacher will further reduce the line item but as the announcement of the retirement is new, it had not yet been factored into the numbers Doyen presented Wednesday.

Fuel costs are up by \$11,000, Doyen said.

Other costs in the budget include funding for new copiers, Doyen said. The plan is to upgrade the copiers and add a printer. Then, as smaller classroom printers break down, they can be eliminated. The new equipment would be put in a room designated as a workroom for teachers.

"The room across the hall has been made into a teacher's workroom," she said. "It's been so nice."

Infrastructure is doing well, with a few things that need to be replaced, such as a 209-gallon duplex steel tank that is corroded on the bottom. The district is already in the process of replacing the tank and prior to her budget presentation, Doyen announced she had accepted a \$10,000 bid from Crest Mechanics for the project.

"That's about half the cost of the bid you told us about last time," Loudon pointed out.

Doyen agreed, stating that the previous bid had been \$18,000.

The budget does not include cutting back any classes or teachers, Doyen said.

"But as I say, you know very well the budget is very fluid," she added.

Enrollment numbers will go below 200 with the graduation of the current sixth grade, which is the last big grade, Doyen said. But when board member Michael Russo asked if fewer students would translate to a reduction in bus

transportation costs, she said not yet.

"We could get by with one less bus at Andover Elementary School; however our contract is tied into RHAM," Doyen said.

Doyen said she could possibly make some changes when the contract expires but told the board fewer busses would result in a second issue.

"Our kids would also be on the buses longer," she said. "There's no question there's a lot of empty space on those busses, again, it's the time question and the contract with RHAM."

The district will also be paying less for substitute teachers next school year, as Doyen anticipates there will be fewer teachers out.

"There were a lot of maternity leaves last year," she said.

The board briefly discussed the \$95,000 ECS hold back.

"We are very aware of the possibility of that \$95,000 but we just don't know where it's going to fall," Doyen said.

Before ending her presentation, Doyen took a moment to point out some accomplishments the district has made.

Andover Elementary School has been recognized as a top school two years running, she said. Also, 72 percent of students in grades three to six score at or better than the state on assessments. Lastly, the district boasts small class sizes with 14 students per teacher and has full day kindergarten, she said.

Oil Truck Rolls Over in Marlborough, Spills 600 Gallons

by Julianna Roche

A Burn Oil delivery truck rolled over on South Road Monday, spilling nearly 600 of the more than 2,000 gallons of oil it was carrying, according to officials with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP).

No injuries were reported.

While the truck was removed from the premises the following day, South Road remained closed until late Wednesday afternoon, explained Marlborough Volunteer Fire Department (MVFD) Fire Chief Kevin Asklar.

Asklar said the fire department received a call Monday, Jan. 8, at approximately 10:45 a.m. to a residence at 114 South Rd., where the truck had been making a home delivery.

The fire chief explained the driver of the Burn Oil truck – a Marlborough-based company – had just finished delivering home heating oil, when he got back into the truck and it started rolling down the driveway, across the lawn, through a stone wall, and ultimately landing in a drainage ditch in a vertical position.

"That's something you don't see every day," Asklar said.

According to DEEP's Director of Communications Chris Collibee, officials believe "a failure of the emergency brake" on the truck

"possibly" caused the truck to slide down the driveway and ultimately spill the petroleum.

Following the crash, Burn Oil hired a contractor to clean up the contaminated ground – a cleaning procedure which consists of excavating and removing soil surrounding the spill with a vacuum truck, often used in the petroleum industry for the cleaning of storage tanks and spills.

"We did our best to contain the oil to the area," Asklar said, adding that by approximately 4:45 p.m., firefighters had cleared the scene and turned it over to DEEP.

DEEP's Emergency Response and Spill Prevention Division, along with Chatham Health District, were dispatched to the scene to investigate the potential impacts of the spill – of which a primary concern is drinking water.

"Out of an abundance of caution, [DEEP and Chatham Health District] took water samples from a couple of nearby wells to determine if there has been impact to drinking water," Collibee said, adding that those samples are expected to be back from the lab in a few days.

"They're working with neighboring properties for testing and future monitoring to assure no long-lasting impact," Asklar said.

