



RIVEREAST

News Bulletin

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

Volume 44, Number 10

Published by The Glastonbury Citizen

December 20, 2019



Committed to High Point... East Hampton High School senior Liv DiStefano has committed to run cross country as well as indoor and outdoor track at High Point University located in High Point, N.C. High Point is a Division One school and a member of The Big South Conference. DiStefano is a four-year varsity letter winner in cross country, indoor and outdoor track at EHHS and is also a team captain. She's pictured with, from left, Athletic Director Shaun Russell, Cross Country Coach Bill Wilkie and Track Coach Ken Landry. She is the daughter of Don and Shelly DiStefano.

Needleman, Carpino Talk Area Issues

by Jack Lakowsky

State legislators discussed renewable energy, tolls and 5G cellular networks at a community conversation in Portland's Waverly Senior Center last Thursday, Dec. 13.

State Rep. Christie Carpino (R-32) and Democratic state Sen. Norm Needleman (D-33) were joined by constituents to discuss issues, that will follow the state into the new decade.

Carpino represents Portland and Cromwell, while Needleman's 12-town district includes the *Rivereast* towns of Portland, East Hampton and Colchester.

"This has been a busy year for energy," said Needleman, who serves as chairman of the senate's energy and technology committee. "We passed a bill to help make us a leader in renewable energy."

Needleman explained that the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection recently selected a bid from Massachusetts-based Vineyard Winds to advance negotiations with Connecticut's electric distribution companies to provide 804 megawatts of offshore wind energy.

Development is slated for Bridgeport Harbor.

"It was the lowest bid in the country to procure wind energy," said Needleman. "This will make Connecticut a mecca for carbon reduction."

According to DEEP, the selection will more than double the amount of zero-carbon renew-

able energy produced by the state. The Vineyard Winds project will provide about 14 percent of the state's electricity demand.

The project would commit 18.3 acres of harbor front land into a wind-farm construction site.

The Park City Wind Project must now negotiate a 20-year contract term with the state's two electric utilities, The United Illuminating Company and Eversource Energy. The Public Utilities Regulatory Authority must approve contracts between the two entities.

"I asked them for some numbers," said Needleman. "One megawatt of electricity produced can create \$5.4 million of economic activity in Southern Connecticut."

"These are great job generators that will at-

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Last Issue for 2019

This is the last *Rivereast* for 2019. The offices will be closed Dec. 20-29, and there will be no Dec. 27 issue.

The *Rivereast* will reopen at 8:30 a.m. Monday, Dec. 30. Our first issue of 2020 will be dated Jan. 3.

Deadline for the issue of Jan. 3 will be Monday, Dec. 30 at noon.

Happy holidays from all of us at the *Rivereast*.

\$11.61 Million Hebron Schools Budget Proposed

by Sloan Brewster

Hebron Interim Schools Superintendent Lynne Pierson last week pitched a \$11.61 million proposed budget for the 2020-21 fiscal year, a \$269,568, or 2.38%, increase over the current year's budget.

According to the PowerPoint presentation she gave, about 63% of the budget, a total of \$7.40 million, covers the cost of salaries. The next largest amount, \$2.2 million or approximately 19%, is for benefits. The remainder of the budget is spread between contracted services, supplies and materials, professional and technological services, and other services and equipment.

The budget was derived based on goals and objectives, including strengthening existing programs and initiatives, Pierson told the board.

She also proposed increasing central office support.

"The last item here is probably controversial, but I enjoy that," she said. "My observation here is that the central office has been reduced to a dangerously low level."

Staffing numbers in central office are so low that when someone quits or retires, it can be

difficult for the rest of the office to compensate, Pierson said – and specifically mentioned last month's retirement of secretary Karen Conderino, who worked in the district for 13 years and served seven superintendents.

"We've been limping along," Pierson said, adding that she has not filled the post since she believes Thomas Baird, who takes over as superintendent in January, should choose his own staff.

Pierson proposes hiring a part-time human resources staffer for \$32,625 to take over HR work, which she said is currently spread between several central office employees.

"The danger in that is that there's not as much accountability," she said.

Pierson included \$30,750 toward professional development for teachers in her budget proposal, compared to \$2,500 in the current year's budget.

She seeks to strengthen what she referred to as the "Columbia model," a program through the Reading and Writing Project of the Teachers Reading College at Columbia University

that offers teachers ongoing collaboration and support, access to professional learning sessions, materials and resources.

Pierson also wants to expand Spanish lessons to grade 2 students at Gilead Hill School, which she proposed doing by reallocating existing staff.

Pierson, who said she has "a strong bias that all of our children need to be learning at least one language," said the format in which students learn Spanish will be changing next year from one long period to two 25-minute sessions.

"In teaching languages, especially with children and people my age, you try to offer small opportunities that are more fruitful," she said. "These are not high school students."

Compared with Andover and Marlborough, Hebron has the least amount of foreign language offerings for elementary students, Pierson said.

Pierson also proposes cutting a curriculum and instruction staff member, thereby eliminating one of the instructional interventionist roles. In addition, she wants to shift an instructional interventionist staffer into a behavioral inter-

ventionist role, to support students with intense behavioral needs and assist staff in planning and implementing behavioral programs.

"When you are in a small district, it's very easy to lose the vertical alignment perspective," she said.

Pierson said the district offers rich support in special education, which explains why there's only one out-of-district placement.

"I had a little conversation with [incoming superintendent] Dr. Baird; I'm delighted that he's here with such a background in curriculum and instruction," Pierson added.

For security maintenance, including for repairs to security cameras, door entry mechanisms, and the visitor management system, Pierson put in the same dollar amount that was included in the current year's budget: \$5,000.

"These two schools are the most secure schools I've ever worked with in my career," she said.

The board will have weekly budget workshops through the end of January and must get a final proposal to the town by Feb. 15.

Area Issues cont. from Front Page

tract people,” Carpino said. “We need to support all businesses, but we must also focus on growing new industry.”

In its proposal to DEEP, Vineyard Winds said the project would generate \$1.6 billion in direct economic benefits and could create up to 12,000 direct and indirect jobs from construction and operation of the site.

