

RIVEREAST

News Bulletin

Serving Amston, Andover, Cobalt, Colchester, East Hampton, Hebron, Marlborough, Middle Haddam and Portland

Volume 42, Number 25

Published by The Glastonbury Citizen

March 30, 2018



Coming Soon... After months of preliminary work, ground is set to be broken on the Big Y supermarket project in Marlborough next Tuesday, April 3. The store is expected to be open by Thanksgiving. See related story on page 16.

Belltown Finance Board Blasts Teacher Salaries

by Elizabeth Regan

Republicans on the East Hampton Board of Finance took aim at teacher salaries and step increases as the most significant factor affecting a mill rate they say will rise at least 15 mills by 2023 if left unchecked.

In a Monday budget presentation by the finance board, Chairman Michael Rose vowed to make sure the town doesn't remain on the current trajectory through the next five years.

"We're not going to allow the mill rate in East Hampton to get to 45.5 [mills]," he said.

This year's budget-planning season is playing out amid the potential loss of \$1.20 million in municipal aid from the state. The revenue estimate is based on preliminary state budget numbers proposed by Gov. Dannel P. Malloy in February. It's up to state lawmakers to approve the state budget later this spring.

The presentation, developed by Republicans in a caucus closed to finance board Democrats and the public, compared East Hampton teacher salaries to those in numerous other Connecticut towns.

The state Freedom of Information Act allows members of a board or commission who belong to the same party to gather together behind closed doors to discuss agency business without it being considered a public meeting.

Rose said the Republicans' research yielded "very, very interesting" results as they mined a contract database from the Connecticut Coal-

ition for Achievement Now (ConnCAN) in preparation for their presentation.

He said the data showed East Hampton entry level teachers with masters' degrees were the fourth-highest-paid in the state based on their 2013-15 contract – after Greenwich, the regional school covering Easton and Redding, and Sherman.

"That tells me something that was a suspicion of mine all along," Rose said.

Superintendent of Schools Paul K. Smith the next day described the presentation as "misleading."

Smith pointed to numbers from the same database showing the salary for top-step teachers with master's degrees – that is, those who have reached the highest levels of the salary schedule – ranked 50th in the state.

Smith said there are currently three entry level teachers with masters' degrees; there are 115 teachers on the top step.

"Throughout his presentation, [Rose] kept referring to the fact that the town could not afford to be fourth in the state," Smith said. "With 72 percent of the teachers at top step, this was clearly an inaccurate use of statistics."

The step schedule incorporates automatic pay raises for teachers based on experience and graduate degrees. The schedule in East Hampton maxes out at step nine, which means those

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Work on New Worship Center Nears Completion

by Sloan Brewster

Work on the new sanctuary and ministry building for The Worship Center Church in Hebron is heading into the home stretch.

The Rev. Mark Santostefano, pastor of The Worship Center, said he hopes the first service in the new church, which is under construction at 99 Marjorie Circle, will take place in July. In the meantime, Sunday services – formerly held in the auditorium at RHAM High School – have been moved to Timothy Hall at 39 Prentice Hill Rd., where the church currently rents office space.

"We moved there to save money," said Sharon Gonyaw, head of the church design team as well as worship leader and Bible teacher. "This is the last leg and it's like, whoa the push is on."

A good thing about holding the services in Timothy Hall is that congregants are sitting in pews that will grace the new sanctuary, she added.

The pews are among a list of intentionally older items or antiques that will be part of the décor in the sacred space.

"We wanted a combination of the old and new," Santostefano said.

It was a decision based on the Gospel of Mark, in which it states a church should contain things that are old and new, the pastor said. "Christianity is rooted in history," he said.

A large 14-by-10-foot stained-glass window

made in 1946, depicting the Good Shepherd, will shine down on parishioners during services. The window will be installed on the interior wall behind the altar and will be back lit to show the full effect of its glory, Santostefano and Gonyaw said.

The window and pews came from a church that was being demolished in Troy, N.Y.

Gonyaw said she and Santostefano went to look at the vestiges of the old church for consideration in the new one. She recalled that the moment she said yes, they would take them, a blaze of light shone through a hole in the ceiling. The light, which flared when the sun came out for an instant, did not reappear at all for the rest of the gloomy day.

"I know the Lord was happy," she said.

The church will have a bell from a church that burned down in Windham. In an ironic twist, when Gonyaw and Santostefano looked at it, they discovered it was made in the same town where they had found the stained glass window and pews.

The pulpit that will grace the altar of the church is from a chapel that was in Glastonbury.

Members of the congregation will do any necessary refurbishing to the bell, pulpit and pews.

Bourdeau Welding is making individual frames for each section of the window.

There will also be a set of huge antique wings



Work on The Worship Center's new sanctuary and ministry building, located at 99 Marjorie Circle in Hebron, is nearing completion – in the hopes the first services will be held there in July.

on one of the beams in the high ceiling.

"It says in scripture that God meets us between the wings of a cherubim," Santostefano said of the symbolism of the giant wings.

The post-and-beam sanctuary was designed

with Biblical symbolism in mind and to direct eyes upward, according to Santostefano and Gonyaw.

"When you step into the sanctuary and you

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Finance Board cont. from Front Page

at the highest level are not eligible for further step increases.

The step system is separate from general wage increases, which are negotiated for all employees.

Rose's presentation also compared East Hampton, with its \$39,497 per capita median income, to Glastonbury's \$58,455 median income. Meanwhile, he said, East Hampton pays \$14,971 per student for education, while Glastonbury pays \$16,085.

Despite the large disparity in per capita median incomes, "we spend maybe 6 percent less [on education]," Rose noted.

A subsequent finance board meeting on Wednesday night yielded a fiery response from middle school teachers Rachel Mansfield and Ellen Nosal, among others.

Nosal assigned board members a failing grade for their presentation.

Mansfield described it as "incredibly demoralizing and disheartening" to walk into school the morning after the finance board presentation with the feeling that "the crosshairs were squarely aimed at us."

Rainy Day Fund

At the public hearing portion of Monday's meeting and again during public comment on Wednesday, most of the hundred-plus residents in attendance came out in support of the schools budget.

"I admit it. I want it all," school board member Nancy Oakley said, describing good schools, well-funded emergency services, safe roads and a clear lake as some of the items on her wish list. "I also want our town to be in a fiscal position that would allow us to have it all. But we're not there yet, and difficult choices must be made. We live in a fiscally-challenging reality, not in a perfect world."

Oakley and others recommended using a "small portion" of the town's fund balance – or Rainy Day Fund – to help ease the burden of this year's potential tax increase on residents. They described it as a one-time fix to give officials time to come up with a creative, revenue-producing plan.

The Town Council's budget policy statement, crafted each year in accordance with the town charter to help guide the budget planning process, outlines the council's philosophy on its reserve fund.

"The fund balance shall NOT be used to lower the annual mill rate or pay for Town operating expenses except to supplement revenue sources for shortfalls or reductions in state funding or other deemed emergencies," the policy states.

Town Manager Michael Maniscalco launched his own fiery assault during Wednesday's meeting when he stood up during the board's deliberations.

"The use of fund balance is not a good idea in this instance," he said.

He said the town's AAA credit rating from Standard & Poor's could be compromised by using the fund to cover operating expenses.

The rainy day fund is currently at 11.9 percent of the total operating budget, according to Finance Director Jeff Jylkka.

Maniscalco said the fund has been used in the past to trade "cash assets for hard assets" like fire trucks and property purchases.

"It's a very different thing than taking cash assets and using them to offset operating expenses," Maniscalco said. "If we go and do something of that nature, S&P can very seriously look at it very negatively, no matter what the dollar amount."

According to town documents, the town has also used the fund balance over the past two years for items including the town's 250th anniversary celebration, equipment for the new Glastonbury dispatch system, and a mid-year police hire.

Maniscalco said the town's high credit rating is critical to securing good interest rates on potential projects such as the creation of a town water system and school building improvements.

That's when Rose cut him off.

"We're going to take it from here," Rose said.

Maniscalco tried to continue before grudgingly stepping back.

"Okay, but your credit rating is going to be impacted," he said. "You're not going to be able to put roofs on those schools, pay for water systems, or anything else."

An August 2017 credit report from Standard & Poor's said the rating agency expects the town to be able to protect reserve levels as it manages reductions to state aid.

