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Skylar Gustavsen takes it down the field for the Bacon Academy girls' lacrosse team last week. Photo by Peter Francis.

Bacon Girls' Lacrosse Opens Season

Bacon Academy opened its 2019 girls' lacrosse season with a pair of losses last week.

The Bobcats started the season on the road April 2, with a 9-7 loss to Montville. On April 6, the girls lost their home opener to Watertown, 14-5.

Junior Hannah Holmes scored five goals to lead Bacon in the loss to Montville, while junior Emily Heald and

freshman Skylar Gustavsen scored one goal each.

Another freshman, Sarah Newton, scored twice in the loss to Watertown, while Heald, Holmes and junior Ryeli Borsari each added a goal and sophomore Shannon Hickey had an assist.

Senior goalie Nicki Tyler made seven saves against Montville and 12 against Watertown.

Tierney Makes Push for Regionalization

by Elizabeth Regan

Hebron Town Manager Andrew Tierney is talking tough about school regionalization.

Against the backdrop of reduced education funding from the state and declining enrollment, Tierney on Wednesday issued a pointed letter to local Board of Education Chairman Erica Bromley asking the school board "to consider alternative approaches" to the replacement of outgoing schools chief Timothy Van Tassel.

Suffield Public Schools earlier this month announced Van Tassel will take over as its superintendent on July 1.

"At this crossroad, it may be time to meet with area school and town officials to explore all options, including but not limited to, a fully-regionalized school district, a part-time superintendent or a variety of other scenarios," Tierney wrote.

Hebron has already consolidated middle and high school functions with Andover and Marlborough as part of the RHAM school district. The elementary schools in each of the three towns remain under local school board control, with a full-time superintendent in Hebron and part-time superintendents in each of the smaller towns.

The three towns briefly consolidated the elementary schools in the mid- to late-1990s, but reverted to local oversight amid complaints that their needs were not being met by the central office.

Tierney told the *Rivereast* Wednesday

he has been approached by officials in Andover and Marlborough who told him the issue of full regionalization needs to be revisited – but that "nobody wants to pull the trigger" on the discussion.

"Well, I pulled the trigger," he said.

Tierney requested that the school board consider holding off on establishing a search committee and to instead hire an interim superintendent. He also recommended the formation of a temporary regional school study committee.

Tierney asked for the letter to be read into the record at the school board's meeting on Thursday, which was held after press time.

Bromley told the *Rivereast* on Wednesday that she and Van Tassel spoke with Tierney after receiving the letter.

She characterized Tierney's message as "a point of conversation" rather than a directive. She said Tierney acknowledged the process of hiring the superintendent is "under the purview of the Board of Ed."

Bromley remained committed to continuing the superintendent search as planned, adding that discussions about the feasibility of a part-time superintendent would be part of the process once a search firm is hired.

Any talk of regionalization should be a separate conversation, according to Bromley.

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Woman Pleads Guilty in Mistreatment of Teen

by Allison Lazur

A Brooklyn school administrator pled guilty last week to two counts of second-degree reckless endangerment after being accused of manhandling a RHAM student outplaced at a special education facility in 2017.

However, Linda Baade, 55, of Pomfret, won't see any prison time, after accepting a plea deal last week to two lesser charges in the alleged mistreatment of the student at The Learning Clinic, a private special education center in Brooklyn, in October 2017.

Baade, an administrator at the school, was accused of grabbing and pushing now 17-year-old Andover resident Emma McBride – who was 15 at the time – into an office at the center and using her feet to slide McBride, who was seated on the floor, back into a room, leaving her unattended. Both incidents were caught on school surveillance footage.

While left unsupervised, McBride

etched the words "help me" into her forearm with a broken mechanical pencil.

Baade was arrested in September 2018 and charged with risk of injury to a minor and second-degree reckless endangerment. She pled not guilty to both charges in January, and instead accepted a plea deal last week, reducing the charges to two counts of second-degree reckless endangerment and avoiding a trial.

State's Attorney Mark Stabile said the plea deal included not only pleading guilty to the lesser charges, but also six months of jail time, which was suspended, and six months of probation.

Emma's mother, Bernadette Kasacek, said, "This ends the case and brings with it a permanent criminal record for Linda Baade."

Baade could not be reached for comment for this story.

According to the state Department of Education, Baade's teaching licenses are

currently active and expire in December.

Kasacek said she plans to request the state revoke the license of Baade.

"My goal all along is to make sure [Baade] had a criminal conviction so that when a background check is done on her this would come up," she said. "There's no leaving this behind; this is forever on her record."

Furthermore, Kasacek said she is "considering" a civil lawsuit against Baade and The Learning Clinic, but has not made a final decision.

"I have been quite disgusted by The Learning Clinic's lack of apparent recognition and understanding of the seriousness of what was perpetrated upon my daughter," she said.

Kasacek said she has received no communication from The Learning Clinic throughout the entire process, other than an initial email from Baade on the day of the incident in October 2017.

That initial email stated while McBride had a good morning she became "dysregulated" after lunch, had broken her glasses and that there were some scratches on her arm.

The Learning Center said it could not comment on personnel issues and wouldn't say if Baade is still employed by the facility.

Kasacek said that to her knowledge, Baade was on paid administrative leave during the course of the case.

RHAM Superintendent of Schools Pat Law did not return multiple calls for comment and it is unclear whether the district continues to contract with The Learning Center.

McBride is currently enrolled in the school's resiliency program that was established in fall 2018.