This economic commitment includes an estimated \$890 million in state development, including Bridgeport Harbor and the local supply chain. The company still has much local, state and federal red tape to get through. Construction in Bridgeport is slated to begin in 2021. This will allow offshore building in 2023, according to a Vineyard Winds news release.

The company beat out two other bids to procure the project.

According to the language in the act allowing the state to put the offshore wind-energy project to bid, the following criteria had to be met by solicitors: is in ratepayers best interests, including the energy source’s delivered price; the promotion of electric distribution system reliability, including during peak winter demand; inclusion of positive impacts on the state’s economic development; and is consistent with state’s statutory requirements to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and policy goals outlined in the state’s Comprehensive Energy Strategy.

The statute commits the state and DEEP to develop a commission to think of the best management practices for minimizing impacts to wildlife, natural resources, ecosystems and commercial fishing during the construction and operation of facilities. Bidders were required to develop mitigation plans that reflect these practices.

“Coastal states can produce a lot of wind energy,” Needleman said. “I’m going to push for battery storage to keep a stock of power.”

Needleman expressed that this is a necessary measure to ensure protection of the state’s coastline from the devastating effects of climate change.

The offshore wind energy procurement and attempt to switch to this renewable energy resource aligns with the legislature’s attempts to reduce the state’s overall environmental impact. Further environmental legislation passed this year includes the state’s plastic bag ban and a law requiring the state’s Department of Agriculture to research a pilot program for hemp production in the state, according to a report of this year’s major public acts from the Office of Legislative Research.

Needleman also brought up the need to improve Connecticut’s waste disposal.

“We burn nearly all of our trash,” Needleman

said. “We need to waste less and recycle more.”

Needleman said that public education about recycling needs to improve. He said, for example, that most people are not aware that recyclable food and beverage containers need to be rinsed before placement in the bin, as dirty plastic must be sorted. He said increased education about proper recycling will save the state a lot of money-this year; \$375 million had to be spent to fix a recycling plant which was damaged from dirty plastic.

Portland First Selectman Susan Bransfield brought up the issue of towns struggling to fund standard winter cleanup and maintenance, like plowing and removal of snow, due to a delay in funding.

“Some towns have struggled to buy salt,” Bransfield said.

Bransfield explained that the town relies heavily on the state’s Town Aid Road [TAR] grant to pay for summer road repaving work, fall tree clearing and winter snow removal. The state borrows the \$60 million annually, giving towns half in July and half in January. The \$30 million due to towns in July didn’t go out because Lamont and legislators haven’t agreed yet on a bond package – a schedule of projects and programs to be paid for with borrowing rather than with cash from the state’s operating budget.

“This makes it so difficult,” Bransfield said.

Needleman replied that Gov. Ned Lamont is withholding the package to force a vote on tolls.

“Tolls are by no means guaranteed,” Carpino said.

The most recent plan settled on by Lamont and state Democrats was to toll only trucks at 12 locations throughout the state with estimated revenues of \$187 million, far less than the governor’s original proposal.

Carpino said that the federal government must approve any tolls – and noted that federal law prohibits the state from constructing tolls exclusively along the state’s borders. She also said “congestion pricing,” or an increase of toll prices during peak hours, would have a negative impact on Connecticut families.

Portland resident Martha Franklin questioned the need for tolls, citing the funding diversions endured by the Department of Transportation. She said it should have seemed obvious that transportation would not have funds for this project if they never receive the proper amount of money.

“I asked the same question,” Carpino replied. “The answer is priorities. Administration after administration hasn’t invested in infrastructure.”

Needleman agreed with Carpino. He said



State Rep. Christie Carpino, left, and state Sen. Norm Needleman discussed various issues with the community at a conversation in the Waverly Senior Center last week.

that, as an owner of a manufacturing company, the first cost forgone when strings are tight is always capital.

“People need to be paid and the lights need to stay on,” Needleman said.

Needleman said that infrastructure investments and improvements are still reeling from bad deals and nonnegotiable contracts made under former Gov. John Rowland.

“Young people want different, better public transportation, but the state does not have enough people for the work,” Needleman said. “Hundreds of state police will be retiring. New state employees are at risk of receiving terrible retirement.”

Needleman said the reason for this issue with the state’s workforce stems from 40 years of negligence in handling the state’s pension funding. He said that he received information from state Sen. Cathy Osten (D-19) stating that the state’s workforce is the same size as it was in the 1950s.

Portland resident Jennifer Shafer raised her concern about the implementation of advanced 5G cellular networks in the state.

“We don’t know the ramifications,” Shafer said.

Shafer cited an article from the Yankee Institute, which says that the state could potentially lease part of its tolling infrastructure to telecommunication companies looking to develop 5G wireless technologies. Shafer went on to say that she has read a lot of negative writing regarding the installation of a 5G network.

“It’s happening. The state is not in a position to say ‘no,’” Needleman replied. “It’s not something we decided to put out. The bill was passed to allow 5G on state land because the networks need to be along public corridors. It’s the next step in internet feed.”

Needleman said AT&T has discovered much of the writing against 5G networks has been traced down to bots creating misleading, false messages.

“The truth is, we will not know if they have an impact [on health] for 25 to 30 years. There’s been no noticeable uptick in cancer related to cell phone use,” Needleman said.

* * *

After the community conversation, both legislators expressed their pleasure with the discussion.

“I am appreciative of every person who came out to these office hours and discussed pressing issues with myself and Rep. Carpino,” said Needleman after the conversation. “There are always prevalent issues impacting the public, and legislators need to hear from their constituents to represent them on those issues properly. I look forward to more conversations like these, which I find vitally important.”

“I want to thank everyone who came to share their thoughts, opinions, and concerns. An open and honest exchange of ideas is crucial for our state government to function in an effective manner,” said Carpino. “Whether it is in a formal setting or at an event in town, I always welcome the chance to talk about issues important to people I represent.”

New Ownership for Angie’s Pizza in Hebron

by Karla Santos

Dani and Klajdi Braho are a pair of brothers that moved to the United States from Albania in 2006.