"However, if revenues do not align with expenditures on a recurring basis and the town draws on reserves, we could revise our view of its operating performance downward," the report stated.

The finance board's fund balance policy states a preference for a fund balance between eight and 10 percent of budgeted operating expenses.

Jylkka said this week that the state's fiscal health has deteriorated since the policy was approved in 2011, which makes it more important than ever to maintain a sufficient fund balance to lend stability amid unreliable funding from the state.

"In the near term I do not see any meaningful changes at the state level that would cause me to change my opinion on not using fund balance," Jylkka said. "Anything the town can do to enhance fund balance will be viewed positively by the rating community."

Union Concessions

According to resident Tom Macey, a Flint, Mich. transplant and magnet school teacher, any long-term plan should examine concessions from educators such as reworking the step structure so it takes longer to reach the highest-paying step.

He said taking that approach back in Michigan, where he served as a union vice-president, saved dozens of jobs one year.

He emphasized tax increases and layoffs are not the only options when it comes to crafting a budget in difficult fiscal times.

"I delivered the layoff notices every year, so I have a very good idea working with the administration, what it feels like to watch someone who's 40 years old cry because he no longer has a position. I'm very sensitive to that reality," he said on Monday.

Wednesday, he was back again to drive the point home.

"Every year we just resign ourselves and sigh and raise the mill rate by 2 mills. We're going to reach a tipping point," he said. "To be honest, I don't think that's this year. I think if you put this to vote, it would pass. The problem is, what about next year? And the year after that? And the year after that? And at some point we have to be disciplined enough to make structural changes."

After resident feedback at both meetings, Rose announced Wednesday that the finance board members would hold off on their budget vote until a joint meeting with the Board of Education the following week.

The agenda for the Wednesday meeting had originally specified deliberation and a possible vote on the proposed 2018-19 budget. That vote has been rescheduled to Thursday, April 5.

The finance board will meet Tuesday, April 3, with the Board of Education.

Rose said the joint meeting with the school board is a chance to get more information.

"When you have all these awful choices, we want to see if there's anything else out there we can do," he said after Wednesday's meeting.

He said he wanted a better idea from school board members about their stance on opening negotiations with the unions.

"I want to address that, think about that, and have a general idea where everybody's going," he said. "Because if it's going to be the same, that's a problem."

School board chairman Chris Goff said after the same meeting that his board is open to the discussion.

The school board met earlier this month with the finance board for a budget workshop. Rose was unable to attend.

"I'm not sure what other information they want," Goff said. "I'm a little frustrated by these questions they have. We've had many months of us presenting and discussing the budget that they could have been part of."

When asked by the *Rivereast* if the school board is open to labor negotiations, he said it is – "to a point."

"I'm a little leery because we haven't even begun as a board discussing our intent or our direction during the negotiations, so to discuss it with [the finance board] I think is very premature," Goff said. "But to get input is helpful."

Smith said earlier this week that the school unions have "been very good about coming to the table."

He cited negotiations last year to switch to the state health insurance pool, which came with increased contributions from the employees. Due to the change, the current school board budget proposal now estimates a 3-percent decrease in health insurance costs compared to the current budget.

When asked what kind of concessions might be on the table, Smith said the typical conversation between school boards and unions in situations like this revolves around freezing step

increases.

Such a freeze could save about \$150,000 in the proposed budget, he said.

But he emphasized he can't speak for the unions.

Differing Perspectives

Eva White, a parent of school-aged children, spoke during Wednesday's meeting to say she'd rather pay more in taxes for the school system – not less.

She said officials should be looking into ways to buy more books and supplies instead of cutting teachers; they should look into adding electives and Advanced Placement classes instead of taking classes away.

"All of this costs money and I understand that. But what if instead of penny pinching the kids of this town, we invest our hard earned money in their education?" she said.

James "Pete" Brown, a Democrat on the Town Council, stood up as one of the few taxpayers who talked about the need to rein in the budget.

"You know what I wish? I wish the elderly people don't have to make a decision about buying pills this month or paying their taxes," he said. "I wish that part of our community was as affluent as the other half. They're not. It's a reality."

While applauding the school advocates for sticking up for education, Brown also applauded the finance board for looking at the town as a whole.

He implored the education supporters not to be "elitist."

"Don't put out of your mind the rest of the community that has to support the very things you're looking at. Can they do it? Some of them can, some of them can't. It's a balancing act," he said.

By the Numbers

The Board of Finance is examining budget proposals from Town Manager Michael Maniscalco and the Board of Education in preparation for a budget vote next week. Here are the figures they're looking at as they decide if further cuts are necessary:

Total proposed budget: \$46.31 million, a 4.63 percent increase over the current budget.

Education budget: \$31.17 million, 3.73 percent, over the current budget.

General government budget (including

debt and capital): \$15.14 million, or 6.54 percent over the current budget.

The proposal could result in a mill rate of 33.62 mills, which would amount to a 2.30 mill increase over the current year.

A mill is \$1 tax per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Under the new mill rate, taxes paid on a home assessed at \$200,000 for the 2018-19 fiscal year would be \$6,724.

That's an increase of \$460 over the current year.

Worship Center cont. from Front Page

look up 32 feet high, it just points you Godward," Gonyaw said.

The stained-glass window will be the focal point.

"Art is so important in our Christian experience; you look at God, the greatest artist of all time," Santostefano, a trained photographer, said. "Visual arts are helpful in worship."

A total of six chandeliers, five feet wide and shaped like crowns, though unornate so they match the barn-like architecture, will hang from the ceiling.

"He's king [so] it's a crown," Gonyaw said, but stressed the design needed to fit with the barn motif.

The steel beams holding up the ceiling will be covered in wood to give the appearance of wooden barn beams in the hammer truss architecture, Santostefano said. The architectural style was chosen as a reflection of the church's beliefs and theology and to make folks become participants in the service, rather than observers.

"Light, space and form," he said. "Hammer trusses automatically make you look up."

"Every line speaks," Gonyaw said.

The 6,000-square-foot building is being built by Sigfridson of Brooklyn. It was designed by Ken Sigfridson, based on a rough drawing Santostefano sketched on a napkin.

Sigfridson, who has since retired, first met with members of the design team in 2008. Work on the building, the foundation for which was laid in 2015, is being completed by his son, Evan Sigfridson.

The sanctuary will take up exactly half of the edifice; the other 3,000 square feet will be the ministry building, which will resemble a house to make people feel welcome. In addition to offices, classrooms and a kitchen, there will be a sitting area with a fireplace and couches. A coffee cart will be there to accent the feeling of warmth and welcome.

Flanked by two stone walls with water flowing down, the entrance of the sanctuary will

mark the change in mood meant to accompany one's visit within, they said.

"Those doors with the water coming down are just going to go, 'Be still, be still God is here,'" Gonyaw said.

The intent is to get people to change their attitude as they step from one area to the next.

"This is the house of the Lord, this is the gate of Heaven," Gonyaw said, reciting a line from Genesis.

Nail spikes on poles in the ministry will make yet another statement.

"The nail spikes represent what purchased my freedom," Gonyaw said.

Santostefano, raised Catholic, founded The Worship Center, a non-denominational Christian church, in 1986. A desire to enter the priesthood and at the same time feeling he, as he put it, was called to be a husband and father, he attended Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary and became a Protestant minister. He planted the new church with a group "looking for a new expression of Christianity in this area of Connecticut," he said.

The church is being built on land donated in 1997 by Florence Boucher.

"She really wanted a church on her property," Santostefano said.

Boucher, who lived in a house down the hill from the church, passed away in 2005. She joined the church after giving the land. A prayer garden that can be seen on the left of the driveway as one approaches the church was put in in 2008 and was also her wish.

When completed the church will have cost a total of \$1.2 million, some which was raised through donations and some that came from bank loans, Santostefano said. There is \$100,000 left to raise and a need for flooring and halo lighting inserts, as well as a stove for the kitchen.

Anyone wishing to make a donation should contact Santostefano at 860-906-8685 or marksantostefano@gmail.com.

Portland Trio Honored for Kindness and Generosity

by Elizabeth Regan

A positive outlook on life, a willingness to help anyone who needs it, and a belief in simple acts of kindness: These are the traits exemplified in the three recipients of the 2018 Ralph Paley Spirit of Portland Award.