"My goal is to see there is never another Emma," Kasacek said.

Regionalization cont. from Front Page

“That is a long-term discussion because it involves multiple towns, multiple boards and elected officials and it’s something that takes a really long time to come to consensus on,” she said.

She noted officials attempted to launch a regionalization subcommittee of the local school board as well as the RHAM Board of Education over the past few years, but neither got off the ground.

“It wasn’t something at the time we felt like was an emergency,” she said.

For Bromley, the issue isn’t simply about saving money by sharing resources.

“We’re not solely looking at financial issues. Our job is to look at what is in the best interest of our students,” she said.

Tierney on Wednesday described his letter as “guidance” for the school board.

“It says [to] consider other options,” he said.

He pointed to a presentation at a Tuesday meeting of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities by state Office of Policy and Management Undersecretary Jonathan Harris that underscored the need to focus on regional efficiencies.

Tierney said districts that fail to consolidate services could soon find themselves getting less education funding from the state.

A flurry of school consolidation bills pro-

posed by state lawmakers this year spurred an angry reaction from opponents who view forced regionalization as a violation of the deeply-ingrained home rule doctrine that gives each of the state’s 169 municipalities the power to control its own destiny.

A bill championed by Gov. Ned Lamont, which would create a commission to develop “recommendations for the sharing of school services,” is making its way through the state legislature. The measure has been scaled down from the governor’s original intent to require towns with fewer than 10,000 residents or 2,000 students to share a superintendent with another town or face a reduction in state education grants.

There were 1,662 letters submitted as testimony for the public hearing on Lamont’s regionalization proposal; only a dozen were written in support of the measure.

Local opponents to the idea of a full RHAM regionalization point to the failed 1990s experiment.

The central office at the time included a superintendent and two assistant superintendents, as well as a number of directors and assistants. The district itself as well as each town had its own Board of Education.

Ken Hjulstrom, a Board of Finance member in Marlborough, was one of the many people

to submit written testimony against Lamont’s bill.

“That arrangement [in the 1990s] did not work to Marlborough’s benefit. The superintendent was stretched too thin and the attention paid to Marlborough was also less than that given to Hebron and RHAM,” Hjulstrom wrote. “Marlborough’s elementary school fell into disrepair while curriculum and policy manual updates lagged behind what was needed.”

He said the town saved \$10,000 per year when it reverted back to its own superintendent in 1998.

Marlborough First Selectman Amy Traversa told the *Rivereast* this week she is adamantly opposed to forced regionalization. But that doesn’t mean towns should not take it upon themselves to talk about sharing services as a way to reduce the burden on local taxpayers, she said.

Data about public school finances compiled through the U.S. Census Bureau shows local property taxes in Connecticut made up 56.3% of education revenue in 2016. Only Massachu-

setts, Nebraska and New Hampshire property owners paid more toward education on a percentage basis.

State Office of Policy and Management figures from 2017 shows the education budget in Marlborough comprised 74% of the total local budget.

“What we’re doing isn’t working. The school budgets are not sustainable,” Traversa said.

And just because full regionalization didn’t work two decades ago doesn’t prove it can’t work now, according to the Marlborough first selectman.

“That doesn’t mean we throw the baby out with the bathwater,” she said.

Instead, officials must explore what went wrong and how the results can be improved.

Traversa emphasized both the town and education sides of local government have to be involved in finding a solution.

“It’s only a matter of time before we’re required to have these conversations,” she said. “So why not do so willingly?”

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

State Sen. Norm Needleman, state Reps. Linda Orange and Irene Haines, and Secretary of the State Denise Merrill were all in Colchester last week to talk about a subject I’m very much interested in, and that I hope is enacted: early voting.

Every November, I implore folks to get out there and vote. They’ve got a large swath of time in which to make it to a polling place and cast a ballot: 14 hours – 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

But the fact is even that isn’t enough time for all people, for various reasons. And I admit that I was unaware that obtaining an absentee ballot is fairly restrictive. You can’t just show up and get one. According to a press release issued by Needleman’s office, in order to receive an absentee ballot, voters must be active military members; be unable to visit a voting station due to illness, disability or religious reasons; be out of town for all voting hours on Election Day; or be election employees assigned to a location other than where they are allowed to vote.

Merrill has proposed to change all that. Under her plan, there would be at least three days of early voting prior to Election Day – and everyone, regardless of situation, would be allowed to vote via absentee ballot.

Neither of these is a bizarre idea. According to the press release, Connecticut is one of just 11 states that don’t allow early voting. There are also only 15 other states that require voters to answer questions to access an absentee ballot.

The more people who can vote, the better. Our democracy only really works when all people can participate. So I really hope Merrill’s plan – which would come in the form of an amendment to the state constitution – comes to pass.

The plan needs to win an awful lot of people over in both the House and Senate, though. According to *CT News Junkie*, the proposal would have to be approved by 114 of the 151 members of the state House. Then the state Senate would have to OK the resolution with ‘yes’ votes from at least 27 of its 36 members. It would then go to the voters, who would weigh in at the 2020 election.

If the proposed amendment passes by only simple majorities this year, then the next House and the Senate would have to pass it again before it appears on the ballot in 2022, *CT News Junkie* said.

The press release from Needleman’s office said Merrill feels early voting would cut down on long lines at polling places, help those with

long commutes, accommodate sick or elderly voters – and simply allow people to vote on their own schedules.