East Hampton Police News

12/29: Sarah Paxton, 36, of 11 Dogwood Dr., East Hampton was arrested and charged with driving under the influence, East Hampton Police said.

12/30: Diana Faden, 29, of 4 Chaucer Rd., was issued a summons for DUI and failure to drive right, police said.

12/31: After an investigation into a car-vs.-parked-car motor vehicle accident on Old Marlborough Road, Riccardo Regina, 23, of 195 East Hampton Rd., Marlborough was arrested and charged with failure to drive right and DUI, police said.

Colchester Police News

1/2: Colchester Police said Aurora Houghtaling, 43, of 23 Louis Ln., was arrested and charged with sixth-degree larceny and threatening.

1/6: State Police said Eric Ryan Scott-Jennings, 27, of 16 Andrew Ln., Windsor, was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol.

1/7: State Police said Dillon Haines, 28, of 766 Tobacco St., Lebanon, was arrested and charged with first-degree failure to appear.

1/1: Matthew McArthur, 37, of 22 Wildwood Rd., Cromwell, was arrested and charged with failure to drive right and operating under the influence, police said.

1/3: Antoinette O'Connor, 33, of 134 River Rd., Colchester, was arrested and charged with failure to drive right and OUI, police said.

1/4: Thomas Falvey, 34, of 70 Woodland Rd., Moodus, was arrested and charged with DUI and failure to drive right, police said.

Also, from Dec. 25-31, officers responded to 16 medical calls, two motor vehicle crashes and 10 alarms, and made 12 traffic stops.

Students Pulled from Malfunctioning Bus in Marlborough

by Julianna Roche

A school bus filled with approximately 10 Marlborough Elementary School students suffered a mechanical breakdown late Wednesday afternoon, leading to a response from the Marlborough Volunteer Fire Department and to students being relocated to another bus.

According to Fire Chief Kevin Asklar, the fire department was called to the area of 120 West Rd. along the bus route at approximately 3:30 p.m. and had the scene cleared in less

than 30 minutes.

Asklar explained a mechanical malfunction inside the bus engine caused heavy smoke to exit the exhaust pipe, and that there was no damage to the bus.

"Literally just by shutting down the bus" the smoke stopped, Asklar said. He added that the children were safely removed from the malfunctioning bus to another one standing by.

Obituaries

Marlborough

Barbara Elaine Peterson

Barbara Elaine Peterson (Strom), 76, formerly of West Hartford and now Marlborough, passed away peacefully Friday, Dec. 15, at Hartford Hospital.

Barbara's journey through life started Dec. 19, 1940, born to her loving parents, Carl and June Strom of West Hartford. She joined an older brother James and was followed by her sister and best friend Susan.

Barbara was a 1958 graduate of Hall High School, where she honed skills as an artist. Among her passions in life besides art, she participated in numerous bowling leagues and Bible studies. Her warm smile and outgoing and loving personality made her cherished by friends and co-workers, but will greatly be missed by her family.

She is survived by her husband of 47 years, George Peterson Sr. of Marlborough, and her sister Susan and her husband Albert Sperbeck of Manchester.

She is also survived by daughter Robin and her husband Scott Parker of Newington, son Todd Burlingham and his wife Darlene of Marlborough, son Carl Burlingham and his wife Michelle of Baltic and son George Peterson Jr. and his wife Tammara of Marlborough; 10 grandchildren, Tyler Parker, Lindsey Parker, Spencer Parker, Jessica Dabrowski, Ryan Burlingham, Heather Burlingham, Austin Peterson, Bethany Peterson, Sydney Peterson and Alexander Peterson; also seven great-grandchildren.

She is also survived by niece Kimberly and her husband Kevin McCauliffe of Manchester and their sons Joshua, with wife Aggie, Justin and Daniel. Also, niece Michelle and her husband Brian Richards of Manchester and their sons Noah, Luke and Seth.

She was predeceased by her parents, Carl and June, and brother James.

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



Amston

Henry Alfred Jones

Henry Alfred Jones, 97, of the Amston section of Hebron, widower of both the late Corene (Farris) Jones and Mary (Devanney London) Jones, passed away Saturday, Jan. 6, at St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center in Hartford. Born March 3, 1920 in New Haven, he was the son of the late Frank and Alma (Nordwall) Jones.