Roselani Ferguson, Joyce Ghent and George Gilbert were honored Sunday at the Waverly Center in the tenth Spirit of Portland Award ceremony. It was the sixth time local volunteers were honored in the name of Ralph Paley, whose two daughters sponsor the event to memorialize their father's legacy of unassuming service to the community.

The program was initiated by senior center administrator Mary Flood as a way to honor residents who have done their best – quietly and without fanfare – to make Portland a great place. The honorees were nominated by their fellow residents.

Ghent is best known for founding the Middlesex Hospital Vocal Chords. According to the musical group's website, the group began in 1990. That's when Ghent, a registered nurse, saw the effect her own soft singing voice had on a patient in the Intensive Care Unit. Pulling together a few hospital employees who loved to sing, she grew the program into a chorus of more than 90 singers who perform in two concerts every year and in various engagements across central Connecticut.

But Flood said Ghent's involvement with the Vocal Chords is "just the tip of the iceberg." She was also active in Portland school activities, the United Way, the Junior Woman's Club and the Little League. She has traveled as far as Louisiana, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, to lend a hand.

One of Ghent's anonymous supporters put it this way in her nomination letter: "Joyce has a strong desire to live life to the fullest, always has a positive outlook on life and is willing to help anywhere she can."

Ghent's voice was choked with emotion as she received the award in front of more than 100 people at Sunday's event.

"I'm so humbled," she said. "I don't deserve this."

She told the audience community service has always been its own reward.

"When you give 100 percent, you will always get back 200 percent. Every day is a gift. Give of yourselves to others. That's why we're here."

Flood introduced Gilbert as "a Portland native and a force for good in our town."

His nomination letter described him as someone who "is willing to help everybody."

In addition to serving as president of the Portland Historical Society, a past district commander of the United States Power Squadron, and a member of the Knights of Columbus, Flood said he is always willing to share his knowledge about local history – "especially Oscar Hedström's Indian Motorcycle and the Pickering governor."

Hedström was a co-founder of the well-known Indian Motorcycle Manufacturing Company; Thomas R. Pickering was the inventor of a spring-loaded governor to produce more reliable and consistent speeds in engines.

Gilbert received his award with gratitude to the residents of a community he said comes together like spokes on a wheel, from emergency responders to elected officials to volunteers in so many different community organizations.

"The town of Portland is a good place to raise a family, right, Mom?" he said. Gilbert, who is one of 11 children, smiled toward the table where his family sat.

Ferguson was unable to attend the event due to a death and illnesses in the family, but Flood spoke in honor of the woman who she said has been her friend for decades.

"She's been active in the community in ways known, but in more ways unknown," Flood said. "Her nomination proves something all of us should know: people do notice when you do the right thing, even if you don't think they're watching."

Ferguson moved to Portland from Hawaii and



2018 Ralph Paley Spirit of Portland Award winners George Gilbert (left) and Joyce Ghent were honored for their service to the community Sunday at the Waverly Center. Ghent is pictured here with great-granddaughter Reagan Hassett, 2. The third honoree, Roselani Ferguson, was unable to attend the ceremony.

became involved with the Cromwell Children's Home, which is now Ädelbrook. Flood said Ferguson taught religious education at St. Mary Catholic Church for 25 years before running the program for a few years.

"She's also a great ambassador for her Hawaiian culture," Flood said.

But those examples are just a part of Ferguson's contributions to the community, according to Flood.

"The interesting thing is she was awarded this for her public acts of volunteerism, but as her friend, I can attest to the untold number of personal acts of kindness she has shared with those less fortunate than her over the years," Flood said.

She said Ferguson has purchased prom dresses for high school students who couldn't otherwise afford them, cooked meals for those who couldn't leave their homes, bought Christmas presents for families in need, and drove senior citizens to the grocery store and medical appointments.

Ralph Paley's widow, Sara, took the podium during the ceremony to honor her late husband and the day's honorees in rhyme.

Describing Ralph Paley as "a lover of his hometown of Portland and all the people in it," she said he "quietly started giving back to help others enjoy every minute."

His good deeds, she told the honorees, "are continued with people like you."

Colchester Resident Opens Glastonbury Barbershop

by Chris Seymour

After several years of working for others, Colchester resident Ryan Cove has decided to go into business for himself – and now owns a barbershop in Glastonbury.

Cove opened the aptly-named Cove's Barber Shop in December. Located at 3045 Main St. in Glastonbury, in the Putnam Bridge Plaza near the East Hartford line, the shop aims to bring an old-fashioned barbershop experience to the modern man.

At Cove's, not only can you get a haircut and an old-school straight-razor shave, but you can also shoot pool in a lounge area – which includes a Keurig coffee machine and a fridge stocked with beer and water – or play video games while you get your haircut.

"It's definitely an old-fashioned thing and it's definitely made its way back," said Cove of barbershops. "It's where you come to hang out and chat; it's not just about getting a haircut."

Cove, 30, has been a barber for about 10 years, and prior to opening his own shop late last year, he worked at Rooster's Men's Grooming Center in Glastonbury since 2011.

With all that experience working in Glastonbury, Cove chose the community as the location for his shop "because I've worked in town for so long and I've built such great relationships with so many people in town."

His new, 2,400-square-foot barbershop used to be a hair salon. Cove said it was "always the ultimate goal" to open his own shop. "For anybody in this business, it is your ultimate goal to have your name up on the door," he said.

Cove, who grew up in Durham, lives in Colchester with his wife Shannon and their two daughters: 3-year-old Kennedy and 1-year-old Evangeline.

For Cove, it's all about building relationships with his customers. "That's where the fun comes from; you sit and talk and laugh and you have a good time with it," he said. "And it's really stress-free work. I have a lot of really loyal customers that I have been doing for years

now."

Cove – who has one other barber, Steve Roberts, working at his shop – joked that running his own business is "absolutely" more stressful than cutting hair.

"My goal is that you come in for your haircut but you also want to hangout, so it's not in and out, and it slows people down a little bit," he said. "There are TVs at every station and we have PlayStations at all of the stations and they're kind of a hit right now with the younger crowd."

Services include men's haircut (with hot towel wash, style and back of the neck shave), \$28; hot shave, \$26; haircut and shave, \$50; 15 and younger, \$20; and beard (with straight-razor edging), \$15. "In-between cleans" are offered free; these enable a customer to come in and get the back of their neck shaved, as well as sideburns and around the ears cleaned up, at no-cost.

"We do the old-fashioned shaves, the straight-edge shaves," said Cove. "It makes shaving more of a relaxing process. It takes about a half hour and it's really like getting a facial for a guy."

For the shaves, "We start with a hot towel, and then use a facial steamer to keep moisture and heat on the face. After the shave we re-wash the face and use another hot towel before applying our aftershave and lotion."

Cove added that "not only is your face hairless but your skin feels fantastic afterward."

This reporter can attest to that. I got a haircut and shave from Cove while interviewing him for this story and it was a very relaxing experience. I had never before had my face shaved by a straight razor, but I found it to be the closest and smoothest shave of my life (and that's saying something because I am the kind of guy who can shave, and then two hours later, has a 5 o'clock shadow).

Cove, to his credit, was a bit of a perfectionist, as he made sure he got every last whisker on my face.



Colchester resident Ryan Cove opened up his own barbershop in Glastonbury in December.

Cove invites men in the community to head over to his shop and "experience something different."

"I am trying to bring back the true essence of the barbershop – you come in, you're not just in and out," he said. "You can hang out, you can play the games, you can shoot pool. You can actually have the atmosphere instead of being in 20 minutes and you're out and onto the next thing. I am just going for a different feel, style and atmosphere."

Cove also said he enjoys seeing fathers and sons bond when they come into his shop.

"Dads bring their boys in and you see the bonding experience," he said. "I am watching

them shooting pool and dads are showing their sons how to hold the cue. To me it's just a really cool thing to be able to watch, see and experience."

Cove's Barber Shop is open Wednesdays, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; Thursdays and Fridays, 9 a.m.-7 p.m.; Saturdays, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.; and Sundays, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. It is closed Mondays and Tuesdays. Walk-in appointments are offered based on availability. For more information on Cove's Barber Shop, or to book an appointment, visit covesbarbershop.com.