All of this can only help increase voter turnout, and that would be a very good thing.

Were you feeling lucky in Colchester last October?

Get your mind out of the gutter; that’s not what I’m talking about. According to the Connecticut Lottery, a pair of winning Cash 5 lottery tickets were sold at the Phillips 66 on South Main Street on Oct. 20. Each ticket was worth about \$65,500 in winnings – and, as of this past Tuesday, those winnings have yet to be claimed.

The winning numbers were 1-2-5-9-10. If the prizes aren’t claimed by April 18, the money will go bye-bye, as Baby Animal used to say.

So if you were in Colchester last October getting gas and the urge hit you to buy a lottery ticket – well, check your dresser drawers. There may be a whole lot of money coming your way soon. But act fast! April 18 is less than a week away.

Lastly, some quick one-liners from the late Joan Rivers:

“You know you’re getting old when you buy a sexy sheer nightgown and don’t know anyone who can see through it.”

“I wish I had a twin, so I could know what I’d look like without plastic surgery.”

“You know it’s time to start using mouthwash when your dentist leaves the room and sends in a canary.”

“I told my mother-in-law that my house was her house, and she said, ‘Get the hell off my property.’”

“The only time [my daughter] really cried is when I sat her down and told her that she was not adopted.”

“My mother could make anybody feel guilty – she used to get letters of apology from people she didn’t even know.”

“Looking 50 is great – if you’re 60.”

“I was getting dressed and a peeping Tom looked in the window, took a look and pulled down the shade.”

“I have a million dollar figure – but it’s all loose change.”

“Never be afraid to laugh at yourself; after all, you could be missing out on the joke of the century.”

See you next week.

Marlborough Resident to be Remembered at Organ Donation Walk

by Allison Lazur

“Nobody doesn’t like Sara Lee and nobody doesn’t like Midge Denno.”

Richard Denno of Marlborough said these words about his late wife this week over coffee in Glastonbury, as he prepared to help honor her later this month in a walk to raise awareness of and funding for organ donation.

Midge, 69, died last March of renal failure. A kidney transplant in December 2008 gave her more than nine additional years of life, Richard said – which led him to become a staunch advocate of organ and tissue donation.

Midge will be honored on April 27 via the participation of Team Midge Denno in the sixth annual Blue & Green Walk presented by New England Donor Services.

According to the Donate Life organization, 114,000 people currently await life-saving organ transplants, with 82 percent waiting for kidneys. A total of 22 people die every day because an organ is not donated in time.

Midge was the reason behind the establishment of the Masonic Organ & Tissue Donor Awareness Program, a committee chaired by Richard and formed by the Freemasons in January 2009 just a month after Midge received her kidney transplant.

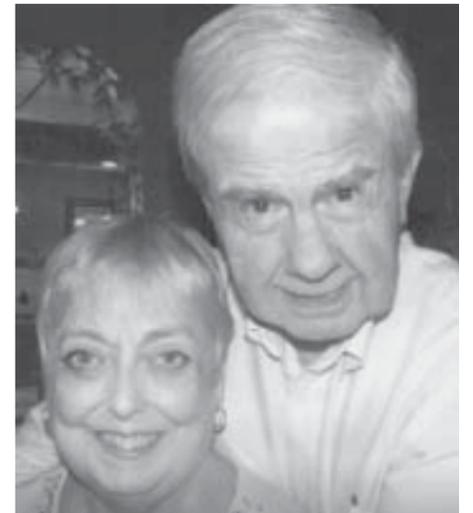
Richard called Midge “the mother” of the committee when he spoke with the *Rivereast* this week.

Midge was able to “pay it forward” by donating both her corneas after her death, Richard said.

Resident Doug Knowlton, Board of Finance chairman and friend of the Dennos, passed away just last week and was also an organ donor.

Richard said he learned Knowlton had donated his corneas and skin tissue which is used to help burn victims.

The Blue & Green Walk will continue to raise awareness for organ and tissue donation and



The late Midge Denno will continue to be remembered by her husband Richard, along with friends and family, at an organ donation awareness walk on April 27.

funds for the continued establishment of programs that encourage donor registration.

Anyone who is interested in registering for the walk can do so by visiting bluegreenwalk.org.

Interested participants must sign up by April 21. The \$25 registration fee includes event shirt, entry and a light breakfast. Monetary donations can also be made to Team Midge Denno through April 27 at the same web address.

The walk is scheduled to take place April 27 at 8 a.m. at the Griffin Center located at 7 Waterside Crossing, Windsor.

Anyone interested in registering in the national database to be an organ donor can do so at registerme.org.

Turner Named to Colchester Board of Selectmen

by Allison Lazur

Selectmen unanimously voted April 4 to appoint Democrat Denise Turner to fill an open position on the Board of Selectmen.

The term – which ends in November – was also of interest to new Colchester resident Sean Nadeau.

Turner, 61, who told selectmen she was born and raised in Colchester, has volunteering experience that dates back to the 1980s.

She headed a committee that ran the tag sale on the town green for the Colchester Business Association and has chaired the Board of Assessment Appeals since 2015, serving on that board since 2013.

“I think being on the Board of Assessment Appeals has given me a good background to see how things work within the town,” she said at last week’s interview.

Wanting to move further up within the volunteering ranks and be involved with the policy making board of the town, Turner said she decided to apply for the position as selectman.

The position was vacated by Democrat James Ford at the end of February for medical reasons.

