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Colchester is Kind... Cragin Memorial Library is one of the sites of inspirational messages in town planters. Michelle Noehren of the Colchester is Kind movement checks on the placement of the hearts, while Katherine M. Kosiba, Colchester Garden Club president, takes the photo. Both groups recently collaborated to place seasonal hearts with messages to inspire others around the Colchester downtown area.

Belletown Coach Inspires Olympic Dreams

by Elizabeth Regan

Three decades into East Hampton resident David Moneypenny's stint as a volunteer speed skating coach, one of his former students is set to become an Olympian.

Ryan Pivrotto, 22, of East Lyme, placed fifth at the U.S. Olympic Team Trials in December to earn himself a spot on the short track team. He will likely participate in the relay, according to Moneypenny.

Kristen Santos, 23 – another Connecticut speed skater who was coached by Moneypenny before moving up to the international realm – narrowly missed a berth on the Olympic team when she placed fourth at the trials.

The Olympic milestone comes several years after Moneypenny was recognized by the US Speedskating Coaching Task Force and the US Olympic Committee as Volunteer Coach of the Year in 2013.

This week, Moneypenny sat in the wood-working studio outside his East Hampton home to discuss the thirty years he's devoted to helping kids skate fast and efficiently.

For most of those kids – 99 percent, he estimated – it's about developing skills and confidence that will serve them on whatever path life takes them.

For the small remainder, it's about fostering the specific kind of focus and discipline necessary to become a champion.

"I always tell them, you don't have to love skating. You have to love training," he said.

Describing dry-land exercises he's heard his students refer to as the "Guantanamo Bay"-style of training, Moneypenny crouched low into the traditional short track skating position. He said the regimen consists of holding the position for six minutes, resting for two minutes, and doing it all over again two or three more times. The session continues with several more sets of exercises in various skating poses.

"It's two hours of torture and you only get two minutes of rest in between," he said.

While doing the exercises along with his students, the 65-year-old said he'll often tell stories to help the time pass. Or he'll address their complaints with the wry sense of humor for which he's become known.

"Obviously, you kids have never been married," he recalled telling them once. "You don't know how to just sit there with a smile on your face and take it."

But with practice comes ease, according to Moneypenny.

"After a while, it won't be like torture. It's like nothing. You slowly build up to that time," he said.

With just one day of ice time per week, Moneypenny currently coaches about 30 kids
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It's a Bird! It's a Plane! No – It's a Drone!

by Julianna Roche

Standing in the Colchester Hayward Volunteer Fire Department's (CHVFD) back parking lot Wednesday morning, fire marshal and self-declared "aviation geek" Sean Shoemaker launches up the fire department's newest piece of equipment – a DJI Phantom 4 drone – for a brief demonstration.

While Shoemaker rattled off names of a few departments across the state that currently use drones – such as the Plainfield Police Department, Danbury Fire Department, and the Orange Fire Marshal's Office – he explained that CHVFD is the first department in the area to acquire one.

After obtaining formal approval from the Board of Selectmen last Thursday, CHVFD was permitted to begin using the device – which was donated to the department last year by Colchester-based Clark's Landscaping – in its day-to-day operations this week. Shoemaker said the drone could be used to help with investigating causes of fires, assessing structure damage, and even finding missing persons.

The selectmen "were doing their due diligence to make sure it was insured and we had training for the operators," Shoemaker said, adding that while he is currently the only unmanned aircraft system pilot certified by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) at CHVFD, two more department members are almost done with their training.

"Part of what people don't realize is that anytime you're flying an unmanned aircraft system, you're entering the national airspace, so once you leave the ground above a blade of grass, you're in some sort of airspace, anywhere you are in the country," he added.

To acquire proper certification, Shoemaker said requirements include taking a two-day class at an FAA testing facility and weeks of studying before a formal examination which tests on topics such as FAA regulations and rules, various communications methods, and reading sectional maps.

The drone, which runs for about \$1,500, can travel up to 15 mph and, per FAA rules, can be flown no higher than 400 feet in the air. While Shoemaker said the department is currently only allowed to fly the drone during the day, they are applying for a waiver which would allow for nighttime use.

The Phantom 4 is GPS-stabilized, can take both video footage and still photos, and can be operated through both Apple and Android products, including iPads and Samsung tablets.

While the drone does have a 28-minute flight time, Shoemaker explained that certain weather conditions, such as extreme cold and high wind velocities, can affect its battery life.

"Like any other rechargeable battery, it doesn't like cold temperatures," he said. "When we fly in extreme weather, the manufacturer

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Colchester Fire Marshal Sean Shoemaker shows off a DJI Phantom 4 drone, which the town's fire department will use as a service tool while investigating structure fires and hazardous material incidents.



David Moneypenny, pictured here in his East Hampton studio, is the speed-skating coach who introduced first-time U.S. Olympic Team member Ryan Pivrotto, of East Lyme, to the sport in 2010. Moneypenny said Pivrotto is poised to compete in the short track relay during the Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea.

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as he guides them through competition at the state and national level. When skaters are ready for full-time training or international competition, he sends them off to a professional coach.

Moneypenny described his coaching style as a combination of strategy and sarcasm. The strategy is based on an understanding of physics applied to his own experience as well as thousands of videos of the sports' top performers he has analyzed over the years.

"The biggest thing I do is teach [athletes] how skating works," he said. "Most coaches don't. A lot of them don't even know how it works."

Understanding the science behind skating allows skaters to correct their own mistakes instead of relying on a coach to do it for them, according to Moneypenny.

Still, he said, a coach is necessary to help skaters come up with a winning strategy in advance – because race speeds of up to 40 miles per hour don't leave athletes much time to do anything but react.

"I always tell them, 'If you don't do what I say and you lose, it's your fault,'" he said. "'If you do what I say and you lose, it's my fault. It's a win-win for you.'"

According to Moneypenny, his advice could have secured a place for Santos on the Olympic team if she had listened to him instead of her current coach.

"But she didn't do what I told her to do," he said.

Moneypenny had advocated for an outside pass, which he said requires a skater to exert more effort but is more effective than the conventional inside pass.

He said hanging in the back for most of the race, with the benefit of the draft from other skaters, will prevent a skater from getting tired. That leaves a "big load of energy" the athlete can use at the end to complete the outside pass, which he described as impossible for other skaters to block.

"I don't let my kids do much inside passing," he said. "I torture them."

Moneypenny's penchant for the ice began when he was a student at the University of Hartford's Hartford Art School. He played on the school's club hockey team before becoming a semi-professional player who sometimes

filled in as a practice goalie for the Hartford Whalers. After nearly 20 years of that, he'd had enough of the torn ligaments and broken bones that plague the sport's last line of defense. That's when he saw a speed skating poster at a friend's house.

"I went and tried it. I liked it. I thought it was great because I'm ADHD and I like things that go fast," he said.

He can trace the need for speed back to his great uncle, Charles Moneypenny, who designed the steeply-banked Daytona International Speedway back in the late 1950s. The civil engineer went on to design Talladega Superspeedway and Michigan International Speedway as well.

Moneypenny's father, who later died in a plane crash, used to race on the beach in Daytona before the speedway was installed.

"I came from racing," Moneypenny said.

In addition to speed skating, Moneypenny devotes himself to a furniture making business that blends the craft of woodworking with the beauty of art.

He uses upcycled materials like car parts to create unique, high-end pieces including desks, chairs and bureaus. His line of "Crashed Furniture" takes damaged body panels and bumpers from cars that have been involved in wrecks and turns them into centerpieces for his creations.

In his studio, the doorway to the woodworking area is lined with messages and drawings from those who have skated through his program over the years.

"These are all letters from my kids, which I prize," he said.

Also hanging on a wall is a gift from one of his skaters: A small wooden sign that reads "Sarcasm – Just One of the Services I Offer."

It's a sentiment echoed by Pivrotto in a message posted to social media when the speed skater made the Olympic short track team last month.

"I want to thank Dave Moneypenny for being my coach from the start and showing me the world of short track along with the witty remarks to make sure I don't get too cocky of my ability," Pivrotto wrote.

Drone cont. from Front Page

recommends we keep batteries inside our vehicles or somewhere warm."

This specific drone is also not waterproof so it cannot be flown during rainy or extremely humid days when there is a lot of water vapor in the air.

Among its uses, Shoemaker said the drone can be used to fly over structure or brush fires while streaming an overhead live feed directly to incident commanders, providing them with a better understanding on how serious the blaze is.

"[We won't need to go] stomping through the woods to see how big it is; we can just look at it over the air," he said, adding that the drone will also be used in post-fire investigations to give firefighters a "better idea of fire patterns" and during fire marshal investigations.

"Not only is it a time-saver, but it's a real safety tool for firefighters," Shoemaker said.

According to Fire Deputy Chief Don Lee, the drone will also be a useful tool in the event of any incidents involving hazardous materials. Shoemaker agreed.