Chris Seymour is a reporter for the River east's sister newspaper, The Glastonbury Citizen.

Green to Seek Second Term

by Sloan Brewster

With a background in social services, state Rep. Robin Green (R-55) is moderate on social issues and conservative on fiscal matters.

"Fiscally I'm very conservative, socially I'm very moderate," she said in an interview Wednesday.

Green is nearing the end of her first term in office, and has her sights set on a second; she's running for re-election this November.

The legislator has been a resident of Marlborough for 11 years. A business owner for 17 years, she owns the Discovery Zone Learning Center, an educational facility for children with outlets in Marlborough, Hebron and Columbia.

Since taking office, she has learned folks on both sides of the aisle have things in common.

"As a freshman, it's been an interesting year and a half," she said. "You learn a lot being in Hartford and up at the capital. Both sides, even though philosophically we think differently, both sides truly want to work with what's best for Connecticut but it's challenging because our perspectives of how to get there are different."

Green was recruited to run for office by Pamela Sawyer, the Bolton Republican who



Green

represented the 55th district for more than 20 years before stepping down in 2014.

"Robin has a great grasp of the legislative process now," Sawyer said. "And one of the things that I recognized in her when I first asked her to run was that she had a keen interest in state government and she had a deep understanding of what the fiscal issues were."

Sawyer said she thought Green would make a great candidate because she understood the challenges for small businesses.

"Who better than someone who lives in the district and owns two of her businesses in the district?" Sawyer said.

So far, Green has proven her worth, according to Sawyer.

"For someone in her freshman term, certainly it's fabulous – a 100 percent voting record, which speaks to her commitment," Sawyer said. "She has done a great job in forging relationships on both sides of the aisle, which in the Connecticut house is very important."

Before opening Discovery Zone, Green, who has a degree in human services from Springfield College, worked for seven years for the Village of Families and Children, an agency in Hartford that works with children with emotional and behavioral issues. After that, she worked for the Capital Region Education Council for 12 years.

Being a business owner, a woman and a mother, and having worked in social services has given her perspective, she said.

A social issue close to Green's heart is the opioid epidemic.

"It is just disastrous," she said. "It is destroying our families [and] not enough is being done."

A high percentage of addiction is masking mental health issues, including depression and anxiety, Green, who said she has sat in Narcotics Anonymous meetings, said.

She is not in favor of legalizing marijuana – or, as she put it, she's "not there."

"I can only imagine if pot were legal, what would that do to a generation?" she said. "It doesn't feel right."

The state budget is Green's number one issue.

"Running as a Republican, the most important thing for me is spending," she said. "We have to take a look at every department and control our spending."

According to *CT News Junkie*, the state Office of Fiscal Analysis found the budget in 2020 will have a \$1.9 billion deficit and a \$2.7 billion deficit by 2021.

To help address this, Green said, one thing to look at is duplicating roles in state jobs and an excess of department heads, she said. Also, the state's overtime budget has increased by 12 percent and needs a hard look, Green added.

Serving on the General Assembly's financial review and bonding committee and education and transportation committees, Green also has an opinion on tolls, which the transportation

committee voted down.

"I voted against the tolls," she said. "We need to take a look at the lockbox that we have, but the lockbox that we have, everyone's got the combination."

In 2017, \$50 million was diverted from the lockbox, Green said.

The lockbox is meant to guarantee that certain funds are exclusively put in the Special Transportation Fund.

"Why are we not looking at that?" she said. "The citizens of Connecticut are led to believe that the Special Transportation Fund is going to become insolvent in the next couple years. How about if we stop diverting money and start putting money in?"

Originally from Ohio, Green moved to Connecticut with her family when she was growing up and her father was transferred from job to job. The family anticipated another move but to their surprise, they remained in the state. Green graduated from Windsor High School and has been married to her high school sweetheart since 1997. They have two children aged 16 and 18 and three cats. Her son's pet – Tony the Lizard – passed away last year.

Sawyer said she has heard good things about Green.

"She's very well received at the capital," Sawyer said. "People find her to be a very positive person with a can do attitude and anyone who's willing to dive into that budget deserves a gold star."

Hebron Survey Would Seek Budget Input

by Sloan Brewster

In the quest for more feedback on what taxpayers are looking for in the 2018-19 budget, the Board of Finance has crafted a survey it hopes a large number of folks will complete.

On March 1, Town Manager Andrew Tierney gave his 2018-19 budget proposal to the boards of selectmen and finance, asking for \$9.047 million in general government expenses. The request represents a \$265,237, or 2.85 percent, reduction from the current year.

The hope, according to Board of Finance Vice Chairman Malcolm Leichter, is that a significant number of responses will come in from the survey before the board makes a decision for final numbers to bring to its public hearing.

"We're hoping to get some different input than we've gotten in the past when we've done the exit poll," he said.

The online survey can be found on the town and school websites and on the AHM website. Hard copies are available at several locations.

As of Thursday morning, there were more than 450 responses.

Board of Finance members decided earlier in March to give the survey a try, Leichter said. It's something the town has never done.

"The Board of Finance thought it was a good idea to try to get some input ahead of time," Leichter said in a phone call Monday. "Rather than having to come back for a revote."

Last year, the 2017-18 town budget passed at the first referendum but the RHAM school budget failed, Tierney said during the call. The year before the town budget failed at the first referendum.

While the town has not engaged in survey

taking in the past, it has performed exit polls at budget referendums, but according to Leichter, they don't give a true picture.

"We find too many people are too upset to take it," Leichter said. "Emotions kind of get involved in taking the budget survey on the day of the referendum."

Workshops and Board of Selectmen public hearings aren't well-attended, Leichter and Tierney said. Board of Finance public hearings tend to be more well attended, but there's a caveat to that.

"Every year the same people come," Leichter said.

Referendums also follow the same track year to year, with a low percentage of voters coming out, Tierney said.

"We also don't get great turnout in our voting," he said.

Tierney and Leichter estimated only about 12 to 14 percent of registered voters participate in budget referendums and said voting patterns are easily determined.

"We can count on 600 to 650 'no's, even if the budget is going down," Tierney said. "Two years ago it was going down, they still had the 'no's."

While the survey is available online, it's also available on paper, including at schools, the Douglas Library and the Russell Mercier Senior Center.

"There was a concern that the elderly may not want to do it online," Leichter said.

As of Thursday, there had only been 10 paper responses although staff from the senior center and library have said they handed out

many more, according to Leichter.

Sharron Garrard, senior services director, said she has been encouraging folks to complete the survey.

Seniors are greeted by a message prompting them to fill out the survey as part of the computerized check-in process, according to Garrard.

"We have to make more copies," she said Tuesday.

A few people sat around the couch and chairs in the waiting area in the center.

Grace Smith, of Hebron, was among them. She said she was planning to do the survey when she returned home that evening. She read through it, chatting about the questions.

Her biggest concern is not about the town budget, she admitted. Rather, she has concerns about funding for schools because her daughter is a paraprofessional at RHAM High School.

Smith said she has had conversations with Hebron Superintendent of Schools Timothy Van Tassel when he has stopped by the center to discuss the budget with seniors.

The survey includes questions about how long respondents have lived in town, their age, gender, income level, if they have children, if they use services and which ones. There are questions in which respondents rate services and the importance of funding them. There is also a section about how the town should deal with reductions in state funding.

"The senior center is good," Smith said, skimming one question after another. "Social services is fair to good, but I think they should have more elderly low income housing."

When she came to the section on reductions, she did not like what she saw. None of the suggestions for dealing with state cuts were acceptable, she said.

"Nothing to do with education," she added. "No way."

When given no other options, she reluctantly said she would chose reducing town services.

In response to the topic of reduced revenue from the state, she had an idea.

"Go back to them and say 'You can't do that,'" she said.

Smith said she would be willing to pay higher taxes to deal with the state funding cuts but added that, with her current low income, she no longer pays taxes.

Smith also pointed out that she has another problem, one shared by other seniors.

"I did not vote in the last referendum because I didn't get transportation," she said. "The senior bus should be provided for that, but they have an awful lot of medical transports so everything else goes to the wayside."

While Leichter and Tierney hoped for responses by April 1, the survey will remain open until April 10 and possibly longer.

"If we're still getting responses at our public hearing, we'll keep it open," Leichter said.

