

RIVEREAST

# News Bulletin

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**Cleaning in the Rain...** Marlborough residents Tyler Burkhardt, Zachary Juliani and Hudson Burkhardt (pictured from left) braved the rain to fish four bagfuls of trash out of the marsh area at Blish Park on Earth Day, April 22. See an additional story on page 24.

## Belltown Homes on Auction Block

by Elizabeth Regan

More than 30 East Hampton properties are on the auction block because of back taxes and overdue sewer bills that, in some cases, amount to a few thousand dollars.

The process is dubbed a “tax sale” in state statute. It allows municipalities to sell private property for the amount of delinquent taxes.

East Hampton Collector of Taxes Kristy Merrifield is looking to recoup \$668,092 in delinquent real estate property taxes and sewer use fees for 48 properties, she said this week.

She told the *RiverEast* she collected \$160,480 as of April 9. Houses belonging to the rest of the delinquent taxpayers are slated to go to auction on June 25.

Twelve of the 31 properties up for auction owe less than \$4,000 in overdue sewer fees, according to the public notice released by the town. The lowest amount owed is \$2,453.42.

“We all have to pay our taxes,” Town Manager Michael Maniscalco said on Tuesday, adding it’s up to residents who do pay their taxes to make up for those who don’t.

“There’s 2% additional in everybody’s taxes that they have to pay to make up for people that don’t pay their taxes. And I’m sure there’s a dollar amount included in the sewer bills that everybody has to pay to make up for the people

who didn’t pay,” Maniscalco said. “I personally, in my tax bill, know I have to pay an extra \$200 a year because people didn’t pay their taxes.”

Maniscalco is leaving in July to become the town manager in South Windsor.

Statute authorizes local tax collectors to implement the tax sale process. Maniscalco said Collector of Revenue Kristy Merrifield worked with the law firm Pullman & Comley, of Bridgeport and Hartford, to develop criteria for this year’s tax sale.

Town Council Chairman Melissa Engel on Tuesday evening said she didn’t know properties with delinquent sewer use fees as low as \$2,453 were on the tax sale list.

After confirming with Maniscalco that it was true, she said the bottom line is that everyone should pay their taxes.

“Pony up,” she said. “There’s no reason not to pay your taxes. I can’t excuse anybody. You’ve got to pay your taxes. That’s the deal. The premise of society is you’ve got to pay your taxes. I’m sorry.”

Merrifield sent a Feb. 1 demand notice to 48 taxpayers to let them know failure to pay their delinquent taxes could have repercussions rang-

See Back Taxes page 2

## Delay in RHAM Traffic Changes Has Ripple Effect

by Sloan Brewster

Construction on a redesign of traffic routes on the RHAM campus will not begin until next year – more than six years after the death of a teacher who was struck by a car in the lot.

And the delay will have a ripple effect – causing the postponement of a new sidewalk that was planned for Wall Street.

At Monday’s RHAM Board of Education meeting, Superintendent of Schools Patricia Law said the campus modification project had been pushed back until the summer of 2020, as permits for the project – which involves work on Wall Street, a state road – have yet to be approved by the state Department of Transportation.

In January, the RHAM school board moved forward on a design for the modifications and, with Luchs Consulting Engineering, which had drafted the plans, applied for final permits. RHAM officials hoped to be able to complete the work this summer.

The approximately \$1.1 million campus modification project is being funded by a state grant secured in 2015, following the death of Dawn Mallory, 65, a teacher at the middle school.

Mallory was walking through the parking lot around 7 a.m. the morning of March 14, 2014, when she was struck by a vehicle. State police said the driver, Elizabeth Everett, 50, of Hebron, backed up and ran into Mallory after she realized she had driven into the bus lane.

Mallory died two weeks later from injuries

sustained when she was hit.

Everett was ultimately found guilty of misconduct with a motor vehicle by criminal negligence and unsafe backing, and sentenced in February 2017 to 20 months in prison.

The parking lot redesign includes about a dozen modifications, including a one-way parent drop-off loop to separate parking from moving traffic, Luchs project manager and principal Ron Dagan said at the public hearing on the design in January. The new driveway would bring parents exclusively to pick-up and drop-off locations with pavement markings to manage traffic flow. It will also provide longer lanes for dropping off and picking up children.