Three years ago, they purchased a restaurant in East Hartford and about three weeks ago, they became the new owners of Angie’s Pizza, located at 127 Main St. in Hebron.

Dani Braho said he and his brother have always been around the kitchen, even as youngsters. Their parents owned a restaurant in Albania.

“Even at home, my mom was 24 hours in the kitchen baking, making food, my dad too,” Braho said.

The Braho brothers have carried on that legacy because ever since they moved to the United States they have been working in the restaurant industry.

According to Dani, he became interested in Angie’s because “the location is nice,” and because of the space it offers.

In addition, he said he wanted to revitalize the business, just as he and his brother did with their East Hartford restaurant, he said.

“It wasn’t making that much so I wanted to bring the business up because it wasn’t doing that good and it was almost going out of business,” Dani said about Angie’s.

Part of the Brahos’ plan for improving Angie’s is to make “quality food,” with fresh ingredients, “be nice to the customers” and “advertise,” Dani said.

He added that “there’s not a lot of entertainment” in the area so if he makes the restaurant nice, it will bring more people in, he said.

“It’s very quiet here, after 7:30, 8 o’clock everything, is dead,” Dani said.

Some of the changes the restaurant has gone through under the new ownership include simplifying the menu.

Previous owners “had so many dishes from everywhere, the menu was so overwhelmed; it had a lot of stuff on it,” Dani said. “It was like a 5 to 6 page menu. They had Mexican stuff, they had Italian stuff, they had Indian stuff. The menu was huge.”

He said he made the menu simpler, but better.

“More Mediterranean, pizza, salads, grinders, Italian dishes,” he added. “The simpler the menu is, the better. The less stuff people have to choose [from], the better it is for them.”

Changes to the restaurant’s physical location are also being implemented. Dani said the restrooms were recently remodeled.

“I changed the whole thing inside, the way they look, and I put everything. Brand new, tiles, painting, everything there is in the bathroom is brand new,” Dani said.

Plans are also in the works to add a small bar with television screens. Dani said they also want to re arrange the tables, paint the dining area and improve the tile work.

In addition, they want to separate the pick-up and dining areas.

Andrew Tierney, Town Manager of Hebron, said that keeping restaurants open is important for the town.

“You can’t ever get enough places to eat in a small town like Hebron,” Tierney said. “There’s a lot of activities that go on at the regional

school so there’s always parents and kids that are looking for different venues and that one could only add to that. I wish them the best of luck and hopefully he has good food, and if that’s the case he’ll do very well here.”

Dani said his favorite thing about the industry is that it keeps him busy.

“You are always running, you are always doing something, it moves you forward, it always keeps you busy,” he said. “If you work hard and you put your best into it then it pays off.”

He added that he likes to wake up in the morning and feel good about going to work.

“If they are not happy about what they are doing, the business is going to go down,” he said. “Businesses need somebody to wake up in the morning and go in happy.”

Dani said the restaurant originally opened in 1987 by a Greek couple and the wife’s name was Angie.

To learn more about Angie’s Pizza, call 860-228-1018.

Marlborough Selectmen Appoint Several to Boards, Commissions

by Karla Santos

With a new administration in Marlborough, the Board of Selectmen has started to make appointments to boards and commissions – and there were five of them at Tuesday’s selectmen’s meeting.

One of the positions the Board of Selectmen carried a motion for was the emergency management director. First Selectman Greg Lowrey has served in that capacity for about three years and previous to that he served as the emergency management radio operator for about 15 years.

But now that he is the first selectman, it’s time to pass the torch.

Lowrey said that while he could continue to serve as both first selectman and emergency management director, he prefers to “split it up” by providing “another set of hands and eyes.”

“I’m familiar with the position, I can step in if I’m needed, but it would be great to have somebody take the primary on that,” Lowrey said.

The selectmen unanimously voted to appoint Richard Antonelly to the role. According to Lowrey, Antonelly has a lengthy resume.

“He was the training officer at a local ambulance company,” Lowrey said. “He’s a paramedic that works for a local children’s hospital in their critical care transport office. He is also very well-versed in the incident command system, which is what emergency management runs on.”

Selectman Joe Asklar also supported Antonelly’s appointment and said they have known each other for 15 or 20 years. Asklar said that as a first responder, Antonelly has “always” been available.

“I know that his performance as a first responder is absolutely excellent,” Asklar said. “Emergency management, I don’t have to tell you, you are not on a time schedule. It could be

any time and an individual that has the attitude to approach it anytime when you need it I think is an asset to the position.”

Emergency management in Marlborough currently consists of a director, two deputies and a clerk, in addition to some volunteers.

At the Dec. 3 Board of Selectmen meeting, one of the emergency management deputies, Jennifer Pietrzak, was appointed to the Board of Finance, leaving the deputy position vacant. Pietrzak had to resign from her deputy emergency management position so that she could take a position on the Board of Finance. There’s a rule in town for individuals in the Board of Finance, they are not allowed to hold any other position within the town.

Before Tuesday’s meeting, there were three vacancies in emergency management including Lowrey’s position and the two deputy positions.

“In emergency management the way it works is you appoint someone pending the resignation of the sitting person so that we don’t go without one for more than a moment,” Lowrey said.

During Tuesday’s meeting, emergency management deputy, John Blanco, was re-appointed to the deputy role.

“He held the deputy position before I was the director,” Lowrey said.

“He’s always been there when we need him,” selectman Amy Traversa said after the board approved the motion to reappoint Blanco.

In addition, Todd Gianetti was appointed to the remaining emergency management deputy position. Gianetti is taking Pietrzak’s spot.

“He’s a member of the CERT team [Community Emergency Response Team] in town; he is heavily involved in Boy Scouts,” Lowrey said.

Lowrey said the deputy positions are not paid but the director is a paid position.

“We have an enthusiastic group of people here in town. I think some of that enthusiasm is driven by the new CERT team,” Lowrey said. “For example Todd Gianetti came from the CERT Team. I think without the CERT program I might not have identified Todd as quickly as I did.”