The Board of Selectmen will make its budget recommendation to the finance board by March 31.

The Board of Finance public hearing will take place April 10 and the referendum will be May 8.

East Hampton Police News

3/8: Cory Lee Burtchell, 41, of 5B Barton Hill Rd., was arrested and charged with criminal attempt of sixth-degree larceny and interfering with an officer, East Hampton Police said.

3/13: Vasil Jovcev, 51, of 708 Church St., Newington, was issued a summons for traveling too fast for conditions and operating a motor vehicle while under suspension, police said.

Also, from March 12-18, officers responded to 17 medical calls, seven motor vehicle crashes and five alarms, and made 14 traffic stops, police said.

Colchester Police News

3/20: State Police said Tyeshon D. Johnson, 33, of 99 Franklin St., Meriden, was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under suspension and failure to have headlamps.

3/21: Colchester Police said Wayne Mohrlein, 38, of 136 Elm St., was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct, violating a protective order and third-degree assault.

3/24: Colchester Police said Ruben Colon, 64, of 187 Hamilton Ave., Norwich was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol/drugs and operating a motor vehicle without a license.

3/24: State Police said a male juvenile, 16, was charged with second-degree burglary, sixth-degree larceny, disorderly conduct, violating a protective order and third-degree assault.

Marlborough Police News

3/25: State Police said Juan L. Martinez, 24, of 70 Hammer St., East Hartford was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol/drugs, improper parking and operating a motor vehicle without a license.

Beloved East Hampton Playground Set for Wrecking Ball

by Elizabeth Regan

The well-loved and well-worn wooden playground at Seamster Park will be demolished within a month, per order of the Town Council.

The council voted Tuesday to authorize the tear-down of the decades-old playground near Memorial School amid continuing concerns about safety hazards.

The move comes as the Parks and Recreation Department works to finalize plans for a replacement playground. Director Jeremy Hall said the new park won't be built until at least a year from now.

The playground will be gone and fenced off before kids converge on the adjacent Little League baseball field for the official start of the season, if all goes according to plan.

"We want it down before Opening Day," Town Council Chairwoman Melissa Engel said.

Parks and Recreation Department Director Jeremy Hall said he has secured a small crew of volunteers with heavy equipment to knock down the playground and haul it away. The demolition should take a few days to accomplish, he said.

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board on March 6 voted unanimously to remove the entire structure.

A certified playground safety inspector with the Parks and Recreation Department issued a June 2017 inspection report that cited many of the issues found by Trident Insurance Company the previous year.

The pressure-treated wood, which the report said leaches toxic materials into the soil and exposes children to chemicals, is a main concern. Remediation would involve sanding and sealing by a contractor qualified to work with toxic elements.

The report included photos of many parts of the structure that don't conform with modern safety standards and must be removed. They include slides, tire swings, a rope climber and numerous other play elements.

Multiple areas of the playground were shown to have dangerous gaps between the wooden slats. The gaps make it possible for children's heads or torsos to get stuck.

The report also cited rusty, worn and outdated

hardware – including chains, bolts, nuts and hooks – that must be replaced.

Back when the department began weighing its options two years ago, Hall said a contractor told him sanding and sealing the existing structure wouldn't be possible; instead, the wood would have to be replaced with expensive composite decking popularly known as Trex.

"That could exceed the cost of doing a total replacement, and then some," Hall said at the time.

The proposed replacement playground, which has gone from original estimates of \$250,000 to a pared-down \$150,000, is being funded by a combination of donations, department program fees and capital funding from the town.

Designs for the 14,000-square-foot proposed playspace were created with help from East Hampton elementary school students through interactive workshops facilitated by architects from the Ithaca, N.Y.-based Play By Design

firm. The kids pitched in their ideas for amenities including adaptive swings, a rock wall, monkey bars, bridges, slides and tunnels.

The proposed playground is slated to be put together by volunteers as part of a "community build." Hall said it will take about a week to complete and requires 70 volunteers per shift for three shifts per day.

The town has already set aside \$20,000 for the new playscape in the capital budget, with the Parks and Recreation Department requesting another \$30,000 in the coming year.

But the Board of Finance this Wednesday expressed an interest in cutting the request to \$10,000. No definitive decisions have been made. A vote is anticipated next week.

Director Jeremy Hall said the department has raised enough money through fundraising and program fees to cover all but \$20,000 of the new playscape.

Coming up with the additional money without help from the town could push the project back to the spring of 2020, he said.

East Hampton Municipal Hub Gets P&Z Go-Ahead

by Elizabeth Regan

The Planning and Zoning Commission last week unanimously approved the special permit and site plan for a 19,142-square-foot municipal hub on 5.4 acres overlooking the eastern end of Route 66.

The town hopes to break ground on the project by early September, according to Town Manager Michael Maniscalco.

Project engineer John Faulise Jr., of Griswold-based Boundaries LLC, presented the plan to Planning and Zoning Commission members on March 22.

The colonial revival-inspired building of brick, metal and glass will include all the offices housed in the current town hall, police department, Board of Education building and a municipal annex on Middletown Avenue. It was designed by the architecture firm Amenta Emma of Hartford.

The site is part of Edgewater Hill, a 59-acre venture by East Hampton residents Steve and Lisa Motto that will include restaurants, shops, offices, single-family homes, townhouses, condominiums and apartments to be constructed over the next decade.

The municipal hub site plan shows traffic will enter and exit via a two-way, 24-foot-wide driveway on Route 66 that takes visitors up Edgewater Circle and onto the town property. The loop around the building is designed for one-way traffic at a width of 20 feet.

A separate emergency access driveway for police is located south of the main entrance.

Planning and Zoning members voted to approve a 24-foot-wide emergency access driveway, as opposed to the 20-foot-wide driveway initially proposed by engineers.

Faulise said a width of 20 feet meets fire marshal regulations and is sufficient for emergency-only traffic. He said it also reinforces the idea that the road is for police, not the public.

"It doesn't look like a road; it looks like a driveway," Faulise said.

But Faulise told commissioners he included a 24-foot width option as part of the site plan so they could make the ultimate decision.

Commission Chairman Kevin Kuhr said this week that members felt the emergency access driveway should be consistent with zoning regulations for standard roads, which require 12-foot travel lanes for each direction of travel.

While proposed for emergency access only, Kuhr said making sure the route is in conformance with zoning regulations now will be "one less thing we have to do" in the future if an applicant comes forward with a plan to turn the driveway into a road.

Faulise's presentation delved into stormwater runoff issues when he told commissioners the volume of flow would not exceed the current levels due to stormwater management measures put in place to mitigate the impact of asphalt pavement, concrete sidewalks, underground utilities and landscaping.

The March Stormwater Management Report by Boundaries LLC said stormwater on the site flows from east and west. Runoff to the east goes into a 0.6-acre pond that drains into a series of culverts running under Route 66 and through a series of open channels to Lake Pocotopaug. Runoff to the west flows into a catch basin next to Lake Vista Drive and then to a retention basin adjacent to Route 66. From there, it goes under Route 66 and into Lake Pocotopaug through open channels.

"It is our professional opinion that there will be no significant impact associated with this project upon downstream wetlands, watercourses or adjacent properties," the stormwater management report concluded.

During discussion on the site plan application, Planning and Zoning Commission members expressed concern about the lack of a back



The Planning and Zoning Commission last week gave the go-ahead to the municipal hub on Route 66. Pictured is a rendering of the 19,142-square-foot hub, which will be built on 5.4 acres.

entrance to the building.

Amenta Emma senior associate Chris Legiadre said that while staff can exit through a back door, they cannot enter that way. Instead, those using staff parking behind the facility must walk around the building to get to the front entrance.

Town Facilities Building Committee member George Pfaffenbach spoke from the audience to say he hadn't realized there was no way to get into the building from the back.

The building committee was established last year by the council to oversee the project.

Legiadre told commissioners the architects can still look into the possibility of a back entrance.

The commission's endorsement follows narrow approval by the public at referendum last

November. The project passed by 30 votes.

Before that, the project garnered approval from the Board of Finance and Town Council.

Efforts to secure a new town hall and police station were the subject of numerous studies and committees going back almost two decades with little visible progress until last year. That's when the council chose the site over seven other submissions in a competitive bidding process. The parcel was donated by the Mottos, who are serving as the town's project managers for a 4-percent cut of the total project cost.