He served proudly with the U.S. Navy in England as an aviation machinist's mate during World War II and went on to work for Pratt & Whitney Aircraft in the Fuel Systems program for many years before his retirement.

Mr. Jones was a longtime member of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Hebron as well as the American Legion Jones-Keefe-Batson Post 95. Traveling, fishing, gardening, and reading were just some of the activities that brought him joy as well as visiting with friends and family. He was always willing to lend a hand to someone in need of his talents as a man who could fix most anything.

He leaves two children and their spouses, Bonnie (Rick) Swanberg of the Bahamas and Jack (Deborah) Jones of Sharon, Vt.; his stepdaughter, Kathleen Edenburn of Columbia and her family of three children and two grandchildren; his stepson, Jack London and family; grandchildren and spouses Scott Sawyer, David Sawyer, Megan (Ben) O'Brien, and Kelin (Jason) Welborn; three great-grandchildren; his foster son and spouse Clark (Denise) Anderson of Nashville, Tenn., and their two children; as well as numerous extended family and friends.

Funeral services will be observed at 1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 20, at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 30 Church St. (Route 85), Hebron. There are no calling hours and burial will be private in the spring.

Donations may be given in lieu of flowers to St. Peter's Cemetery Fund or the St. Peter's Hospitality Group, c/o St. Peter's Episcopal Church, P.O. Box 513, Hebron, CT 06248-0513.

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



Hebron

Denise Schaller

Denise (Larouche) Schaller, 68, of Hebron, passed away Sunday, Dec. 24, at home, with her family at her side. Born April 6, 1949, in Nashua, N.H., she was the daughter of the late Paul and Lena (Boissennault) Larouche, who moved their young family to Connecticut in 1956.

Growing up in Bloomfield, Denise remained in Connecticut where she earned her associate's degree in business from Asnuntuck Community College in Enfield. There she was awarded the prestigious Broken Paddle Award for being the outstanding student of the year. She managed the highest performing Gloria Stevens exercise facility in the state and also served as a substitute teacher in East Windsor.

Denise settled in Hebron with her loving husband Russell where she served as the Public Works secretary for 17 years, a position to which she was devoted and greatly enjoyed. Denise and Russell, at their property Woody Acres, participated annually in the Hebron Maple Festival where visitors enjoyed their sugarhouse, maple syrup and Denise's maple confections. Indulging her creative side as a crafter she was active as a demonstrator for Stampin' Up! Weekly get-togethers with local participants, resulting in personal and beautiful handmade cards and other items.

Denise's generous spirit and positive "can do" attitude were among many of her endearing qualities. She took great pleasure in doing special favors for others and presenting thoughtful surprises to family members, friends and co-workers. Nothing made Denise happier than caring for her family and home in which she took great pride. Her warmth, strength and enthusiasm for life, before and throughout her illness, were truly inspirational to all who knew her.

She is survived by her husband Russell of 33 years; her daughters Lisa Stavol, Leslie Ross and husband Terry, and son Russell David Schaller; stepson Jeff and wife Desiree, her sisters Rosanne Roberts and husband Cliff, Vivien Larouche and husband Ken, Linda Winter and husband Mark; brothers Paul Larouche and wife Sue, Philip Larouche, and John Larouche; her sister-in-law Linda Fortuna and husband Bruce; brother-in-law Kenneth Schaller; nine beloved grandchildren and numerous cousins, nieces, nephews, great nieces and nephews; and many good friends.

Denise was predeceased by her parents, Paul and Lena (Boissennault) Larouche; stepfather Ed Desjourdy; twin brother Denis Larouche; sister Louise (Larouche) Bouchard; and stepdaughter Heather Schaller.

A celebration of Denise's life will be held at the convenience of the family.

Memorial donations may be made to Oncology Associates of Windham Hospital.

Holmes-Watkins Funeral Home, Manchester, has care of the arrangements. To leave an online condolence, visit holmeswatkins.com.



East Hampton

Kary-Ann R. Suprono

Kary-Ann R. (Lucas) Suprono, 48 years old, of East Hampton, left us to be with her Heavenly Father on Monday, Jan. 1.