Turner has worked in the fields of eldercare and health insurance, as well as being involved with the Lions Club.

She said last week she comes from “a family that believes in giving back.”

Turner’s father served as constable for the town for a number of years while her mother served on the Board of Education. She added she believes her parents were two of the founding members of the Colchester Business Association.

The second interviewee, Sean Nadeau, was at the opposite end of the spectrum.

Nadeau moved to Colchester with his wife just six months ago, after spending the last year building a house in town.

“One of the comments I made to [my wife] back when we were still building our house was that I wanted to be involved with the town,” Nadeau told selectmen. “There’s a lot going on here. You can feel the energy, the excitement.”

After learning of the vacancy in the newspaper, Nadeau said he thought “this is my chance” to be involved.

Nadeau currently works at the Connecticut Science Center as marketing and membership

manager, overseeing everything from budgeting to what goes into marketing the organization and running a successful membership program, he said.

He also worked as recreation and camp director for Winding Trails, Inc., located in Farmington, as well as retail marketing and public relations manager for ACE Hardware Corporation, his resume states.

“All those different experiences I have with marketing and public relations, communications, Parks and Rec [and] event planning skills, I think are kind of a perfect fit for a lot of things that happen in this town,” Nadeau said at his interview.

Despite not being chosen, selectmen encouraged Nadeau to become involved with other boards and commissions.

Turner, who said she has plans to make a bid for a full two-year term, told the *Rivereast* she thinks passing the town and school budgets are the upcoming priority.

“This town is very dear and near to me and it’s nice to be in a position to move the town forward,” she said.



Denise Turner

East Hampton Police News

3/28: Benjamin Rosado, 46, of 49 Flanders Rd., was charged with second-degree violation of the conditions of release and violation of a protective order, East Hampton Police said.

4/3: Patrick Burke, 49, of 9 Lakeview St., was arrested and charged with DUI, police said.

4/3: Mark Clement Jr., 35, of 65 Highgate Rd., Newington, was arrested and charged with DUI, passing in a no-passing zone and operating an unregistered and uninsured motor vehicle, police said.

4/7: Sydney Beck, 25, of 289 Church St., Willimantic, was arrested and charged with DUI and operating an unregistered motor vehicle, police said.

Also, from March 25-April 7, officers responded to 27 medical calls, eight motor vehicle crashes and 14 alarms, and made 35 traffic stops.

Colchester Police News

3/28: State Police said Carlos M. Santiago, 23, of 98 Garden St., Hartford, was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear.

4/1: State Police said John Coloccio, 25, of 80 Pinebrook Rd., was arrested and charged with operating an unregistered motor vehicle, failure to display/return/improper use/obstruct/damage to plates, operating a motor vehicle without minimum insurance, interfering with officer/resisting arrest, second-degree breach of peace and second-degree threatening.

4/3: State Police said Siara McGuinness, 28, of 5 Cobble Way, Apt. 4, was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and third-degree assault.

4/3: State Police said Roan R. Brown, 35, of 89 Hawthorne St., Manchester, was arrested and charged with violation of probation.

Break-in at Photo Connection

State Police said a burglary at Photo Connection located at 199 Old Hartford Rd. resulted in a number of stolen items.

At approximately 3:48 a.m., police responded to an alarm at Photo Connection to discover numerous cameras, lenses and equipment were taken from the store.

Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to contact Trooper Brett Cook at 860-465-5400 ext. 4037.

Marlborough Police News

4/1: State Police said David W. Secore, 67, of 299 East High St., was arrested and charged with reckless driving and second-degree breach of peace.

Study Looks at How to Improve Route 66

by Elizabeth Regan

The 11-mile expanse of Route 66 between the Arrigoni Bridge and the Marlborough town line is the subject of a comprehensive study to guide improvements along the corridor.

The unfinished Route 66 Engineering Planning Study – already amounting to almost 1,000 pages – looks at the road not just as a set of travel lanes, but as a driving force in the region’s growth.

The effort is coordinated by the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments (RiverCOG) through federal, state and local funds. It’s being carried out by consultants from the Tighe and Bond engineering firm.

The plan will ultimately include ideas to improve traffic flow, enhance safety, explore alternative travel modes and promote economic development along the state road.

Robert Haramut Jr., RiverCOG’s senior transportation planner, said he hopes the study will be finished by the end of the year. Expected to take a total of 18 months, the study examines current conditions along Route 66 based on traffic, population and environmental data. It also looks at how the area is likely to grow over the next 20 years.

The \$365,000 study is funded mostly by federal funds, according to Haramut. He said state grants cover 10% and the remaining 10% is evenly split between East Hampton and Portland.

A public information session is tentatively scheduled for the week of May 13, according to Haramut. Then consultants will get to work devising suggested improvements to round out the study.

The consultants are working with two separate advisory boards of local officials and resi-

dents.

The comprehensive corridor study builds on a 1998 Route 66 improvement report that sought to reduce congestion areas and make the area safer. That plan resulted in the installation of a traffic light at the Route 66 intersection with Payne Boulevard in Portland and Route 196 in East Hampton, as well as the addition of dedicated turn lanes at the intersection with Main Street and North Main Street in East Hampton.

But unlike its predecessor, Haramut said the new plan for Route 66 is “not purely a transportation study.”

A team made up of the engineering consultants, RiverCOG staff, state Department of Transportation representatives and local officials are also addressing issues related to zoning and economic development.