"Rather than putting firefighters in chemically-protective clothing and putting them in harm's way to do an analysis of an incident, we can launch this and go much safer and much quicker to the incident to see what's going on," he explained.

"We can fly this up and put nobody in harm's way," Lee continued, adding the drone can be flown up directly to the scene to take photos, which can then be distributed to other emergency responders and HAZMAT teams.

In recent years, unmanned aircraft systems have proven an invaluable asset and a critical tool to rescue and recovery teams all over the world.

Last November for example, fleets of drones were sent by the FAA to Texas and Puerto Rico

following hurricanes, to do damage assessments.

Cell phone provider AT&T even sent an LTE-equipped drone to hover over the city of San Juan, Puerto Rico, providing nearly 8,000 people with cell coverage after more than 30 percent of Puerto Ricans lost cell service following the hurricane.

The Los Angeles Fire Department also dispatched drones for the first time battling the Skirball fire in December, which burned over 400 acres in west Los Angeles.

Shoemaker explained that the drone can help with damage assessment following major storms locally and locate missing persons as well.

"This is a big tool," Lee said. "We hope we don't need to use it, but for what it's capable of doing and what it can give us for information, this has proven itself [to be useful] all over the country."

Shoemaker added that moving forward, the drone will also be part of the mutual aid services that CHVFD provides to neighboring towns if needed.

Despite its many capabilities, Shoemaker said one worry people might have regarding the department's use of the drone is privacy.

But, he said, the fire department will treat its drone flights "just like we treat our fire investigations" – meaning that any photos or video footage taken during a flight will be downloaded and safely stored, and the drone's SD card will be erased.

"We're very conscious of privacy and data security for anything we collect," Shoemaker added. "Our goal is to prove [the drone's] worth and hopefully as more interest in the program grows, more people [from the department] will want to go through the training too."

Andover Tax Assessor Files Complaint Against Selectman

by Sloan Brewster

Andover's tax assessor has lodged a formal complaint with the town against a member of the Board of Selectmen.

At the January 3 Board of Selectmen (BOS) meeting, John Chaponis, who is assessor in Colchester as well, filed a written complaint against selectman Jeff Maguire for continually making requests for data on the 2016 revaluation.

"[The revaluation] was completed more than a year ago, at which time it met the performance-based testing standards as approved by the State of Connecticut," he stated.

In the written complaint, which Chaponis supplied the *Rivereast*, Chaponis said Maguire was questioning his revaluation of 21 assessments.

"It is inappropriate, as well as not legally permissible, for a BOS member to question individual assessments, intervene in the assessment process, pressure the assessor change assessments or settle pending court cases," he wrote. "State statutes only authorize the assessor to make assessments decisions and that is done intentionally to ensure the political process does not hinder a fair administration of the local property tax."

Chaponis wrote that Maguire's actions were "hostile."

Chaponis wrote that Maguire, who is vice first selectman on the Board of Selectmen, had advocated for property owners and was on site at a property when he arrived to make an inspection. He said the actions were inappropriate and usurped his authority as assessor.

"Last December I went out to perform an inspection on a property where the homeowner performed illegal renovations and remodeling of their home, finishing an apartment over a garage and a partial finished basement all while circumventing the building & health permitting process and evading taxation," he wrote in the complaint. "When I arrive, VFS Maguire is there on the Taxpayer's behalf advocating for the tax-evading property owner."

Chaponis also provided the *Rivereast* with a chain of emails between the selectmen, Chaponis and his assistant, in which selectmen apparently wrote that all questions related to the 2016 revaluation had been answered.

"I am of the opinion that all questions have been answered and exhausted," selectwoman Cathleen Derosiers wrote in an April 27, 2017 email, included in the chain.

On April 26, selectwoman Julia Haverl wrote in an email directed toward Maguire that the board had no complaints regarding actions by the Board of Assessment Appeals (BAA) and that selectmen "have no authority to change or influence their decisions."

"Also, you have no authority to ask the assessor for the information in the email you sent to all board members," Haverl wrote. "He does not work for you. It was not a board decision to ask for it."

Maguire, in a phone call Wednesday, said he had no intention of backing down, whether the rest of the board approves or not.

"I'm not going to stop," he said.

He said he was on the hunt for information and that he specifically wants proof that interior inspections of homes, for which the town paid \$40,000, were completed. He also said he was trying to perform an evaluation on Chaponis and how taxpayer dollars are spent.

"I think that's why [people] voted for me, was to sit there and evaluate how we're spending our money and that's what I'm trying to do," he said.

Maguire also said everything he was doing was to assure there was transparency in the town.

"We should not just use 'transparency' as a buzzword," he said. "We should live with that."

Chaponis, who said he has been a municipal assessor for 30 years, said his department, like any assessor's office, "is very likely the most transparent office in any municipality." He pointed out that he was the first assessor in Andover to make assessment data available online.

"State law requires that all of our information, property record cards, and grand list be open for public inspection," he said.

Chaponis said that the \$40,000 to which Maguire referred paid for a contract for revaluation services and did not specifically pay for interior inspections.

A full physical inspection would have cost approximately \$125,000, he said.

Also, it is not the job of a selectman to evaluate town employees, Chaponis said.

In the complaint, Chaponis also mentioned

concerns with the expired union contract for his department and Maguire's involvement with the negotiating committee.

In a phone interview Monday, First Selectman Robert Burbank said the negotiating team was working on the previous year's contract for the three-person department and that Maguire had been removed.

Maguire was replaced by Haverl on the negotiating team, Burbank said.

In the complaint, Chaponis stated that if something is not done about the situation he will take harsher action.

"If not resolved immediately, I will be left with no alternative but to file a formal grievance and complaint with the state of Connecticut and/or a law suit against the town of Andover," Chaponis wrote.

Chaponis said he hopes the Board of Selectmen will clarify the chain of command and make it clear to Maguire that his responsibility is not to evaluate town employees.

"It's impossible for town employees to have six different bosses," he said.

Ultimately, he wants to get back to doing his job.

"We're hoping that the Board of Selectmen will resolve the issues and I'll be left to administer the local property tax program without interference," he said. "I think that the board has already started to take some of those steps."

As an example of what the selectmen had already done, he pointed to the fact that Maguire had been removed from the negotiating team.

'Substantial' Changes Proposed for RHAM Budget

by Sloan Brewster

Patricia Law started as the RHAM schools superintendent in July – meaning this is her first time crafting a budget for the regional school district. And, with a slew of administrative changes and staffing reductions, it looks as if Law is seeking to put her own stamp on the school system.

In the 2018-19 budget proposal Law presented to the Board of Education Monday – a \$30.42 million spending package, or 2.36 percent more than the current year – she suggested ways to restructure the district in order to deal with needs and issues.

The spending proposal includes \$30.12 million for the operating budget, as well as \$300,000 for capital improvements.

Law called the proposed changes "substantial."

More than 34 classes in the high school are down by 10 students, Law said. She blamed the low numbers on declining enrollment; she said there were 83 fewer students in the high school this year and expects that reduction to repeat next year.

With that in mind, Law recommended cutting staff by 11.7 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions for \$700,000 in savings; the reductions would come via a mixture of retirements, resignations and staff layoffs. Part- and full-time employees would be affected.

The list includes applied technology, art, English, family consumer science, health/PE, math, Latin and special education teachers.

"We can reduce one special ed teacher and still meet all the programming needs for special ed," Law said.

In addition, Law recommended a cut in the guidance department.

Law also proposed administrative changes.

She suggested eliminating the middle school assistant principal position and creating a new, combined position of Pupil Services Supervisor/Middle School Assistant Principal.

The position would help address the needs of rising numbers of special education students, including those who are outplaced, and students in need of special accommodations based on disabilities, Law said.

The new position would result in the elimination of two special education coordinators.

The shift would result in an \$8,211 reduction overall; the assistant principal elimination would result in \$127,938 in savings, cutting the coordinators would translate to \$15,974 in savings, and adding the new person costing about \$135,701.

Law also proposed reducing the number of days the high school assistant principal works from 260 to 196 for \$22,422 in savings.

For another \$62,254 in savings, Law proposed making the director of curriculum, professional development, assessment and instructional technology a part-time position.

Law also proposed creating a program that she said would be cost-neutral. The In-District School Avoidance Program would be individualized for students with intensive special education needs and who avoid going to school, in many cases because of anxiety, Law said.

Due to increases in state requirements for professional development, Law requested \$9,750 more in that line item.

Law also said she wants to make updates to

the curriculum and bring in new courses, including Applied Computer and Digital Skills, History of Popular Music and Publication and Writing and Design; the new courses would total \$29,344

Law's proposal to reconfigure the technology department would save the district \$34,947 and her plan to increase hours for the athletic trainer would cost \$21,000, she said.

Fiscal issues Law pointed to included reduced and inconsistent state funding of the Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) and Excess Cost grants and for transportation and magnet school tuition.

