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Officials said a Jan. 17 construction collapse on West High Street in East Hampton left three workers injured after approximately 20 roof trusses, each 74 feet long, fell "like dominoes" into the structure. Photo credit: East Hampton Building Department

Construction Collapse Sparks Investigations

by Elizabeth Regan

A construction collapse last week on a Route 66 site in East Hampton has spawned a spate of investigations after three workers were injured.

East Hampton Police Chief Dennis Woessner said the construction crew at 207 West High Road was lifting large trusses with a crane on Jan. 17 when something caused the trusses to collapse "domino-style" into the 8,000-square-foot building being constructed on the site.

Two of the injured people were on the trusses and one was on a ladder, according to Woessner. He said a worker with a pelvic injury and another with an ankle injury were taken by ambulance to Middlesex Hospital Marlborough Medical Center before being diverted to Hartford Hospital, while a worker with a head injury was driven in a car to Middlesex Hospital in Middletown.

Woessner said Wednesday he had not heard the medical status of the victims.

"We're lucky no one got killed," he said.

Woessner said the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the state Office of the Fire Marshal's crane inspector and East Hampton Building Official Glen LeConche were on site after the collapse to investigate.

The local police investigation has been officially closed after officers found no criminal aspect to the case, according to the chief.

An OSHA spokesman said the agency's Bridgeport office has "opened inspections" on three employers in order to determine if there were any violations of workplace safety standards.

The spokesman said the three employers being inspected by OSHA are general contractor RAU Renovations LLC; Price is Right Construction, the subcontractor installing trusses; and General Construction Crane Services Incorporated, the crane contractor.

OSHA has up to six months to complete an inspection. The agency remains open despite the government shutdown affecting many federal agencies, according to the U.S. Department of Labor website.

Findings from the state crane inspector were not available by press time.

The property is described in the West High Enterprises LLC site plan as a daycare center; Planning and Zoning meeting minutes from September 2018 identify KOCO Child Care Center as the potential renter.

The Secretary of the State's business database lists West High Enterprises as a venture of prominent local developer Wayne Rand.

Rand ranks sixth on East Hampton's list of the top ten taxpayers for his Global Self Storage LLC venture, which had a net assessment of \$2.67 million in the 2017 Grand List.

Rand did not respond to multiple phone calls
See Construction page 2

Four Sickened After Vaping at Portland High

by Elizabeth Regan

An unnamed Portland High School student has been referred to juvenile court stemming from a Tuesday afternoon incident during which four students became ill after allegedly vaping in the boys' room, according to officials.

Portland Police Capt. Ron Milardo said one of the four students was charged Tuesday with possession of an electronic nicotine device.

Connecticut law authorizes a fine of up to \$50 for the first offense and \$50 to \$100 for each subsequent offense to those under the age of 18 who are charged with possessing an e-cigarette in public.

Only one of the four students involved in the vaping incident was in possession of an e-cigarette, Milardo said.

Superintendent of Schools Philip O'Reilly confirmed that student, and three others, "fell ill" after reportedly vaping in the boys' bathroom.

"Out of a preponderance of caution, emergency medical personnel were called to the school and medical professionals are now evaluating all four," he said in a statement Tuesday afternoon.

The four were transported to Middlesex Hos-

pital, Milardo said.

According to Milardo, police responded to the incident around 1:30 p.m. He said a teacher noticed one student wasn't "acting properly" and subsequently sent the student to the nurse's office.

That's when the nurse found out the student had vaped, according to Milardo.

Milardo said the student was described as "drowsy" and "not alert."

Vaping refers to the inhalation of flavored vapor through battery-powered devices known as e-cigarettes and vape pens, among others. They are marketed as a safer alternative to help wean existing smokers off the old-fashioned cigarette habit.

However, the National Institute of Health (NIH) says the vapor may include nicotine and cancer-causing toxins.

Despite federal prohibitions on the sale of tobacco products to people under 18, a 2018 NIH survey found that roughly one in five 12th-grade students reported vaping nicotine at least once in the last 30 days. That's up from 11 percent in the previous year's survey.

E-cigarettes can be used to deliver marijuana

and other drugs, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Milardo said the e-cigarette was empty when officers got it.

When asked if drugs were involved, Milardo said officers are going to "try to get some residue" out of the empty e-cigarette for testing.

He said he was not aware of any drug testing done at the hospital.

O'Reilly said in his statement Tuesday that student safety is "of utmost concern."

"The administration will thoroughly investigate the matter and will address this incident in accordance with [Board of Education] policy," he said.

Several Portland parents late last year brought concerns about vaping in the school bathrooms to the Board of Education. According to November school board meeting minutes, three fathers expressed concerns that their children are not comfortable using school lavatories because of the rampant vaping going on inside. The parents' ideas about how to deal with the problem included adding a school resource officer, an assistant high school principal or assigning additional staff to monitor bathrooms.

Portland High School Principal Kathryn Lawson told the *RiverEast* earlier this month that administrators noticed "an emerging problem with e-cigarette use" among students in the middle of the last school year. She said administrators' heightened vigilance since then has resulted in increased monitoring of the bathrooms, as well as the rest of the school during "non-structured" times like lunch.

Vaping currently results in a two- to three-day suspension, according to Lawson.

In addition to discipline, Lawson said the school is addressing the problem with a focus on educating students, educating parents and involving the community.

The community element of the four-pronged approach involves taking a close look at where students are getting e-cigarettes. That includes working with law enforcement to ensure local businesses are asking for identification and not allowing one adult in a group of kids to buy multiple e-cigarettes, she said.

Lawson told a panel of educators, students and social services employees on the town's *This is Us, Portland* podcast last month that
See Vaping page 2



A crane was lifting large trusses onto the 12-foot-high walls of the building when the trusses fell into the structure, officials said. Investigations by local, state and federal agencies are working to determine what caused the collapse and whether or not the remaining walls are structurally sound. Photo credit: East Hampton Building Department

Construction cont. from Front Page

and an email for comment.

Building Official Glen LeConche as of Thursday morning did not know the cause of the collapse.

The building inspector said about 20 of the 74-foot-long trusses collapsed into the four walls of the unfinished building. The collapse caused some of the walls to bulge out.

LeConche said he has issued a stop work order, which will be in place until a structural engineer conducts an "independent" evaluation of the construction.

"When these [walls] are stressed and nails are twisted or stretched, just because you straighten the wall out doesn't mean everything goes back into place," LeConche said.

The structural engineer will be tasked with verifying the walls haven't "been stressed or

that the level of stress it's received during this process is an acceptable one," according to LeConche.

The structural engineer will be chosen and paid by the contractor.

It will be up to LeConche to either approve or deny the engineer's report, he said.

"Mine's the last signature for a reason. I'm taking all that responsibility. So I'm going to vet out that engineer. I'm going to make sure they have a background in what they're signing off for," he said.

He added he will also likely have the town engineering firm, Anchor Engineering, look at the building as well.