Officials late last year estimated the plan will cost a taxpayer with a home assessed at \$200,000 roughly \$220 per year, based on average annual grand list growth of 0.50 percent.

The debt will not come due until 2022.

Marlborough Big Y Groundbreaking Planned for Tuesday

by Allison Lazur

After receiving approval from the zoning commission last summer, and much preliminary work in the months since, ground is scheduled to be broken next Tuesday, April 3, on the Big Y supermarket coming to Marlborough's town center.

The Big Y project was met with some minor issues. A meeting last week with Pepin Associates Architects, several contractors, Town Planner Peter Hughes and code officials of the town revealed a "lack of information regarding the propane gas tanks and fire suppression system," according to Joe Asklar, Fire Marshal. "This information has been requested ASAP," Asklar added, "but the project is alive and well!" He went on to say that "it is the intent of the town to issue the building and blasting permits."

Hughes was confident they would be able to provide this information.

"There were some outstanding comments when we went into meeting that we knew about, regarding the fire suppression system inside the building, whether the propane tanks are up or below ground and then we need some informa-

tion on some of the pent house units which are up top and power the freezers," said Hughes.

Hughes said town building official Bill Hayes has issued a partial building permit, to lay the foundation and put up walls only, until the requested information can be fully provided. Once that information is received and approved, the full building permit is expected to be issued in 2-3 weeks at most.

Edward M. Pepin, of Pepin Associates Architects, was also positive about the progression of the project since last June.

"We do have the foundation permit and other site work has been completed," he said.

The 55,000-square-foot store will be the 65th Big Y to open and is expected to open this fall, with construction completed in about six months, according to Hughes.

"I would say they will definitely be open before Thanksgiving, but you would have to talk to them [Big Y]," Hughes said. However, Lori Bryant, the Project Manager for Big Y could not be reached for comment as of press time Thursday.

Featuring a budget of \$6 million for the build-

ing – plus an additional \$1.5 million for site work, which include crucial items like the parking lot – the supermarket will be a major change for Marlborough.

"This provides a pharmacy, which is big; it's not just a grocery store," Hughes said. "People in Marlborough have to go to East Hampton, Colchester and Glastonbury to get pharmacy services; it's not just a food issue."

"Plus," he added, the project is bringing "175 jobs" to the town.

Aside from the increase in jobs, the supermarket is expected to bring in an additional \$310,000 of revenue to town, according to the site plan.

While the opening of the supermarket is in itself a significant event for the town, there will be new neighbors in the area, near the supermarket, who will also offer something original to Marlborough.

Ashley Kate Meyer, a Marlborough resident has plans to open a high-end hair salon at 8 Independence Drive. The salon, called The Violet and Lily Hair Studio, will also feature beer

and wine offerings.

Meyer, who currently works in Glastonbury, said she was excited to be closer to home and fulfill her vision.

"I'm going to be super picky about [what other hairdressers] rent space from me," she said. The salon is expected to be open in the next two to three weeks.

The development of Marlborough's town center also included renovations for the Marlborough Tavern building – which are underway, said Hughes – where the opportunity exists for two new tenants to occupy the renovated space. Hughes was unsure who those two new tenants would be.

The property owner, Allan Schwartz, could not be reached for comment as of press time.

Also, Hughes said, Dunkin' Donuts is moving into the old Bank of America building on Route 66, and the Marlborough Bakery is moving to Independence Drive, near Meyer's new salon.

"A lot of things are happening, and they are all positive," Hughes said.

Hampton Woods Returns to East Hampton PZC Next Week

by Elizabeth Regan

The development team behind a Route 66 affordable housing project they say is “not financially viable” will be back in front of the Planning and Zoning Commission next week with a plan they hope will earn the community’s support.

The Hampton Woods project has been the subject of public hearings for the past two months as development consultant Harry Freeman, along with Lisa Motto and Steve Motto, presented an application to create a new zone that would sidestep affordable housing requirements attached to the existing approval.

The third installment of the public hearing, which was extended at Freeman’s request, will be held Wednesday, April 4.

The 63.21-acre site on 206 East High St. was approved in 2010 to include up to 253 townhouses and single family homes. The current Housing Opportunity Development zone requires 30 percent of the units to be deed restricted for buyers who make less than 80 percent of the statewide median income.

The developers have proposed a new zone, called a Diverse Housing Development zone, that would mimic most aspects of the existing zone – with a few key differences. Besides getting rid of the affordable housing requirement, it would require a condominium association ownership structure and add single-level “flats” – otherwise known as apartments – to the housing mix.

Each building containing “flats” is limited to no more than three stories tall and 18 units under the proposed regulation.

Public response so far has been negative. Critics argue the proposed zone – which would apply to properties ranging from 10 to 200 acres and would allow 6 units per acre – encourages

dense housing developments that detract from the town’s rural charm.

While the existing zone allows 5 units per acre, Hampton Woods developers were able to increase the ratio to six units per acre through court intervention under the state’s affordable housing statute back in 2010.

If less than 10 percent of a town’s housing stock is deemed affordable according to the state statute known as 8-30g, a municipality is held to more stringent standards when it chooses to deny a developer who comes in with an affordable housing proposal.

The statute puts the onus on the Planning and Zoning Commissions to explain to the court why they denied an affordable housing development. In order to win a case, the commission has to prove the benefits of offering affordable housing are outweighed by threats to public health or safety.

The statute can help developers build a high number of apartments for which they would not otherwise get approval.

According to the state Department of Housing, 3.21 percent of East Hampton’s housing stock was considered affordable in 2016.

Critics of the current Hampton Woods proposal argue that eliminating the affordable housing provisions would interfere with the town’s ability to reach the 10-percent threshold that allows the Planning and Zoning Commission to remove itself from 8-30g oversight.

But Lisa Motto emphasized last week there won’t be any new construction if the zoning regulations don’t change. That’s because investors won’t support a project that requires one-third of the units to be sold at “unprofitable” levels and below cost, she said.

“I don’t care if you’re in West Hartford, I

don’t care if you’re in Farmington. I don’t care if you’re in Avon, or East Hampton or Colchester,” she said. “You’re going to have this lovely, approved project you can’t sell, you can’t build.”

Only two buildings, comprising three units each, have been constructed in the Hampton Woods development so far, officials said.

Alternative Approach

An alternative approach from the development team was quickly shot down by both the commission and the public when it was presented at the beginning of last week’s public hearing.

The revised plan would have scrapped the creation of a new zone and would have instead amended the current Housing Opportunity Development Zone to allow developers to ask for a special permit.

According to the proposed amendment, only an applicant with an already-approved project in the zone would be eligible for the special permit. The developer would also be held to the same number of units that was approved in the original application.

What the special permit would do is eliminate the affordable housing requirement, include a more diverse array of housing types, and require at least 30 percent of dedicated open space.

Mark Philhower, a former chairman of the commission and a current member of the Town Council, spoke for himself during the public hearing to object to the new proposal on the grounds that it wasn’t noticed in the newspaper as required by state law.

“How does the public know this is going on tonight?” he said. “They don’t.”

Commissioners also objected to the revised

proposal.

According to Kuhr, the amendment would essentially negate the Housing Opportunity Development Zone “so there’s no reason to even have” it.

Other long-standing members of the appointed commission established the zone to help regain control over how affordable housing can be built in town, instead of allowing the court system to call the shots as part of the affordable housing statute.

Rowland Rux said the zone came about after both the Hampton Woods project and the Belltown Place project on South Main Street were approved by judges, not commissioners.

“Being forced in two parts of our town to provide affordable housing, we came up with our own regulations,” Rux said. “We should leave it at that. Let the developer provide the affordable housing.”

DeCarli, who was flanked by town attorney Richard Carella of Updike, Kelly and Spellacy, apologized for not providing proper public notice in the newspaper. He said he mistakenly considered it a “modification” to the original zoning change application as opposed to a separate application.

Freeman agreed to drop the revised proposal. He said he would instead take all the concerns raised during the public hearing into account and return to the next meeting with “tweaks” to his original Diverse Housing Development zone proposal.

“There was a request to go with 30 percent open space requirement in that regulation. Done, we’ll do it,” he said. “There was a request to limit the density to five units [per acre]. Done, we’ll do it.”