“The main purpose is to get parents to drop-offs without crossing any parking lots,” Dagan said.

The plan also includes several other changes to the main entrance, including installing a rapid flashing beacon, removing a crossing on Wall Street – leaving a single crosswalk – and incorporating a fence to make sure students go to the proper crossing location. The plan also calls for installing an underground conduit to provide power so a traffic light can be added in the future.

However, with the delay in the parking lot project comes a delay in a plan to add a sidewalk on Wall Street from RHAM’s main entrance toward Ridge Road, a recommendation of Luchs project manager and principal Ron Dagan.

See Traffic Changes page 2



**RHAM High School senior Joe Brosseau walks home from school on Wall Street, something he has done since he was in middle school. There is no sidewalk on the busy street and Brosseau said there have been times when he thought he might get struck by a car. A delay in a parking lot modification project means a plan to add a sidewalk to Wall Street will also be delayed.**



### Back Taxes cont. from Front Page

ing from business license revocation to the auction of their property.

Twenty-five of the taxpayers who received notices owed more than \$12,000 in real estate property taxes and have been delinquent for at least two years, she said.

There were also letters sent to residents who haven't paid their sewer use fees in at least four years. There were 34 of those cases, according to Merrifield.

Some residents were delinquent in both their property taxes and their sewer payments.

Those who didn't pay their debt within 30 days of a second demand notice were added to the auction list.

Public Utilities Administrator Tim Smith said Wednesday he was not involved in the decision to put overdue sewer customers on the tax sale list.

"That would've been the tax collector," he said.

Merrifield is also responsible for sewer department billing.

Town Council meeting minutes show Maniscalco on Jan. 22 reported to councilors that the collection of back taxes was "trending off mark."

"There are plans for another tax sale to attempt to make up the difference," the minutes said.

But Maniscalco this week told the *Rivereast* it's not about the dollar amount – "It's about people paying."

The criteria this year changed since the town's inaugural tax sale, which was held over a year ago for real estate property taxes only. Taxpayers on that list owed at least four years of back taxes totaling more than \$6,000.

Merrifield said last year's tax sale process ultimately brought in \$1.50 million. She collected \$1.08 million before the auction, while \$422,347 was recouped during the auction.

Maniscalco said the plan is to make tax sales an annual occurrence.

State statute dictates that after the auction, all deeds signing over the property to the highest bidder sit in the town clerk's office for six months. The existing owner can still keep the property by paying off the debt.

If not, the property transfers to the winning bidder.

Maniscalco said residents have used different methods to catch up on their payments. Examples included taking out loans, using a credit card or getting loans from employers.

But getting help from the town isn't one of the available options.

"We're not doing payment plans," he said. "The problem is, people make two payments and then they don't make any more."

Sarah White, staff attorney with the Connecticut Fair Housing Center, said tax sales are

becoming a trend in the state. They happen more quickly than foreclosures, leaving delinquent taxpayers with six months to pay up before their home goes to the highest bidder.

"There's nothing that requires a tax collector to work with folks on a payment plan, no matter the reason someone fell behind on their taxes," she said. "I think the better practice would be to enter into repayment plans for the betterment of the community, rather than just doing a tax sale on someone's home for a few thousand dollars."

She said the scramble to find a way to pay the overdue taxes can exacerbate already difficult financial circumstances for homeowners.

"We often see people in this situation, whether it's a tax sale or more of a traditional tax foreclosure, end up going to hard money lenders – which are basically loan sharks – and getting really predatory, high-interest loans that are just bound to fail, and are going to cause them to lose their home in a year or so," White said.

Jeff Gentes, a Connecticut Fair Housing Center attorney who manages the Fair Lending and Foreclosure Prevention Project, said attorney fees and marshal's fees drive up costs for those on the tax sale list.

Those extra fees could ultimately cost someone with a \$2,500 overdue sewer bill a total of \$6,000, he said.

Gentes described it as rare for cities and towns in Connecticut to include sewer use fees on their tax sale list.

"Basically, towns just sit there and throw a lien on the property and collect the 18% interest," he said.

