

RIVEREAST

# News Bulletin

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**Mighty Mathletes...** William J. Johnston Middle School math club students competed in the regional Connecticut Society of Professional Engineers math competition at the University of Connecticut's McHugh Hall in Storrs on Saturday, Feb. 9. The Mathcounts members applied their standards to an array of math problems encompassing grades 6-8 standards and were a team of 9 out of 191 students from the region. Eighth grade math teacher and Mathlete coach Maddalena Scrivano is the advisor of the WJMS math club. Pictured from left, top row, are Mathletes Brianna Berthiaume, Jack Stillwell, Henry Callan; middle row, Jackson Budrow, Carolyn Baehr, Samantha (Sammi) D'Atri, Jack Mallet; and first row, Shayla Babcock, Anastasia (Anna) Violette, and Scrivano.

## Rocky Could Go Free – But Has to Leave Town

by Elizabeth Regan

The Portland Board of Selectmen this week unanimously authorized a settlement that would give the dog pound's resident 90-pound pit bull a chance to go free – as long as he leaves Portland and never comes back.

The resolution specifies the town is willing to release Rocky, who has been on death row at the Portland pound for three years after a bite incident, to "an appropriate custodian in a location outside of the borders of the town."

Any settlement would have to be approved by resident Paul Bell, who is appealing the dog's kill order in the New Britain Superior Court. The Old Marlborough Road resident adopted Rocky from the Portland pound not long after a motorcycle accident left Bell with serious injuries that ultimately led to amputation of one leg.

It seemed unlikely Wednesday night that Bell would sign off on a settlement requiring him to give up Rocky.

"If he's good enough to go somewhere else, why is he not good enough to be here?" Bell asked selectmen during the public comment period before their vote.

Rocky was impounded following a 2016 attack on fellow Old Marlborough Road resident Stephen Demarest. According to legal documents, Demarest was transported to Middlesex Hospital for wounds to his left ankle, inner leg and upper thigh after he was bitten across the street from Bell's house. Demarest said the dog was unattended and unleashed at the time.

Documents show another complaint was lodged the next day by a man who said Rocky ran down the driveway of Bell's home and began to attack a bag the man was carrying. Bell has said he was letting Rocky outside before

leaving to put him in quarantine at the pound. He briefly considered putting the dog on a leash, but decided it wasn't necessary for the quick trip to the backyard.

Stephen and Maria Demarest last year received a \$275,000 settlement in their civil case against Bell for both the victim's physical injuries and his wife's mental pain and suffering.

One of Bell's main objections to the selectmen's resolution revolved around a section emphasizing that any formal settlement must "absolve the town of any further liability" related to Rocky.

He said the town is not liable and never has been.

"Rocky is not your property," Bell said. "Otherwise those people would have sued you, too."

Bell got emotional when describing his parting message to Rocky at the end of each daily visit to the pound.

"I care about this dog and I will not give up on him," Bell said. "I tell him every day, 'I love you and I will never leave you.'"

Rocky's death sentence was ordered by Portland Animal Control Officer Karen Perruccio and upheld by the state Department of Agriculture. It took the agriculture department almost two years to make its ruling.

Rocky has gained a devoted following in that time, including an 11-year-old girl named Annabelle Maruschock whose online petition to free the dog garnered almost 3,700 signatures as of press time.

Spurred in part by Maruschock's advocacy, selectmen back in August committed themselves to looking at alternatives to the kill order. A judge officially put the case on hold in October to give the parties time to work out the

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## Omitted Word Leaves Colchester Board 'Neutered'

by Allison Lazur

Developing.

That's the single word missing from the town charter that sparked a heated discussion Wednesday between the Colchester Board of Finance and the town's first selectman, Art Shilosky.

Without the word "developing," the Board of Finance loses nearly all involvement in the creation of the town budget, including making necessary cuts, and the powers of the Board of Selectmen over the yearly spending package are "enhanced," states a legal opinion from Colchester town attorney Matthew D. Ritter.

As a result the finance board is left feeling "neutered," in the words of one of its members.

The current town charter, which was revised in November 2017, reads, "The Board of Finance shall be responsible for presenting to the town voters the budgets for all the town departments and the combined budget and shall have all of the powers and perform all of the duties conferred or imposed upon Boards of Finance

by the general statutes."

But before charter revision occurred, the language outlining Board of Finance duties and powers read "shall be responsible for *developing* and presenting to the town voters the budgets..."

As a result of this altered language, "The Board of Finance does not have the authority to amend the Board of Selectman's proposed budget before the budget is acted upon by the annual budget meeting," Ritter wrote in a Feb. 18 memorandum to Shilosky, who requested the legal opinion after discovering the change himself earlier this month.

Board of Finance Chairman Rob Tarlov said he believed no one involved with crafting the charter revisions – not the boards of selectmen or finance, or even the Charter Review Commission itself – had any idea the word "developing" was being deleted.

"In my opinion I believe it was an oversight with unintended consequences," Tarlov said,

adding, "I'm not sure how we remedy that."

At the time of charter revision, over a year ago, residents had the opportunity to vote on six questions regarding proposed changes.

Of the six questions, only two passed: the making of general grammatical amendments and clarifications to the charter, and the making of changes to the annual budget meeting and updating the approval of financial matters.

Tarlov said Wednesday night he felt it was a "real stretch" to try to connect making grammatical amendments to the deletion of the word "developing."

As for the other approved question, he said it focuses on the annual budget meeting specifically, adding he couldn't see how that would apply to the issue at hand.

In 2017, Charter Revision Commission Chairman Gregg LePage described "updating the approval of financial matters" to mean lowering the thresholds to reconvene for an annual budget meeting, closing loopholes on borrow-

ing to ensure that all borrowing agreements above the threshold go to a town meeting, adding an emergency contingency for public safety, requiring that the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance approve transfers between adopted town department budgets, and requiring a town meeting for any appropriations above 2 percent of a department's budget.

Tarlov said that, the way the charter reads now, the Board of Finance should not have been permitted to make any cuts to the town's budget last season, and should have simply presented the budget to town voters and answer questions about it.

While some Board of Finance members considered the matter a simple mistake, members Andrea Migliaccio and Andreas Bisbikos weren't satisfied with that explanation and asked Shilosky how this was allowed to happen.

Migliaccio asked Shilosky if the charter was

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**Rocky has been on death row in the Portland pound for 3 years after attacking a neighborhood man on Old Marlborough Road. Selectmen this week authorized a resolution to settle the lawsuit initiated by his owner, Paul Bell, which would release the dog to someone outside the town's borders as long as the dog does not return even temporarily to Portland.**

#### Rocky cont. from Front Page

issue on their own.

Initial discussion involved allowing Rocky to return to Bell's home under the close supervision of an animal trainer. But the first trainer Bell brought in soon determined it was best to step away from the case, in part because Bell installed a fence that did not match the trainer's stringent specifications.

The trainer, Brian Rogers, told the *Rivereast* in December that the situation was a "political and social mess."

A second trainer brought in by Bell expressed confidence Rocky "can and should come home," but emphasized the dog's successful return depends on Bell's ability to handle him safely.

#### Setting Precedent

Maruschock asked selectmen before their vote to consider the precedent they will be setting.

"Will every dog owner whose dog bites be held to the same expectation? Will they have their dog taken away for three years, then be told to put up a fence to comply with directives given by this board, only to have this board make a random decision based on personal feelings?" she asked. "Long after your vote tonight, the public will remember what happened in this case – what was decided and how future, similar situations will be handled."

Each selectman in turn described the resolution on the table as one that strikes a balance between the victim, the dog owner and the community at large.