Marlborough Finance Board Questions School Budget

by Allison Lazur

The Board of Finance Tuesday held a budget workshop and peppered Board of Education members with questions about the proposed 2018-19 school budget, which the school board had presented the week before.

Board of Finance Chairman Douglas Knowlton said he took a different approach to this meeting, with an emphasis placed on general discussions and questions, as opposed to inquiries about specific line items. The proposed school budget totals \$7,308,497, a 0.3 percent increase over current year spending.

Updates to the school were discussed, including a replacement roof and new boilers, as the budget allows.

Knowlton explained that there are currently no available funds other than \$10,000 in capital funding set aside for the roof replacement projected to take place in the next 10 to 15 years.

The proposed budget also has \$35,000 built in for service contracts, so that routine maintenance of items such as the boilers can be upheld.

Evelyn Godbout, a Board of Selectmen member, noted she was speaking as an individual when she said “schools around the state are all responsible for maintaining their buildings. If I was the school, I would be looking at who my lead janitor is and hire someone who can assist

the school [with HVAC systems and fixing boilers], so you aren’t using so many service contracts.”

There was also discussion of maintenance responsibilities occasionally left to the staff to accomplish.

Liz Gorgoglione, a finance board member speaking as an individual, said members should be “more concerned with our superintendent, principal and assistant principal acting as HVAC technicians and putting salt on sidewalks; Their specialty is education, not capital improvements.”

Upgrading the 15 year old phone system at the school—to allow a broadcast announcement to all classrooms—was a concern of the school board. The Board of Finance wanted to know whether it made sense to update separately from the town, or wait and integrate the upgrade. The town decided last year to postpone its upgrade until 2019.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. David Sklarz emphasized the phone system is one of the focal points of safety and “if the system goes down, we’re in trouble,” he said.

Sklarz said he would get updated information on the 2-year-old estimate of \$28,000 to update the phone system.

Declining enrollment for Marlborough El-

ementary from 534 students as of Oct. 2016 to 492 as of Oct. 2017 was also a point of interest and led some members of the Board of Finance to question why there was no decrease in the overall budget or cuts in staff. Members specifically asked about the possibility of reductions in the subjects of reading and writing teachers, as well as art, music, physical education and library positions known as “specials.”

Sklarz emphasized that more opportunities and more time in classes like music meant students would do better in academics, which led to the decision to increase class time from 40 to 50 minutes a day per subject.

Board of Education Chairman, Ruth Kelly also emphasized that the decision to increase the specials time was voted on by the Board of Education just last week, with seven in favor of the increase and two opposed.

The school board also addressed a question from the previous week regarding the number of hours the elementary school building is actually used.

Sklarz said the building was used for 915 hours total, including normal school hours, in February and March. He went on to stress the importance of the multi-purpose use of the building for 19 different groups.

“If we charged \$50 an hour, that would be \$35,000 in revenue; but we are a community school, we don’t want to do that,” he stated.

Salaries, benefits and contractual obligations contribute to 85 percent of the proposed budget.

Board of Finance member Deborah Bourbeau expressed her concern about extra time being devoted to specials instead of regular classroom studies. She referenced a rating by the *CT Mirror* from February that revealed Marlborough elementary had dropped to 74.1 percent, down from 2015-2016’s rating of 82.3 percent.

“One year does not set a trend,” said Sklarz. “If you look across the state, it was the state trend to see a decline... I have 100 percent confidence you won’t see that again.”

With no final decisions made as of Tuesday’s meeting, the workshop’s discussions were scheduled to continue Thursday evening.

Knowlton said finance board members were set to discuss the revenue part of the budget, work through an excel spreadsheet to make sure everyone understands how calculations involving the mill rate are done, and, finally, open up the discussion to what adjustments can be made to the budget.

Obituaries

Colchester

Sarah Alma Stewart

Sarah A. Stewart (Clinton), known as Sally, 88, passed peacefully Monday, March 26, at Middlesex Hospital Hospice surrounded by family. Born March 30, 1929, in Rocky Hill, Sally was the fourth of five children raised on Riverview Rd. in Rocky Hill. She graduated from Wethersfield High School, Class of 1947.



In 1949, Sally married her childhood sweetheart, Joseph Paul Stewart (Paul), who lived across the street from her. They remained in Rocky Hill and welcomed four daughters and one son while living on Pratt Street. She brought smiles to the faces of many customers at Grosso's Grocery Store in Rocky Hill, Bliss Market in Wethersfield and Noel's in Colchester. Sally and Paul enjoyed many good times on Sara-Jo, their boat.

Sally and Paul moved to Colchester in 1981 where Paul built their forever home, a beautiful log cabin. If those walls could speak, they would tell of unforgettable times at family gatherings, laughter bouncing off the walls at birthday celebrations and the yearly banter at Christmas to rally everyone around the fireplace for the family photo. Though some family members griped about this, these pictures tell the story of a remarkably close, tight-knit family who embraced "family first." Sally lived this motto daily as she knew the simplest yet most rewarding pleasure in life was spending time with them.

She looked forward most to seeing her loved ones and greeting each of them with big hugs and the best back scratches! Over the years, she also enjoyed painting ceramics and playing bingo with family and friends. Since Sally was quick to yell "bingo" thanks to a winning card, the common adage among family was, "it's all about the QT!"

The "quality time" and loving memories of Sally will be cherished in the hearts of Paul, her husband of 68 years; daughter, Kathy and husband Wayne Palmer; daughter, Sharon and husband Mark Adams; daughter Barbara and husband Charles Luddy; daughter Mary and husband Danny Spencer; and son Michael and wife Joelle Stewart; her nine grandchildren, Heather (husband Andrew), Jennifer (husband Demetrious), Nathan (wife Julie), Amy (husband Rob), John, Stacey, Michael, Joseph and Nicole; her eight great-grandchildren, Veda, Rex, Jonah, Nolan, Brayden, Isaiah, Travis and Kennedy, and many nieces, nephews, cousins, family and friends.

Sally's love for her family was of utmost importance and will continue to surround them in her absence. She is already missed beyond measure.

Sally was predeceased by her mother, Nellie (Treat) Clinton; her father, Joseph Clinton; brother, Edwin Clinton; sister, Harriet Clinton Olney; brother, Arthur Clinton; and brother Lawrence Clinton.

The family would like to thank the staff of Middlesex Hospital Hospice for their loving care and support at such a difficult time.

Calling hours will be held at the Brooklawn Funeral Home, 511 Brook St., in Rocky Hill, on Saturday, March 31, from 4-7 p.m. A funeral service will be held Monday, April 2, at noon, at Brooklawn, officiated by RHFD Chaplain the Rev. Dr. William Veinot. Burial will be immediately following in State Veterans Cemetery, Middletown.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Middlesex Hospital, Office of Philanthropy, 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457 (Hospice) or St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Hebron

Services for Mildred O'Toole

Services for Mildred (Gruich) O'Toole, late of Hebron, who passed away Jan. 5 at the age of 101, will be observed at 10:30 a.m. Friday, April 6, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester.

The family will receive guests starting at 9 a.m. until the time of the service.

She will be laid to rest along with her late husband in the Bourne (Mass.) National Veterans Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to Alzheimer's Association (alz.org).

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Hebron

Robert S. West

Robert S. West, 92, of Hebron, widower of the late Geraldine (Lewis) West, passed away peacefully at home Monday, March 26. Born Aug. 15, 1925, in Hartford, he was the son of the late Morris and Marjorie (Barber) West.

Along with his beloved wife, who predeceased him July 3, 2014, he was the devoted father of seven and ran the family farm, West Farm, in Hebron, where he loved gardening and tending to the animals.

Additionally, Bob worked as a mechanic for the main Texaco plant in East Hartford for many years before his retirement. In his spare time, he also enjoyed visiting with family and friends alike as well as reading. Mr. West was a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Willimantic.

He leaves five children (and their spouses), Robert Jr. and Nadia West of Glastonbury, Barbara and Stephen Renals of Vernon, Timothy and Genia West of Buford, Ga., Debra Wolicka of Rocky Hill, and Sandra Slingo of Ellington; 11 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; his brother, Richard West of California; and numerous extended family members and friends.