"So there's a lot of uncertainty around state funding," she said. "As a district we have been running at a deficit since the beginning of the year."

The district is running a deficit due to reductions in state funding and to an accounting adjustment, Law said in December. It had expected \$608,444 in the Excess Cost Grant for out of town tuitions for special needs students but changed the projection to \$443,446, the same amount it received last year.

"To be fiscally prudent in our accounting, at this point making this adjustment I think is important," she said then. "We haven't historically gotten the number we projected in our costs."

The adjustment brings the budget down by \$164,998. In addition, there are further state cuts, including in the ECS Grant and unanticipated costs, such as repairs to moisture damaged flooring.

After Law's presentation, board member Carole Shea said she wants to know how Law

will deal with the ever-changing state budget. "I would like to see a strategy because the state is so uncertain," she said.

Meanwhile, board member Joseph O'Connor questioned Law's proposal to increase pay-for-participation costs. Law, as she first explained in December, wants to increase the cost from \$185 per year for high school athletes and \$155 per year for middle school athletes to \$170 per athlete per season for both schools, with a family cap of \$510. The cost for participating in extracurricular activities would increase to \$40.

The proposal would raise approximately \$49,000, according to Law's budget document.

"What's the need for the increase?" O'Connor asked, adding that like so many other costs, it would end up on the backs of parents. "Where are we going to end it, is my concern."

Board of Education Chairwoman Judy Benson Clarke echoed his sentiment.

"It's always more money on the parents," she said.

Marlborough Board of Selectmen member Dick Shea, meanwhile, praised Law for her presentation.

"I'm very impressed with this booklet; I can hardly wait to get into this thing," he said. "We're in for a long tough battle. I think everybody's heads are in the right direction and armed with legitimate information."

The board will hold budget workshops Jan. 29, Feb. 5 and Feb. 12 – and will finalize and adopt a budget on April 2.

The Jan. 29 workshop will be at 6:30 p.m. in the media center at Marlborough Elementary School, 25 School Dr. The location of the other two is yet to be determined.

TIF Proposal Heads to East Hampton Planning and Zoning

by Elizabeth Regan

A proposal to earmark a portion of Village Center property taxes for economic development efforts is on its way to the Planning and Zoning Commission after being endorsed by the Town Council.

The effort has been described as a way to help resurrect an area of town that has been floundering for half a century.

Councilors voted along party lines in favor of submitting the draft Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District Plan to the commission for its review. Republicans Melissa Engel, Tim Feegel, Mark Philhower and Josh Piteo were in the majority while Democrats Dean Markham and Kevin Reich voted in opposition.

Democrat James "Pete" Brown was on vacation.

Those in favor of forwarding the draft document to the commission said there's no reason to wait, while those opposed said there's no rush.

The draft plan was created by Planning and Zoning Official Jeremy DeCarli. It has already been revised once based on feedback from the council.

The TIF program was made possible by a state statute enacted in 2015.

Statute requires a public hearing before the Town Council, but not until after the Planning and Zoning Commission has reviewed the plan.

The two Democrats lamented the lack of input from members of the wider community in the process so far. According to Reich, the Economic Development Commission, the Board of Finance and property owners in the Village Center could have added valuable insight in the early stages of the process.

"I think other people need to see [the plan]. It's well done, but not thoroughly done," Reich said. "We could be a bell-ringin' town, but we need to do our homework."

A review of Economic Development Commission meeting minutes shows the TIF concept was discussed last year at meetings in May, October, November and December.

The concept was first broached to the Town Council by Town Manager Michael Maniscalco in May, according to meeting minutes.

The TIF 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 projects.

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.

As outlined in the statute, it is ultimately up to the council to approve the program once the Planning and Zoning Commission has come back with a decision. If rejected by the commission, the proposal would need to be passed by a supermajority – six out of seven members – of the council.

DeCarli said the first increment would be applied to the fund in July 2019 if approved by the council.

Piteo described it as a way to merge public and private interests in a way that shows the town "has the back" of those in the Village Center.

"I think it's a good way to move the ball forward," he said.

TIF 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.

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

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

DeCarli said Canton, New Britain, Suffield and Windsor Locks are the only Connecticut towns to have implemented the TIF program so far.

Markham raised numerous concerns about the 31-page draft document, many of them clerical. Some of his larger questions revolved around the financial assumptions guiding estimates about how much revenue would accrue

in the fund each year.

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

The figure factors in 1 percent growth annually in the assessed value of the district and a flat mill rate, according to the draft plan. It also includes the possibility that four vacant mills at 13 Summit, 1 Watrous, 101 Main and 8 Walnut streets would be renovated as commercial buildings, thus driving up the district's assessed value.

Based on those numbers, the district would generate \$18,744 in the first year of the program and \$291,720 in its 20th year.

Markham expressed skepticism that the actual growth of the district would keep pace with DeCarli's projections.

DeCarli on Wednesday told the *Rivereast* he would revisit the numbers, but added it is reasonable to think the four mill buildings could be purchased and upgraded to Class B+ commercial space. The classification describes older but well-maintained real estate that yields average or above average rent.

"We have had several interested parties inquire about a few of those buildings," he said. "I do not think renovations to bring them up to B+ commercial space is out of the question."

A key concern held by Democrats is that diverting tax dollars to one area of town means the difference will have to be made up elsewhere in the operating budget.

Critics of the program have said the town's priority for the Village Center should be focused on the longstanding need to bring a safe and sufficient water supply to the area.

DeCarli said overall improvements to the area will help fund a water system project in the long run.

"It's unlikely that the TIF district will generate enough revenue to fund a large scale water improvement; however, TIF funds can be designated toward that effort if the town so desires," he wrote in a memo to councilors. "It is more likely that bonds or another revenue source outside of tax revenue will be needed for large scale water improvements."

Other issues raised by the Democrats related to the 20-year commitment to the TIF district.

But DeCarli argued 20 years is a commonly-

used period.

"You're not going to build up funds in five or 10 years that's going to be meaningful to really do anything with," he said. "The longer [the] term, the more funding you're able to move to that pot."

DeCarli said the district could be dissolved by at any point during those twenty years, as long as there are no outstanding bonds issued with TIF district funds.

The statute enabling the TIF program leaves it up to municipalities to decide if they want to implement an advisory board, consisting of elected officials and community stakeholders, to help the council form the district, assign project priorities and implement them.

The draft plan will be provided to the Planning and Zoning Commission at its Feb. 7 meeting, according to DeCarli. He said discussion will occur on March 7.

When asked if there would be a public hearing to invite community input at the commission level, DeCarli indicated he would not recommend it.

"I don't feel as though the Planning and Zoning Commission is the right forum for a public hearing as it is not their plan and [they] cannot make changes," DeCarli said. "They can only make recommendations to the council based on their review and discussion."

At Tuesday's council meeting, the public wasn't afforded a chance to comment on the proposal until after the vote had already taken place.

According to Town Council Chairwoman Melissa Engel, that's because she moved the agenda item to the beginning of the meeting so members of the Board of Finance who came to learn more about the proposal wouldn't have to sit through a whole council meeting.

She called it a mistake to place the item ahead of the public comment portion of the agenda instead of after it.

"I didn't mean to do that," she said.

Engel described herself as "very comfortable" sending the proposal to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

"I don't feel like we're rushing it," she said. "I think it's slowing it down unnecessarily not to let the Planning and Zoning Commission have their crack at it."

East Hampton Man Charged with Stealing Nearly \$55K

by Elizabeth Regan

An East Hampton man known as a high-roller at Mohegan Sun Casino has been arrested on larceny charges after allegedly stealing \$54,675 in an online scam.

Demetrios Elias Katras, 39, of 166 Comstock Trail, was arrested Jan. 20 following a six-month investigation.

The case, outlined in an arrest warrant affidavit, began when the credit-card processing company Square Inc. alerted the East Hampton Police Department that 30 customers had disputed charges from several businesses tied to Katras between April and October 2017. The victims said they put down substantial deposits on prefabricated sheds that never arrived. The sheds were advertised on Craigslist and other websites, according to the affidavit.

Police said Katras, using different fake names, did business as "New England Sheds Company," "Backyard Sheds, Your Dream Shed" and "Pine Creek Sheds."

Meanwhile, the affidavit alleges Katras was withdrawing a total of \$33,415 from ATMs in and around Mohegan Sun and racking up \$14,117 in charges from the Draft Kings gambling website.

Mohegan Sun Casino records show Katras is considered a "Whale Player," according to the affidavit. In gambling parlance, the term whale refers to high rollers.

Those records also showed Katras lost a total of \$31,692 at the casino between April and November 2017, the affidavit said.

Another case involving the alleged theft of \$83,000 from unwitting shed buyers between 2015 and 2016 is in the pre-trial phase at Middlesex Superior Court. Police said that one involved the credit card processing company Stripe, Inc.