Selectman Ralph Zampano emphasized his role in representing not just the vocal animal advocates who've been rallying for Rocky's release in front of the selectmen for the past year, but also for Portland residents who have other, quieter opinions.

"I have yet to hear a single person say to me that the dog should go back to Paul Bell," he

said, adding he asked about 20 people around town for their thoughts.

Board of Selectmen member Ben Srb said the sign of an effective compromise is when nobody is happy.

"That's how you know you've come to a good solution," Srb said. "I doubt the Demarests are happy with the situation and I doubt Paul is going to be happy with the situation, but I'd just like to point out, here's a scenario the dog can live."

Srb also rejected the idea of setting the kind of precedent Maruschock described. He said Bell's case is not typical in scope or duration because it involves a rare order from the animal control officer to put the dog down, combined with support for the kill order from the state Department of Agriculture and then an appeal to the state Superior Court by Bell.

Bransfield summed up the selectmen's decision by outlining the chain of events and series of concerns raised by the victim, the animal control officer, the state Department of Agriculture, and the trainer who was first willing to work with Bell but then removed himself from the situation.

Bransfield said selectmen are trying to "avoid further court matters and further time for Rocky to be in the pound."

Bell told selectmen he'd bring their resolution to his lawyer, but added "I'm sure he's going to flip out."

Bell's lawyer, Thom Page, a self-described civil rights attorney for animals, has vowed to take the case to the appellate court if he loses the Superior Court case.

Page last year said he was fighting 15 similar cases in this state and 27 in other states. He brought several cases to the federal court system, including one challenging Connecticut's kill order statute.

#### Omitted Word cont. from Front Page

reviewed by the town attorney prior to going to referendum and pushed to find out if removing Board of Finance powers was anyone's intent.

"We removed the powers of the Board of Finance by way of no longer allowing us to create [the budget], right?" Migliaccio said. "This is what that word has done. However, this attorney points out that intent was to enhance the power of the Board of Selectmen – was that the intent of the commission?"

"I have no clue," Shilosky said.

Migliaccio said that, based on the attorney's opinion, "it looks like intent." She continued by calling the oversight of the revision "pretty poor" because of the situation at hand and ultimately told Shilosky the mistake "falls on you."

Shilosky said, "Why does it fall on me?"

Migliaccio responded, "Because you put together the [Charter Revision Commission] and you're putting this out to referendum to the people who put you in charge."

Shilosky shot back, "Excuse me? Could you clarify that? Are you accusing me of doing something illegal and wrong?"

Migliaccio said, "I am not accusing you of doing something illegal and wrong. What I'm telling you is that if this went to referendum and it has this much damage to our board then I think the voters were very misled."

Tarlov chimed in, stating the voters voted on six specific questions during charter revision, not this altered language. He added that the change is "so drastic" that if the intent was indeed to strip the finance board of its budget power, "this should've been highlighted during the hearings and brought to people's attention and listed as a separate question."

However, Tarlov reiterated he believes no one on any board or any resident "had a clue" that this was being changed.

Despite Shilosky stating he had no idea the word was left out, Bisbikos pushed for answers, asking again if Shilosky was aware the deletion occurred.

Shilosky replied, "I did not know [the word was missing] until I started reading the charter

and then I called Rob."

Bisbikos asked "How do you read the charter two years after it's passed?"

"You pick it up and you read it," Shilosky said sarcastically.

Bisbikos continued, "You believe the voters were informed that the [finance board] was going to lose all its powers? Do you feel as first selectman you got out there and told the voters, 'Hey, the Board of Finance is going to be completely neutered and it's not going to exist in this town.'"

Shilosky simply said, "I did not do that."

While Tarlov attempted to keep the meeting under control, finance board members Nilda Negron and Michael Egan chimed in with their solutions.

Negron and Egan both thought a second opinion from another attorney would be beneficial – and said that this time the Board of Selectmen should provide the lawyer with additional information surrounding the "intent" of the revision commission instead of looking at the charter on its own.

Egan added such an approach could possibly result "in a memorandum of understanding between the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance about the duties" – provided that the memorandum could stand until a more permanent solution is agreed upon.

"That's the way we move forward," he said. "We cannot wait for a charter revision that might not happen until 2020 or 2021."

With no clear solution in sight, the finance board requested the Board of Selectmen discuss the matter further at its meeting Thursday night after press time – with the hope that the selectmen will agree to obtain another legal opinion.

"We all had the opportunity to read [the charter]," Tarlov said. "We all missed it and proof of the matter is we all marched through the budget process last year as if nothing changed. We have to figure out how to fix it in time for this budget season."

# Hebron School Board Finds \$70K in Budget Savings

by Sloan Brewster

After approving an \$11.60 million budget for the 2019-20 fiscal year, the Hebron Board of Education has found an additional \$70,000 in savings.

Last week, the board learned that the town had adjusted the board's share of Liability and Worker's Compensation by \$70,000, said Superintendent of Schools Timothy Van Tassel.

In January, the board approved the \$11.60 million budget, a .97 percent increase over the current year's \$11.48 million budget.

That is the board's formal adopted proposal and has been forwarded to the town, Van Tassel said.

With the \$70,000 deduction, the budget would be reduced to \$11.53 million, a .36 percent increase over the current year.

Interestingly, however, the school board could not officially alter the budget, as the board already approved the budget last month and sent it to the Board of Finance. Van Tassel said, "It's just understood that the adjustment is occur-

ring during the [Board of Finance] deliberations."

In December, Van Tassel presented a proposal for an \$11.72 million budget for the 2019-20 school year, a \$235,644, or 2.05 percent, increase over the current year.

The board then made some changes, including adding \$82,148 for school resource officers. The board has proposed hiring four part-time officers who would rotate between the two schools in the district. Last month, the board held a public forum on the proposal and was met with support by residents.

More recently, the school board proposed the idea to selectmen at their Feb. 7 meeting.

The officers – who would be sworn police officers – would officially fall under the town's purview, hence the proposal requires approval by selectmen, Van Tassel said.

The plan would be to hire the officers before August with the hope they will be available to start on Aug. 20, Erica Bromley, school board

chairman, told selectmen.

Town Manager Andrew Tierney said he would continue to work with Van Tassel and will forward to the superintendent any questions selectmen may have.

The board's tweaks included \$265,425 in reductions and \$141,294 – including the funding for the SROs – in additions.

Reductions included \$56,560 savings on a lease, \$83,977 in savings for a teacher leave of absence in 2019-20, \$26,373 in insurance savings due to the leave of absence, and \$57,620 in savings due to an insurance consortium adjustment.

The board is in the process of negotiating the terms of a new transportation contract, according to Van Tassel.

"It remains unknown what savings may re-

sult from this," he said. "In addition, changes in special education, health insurance, and salaries are all subject to change moving forward."

Health insurance and salaries would not be known until sometime between May and July as staff may opt out of insurance during open enrollment, he said. In addition, staff leaving the district is a factor that can't be predicted.

"As further adjustments become known, they are shared with the [Board of Finance] to assist their formal development of the expense budget for the town," the superintendent said. "The Board of Education continues to work in partnership with the town to develop a reasonable budget proposal to taxpayers. We believe this year's budget proposal meets the needs of our students, staff, parents and the taxpayers of Hebron."

# Andover School Board Approves \$4.07M Budget

by Sloan Brewster

With zero discussion, the Board of Education last week approved the exact same school budget proposal for 2019-20 Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen had presented in January.

The board agreed 6-0 – board member Jay Lindy was again absent – to approve the \$4.07 million spending plan, which calls for the elimination of two teaching positions.

The budget reflects a \$90,000, or 2.16 percent, decrease from current year spending.

As there were no changes from the budget she presented in January, Doyen only briefly ran through the numbers before the board voted.