"Our overall goal isn't about me being the expert or the only word on this. We want to make sure this is safe. We want to make sure

it's safe for the owner of the buildings, the users of the building, and the community as well. Take the personalities out of it. This is important stuff we do," LeConche said.

LeConche, who came to East Hampton three years ago after having worked as a building inspector in several other towns, described installing the large, unwieldy trusses as the most dangerous phase of construction.

Trusses aren't typically inspected by the town until after they are installed, according to LeConche. Then building inspectors evaluate the manufacturer's specifications as well as the submitted design to verify structures are properly constructed and braced.

"In the process of installing trusses, the criti-

cal component is bracing," LeConche said. "What methods did they use and did they follow the manufacturer's prescribed method for bracing that system? And what was the process that was executed in the installation?"

LeConche said the investigators at the local, state and federal level will help form a full conclusion about the cause of the collapse.

"A lot of times it's not one particular thing; it's a lot of little things that add up. So we will soon find out what that ultimately is," he said.

Rand is currently involved in construction projects at 201 West High St. and 100 Main St., according to LeConche. He is also doing interior work at a restaurant on 42 East High St.

Vaping cont. from Front Page

vaping has introduced nicotine addiction to a new generation.

"As I look back across my career in public education, the problem of cigarette use seemed to have been on the decline for many years. It was not cool, it was not acceptable," Lawson said. "And now we seem to have a whole 'nother marketing plan targeted towards kids with these e-cigarette devices."



Colchester Police are asking for help identifying this woman, who is believed to have made several fraudulent purchases using a Colchester resident's stolen identity last October and November.

Woman Makes Fraudulent Purchases

Colchester Police are looking for a woman who stole a Colchester resident's identity and proceeded to make purchases totaling \$13,400.

The woman went to three stores in the Milford and Orange area in October and No-

vember of last year and proceeded to make fraudulent purchases, police said.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Colchester Police at 860-537-7200.

Plainville Man Dies in Colchester Crash

State Police said a head-on collision on Route 16 Tuesday afternoon killed a 37-year-old Plainville man, and left the road closed for several hours.

At approximately 2:55 p.m., police said, a Nissan Rogue driven by Robert Nejako, 75, of 328 Gates Rd., Lebanon, was traveling east with a passenger, Sharon Nejako, 75, also of 328 Gates Rd., Lebanon, in the area of Desmond's Auto Repair, police said.

Tobias Hussey, of 33 Wilson St., Plainville, was traveling west in the same area and was driving a Nissan Altima, police said.

The two vehicles collided head-on and both Robert and Sharon Nejako were transported by the Colchester Fire Department to Hartford Hospital with possible injuries.

Police said Hussey was removed from the vehicle by the Colchester Fire Department and CPR was initiated. However, Hussey was later pronounced dead at the scene.

This accident is currently under investigation and anyone with information is asked to contact Trooper Benjamin Duffy at 860-465-5400.

East Hampton Finance Board Endorses \$1.75M Bonding Package

by Elizabeth Regan

The East Hampton Board of Finance this week endorsed a roughly \$1.75 million bonding package to address long-standing needs in the police department, fire department and Center School.

The package – which the board will formally vote on next month – would fund \$800,000 in radio upgrades for emergency services, \$675 for a new pumper-rescue fire truck and \$275,000 to replace the failing boiler at the town’s school for fourth- and fifth-grade students.

Finance board Chairman Richard Brown, who sits on the Capital Improvement Committee as well, said members of the capital committee determined the projects are all pressing needs that should be addressed before the 2019-20 proposed budget goes to referendum in May.

Finance Director Jeff Jylkka told members at Tuesday’s meeting the exact bonding amount, including financing fees and contingencies, is yet to be determined.

Jylkka said he cannot estimate the impact of the bonding request on taxpayers until he calculates the total amount of the request.

The town attorney is currently drafting formal resolutions approving each project separately, according to Jylkka. Members will officially vote on the trio of resolutions at their February meeting.

The request must also be considered by the East Hampton Town Council, which will send the question to voters at a town meeting.

Public Safety Radio Upgrades

The radio upgrade project, presented to the finance board by East Hampton Police Chief Dennis Woessner, relies on a 52 percent discount from Motorola. The discount expires in May, according to Woessner.

The public safety radio upgrades include critical infrastructure improvements to a system described in an independent 2018 public safety communications analysis as “substandard” due to a lack of investment by town officials over the years.

Woessner said current police radios only work in 75-80 percent of the town. He said industry standard demands at least 90 percent coverage, 95 percent of the time.

Officer Hardie Burgin, the police department’s union president, told Town Councilors

in November that the situation has “worsened dramatically” over his last nine and a half years with the department.

“I can say with certainty that at one point or another, every officer at this department has been in need of backup or other first responder assistance and has clicked their radio to call for help only to hear silence or static,” he said at the time.

Burgin said officers hit the streets every day in “absolute adversity” caused by a radio system that’s been neglected by the very town that officers “swore to serve and protect.”

The \$800,000 plan from Utility Communications would add a communication tower on Young Street and would ensure the police department, fire department, EMS and public works department have up-to-date radios. The new digital system could be encrypted when law enforcement officials deem it necessary to prevent public access to the communications, according to Woessner.

Officials also explored options through NorcomCT of Naugatuck and a state-managed system.

The NorcomCT estimate came in at \$749,000 for a GPS-enabled communications system but did not include new pagers, mobile radios or handheld radios.

Woessner said signing on with the system operated through the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection Division of Statewide Emergency Telecommunications would require the town to pay for initial upgrades and subsequent upgrades as determined by the state.

“When the state decides to do an upgrade to their system, anyone that’s on the state system must do the upgrade, which could vary in price, and anyone on that system is obligated to make those upgrades based upon the memorandum of understanding an agency signs with the state,” Woessner told the *Rivereast*. The town would also have to get new radios from a separate vendor.

Woessner described the Utility Communications proposal – with enhanced infrastructure, digital communications and new, discounted radios – as “the best options for us.”

Brown told fellow finance board members that bonding out the \$800,000 Utility plan is

“best for the town in the long run.”

He said members of the capital committee did not feel the mill rate could accommodate the expense as an item in the upcoming budget, which led to the suggestion to finance it over time as part of a bond request.

Jylkka recommended a 5 percent contingency fee for unexpected costs be added to the project, which would bring the total to approximately \$840,000.

Pumper-Rescue Truck

The fire department is hoping to buy a roughly \$675,000 pumper-rescue fire truck to help keep its fleet current.

Fire Chief Greg Voelker said the truck would replace Engine 212, a 1994 Pierce Manufacturing pumper truck stationed at the Company 2 firehouse in Cobalt. Engine 212 would then move to Company 3 on White Birch Road, where it would replace a 1989 Pierce pumper truck the department plans to retire.