Also Tuesday, the selectmen appointed John Grasso to the Zoning Commission. A Democrat, Grasso unsuccessfully ran for the Zoning Board of Appeals in November, Lowrey said.

“He’s enthusiastic about the position,” Lowrey said of Grasso. “He’s highly-regarded by pretty much everybody I’ve talked to and he’s very well-qualified. He had a five-person law firm for 30 years in Glastonbury.”

Asklar and Traversa each spoke highly of Grasso when the board was discussing his appointment.

“I think you can’t have a better individual than John Grasso in that position,” Asklar said. “He’s a longtime resident; he’s been on several boards and commissions. Anytime he spoke, anytime he made decisions, they were always wise and intelligent decisions.”

“I couldn’t agree more,” Traversa responded. “His background in law, especially as it pertains to land, real estate, et cetera – it’s not somebody we want to let slip past us. I’m thrilled that he volunteered to do this and stepped forward.”

Lowrey said that Grasso’s role was previously held by a democrat and under the town charter “we are required to appoint a democrat to a democratic vacancy.”

The board also appointed Jason Valentine as an alternate member of the Lake Advisory Com-

mission.

More Marlborough News

In additional Marlborough news, First Selectman Greg Lowrey told the *RiverEast* that on Monday that the town received the word that Capital Regional Council of Government (CRCOG) approved a cost increase on an upcoming paving project.

“We are going to be able to complete three culverts on South Main Street,” Lowrey said. “That’s going to add approximately \$280,000 to a \$1 million dollar grant for improvements of South Main Street.”

Marlborough Town Planner Peter Hughes said that late summer 2020 is the target start date of the project, which could take three months to be completed.

“The road will be closed while culvert work is done and should be alternating traffic during pavement grinding and paving,” Hughes said.

“While the road closure will no doubt result with inconvenience to local residents, the road infrastructure is going to benefit for decades,” Lowrey said.

The \$1,280,000 will be used to complete the three culverts and grinding and paving 3,100 feet of the road, Hughes said. The next step of the planning process before work begins is to submit 90% of the design plans to CRCOG and the Department of Transportation (DOT) for the final review.

The town needs to get an updated commitment to fund letter from the DOT, which could take about four to six weeks, Hughes said.

In addition, the town needs an authorization from CRCOG and the DOT to select through a bid the construction company that will complete the project. The bid is expected to be done sometime in April or May.

East Hampton Residents, Officials Talk Lake Protection

by Jack Lakowsky

Residents and East Hampton officials discussed updates to protective regulations of the Lake Pocotopaug Protection Zone, a watershed area which has been subject to degradation and pollution, according to Planning and Zoning Commission officials.

Documentation provided by Zoning Official Jeremy DeCarli states that the lake’s water quality has undergone a gradual degradation since 1970. This reduction in water quality is said to be the result of the intense development and habitation the area has seen over recent years.

Ultimately, the regulations presented Monday night are intended to protect all land in the Lake Pocotopaug watershed and to minimize the environmental destruction brought about by development.

“Best management practices are recommended, but not enforceable,” said DeCarli in his presentation to the dozen attendees of the forum.

DeCarli discussed current regulations, which, according to him, are ineffective for the following reasons: they have not been changed or updated since 1996; they do not require best management practices; no buffers are required and developments can creep right up to the water’s edge; they do not limit tree clearing; and are of very limited scope, not being applicable to residential lots or any development not requiring commission approval.

DeCarli listed several reasons to update the regulation. He said that eutrophication is a great

concern. Eutrophication occurs when excessive nutrients, mainly nitrogen and phosphorous-two elements common in fertilizers – accumulate in a body of water, typically a lake. This leads to an intense bloom of algae on the water’s surface. If severe enough, the emerald coating of the algal bloom will block all sunlight from reaching beneath the surface, killing aquatic plants and reducing oxygen in the water. Remaining oxygen will then be consumed by bacteria feeding on the dead plant matter, killing aquatic wildlife. Eventually, the algae will die too, leaving only uninhabitable hypoxic, or oxygen-deficient, water.

According to DeCarli’s information, this issue has worsened in Pocotopaug.

“We’re paying a lot of taxes to look at a green lake,” said Judy Isley, an East Hampton resident who lives in the watershed area.

Another update proposed by DeCarli was to reduce the number of large development projects within the watershed area through tighter regulation. He also said that current science and practices must be observed and that the long-term health of the lake needs consideration.

DeCarli’s draft regulations included language to broaden applicability, a stormwater management plan, as stormwater runoff is carries pollutive substances which leak into water bodies, a requirement to create native plant buffers on the edges of the lake and its tributaries and a seasonal clearing limitation.

The most notable element of the commission’s seasonal clearing limitation was a seasonal ban on any and all clearing resulting in 500 square feet or more of exposed soils from October 1 to April 1.

David Banksen, a seasonal Pocotopaug resident, raised concern with this provision. He said that he and his wife plan to build a house to live year-round in the watershed.

“If construction starts in September, it will continue well past October,” Banksen told the forum. “Will I have to stop?”

DeCarli replied saying that the ban is for new projects in the proposed time period.

Banksen also expressed concern about the actual effectiveness of the regulations, saying he believes the commission should impose more severe fines for violations of ordinances protecting the watershed.

“Everyone here just wants to do the right thing,” he said. “What can be in the regulation to make enforcement worthwhile, and make people comply?”

DeCarli said that fines are established by state statute and that they as a governmental body have no right to impose anything more severe than established by the state.

Another regulation proposed by the commission was a 15 percent limit on the area of a parcel covered by an impermeable surface. DeCarli said that, because regulations cannot be retroactive, current properties which exceed

this limit will not be forced to comply, but any and all new development must comply with new regulations.

“They’ll have to adhere to more stringent rules,” DeCarli said.

Isley expressed concern that this limit will disproportionately hinder owners of smaller parcels, most of which are on the lakeshore itself.

The commission said that it believed most parcels on the lake were similar in size, but that would review the properties again.