A victim in the most recent case told Sgt. Paul Battista he dealt with a man named "Jake G." when he tried to purchase a shed from

"Your Dream Shed" last summer. The affidavit states that the Midlothian, Va. resident ultimately put down a \$2,500 deposit, but the delivery date came and went with nothing to show for it.

Police said the man was able to reach the shed company representative over the phone. "Jake" gave various excuses, including one claiming rain had set the company back on installations.

The victim told officers the excuse seemed "poor," considering that area of Virginia had not received any rain at the time.

The affidavit alleges Katras also forged the man's signature on a purchase order used to prove the business's legitimacy to the credit card processing company.

According to *Rivereast* archives, Katras was arrested in 2011 on charges related to the theft of 12 sheds worth about \$30,000 from an Amish supplier in Pennsylvania.

Battista said at the time that Katras was accepting delivery of prefabricated sheds from a supplier in Embreeville, Pa., and selling them without paying the supplier back.

The Amish shed dealers, Battista said, "are so nice that they don't want to get paid until you sell it."

Katras pled guilty and was ordered to refund the customers, according to the affidavit. Court documents show he received three years' probation in late 2015.

This time around, Katras was charged with first-degree larceny, identity theft, criminal impersonation, and first-degree forgery. He is free on a \$100,000 bond pending a Jan. 30 appearance at Middlesex Superior Court.



Katras

Former Colchester Attorney Charged with Embezzling from Clients

by Julianna Roche

A former lawyer and probate judge was accused last week of embezzling more than \$150,000 from a client who hired him to handle the sale of her late father's estate in Colchester over two years ago, police said.



John Butts

Combined with another case stemming out of Norwich, this means the former attorney has allegedly bilked clients of more than \$430,000.

On Thursday, Jan. 18, John Butts, 65, of 376 Hartford Rd., Salem, was arrested and charged with first-degree larceny by extortion after Kimberly Corbett – who resides in Sherwood, Ariz. – had her attorney file a complaint with state police earlier this month.

Court documents show that Butts, whose business address is listed as 151 Broadway St., Colchester, was suspended from practicing law on Feb. 27, 2017, after allegedly stealing \$276,000 from another client – Sofia Kachorowsky, an executor of the estate of Anna Krywonis in Norwich, which was sold in 2014.

Butts ultimately was forced to surrender his license to practice in September 2017.

He also worked as the town of Salem's probate judge until 2011 and as the town attorney until Feb. 28, 2017 – the day after his suspension – when the town appointed attorney William C. Kollman to replace him.

According to his arrest warrant affidavit, as executor and sole beneficiary of his estate, Corbett retained Butts to handle and file the probate paperwork several weeks after her father's passing in September 2015.

In December of that year, her father's condominium, located at 17 Vicki Ln., sold for \$165,000, which, according to Corbett, should have left her with \$154,502 in net proceeds. She claimed Butts told her the estate would be settled in six months to one year, the affidavit said.

However, after sending her father's final federal and state income tax returns to Butts in April 2016, she was no longer able to reach him despite multiple emails and calls, according to police.

The affidavit stated that between July and October 2016, Corbett flew from Arizona to Connecticut several times in attempt to track down Butts to request that her money be wired to her immediately.

Having still not received any money by January 2017, she once again flew to Connecticut and confronted Butts at his office, the affidavit said, where Butts told her he could not speak with her as he had a "catastrophe" and she should contact his attorney, Frank Manfredi of Norwich, police said.

According to the affidavit, an Interest on Legal Trust Account (IOLTA) in the name of Butts' law firm at a Liberty Bank branch showed a wire deposit was received Jan. 28, 2016 for \$152,875 – the amount due to Corbett after expenses from the estate sale were deducted, according to the arrest warrant.

According to state law, all attorneys are required to deposit all assets belonging to their clients into IOLTA accounts and are not permitted to commingle those assets with their personal or business funds.

State police said that withdrawals from the account after the closing proceeds were deposited – including 33 checks cut to Butts, his law offices, and for personal expenses – that totaled \$380,918, according to court documents.

No payments were made to Corbett from the account, however.

In September 2017, the affidavit said, police were then granted a search-and-seizure warrant for Butts' bank account information at People's

United Bank, which contained copies of signature cards, monthly statements, negotiated checks and deposit slips. Funds from the account – which included funds from Corbett – were used by Butts to pay for personal expenses, including property tax liability to the Town of Salem and medical expenses.

Police also found that monthly checks from the account were made out to Butts' business account at Liberty Bank, totaling \$45,805, while checks in varying amounts totaling \$38,100 were written out to his wife, the affidavit said.

Police said the Office of the Chief Disciplinary Counsel also performed an audit of Butts' IOLTA account and found that on various dates between Feb. 5, 2016, and Feb. 27, 2017 (the day Butts surrendered his law license), the former attorney had embezzled funds from Corbett.

According to the warrant, Corbett claimed that she was not billed for legal fees associated with the sale of her father's condominium likely "because [Butts] had stolen the proceeds from [the sale]."

Butts was released on a \$155,000 bail and is scheduled to appear in Superior Court in Norwich on Jan. 25.

Marlborough Food Bank Manager Honored for Service

by Julianna Roche

After serving the community for decades, Dave Wagner – a former manager of the Marlborough Food Bank – said this week that he leaves the town behind with "a heavy heart" as he prepares for his move to Rotonda West, Fla. with his wife Terry.

For 25 years – from the time he moved to town in 1986 until he retired from his engineering job in 2011 – Wagner served on countless committees and civic organizations including the Library Board, School Renovation Building Committee, Water Pollution Control Authority, St. John Fisher Church, Connecticut Hunger Action Team, and the Playscape Committee.

After retirement, though, he got involved with the food bank, and has served as a food bank manager alongside friend Joanne Goode for the last five years.

"It doesn't take long for people in this town to know you're retired," Wagner laughed, adding that his and Goode's family grew close over the years since they had children the same age in the school system.

When he was recruited for a position managing the food bank, Wagner explained that his response was: "I'm not doing it unless Joanne does it with me."

"He's been an amazing partner," Goode said of working with Wagner. "We've had our moments and our disagreements, but at the end of the day we've always been on the same page with the same mission at heart."

Goode explained that originally when she and Wagner took on manager positions, the plan was that "we would leave together" and "no man would be left behind."

Unfortunately, due to the timing of the situation, Goode said she would be staying as the

food bank is actively recruiting replacements for Wagner – who explained to the *Rivereast* this week that he and his wife decided to make the move further south mostly for economic reasons.

"We love the town. We love our neighbors, but once you retire in Connecticut [and are] living on a fixed income, it's just a matter of time," he said. "We decided to leave on our own terms."

On his time with the food bank, Wagner said, "it's been great."

"It's very rewarding and satisfying to help out those people in town that need the extra help and are all very appreciative for whatever we do for them – whether that's just to provide food or [lend] an ear to listen to them talk," he said, adding his only hope for the food bank is that "people continue to step up like they have done" as volunteers.

"They are a wonderful team and the community has been extremely supportive," Wagner furthered, noting that it has been an "honor and privilege to work" both with the volunteers and for the town.

Goode agreed.

"It's really been a great run," she said. "I'm really going to miss Dave."

As one last goodbye, Goode said volunteers from the Marlborough Food Bank hosted a goodbye dinner for Wagner last Thursday, Jan. 18, at Marlborough Congregational Church to celebrate his decades of service to the town.

He was then surprised with a special proclamation from the state, presented by First Selectwoman Amy Traversa, which read: "In recognition of your many years of outstanding and dedicated service to the citizens of the Town of Marlborough. Your leadership and commitment to the welfare of residents in need through



Former Food Bank manager Dave Wagner was presented with a proclamation from the state last week by First Selectwoman Amy Traversa for his many years of dedicated service to the town.

out the community, especially in your service with the Marlborough Food Bank, has greatly improved the quality of life for so many people. Your gentle and kind heart will be greatly missed."

"I don't think there's anybody more deserving" of the proclamation, Goode said. "A lot of people do service in this town and go around

blowing their own horn. Dave has done [community service] for decades and has done it quietly."

For more information about the Marlborough Food Bank, contact Goode at 860-295-8104 or 860-539-6123, or by email at marlboroughfoodbank@comcast.net.

Linares to Run for State Treasurer

by Elizabeth Regan

The state senate seat belonging to Art Linares, R-33, will be up for grabs now that the young politician has announced his campaign for state treasurer.

Linares, 29, announced his candidacy last week in a video posted on social media.

"In 2012, I knocked on 10,000 doors to win a state senate seat against all odds," he intoned as the music built to a crescendo behind him. "This year, I welcome you to join me in a race that will change Connecticut forever."

Current state treasurer Denise Nappier is not running for reelection, according to the *Hartford Courant*. Nappier has been in office for twenty years, making her the longest serving state treasurer in the past two centuries.