But Maniscalco told the *Rivereast* he looks at it this way: "If we let [the interest] continue to go and grow, you'll get to a point where you'll never have a chance to pay it off. This process really forces a lot of people to pay. And it saves them from becoming the individual who owes the town \$200,000," he said.

Two since-deleted posts on the "Let's Talk East Hampton" Facebook group spurred a lot of talk about the tax sale. The posts were ultimately taken down by the original posters, according to group administrator Rina Johnson.

Johnson herself emphasized the importance of having those kinds of conversations, even when they're uncomfortable and contentious.

The posts revealed a lot about the plight of neighbors and the way local government operates, according to Johnson.

"The conversation was truly disturbing in terms of how the town moved forward with this tax sale on properties that owed relatively small amounts of money," she said. "Honestly, that conversation leaves me with more questions than answers and I am left to wonder – as a community, aren't we better than this?"

### Traffic Changes cont. from Front Page

The Town of Hebron ultimately decided to fund the sidewalk project itself, at a cost of \$189,000. However, because the sidewalk project would be physically connected to the parking lot work, town officials wanted to do both projects at the same time.

The current year's Capital Improvement Plan budget includes \$25,000 for the sidewalk. Selectmen added the funding last year, before the parking lot redesign project was even approved, to show residents they were committed to the work, Tierney said Tuesday. At several school board and selectmen meetings last year, parents stressed the need for a sidewalk on Wall Street for the safety of students who walk to and from school and cross country runners who run on the busy road.

Tierney earlier this year recommended setting aside an additional \$64,000 in the 2019-20 budget, partly because he feared the parking lot project would be delayed and also because he thought setting aside a significant portion of the project cost this year would make it easier to find the remainder of the sidewalk funding next year.

Selectmen, however, did not want to leave that money sitting around untouched, Tierney said, and decided not to include any additional funding for the sidewalks beyond the \$25,000 already included for them.

Tierney said he knows delaying the sidewalks

would be "a bone of contention" with some residents who fear they will never be installed – but stressed the project would happen at the appropriate time.

"By no means are we scrapping that project," he said. "It ties in with the construction changes of the entrance of the school. It's all got to be coordinated together."

On Tuesday after school, Joe Brosseau, a senior at RHAM High School, walked home on Wall Street in the area where the sidewalk would be.

Brosseau said he has been walking to and from school on the route since he was in RHAM Middle School and added "it would be nice" if a sidewalk was installed even if it's put in after he graduates.

Rousseau said it wasn't "that bad" to walk on the busy road, but admitted there have been a couple times that he thought he might get hit by a car.

Still, he said, "It's not the worst place to have to walk," he said.

\* \* \*

Also due to the parking lot project delay, Law added \$10,000 to her recommended RHAM 2019-20 budget for the capital nonrecurring fund to pay for a crack sealing project that would have been included with the modifications, saying the sealing still needs to be completed.

## Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

A flip between the local TV newscasts last Thursday night brought a very interesting lesson in how different coverage of the identical event can be.

During the 11 p.m. newscasts, there were breaking news reports about a protest that was going on in New Haven over a recent officer-involved shooting. When flipping the channels (looking for weather forecasts, to be honest), I came across first Channel 8's coverage of the protest, then Channel 3's, and then the coverage on Channel 61.

Channel 8 and Channel 3 both had similar approaches to the story. They each had a reporter at the scene, who covered it in a very newsy manner: they reported what the protest was about, explained it was a peaceful protest that had been going on all evening, and showed lots of footage of the protesters standing in a line, linked with each other.

Channel 61, meanwhile, took a different approach. The newscast didn't just have one of their average reporters at the scene; they tapped their new chief investigative reporter, Brian Foley, to cover the protest. And the difference between Foley's coverage and the other two reporters' was striking.

While the other two opened up on a shot of the protesters, Foley's coverage opened with a shot of the heavy police presence nearby, of officers ready to go if needed. And while he touched briefly on the protest and the reasons behind it – and eventually his cameraman panned to the protesters themselves and away from the police officers – Foley dwelled much more on the police.

The protest was on a New Haven city street, and Foley said that while there had been no indication the protesters would spill onto the highway, disrupting traffic there, he stressed officers were ready if that happened. And while he said there was no indication the protest would turn violent, officers are ready just in case.

Foley even felt the need to add, immediately after saying his feeling was the protest would remain peaceful, that he's "been wrong before."