Neal Perron, of Haddam, lives on an area of the Connecticut River which is regulated by the Connecticut River Gateway Commission, a state-local compact protecting the Lower Connecticut River Valley. He said the valley commission has proven quite effective in protecting the area.

DeCarli said that he is a former employee of that same commission. He said that Gateway is established by state statute and therefore has different powers than a local PZC. He added that they have been in contact with Gateway and that there are certainly elements which can be replicated.

“So, next step is to make some further revisions based on your feedback,” said Kevin Kuhr, Planning & Zoning Commission chairman. “We can’t hurry. We have to be cognizant of lake owners and add any more hindrances.”

Kuhr said the commission will host another forum in the new year.

Portland Selectmen Talk Speeding, More at Meeting

by Jack Lakowsky

First Selectman Susan Bransfield on Wednesday detailed the town's successful effort to reduce speeding in the High Street area.

Bransfield told her fellow selectmen the board has received many complaints about speeding along Portland's roadways. Bransfield said that results from a study with the Council of Governments revealed that a 55% of cars were violating the 25 mph speed limit.

"Residents wanted a stop sign," Bransfield said. "We spoke with an engineer who said that wasn't possible."

Bransfield explained that community advocates suggested the idea of a digital readout sign. She said the results of installing these digital speed readout signs have been successful. According to documentation of the study provided by the board, the following statistics were measured after sign installation; 34.62% of cars were driving under 25 mph; 24.46% were measured between 26 and 30 mph; 26.21% were between 31 and 35 mph; 10.47% were measured between 36 and 40 mph; only 2.81% were caught driving 41 to 45 mph and the remaining 1.42% were driving between 46 and 65 mph.

"There a lot of children in that area," Bransfield said. "It's very important to reduce speed. There are young drivers, too, and teachers who need to be safe."

Bransfield proposed to the board the creation of a Connecticut River Community Outreach Focus Group. This focus group would focus on

redevelopment and revitalization of properties along the riverfront.

"The work occurring would be remediation," Bransfield said. "This is very important and we will provide written information."

According to Bransfield, the focus group's budget would be \$750,000.

Other environmental initiatives floated by the board included a town-wide plastic bag ban and the promotion of agricultural best practices. Bransfield said that Portland has a lot of great farmers producing a huge array of products. Board member Louis Pear presented an idea of installing solar power units on several public buildings.

The board also discussed the allotting of a dog park for Portland. Bransfield proposed the idea of a pilot program, possibly adjacent to animal control, to gauge the feasibility of such a park.

One resident, David Murphy, expressed frustration at the length of time it has taken to approve the dog park.

Bransfield reiterated that the board is going to open research into a pilot program and explained that the length of time approval of the park has taken is both a result of the slow wheels of municipal government and the large number of items on the board's agenda.

Another project discussed was the construction of boat and kayak launches along the Port-

land riverfront.

Selectmen Rick Sharr and Louis Pear investigated potential sites with the Connecticut River Conservancy; an environmental group focused on both the remediation of the river ecosystem and increasing sustainable public access.

"This is not a big money project," Sharr said. "It's very inexpensive."

"We have a lot of riverfront and not a lot of access," Pear said. "We'll have more information in the spring."

Pear also said the town has entered into Phase II of the Air Line Trail expansion. The expansion, he said, could potentially connect the trail with hiking trails beginning in Willimantic and ending in Cheshire. This is a part of a more ambitious plan to connect to the East Coast Greenway, which would run from Maine to Florida.

Other business discussed by Bransfield and the board included Lt. Gov. Susan Bysiewicz's request for municipal governments to ensure the accuracy of the 2020 census. She also suggested a town charter revision, as the last approved change was in 2004. She said the ordinance of the ethics commission is in need of revision due to its difficult language, which has led to two vacancies of the three seats on that commission.

Lastly, the board renewed more than a dozen

appointments to boards and commissions.

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Before Wednesday's regular meeting, the selectmen, following a brief public hearing, approved an \$80,000 supplemental appropriation of revenue to the town Board of Education budget total Wednesday night.

This increased revenue flows from space rented by the Connecticut Institute for the Blind (Oak Hill) in Brownstone Intermediate School. The rental agreement with Oak Hill occurred too late for the revenue to be included in the Board of Education's current year (2019-20) budget. Therefore, the revenue needed to transferred to the school board budget.

Currently, Oak Hill's lease is slated for one year.

"This is a good deal," said Portland First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield. "We may encourage a five-year lease agreement, which will be easier to budget."

Board of Education Chairman Sharon Peters said the integration of Oak Hill students into Brownstone has gone very well.

Bransfield extended thanks to Oak Hill, saying the school is great to have in town, educating students from Portland as well as other towns.

Board of Selectmen member Ralph Zampano added that using rooms at BIS that would otherwise be vacant is great.

East Hampton Town Council Talks Budget Goals

by Jack Lakowsky

The Town Council presented its budget goals and policy to the Board of Finance and Education on Dec. 10.

The budget policy statement presented was also to provide guidance to the town manager and the Board of Education, both of whom are charged with proposing and presenting respective general government and education budget recommendations to the Board of Finance.

The policy states that budgets presented should reflect the guidelines presented to the respective boards as well as projected revenue, anticipated state funding shortfalls and potential impact of current economic conditions.

The town manager's budget will incorporate recommendations of the Capital Committee composed of representatives of the Town Council and Boards of Finance and Education.

A draft budget calendar was reviewed during the meeting. The final calendar is currently being completed.

The council provided goals that budgets should reach.

A goal mentioned in the policy was to enhance the quality and competitiveness of East Hampton students, including adequate investment in technologies, as well as investment in new technologies, according to the council outline.

Technology, however, has often been on the budget chopping block. Documentation provided by East Hampton Schools Technology Director Richard Fielding said that the council has approved an average of \$69,468 over the past few years. The initial funding requested by Fielding in his five-year plan averaged \$246,100.

In a previous Board of Education meeting, Fielding presented information about the im-

perative need to update and replace the school system's aging, outdated technological infrastructure.