Fire Commission Chairman Brett Salafia referred to a report requested by the commission about eight years ago that highlighted deficiencies in the fire department’s infrastructure. He said the department is routinely getting 25-28 years out of its fire trucks when industry standard recommends 20 years.

Salafia said the purchase will help ensure the town has “appropriate equipment that’s ready to meet the demands of the town.”

In 2015, all of the roughly 200 voters at a town meeting voted to approve the purchase of an \$805,018 Pierce ladder truck. The council’s decision to pay for the truck outright was made despite the recommendation of Jylkka and a unanimous Board of Finance vote to finance it over a 10-year period through a lease-purchase agreement.

Boiler Replacement

The smallest price tag in the bonding request recommended by the capital committee comes from a \$275,000 project to replace the 34-year-old boiler at Center School with two smaller and more energy-efficient units.

The school district’s director of facilities, Donald Harwood, said the school relies on the single, outdated boiler for its heating needs.

“In five years, nearly \$200,000 in repairs have been spent on that boiler,” Harwood told finance board members.

A 2008 report from Friar Associates – the architectural, engineering and design firm charged with assessing the condition of the town’s municipal and school buildings – found that even 10 years ago, the boilers and associated mechanical equipment had “exceeded their useful life” and needed to be replaced.

Harwood said several contractors and insurance professionals since then have recommended replacement.

Estimates for a full conversion from steam to a hot water system – including air conditioning – would cost approximately \$1 million, according to Harwood.

He first presented the proposal to the capital committee and finance board about two years ago. The finance board at the time authorized \$30,000 in repairs to buy time for a full replacement the following year.

But Harwood acknowledged \$1 million is “a really big number.”

The \$275,000 proposal to replace the boiler with two natural gas-fired boilers leaves the current piping system in place.

Harwood described the project as a “decent compromise” and a “viable plan.”

He said major construction work would take place over the summer break when the school is not occupied, but preparations and targeted work could begin when temperatures warm up in April. The project is estimated to take about 10-12 weeks.

Brown emphasized the current lack of a second boiler requires the district to make expensive emergency repairs or bring in temporary heating devices so school can remain in session when the single unit breaks down.

He called the stop-gap measures “stupidly expensive.”

Harwood estimated they spend an average of approximately \$25,000 per year on the aging boiler.

Finance board member Janine Jiantonio said the boiler replacement “has to happen” at this point.

“It’s not long before it pays for itself,” she said.

* * *

The finance board will vote on the three bonding resolutions Feb. 19 at 7 p.m. The location of the meeting has not yet been determined.

East Hampton Sewer Line Ruptures Again – And Will Be Replaced

by Elizabeth Regan

Another Old Marlborough Road sewer line break this week, which leaked approximately 12,000 gallons of sewage into the Lake Pocotopaug watershed, is prompting an emergency replacement.

Public Utilities Administrator Tim Smith said CLA Engineers Inc. is drafting the plan to replace the 450-foot line extending from the intersection of Old Marlborough Road and Day Point Road toward Route 66.

The 12,000 gallons released into the watershed on Sunday combines with two previous ruptures that occurred about two weeks apart in November, according to Smith. He said at the time that the first break in the line leaked up to 10,000 gallons into the watershed and the second leaked about 1,800 gallons.

The plan is to install a new line – instead of repairing the existing one – along the town’s right of way on the side of Old Marlborough Road, according to Smith. He said in a phone call Tuesday that he expects to receive a completed design from engineers by the end of this week.

“It’ll probably be a couple weeks to a month before [the line] is completely replaced,” Smith said, citing time needed to finalize the design, order the necessary parts and construct the line. The new line will be installed by Steve Motto

of East Hampton-based Dream Developers. Motto is the project manager for the town hall hub currently under construction nearby on Route 66.

Preliminary estimates put the replacement project at \$50,000, according to Smith.

The emergency replacement is exempted from the town’s purchasing ordinance, which requires multiple bids for projects over \$20,000.

The ordinance does not apply to projects of an “immediate nature for health and safety reasons.”

Smith said the most recent rupture was called in Sunday around 8 a.m. after sewage was discovered in the vicinity of 31 Old Marlborough Road. The leak was isolated an hour later, he said. Pumper trucks shuttled out the sewage for several days until a temporary, above-ground line was installed Wednesday. The installation of the temporary line closed a portion of Old Marlborough Road from the morning until 3 p.m.

The three breaks have cost the town approximately \$40,000 based on invoices received to date, according to Smith.

Chatham Health District Director Don Mitchell told the *Rivereast* this week he has not tested the nearby brook for bacteria like he

did after the last leak in November. He said he “came up empty” when asked by Town Manager Michael Maniscalco to find a laboratory to test water samples this time around.

The state laboratory was closed the day the leak was identified and the other lab he contacted would only have been able to determine the presence or absence of bacteria, according to Mitchell.

Mitchell said results would “probably be similar” to the previous results, which revealed low levels of E. coli contamination in the lake watershed.

The state Department of Health states a single sample with a concentration of E. coli organisms greater than 235 per 100 milliliter “is in excess of that which is normally considered acceptable for bathing.”

Only one of the four samples came back at levels exceeding that threshold in November. The sample, taken from a ditch that runs into the adjacent brook, came back at 650 E. coli organisms per 100 milliliters, Mitchell said.

The other samples ranged from 98 to 135 E. coli organisms per 100 milliliters.

Planning and Zoning Official Jeremy DeCarli, who also serves as the wetlands en-

forcement officer, told the *Rivereast* he has consulted with Inland/Wetlands Watercourse Agency Chairman Jeff Foran about the replacement project. DeCarli will approve the replacement project at the administrative level instead of waiting for members of the agency to take a vote at their next meeting.

“We want to expedite that as quickly as we can,” DeCarli said.

After the first two leaks in November, officials had decided to replace the pipe this spring. Maniscalco said at the time that a lack of asphalt in the winter months was a driving factor in the decision to hold off on the project.

But Maniscalco said this week that engineers, in evaluating the spring replacement plan, discovered the town’s right of way extends far enough to install the pipe along the side of the road without disturbing the pavement.

He said grass and driveway aprons of affected residents would be replaced as part of the project. Driveway aprons will likely be covered with gravel until asphalt becomes available again during the spring, according to Maniscalco.

Smith said any trenches in the road will be patched with cold patch asphalt until spring.

Colchester Resident Concerned About Trail Spur Parking Lot

by Allison Lazur

The Air Line Trail, which begins in East Hampton and travels through to the Massachusetts border, passes through Colchester mainly in the Salmon River State Forest. But there is a portion of the trail – the Colchester spur – that breaks from the main trail and brings users into the center of town.

And it's the parking lot for that spur that's causing concern to resident Stephen Langelo.

The spur parking lot is tucked away behind Sunshine Cycle and Run, partially hidden by a dirt berm. The modest parcel, which fits approximately 12 to 15 cars, has been a concern of Langelo's for about the past year.