With a \$127,845 reduction, the \$2.16 million salaries line is the biggest line item to go down, she said. In the year's budget, that line item is \$2.29 million. The decrease is the result of eliminating two positions, one resignation and one layoff.

The board has not yet determined whom it will lay off, Doyen said.

Also due to the elimination of the two positions, the employee benefits line item is sliding by about \$50,000 to \$815,000, and insurance costs are going down by 10 percent, as

there will be fewer employees using the plan.

Despite the overall reductions, some line items will increase.

The professional and contracted services line item is on the rise by \$34,000 to \$284,000 due to the addition of a pre-kindergarten consultant and a special education consultant, Doyen said.

Property services, which include contracted maintenance HVAC, electrical and plumbing are going up by \$18,000. Other purchased services are increasing as it includes the bus contract, which is going out to bid with the assumption the cost will rise, Doyen said.

Supplies, a "very diverse" line item that includes heating oil, diesel fuel "and things that you don't normally think of as supplies," is going up by \$19,000, she said.

Doyen realized about \$5,000 in savings in furniture, fixtures and equipment by getting free stuff from the University of Connecticut when it closed its West Hartford campus last year, she told the board at last month's meeting.

"Things were free so we got a lot of very nice furniture from them," she said.

Administrative salaries will go down from

about \$295,000 to \$288,000 due to a change in the contract that eliminates a stipend and a vacation buy out.

Extracurricular, another line under salaries, is staying the same at \$10,000, Doyen said. The item increased this year from last year's \$6,900.

"In the last couple years we've really increased things we have after school and we do provide transportation home for the kids," she said.

Retirement payouts are going down from \$14,000 to \$2,000 because no one is planning to retire.

The list of capital improvements Doyen is recommending for 2019-20 includes \$10,000 for a new water softener system, \$5,000 for new piping to the boilers, \$15,000 in HVAC fixes, \$12,000 in electrical systems fixes and \$10,000 to replace doors on the building and upgrade lockers.

The five-year Capital Improvement Plan forces the board to look ahead and "gives us a

planning tool," Doyen said. That list includes a plan to replace boilers at the school for an estimated \$20,000 in 2022-23.

The sole comment on the budget came from Board Chairman Shannon Loudon – and it was in relation to the \$175,000 in budget surplus the school board is returning to the town, Doyen said. The surplus is due to more grant money coming in than was expected and more than \$110,000 for a special education outplacement that was not spent as the family moved out of the district.

Loudon said she was asked by parents why the district continues to charge parents \$20 per field trip and such "when we're returning more than \$100,000 to the town."

Loudon said she felt it was a good question to ask; however, the board did not discuss it further.

Doyen said she plans to give the board an update on field trips and costs at its next meeting.

## Man Arrested for Colchester 2017 Bank Robbery

by Allison Lazur

A Rhode Island man has been arrested in connection with a 2017 bank robbery in town.

State Police arrested Leif Anderson, 40, of 4 Cul De Sac Dr., Richmond, R.I., on Feb. 14 for third-degree larceny, second-degree robbery and second-degree threatening stemming from a bank robbery that occurred Oct. 3, 2017 at the United Bank located at 99 Linwood Ave.

The warrant states a total of \$3,120 was stolen after Anderson showed a note demanding money.

No weapon was used or shown.

With the help of surveillance footage from Stop & Shop, located adjacent to the bank, the state's Department of Motor Vehicles Auto Theft Task Force was able to identify the vehicle's license plate and owner of the Nissan Xterra days after the incident, the arrest warrant affidavit states.

Several attempts to locate Anderson and his vehicle were unsuccessful, until the vehicle was identified during routine police patrol on Oct. 7, 2017, parked at the Country Manor apartments in Hebron.

The vehicle was subsequently seized from the property on Oct. 11, 2017 and transported to State Police Troop K barracks as evidence, the arrest warrant states.

On Oct. 13, 2017 Anderson contacted Troop K and asked why police had his vehicle, the arrest warrant states. Police explained they

wanted to speak with Anderson and requested he come to Troop K.

Anderson arrived at Troop K on Oct. 18, 2017 and said his vehicle was in the area during the time of the bank robbery, but denied any involvement in the incident, the arrest warrant states.

He provided a DNA sample to police, which did not match DNA swabs taken from the bank, the warrant states.

However, on May 24, 2018, state police issued a warrant for his arrest, after the mother of Anderson's son contacted state police informing them she was not only able to successfully identify Anderson from surveillance footage released online, but that he had also admitted to her he had robbed the bank, the affidavit states.

Anderson was ultimately arrested at his Richmond, R.I. address by Richmond Police on Feb. 11.

Richmond Police told the *RiverEast* this week the department had his last known address under surveillance after being informed by Connecticut State Police of an extraditable arrest warrant.

Anderson is next due in Norwich Superior Court on March 11 and is currently being held on a \$100,000 bond at Corrigan-Radgowski Correctional Center in Uncasville.

## Southington Man Arrested on Sexual Assault Charges in East Hampton

by Elizabeth Regan

Forensic evidence played "a crucial role" in the Feb. 15 arrest of a Southington man on charges related to the alleged sexual assault of a girl, according to police.

Local police arrested David A. Boulanger, 65, at his residence and charged him with first-degree sexual assault, illegal sexual contact with a minor and first-degree possession of child pornography.

East Hampton police officers Hardie Burgin and Dave Gionfriddo determined through the course of their investigation into the assault allegation that Boulanger was in possession of child pornography, police said. The case goes back to last June.

The first two charges come with mandatory minimum sentences that vary based on the age of the victim, according to state statute.

Police said the name and age of the female juvenile and the location of the alleged crime are not being released to protect the identity of the victim.

State law governing first-degree possession of child pornography dictates five years of any

sentence may not be suspended or reduced by the court.

East Hampton Police Chief Dennis Woessner said Boulanger was released on a \$350,000 bond the same day he was charged. Boulanger is scheduled to appear in court on Feb. 26.

Boulanger was arrested in October by the Southington Police Department and charged with two counts of first-degree sexual assault, one count of fourth-degree sexual assault and three counts of illegal sexual contact with a minor.

According to the *Bristol Press*, Boulanger's attorney said during the Oct. 11 arraignment in Bristol Superior Court that Boulanger provided foster care out of his home.

A spokesman for the state Department of Children and Families said Boulanger lost his foster care license last year as a result of "these highly disturbing events."

The Southington case is now in the pre-trial phase at New Britain Superior Court. Boulanger is next scheduled to appear there on March 19.

# Portland Resident Slams Ethics Commission Over Transparency

by Elizabeth Regan

A resident this week lodged a complaint against the Ethics Commission for lack of transparency.

Melissa Gerrier-Satagaj handed her complaint to members of the Board of Selectmen at their meeting Wednesday.

Gerrier-Satagaj pointed to a lack of available information about how the Ethics Commission conducts its business. She said the requirement in the local ethics code for commission members to produce an “annual review” – including a summary of public decisions, opinions and the number of dismissed complaints – has only been carried out once in the past five years.

The ordinance was established in January 2008 to provide an “open, fair and effective” process for addressing ethical questions in local government.

Citizens can bring complaints to the commission or the commission can lodge its own complaints, according to the ordinance. The commission is also entitled to give advisory opinions when town representatives are unsure if a certain behavior is ethical.

Gerrier-Satagaj’s complaint characterized the lack of transparency as “concerning.”

“From the outside looking in, it appears the commission members, that are put in place by the [Board of Selectmen], are more interested in laying low - out of sight, out of mind, as opposed to being engaged with the public,” she wrote.