She leaves behind her loving and devoted husband of 22 years, John Suprono; her mother, Joann Lucas of Norwich; her brother, Jason Lucas of Middletown; her mother- and father-in-law, Barbara and Glenn Suprono of East Hampton; her aunts and uncles, Joyce and Karl Eiriksson of Norwich, Danny and Linda Biskupiak of Walkersville, Md., Janet and Kyle Bradt of Bristol, Jane and Gary Roberts of Edgewater, Fla., David and Pam Biskupiak of Riverside, Calif., brother- and sister-in-law, Jay and Julie Roberts of Manchester; several cousins, two nephews, a niece and her loving "fur babies" Ruby, Emmi and Jet.

She was predeceased by her father, Gary Lucas. Kary was a beautiful, funny and loving person. Throughout her life she spent many years as a home health aide caring for elderly people, a career she loved with all her heart. She also worked in retail and medical offices where she enjoyed interacting with the public. She had a beautiful voice and loved singing karaoke. Kary was a hard worker throughout her working career and put her all into anything she did. She was an organ donor and continues to help others. She will be missed by all who knew her.

Calling hours are 1-3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 14, with a memorial service at 3 p.m., at the Masonic Lodge, 111 Main St., East Hampton. Please do not send flowers as there will be no one to accept them until noon that day. All are welcome to come join us in paying a final tribute to a loving soul.

Marlborough

Thomas Cunningham

Thomas Cunningham, 58, of Marlborough, husband of Catherine (Cianci) Cunningham, passed away peacefully with his family by his side Saturday, Jan. 6. Born Dec. 31, 1959, in Hartford, he was the son of the late Richard and Rose (Piscottano) Cunningham.

Prior to his retirement from Rogo Distributors as a truck driver, he was an active member of Teamsters Local 1035 and a proud veteran, having served in the U.S. Army. Tom loved the outdoors, woodworking and was known as the "voice of RHAM High School Football" as a volunteer announcer of the games for many years. Most of all, he loved being with family and friends.

Tom is survived by his high-school sweetheart and wife of 33 years, Cathy, and their two sons, Joseph and Kyle Cunningham. He also leaves five siblings, Diane Cunningham, Linda Cunningham, Marty Cunningham, Cheryl Parrott and Richard Cunningham, as well as Richard's wife, Corrine, and many nieces and nephews who he loved dearly.

We will miss his laughter and his positive, brave spirit.

Friends and family attended calling hours Thursday, Jan. 11, at the Farley-Sullivan Funeral Home, 34 Beaver Rd., Wethersfield. A Mass celebrating Tom's life will be held today, Jan. 12, at 10 a.m., in Christ the King Parish at Corpus Christi Church, 601 Silas Deane Hwy., Wethersfield.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, 3 International Dr., Suite 200, Rye Brook, NY 10573 and Working on Walking at workingonwalking.org.

To extend online condolences, visit FarleySullivan.com.

Portland

Mary Wagner

Mary (Dean) Wagner, 59, of Portland, beloved wife of Robert "Skip" Wagner, passed on peacefully in her sleep Saturday, Dec. 23, at home. Born May 18, 1958, in Coos Bay, Ore., she was the daughter of William Dean of Tennessee and the late Judith Dean.

Mary graduated from Portland High School in 1976 and went on to earn her associate's degree in business administration. She worked as an administrative assistant for Northeast Utilities, Connecticut Yankee Nuclear Power Plant and Aetna, until the most recent 15 years, where she spent time as a homemaker and helping with her grandchildren.

Mary loved unconditionally and had so much love to give. Mary loved animals, especially her dog, Sandy Boy. Reading and painting and country music were a few of her favorite things, and home was her favorite place to be. She especially loved spending time with her daughters, "sons," and her five grandchildren. Grammy was always there for a warm hug and a snuggle; her grandkids meant the world to her. She had a very deep faith in God and was active in her church.

Mary had the biggest heart and loved spending time with family and friends. She always looked forward to her monthly dinner club and doggie play dates. Mary was bubbly, happy, and had a way of making people feel so loved. She was the foundation of her family and will be greatly missed.