In October, Linares married Democratic state Rep. Caroline Simmons, of Stamford. His announcement helps resolve some of the questions about where the couple, whose romance spans both sides of aisle and both sides of the state, would ultimately call home.

The couple said at the time they would continue living in their respective districts through the upcoming election, according to the *Cou-*



Linares

rant.

Linares lives in Westbrook. His district also covers the *Rivereast* towns of Colchester, East Hampton, and Portland as well as Chester, Clinton, Deep River, East Haddam, Essex, Haddam, Lyme, and part of Old Saybrook.

A three-term state senator, Linares is co-founder of a commercial solar energy company in Middletown.

The company, Greenskies Renewable Energy, was acquired by a California-based group of renewable energy companies for an undisclosed sum, according to a Dec. 19 press release. The company said the business will remain in Middletown, where all current employees will be retained.

Linares won his third term with 57 percent of the vote in 2016. Democratic challenger and Essex First Selectman Norm Needleman garnered 41 percent of the vote while Green Party candidate Colin Bennett took home just under 2 percent.

He was first elected at the age of 24 to a seat long held by Democrats.

Linares attributed his fitness for the state treasurer position to a combination of factors: His five years in the senate; membership on the General Assembly's Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee; and 10 years as the head of his own company.

Touting the jobs he created by starting his business in the state, he also acknowledged the times he struggled to make payroll and balance

the budget.

It's that kind of public and private experience that make him qualified to lead, he said.

"Most people in the state believe Connecticut is on the wrong track and I want to work to fix that," he said.

He described his main priority as getting the state's fiscal house in order.

"I decided to run for state treasurer because Connecticut's credit card is maxed out and under Malloy we have doubled our borrowing. Our borrowing and pension costs are starting to crowd out our ability to invest in our schools, our roads our bridges," he said.

The *Connecticut Mirror* reported earlier this month that the only other state treasurer hopefuls who have filed candidate papers so far are Lakeville Republican Thaddeus Gray, a retired investment firm executive, and Democrat Shawn Wooden, former president of the Hartford City Council.

Open Seat

Linares' announcement comes with the balance of power teetering in an 18-member tie between the two parties. But he expressed confidence that the district has shifted Republican and that his party will be able to retain the seat.

Linares was closemouthed, however, about whom exactly is up for the task.

"I know there are some folks that are considering it right now," he said. "There's a long list of people that would be fantastic for the seat. I'm confident the people of the 33rd district are

going to elect someone who's going to fight for fiscal responsibility and economic growth.

He added that he will be waiting for "a few" announcements, which he expects soon, before he makes any endorsements.

State Rep. Melissa Ziobron, R-34, said Wednesday she won't be running for the seat – even though she considered it "very strongly."

Ziobron represents East Haddam, East Hampton and the Westchester portion of Colchester.

She said it's critical for the Republicans to maintain the balance in the Senate if they are going to be able to "push forward fiscally responsible ideas and policies."

But in speaking with "key folks" in her district, as well as her family members, she said she came to understand her current role in the House puts her in the unique position to help her constituents in many ways.

She said that position was forged not only through her influential role as ranking House Republican on the Appropriations Committee, but also through the relationships she's built with people in her district and her colleagues in the House. See related story below.

Still, it wasn't an easy choice, according to Ziobron.

"There are some days if I wonder if I could do more for the state being in the Senate, but at the end of the day, that was my decision," she said.

Ziobron to Seek Fourth Term

by Elizabeth Regan

State Rep. Melissa Ziobron, R-34, has announced her bid for a fourth term in the General Assembly.

Ziobron represents East Hampton and the Westchester section of Colchester, as well as East Haddam. She made the announcement Monday on her website and social media.

The announcement seems to end speculation that Ziobron might run for the state Senate seat being vacated by Art Linares, R-33, in his quest to become state treasurer. See related story above.

Ziobron is the highest-ranking House Republican on the General Assembly's 57-member Appropriations Committee.

The House of Representatives is controlled by the Democrats, while the Senate is evenly split between the two parties.

In an announcement posted on her website Sunday, Ziobron said she's especially proud of her work on the budget committee during what she described as a "historic" budget year.

The \$41.3 billion, two-year budget deal was signed in October by Gov. Dannel P. Malloy.

The state legislature's delay in passing a budget outlasted any previous impasse, including the contentious summer of 1991 that resulted in the creation of a state income tax.

Ziobron noted the budget included a constitutional spending cap and a "volatility cap" that directs excess revenue into the state's rainy day fund.

She cited the current makeup of the Senate – which has 18 Republicans and 18 Democrats – as the main reason Republicans were able to push through some of their priorities in last year's prolonged budget process. Republicans had been stymied by a Democratic majority in place since 1997.

Ziobron, a former economic development coordinator in East Haddam, does not hold a job outside of the House.



Ziobron

Ziobron said her ability to work across the aisle with Democrats – a trait illustrated his year with the passage of a bipartisan budget deal – is one of her key strengths.

Her other overarching focus is "keeping small towns in the forefront in policy discussions," she said.

Ziobron remains proud of a forum she convened in early 2016 on the opioid crisis. The dangers of heroin and prescription pain medication had gained prominence in East Hampton that year following three suspected overdoses – two of them fatal – in a seven-hour period over the New Year's holiday.

She described the forum as helpful in spurting additional conversations in the community, which she sees as a significant component of her role as state representative.

"It's really about being a torchlight to talk about issues that people are pretty hesitant to discuss," she said.

In 2015, Ziobron worked to secure \$7 million in state funding for the East Hampton High School renovation projected after the state Department of Administrative Services failed to fund the maximum reimbursement amount.

"That was a big deal for the town of East Hampton," she said. "It wasn't a matter of due course. I had to really negotiate and work with my colleagues."

Ziobron also has a track record of aiding environmental causes in the district. She pointed to her support for the Air Line Trail in East Hampton, the Sunrise State Park in Moodus, the Salmon River State Forest and local lakes and streams. She is also a member of the General Assembly's Environment Committee.

Ziobron won her seat in 2012 against Democrat Chris Goff of East Hampton upon the retirement of Democrat incumbent Gail Hamm.

In addition to serving on the Appropriations Committee and Environment Committee, she is a member of the Committee on Children and belongs to the General Assembly's Sportsmen Caucus. She was also appointed to the Connecticut Alcohol and Drug Policy Council and the Spending Cap Commission.

She said she will launch her campaign in earnest when the General Assembly adjourns in May. The session convenes Feb. 7.

East Hampton Police News

1/5: Colleen Pollard, 35, of 73 Main St., was issued a summons for failure to drive right, operating an unregistered motor vehicle and operating a motor vehicle without insurance, East Hampton Police said.

1/8: Brennan Gibbons, 25, of 16 Race Ave., Plainville and Jolene Turner, 27, of 83 N. Main St., were both issued summonses for illegal dumping, police said.

1/12: A 15-year-old juvenile of East Hampton was issued a summons for third-degree larceny, police said.

1/12: Emanuel Dejesus, 26, of 3828 Park Ave., East Hartford, was taken into custody

pursuant to an active warrant and charged with third-degree identity theft, credit card theft, illegal use of a credit card, receipt of money, goods or services obtained by illegal use of credit card, and sixth-degree larceny.

1/13: Shannon Brown, 43, of 374 Beaumont Hwy., Lebanon, was taken into custody pursuant to an active warrant and charged with interfering and resisting an officer, failure to drive right, speeding, and increasing speed in an attempt to escape/elude an officer, police said.

Also, from Jan. 8-14, officers responded to nine medical calls, eight motor vehicle crashes and eight alarms, and made 25 traffic stops.

Portland Police News

1/18: George Grillo, 49, of 9 Spencer Court, East Hartford, was charged with criminal violation of a protective order, Portland Police said.

1/19: Frank Johnson, 33, of 204 Main St., was charged with four counts of first-degree failure to appear and one count of second-degree failure to appear, police said.

1/21: Kathleen Daley, 58, of 14 Perry Ave., was charged with second-degree failure to appear, pol

Colchester Police News

1/20: State Police said Westley J. McCaslin, 31, of 130 Retreat Ave., Apt. B4, Hartford, was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear, operating a motor vehicle under the influence of drugs/alcohol, speeding on a highway up to 85 m.p.h., and interfering with an officer: non-assaultive.

1/20: Colchester Police said a 16-year-old male was arrested and charged with first-degree criminal trespass and violation of a protective order.

Marlborough Police News

1/18: State Police said Duncan P. Mclean, 20, of 6 Rivendell Rd., was arrested and charged with third-degree assault and disorderly conduct.

Hebron Police News

1/20: State Police said Victoria M. Carr, 32, of 21 Wall St., was arrested and charged with failure to respond to an infraction.

Single-Vehicle Crash on Route 316 in Andover

by Julianna Roche

A single-vehicle crash last Friday, Jan. 19, left one Coventry resident with possible injuries, police said.