East Hampton Planning and Zoning Official Jeremy DeCarli and Portland Land Use and Economic Development Coordinator Mary Dickerson have been advising the consultants on local land use policies, zoning regulations, prospective developments and other local issues along the corridor.

DeCarli reiterated the study takes a “broader approach” than the previous one, with a focus on development that affects properties up to a half-mile from Route 66.

“This will spell out projects that will improve the corridor overall for the next 20 years,” DeCarli said.

Expected construction projects outlined in the document so far include relatively imminent developments like the 238-unit apartment complex and neighborhood shopping center on the former Elmcrest Hospital property in Port-

land and the town hall hub under construction in East Hampton. They also include more long-term proposals – like a 102,655-square-foot plaza with space for retail businesses and restaurants at the intersection of Gospel Lane in Portland or the 253-unit Hampton Woods development on the eastern end of Route 66 in East Hampton – that could be complete in about 10 years.

The growth is expected to contribute to an increase in overall traffic volume during peak hours of 0.7% per year in Portland and 1.2% per year in East Hampton, according to a March 7 presentation by project engineers.

A draft of the part of the study devoted to “future conditions” along the Route 66 corridor emphasizes the importance of concentrated planning and zoning efforts to create “vibrant activity centers” in each town.

Consultants pointed to the Brainerd Place development on the former Elmcrest Hospital site, which is using studio, 1- and 2-bedroom units to lure millennials and baby boomers, as a way to bring residents closer to the downtown area and create a “built-in customer base” for local businesses.

“A similar concept could be deployed for downtown East Hampton and the Historic Village Center,” the draft report said.

Ways to do that could include allowing some level of mixed-use development without a special permit, loosening regulations on lot size and building height maximums, and creating a special zoning district along Route 66.

The draft report also suggested Portland consider allowing some mixed-use development without a special permit and rezoning the pri-

marily industrial part of Route 66 near Gospel Lane to allow “a broader mix of commercial, retail and residential development.”

Water-related issues remain a barrier to larger-scale development in both towns, according to the draft report.

Portland uses its aging infrastructure to send water from the Metropolitan District utility company to a few thousand users concentrated in the downtown area. Many East Hampton residents rely on inadequate private wells for their water needs.

“The lack of water service is a hindrance to larger developments or single users that would demand a large volume of water, such as certain types of manufacturing or bottling facilities,” the draft report said.

Portland First Selectman Susan Bransfield said the Route 66 study is a good model for collaboration between the two towns as they work to enhance safety and economic development along the route.

“We can’t do it alone. East Hampton can’t do it alone. The corridor has to be studied,” she said.

The same can be said for concerns involving water and sewer service, according to Bransfield.

The two towns have recently been exploring a project that would pipe MDC water through Portland to East Hampton. There was talk a few years back of connecting a sewer main from Saint Clements Castle in Portland to the East Hampton treatment plant.

Utilities, like roads, “should also be planned in concert with the needs of businesses and residents of the two communities,” Bransfield said.

Portland Selectmen Approve \$35.05M Budget

by Elizabeth Regan

The Board of Selectmen Wednesday unanimously approved a \$35.05 million budget proposal that comes with an anticipated mill rate increase of 0.58 mills.

The combined general government and education spending plan is \$1.08 million, or 2.97%, over the current budget.

The proposed general government budget – including operations, debt and capital – comes in at \$13.65 million. That's \$295,189, or 2.21%, over the current budget.

The education budget comprises \$21.39 million of the total budget. The figure represents a \$65,000 reduction from the amount originally approved by the school board in January. The cut, requested by First Selectman Susan Bransfield, brought the education budget from a 3.78% increase over the current year to a 3.47% increase.

Bransfield said the mill rate increase this year is driven totally by the education proposal. But she noted there was no increase in education spending at all when the current budget was approved this time last year.

"It's their turn," Bransfield said.

The projected 1.71% increase to the mill rate based on the proposed budget would bring the total to 34.39 mills. A taxpayer with a home assessed at \$200,000 would pay \$6,878 in the coming year. That's an increase of \$116 over the current tax bill.

Selectmen at an April 2 budget workshop reduced Bransfield's recommended town operations budget by \$26,567. They removed between \$1,000 and \$2,000 each from line items including elections, technology, highway, street lighting and social services.

Selectmen also updated revenue estimates to reflect a \$150,000 anticipated increase in investment income that Bransfield said benefits

from the town's healthy fund balance. The rainy day fund currently amounts to 19% of the total operating budget, according to Bransfield.

This year's revenue figures are seeing a slight boost from the state due to an increase of approximately \$70,000 in education grants. Bransfield said the funding formula instituted by Gov. Ned Lamont to determine each town's level of need is more favorable to Portland than calculations used by other governors.

But there is also talk in the halls of the state Capitol about a cost-sharing arrangement, championed by Gov. Ned Lamont, that would require municipalities to pay a portion of teachers' pension costs. Figures from Lamont's plan show the move could result in a bill of \$59,327 for Portland's share of the expense if the governor gets his way.

Teachers in Connecticut do not pay into the Social Security system. Instead, they make a mandatory contribution of 7% of their annual salary into the state retirement fund, according to the 2018 Connecticut Teachers' Retirement Handbook.

But the state underfunded the Teachers' Retirement System for decades and is now grappling with how to keep the spiraling costs in check.