So while 3 and 8 took a straight journalis-

tic approach – here's what's going on, here's why, and we'll continue to follow it – Channel 61 and Brian Foley instead made it clear violence could break out at any minute. The implication was that these protesters couldn't really be trusted.

If you're familiar with the name of Brian Foley, it's because up until last year he was the deputy chief of the Hartford Police and, in many ways, the face of the department. He retired last May and almost immediately began reporting for Channel 61.

Channel 61 made a big deal about his hiring and making him chief investigator, but I had my doubts from the start. If a former long-time policeman is covering stories about police, how unbiased could those stories be expected to be? If there was a potentially controversial matter that needed to be reported, that wouldn't present police in the greatest of lights, would this be the best guy to be doing that reporting?

I have no doubt Brian Foley is a good investigator – you don't make your way up to deputy chief of a police department without being one. But I couldn't help but think this was a guy who was going to take the side of police, or at least appear to, and especially now, with relations between police and the community increasingly fraught, I didn't think that was the best approach for Channel 61 to take. They should have a reporter do the reporting, at least when it comes to matters involving the police.

And I have to admit, the way 61 covered that protest last Thursday just validated my doubts. By stressing that the protest could turn violent, that people could wind up blocking the highway, even though there was no indication either of those things would happen, it painted the protesters in an unnecessarily negative light.

Channel 3 and Channel 8 presented the protest in an unbiased, straight news matter. Channel 61, meanwhile, seemed to be taking sides. And that shouldn't be.

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See you next week.

# Marlborough Charter Revision Report Reveals ‘No Surprises’

by Allison Lazur

A report compiling suggestions from town officials and board and commission members regarding possible charter changes yielded “no surprises,” the three members of the Board of Selectmen said last week.

The report mentioned everything from appointing a town manager to making the town and school budgets separate entities.

Mark Pellegrini, former director of economic development and planning for the town of Manchester, was hired by selectmen last fall as a consultant, to guide the charter revision process. Over the past several months he interviewed appointed and elected officials to get their thoughts on items that should be looked at in a potential charter revision process.

He presented his findings to selectmen at an April 16 Board of Selectmen meeting, noting that the proposed revisions had not been reviewed against Connecticut General Statutes.

If selectmen decide to appoint a Charter Review Commission, it would be the responsibility of the commission to research the possibility of any proposed changes against statute and to see if any alternatives exist.

Traversa and selectmen Cliff Denniss and Evelyn Godbout briefly discussed the eight-page report following Pellegrini’s presentation. All the suggestions in the report were ones Traversa said she had heard discussed over the past few years among town residents and officials.

The document included requests ranging from a change in the structure of the town’s government to clarification of charter terminol-

ogy and the specific roles of certain boards.

The idea of increasing the Board of Selectmen from a three-member board to five or seven members was among some of the major proposed revisions.

“The fundamental concern there was with only three members the minority representation may not be able to put forward legislative ideas,” Pellegrini said, adding “three is a pretty small number” for the responsibilities of the town.

Furthermore, combining the boards of selectmen and finance was suggested because of how closely the boards work to propose, present and pass a town budget, he said.

A charter review commission, if appointed, will be responsible for researching the pros and cons of such a proposal, Pellegrini said.

A bifurcated budget process – where votes on the town and school budgets are separate – was also among the list of proposed changes.

The consideration of an appointed position of a town manager or town administrator and defining the roles of such a position in the town charter, as well as the creation of an appointed, separate inland wetlands agent position were other proposed revisions included in the report.

Currently the town’s director of development and planning, Peter Hughes, also serves as the town’s wetlands enforcement official.

Specifying the routine maintenance and capital improvement responsibilities of the Board of Education for town owned facilities that are occupied by the Board of Educations was noted.

A number of suggestions were classified as

“non-charter revision matters” by Pellegrini.

The report states “several weaknesses or opportunities were identified and charter revision may not be required or necessary to address them and improve operations” – and added, “the Board of Selectmen may wish to follow through on them regardless of the decision on the charter review.”

The maintenance of town-owned buildings occupied by the Board of Education was also listed in this section.