In addition to his wife and parents, he was predeceased by two children, Patricia Weed and Steven West; and his sister, Marjorie White.

A celebration of his life will be observed Monday, April 2, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The family will receive guests at 9 a.m., with services beginning at 10:30 a.m.

Burial with military honors will follow in the New Hebron Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to the Willimantic SDA Church, 126 Quarry St., Willimantic, CT 06226.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Lena Bouchard

Lena (Deschenes) Bouchard, 83, of Bristol, formerly of Colchester, widow of the late O'Neil Bouchard, passed away peacefully on Palm Sunday, March 25. Born July 17, 1934, in Sainte-Anne-de-Madawaska, New Brunswick, Canada, she was the daughter of the late Patrick and Adele (Berube) Deschenes.

Lena and O'Neil were married in New Brunswick in 1956 and moved to Connecticut thereafter to raise their family. After their children were grown, Mrs. Bouchard had worked for Merrow Machine Co., Emhart Industries and finally New England Calendar before retiring in 1997. She was a communicant of St. Andrew Church in Colchester and a former member of the Daughters of Isabella.

In addition to her loving husband of 53 years, who passed away May 5, 2010, and her parents, she was predeceased by a daughter, Micheline Squires, March 29, 2010; and eight siblings. She leaves three children, Mario and Nancy Bouchard of Dearborn, Mich., Michael and Krystyna Bouchard of Port Orange, Fla., and Liza Anderson of Middletown; a son-in-law, Richard Squires of Port St. Lucie; nine grandchildren, Kimberly, Dayna, Eric, Emily, Jared, Dawn, Brendon, Kamil and Anna; four great-grandchildren, Arya, Casey, Zachary and Keegan; a stepbrother, David and Helen Salter of New Brunswick, Canada; and numerous extended family and friends.

The family received guests Tuesday, March 27, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral liturgy was celebrated Wednesday, March 28, directly at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave., Colchester. Burial followed in the New St. Andrew Cemetery.

Donations in her memory may be made to the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, c/o University of Michigan Office of Development, 3003 South State St., Suite 9000, Ann Arbor, MI 48109 1288 or online at mottchildren.org.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Selah S. Palmer

Selah S. Palmer, 92, a longtime resident of Colchester, passed away peacefully Friday, March 23, at Apple Rehab Colchester. He was born Jan. 8, 1926, the youngest of five children of the late Selah and Eva (Greene) Palmer of Mansfield.

Selah served in the U.S. Army in Korea during the Korean War. He was proud to be a 58-year member of the Grange, and a 60-year member of the Colchester Fish and Game Club.

He had a great love of the outdoors. In his younger years, he maintained extensive gardens, delighting in sharing vegetables and flowers with anyone who came to his door. Until infirmity made it impossible, he enjoyed hiking in the woods and paddling his canoe in the lakes and rivers of Connecticut and beyond.

Selah was predeceased by his parents and four siblings. He was able to live independently in the family homestead up to one month ago, thanks to the devoted support of friends, neighbors and the Meals-on-Wheels drivers, many of whom became friends. The family wishes to thank those individuals for making this possible.

Selah had a wonderful and wry sense of humor which was sometimes misunderstood. One had only to look at the sparkle in his blue eyes and the tiny grin to know that he was teasing. He was an avid and eclectic reader who read at least three books a week. He had a great memory for everything that he read and was able to reach back for details years after reading a book. The dedicated staff and volunteers at Cragin Memorial Library in Colchester faithfully kept him in reading material, delivering baskets of books to his home when he became homebound. They have our gratitude for providing this service.

He is survived by six nieces and nephews. In keeping with his wishes, there will be no services. Interment will take place at the family plot in Linwood Cemetery at a later date.

The family encourages those wishing to make a memorial donation in Selah's name to consider the Cragin Memorial Library, 8 Linwood Ave., Colchester, CT 06415.

Arrangements are in the care of Belmont Funeral Home. To share a memory or leave a condolence, visit belmontfh.com.

East Hampton

Marie L. Hasselman

Marie L. Hasselman of Statesville, N.C., formerly of Portland and East Hampton, died Thursday, March 22. Marie was born May 2, 1928, in Saint-Louis-de-Kent, New Brunswick, Canada, daughter of the late Melanie and Joseph Vautour.

She leaves her son, Gerald Hasselman and wife Nancy; daughter, Diane Higgins; grandchildren, Tanya and AJ Beaulieu and her mother Paula Hasselman, Jennifer and Ryan McCormick; great-grandchildren Jasmine, Ciera and Kaylie Beaulieu, Nathan and Leah McCormick; her sisters, Aurea, Victoria and Semida; her brother, Gerald; many nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews, extended family and cherished friends.

She was predeceased by her husband of 67 years, Arthur J Hasselman; daughter, Annette Hasselman; son, Roger Hasselman; grandson, Brian Hasselman; son-in-law, Fred Higgins; her brothers, Leo, Emory, Adrian, Ulysse, Valmond and Armand; and her sisters, Celanire and Lorraine.

Marie worked at the Wiremold Company, retiring in 1988. She loved sewing, playing cards, cooking but mostly spending time and being with her family and her friends.

The family would like to extend their thanks to the many aids, nurses, doctors and staff at Maple Leaf Health in Statesville, N.C., and Portland Care and Rehabilitation in Portland. We would also like to thank her dear friend Jane for everything she did for Marie, Paula and Doreen for all the visits. We would be remiss if we did not mention all her dear friends at the Atrium. Our thanks, each and every one of you. She was blessed with many wonderful memories. "Tu vas nous manquer."

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

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the American Cancer Society, 825 Brook St., I91 Center, Rocky Hill, CT 06067 or a charity of donor's choice.

Colchester

Michael Louis Corbo

Michael Louis Corbo, 68, a Colchester resident for 41 years, passed away Sunday, March 25, at the Wm. W. Backus Hospital in Norwich. Born Dec. 8, 1949, and raised in Waterbury, he was the son of Salvatore and Bernice (Francis) Corbo of Waterbury.

Mike earned his associate's degree in marketing from Post University. Early on, he worked as a self-employed plumber, owning and operating BMC Plumbing. Mike went on to work for Foxwoods Resort Casino as an engineering manager for over 20 years before his retirement. In his spare time, he was a registered certified HAM Radio Operator.

In addition to his parents, he leaves his wife of 46 years, Darlene (Ranco) Corbo; two daughters, Cassandra Corbo of Marlborough and Stacy Raill (and husband Michael) of Colchester; two grandchildren, whom were his pride and joy, Nicholas and Jasmine Raill; three siblings, Virginia Chepurna (and husband Robert) of Waterbury, Louis Corbo (and wife Robin) of North Carolina and Rose Langley of Waterbury; his father-in-law, Anthony Ranco of Bristol; and numerous extended family and friends.

A celebration of his life will be observed from 1-3 p.m. Saturday, April 7, at the Corbo residence (75 McDonald Rd., Colchester).

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made online for "Fundraising for Mike Corbo Memorial" at gofundme.com/4npu5-mikes-medical-expense-fund.

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

Marlborough

Lillian Caroline Lasky

Lillian Caroline (Ginsberg) Lasky, 99, formerly of Berlin, passed away Friday, March 23, at Marlborough Healthcare Center. Lilly was born in New Britain to Edward and Sarah Ginsberg on Jan. 31, 1919.

She graduated high school in 1937 and then earned an accounting certificate from New Britain Accounting School. She was married to Frank E. Lasky Jan. 28, 1941. They had two children, David and Frances. Lilly was an avid long-distance swimmer and performed with the New Britain Drama Club. In her later years, she enjoyed walks in her neighborhood and to the local coffee shop where she socialized with friends. She also enjoyed family trips to Cape Cod.

Lilly was predeceased by her brother Henry Ginsberg, her husband Frank Lasky and her son-in-law Robert C. King Jr.

Lilly is survived by her son, David F. Lasky and his wife Jenice; her daughter, Frances Lasky King; her grandchildren, Baia Lasky, Mindy (King) Rowe and her husband David Rowe, Devin King, Sarah Lasky, Daniel Lasky and his wife Jessica.

Calling hours were Thursday, March 29, at Glastonbury Funeral Home. Funeral services will be held today, March 30, at 10:30 a.m. Burial will follow at Maple Cemetery, Berlin.