According to police, at approximately 1:19 a.m., Cheryl Dickerson, 23, of 356 High St., Coventry, was driving a Mazda Tribute heading northbound on Route 316 near the intersection with School Road when she lost control of the vehicle and collided with a utility

pole.

The Mazda sustained severe damage and was towed from the scene by Axel and Spindle Towing, according to police.

Police said Dickerson was transported by Andover EMS to Windham Hospital for possible injuries and was cited with an infraction for traveling too fast for conditions.

Hebron School Board Passes \$11.58M Budget

by Sloan Brewster

The Board of Education has passed an \$11.58 million budget proposal that is .02 percent less than this year's budget.

At the Jan. 18, Board of Education meeting the board voted 5-1, with Maryanne Leichter opposing, to approve the numbers, which were scaled back from Superintendent of Schools Timothy Van Tasel's original \$11.69 million recommendation. The school board proposal will be passed to the boards of selectmen and finance next month.

Van Tasel gave his presentation in December. The board deliberated after that, holding budget discussions at three separate meetings, going line by line and crunching the numbers.

Van Tasel's proposed .94 percent increase was \$108,474 up from the current year's budget and was a "maintenance budget," he said in a phone call Wednesday. Due to the fiscal climate of the state, however, the board wanted to shrink the numbers even more.

"To do that they made some reductions," he said.

Despite being supporters of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), the board decided to forgo annual membership in the organization next year, saving the district \$7,450, Van Tasel said.

Board of Education Chairwoman Erica Bromley said this week that while cutting CABE was a hard call, it was not a budget line that had any impact on students or programming.

"That's a tough one," she said. "I don't think that there was any board member who was opposed to the services provided by CABE and I think at the end of the day it comes down to what the end result budget numbers were going to be."

The board also decided to use some of the money it has saved in this year's budget, due to a budget freeze that began in August, on some items that were slated to be funded in next year's budget. Those included \$20,000 for Chromebooks, \$27,975 for textbooks and \$21,379 to pay off a lease for computers.

The money will not come from the \$350,000 the board has set aside at the request of the Board of Finance, Van Tasel said.

In December, the Board of Finance asked the boards of education and selectmen to set funds aside toward covering an anticipated \$1.04 million in shortfalls in state funding. The Board of Education set aside \$350,000 and the Board of Selectmen set aside \$200,000.

The board also saved \$16,777 on a salary line by making a custodian a part-time posi-

tion and \$21,996 in insurance for the employee, who would no longer qualify for insurance as a part-timer, Van Tasel said.

AHM Youth and Family Services has also done its share to help with the budget woes, Van Tasel said. The district pays the organization approximately \$68,000 a year for services including social workers and mentors for students. It's a number that generally goes up year to year.

"Every year there's a line item in our budget that we put aside for AHM," he said. "This year, because of the fiscal issues they're not requesting an increase."

The board is also working on giving the Board of Finance a picture of what a 5 percent decrease would look like, Van Tasel said.

Van Tasel's original proposal included personnel reductions due to reorganization. Those cuts were not changed by the board.

Whenever possible, Van Tasel said in December, the cuts would be made through attrition or consolidation. The proposed cuts include a data specialist, a part-time teacher, five full-time and one part-time paraprofessionals and a part-time office secretary.

Most of the paraprofessionals Van Tasel proposed cutting are already empty and the posi-

tions have not been filled, he said. The part-time secretarial position is also an unfilled empty slot, due to a resignation.

* * *

Bromley said Thursday she ultimately was satisfied with the budget the board adopted, stressing that it keeps programming intact.

"I think everybody would agree that it's a fiscally-responsible budget but still ensures the education of our kids," she said.

Leichter, however, expressed her reservations in a phone interview Thursday – saying she voted against the spending package because she felt an even lower budget figure would be more prudent.

"I'm very concerned about the state's current fiscal budget and we don't know what the bottom line could be and I personally feel that our number is going to still need to be lower," she said. "It's not about the kids. I love the kids but the state's fiscal budget is very difficult."

* * *

The school board will give the boards of selectmen and finance budget books by Feb. 15 and in March and April those boards will do their own number-crunching. The Board of Finance will then set the entire town budget and pass it on to voters for a May 1 referendum.

Hebron Receives \$102K for Open Space

by Sloan Brewster

The state has awarded the town \$102,000 to help pay for a 48-acre swath of open space on Gilead Street.

At the Jan. 18 Board of Selectmen meeting, selectman Brian O'Connell announced the town had received a letter of award for a grant from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program.

"Hats off to [Town Planner] Michael O'Leary," O'Connell said. "He really does a great job in trying to get money for open space."

The money will go toward what is known as the Calvin Fish Parcel. About eight years ago, Fish, a native Gilead resident who passed away Sept. 19, 2017, approached the town about purchasing the property in order to preserve it, O'Connell said.

"It was his and his wife's property," O'Connell said. "He came to us saying he had taken the culverts program at UConn, he was big into protection, and he wanted it preserved."

Town staff and elected officials walked the property at that time and over the years, O'Connell said, he has stayed in touch with the Fishes.

"I know that in his heart he wanted the land preserved," O'Connell said.

Early last summer, the Open Space Land Acquisition Committee, of which O'Connell is a member, walked the property once again.

"We decided that this was a property that we wanted to see preserved as it is," O'Connell said. "It is a nice woodland piece of property."

The town applied for the grant in 2017, and voters approved the \$175,000 purchase at a town meeting in December.

The property, which sits to the west of Gilead Hill School, abuts other parcels of open space and sits near the Milne property, which is owned by the Connecticut Forest & Parks Association, O'Connell said.

"It abuts a few different pieces," he said.

Preserving the parcel is imperative because of its connectivity with the other properties, O'Connell said. It's a valuable piece of land because it blocks off several pieces of open space and will be effective toward building a contiguous piece of open space for protection of watercourses, quality of water for wildlife and for improving home values.

The Fish property consists of 55 acres, with a single-family house, O'Leary said. Per the purchase agreement, the Fish family will retain the house and seven acres around it, and the town will buy 48 acres of open space.

The land is located in the Fawn Brook Greenway, which is highlighted in the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) as a high-priority corridor for open space preservation, O'Leary said. There are trails or old wood roads on the Fish property. It will be managed by the Parks and Recreation Department, which will determine how to make the trails accessible to the public and will make improvements, including signage and parking.

Trails on the school property could be expanded to the Fish property, which extends all the way down to Fawn Brook and the Fawn



The Calvin Fish Parcel will be preserved in perpetuity. The 48-acre parcel sits west of Gilead Hill Elementary School, runs along Fawn Brook and is near the Connecticut Forest & Parks Association's Milne property.

Brook wetlands, he said.

Tiffany Ventura Thiele, who lives next door to the Fish home, said she met Fish when she moved there with her husband Adam in 2013. She remembers Fish as a gracious man who made an effort to help her and Adam in their first home-buying experience, including telling them some history on their home and the family who had lived there. Fish also loaned, and eventually sold, the couple a tractor to mow

their large yard.

"He was very kind and helpful," Thiele said.

While Fish had not told her he was planning to protect the parcel in perpetuity, Thiele said she was not surprised.

"I think that's just a testament to Cal's character; he just understood the value of something like that to a town like Hebron," she said. "I think the preservation of open space is essential to a town like Hebron."

Obituaries

Colchester

Jean Kowalski

Jean (Maikshilo) Kowalski, 72, of Colchester, passed away Tuesday, Jan. 16, at the Wm. W. Backus Hospital in Norwich. Born Jan. 25, 1945, in Norwich, she was the daughter of the late Maxim and Amelia (Kutis) Maikshilo.

A lifelong resident of Colchester, Jean was a 1963 graduate of Bacon Academy and went on to work as a hairdresser for over 50 years. She loved to cook and entertain, especially during the holidays. Her greatest joy was found in her family and she always delighted in following her grandchildren's activities.

She was the loving mother of two, son Jason Kowalski of Groton and the late Kristin Danaher; devoted grandmother of five, Jordan, Emily and Leo Kowalski, Jayden Danaher and the late Dylan Kowalski; sister of Thomas Maikshilo (and his wife Sue) of Colchester; and numerous extended family members and friends.

The family received guests Sunday, Jan. 21, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A chapel service was observed during the visitation. Burial was private.

Donations in her memory may be made to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place Memphis, TN 38105 (stjude.org).

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Anita Stollman

Anita "Gigi" Stollman, 86, of Colchester, passed away peacefully Sunday, Jan. 21. Born in the Bronx, N.Y., on Nov. 29, 1931, she was the daughter of the late Archie and Bella (Klar) Berkowitz and raised in Columbia, where she lived until marrying Hyman Stollman, late of Colchester, in 1952.

Hymie and Gigi were married for 63 years and had made Colchester their home for 65 years until he predeceased her June 26, 2015.