The requested technology budget for fiscal year 2020-2021 totaled \$571, 771. This high number, according to Fielding, is a result of cuts made to the technology budget in prior years.

In the Dec. 10 meeting, Board of Education member Marc Lambert encouraged members to see technology items as critical to moving the town forward. He said he is seeking a commitment from the town to prioritize student technology, according to meeting minutes.

The council also outlined its own goals in the Tri-Board meeting. The council promised members that it will seek out savings by pursuing regional sharing of services and support the town manager's labor negotiation efforts to save tax payer money, ensure services and programs for seniors are adequately funded, aggressively pursue plans to improve the condition of Lake Pocotopaug and continue to support programs and efforts to help victims of opioid addiction.

Ted Turner, who is on the Board of Finance, told the council that he hopes to see that sinking funds for large ticket items will continued to be funded.

Town Council Chairman Pete Brown said that reasonable budgets are needed. In accordance with this, the council outline states that general government and Board of Education budget increases to meet contractual obligations.

According to meeting minutes, Brown added that all at the meeting were there on behalf of the town and that health, safety and education are very important in the budget and extended his thanks for everyone taking on this task.

East Hampton ĩ Portland ĩ East Hampton ĩ Portland ĩ East Hampton ĩ Portland

Nutmeggers Pay More for Utilities

by Jack Lakowsky

Connecticut has the sixth-highest utility costs in the nation, according to a report by researchers from move.org, a public policy and advocacy group.

According to researchers, Connecticut residents pay an average of \$440.03 a month for utilities like electricity, natural gas, water, internet and cable.

The average utility bill in the state breaks down as follows; electricity: \$139.97; natural gas: \$84.67; water: \$70.39; internet: \$60; and cable: \$85.

Researchers revealed that the average gas bill in the nation is \$72.10, \$12 less than Connecticut's average.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the cost of electricity is especially high in Connecticut at 20 cents per kilowatt hour- the third highest electricity rate in the nation and nearly 8 cents higher per hour than the national average. Compare this to the lowest rate in Louisiana, which is 9.3 cents per kilowatt-hour. Connecticut also has the third highest rate of residential electricity expenditures, totaling an average of \$1,706, nearly \$400 more than the national average of \$1,351.

Based on data from areavibes.com, a cost of

living research group, East Hampton's cost of living is 7% less than the state average, but 12% higher than the national average. Town electric bills are 4.9% higher than the national average, but phone bills are 12.9% less. Overall, East Hampton spends less than the state average on goods & services, groceries and housing. However, the average mortgage payment in town is more than 30% higher than the national average. Housing in East Hampton is priced at 15% higher than the national average.

Areavibes.com's overall cost of living index scored East Hampton at 12 points higher than the national average, but 8 points less than the state.

For Portland, the cost of living was 8% lower than the state average, but 11% higher than the national average. Portland's cost of housing is 12% higher than the U.S. average. Mortgage payments in Portland are also more than 30% higher than the national number, but apartment rent is 6.6% less. Like East Hampton, Portland residents pay 4.9%

The website's determinate categories for cost of living are: health care, transportation, utilities, groceries, housing and goods and services.

Assault Charges Added to September Kidnapping Case in Andover

by Sloan Brewster

An East Hartford man who was arrested in September after holding a woman at gunpoint while taking police on a high-speed chase that began in Andover has now been charged with assault.

The charges are based on an incident that allegedly took place in August.

According to an arrest warrant, Simmie Freeman, 34 of 22 Webster St. in East Hartford, was arrested on Dec. 17 and charged with second-degree assault with a firearm and second-degree assault.

According to the warrant, he was held on a \$50,000 bond and appeared in court in Danielson on Dec. 17.

The warrant states that Freeman drove to the victim's home in Willimantic. When he stated that he wanted to have sexual relations, the victim refused and Freeman took out his gun, hit her on top of the head, turned her over and sexually assaulted her.

The victim did not report the incident because she "is afraid of Freeman and knows what he can do," the warrant states.

Also according to the warrant, the victim was given the number of and met with the Sexual Assault Crisis Team in Willimantic but a sexual assault kit was never completed based on the dates the incident was reported versus when it occurred.

Freeman was previously charged based on an incident that took place Sept. 11.

According to a press release from state police, Freeman was arrested on that date by Trooper Andrew Eckman and charged with theft of a firearm, criminal possession of a firearm, criminal use of a firearm, reckless endangerment, interfering, weapon in a motor

vehicle, carrying a revolver without a permit, possession of controlled substance, engaging police in pursuit and reckless driving.

Resident State Trooper Darrell Tetreault said that on Sept. 11 Freeman went to see his wife in Willimantic.

In the process of getting a divorce, Freeman showed up to talk to the woman "about their personal stuff," Tetreault said. She got in the car and Freeman allegedly took off, holding her at gunpoint.

While on the road, the woman texted 911 and state police dispatchers retrieved her location at 144 Route 6 in Andover, which is Andover Plaza, Tetreault said.

A trooper responded to the scene and saw the woman in the car, Tetreault said. Freeman, in turn, saw the trooper and sped off.

The trooper followed and a high-speed pursuit ensued, during which the woman continued to text with dispatchers, Tetreault said. Police chased Freeman all the way to Hartford at speeds exceeding 100 mph. The chase took place at night, and Freeman "had no lights on whatsoever," Tetreault said.

The chase ended in Hartford where the suspect crashed his vehicle and took off on foot, the trooper said. After a short foot pursuit, he was caught and transported to Hartford Hospital.

Once Freeman was released from the hospital, he was taken into custody, Tetreault said.

His wife gave a statement that Freeman had held her at gunpoint and police located a gun in the car as well as drugs, Tetreault said.

The gun was stolen from East Hartford, said East Hartford Police Department Public Information Officer Josh Litwin.

Colchester Police News

11/26: State Police said John Goncalves, 65, of South Windsor, was arrested and charged with driving under the influence and driving without minimum insurance.

11/28: State Police said John Mitchell, 33, of Gales Ferry, was arrested and charged with driving under the influence and failure to drive in the proper lane.