Langelo said he has experience serving on various trail crews, including as foreman, in Colorado and Utah as well as a volunteer trail designer for the Bureau of Land Management and program coordinator for the Adopt-a-Trail Program.

He told the *Rivereast* this week his concerns surround the state of the parking lot and the activity it attracts.

In the warmer months, Langelo said the area is saturated with trash, empty alcohol bottles, used condoms and potholes. He said the lot is "overrun" with weeds that need not to be trimmed, but dug out completely. The space also lacks a sign directing trail users to the center of town.

Langelo, who said he was previously employed by the nearby bike shop, said he has also witnessed "unsavory acts" in the space.

First Selectman Art Shilosky said he has never received a police report proving evidence of crime in that area.

Last spring Langelo and a few other volunteers decided to spruce up the area by picking up trash and requesting the installation of a light on the already-existing Eversource pole, he said.

The light was subsequently approved by the Board of Selectmen last spring, but has yet to be installed by Eversource.

Public Works Director Jim Paggioli told the *Rivereast* a signed contract has been submitted to Eversource along with the approximately \$190 it cost the town to run conductors to the site.

But Eversource spokesman Mitch Gross said

the company never received a contract.

Upon further investigation, Gross said he was "unsure" exactly what happened with the contract, but that a community relations coordinator is now "working directly with Mr. Paggioli and the first selectman to get the contract signed and get the work scheduled."

While the installation of the light is a step in the right direction, Langelo said he is unhappy more hasn't been done by the town since his initial inquiry a year ago.

"We've been working on this for a while and what have we gotten? Another trash dump," he said.

Langelo was referring to about a dozen piles of dirt, dumped last summer, that line the left side of the lot upon entering.

Paggioli said the piles of gravel are excess material from the repaving of the parking areas at Town Hall last summer which will be used for widening of the spur parking lot once the weather is warmer.

However, Langelo questioned the composition of the mounds, stating the chunks of asphalt contained in the piles would not improve the parking lot quality, but rather make it more difficult for "skinny tire" bicycles and strollers to navigate the area.

He also directed the *Rivereast* to the approximately 28-inch-by-46-inch sign near the rear of the property as a proposed location for a new sign that encourages cyclists to venture past the parking lot and into the center of town.

"I don't understand why the town has just neglected that sign," Langelo said, adding, "when people get to Colchester they don't know what to do; they turn around and go back."

He said a sign that says "Welcome to Colchester" could outline the details of the downtown area and encourage trail users to "ride on and get something to eat or patronize some of the businesses."

The brown posts and space where Langelo proposed a map be placed is empty other than a small "clean up after your dog" sign – and a handwritten notice by Langelo which states "If you are tired of seeing this parking lot in disrepair please call the Board of Selectmen and tell them."

On the other side of the brown post is a green



Resident Stephen Langelo wants to see several upgrades to the Air Line Trail Spur parking lot including not just the regular trimmings of the weeds, but the total elimination. Langelo said the weeds are overgrown in the summer months as pictured here.

and white sign placed in the space by the bicycle shop, Langelo said, and is the only indication in the lot of opportunities offered in town.

Langelo also said this week he would like to see additional upgrades to the lot including a post and rail wooden fence around sections of the perimeter, along with plantings in place of the weeds.

Economic Development Commission Chairman Jean Walsh and one of the volunteers who cleaned up the space with Langelo last year said she reached out to the Gardening Club who agreed to install plantings in the area.

However, Walsh said the issue lies not in the town's actions, but in the lack of funds in the parks and recreation and public works budget, adding that development to the area for a fence or plantings would have to come from dona-

tions.

"[Public Works] has minimal staffing and money," Walsh said. "[The issue] is not forgotten, it's just not on the front burner."

Paggioli echoed Walsh's statement on the lack of funds in the budget. He also said the town-owned portion of property is an "odd shape" with the remaining portions labeled as privately owned and out of the town's jurisdiction for development.

But Langelo stood by his belief that more needs to be done with the lot to promote the town and trail.

"It's not fair to people that [the parking lot] is left in disrepair," Langelo said, adding "it would be economically good for the town to try to get people to use that parking lot" and in turn creating a destination for trail users.

East Hampton Police News

1/3: Brittany Delaware, 28, of 5 Mathieson Dr., Andover, was issued a summons for failure to drive right, operating under suspension and operating an unregistered motor vehicle, East Hampton Police said.

1/10: Stacey Mathers, 36, of 43 Burnham St., Terryville, was charged with second-degree failure to appear, police said.

1/12: Charlotte Klotsko, 48, of 500 Washington St., Middletown, was arrested and charged with operating under the influence and failure to drive right, police said.

Also, from Jan. 7-13, officers responded to 14 medical calls, one motor vehicle accident and nine alarms, and made 13 traffic stops, police said.

Portland Police News

1/10: Joseph Walden, 46, of 24 McKenzie St., Middletown, was charged with operating an unlicensed repair facility/garage, Portland Police said.

1/14: Michael McLean, 38, of 44 Marlborough St., was charged with operating an unlicensed repair facility, police said.

Colchester Police News

1/14: State Police said Raekwon D. Branch, 23, of 2 Cobble Way, Unit 3, was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and third-degree assault.

1/14: State Police said Tesiny M. Lassalle, 24, of 192 Sandy Ln., Norwich, was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and third-degree assault.

1/15: Colchester Police said Joshua Rodriguez, 37, of 66 Brown St., Bloomfield, was arrested and charged with violation of probation.

Bacon Student Found With Marijuana

State Police said a Bacon Academy female juvenile was issued a summons after she was discovered to be in possession of less than one-half an ounce of marijuana.

At approximately 7:40 a.m. on Jan. 16 the female was discovered to be in possession of the marijuana while at Bacon Academy.

State Police did not provide any further details on how the marijuana was discovered, but said the female was issued a juvenile summons and is scheduled to appear in court next month.

Hebron Responds to Rash of Break-Ins

by Sloan Brewster

There's been a rash of car thefts and break-ins on the south end of town.

Last week, two cars were stolen and one was broken into, according to Town Manager Andrew Tierney and Hebron Police Sergeant Marc Rubera. In all cases, the cars were unlocked and the ones that were stolen had keys or key fobs left in or near them.

Rubera said the thieves are likely a group of three or four juveniles who go out together. When they hit an area they are interested in robbing, one stays in the driver's seat of the car while the others run around the neighborhood "wearing hoodies, running around yards and ducking behind trees" if they hear anyone coming.

"They generally avoid cars that are locked, they seldom break windows," Rubera said.

Then the juveniles use the cars for crimes – like breaking into more vehicles or going shopping with stolen credit cards – and then abandon them, according to Rubera.

"They don't take the cars to sell them [or] to take them to a chop shop, that's just more sophisticated than what they do," Rubera said.

The incidents are under investigation, Tierney and Rubera said.

Tierney wants it known that local police are seeking out the criminals.

"We're back filling shifts, we have unmarked cars out at night," he said.