Mary is survived by her husband of 39 years and high school sweetheart, Skip; her daughter, Heather Kissinger and her husband Eric of Portland; her daughter, Kasie Eason and her husband Glenn (PJ) of Portland; one brother, Daniel Dean, and three sisters: Janet Steir, Robin Crosswhite and Patty Lindsay; and her five grandchildren, MaryJane, Easton and Evan Kissinger and Aubrey and Alanna Eason.

Funeral services were held Saturday, Dec. 30, at the Zion Lutheran Church, 183 William St., Portland. Burial will be in the family plot in the Swedish Cemetery, Portland, at a later date. Friends called at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, on Friday evening, Dec. 29.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Zion Lutheran Church, 183 William St., Portland, CT 06480, or to the Connecticut Humane Society, 701 Russell Rd., Newington, CT 06111.



Colchester

Melvin Levine

Melvin Levine, 92, of New York City, Mattituck, N.Y., formerly of Colchester, passed away Tuesday, Jan. 2. Born May 5, 1925, to Samuel and Gertrude (Small) Levine, late of Colchester, Mel graduated from Bacon Academy in 1943.

Immediately after graduation, he enlisted and served as a nose gunner in B-24 bombers in the Army Air Corps 460th Bombardment Group, hitting bridges, viaducts, ammunition dumps, railroads, and other targets to aid the advance of Allied forces in northern Italy. His plane was shot down and Mel was captured as a Prisoner of War in March 1945.

After release, Mel returned to Connecticut, graduated from UConn, and then moved to New York where he had a successful career as a mechanical engineer in missile systems and medical devices. Among his career highlights were multiple patents and working directly with Wernher von Braun on guidance systems for the Redstone and Jupiter rocket programs.

He loved and excelled at tennis, skiing in the U.S. and Europe, and making gin and tonics for his wife Lillian at their homes in Manhattan, Fire Island and Mattituck.

He was predeceased by his loving wife, Lillian (Rowan) and his brothers Herbert and Leon. He is survived by his sisters-in-law, Marie (Herbert) Levine and Anita (Leon) Levine, and multiple generations of nieces and nephews who will miss him terribly.

Graveside services with military honors were observed Sunday, Jan. 7, at Ahavath Achim Cemetery, Colchester.

Donations in his memory may be made to Jewish War Veterans of the USA, 1811 R Street NW, Washington, DC 20009.

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



Marlborough

Robyn Lee Miner

Robyn was a rare find; she was effortlessly herself and the world loved her for it. Robyn Lee Miner was born Aug. 11, 1958, and passed Sunday, Dec. 31, after her brave battle with lung cancer.

Robyn grew up in Marlborough, but made her way to Miami after high school for seven years, then on to Texas and Missouri where she really felt at home for the past 30 years. As Robyn faced her illness, she returned to her Connecticut family for comfort and support.

Robyn was a stellar daughter to Woody & Midge Miner, a comical and loving sister to Marla & Craig Robinson and Brud & Linda Miner, an adventurous Auntie to Rianne & Steve Kistner, Leah & Jay O’Hearn, Katherine Robinson, Brian Miner, and Grayden & Cooper O’Hearn, and a crazy cousin to Pam & Andy Brunelle, and Lori Schreindorfer and Debbie Branierd.

Robyn leaves millions of friends and extended family; however, we would like to make special mention of her Missouri clan, Mike, Larry Dow and family, Bernie, Judy, Jo Etta, and Shine and also to her Florida pals, Linda and girls, Tootie, Randy, Patsy, and Kimmy.

Please take to heart the sentiment that this poem, “Feel No Guilt in Laughter,” offers us.

Feel no guilt in laughter, she’d know how much you care.

Feel no sorrow in a smile that she is not here to share.

You cannot grieve forever; she would not want you to.

She’d hope that you could carry on the way you always do.

So, talk about the good times and the way you showed you cared,

The days you spent together, all the happiness you shared.

Let memories surround you, a word someone may say

Will suddenly recapture a time, an hour, a day, That brings her back as clearly as though she were still here,

And fills you with the feeling that she is always near.

For if you keep those moments, you will never be apart

And she will live forever locked safely within your heart.