First Selectman Susan Bransfield accepted a copy of the complaint hand-delivered by Gerrier-Satagaj at the meeting. While Bransfield attributed some of the lack of available information to a recent town website update that has not yet been completed, she acknowledged the ethics ordinance deserves some

attention.

“I think it’s an ordinance we need to review,” she said.

Selectmen have periodically discussed the ethics ordinance over the past few years but have not followed through with revisions. Meeting minutes reveal selectmen in 2015 held off on making any changes to the ordinance because they thought the state legislature might soon require municipalities to adhere to the same ethics law followed by State of Connecticut officials and employees. The state law didn’t end up changing, and neither did the local ordinance.

More recently, the topic of the ethics ordinance has been a standing item on the Board of Selectmen agenda but routinely fails to come up for discussion.

Gerrier-Satagaj told the *Rivereast* this week that cumbersome guidelines for filing complaints make it difficult for residents to address their concerns in front of the commission.

“I think the [complaint] form you fill out is a deterrent,” she said. “You can’t drop it off in person. It has to be sent snail mail.”

She said the only means of contact is a P.O. Box belonging to the commission.

“You can’t call them. There’s no email address for them. You’re left to your own devices as a person making a complaint,” she said.

The Ethics Commission chairman, Portland-based attorney George Law, responded to an email request for comment from the *Rivereast* by saying he would take the question to the commission’s next meeting to be addressed by the full membership.

“All communications to the Ethics Commission are addressed and responses issued by the commission as a commission and not by mem-

bers individually. Members have no authority to act individually,” he wrote.

While he said he would be happy to bring the *Rivereast*’s email to the commission, he noted all correspondence should be directed to the PO Box.

“This assures that all correspondence is received by the commission in a proper manner, time noted upon receipt and kept confidential as appropriate,” he said.

According to a review of meeting minutes, the commission met nine times over the past five years: three in 2014, once in 2015, two in 2016, zero in 2017, and three in 2018. Members dismissed seven of the nine cases brought to them for lack of probable cause, dismissed another for lack of information, and rejected one for not being filed the right way.

The ethics ordinance prohibits the disclosure of any details about dismissed cases unless the accused person allows it.

Gerrier-Satagaj said she started looking for more information about the commission’s policies and procedures after members rejected an ethics complaint made by her husband, Robert Satagaj, on procedural grounds. They said Satagaj’s complaint wasn’t “properly brought before the commission,” according to meeting minutes.

Satagaj said this week he filed his complaint because of his concerns that Law’s role as legal counsel for numerous Portland residents puts him in conflict with his position as the arbiter of the town’s ethics code.

Gerrier-Satagaj and Satagaj had been involved in a five-year dispute with their neighbor, Quarry Ridge Golf Course owner John J. Kelley Sr., over Kelley’s installation of an unpermitted paved driveway they say has caused

flooding issues. The golf course developer in 2013 filed a lawsuit against the Portland Zoning Board of Appeals after the board upheld Zoning Enforcement Officer Bob Spencer’s cease-and-desist order on the paved driveway.

A Middlesex Superior Court judge upheld the ZBA decision in a 2016 ruling.

Law served as Kelley’s lawyer last year while the parties negotiated the return of the driveway to “its natural state,” according to town documents.

Satagaj said he’s troubled that Law, while acting as ethics chairman, represented a party who had been fighting the town on such a drawn out and publicly problematic issue.

A search of current and resolved cases in the Superior Court system indicate Law has also represented clients including the Portland Housing Authority, Daniels Oil Company, local developer and sitting selectman Ben Srb, and the Connecticut Explosives Company.

Connecticut Explosives Company and the Portland Planning and Zoning Commission are currently being sued by resident Wayne Carini after Planning and Zoning Commission members approved a special permit to enable the explosives company to update the way it stores material on the Isinglass Hill Road site, which is next to Carini’s property. The suit alleges defective public notices, “errors of law and fact” in the commission’s decision, and a “substantial adverse effect” on Carini’s use and enjoyment of the property.

Satagaj said his ethics complaint alleging Law’s potential conflict of interest was rejected outright by the commission in a formal letter without any prior requests for clarification or revision.

“It’s bad optics,” Satagaj said.

## Marlborough School Board Approves Budget With 1.6% Increase

by Allison Lazur

Last Thursday, the Board of Education unanimously approved a \$7,410,830 budget, an increase of 1.6 percent over current year spending.

After Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz presented the board with a \$7,407,854 budget – a 1.55 percent increase over current year spending – last month, the spending plan saw further reductions in medical insurance rates and an increase in three kindergarten paraeducator positions from part-time to full-time.

The operations budget will be presented to the Board of Finance next month along with two capital improvement plan options.

Medical insurance rates saw a further reduction of \$26,305 or a 6.8 percent increase over the current year. In Sklarz’s initial presentation he estimated a 10.2 percent increase.

The increase in kindergarten enrollment was discussed throughout the meeting as Sklarz outlined three options for handling the increase from 45 to 57 students or more.

He called the enrollment figure “fluid,” as more students may continue to enroll or parents may instead decide to have their students attend magnet schools after they’ve already gone through the enrollment process.

The average class size is 18 students, with a part-time paraeducator in each classroom.

The board considered the three options be-

fore unanimously supporting Option One, which would keep the current number of kindergarten sections at three, but increase each class size to 20 – the current class size guideline is 18 – and provide each teacher with a full-time paraeducator.

Sklarz said this decision would cost an additional \$28,830, which includes salaries and health benefits, and was the preferred option by the teachers he spoke with at Marlborough Elementary.

“I would suggest that if we did this let me recommend that it be a one-time-only thing and we revisit it at a time when we want to decide if we want to permanently change the class size guidelines,” Sklarz said, adding that the “unknown variable” will continue to be kindergarten enrollment over the next five to 10 years.

Two more expensive options were considered, each of which would have added an additional classroom section. One option would’ve added an additional teacher and part-time paraeducator and reduce the class size to 15, and would have cost \$98,871 including salaries and benefits. The other option would’ve also added an additional teacher and also reduced the class size to 15, but eliminate all paraeducators, and have a cost of \$60,431.

School board member Betty O’Brien said she preferred the three-section option because it would create a student-to-teacher ratio of 1-to-

10 in a class of 20, as there would be both the teacher and the full-time paraeducator.

O’Brien also said she was concerned about the board potentially having to lay off a teacher if the school board went with four teachers and then decided in the future it wasn’t necessary.

“I have concerns about hiring someone and if enrollment declines then we would be laying someone off in future years,” she said.

School board member Michelle Padilla agreed with O’Brien on not wanting to lay off a teacher.

“I like Option One because you aren’t risking having to lay off a teacher who may have come from a different area [to work here],” Padilla said. “It’s already mid-February. I don’t see another five or six kids signing up because normally parents are on that right away; I see us losing [students] to magnet [schools].”

Board of Education Chairman Ruth Kelly also said she supported Option One, as long as in the motion of approval, specifies the increase in class size is for the 2019-20 school year only.

The board members agreed this was a “special circumstance” and unanimously voted for option one while also agreeing to revisit the matter in early August in the event that the kindergarten enrollment exceeds 60 students.

\* \* \*

Sklarz said he was advised by Board of Fi-

nance Chairman Douglas Knowlton to bring both options for a capital improvement plan to the finance board.

The plan includes projects that would span several budget seasons, such as paving the school’s four parking lots and boiler and roof replacement.

The two options included different time frames for the paving of the 15-year-old parking lots – a multi-phase plan or paving the parking lots all at once.

If the parking lots are paved in phases, the capital improvement plan will total \$123,300.

The multi-phase plan would require \$93,300 in the proposed 2019-20 budget, \$128,736 in the 2020-21 budget and \$84,000 in 2021-22 – a total of \$306,036. If all lots were paved at once, a cost savings of 5 percent or \$15,300 would occur.