Gigi was a devoted wife and extraordinary mother. Her unwavering support of her husband was instrumental in her family's construction and operation of Chantclair Golf Course, the family business since 1972. Gigi worked tirelessly in the day-to-day operation of Chantclair, managing the clubhouse, performing its bookkeeping and organization of its many golf leagues. She was an avid golfer, loved playing Mahjong, and cherished her time with family and friends.

Gigi is survived by three sons, Steven and wife Kristen of Key Biscayne, Fla.; Carey and wife Marcia of Colchester; and David and wife Mary of Amston; and five grandsons, Jason and wife Ashley, Edwin, Daniel, Patrick and Ryan. Gigi is also survived by her sister, Estelle Flaum and husband Gill of Manchester; sister-in-law, Harriet (Stollman) Berland and husband Robert of West Hartford; sister-in-law, Lenore Berkowitz of Columbia; and numerous nieces and nephews.

In addition to her parents and husband, she was predeceased by four siblings, Eva Miller, Celia Fruchtmann, Myron "Muni" Berkowitz and Samuel "Sam" Berkowitz.

Funeral services were Wednesday, Jan. 24, at Congregation Ahavath Achim Synagogue, 84 Lebanon Ave., Colchester, with Rabbi Kenneth Alter officiating. Interment followed at Ahavath Achim Cemetery, Taintor Hill Rd., Colchester. A memorial period (Shiva) was observed at the Stollman residence, 288 Old Hebron Rd., Colchester, on Wednesday and Thursday evenings.

In honor of Gigi, donations in her memory may be made to Congregation Ahavath Achim Synagogue, P.O. Box 5, Colchester 06415.

The Stollman family wishes to express their sincere gratitude to the staff at the Hartford Hospital for their exceptional care, concern, sensitivity and support of both Gigi and her family. We would also like to thank Gigi's home-care aids for their devotion to her comfort.

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



East Hampton

Pat McLaughlin

Pat McLaughlin, born in New Britain, formerly of Cromwell and East Hampton, died Jan. 18, at Chestelm Healthcare in Moodus. She was the daughter of Joseph Patrick Malley and Margurite "Miggie" (Crowley) Malley, also born in New Britain.

She leaves behind her two sons and daughters-in-law, Jay and Apres McLaughlin of Bradenton, Fla., as well as Keith McLaughlin and wife Janet Poncini of East Hampton, CT. Other survivors include her brother and sister-in-law John "Butch" Malley and wife, Alice of New Britain. She also leaves two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren; grandson Sean McLaughlin, wife Charlotte and daughter Clare of Bradenton, Fla., and granddaughter Kelly Doheny, husband Kevin and daughter Emma of Grand Junction, Colo. Pat adored several nieces and nephews, their children, and many cousins. She was predeceased by her husband Robert and siblings Joan Quinn, Robert Malley and Catherine "Kay" Tuttle.

The great depression was the setting for Patty's early childhood. She attended St. Joseph's school and graduated in 1946 from New Britain High. She married Robert J. McLaughlin in 1947. For the next 56 years, it would be "Pat and Bob." They raised their family on Bassett Street, where their neighbors became part of the family and where many notorious parties took place. Pat was employed her entire adult life and took great pride in her work at New Britain General Hospital. She started at the switchboard and retired after more than 30 years of rewarding service.

Pat was known as a classy, dignified lady who was generous to a fault. She loved and cherished her friends, family, neighbors and coworkers, and a parade of pets. She liked the snow and anything to do with Maine, where she vacationed with her family often. Pat had an adventuresome side. She could be seen riding in a horse-drawn carriage in Ireland as well as floating in a hot air balloon among the Colorado Rockies.

More than anything or anyone she loved her two sons, Jay and Keith, whom Pat and Bob adopted as infants. Pat was devoted to her children and was involved in all aspects of their lives while growing up.

The family extends their deep appreciation to the staff and residents of Chestelm Healthcare. They became family during the last part of her life.

There will be calling hours for Pat Saturday, Jan. 27, from 9-10:30 a.m., at the Luddy-Peterson Funeral Home located at 205 South Main St. New Britain. A funeral Mass will follow at 11 a.m. next door at St. Joseph Church.

In lieu of flowers the family asks that you make a donation to The Connecticut Humane Society.

East Hampton

Milton Mager

Milton "Mike" Mager, 88, of East Hampton, beloved husband of Shirley (Barbour) Mager, died Wednesday, Jan. 17, at Saint Francis Hospital. Mike was born in the Bronx, N.Y., son of the late William Mager and Clara (Freed) Mager.

Prior to his retirement, Mike was employed with J.C. Barton Co. He was a veteran of the Korean War, serving with the U.S. Army. Mike was a life member of the VFW, the BPO Elks Lodge 771 of Middletown and the American Legion.

Besides his wife Shirley of 68 years, Mike is survived by a daughter, Kim Mager of East Hampton; two grandchildren, Michael Salafia, his wife Lana, their children Skyler and Michael of East Hampton, and Mallory Adams, her husband Jeremy and their daughter Hailey, also of East Hampton.

He was predeceased by a daughter, Doreen Mager.

In honoring Mike's request, there will be no services.

Biega Funeral Home is in charge. To share memories or express condolences online, visit biegafuneralhome.com.



Colchester

Joseph Andrew Urbano

Joseph Andrew Urbano, "Andy," 85, of East Haddam, passed away peacefully at home with his fiancée, Carol Aniello, by his side early Thursday morning, Jan. 18.

He was born Nov. 1, 1932 and raised in Hartford, the son of the late Andrew Urbano. Joseph was also predeceased by the woman he called "Ma," Anna Gilbert. Andy shared a very special lifelong bond with the Gilbert family.

A proud Army veteran, he served during the Korean War as an Army Ranger with Company "D." Andy married his late wife, Judith Powers, on Nov. 10, 1956. The couple shared 47 years of marriage together before she predeceased him Sept. 14, 2004.

Mr. Urbano retired several years ago after having worked in a variety of trades throughout his life. There was nothing he couldn't do! Andy was a member of American Legion Post 54 in Colchester. He was also an avid outdoorsman who especially enjoyed fishing with dear friend Bob Torsza and hunting with dear friend Bruce Rigott and nephew Jeff Boccacio. Andy loved the North Country and was happiest when there.

Most importantly, he will be remembered for his devotion to his family and his country. He will be sadly missed but always remembered with love by his children and their spouses, Joseph Urbano Jr. and his wife Victoria of Northport, Fla. Lisa Maloney, Angela Greer and her husband Shannon and Gina Urbano, all of East Haddam; eight grandchildren, Amy Soja, Toni Urbano, Joey Urbano III, Frank and Jennifer Maloney and Gabriel, Luca, and Gianna DiStefano; two great-grandchildren, Sydney and Shawn Soja; and numerous extended close family members and friends he made along the way.

Throughout his life, he always put others first and his words "What can I do to help?" will ring on in the hearts and memories of all those lives he touched.

The family received guests Tuesday, Jan. 23, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, followed by a chapel service with military honors that afternoon. Burial was private.

Donations may be made in his name to the Disabled American Veterans, P.O. Box 14301, Cincinnati, OH 45250-0301 (dav.org).

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

East Hampton

G. Malcolm Clark Sr.

G. Malcolm Clark Sr., 85, of East Haddam, formerly of Cobalt and East Hampton, husband of the late Judith (Nyberg) Clark, died Wednesday, Jan. 17, at Marlborough Medical Center. Born Jan. 27, 1932, in Newington, he was the son of the late George Malcolm Clark and Helen (Caldwell) Clark.

Malcolm served his country in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War. He had worked as a gunsmith and gun shop owner for most of his life. He had been employed by Dewey Gunsmithing, Red Wing Oil and Chevron Oil. At a very young age, he had been a partner in a drive-in movie theater, where he met his wife Judith. He was the owner and operator of Middletown Gun World and later Clark Gunsmithing. Malcolm was a life member of the NRA.

He is survived by his twin sons, G. Malcolm Clark Jr. and his wife Jennifer of East Haddam, G. Matthew Clark and his wife Allison of Willington; a sister, Gayle Rogers of Vermont; two grandchildren, Matthew and Laura Clark of Wethersfield; special friend, Agnes Pawlich of East Hampton; and numerous nieces and nephews.

He was predeceased by his two brothers, Roger and Russell Clark.

Friends called at Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton on Monday, Jan. 22. A memorial service was held that evening. Burial was Tuesday, Jan. 23, in Union Hill Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the American Lung Association, 45 Ash St., East Hartford, CT 06108.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.



Portland

Donald K. Williams

Donald K. Williams of Portland departed this earth Sunday, Jan. 21, with his grandson Dan by his side. Don was born in Exeter, N.H., on Oct. 4, 1928, to his parents, John L. Williams and Gladys Mifflin Williams. Don grew up with loving and doting aunts and uncles and summers at the family cottage in Hampton, N.H.