— Anonymous

The family is planning for a private, spring-time memorial.

Condolences can be sent in care of It’s So Ranunculus Flower Shoppe at 59 North Main St., Marlborough, CT 06447.

East Hampton

James A. Harrington II

James A. Harrington II, 72, of East Hampton, formerly of Hebron and Amston, beloved husband of Sandra (Sawyer) Harrington died peacefully on Tuesday January 9th at Portland Care and Rehab. Born Jan. 23, 1945 in Syracuse, N.Y., he was the son of the late James and Doris (Gilbraith) Harrington.



Jim and his wife Sandra lived in Amston, where they raised their children. Jim had been a Little League Baseball coach in Hebron for many years. He had worked in retail sales for most of his life having worked at Sounds Great, Bernie’s and other retailers before working for Allstate Insurance.

Jim was a communicant of St. Patrick Church in East Hampton and was an active member of the Knights of Columbus. Jim enjoyed brewing his own beer, fishing, and especially spending time with his grandchildren.

Besides his wife he is survived by his three sons, James A. Harrington III and his wife Lucinda of East Hampton, Scott Harrington and his wife Kristy of Colchester, and Patrick Harrington of Vermont; a brother, David Harrington of North Carolina; two sisters, Joyce Nash and Jacqueline Evans of North Carolina; his 10 grandchildren, Zac, Riley, Michaela, Caden, Shelby, Mackensie, Zenaveve, Bella, Zephyn and Zayer. He was expecting his first great-grandchild shortly.

A funeral liturgy will be celebrated Saturday, Jan. 13, at 11 a.m., in St. Patrick Church in East Hampton. Burial will be in the spring in St. Patrick Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the American Kidney Fund at kidneyfund.org or American Kidney Fund, 11921 Rockville Pike, Suite 300, Rockville, MD 20852.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

Hebron

Dr. Henry Irwin Snider

Henry was born and educated in Boston, Mass., the eldest son of Joseph and Gertrude Denenberg Snider.

He leaves his loving wife of 54 years, Dottie Glaiber Snider; three children, Rebecca (Tim) Miller, Mordechai (Ruth) Snider, and Elliot (Chantal) Snider, 11 grandchildren to whom he was “poppa”: Zachary Miller, J/L Miller, Sara Tova (Akiva) Miller, Avraham (Sara) Snider, Aron Dovid Snider, Akiva Snider, Shlomo Yeshia Snider, Esther Golda Snider, Elimelech Snider, Zoe Snider and Noah Snider. He has five great-grandchildren: Raizel, Rochel Tzipora, and Yehuda Leib Miller (Jerusalem), Yedidya and Nossom Dovid Snider (USA) and a brother, Barry Snider of Arizona.

After leaving MIT on an academic scholarship, he worked on railroads, oil fields, and in aviation. He enlisted in the U.S. Army, serving as sergeant in peacetime Germany. He then earned his bachelor’s degree at University of Texas El Paso, master’s at University of Minnesota, and doctorate at University of New Mexico. His dissertation on western New Mexico and east Texas is still considered a classic.

After graduation, Henry was employed by British Petroleum in Texas. With his family, he returned to their roots in New England. A resident of Hebron for 36 years, Henry was involved with local organizations, including the United Brethren of Hebron, Masons, and boy scouting, Temple Beth Sholom B’nai Israel, Manchester, and where they still enjoy many friends.

Henry obtained a position at Eastern Connecticut State University. In 1972 he and Dr. Smith developed the Environmental Earth Science degree, the first of its kind in New England and New York. Henry served as department chair, and in the faculty senate. In 2010 the Smith/Snider/Klebnick EES Founders’ Award was established to assist EES students.

He enjoyed traveling; he and Dottie toured the European continent for 20 days, also a tour of Spain and Portugal; and they took several cruises. Most memorable were their 14 trips to Israel, where they stayed for the summers, took many tours, and found new friends.

In 2008 Henry and Dottie moved to Richmond, Va. Henry was a member of synagogue Keneseth Beth Israel, where he participated in Sabbath study sessions, as well as activities at the local Jewish Community Center.

In lieu of flowers, please consider contributions in Henry’s memory to chichenladyofjerusalem.com and EES Founders’ Award (contact Peter Dane at dane@easternct.edu or 860-465-4513) or a charity of your choice.