Tierney said a lot of folks have reached out to him on the town's Facebook page, some complaining that the town is not doing anything about the crimes, which he said is not the case.

"We are actively pursuing these criminals and had success," he said. "We're on this stuff."

Trooper James Olson happened upon the car thieves at one point last week, Tierney said. A multi-town, high-speed chase with one of the stolen cars ensued, but was called off for the safety of residents when the car approached a populated area in Hartford, Tierney said.

The car was later recovered at Garden Street and Asylum Avenue in Hartford, according to Rubera.

Officers had more success back in December, when a juvenile being sought in a string of car break-ins over the summer and fall was nabbed, Rubera said.

On December 3, a 15-year-old juvenile was arrested by state police on warrants stemming from the Hebron crimes, Rubera said. He also had multiple warrants from Cheshire, West Hartford, Milford, Hartford and Wethersfield.

Determining the identity of the alleged thief was a joint operation between Rubera, Trooper Mike Evangelisti and police departments from the other towns he allegedly hit in his crime spree.

Over the summer, Rubera went to the home of one of the local victims, whose wallet had been stolen from her car the night before. Using an online application, she showed Rubera

the places of business where her card had been used.

Rubera said he called Evangelisti, who followed the trail, getting a picture of the guy's face from video surveillance at McDonalds on Albany Avenue in Hartford, where he was a regular.

"He was on video there buying stuff with the stolen card," Rubera said. "He's been remanded to a juvenile facility since December 3, 2018."

Rubera and Tierney want folks to remember to remove their valuables and lock their cars. They suggest turning on outside lights or using motion sensor lights and "if you see [or hear] something, say something."

"People say, 'oh, I heard something outside last night and I didn't go out,'" Rubera said.

Just call police, he said. They will come out and look around.

"If we don't find anything, so what," Rubera said.

Hebron Water Woes Over as Well Starts Producing

by Sloan Brewster

The well in town that had been coming up short since last spring has begun producing water at a stabilized rate.

On Wednesday, Town Manager Andrew Tierney said he had met with officials from Connecticut Water, the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority [PURA] and the state Department of Health the previous day. In the meeting, he received the "good news" that the well, which is located on Loveland Road behind the Loveland Hills housing development and supplies the most water in town, was back online and is producing 38 gallons a minute and sustaining that amount.

"It's pumping," Craig Patla, Connecticut Water vice president of service delivery, said in a phone call Wednesday. "It's at a lesser rate [but] it's at a stabilized rate,"

Prior to the shortage in the well, which came up suddenly and unexpectedly last May, the well was registering 60 gallons of water per

minute, Patla said. During the shortage, it was pulling only about 20 gallons per minute.

In June, shortly after the shortage was discovered, Commissioner of Public Health Paul Pino declared a public drinking water supply emergency in the town center, and Connecticut Water placed a ban on outdoor water usage.

Last month, the ban was lifted, after the well was connected to a nearby well at Country Manor on Wall Street.

The 38 gallons the well is now producing is continuing to be supplemented by supply from the Country Manor well – which means that, according to Tierney, "we're back to where we were and a little bit better."

In addition, the water company is testing for water on a parcel on Wall Street and is in the process of getting an easement from the town to do some testing on existing wells on a property on Ridge Road.

The easement will be finalized at the Feb. 7

Board of Selectmen meeting, Tierney said.

"They are looking to have the town let Connecticut Water go in and explore those wells and do some testing," Tierney said. "So it's just exploration."

Cause Still Unknown

While Connecticut Water has not been able to determine the cause of the shortage, Patla said the company has determined the shortage was not a result of mechanical deficiency but rather a lack of volume, and may go back to the drought in 2016, Patla said. The drought affected water supplies all over the state and certainly contributed to the shortage but may not be the sole cause. Other contributing factors could be from streams not flowing at their normal volume into veins in bedrock wells.

"It's the geology of what's the water that's existing in those veins, where does it come from? It could be from 100 miles away, it could

take years to get there," Patla said. "There's all sorts of hydro-geologic potential contributors."

The company will be developing a water supply plan for Hebron with the intention of seeing if it's cohesive with the town's Plan of Conservation and Development, he said.

"We want to see how those two plans intersect," he said. "We want to see how we can supply what the town is envisioning it can develop."

One take away from yesterday's meeting with Connecticut Water, PURA and DPH, according to Tierney, was that expanding water supplies is not something the water company can do in isolation.

"It would be a joint effort between the water company and the town," he said. "If we need expansion or additional water the town has to play a role."

Maguire to Face Mandeville in Andover First Selectman Race

by Sloan Brewster

When voters head to the polls in May, they'll be faced with choosing Democrat Jeff Maguire or Republican Adrian Mandeville to be the town's first selectman.

Those two men, and a host of others, were endorsed for public office when the Democratic and Republican town committees held their respective caucuses last week.

Both Maguire and Mandeville are currently involved with town politics. Maguire is already on the Board of Selectmen, as the vice first selectman, while Mandeville is on the Board of Finance.

Democrats Dan Warren and Eric Anderson will also run for the Board of Selectmen, against Republicans Jeff Murray and Brian Clate. Aside from Maguire, the lists of candidates are noticeably absent of any current members of the Board of Selectmen.

Current First Selectman Robert Burbank did not seek endorsement and said he is not going to seek reelection, Republican Town Committee Chairman Carol Barton said. In the 2015 election, Burbank did not receive Republican Town Committee endorsement, but ran instead as a petitioning candidate.

Burbank did not return a call for comment. Maguire, 53, is a CPA and has run his own business since 1992. He was elected to the Board of Selectmen in 2015, and said he's now looking to lead the board "for a simple reason."

"I didn't get enough accomplished in the first four years," he said. "It was a very difficult four years in terms of what I think we should have accomplished. I think we can do some good things."

For starters, the board needs to do a better job managing the town's current resources,

employees and departments and should make some changes to operate the town more effectively and efficiently, Maguire said.

"There is always room for improvement across every area," he said. "I just don't think the town had anyone who would take the time and put in the effort to sit there and effect these changes."

The town also needs to address infrastructure improvements, he said, including renovating the public works building and making repairs to the transfer station.

"There are plenty of things that need to be accomplished and to do that, there needs to be a plan," he said.

"The next board needs to fix the issues in front of them and plan for the next five, 10, 20 years," he added.

"We need someone with a vision. We need to plan."

Democratic Town Committee chairman Shannon Loudon said Maguire "has done wonderful things for our town" and would make an "excellent first selectman."

Mandeville, 46, is a landlord with properties in Willimantic and a contractor with Three Brothers Renovations, a business he and his two brothers own. He took a few minutes from training his 18-month old Shepherd-poo, whom he named Andy after the town of Andover, to talk about his candidacy.

Stating that he is not "a politically-minded person," he said he wanted to jump into the first selectman's seat in order to effect more change.

The finance board is more of "a stopgap" and does not make policy, he said.

The Board of Selectmen has had some "prob-

lems working together."