The Connecticut Mirror reported on March 29 that members of the state General Assembly's Education Committee eliminated Lamont's teachers' pension plan when members approved the governor's two main education bills. But opponents of the measure are fearful it could show up again at the end of the legislative session as part of a budget implementer bill.

Implementer bills contain the language that explains budget numbers and puts them into action. But the dense documents can also be a

way for lawmakers to insert measures at the last minute outside of the traditional committee and public hearing process.

It means budget-related bills that failed previously during the session – and some that were never voted on at all – can show up as policy in the implementer.

All the policies included in the uncompromising implementer bill are voted on as a single package.

Bransfield said the potential teachers' pension contribution is not factored into Portland's proposed budget.

"I will not propose that we incur an expenditure that hasn't been completely vetted," she said.

A former president of the Connecticut Council of Municipalities, Bransfield said she has taken "a firm stance" against sharing any teacher retirement costs with the state this year.

"I think that municipal leaders, along with state leaders and members of the state teacher retirement board, should review the pension benefits and review how they're funded and have a plan going forward," Bransfield said.

Capital Needs

Bransfield described the capital improvement plan – which is up by \$294,740, or 40.39%, over the current year – as one of the main factors driving this year's budget increase.

The proposed \$1.02 million capital improvement plan for the coming year includes \$188,500 in technology upgrades for the school system as part of what Superintendent of Schools Philip O'Reilly has described as "huge, huge changes in technology" in the coming year.

The school board decided to move several technology purchases from the education

spending plan to the capital budget before voting approving the proposal unanimously in January. The technology needs include \$131,500 for the secondary school Wi-Fi system, \$35,000 for a new Science, Technology, Engineering and Math lab, \$10,000 for smart boards and \$6,500 for projectors.

A request for \$41,500 to upgrade a heating, ventilation and air conditioning system in the district brings the capital requests for education to \$230,000.

The town side of the capital improvement plan includes \$88,000 to replace a police cruiser, \$50,000 for communication equipment upgrades in the fire department, \$40,000 to save up for the planned 2021 revaluation, \$30,000 each for sidewalk and municipal parking lot improvements and \$10,000 for work on the Air Line Trail.

The largest chunks of the spending plan include salaries, at approximately 33% of the total operating budget; employee fringe benefits, at 22%; and debt service, at 13%.

There is no increase in staffing in the proposed education budget, according to Superintendent of Schools Philip O'Reilly.

Staffing changes on the general government side include full-time administrative assistants in the Parks and Recreation Department and at the Waverly Center. Bransfield said the two departments were each previously filled for 17.5 hours a week by a shared assistant.

Oversight of the senior center and youth services department is shared, according to the proposed budget.

Bransfield also added five hours to the part-time land use and economic development coordinator position and approximately 5 more hours for the zoning enforcement officer.

Hebron BOF Approves Lean Budget, Anticipates Lower Mill Rate

by Allison Lazur

The Hebron Board of Finance voted unanimously Tuesday night to send a \$35.65 million budget and \$702,029 capital improvement plan to referendum, after a public hearing and finance board meeting dominated by concerns over hiring school resource officers for the elementary schools and deflating the mill rate with the town's unassigned fund balance.

The proposed budget is a decrease of \$149,075, or 0.42%, from current spending. It includes \$9.03 million for town operations, \$11.34 million for the local Board of Education and \$15.21 million for Hebron's portion of the RHAM schools budget.

The town operations budget represents an increase of 1.24% over the current budget, while the local Board of Education budget is a decrease of 1.27%.

Finance Director Elaine Griffin told finance board members a math error was discovered after a public hearing on the budget, leading to a savings of \$10,277.

Officials are projecting a 37.05 mill rate based on the proposed budget – a reduction of .39 mills.

One mill is equivalent to \$1 in tax per \$1,000 of assessed property, meaning a 37.05 mill rate would result in a resident paying about \$9,262 in taxes on a home assessed at \$250,000. That's a decrease of roughly \$98 compared to the current tax bill.

School Resource Officers

The Board of Finance last week shifted \$90,000 from the Board of Education budget to the town budget, only to cut \$85,000 from the town budget. It was a move that a number of residents believe was made to prevent the school from hiring a number of part-time school resource officers to provide full-time police coverage at both elementary schools.

But Board of Finance Chairman David Veschi at Tuesday's public hearing assured residents the cut was made to maintain fiscal efficiency, as police were funded in both the town and school budgets.

Veschi said that after the Board of Selectmen made the decision last month to add \$70,000 to the town budget for additional police patrol, a recommendation was also made to the finance board by selectmen to remove

the funding from the school budget.

"[W]e left the police budget with the town because regardless of whether we have an SRO or not, it would be a town police officer. The rest of the town's officers are in the town budget, not the Board of Education budget," Veschi said.

Police funding in the current town budget proposal totals \$130,297, an increase of \$80,008 over current year spending.

Town Manager Andy Tierney told the *Riverast* this week the proposed police funding includes hiring three part-time officers, with one officer working 7 hours a day split between the two schools.

The school had proposed having full-time police coverage at each elementary school.

Despite Veschi's explanation, five residents voiced disappointment over the cut, including Board of Education member Heather Petit.

Petit asked the \$90,000 be reinstated to the school budget. She expressed concern over whether the Board of Selectmen will truly use the money for a school resource officer.

Resident Rich Elomma questioned why funds totaling \$140,000 were allocated for open space in the proposed budget while SRO funds were cut from the school budget.