The suggestion states both the Boards of Selectmen and Education “should work together to reach an agreement on which board is responsible for conducting and budgeting for the ongoing routine repair and maintenance, and capital improvements” to buildings and grounds owned by the town, but occupied by the school.

The town of Marlborough owns the elementary school, as well as the fields used by the school’s sports teams including Blackledge Field and Farley Field.

Other suggestions from those involved in town government included the possible arrangement of training on how to conduct meetings and the “best practices for dealing with the public and others” so that the conduct is consistent among every board and commission.

If a charter commission is appointed by selectmen, their goal would be to look at what is outlined in a resolution, but can look at anything in the charter.

A resolution includes what specifically will be researched, scrutinized and discussed by the commission.

State statute states a charter commission, if established, would be required to hold at least two public hearings on proposed amendments – one before the commission begins to draft its revisions and another before it submits the draft to selectmen. The selectmen would also be required to hold at least one separate public hearing.

The town hasn’t seen a full revision of its charter since 1985. The last time it was partially revised was in June 2017, when a nine-member charter review commission was appointed. That commission, however, was only tasked with reviewing four specific questions in the charter – resulting in a switch, approved in November of that year, to an all-day budget referendum. Residents had previously voted on each annual budget at a town meeting.

According to state statute, once a charter review commission is formed, it can work for no less than 90 days and no more than 18 months. The commission is later dissolved after submitting a final report of proposed changes to the Board of Selectmen.

Pellegrini said the next step is up to selectmen, who will have to decide if they want to proceed with charter revision and, if so, what exactly the resolution for a Charter Review commission will contain.

Traversa said Monday the current priority is to pass the annual town budget at referendum on May 7 and that matters surrounding charter revision will probably not be addressed until June.

## \$25.99M Budget to Town Meeting, Referendum in Marlborough

by Allison Lazur

After a quiet public hearing Monday night, the Board of Finance unanimously voted to send the 2019-20 proposed \$25.99 million budget – a 5.54%, or \$1.36 million, increase over current year spending – to a town meeting on May 6.

The annual town meeting is the final opportunity residents will have to voice their opinions on the budget before the spending package is voted on at referendum the following day.

The proposed budget includes town, local Board of Education and RHAM operational and capital expenses.

No cuts were made by the Board of Finance to either the town or the local school board budgets, after the board agreed both budgets were already lean in their initial presentation earlier in the budget season.

However, the Board of Finance made the decision to utilize \$375,000 of the undesignated fund balance to offset the mill rate resulting in a 2.01% tax increase, or 0.73 mills.

Under the current budget proposal, the mill rate would clock in at 37.25.

One mill is equivalent to \$1 in tax per \$1,000 of assessed property, meaning a 37.25 mill rate

would result in a resident paying about \$9,312 in taxes on a home assessed at \$250,000, an increase of about \$182.

Utilizing \$375,000 brings the undesignated fund balance to 13.48% of the entire town budget or about \$3.5 million.

The town operations budget totals \$5.04 million a \$153,103 or 3.13% increase and includes general government costs totaling \$2.16 million; public works totaling \$1.63 million; and public safety at \$621,093.

General government includes items such as salaries and benefits of appointed and elected personnel, supplies, software and equipment for town hall operations and custodial needs and occupies 43% of the total operating budget.

The spending plan reflected a 1.75% increase in union and non-union salaries, as well as a new part-time social service coordinator to cater to the town’s growing aging population.

A \$1.46 million capital improvement plans includes the local school board and town proposals, an increase of \$525,581.

On the town’s capital agenda are road and bridge construction, town hall and fire depart-

ment equipment updates, and reserves.

Road and bridge construction totals \$701,513 and includes the replacement of the Fawn Brook and Jones Hollow Bridge – projects that are each estimated to cost over \$2 million and are a combination of federal and local responsibility.

Other capital projects include thermal cameras and radio upgrades for the Marlborough Fire Department, a total of \$52,300.

A number of reserves include \$75,000 for public works equipment, \$50,000 for the fire department and \$75,000 for general government capital reserve.

Reserves for the school include \$10,000 towards the replacement of the Marlborough Elementary roof and \$15,000 for boiler replacement, as well as \$290,735 to pave all three parking lots at the school.

The local school operating budget totals \$7.41 million, a 1.59% or \$115,882 increase over current year spending.