"I think there were some personal conflicts from the board," Mandeville said.

Mandeville said another challenge the town has faced in recent years has been the transition from a first selectman-led government to one overseen by a town administrator. Shortly after Joseph Higgins stepped into the administrator role in 2017, the town was hit with a controversy when Board of Selectmen and Board of Education member Jay Linddy was accused of sexual harassment by former tax collector Donna Doyker. The fallout from that – as well as Linddy's subsequent absence from every single Board of Selectmen and Board of Education meeting since late 2017 – has been difficult for Higgins to navigate, Mandeville said.

"I think he stepped in more than he expected," Mandeville said. "I think he's doing the best job he personally can."

Mandeville wants to maintain taxes while still providing for the town.

"I think in Andover, people want to see things continue to evolve and yet be the same," he said. "This is the dichotomy that we have to govern in."

Another thing he wants to achieve is increasing community involvement with the town, possibly by creating a town Facebook page.

"We need to have another level of engagement to the town," he said.

He pointed out that there are empty seats on both sides on many boards and commissions as an example of folks not being involved.

"I know both parties are having difficulty filling the positions," Barton echoed.

Republicans were unable to fill some alter-

nate seats as some of the current alternates have decided to run for actual seats, she said.

The election will take place on May 6.

The full slates of endorsed candidates are:

Republicans: Mandeville, first selectman; Brian Clate and Jeffrey A. Murray, Board of Selectmen; Linda Fish, Leigh Ann Hutchinson and Carol W. Barton, Board of Finance; Wallace E. Barton Jr. and Curtis W. Dowling, Fire Commission; Amy L. Knox and Steven D. Fuss, Andover Board of Education; David G. Gostanian, RHAM Board of Education; William M. Desrosiers and Kathleen D. Skorka, Zoning Board of Appeals; William J. "Jed" Larson, Planning and Zoning Commission; George E. Knox, Planning and Zoning Commission – Alternate; and Penny Auer and Georgette M. Conrad, Board of Assessment Appeals.

Democrats: Maguire, first selectman; Eric Anderson and Daniel H. Warren, Board of Selectmen; Carol H. Lee, Town Clerk; Annmarie G. Daigle, Louise H. Goodwin, Sarah R. Moon and Dennis S. Williams, Board of Finance; Daniel J. Foran and Shannon O. Loudon, Andover Board of Education; Linda L. Armstrong and Catherine A. Magaldi-Lewis, Board of Assessment Appeals; Eric Anderson and Scott Person, Planning and Zoning Commission; Kathleen M. Barrett and Anne P. Cremé, Planning and Zoning Commission – Alternate; Jay R. Kamins and Dorothy I. Yeomans, Zoning Board of Appeals; Gerard J. Cremé and Danielle Maguire, Zoning Board of Appeals – Alternate; and Curtis W. Dowling and Mark Williams, Fire Commission.

Concerns Expressed for Andover School Wing Repurposing

by Sloan Brewster

Security concerns were raised by parents at a public hearing last week on the possibility of converting the third- and fourth-grade wing of Andover Elementary School into a senior or community center.

In drafting a report on converting the space, architects from Silver/Petrucci will consider the concerns and other points raised at the lengthy hearing last Thursday, according to Amanda Cleveland, lead of the firm's interior design team.

Selectmen will also mull over the concerns – which centered on the idea of bringing not just a senior center to the school but a community center as well. Some parents in attendance were not thrilled with that plan.

Resident Lori Blake said she and other parents in the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) were concerned about opening the doors to the school to non-school personal, even if they would be in a wing of the school that is separated by a locked door or a wall.

Using the space exclusively for seniors, at least during the day, would allay some of the concerns, Blake said.

“Using it at night is not a concern,” she said. “It’s just during the school day.”

Resident and school nurse Karen Zito echoed Blake's concerns.

“They’re my kids and I know we need to keep them safe,” Zito said about students at the school. “Security in our school is a priority.”

Zito said a proposal to separate the wing from the rest of the school by an automatically-locking door, with a lever to pull down and open in case of an emergency, was not adequate.

“I want to keep our building safe,” she said.

The door with a lever would prevent unauthorized entry into either part of the building and serves as fire separation, Cleveland said.

“We don’t want the students going out to that

wing and we don’t want the seniors going to the school,” she said.

The door could be eliminated by installing a wall but then a secondary egress would have to be built in the converted wing, she said.

Resident Gerry Wright suggested putting the state trooper’s office in the school as a way to keep children safe.

Not everyone agreed that folks should be worried about security.

“We’re not asking for the moon,” resident, and senior, Marge Surdam said. “I drove a bus in this town for six years, I raised five kids, I never had a problem and [Blake’s] worried about security.”

Surdam continued, “This town is safe, the seniors work for the kids and we can protect them. Have a little faith.”

Selectman Cathleen Desrosiers said her fellow board members should consider using the wing only for seniors and that it was “a viable solution taking into consideration what the PTA has brought up.”

“Maybe that’s not the right spot for a community center,” she said. “This is a different world today.”

Board of Finance member Adrian Mandeville asked if the PTA could have a seat at the discussion table “on a formal basis” while the selectmen hash out plans for the center.

“I don’t mean they show up and complain. I mean is it possible to get them involved in the process?” he asked.

Many speakers said they were in favor of using the space as a community center.

“We need a community center; we need a place for the seniors to go to,” Wright said, describing a place where veterans could sit down and chat over coffee.

He even volunteered to help pay for a refrigerator for the space.

Mandeville said that since last year’s closure of the Old Firehouse due to mold issues, meeting space has been elusive and the wing should be used “not just as a senior center, not just as a community center, but a place to have meetings for the Board of Finance, for the Board of Selectmen.”

“Losing that old firehouse, just that one space, has impacted us phenomenally,” he said.

The Old Firehouse on Center Street, which has been used as a senior center since the early 1990s, also previously served as a meeting spot for the boards of finance and selectmen. For the past several years, though, both boards have met in the community room at Town Hall.

In October, selectmen officially closed the building after air quality tests officially confirmed the presence of mold – which essentially left the senior center without a home. Shortly thereafter, the Board of Education offered the wing, which is largely vacant due to declining enrollment, and selectmen gave Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen the go-ahead to move forward with architectural drawings for repurposing it.

Shannon Loudon, school board chair, said in the last three years enrollment at the school has declined sharply – and Doyen has projected it will continue to fall, reaching 163 by the 2020-21 school year.

Since the 2004-05 school year, Loudon said, “we’ve gone from a population that was closer to 400 to 160. That means we have the opportunity to relocate classrooms to free up the third- and fourth-grade wing.”

In addition to just what to house in the repurposed wing, there was also talk at last week’s hearing of funding the conversion.

Loudon said the price is still an unknown.

“No one can tell you tonight what the cost is

going to be,” she said. “Nobody should be talking about numbers now because we don’t know the scope of work and obviously we’re going to do what we can to keep the costs down.