Services will be held at noon at Temple Beth Sholom B’nai Israel, 400 Middle Tpke. E., Manchester, followed by burial in the Temple Beth Sholom cemetery. (Shiva) Friends may visit after the burial at 25 Harris St., Glastonbury.



From the Editor’s Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Oprah for president in 2020? I am not enthused.

After Oprah Winfrey gave a speech at the Golden Globes Sunday night, the Twitterverse, the Facebook-verse and other media-verses were all chattering about an Oprah presidential campaign in two years.

It was a gripping speech – a very powerful one and Oprah made many good points. I’d take her over Donald Trump in a second. But that doesn’t mean she should be president.

The embarrassment that is the Trump presidency has taught us many things – and one of the big ones is that, hmm, maybe the person running the country should have a little political experience. Anything. Even a week on a Board of Selectmen.

Failing that, some high-profile military experience, a la Dwight D. Eisenhower, would be welcome. But the title of president of the United States should not fall to a billionaire TV star. There should be more qualifications than that. The presidency is that important of a position.

Don’t get me wrong; Oprah is by all accounts a wonderful woman, and her story is inspirational. A survivor of child abuse, Oprah grew up in poverty but excelled in high school, earning a full college scholarship and entering into a career in broadcast news. She parlayed that time in the news into her own talk show in Chicago in 1983. The show went national in 1986, and went on to become one of the biggest things in television.

Oprah rose from childhood poverty to become a billionaire; unlike Trump, she is truly a self-made person. She is also one of the most influential people on the planet. (She also unleashed Dr. Phil and that quack Dr. Oz on us – but hey, no one’s perfect.)

In short, Oprah’s amazing – but that doesn’t mean she should be president. In 2016, a complete mockery of politics was made when we elected Trump. He was wholly unqualified, a bigot, a sexist, a bully and a complete loose cannon. Still, people went along with him, because he “told it like it was” and he wasn’t “politics as usual.”

Oprah would be Trump’s opposite in many, many ways. But that doesn’t mean she’ll have the qualifications necessary to restore this country to what it used to be – and what it will need to be once Trump’s disastrous four years in office are up.

A friend of mine told me this week, in response to my opposition to an Oprah presidency, that I’m living in the past – that Trump has fundamentally changed what it takes to

become president. I’m hopeful, though, that this time in our country will just be seen as an unfortunate blip, that in 2020 cooler heads will prevail and we’ll again have somebody in the Oval Office who actually deserves to be there.

Mind you, all this is how I feel right now. It’s a long time between now and 2020. Who knows what Oprah might do to sway me; just because Donny never did doesn’t mean Oprah can’t. And who knows what other Democrats will step forward? If Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders decide they’re too old to run – distinct possibilities – we may be looking at a rather lackluster selection. If that’s the case, then I may be one of Oprah’s chief boosters.

But for now, let’s look somewhere else. Let’s return politics to the most important political office in the land.

I was shocked and very sad this week to learn about the passing of Hebron resident Denise Schaller. Denise, for those who never had the pleasure of meeting her, was a wonderful woman. I knew her best via the Woody Acres Sugar House, which she and her husband Russell opened up to the public each year during the Hebron Maple Festival.

Denise was a key cog in the annual planning of the Maple Fest, that joyous two-day event held in Hebron each March that celebrates all things maple and also serves as a fantastic way to end a long winter of cabin fever.

I tried to make it a point to visit Woody Acres each time I went to the Maple Fest, and chat with Russell or Denise. The demonstrations of how to convert sap to syrup never got old, and neither did the delicious maple confections Denise had created that were offered for sale during the fest.

Denise was also well-known in the town as the longtime secretary for the Public Works department. It was in that capacity that often called me in recent years, making sure I got the latest press releases about goings-on at the department. I loved taking her calls; hers was always a friendly voice. She was always cheery, always helpful.

It wasn’t that long ago that I last received something from Denise – which is what makes her passing all the more surprising. I had no idea she was sick.

My deepest condolences go out to Russell, their children, and all that knew and loved her – and I’m betting those numbered many.

See you next week.