Selectman John Collins, who was also in attendance of Tuesday's public hearing, responded to Elomma. He called the open space program "necessary [and] essential to economic development," adding "the open space program is not comparable to the SRO program."

Collins said he believed more research needed to be done to determine if the school board's request for full-time police coverage in each elementary school is the best solution.

He said both the safety of the children and the overall community is the responsibility of the selectmen, adding that the proposal by the selectmen is only "a little bit different" from the school's proposal.

"We put additional money in our budget for an SRO that would be mobile," so that the designated officer would not only be effective at the school, but also be available to respond to other incidents if needed, he said.

"There's no vehicle in the Board of Ed proposal," Collins said.

Tierney backed Collins' views when he spoke with the *Riverast* Wednesday. He said an officer needs to be mobile and available to respond if there's any issue on a school bus or at a soccer game after hours.

Elomma said Tuesday night school resource officers "don't need vehicles because they will be in the schools, not divided part-time between them in each of the schools. That's the response time we are looking for."

Board of Selectman Chairman Daniel Larson, who was also in attendance at Tuesday night's public hearing, reassured residents the SRO matter would be remedied.

"I want to reiterate to everyone here that we are committed to finding a solution for this issue. Point blank – by fall I do not see why there will not be something in place. I don't know what it's gonna look like yet, but that's the best we can do," he said.

The Board of Finance, at its meeting directly following the public hearing, did not reinstate funds to the school budget.

Hebron in 85th Percentile

During Tuesday night's finance board meeting, Veschi revealed Hebron currently has a mill rate that is higher than 85% of Connecticut towns.

The town's current mill rate is 37.44.

The budget presented at the public hearing allocated \$250,000 from the undesignated fund balance to bring the mill rate down to 37 mills.

However, the finance board unanimously decided to take \$200,000 from the fund balance instead, bringing the mill rate down to 37.05 mills.

"Right now we have a budget in front of us that is 37 [mills]. Is that where we want Hebron to be?" Veschi said during the finance board meeting.

He added he would like to keep Hebron "competitive" with other towns to encourage new businesses and residents.

Board of Finance Vice Chairman Malcom Leichter said he believes the town needs a lower mill rate, but added he is "financially critical" about how the reduction should be achieved.

"I do not believe that we should at any time be artificially reducing our mill rate by taking

money out of our savings account."

Using \$200,000 of the town's undesignated fund balance would bring the total to about \$6.1 million, or about 17% of the total annual budget.

Griffin, the finance director, said the town's general fund policy specifies the fund balance should be closer to 12.5% of the total annual budget.

But board members discussed needing the fund balance for future hefty projects such as replacing the pipes at the elementary school due to recent issues with lead in the water, as well as a projected loss in revenue from the state.

Veschi called the water contamination remediation project "the poster child for why we have an unassigned fund balance."

Under Governor Ned Lamont's proposed state budget, the town of Hebron is expected to lose \$642,658 in municipal aid, and may end up being responsible for paying at least 25% of the cost for teacher pensions. Hebron's share of the teacher pension payment was estimated at \$71,039 in Lamont's proposal.

The Connecticut Mirror reported on March 29 that members of the state General Assembly's Education Committee eliminated Lamont's teachers pension plan when members approved the governor's two main education bills. But opponents of the measure are fearful it could show up again before the end of the legislative session.

As finance board members discussed whether or not to keep the possible pension payment in the proposed budget, Griffin advised them to consider information that has been released from the state so far.

"The state Board of Education committee has recommended the removal of the teacher retirement funds from the municipalities, but the town manager has heard from our state rep, Cathy Osten, that the appropriations committee will want it to remain," she said.

The appropriation committee makes the final decision, Griffin said.

Residents can vote on the proposed budget at a referendum scheduled for May 7 from 6 a.m.-8 p.m. at Hebron Elementary School.

Obituaries

Marlborough

Ralph Pensiero

Oct. 24, 1923-April 4, 2019

On Thursday, April 4, Heaven gained a very special angel, Ralph "Poppy" Pensiero.

Ralph succumbed after a long, courageous battle with Alzheimer's disease; he was 95 years young.

Ralph and his wife Ellen (Judy) were married one week shy of 66 years. They lived in Fairfield for 46 years, where they raised two children, Jeri and John (who predeceased his dad). Ralph loved boating on his PenSea for many years with family and friends from South Benson Marina. Ralph owned a successful hair salon, TrendSetters, in Fairfield before retiring and moving to Marlborough.

Besides being a loving husband and father, he was a devoted and proud grandfather to his granddaughter Kelly and his two special great-grandsons, Ryan and Tyler. No one could make him smile as they could.

The Pensiero family extends their sincere gratitude to the staff of Harrington Court in Colchester for the love and respect they provided to "Poppy" over the years. A special 'thank you' is extended to Chuck and Paulette for their compassionate attention and care they afforded to Poppy especially on this day.

At this time there are no plans for a service. The family is grateful for the guidance provided by Spencer Funeral Home in East Hampton during this difficult time.

Anyone wishing to honor Ralph's life with a donation should do so to the Alzheimer's Association.

Colchester

Melissa Jean Garrett

Melissa Jean Garrett, "Lisa," 58, of Colchester, passed away Saturday, April 6, at Hartford Hospital after a valiant battle with cancer. Born May 27, 1960, in Sharon, she was the daughter of Albert Garrett and the late Betty Louise Branche Garrett.