However, Mandeville said the town “should definitely be looking at” doing the project if costs could be kept to \$100,000 to \$150,000.

Meanwhile, some wondered about the feasibility of remediating the old firehouse.

Eric Anderson, chairman of the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Long Term Planning Committee said such a project would be costly, and entail remediating the mold, removing and replacing insulation and drywall, fixing the leaky roof, and ripping up the road to tie the building into a drainage system to prevent more water build-up.

“And you still have a fairly crappy 1,500-square foot structure,” he concluded.

Resident Edward Sarisley said the town should plan to build a community center on the 70-acres of town-owned land around town hall and behind the school. He commented that utilizing the school wing was a temporary solution, which educators and selectmen have said as well, with the plan to change it as little as possible for an easy transition back to school use if enrollment goes back up.

Vice First Selectman Jeff Maguire said selectmen, school board members and the architectural team would consider the information gleaned from the hearing.

“Hopefully we can come to something that makes reasonable sense for everyone,” he said.

Cleveland, meanwhile, said her firm will draft a report and “make sure it has all [speakers are] asking for.”

Loudon on Tuesday said she expects the report would be back to the town sometime in February.

Obituaries

Portland

Rose Castelli

Rose (Preli) Castelli, 91, of Portland, formerly of Glastonbury, passed away peacefully at home Saturday, Jan. 19. She was born Sept. 15, 1927, to Modesto and Fortunata (Tribolati) Preli of South Glastonbury.



She was a loving and devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. She was also devoted to her Roman Catholic faith, attending Mass faithfully until age and infirmity prevented her regular Sunday schedule.

She was predeceased by her first husband, Andrew, and second, Louie. She is survived by her four children, Steven (Carol) Castelli, Andrea (Reg) Farrington, Mark (Kim) Castelli, and Thomas Castelli; grandchildren, Jessica (Josh) Shelberg, Jeremy (girlfriend Ammie) Castelli and Stacy Castelli; and great-grandchildren, Cole and John Shelberg and Carolanne Castelli.

She was predeceased by her brother, Philip Preli and sister, Judy Lynch. She leaves behind her sister Dorothy Lavezzoli of Chester, and many nieces and nephews.

She loved preparing her home for her family for every holiday. Her collection of decorations was enormous; it seemed that there was continuous celebration happening in the home.

The family wishes to extend their thanks to the Middlesex Hospice Homecare for the life-ending care they gave to Rose and her aid Comfort who was with her constantly near the end.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held today, Jan. 25, at 10 a.m., at St. Mary Church, Portland. Burial will be in St. Augustine Cemetery, South Glastonbury. Family and friends called Thursday, Jan. 24, at the Mulryan Funeral Home, 725 Hebron Ave., Glastonbury.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to St. Mary Church, 51 Freestone Ave., Portland, CT 06480 or the Portland Volunteer Fire Department, P.O. Box 71, Portland, CT 06480.

For online condolences, visit mulryanfh.com.

East Hampton

Laura J. Oliger

Laura J. Oliger, 59, of East Hampton, surrounded by her family, passed on peacefully Tuesday, Jan. 22, after a courageous battle with cancer at her home. Born April 16, 1959, in Middletown, she was the daughter of the late Wallace R. Hall Sr. and Kathleen (Goff) Hall.

Prior to her illness, Laura worked at B&L Diner (everyone enjoyed her presence), American Distilling, and later went on to become a health aide caregiver. Laura was a loving aunt and friend, and her brave spirit and determination will be deeply missed, but not forgotten.

Laura is survived by her longtime companion, friend and caregiver, Randy Desjarlais, his son, Shane, and his granddaughter, Faythe, Jean Desjarlais (Randy's mother), close friend and support, her daughter, Brandy Christopher, and son, Don Oliger, both of Virginia; her brothers, Wallace R. Hall Jr, Timothy Hall, Michael Hall, Lenny Hall and Mark Hall; sisters, Carol Hines, Doreen Mosher, Colleen Pratt, Vickie DeMerchant and Charlene Hall; granddaughters, Alice and Emma; and many nieces and nephews.

The family would like to thank the Middlesex Hospice Group.

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

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the East Hampton Food Bank 43 W. High St East Hampton, CT. 06424.

Bacon Funeral Home, 71 Prospect St., Willimantic, is serving the family. To send an online expression of sympathy, visit baconfh.com.

Colchester

Thomas Edward Ryan Jr.

Thomas Edward Ryan Jr., 61, of Glastonbury, formerly of Colchester and Marlborough, passed away at home Thursday, Jan. 17. He was born in Hartford, a son of Ruth (Shea) Ryan Derr of Aventura, Fla., and the late Thomas E. Ryan Sr.



Tom grew up in Colchester and graduated from Bacon Academy with the Class of 1975. He moved to Marlborough soon after, where he made his home and raised his family. Tom was the owner and operator of the former store known as Glastonbury Floor Covering. He later worked for Foxwoods as a supervisor in the casino accounting department.

Tom was an avid sports fan. He enjoyed all types of sporting events, but he was a diehard fan of the Boston Red Sox and the New York Giants. Tom loved spending his free time outdoors, traveling, golfing, going to the beach, grilling, and going to sporting events with friends and family. Most importantly, he will be remembered as a devoted and loving father to all his children.

He will be sadly missed but always remembered with love by his companion of many years, with whom he made his home, Carol Miller; children, Chelsea Ryan and fiancé Aaron O'Connor of Colorado Springs, Colo., Thomas E. Ryan III, Maeghan Ryan, Peter Guasta, Jr., and Kayla Guasta, all of Glastonbury; sister, Patricia and husband Stephen Smith of Colchester; step-sisters, Nancy Moriarty and husband Tim of Coconut Creek, Fla., Raelene duPont of Stony Creek, Deborah and husband Brad Cofield of Glastonbury; brother-in-law, Anthony LaVorgna of Plantsville; his former wife, Virginia Derr of Glastonbury; a grandson, Camden O'Connor; and numerous extended family and friends.

In addition to his father, he was predeceased by a sister, Nancy LaVorgna, and his stepfather, Raymond Derr.

Funeral services were held at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester, Wednesday, Jan. 23, beginning with calling hours, followed by a chapel service. Burial followed in New St. Andrew Cemetery.

Donations in his memory may be made to "AutismSpeaks.org Greater Hartford Walk, Team Sweetheart."

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthy-funeralhome.com.

Hebron

Patricia Anne Johnson

Patricia Anne Johnson, 84, of Hebron, passed away Sunday, Jan. 20, at the Middlesex Hospital Hospice, with her loving family by her side. Born in Worcester, Mass., on Jan. 30, 1934, she was a daughter of the late Charles and Elizabeth (Elkins) Amidon.