Other capital items included replacing two of the four boilers at the school.

A total of \$70,000 spent over three budget seasons would pay for the replacement, with \$20,000 in the 2019-20 budget proposal.

Other items included funds for a roof replacement totaling \$10,000.

\* \* \*

The school budget will be presented to the Board of Finance on March 6 at 7p.m. in the school’s library.

# State Bills Could Impact Potential Turf Field at RHAM

by Sloan Brewster

One bill proposed in Connecticut could help RHAM High School get a turf field – whereas one could stop the project entirely.

The Board of Education has been considering installing a turf field complex at RHAM and Superintendent of Schools Patricia Law included \$35,000 in her capital budget request for a feasibility study on the possible project.

At a school board meeting on Feb. 6, Amy D'Amaddio, school board chairman, told the RHAM Board of Education that state Sen. Cathy Osten (D-Sprague) and state Rep. Robin Green (R-Marlborough) had proposed a bill for \$2.42 million to fund the project.

Osten said that if the bill goes through, the board will be notified if there is funding available, D'Amaddio said.

According to Osten's website, Proposed Bill Number 14 was referred to the Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding last month.

Meanwhile, a bill to ban artificial turf in the state was introduced by a pair of Democratic state representatives, David Michel of Stamford and Josh Elliott of Hamden.

Last week, the bill, which would prohibit the state and municipalities from purchasing and using artificial turf, was referred to the Joint Committee on Environment and went to a public hearing.

In a phone call with the *Rivereast* Wednesday, Michel said there are a couple of issues with synthetic turf, including that the chrome rubber infill – the layer beneath the artificial grass surface – is toxic and that there's not enough scientific data on it.

"There's toxicity in the air [from the rubber

infill] as the kids are playing on the field," he said.

Natural alternative inlay products, such as cork or coconut and sand have also not been researched enough, he said. The cork creates a lot of dust and, because it has not been studied, it's difficult to determine what health effects the dust will have in the long run.

"There's nothing written about it," he said. "They keep putting [down] stuff that nobody has any studies of and then the kids play on it."

Michel said he also has concerns about how the plastic is discarded when the inlay comes to the end of its useful life and that he suspects "a huge amount of plastic" is not being properly recycled.

"There are several plastics that need to be separated before it's recycled," he said. "In society we're trying to move away from plastic."

The Feb. 6 meeting was an overview of information gathered on RHAM's turf field project by the Facilities Subcommittee, Law said. BSC Group of Glastonbury, a planning, design, and environmental science firm, gave the subcommittee a presentation on concerns, needs and possible solutions to the issues on the current athletic field.

"We took that presentation and pared it down and gave the board highlights," Law said.

Parents have long decried drainage issues on the current athletic field and at nearly every Board of Education meeting in recent months, one or more people stand up and complain about games being cancelled or moved because of the wet field.

In November, John Swanson of Marlborough

was among residents to say they supported the turf field project.

Swanson spoke of a RHAM homecoming night football game that was moved to Manchester because the field was wet. Because of the move, many couples had to miss the homecoming dance, he said.

"There was a line of girls in dresses at Manchester High School waiting on their [dates]," he said at the time. "Imagine if it's your daughter, she buys a dress, looks forward to everything at that homecoming dance but there she is at another school. She can't go to the dance because we couldn't host the [game] here."

There are a couple of potential fixes to problem, including remediating the drainage issue or installing a synthetic turf field, Law and Joseph O'Connor, board member, said.

O'Connor is a proponent of the synthetic turf field, which would have a drainage system underneath it.

"Synthetic turf makes all the sense in the world, at least in my opinion," he said.

He said he is not convinced synthetic turf leads to health problems and said there are hundreds of such fields in the U.S. and Europe where teams, including Premier League soccer clubs, play.

"Chrome rubber is highly talked about, though usually with no conclusive evidence that it is toxic or a carcinogen," he said.

The board would be willing to consider an alternative to the chrome rubber inlay but it's more expensive, O'Connor said. The town of Avon is putting in a turf field and opted for a

coconut and sand mix rather than chrome rubber.

Fixing the drainage issue will not resolve all the problems with the field at RHAM, O'Connor said. After a game is played on a natural grass field it must be rested to prevent it from being torn up, and the district does not have fields to stagger between during the rest period.

Natural grass can't be played on in rain or snow either, he said.

"If you have rain or snow on your fields in April, you have to wait for it to dry or you'll destroy it. With synthetic turf, you can go right out and play," he said. "You can play 24/7 on that field; it's not going to matter."

In addition, O'Connor said there would be an economic benefit to synthetic turf, especially if it includes lighting – which the proposal does include – because there would be more games in town with crowds of spectators to flood the town's shops and restaurants after they're over.

He described a night game held at RHAM this year that thousands of people attended, and then afterwards went into town to FennAgain's Pub & Restaurant and other local eateries, all of which profited from the event.

O'Connor said he has written the environmental committee a letter of opposition to the bill banning synthetic turf. One question he said he asked in the letter was how municipalities would pay for taking out synthetic turf already in place.

Michel said municipalities would not be mandated to remove them.

"It's not retroactive," he said of the bill.

# East Hampton Residents Want Local Control of Dam

by Elizabeth Regan

In a story almost as old as the dam is, East Hampton residents are once again clamoring for a way to streamline the process by which water levels in Lake Pocotopaug are raised and lowered.

Here's the twist to this distinctly Belltown tale: the dam is operated by Matthew Bevin, the president of the East Hampton-based Bevin Brothers Manufacturing Company – and also the governor of Kentucky.

Bevin Brothers Manufacturing has produced bells since 1832, according to the company. It remains the only dedicated bell manufacturer in the United States.

News reports from the middle of the last century show the dam, controlled by the Bevin family's Pocotopague Water Power Company since 1900, was rebuilt in 1953. Scores of residents since then have complained about its private ownership structure.

Bevins going back generations have regulated the dam with the working knowledge you can't please everyone.

Catherine Egan, an employee of the Bevin bell factory, said she hears the complaints all the time.

"I get people running in and starting to yell at me for 20 minutes because the water level is too high. Then the next person comes in and says the water level is too low," she told attendees at a workshop hosted last week by the Friends of Lake Pocotopaug.

Chuck Yenker – whose frustration with fluctuations in the lake compelled him to start producing weekly lake level reports he posts on the Friends' website – made a call for change at the workshop.

He said citizen concerns about lake levels are currently addressed through a convoluted process that involves Town Manager Michael Maniscalco reaching out to one of Bevin's representatives, who then reaches out to Bevin.

"The lake level appears to be somewhat inconsistent and reactionary," Yenker said. "We react to events, we [aren't] proactive."

Yenker's solution is to gather input from stakeholders – including property owners in the lake watershed, recreational lake users, and industrial and municipal interests – in order to devise a formal plan to maintain optimal lake levels locally.

Reports by Yenker showed conditions in the past year such as excessive rainfall – or, in one instance, a kayak blocking the spillway – have led to erratic lake levels ranging from 20 inches below the dam top to as high as 4 inches above it.

Yenker's suggestion for lake levels would keep the height around 18 inches below the dam top from November through February and would rise gradually to a steady 1 inch above the dam top in May, June and July.

He acknowledged there are many different viewpoints and competing interests when it

comes to desired lake levels, but said a "consensus plan" is possible.

"Then we take that to the governor of Kentucky and say 'Sir, would you please let us manage the lake to this level? We'll keep you out of it,'" Yenker said.

He said the group responsible for managing the dam could be the Conservation-Lake Commission, the Friends of Lake Pocotopaug, or whatever entity is agreed upon as part of the plan.