Melissa grew up in Colchester and graduated from Bacon Academy. While in high school, she was the competitive French-language Scrabble champion. Lisa went on to earn a BA in graphic design. For over 15 years, she was a graphic designer for Stanley Tools. She later earned an associate's degree in human services and most recently worked for Inter Community Health as an employment specialist, finding work for people with mental illness, criminal history or other difficulties.

Lisa was a proud mother to her son, Marcus. She was involved in many aspects of his life growing up but most notably, she coached youth soccer. In her spare time, Lisa enjoyed hiking, and going to the beach. She will be remembered as a person who touched many lives in a widely-diverse range of humanity. She was kind, and generous, giving of herself to others.

She will be sadly missed, but remembered with love, by her son, Marcus Spinner of New Haven; her father Albert and his wife Willess of Marlborough; her former companion, Billy Spinner of Baton Rouge, La.; siblings, Albert and wife Merry Garrett Jr. of Tolland, Yvette and husband Brien Gregoire of Hebron, Cheryl and husband Richard Cummings of Soldotna, Ark.; aunt Jean and uncle Norman Buzzy Garrett of East Hartford; a close friend, Richard Carpenter of Massachusetts; and numerous extended family and friends.

In addition to her mother, she was predeceased by a sister, Patricia Garrett.

Calling hours will be held Sunday, April 14, from 12:30-2 p.m., at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A memorial service and celebration of life will follow at 2 p.m. at the funeral home. Burial will be private.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.



Andover

Wesley Doane Clark

It is with great sadness that the family of Wesley Doane Clark announces his passing, at the age of 63.

Wes will be lovingly remembered by his wife, Lisa; his brother, Ken and Lori Clark of Maine; his sister, Shirley Haddon of Florida; his seven beloved nieces and nephews, Sean, Emily, Elise, Jacquelynn, Ryan, Cory and Ashlee; his two great-nieces, Morgan and Kinsley; and his in-laws, Jack and Bonnie Cratty of Ellington and Christine and Peter Garvey of Longmeadow, Mass. Wes leaves behind his many loving friends and large family.

He grew up in Pennsauken, N.J., and graduated from Pennsauken High School. He graduated from UConn in Storrs and remained in Connecticut ever since. He enjoyed a full career at Aetna for more than 32 years. Wes had a deep love of animals, especially his Malamutes and cats that were family to him.

Relatives and friends joined the family Thursday, April 11, at Burke-Fortin Funeral Home, 76 Prospect St., Rockville, CT 06066. A private memorial service will be held by the family in Vermont.

Donations in memory of Wes can be made to a pet shelter of your choice.

For online condolences, visit pietrasfuneralhome.com.



Portland

Emanuel Aletta

Emanuel Aletta, 89, of Portland, passed away peacefully Sunday, April 7, after a long illness.

He was predeceased by his beloved wife, Josephine Aletta (Checko), and is survived by his sons, Michael Aletta of Cromwell and John Aletta of Portland; his daughters and their husbands, Kathy and Russell Therrien of Hollywood, Md., Rose Aletta and Donald Roy of Portland and Belinda and Donald Yankowski Jr. of Portland; his grandchildren, Nicholas and Katelyn Yankowski of Portland and Justin Aletta of Hebron; his sisters, Jenny Faraci of Middletown, Natalie Cianci of Portland, Esther Kotch of Middletown, Josephine Vonella of Bristol; many nieces, nephews and relatives; and was predeceased by his brother Frank Aletta of Portland.

Born in Portland April 30, 1929, he was the son of the late Nicola and Rose (Pirruccio) Aletta. He grew up in Middletown, served as a private in the U.S. Army while stationed in Germany after World War II. He was employed in manufacturing businesses in Connecticut and was active in local politics. He was a devoted husband, father and friend who will be greatly missed by his family and many friends.

Burial will be private at the request of the family. A Mass will be held in Emanuel's name at St. Mary's Church at 45 Freestone Ave. in Portland Saturday, May 11, at 11 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, any donations in Emanuel's memory may be sent to Middlesex Hospice c/o Office of Philanthropy, 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457.

East Hampton

Mary Sullivan Parent

Mary Sullivan Parent, 58, of East Hampton, passed away Wednesday, April 3. Born Dec. 31, 1960, in Hartford, daughter of the late Edwin J. and Genevieve M. (Marino) Sullivan, she was raised in East Hartford and attended local schools.

She had a love of sports and played softball and flag football for many years. She was her sons' biggest fan, attending sporting events, even their adult softball games through the years. She settled in East Hampton near the lake, which she loved. She enjoyed spending time with her sons and family for special celebrations and holidays. She loved summer picnics and had a great love of animals, especially her pets Piper and Bella. Mary was a daughter, sister, mom, grandmother, aunt, and friend to many and always said she wanted to be a better mom.

Mary is survived by her two sons, Jeremy Parent and Jason Parent; her grandson, Collin; her siblings, Michael Sullivan and his wife Lise, Patrick Sullivan, Joanne Dumais and her husband Andrew, Susan Soboleski, Dennis Sullivan, Joseph Sullivan and his wife SueAnn and Edwin Sullivan and his wife Karen; 13 nieces and nephews; five grandnieces and nephews; and many cousins.

Friends called at the Ahern Funeral Home, 111 Main St., Route 4, Unionville, on Monday, April 8, followed by a prayer service in the funeral home that evening.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Connecticut Humane Society, 701 Russell Rd., Newington, CT 06111.

To send online condolences to the family, visit ahernfuneralhome.com.