Patricia met her beloved husband George in college. They were married Oct. 2, 1954, and began growing their family of five wonderful children, that would later grow into eight beautiful grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Not only was she a devoted and loving wife and mother, but she was also devoted to her community as a volunteer. She was given a service to the blind award by Governor Rowland and she volunteered as a visitor to shut-ins with the Hebron Senior Center.

Patricia was a talented crafter. She was a voracious reader and she loved cats, word puzzles, and Jumbles. Patricia will be remembered most fondly by her family as being a quiet, kind, and private woman with a fierce devotion and undying love for her family.

She will be sadly missed but always remembered with love by her beloved husband of 64 years, George; five children and their spouses, David (Loretta) Johnson of Jordan, N.Y., Susan (Donald) Koester of Woodway, Texas, Jeffrey (Martha) Johnson of Manchaca, Texas, Peter Johnson (Kathy Healey) of Eastford, Julia Johnson of Astoria, N.Y.; a sister, Nancy Blanchard; eight grandchildren, Erin, Stephen, Kimberly and Reed Johnson, Amy and Paul Koester, Robert and Nathaniel Johnson; a great-grandson, Ferris Johnson-Waggner; and numerous extended family members and friends.

In addition to her parents, she was predeceased by five siblings.

A memorial service will be held at a later date to be announced.

Donations in her memory may be made to the Alzheimer's Association, at alz.org.

The Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester has been entrusted with care of funeral arrangements. For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

South Windsor

Lucia M. Visintainer

Lucia M. Visintainer passed away peacefully with her family by her side Wednesday, Jan. 16, at Leesburg Regional Medical Center in Florida. She was born Sept. 25, 1945, in Brighton, Mass., to Joseph V. and Rose M. Bella.



She spent her childhood in Centerbrook and most of her adult life in South Windsor, before retiring to Florida in the Villages with the love of her life and husband, Ronald Visintainer. There they built a beautiful home and developed a large circle of friends who became her "Florida family."

Lucia was a kind and generous person who often put the interest of others ahead of her own. She concentrated much of her time to volunteer and charity work. Some of her most notable charity work involve working with The Villages Regional Medical Center Auxiliary Thrift Shop, House of Hope, Relay for Life, Shoe Box which aids our US troops overseas, Deliver the Difference, along with knitting hats to send to over 50 pediatric hospitals around the country. Lucia's proudest achievement, however, was her family. She was a devoted wife, mother, sister, grandmother, aunt and cousin. She will be greatly missed by all.

In addition to her husband Ron, she leaves behind her son, Tim Mulcahy and his wife Robin, and her beloved grandchildren, Taylor and Matthew. She also leaves her sister, Mary Shea, and her nieces, Lisa Bloom and Debra Berryman, and their respective families. She is also survived by brothers-in-law Phil Visintainer and his wife Sharon, Don Visintainer and his wife Linda, Ron's daughter Karen, son Kevin and their families.

She was welcomed to Heaven with open arms by her brother-in-law Jack Shea, her father, and mother Rose Bella who predeceased her 20 years to the day, along with many aunts and uncles.

Please join us in celebrating the beautiful life of Lucia Saturday, Feb. 2, at Haddam Neck Covenant Church in East Hampton, at 11:30 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Lucia's memory to Haddam Neck Covenant Church, 17 Haddam Neck Rd., East Hampton, CT 06424.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Kudos to our new governor, Ned Lamont, for getting a bill done this week that will provide immediate relief to the 1,200 federal workers in this state who are going without pay due to the unending government shut-down.

According to the *Hartford Courant*, the state legislature voted Tuesday – and Lamont immediately signed into law – a bill to provide state-backed, no-interest bank loans to federal employees. The *Courant* reported that the workers will be eligible for loans of up to \$5,000 a month for a period of up to three months.

As I wrote in this space last week, the shut-down needs to end. People are hurting. Unfortunately, no end is in sight because President Trump has made it clear he won't budge unless he gets the \$5.7 billion he wants for a wall at the Mexican border, and Democrats have made it clear they don't want to pay for the wall. They've proposed reopening the government at least temporarily and continuing to negotiate, but the president has been adamant that he wants the wall money.

Look, Trump can negotiate for the wall all he wants to, but he shouldn't do it at the expense of hundreds of thousands of American workers. They're being used as a pawn, and it's not right.

Fortunately, the folks running the Connecticut government can see it's not right, and are now giving the workers some help. The *Courant* reported that Tuesday's emergency bill saw overwhelming victories in both the House and Senate. In the state House, it passed 127-15. I think it should've been unanimous, but the *Courant* said 15 conservative Republicans felt that "federal workers were being given a special deal on no-interest loans that are not available to other workers." Democrats countered with what, well, seems pretty obvious to me: that these federal employees are being forced to work without pay, while at the same time being ineligible for unemployment compensation since they are still employed.

I'm happy to report, by the way, that none of the *Rivereast's* state representatives voted against the bill.

The legislation passed the state Senate 32-1, with only Republican Rob Sampson of Wolcott voting no, for the same reasons as his 15 House colleagues, the *Courant* reported.

Lamont first started championing this bill last week, and to sail it through with massive bipartisan support is a big victory for him. I also thought he handled himself well during

the news conferences about the snow and ice storm that hit us last weekend. He had a confidence about him and also still exhibited some of his "aw shucks" homespun charm that served him well in last fall's campaign. (Those storm-related press conferences were never a strong suit for Dannell Malloy; he always seemed uneasy and a little on edge.)

Lamont's term is very much still in its infancy, but so far, I have to say I'm pretty impressed.

* * *

My sister and I spent 10 years going to Saturday home games for the Mets at the old Shea Stadium. The games were a lot of fun, and three of those 10 years we saw the team go to the postseason, which was pretty sweet. We built up a lot of good memories at Big Shea during those years – and we both cried like babies when the stadium was torn down after the 2008 season.

So when the Mets moved into their new stadium, and gave fans a chance to buy a brick emblazoned with the message of their choice, which would live forever on the walkway outside Citi Field, we jumped at the chance. The brick has the simple message "Shea Saturdays, 1999-2008," followed by our names. To this day, whenever I'm at Citi Field I like to wander over to the spot where my brick is and touch it with my toes. It's a little piece of me, and my sister, right there outside the gate, and I love it.

Well, if you like the Andover Public Library, now's your chance to experience that same feeling.

The Andover Friends of the Library are holding a "Buy a Brick" fundraiser to benefit the library and its programs. The Friends are selling 4-by-8-inch bricks to be engraved with up to three lines of text, for \$50 each. For an extra \$10, you can enhance your brick with such symbols as a paw print, a heart, a cross, a book, and more. You can even use the brick to advertise your business, if you want.

The bricks will be part of a newly-designed patio on the library lawn, which will be constructed this spring. Stop by the library, located at 355 Route 6 in Andover, to see a sample brick and available symbols, and to pick up an order form. Based on my experience with my brick outside Citi Field, you won't be disappointed.

For more information about the fundraiser, email the Andover Friends of the Library at andoverfol@gmail.com.

* * *

See you next week.