11/28: State Police said James Gerent Jr., 29, of 101 Mill Hill Rd., was arrested and charged with interfering with officer, disorderly conduct and interfering with an emergency call.

11/30: State Police said Lucas Gregorio, 26, of Norwich, was arrested and charged with second degree failure to appear.

12/2: State Police said Andrew Schultz, 33, of Glastonbury, was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear.

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Marlborough Police News

12/5: State Police said Joshua Swindell, 38, of Norwich, was arrested and charged with third-degree larceny.

12/5: State Police said Caleb O'Donnell, 34, of 253 Jones Hollow Rd., Marlborough was arrested and charged with driving under the influence and making improper turn or stop.

12/7: State Police said Manley Clarke, 44, of Hartford, was arrested and charged with driving under the influence, failure to drive in proper lane, unsafe backing and tinted auto glass requirements.

12/17: State Police said Tywan Jenkins, 51, of Norwich, was arrested and charged with failure to respond to an infraction.

East Hampton Police News

12/8: Christy Dence, 39, of 4 Aaron's Way, was arrested and charged with driving under the influence, East Hampton Police said.

12/9: After an investigation into a one-car motor vehicle crash on Route 16 (Colchester Avenue), Ella Whitford, 20, of 54 Mott Ln., Moodus, was issued a summons for operating under suspension, police said.

Also, from Dec. 2-8, officers responded to 17 medical calls, three motor vehicle crashes and five alarms, and made 25 traffic stops, police said.

12/4: State Police said Jeffrey Marroquin, 21, of 76 Prospect St., Colchester, was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct, third-degree assault and second-degree threatening.

12/11: State Police said Jayven Hunter, 21, of New Britain, was arrested and charged with second degree failure to appear.

12/14: State Police said they are investigating a larceny complaint regarding a contractor that was hired for home repairs in Colchester.

12/15: State Police said James Gulizio, 53, of 251 Westerly Terrace, Colchester, was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear.

12/17: State Police said Mark Robinson, 41, of Moodus, was arrested and charged with driving under the influence.

Andover Police News

12/12: State Police said they are investigating the report of a Burglary in Andover, where the suspect entered by smashing the rear sliding glass door.

12/12: State Police said they are investigating the report of a stolen firearm from a locked cabinet in Andover.

Hebron Police News

11/26: State Police said Michael Sentell, 35, of 116-2 Wall St., Hebron was arrested and charged with second degree breach of peace, disorderly conduct and third-degree assault.

11/26: State Police said Ketan Patel, 34, of Newington, was arrested and charged with violation of a protective order.

12/16: State Police said a gray 2017 BMW X5 was taken from the driveway of a residence located in Amston.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

I've got to start by praising state Republicans for telling one of their Congressional candidates to get lost.

CT News Junkie reported Tuesday night that House Minority Leader Themis Klarides and Senate Republican Leader Len Fasano each called for Robert Hyde, one of three Republicans vying for the party nomination in the 5th Congressional District, to drop out of the race after a frankly repugnant tweet about a U.S. senator.

On Dec. 3, Hyde for some reason decided to use graphic sexual language to describe Sen. Kamala Harris withdrawing from the Democratic presidential race. It was frankly too offensive to use in this newspaper. The tweet didn't draw much reaction until earlier this week, when news media began reporting on it. Hyde decided then to delete it, but the damage had been done.

"He needs to end his bid for Congress," Klarides told *CT News Junkie*. "The Connecticut Republicans won't tolerate this from anyone. He should end his bid."

Klarides added that Hyde is not someone she would support "under any circumstances."

Fasano, meanwhile, said Hyde's tweet was "flat-out disgusting and morally reprehensible."

"I am calling on Mr. Hyde to step down as a candidate for office," Fasano said in a statement, according to *CT News Junkie*. "His comments are beyond disgraceful and offensive and his actions are not representative of the Republican Party at all. He needs to remove himself as a candidate immediately."

Hyde's given no indications he'll step down, although he did write in a tweet Tuesday evening that he "wasn't thinking" when he made his earlier comment. Given that it was it was a fairly lengthy tweet, with no less than four sexual references included, I find that difficult to believe. He knew what he was doing. He also misspelled Kamala Harris's name in his "apology" tweet, which renders it even more insincere.

A scroll through Hyde's Twitter shows that he's frankly not fit for public office. An avid fan of Donald Trump, he seems to have taken up his hero's penchant for childish nicknames, with tweets attacking "crazy eyes Schiff" and "nut cake Nancy." It'd be embarrassing to have somebody like this representing Connecticut anywhere, much less in Washington. I hope Hyde heeds his fellow Republicans' call and drops out.

* * *

Kudos also – although somewhat muted kudos – to the Hallmark Channel for quickly reversing its decision over the weekend to pull a series of wedding advertisements that featured a same-sex couple, after the conservative watchdog group One Million Moms complained.

The group – whose membership, I've heard, numbers significantly less than one million – threatened to boycott the channel over the advertisements. This is Hallmark Channel's biggest time of year; it's built its reputation on the insanely popular cheesy Christmas movies it shows non-stop for about the last two

and a half months of the year.

Hallmark was no doubt concerned about losing the eyeballs, so they quickly caved to the group's hateful demands.

I was disappointed, for sure. It's depressing that, in 2019, there are still people who would boycott a channel because they showed a commercial featuring a same-sex couple. I have zero patience for homophobia. And it's always ironic when it pops up during the Christmas season, particularly from groups that claim to be Christian, as the blatant intolerance seems pretty un-Christ-like to me.

But then something kind of amazing happened. People and groups in favor of love and acceptance and tolerance decided that, in the words of Twisted Sister, they weren't going to take it anymore.

There was loads of backlash, from viewers as well as celebrities, politicians, and even stars of previous Hallmark Channel movies. Heck, for a time #BoycottHallmarkChannel was even trending on Twitter – which was funny as a boycott was precisely what Hallmark was looking to avoid.

So, Hallmark reversed course. Hallmark Cards president and CEO Mike Perry said in a statement Sunday that removing the ads was "the wrong decision," according to the television news website TVLine.com.