The proposal includes \$4.04 million for the contractual salaries for administrators and teachers, an increase of 0.89%, while the sala-

ries of office and technology support, paraprofessionals, nurse and custodians totals \$991,495, a decrease of 1.46%.

Employee benefits clocked in at \$1.10 million, a decrease of 3.25%.

Marlborough’s contribution to RHAM operations totals \$9.89 million, an increase of 5.78 percent or \$539,543 over the current year, as well as an additional \$172,308 for capital.

The proposed budget also accounts for the possibility that municipalities may be responsible for funding at least 25 percent of teacher pension costs as proposed by Governor Ned Lamont. Marlborough’s contribution is estimated to be \$47,411 in the proposed budget.

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The annual town meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 6, at 7 p.m. in the school cafeteria followed by a referendum the next day, May 7, from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m., in the school’s community room.

Absentee ballots are available in the town clerk’s office and must either be delivered in person on May 6 by 4:30 p.m. or in the mail by 4 p.m. on the day of the referendum.



# East Hampton Council Reduces Budget via Party-Line Votes

by Elizabeth Regan

The Republican-dominated East Hampton Town Council this week stripped the finance board's recommended budget by \$442,560 in a series of party-line votes that prompted the council chairman to declare "nobody said politics is fair."

Casualties of the council's sharpened pencil included one of the two police officers slated to be hired in January as well as \$300,000 of the Board of Education's requested \$432,500 capital budget.

The cuts bring the 2019-20 proposed budget to \$46.71 million. That's an increase of \$1.26 million, or 2.77%, over the current budget.

The projected mill rate associated with the budget proposal would raise the mill rate by 1.33 mills – or 4.13% – over the current mill rate of 32.21 mills.

Two additional police officers had been added to the budget as a way to help bring staffing levels closer to the industry standard and to mitigate the lengthy replacement process for multiple impending retirements.

The council has four Republicans and three Democrats. Its members presided over several tri-board meetings earlier this year as a way to open the lines of communication with the Board of Finance and Board of Education. That initial spirit of cooperation grew out of last year's prolonged budget battle, which didn't come to an end until the fourth referendum in October.

Republican Josh Piteo made the motion to cut the finance board's proposal. The councilors also removed \$90,000 in funds set aside to save up for vehicles in the fire and public works departments.

Democrat Kevin Reich said the cuts in Piteo's motion were dropped "from the heavens" at the Tuesday evening meeting without any input from the minority party, the Board of Finance or the Board of Education. He asked the council to hold off on a vote until the reductions could be discussed by all the relevant parties.

"This is not fair to all the people who have been working on this budget process for the last three months," Reich said.

That's when Republican Council Chairman Melissa Engel noted "nobody said politics is fair."

The council's majority, when pressed by Democrats, acknowledged the cuts were hashed out behind closed doors by the four Republicans.

"When you guys caucus, you don't include [Republicans]," Engel told the Democrats. "That's kind of the way it goes. That's how a caucus works."

The oft-used caucus exemption to the state Freedom of Information Act allows members of a board or commission who belong to the same party to convene closed meetings for the discussion of public business.

Republican Mark Philhower cited a document prepared by Finance Director Jeff Jylkka that forecast a mill rate of 40.11 by 2028.

"I'm sorry, we just cannot keep doing this to the people of this town, hitting them with mill rate increase, after mill rate increase, after mill rate increase every year," Philhower said. "Forty mills is not sustainable for some of the people in East Hampton to maintain living in this town. It's not."

Jylkka's mill rate projections assumed a 2.5% increase in annual spending, no growth in revenue from grants, and 1% growth in other revenue.

Philhower said the process so far – which has included multiple tri-board meetings as well as many school and finance board meetings – has yielded "a lot of compromise" in terms of spending increases.

"Quite honestly, if it was me, there would've been zeroes across the board," he said.

A mill is \$1 tax per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Based on the projected mill rate associated with the council's budget, a property owner with a home assessed at \$200,000 would pay \$6,708 in taxes based on the finance board's budget proposal. That's an increase of \$266 for the year, or \$22 per month.

The \$15.45 million general government proposed budget – composed of town operations, debt and capital projects – is an increase of \$645,471, or 4.36%, over the current budget.