He was a 1952 graduate of Washington & Lee University in Lexington, Va. He served two years in the United States Army, almost realized a dream of owning an airport, but was a seasoned single engine airplane pilot. After completing college he worked for the First National Bank, Hartford and then for Traveler's Insurance Company. In the '70s and early '80s he started two computer companies, CPU and Horizon, respectively. Don took the trip of a lifetime in 1976 with his wife, son, and daughter for a month long trip around the United States.

Don lost his beloved wife Nancy (Scott) Williams on Feb. 15, 2000, while watching their beloved women's Husky basketball. Don was also able to see his Boston Red Sox win a pennant. He was also an active member of AL-ANON family member groups for almost 40 years.

Don is survived by his daughter, Alison Wagner (Tom) of Portland; his son, Sean Williams (Jean) of Portland, N.H.; his beautiful grandchildren, Dan Goodrich of Portland, Tracy Goodrich of Portland, Shane Kvietkus of Southington; and the light of his life, great-granddaughter Taliah Frangione of Portland.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, Jan. 27, at 10 a.m., in the Pilgrim Fellowship Church, 1199 Hebron Ave., Glastonbury. Burial will be at a later date in the State Veterans Cemetery, Middletown, with full military honors. Friends may call at the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, today, Jan. 26, from 5-7 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Pilgrim Fellowship Church, 1199 Hebron Ave., Glastonbury, CT 06033 or to AL-ANON Family Group Inc., 277 Main St., Hartford, CT 06106.

Middlefield

Walter Slomkowski

Walter Slomkowski, 77, of Middlefield, beloved husband of the late Judith Slomkowski, died Thursday, Jan. 18, peacefully at home, surrounded by his loving family. He was born in Meriden, and was the son of the late Stanley and Mary (Bystrek) Slomkowski.

Walt was a lifelong resident of Middlefield where he was known throughout the town and he was also a member of the fire department. He was employed as a welder at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft for 34 years and after retirement he worked part-time for the Durham-Middlefield school system, District 13.

Walt is survived by his daughters, Lisa Grandy and husband John of Meriden and Sheri Sienkiewicz and husband Thomas of Portland; brothers, Stanley, Edward (Gerry), Thomas and sister Theresa Manning; grandchildren, Matthew, Daniel and Zachary Grandy, Beau and Carli Sienkiewicz; as well as several nieces and nephews.

Walt enjoyed his daily trip to Trackside Deli for breakfast and morning conversation with the guys. He took pride in his home and was always working in his yard. Most of all he cherished time with his family, especially Sunday dinners.

Funeral services were held Thursday, Jan. 25, at Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown. Burial will be private at a later date. Friends called at Biega Funeral Home Thursday, Jan. 25, prior to the services.

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



Obituaries continued

East Hampton

Doris E. Clark

Doris E. Clark of LaVerne, Calif., formerly of East Hampton, passed away Wednesday, Nov. 9, 2017.

Doris was born Feb. 17, 1915, in Chester, to John and Georgiana Scovill. She lived in East Hampton for 41 years after marrying William Clark, who preceded her in death.

Also preceding her in death were her sons Stephen, Charles, Joseph, David and Eugene Zadroga.

Doris retired from Connecticut Valley Hospital after 20 years of service. She was a member of the V.F.W. Ladies Auxiliary for 65 years.

Doris is survived by her daughter Elizabeth Rumbolo of LaVerne, Calif., and sons William Zadroga of Middletown and Gerald Zadroga of LaVerne, Calif. She is also survived by 26 grandchildren, 48 great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren, as well as three stepsons, William, Thomas and James Clark.

A Celebration of Life will be held today, Jan. 26, at noon, at the Connecticut State Veterans Cemetery Chapel, 317 Bow Ln., Middletown.

Middletown

George J. McGuigan Sr.

George Joseph McGuigan Sr., 72, of Middletown, died Monday, Jan. 22, at Yale New Haven Hospital, New Haven.

He was born in Hartford Feb. 24, 1945, the son of the late George and Mae (Flanagan) McGuigan.

A veteran during the Vietnam War, George served with the US Army. Prior to his retirement, he was employed with Olin Ski Corporation. He was an avid New York Giants and Yankees fan.

George is survived by his sons, George McGuigan Jr. and his wife Sharon, and Patrick McGuigan, all of East Hampton; brothers, Stephen McGuigan of Florida and John McGuigan of New Jersey; former spouse, Donna McGuigan of East Hampton; his companion, Jackie Kielb and her son Steven Kielb of Middletown; as well as nine beloved grandchildren: George, Page, Alexis, Shawn, Robert, Reece, Ben, Jasmine and Allison.

He was predeceased by his daughter, Kathleen Marie McGuigan.

Friends may visit with his family on Tuesday, Jan. 30, at Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown, from 5-7 p.m. Burial will be at the convenience of the family.

Those who wish may make memorial contributions to the Giants offensive line or more importantly to the Wounded Warrior Project.

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

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Last week, a letter came across my desk from somebody who reads the *Rivereast*, telling me I should refrain from writing about politics in my column. The person added, "I'm glad I'm not paying for this newspaper because I wouldn't and would cancel."

They then went on to write at length about how great President Trump is.

I always appreciate fan mail, but now's as good a time as any to remind people that if their letter is anonymous, as this one was, I can't publish it in the paper. Not that I seriously think this person wanted their letter published, of course. But I do occasionally get letters from folks who do expect to see them published, but refuse to sign their name. Sorry, it just can't work that way; this isn't the "Speak Out" section in the old *Reminder* newspaper. If you feel strongly about something, attach your name to it.

* * *

Speaking of politics (sorry, Mr./Ms. Anonymous), the Democrats predictably caved Monday morning and blinked first in the government shutdown, based apparently on nothing more than Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's promise to address the status of "dreamers" – young immigrants who were brought to this country illegally as children – at some point in the future.

Look, I'm glad the government is back and running again; when a shutdown happens, it affects many things, not just the goings-on in Washington. For example, a friend of mine works for the federal government, and when the shutdown occurred he was furloughed. Meanwhile, his wife is on maternity leave. So you can imagine that was not a pretty situation – and I'm very glad for him and his family they don't need to stress about paychecks.

But for the Dems to step down so quickly from the noble cause they were fighting for – to force Republicans to help protect "dreamers," as their fate is up in the air now that Trump has canceled the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program – based simply on McConnell's word is a little frustrating. There needed to have been more than that. There's nothing forcing McConnell to keep to his word – and besides, all he said was that it was his intention to address it. There were no protections promised. Even if he looks at it and decides to do nothing, he still addressed it.

Still, some Democrats were optimistic that McConnell will play fair – enough of them to end the shutdown anyway. (It should be noted Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy voted against ending the shutdown.) "Trust but verify" is my motto," the *Chicago Tribune* quoted Sen. Angus King, an Independent who caucuses with the Democrats, as saying. McConnell, King added, "made this commitment publicly, he made it on the floor of the

Senate. ... Frankly this is an important opportunity for him to demonstrate that he will carry through."

But, according to the *Tribune*, other Democrats argued that McConnell offered no new concessions on immigration, lamented giving up the leverage they believed they had, and said they simply don't trust the Republicans to follow through.

I'm pessimistic as well. I hope I'm proven wrong – but at the moment I can't help but feel the Democrats were duped, and they waffled, and frankly the whole thing has left me a little uneasy about the November elections. With Trump regularly embarrassing himself, and the office, and the nation, seats should be Democrats' for the taking in the mid-terms. But don't be surprised if they manage to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. It is, after all, one of the things they do best.

* * *

The Super Bowl is set, with the Patriots returning again, this time to face the Philadelphia Eagles. I talked with my dad on the phone Sunday night – he lives down south – and it's truly a no-win situation for him. Born and raised in New York, my dad's a fan of the Jets and the Giants – so he hates both the Patriots and the Eagles. He told me he'll be watching the Super Bowl strictly for the commercials.

I pull for the Jets as well, but I have several friends who are die-hard Pats fans, so it's tough to root against them in the Super Bowl, especially if the Jets didn't even sniff the postseason and have no one to blame but themselves (as is so often the case). Plus – I can't stand Eagles fans. I have no opinion on the team, but their fanbase is just awful. These are the fans that once famously booed, and threw snowballs at, Santa Claus.

These are the fans who, in 1999, cheered when an opposing player suffered a severe spinal cord injury on the field. They cheered repeatedly, in fact.

The incidents aren't confined to years past either. Before this past Sunday's NFC championship game between the Eagles and the Minnesota Vikings, a nice story made the rounds about this 99-year-old die-hard Vikings fan named Millie, and how she was rooting for her team to go all the way.

Well, after the Eagles won Sunday night, a bunch of fans hit the streets of Philadelphia, to celebrate their team's victory. A pair of them marched with a giant sign that read "F-ck Millie" (only there was no dash), and chanted "F-ck Millie!" as well. Really, Eagles fans? A 99-year-old woman? The classlessness knows no bounds.

Let's go Patriots.

* * *

See you next week.