"I want to ditch the process where we've got to go through the town manager, who has to talk to the guy [at the bell factory], who has to talk to his boss in Kentucky," Yenker said.

Bevin could not be reached for comment by phone and a spokesman for his administration in Kentucky did not respond to an emailed request.

Maniscalco said this week the current process when it comes to management of the dam by Bevin and his representatives goes like this: "They decide they want to open it, and they open it."

Maniscalco said he tries to make them aware of lake level issues when he hears complaints from residents.

Maniscalco said he has no stance on Yenker's proposal.

"The dam is private property. It's owned by a private individual and he's owned it for hun-

dreds of years at this point. Trying to negotiate between neighbors is not something we typically get involved with," Maniscalco said.

But he acknowledged it's a "little bit of an extraordinary circumstance" with the potential to impact others in the community.

Ultimately, it's "for Mr. Bevin to decide" who opens the dam, according to Maniscalco.

But some residents, like local historian and councilman Dean Markham, have long questioned the dam's ownership.

Markham detailed the dam's history in a lengthy 2014 post on his blog, *Dean Remembers East Hampton*.

"Yes, the Bevins ... acquired some right in the 1850s, but not what they now claim or have expropriated over time," Markham wrote.

The dam is included on the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's list of dams as a "significant potential hazard." The agency said dams fall into that category when there is a significant downstream hazard potential if were it to fail, including loss of life, service interruption to utilities, road damage or significant economic loss.

Dams classified as a significant hazard must be inspected every five years.

The Lake Pocotopaug dam was last inspected in October 2014, according to a DEEP spokesman. A notice of required inspection was issued by DEEP on Jan. 14.

# Marlborough Gas Station Denial Results in Lawsuit

by Allison Lazur

A Route 66 gas station and convenience store application that was denied a special permit last month by the Marlborough Zoning Commission has resurfaced in the form of a lawsuit against the commission.

The 37 Hebron Road project is a venture of prominent local developer Wayne Rand under the limited liability company Marlborough One.

The appeal, filed Jan. 25 with the state Superior Court, said the commission acted “illegally” and “arbitrarily” by rejecting the project “based on standards which are not part of its regulations.”

Connecticut’s comprehensive zoning statutes and established legal precedents make it difficult for a commission to deny a site plan that complies with local regulations and state laws.

A motion of denial was drafted by town Planner Peter Hughes last month, citing safety concerns, inadequate protection to the nearby Forest Homes well system, and the single driveway as grounds for the motion.

The denial also stated a specific property survey conducted by a state licensed land surveyor was not submitted and the site plan did not have local and state health approval, nor did it include the required information for inspections and maintenance.

At the time the application was denied, Rand told the *Rivereast* he wished the public hearing

was continued in order to give him an opportunity to address concerns voiced by residents and commissioners. Instead, he said the hearing was “closed abruptly.”

In an email to the *Rivereast* this week, Rand said it would not be appropriate to comment because the matter is currently in litigation.

First Selectman Amy Traversa did not return multiple calls for comment.

Rand’s complaint also states the zoning commission’s decision is “not reasonably supported by the evidence” before the commission.

The complaint alleges conflicts of interest among members who nevertheless deliberated and voted on the application, the complaint states.

It is unclear what conflicts of interest the complaint is referencing.

A memorandum from the law firm Murtha Cullina, which was written in response to a request from the nearby town of Portland several years ago, outlines the zoning implications of conflicts of interest and predetermination.

“No member of any planning commission shall participate in the hearing or decision of the commission of which he is a member upon any matter in which he is directly or indirectly interested in a personal or financial sense,” the memo stated regarding conflicts of interest.

The memo said state law prohibits commis-

sion members from acting on an application which would prove beneficial to the member directly or through family members.

Zoning Commission Chairman Kevin Asklar said he could not comment on the allegations in Rand’s complaint.

When the unanimous vote against the gas station occurred on Jan. 3, an application submitted by Joe and Carol Asklar for another convenience store and gas station proposed for 2-4 Portland Road was on record as being received by the building department several days prior.

The zoning commission will consider the Asklars’ application at a public hearing scheduled for March 7.

Rand’s complaint also accuses members of making a “predetermined” decision and not giving “the applicant a reasonable opportunity to address any concerns, and act[ing] in an openly hostile and prejudicial manner.”

The Murtha Cullina memo states predetermination applies when commission members make up their minds before all the evidence has been submitted.

The application was denied after more than a dozen impassioned residents raised concerns about the project during a public hearing in December.

Vice Chairman Susan McFarland said during the hearing that while the site’s design ad-

resses a storm water pollution prevention plan and water quality issues, she felt it was her job to consider the public sentiment and address the bigger issue of increased traffic.

McFarland at the time told commission members she came to the meeting intending to focus on the design of the system in order to assure herself and the residents it would protect their wells. But she said traffic emerged as “the bigger issue that really hasn’t been solved.”

“What everybody said here today definitely affected how I think about [this project],” she said at the public hearing.

At that time, Kevin Asklar said he felt the plan “pose[s] an undue risk to a large portion of the community and their community well, which sits in very close proximity to the fueling station.”

He also expressed concern about an increase in traffic.

Rand’s attorney, Tim Furey, said Wednesday his client is asking the court to overturn the zoning commission decision and for “any other appropriate remedies.”

While Furey told the *Rivereast* it is his policy not to comment on pending litigation, he said conversations with the town’s attorney have been “positive” as they continue to work through the matter.

## East Hampton Police News

2/8: Concetto Mastroianni, 65, of 108 Main St., was issued a summons for failure to drive right, and operating an uninsured and unregistered motor vehicle, police said.

Also, from Feb. 4-10, officers responded to 17 medical calls, three motor vehicle crashes and five alarms, and made 14 traffic stops.

## Portland Police News

2/12: Jena Kowalsky, 22, of 1503 Portland Cobalt Rd., was charged with operating under suspension, Portland Police said.

## Marlborough Police News

2/16: State Police said Willie A. Cousin, 40, of 11 Grandview Ter., Hartford, was arrested and charged with violation of protective order.

## Colchester Police News

2/13: State Police said Kelly P. Luce, 39, of 406 Woodbridge St., Manchester, was arrested and charged with travelling too fast for conditions and DUI.

## Vehicle Strikes Tree in Andover

A vehicle collided with a tree on Feb. 9 as a result of failing to successfully navigate a left roadway curve, State Police said.

At approximately 9: 04 p.m., David J. Roper, 33, of 730 East Street, was driving a Jeep Wrangler north on Bunker Hill Road near the intersection with Route 6 when he failed to navigate a left curve in the roadway traveling off the right shoulder and subsequently striking a tree, police said.

Roper received minor injuries and was transported to St. Francis Hospital by American Medical Response, police said. He was found at fault for the crash and given a verbal warning for restricted right hand turn.

## Obituaries

### Amston

#### Charles William Frampton Jr.

Charles William Frampton Jr., 79, of Amston, formerly of Rowley, Mass., Moultonborough, N.H., and Center Harbor, N.H., passed away in his sleep Monday, Feb. 18, in Colchester. Born Sept. 21, 1939, in Medford, Mass., he was the son of the late Charles and Evelyn (York) Frampton.



In 1957, Charles enlisted in the U.S. Navy, where he truly enjoyed the time he served. Shortly after his discharge he married the former Donna Moran in 1961 and was married for 57 years. He enjoyed hunting, fishing, spending time at his cottage on Lake Winnepesaukee, and seeing his grandchildren. Mr. Frampton worked at General Electric in Lynn, Mass., for 34 years, where he became a foreman and quality control analyst before his retirement.