Education comes in at \$30.05 million, a 2.00% increase over the current budget.

Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith during the meeting brokered one more in a series of compromises that have been a hallmark of East Hampton's unorthodox budget planning process over the past two years.

Engel, while listening to Democrat James "Pete" Brown ask the council to hold off on the vote for another week so officials and department heads can discuss alternatives to the

cuts, looked at her phone.

"Paul Smith, the department head, just texted me; we're sort of negotiating here," she said.

Smith stood up at that point to ask the council to let the school board decide how to itemize the \$300,000 cut to the education capital budget. The council had originally suggested cutting the entire line item for technology upgrades.

"What you've done is you've eliminated the Chromebook program completely, and I'd rather piecemeal the capital [cuts] and not just wipe out technology," Smith told the council.

The schools' capital request for technology includes several hundred computer tablets for students and more than 100 computers for teachers. The bulk of the remaining projects address school safety enhancements and building repairs.

Engel said she was fine with letting the school board decide how to implement the \$300,000 reduction.

But council Democrats once again pleaded for more time.

Reich said Smith should be allowed to discuss the council's reductions with school administrators and the school board before bringing any solutions back to the council in a week or so.

"This is not his budget; it's the Board of Education budget," Reich said. "I think in all fairness to the superintendent, he should not be put in that situation of having to propose something without having discussed it with his board and with his staff."

Piteo amended his motion to let the school board decide which capital items to cut. The budget vote passed 4-3.

## Public Safety Implications

Before Smith took his opportunity to stand up in defense of capital spending for education, Police Chief Dennis Woessner was rebuffed by Engel when he asked if the council would be addressing the public safety cuts.

"I was just wondering if I had an opportunity to talk about the reductions," he said shortly after Piteo made his motion.

Engel's response was "not at this point."

East Hampton Police Department Union President Hardie Burgin after the meeting told the *Rivereast* that failing to hire two new police officers exacerbates the department's staff-

ing problems.

He said the national average is 2.4 officers per thousand citizens, which would put East Hampton at roughly 31 officers. They have 15 currently.

Woessner has said there are also several imminent retirements. Each position typically takes about nine months to fill due to certification and training requirements.

The department regularly has only a couple officers on patrol during a shift, according to officials. They said if even one officer retires or becomes incapacitated for an extended period, it has a significant impact on the department's ability to function.

"I mean, we're busy," Burgin said. "Two guys to cover 36 square miles is just not enough."

Burgin said he missed most of the Town Council's meeting because he had to respond to a medical call, though he would have liked to hear the discussion.

"I try to come to these [meetings] for the annual decimation of the police budget," he said. "But it is what it is."

Engel after the meeting expressed hope that the police officer position the council cut this week could be restored at some point.

She referenced uncertainty at the state level about expenses that municipalities may have to incur in the upcoming budget, such as a \$151,185 payment toward teachers' pensions that has been floated by Gov. Ned Lamont.

The pension proposal would require most municipalities to pay a portion of teachers' pension costs. *The Connecticut Mirror* reported on March 29 that members of the state General Assembly's Education Committee eliminated that part of the governor's plan when they approved Lamont's two main education bills, but opponents of the measure are fearful it could show up again before the end of the legislative session in early June.

"Things make more sense to all of us when the state finally passes their budget," Engel said. "This is so backwards because we have to approve ours before we know exactly how much they're taking away from us."

The finance board earlier this month agreed to a compromise proposal from Smith that requires the general government side of the proposed budget to absorb the possible \$151,185 increase.

# Hope for Belltown Water Drying Up

by Elizabeth Regan

The Metropolitan District Commission dealt water-strapped East Hampton its latest blow when the company revealed it is currently not interested in bringing the precious resource into town.

The quasi-public water utility known as MDC in an April 10 letter said it "must respectfully decline" an informal request for proposals from Town Manager Michael Maniscalco.

The letter was signed by MDC CEO Scott Jellison.

Maniscalco in March reached out to MDC, Aquarion Water Company and Connecticut Water Company to ask them to outline where the water would come from, how the roll out would be phased, what it would cost to construct, and how much expected water rates would be.

Aquarion and Connecticut Water have not yet responded to the request, Maniscalco said this week. His deadline is May 20.