"We are truly sorry for the hurt and disappointment this has caused," Perry added. He stressed that Hallmark "is, and always has been, committed to diversity and inclusion," and even said Hallmark would be "working with GLAAD to better represent the LGBTQ population across our portfolio of brands."

It was a victory for love and acceptance, and a defeat of hatred and bigotry, and should be celebrated, right? Well, sort of. I'm glad Hallmark changed their minds, but I'm also saddened they had pulled the ads to begin with. They never should've given in to hate the way they did.

One Million Moms, by the way, is still hopping mad. A look on their website Tuesday night showed they were still calling for a Hallmark Channel boycott.

Maybe these moms have too much time on their hands.

* * *

I seem to say this every December: where did the year go? Yup, it's the end of 2019 – and it's also the last *Rivereast* of the year.

The paper won't publish next week, and the offices will be closed. We'll be back the week of Dec. 30 – but at a shortened schedule. The offices will be closed for New Year's Day on Wednesday, Jan. 1, and will open again Thursday, Jan. 2. So, there will be an early deadline that week; all copy – such as letters to the editor, event announcements, church listings, etc. – **must** be submitted no later than **noon Monday, Dec. 30**. No exceptions will be made.

So, to repeat: no paper next week, and then an early deadline the following week.

Happy holidays from all of us at the *Rivereast News Bulletin*.

See you next year.

Obituaries

Marlborough

Jody Fay Lerner

Jody Fay (Maner) Lerner, 60, of Wilmington, N.C., formerly of Marlborough, passed away unexpectedly Monday, Sept. 23.

Jody was an accomplished account executive for many years with local radio and television stations. She enjoyed traveling and holidays, but most of all she was a loving mother to her only child, Justin Lerner. She cherished her time spent with Justin and her dear friends and co-workers.

A celebration of Jody's life will be Monday, Dec. 23, at 4 p.m., at the D'Eesopo-East Hartford Memorial Chapel, 30 Carter St., East Hartford. Jody's family will receive relatives and friends Monday afternoon, Dec. 23, from 2-4 p.m., at the funeral home chapel. Private burial will be held at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions in Jody's name may be made to the American Heart Association-Connecticut Chapter, 5 Brookside Dr., P.O. Box 5022, Wallingford, CT 06492-5022.



Hebron

Betty Lou Mastandrea

Betty Lou Mastandrea (Drake), 87, formerly of Hebron, passed peacefully surrounded by her family Thursday, Dec. 5, in Wrentham, Mass. Born in Portsmouth, Ohio, on Oct. 14, 1932, Betty was the daughter of the late Azil and Sarah Mabel (Goad) Drake. She graduated from Portsmouth High School in Portsmouth, Ohio.

Known as a tough and sassy lady, Betty defied her parents and left Portsmouth after graduation for Washington, D.C., where she worked as a switchboard operator at the FBI. One of her favorite memories from working at the FBI was meeting J. Edgar Hoover. In 1960 Betty met Salvatore Mastandrea, who became her husband in 1960 and to whom she was married for 55 years. Together they moved to Lincoln, Neb., Silver Spring, Md., Mystic and Waterbury, ultimately settling in Hebron, where they raised their two children.

A loving mother and doting grandmother, Betty was one of the original "soccer moms," but instead of soccer it was figure skating, gymnastics, baseball, and basketball practices that she was constantly carting her kids and their friends to. Betty especially loved Christmas, making the decorating of the house a major event, and punctuated by the conscription of various family members in the Christmas Eve ritual of wrapping each other's presents.

At various times she worked at the Gilead Hill Elementary School library in Hebron and Bolton Public Library in Bolton. Betty enjoyed reading, playing dominos, tennis, bowling, watching UConn women's basketball, baseball, football, and debating her son-in-law on any and all subjects, and relating family stories.

Betty is survived by a daughter, Christina Crowther, and her husband John, of Wrentham; a son, Mark Mastandrea, and his wife Janea, of Santa Cruz, Calif.; and six grandchildren, Kathleen, Colleen, and Sean Crowther; and Viveka, Radha, and Tara Mastandrea.

She is predeceased by her husband, Salvatore, sisters Virginia and Joyce, and brothers Bob, Donny, Dick and Jim.

The family would like to thank the exceptional nurses and staff at the Maples Rehabilitation center and Beacon Hospice who comforted and cared for Betty.

There will be a memorial reception for Betty in the springtime, followed by a burial next to her husband Salvatore at the Massachusetts National Cemetery in Bourne, Mass.

In lieu of flowers, gifts may be made to Alzheimer's Association at alz.org.

Online guestbook may be found at rjrossfuneralhomeinc.com.

Marlborough

Danuta Kolodziej

Danuta Kolodziej, 71, of Dudley, Mass., passed away Saturday, Dec. 14, at home, surrounded by her family, after a battle with brain cancer.

She leaves her husband of 49 years, Jan Kolodziej; two children, Tomasz and his wife Urszula, and Karolina (Dowd) and her husband Thomas, as well as four loving grandchildren – Anastazja and Tomasz Kolodziej Jr., and Jack and Patrick Dowd. She also leaves extensive family in Poland including her sister and brother-in-law, Hanka and Krzysztof Kozlik, and nephews Dawid and Jakub Kozlik.

Danuta was born in Zabrze, Poland on Jan. 27, 1948. In Poland, she worked as a high school Polish language teacher before emigrating to the United States in 1984. After moving to Massachusetts, she continued her vocation in education and worked for many years as a kindergarten aide in the Worcester School Department until her retirement in 2007. Throughout the years, Danuta was very active in local Polish-American organizations.

Calling hour was held Wednesday, Dec. 18, at Farley-Sullivan Funeral Home, 50 Naubuc Ave., Glastonbury. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated that day in St. Augustine Church, 55 Hopewell Rd., South Glastonbury. Burial followed the Mass in Holy Cross Cemetery, 1318 Hebron Ave., Glastonbury.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the charity of your choice.

To extend online condolences and/or share a memory, visit farleysullivan.com.