He is survived by his loving wife, Donna; his son, Brant Frampton and significant other Maria Fitzpatrick, of Peabody, Mass.; his daughter, Cheryl Lage and husband Christopher of Amston; five grandchildren, Jacqueline, Andrew, Evelyn, Christian and Brandon; his sister, Cheryl Barrows of North Carolina; and numerous extended family members.

In addition to his parents, he was predeceased by a sister, Joan Pettengill.

Graveside services will be observed in the spring at Shannon Cemetery, Moultonborough, N.H.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to the Parkinson's Foundation, 1359 Broadway, Ste. 1509, New York, NY 10018 ([parkinson.org](http://parkinson.org)).

Care of arrangements has been entrusted to the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester. For online condolences, visit [auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com](http://auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com).

### East Hampton

#### Marion Jalbert

On Sunday, Feb. 17, Marion (Constantine) Jalbert, 74, was called to eternal life at the Middlesex Hospital in Middletown, surrounded by the love of her family. Born in Hartford, on June 7, 1944, she was the daughter of the late George and Anna Constantine, she was raised in the Elmwood section of West Hartford.



Besides her parents, she was predeceased by a brother, Stratton "Sonny" Constantine.

Left to honor and cherish her memory are her daughters, Karen Sebastiao and her husband Miguel of East Hampton, Michelle Jalbert and her fiancé Bill Windish of Marlborough; her brothers, Charlie Constantine and his wife June of Pawcatuck, Durand "Richie" Constantine and his wife Dorie of Pawcatuck; six grandchildren, her heart and soul – Christopher Laurito Jr., Robbie Sebastiao, Zac Sebastiao, Michael Sebastiao, Nicholas Stacey and Gage Stacey; and her adored feline companion, P-Mama.

Relatives and friends called for visitation Thursday, Feb. 21, at Duksa Family Funeral Homes at Newington Memorial, 20 Bonair Ave, Newington. A funeral service will be celebrated today, Feb. 22, at 11 a.m. at Newington Memorial, followed by committal services at West Meadow Cemetery Chapel.

To share a memory or words of comfort with Marion's family, visit [duksa.net](http://duksa.net).

### East Hampton

#### Margaret L. Standley

Margaret L. Standley, 87, of East Hampton, beloved wife of Peter G. Standley (who passed in 2011), died Friday, Feb. 15, at Hartford Hospital. Born Aug. 6, 1931, in Portland, Maine, she was the daughter of the late Justina and Leslie Libby.

Margaret (Peg) graduated from South Portland High School in South Portland Maine. She attended the Portland School of Art for 3 years and spent a fourth year at the University of Maine where she received her teaching degree in 1953. While at UofM she met Peter and would later marry him in 1956. She taught art classes for three years after graduation.

She was an active leader in East Hampton Girl Scouts for many years and later worked with the Connecticut Girl Scout Historical Committee extensively. She supported the creation of a Girl Scout museum in North Haven and has on display a great many custom-created replica dolls depicting Girl Scout uniforms over the decades.

Margaret was a member of the Congregational Church of East Hampton for close to 60 years. She taught religious school for many years and was a fixture at the annual fair running the refurbished toy booth, which allowed many young kids to enjoy toys and dolls that otherwise might have been discarded.

She was also an extremely gifted creator of dollhouse and dollhouse miniatures and loved creating replica homes and vintage stores and settings. She loved spending days and days fabricating custom miniature furniture recreations from scratch.

Margaret is survived by her sons, Peter L. Standley of Woburn, Mass., Paul G. Standley of Versailles, Ky.; her daughter, Pamela G. Standley of Magnolia, Texas; sister-in-law, Virginia Standley Rutter of Portland, Maine; and three grandchildren, Laura, Caleb and Aaron.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, Feb. 23, at 2 p.m., in the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, with the Rev. Thomas Kennedy officiating, with visiting hours from 1-2 p.m. There will be a gathering at the Congregational Church Sunday afternoon at 2 p.m. Burial will be private at the convenience of the family in Lakeview Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be made to Maine College of Art (MECA) to the Margaret Libby Standley Scholarship fund, which supports aspiring students who seek a career teaching art. Send donations marked "In Memory of Margaret Standley" to MECA (Maine College of Art), Attn: Annie Wadleigh, 522 Congress St., Portland, ME 04101.

To leave online condolences, visit [spencerfuneralhomeinc.com](http://spencerfuneralhomeinc.com).

### Colchester

#### Sarah Hurwit

Sarah (Schuster) Hurwit, "Sudie", 95, of South Windsor, formerly of Palm Beach, Fla., Tucson, Ariz., and Colchester, widow of the late David "Duddy" Hurwit, passed away Friday, Feb. 15. Born Sept. 25, 1923, in Hartford, she was the daughter of the late Reuben and Bessie (Kolin-sky) Schuster.

Sarah was a lifelong resident of Colchester and was very active in Pythians, Sisterhood of Ahavath Achim, ORT and Cragin Memorial Library. Mrs. Hurwit was also instrumental in the planning and construction of the Ahavath Achim Synagogue.

She leaves three children, daughter Sharna Gordon and her husband Joel of Boynton Beach, Fla., and sons, Robert Hurwit and his wife Deborah of South Windsor and James Hurwit and his wife Alina of West Hartford; seven grandchildren, Mandi, Bari, Alexandra, Elizabeth, Jason, Jaimie and Michael; eight great-grandchildren, Hannah, Sophie, Brennan, Matthew, Jessica, Zachary, Pace and Eli; and numerous extended family and friends.

She was the sister of Hilda "Hindi" Teitelbaum, Israel "Tully" Schuster, Bernard "Ben" Schuster, Morris "Maesch" Schuster and Paul "Pinny" Schuster.

Graveside services were observed Tuesday, Feb. 19, at Ahavath Achim Memorial Park, Taintor Hill Road, Colchester. Shivah was observed at the home of Rob Hurwit and Deborah Shelby Tuesday through sundown.

For those who wish, donations in her memory may be made to Congregation Ahavath Achim, P.O. Box 5, Colchester, CT 06415.

Care of arrangements has been entrusted to the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester.

### Portland

#### Constance M. Parks

Constance M. Parks (Connie), 88, of Portland and recently Middletown, R.I., passed away Friday, Feb. 8. Born Aug. 21, 1930, in Hackensack, N.J., she was the daughter of the late Virginia Clark (McKay) and Victor McKay.

Connie spent her childhood in Harrington Park, N.J., graduated from Dumont High School, and then attended the Franklin School of Art in New York City where she studied interior design. She was married to George U. Parks in 1952. They built a house in Portland in 1955, where they lived together for 51 years until George's death in 2006. Connie stayed in Portland, weaving and tending her beloved garden until 2016.

Connie was a skilled interior designer, devoted mother and gardener and active in the Portland River Valley Garden Club. She was also a longstanding and respected member of the Wesleyan Potters where she initially pursued ceramics and then focused on weaving. When she wasn't raising her children, any particular week would find her redesigning and expanding her garden, throwing pots or weaving at the Pottery and at home. Connie was always outdoors gardening, hiking and touring.

Connie is survived by her three sons, Steven Parks and his wife Sandy of Middletown, R.I., Robert Parks and his wife Jan of Ipswich, Mass., William Parks and Linda Sorensen of Christchurch, New Zealand; and two grandchildren Joshua Parks of Newport, R.I., and Ian Parks of New York City. She is also survived by her sister, Carol Chaudière of Lummi Island, Wash., Carol's four children, and four grandchildren.

She is predeceased by her brother, Victor McKay of Shoreline, Wash.

There will be a gathering to remember Connie at 2 Hopewell, 2 Hopewell Rd., Glastonbury, at 1:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 24.

### Portland

#### Lucille Elizabeth Jones

Lucille Elizabeth (Faraci) Jones, 79, of Portland, beloved wife of Kenneth Jones, passed away peacefully surrounded by her loving family Wednesday, Feb. 13, at Middlesex Hospital. Born March 2, 1939, in Middletown, she was the daughter of the late Peter and Veronica (Checko) Faraci.

Lucille was a longtime resident of Portland and a member of Trinity Episcopal Church in Portland. Lucille enjoyed oil painting and shopping and she loved to play bingo. Lucille was a wonderful mother who loved her children but her greatest joy was her grandchildren and great grandsons.

Besides her husband Kenneth, she is survived by her two daughters, Edie Williams and husband Richard of Haddam, Holly Bankoski and husband Kenneth of East Haddam; daughter-in-law, Judy Jones of Texas; sister, Janet Schomaker of Pennsylvania; four grandchildren, Kelly Bouchard and husband Joseph, Rick Williams, Veronica Jones, Julie Bankoski; two great-grandsons, Bryce and Benjamin Bouchard.

She was predeceased by her son, Peter Jones, and her sister, Connie Sutkowski.

Burial will be at a later date in Trinity Cemetery in Portland.

In lieu of flowers memorial donations may be made to Trinity Episcopal Church, 345 Main St., Portland, CT 06480.

To leave online condolences, visit [spencerfuneralhomeinc.com](http://spencerfuneralhomeinc.com).

### Andover

#### Robert E. Blass

Robert E. Blass, 64, of Andover, formerly of East Hartford, Marlborough and Manchester, passed away Saturday, Feb. 16, at Hartford Hospital with his beloved children by his side. He was born in Hartford Feb. 26, 1954, the son of the late Carl E. Blass and Klara (Enders) Blass.



Bobby grew up in East Hartford, graduating from East Hartford High School in 1972. He was part of their state championship baseball team, co-captain of the basketball team and in subsequent years was very active in local softball and basketball leagues. Bob also attended UConn. He was a local business owner who loved fishing, the New York Yankees, UConn men's basketball, the Green Bay Packers, classic rock and most of all spending time with his family.

He was a devoted and loving father to Jennifer and Brian Blass, brother and brother-in-law to Linda and Merrill Myers, Pamela Blass and Monica and Todd Lessard. He also leaves to mourn his loss his nieces Kristin Grote Hayes (Matthew) and Courtney Lessard and nephew Jeffrey Grote (Tracey), as well as great-nieces Taylor Hayes, Emily and Samantha Grote; great-nephews Benjamin and Griffin Hayes; cousins in Germany, Werner and Jutta Enders and Martina Heller; his former wife, Diane Blass; and many lifelong friends.

Bob was the best brother, father, son and uncle any of us had – always thinking of the rest of us instead of himself; a loving, generous and thoughtful person to the end. His family would like to extend a special thanks to the staff at Hartford Hospital, the liver transplant team, including Gina, Andrew and all the staff on CB3, Sonia on CB5 and Bob, Laura and Maddie in the ICU (truly 4 Angels).

Friends may call at the John F. Tierney Funeral Home, 219 West Center St., Manchester, from 4-7 p.m. today, Feb. 22. There will be a brief memorial service at 6:45 p.m. Funeral will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Bob's memory may be made to Dog Star Rescue, 12 Tobey Rd., Bloomfield, CT 06002 or the Manchester Land Conservation Trust 20 Hartford Rd. Manchester, CT 06040.

For online condolences, visit [tierneyfuneralhome.com](http://tierneyfuneralhome.com).

*From the Editor's Desk*

# Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

The sex abuse scandal in the Catholic Church has been in the news these past few weeks, as the Hartford and Norwich dioceses each released lists of priests that had been “credibly accused” over the years. In last week’s *Rivereast*, reporters Elizabeth Regan and Allison Lazur had an excellent story about the Norwich list and its connection to area towns.

It’s a troubling issue, to say the very least. I suspect there’s more to the story. Neither diocese – particularly the Norwich one – has been as transparent as they could’ve been. Norwich, for example, declined to provide a list of the parishes where the accused priests served, when that seems like it would very much be a matter of public interest. Church officials say they want the healing to begin, and of that I have no doubt, but the best way to do that is to lay all the cards out on the table. I’m not saying go into the various X-rated acts some of these priests are accused of, but at the very least explain which priests served where. Don’t decline all press interviews. Don’t instruct pastors of individual churches to clam up.

All of this makes it look like there are more secrets to tell – and that’s not the way to heal.

While the public lists Hartford and Norwich released may be new, the sex abuse scandal itself very much is not. And whenever it pops back into the news, it gives me particular pause, as someone who is Catholic and was raised in the faith. There are a lot of teachings of the church I disagree with – its stance on homosexuality a very big one – but I still find much comfort and peace in the Catholic Mass. And I’ve seen the many good things the church does, and the various ways it touches people’s lives deeply, in a variety of positive ways.

The sex abuse is just so horribly contradictory to all of that. To know that something that provided you so much comfort over the years provided many others – particularly children – with so many tortuous experiences that they’ll never fully recover from...it’s a tough thing to wrestle with.

The Catholic Church is not to blame for some priests being pedophiles. Yes, I firmly believe the church could help reduce their ranks a little if it allowed married priests. In fact, I’ve long thought the church should do that anyway, as at the very least it would help solve the priest shortage. But the fact is pedophilia is a disease. It’s a mental affliction that can, and does, affect clergy and lay people alike. The church should not be held accountable for pedophiles simply existing.

But I can, and very much do, blame the Catholic Church for how it responded to accusations about priests. For far, far, far too long the church would simply shuffle priests around, to different states or different dioceses. Indeed, beyond the heinousness of the

acts themselves, that’s what annoys me the most about this whole scandal: the cover-ups – by people who certainly should have known better.

Yes, a priest could be defrocked, but that was relatively rare. Instead, he would just be moved elsewhere – made someone else’s problem. Yeah, the priest can be allowed to continue to molest children, but hey, it wasn’t in my diocese so who cares? That may sound cynical, but the alternative to that is that church officials didn’t really believe the accusers at all, therefore moving them around was no big deal.

And the cover-ups went on for so long. At no point did anyone step in and say this wasn’t a good idea. The level of complicity here is striking.

The sexual abuse was bad enough. The covering up of it was even worse. It’s utterly shameful the Catholic Church employed this approach.

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This is the time of year where, in the state legislature, some of the more outlandish bills get proposed. Often times, it’s a pet project of a lone senator or representative, an idea that dies in committee before the first day of spring.

This year is no different – and among the laws proposed is one pitched by state Rep. John Piscopo, a Republican representing Burlington, Harwinton, Litchfield and Thomaston, that would eliminate the teaching of climate change from our schools.

Yes, that’s right; eliminate it.

Piscopo, in explaining the purpose of the aptly-named “Act Eliminating Climate Change from the Next Generation Science Standards,” writes that climate change is a “controversial area of information.”

Climate change is only controversial because certain Republicans, like Piscopo, have made it so. It’s time – past time, really – for politicians to focus on politics and let scientists focus on science. And the vast, vast majority of scientists believe climate change is real. Maybe, if you’re teaching science to kids, you should let them know what the scientists believe.

It’s not like Piscopo has a science background. According to the biography on his website, he majored in history and political science in college, and the Connecticut Business and Industry Association lists his job as simply “legislator.” He was an early supporter of Thomaston’s recycling program, so evidently at one point he believed in conserving the earth’s resources. But now he feels climate change is just too “controversial.”

I’m hoping this bill dies a quick death. There’s absolutely zero harm in teaching kids about climate change – and a heck of a lot of good that could come from it.

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See you next week.