East Hampton officials for decades have been trying to figure out how to fund a reliable public water supply for a much-larger swath of town than the area currently served by three small, town-operated water systems. Belltown has long been beset by a lack of clean water that has disrupted the lives of residents and hindered economic development.

Voters in a 2007 referendum shot down a \$28 million proposal to bring water to the Village Center.

Ten years later, a report from the engineering firm Tighe and Bond found it would cost roughly \$81 million to fully outfit East Hampton's water system to bring MDC into town, construct a downtown loop and connect to the existing Village Center and Royal Oaks waters systems. The report contemplated us-

ing town-owned wells in Cobalt and connecting with MDC through Portland.

Jellison's letter cited a lack of cooperation from Portland and unreasonable costs as MDC's reasons for pulling out.

The utility acknowledged it has been in talks with East Hampton and Portland about a plan to send water along seven miles of Route 66 from Grove Street in Portland to the current East Hampton Town Hall.

"As you are aware, MDC has been working with Portland for the past five years discussing this possibility with no clear decision," Jellison wrote.

MDC's existing base cannot afford the cost of bringing water to East Hampton and building the system, according to Jellison. And while state officials with the Department of Public Health earlier this year confirmed they had requested a \$40 million grant from the governor's office, the funding was not included on the agenda for the most recent State Bond Commission meeting earlier this month.

A spokesman for the state public health agency did not respond to multiple calls and emails by press time.

Jellison said the state funding is necessary for MDC to be able to provide water service to the town "for a reasonable cost."

Town Council Chairman Melissa Engel, who campaigned on a water platform, blamed Portland for MDC's decision.

"I'm mad at Portland for not helping us out here," she said. "Come on, be a good neighbor."

She said she wasn't expecting a much better response from Aquarion or Connecticut Water, either.

"I'm not optimistic about anything without any money. That's our problem. And they're only interested in partnering with us if we have more than one town," Engel said.

Portland First Selectman Susan Bransfield this week emphasized any plan the town signs on to has to take into account needs beyond East Hampton.

She said the key is involving the state – and its resources – in studying the needs in nearby communities along Route 66 up through Hebron.

"I'm not talking about a study that's going to take a long time, but really a look at what are our resources, how can we capitalize on them, and how can we work together toward achieving our goals of clean, plentiful water and sewer that's necessary for our growing communities," she said.

She cited the Colchester-East Hampton Joint Facilities framework, based in East Hampton, as an example of regional cooperation. The program provides sewer services to portions of several communities.

"Maybe there's a way for us to extend that over to Portland, to provide our water and sewer systems to our constituents in a united way," she said.

Portland officials in 2015 engaged in talks with East Hampton after one of Portland's largest taxpayers, Saint Clements Castle and Marina, asked to connect to Belltown's sewer plant as part of the banquet facility's expansion plans. The talks eventually fell to the wayside with no visible results.

Bransfield said she would like to see a meeting between the Portland Board of Selectmen, which serves as the towns Water Pollution Con-

trol Authority, and the East Hampton Water and Sewer Commission.

"I welcome the opportunity to further explore, but anything we proceed with has to meet the needs of all the communities involved," she said.

Public utilities administrator Tim Smith, who will be leaving his position for a new job effective today, said earlier this week he has been working on the water system issue with Maniscalco. Their work built on the findings of the now-defunct Water Development Task Force, which was established in 2014 to figure out the best way to get water to town.

The task force was disbanded about one year ago after members released recommendations that supported the 2017 report from Tighe and Bond. Meeting minutes indicate officials left open the possibility of forming an implementation task force.

Smith said there has been no commission involvement in the process since then.

Mark Barmasse, the former chairman of the task force and current chairman of the Water and Sewer Commission, did not return a call for comment.

Bransfield said this week she plans to reach out to Barmasse to open communication between the two towns' water pollution control authorities.

"This is a very unique opportunity to bring clean, potable and plentiful water to this region," she said.

Bransfield regretted that the East Hampton town council chairman chose to blame Portland for MDC's decision to back out.

"I think there's much to be gained in being cooperative and gracious," Bransfield said.



# Andover Finance Board Approves \$12.35 Million Spending Plan

by Sloan Brewster

The Board of Finance approved a \$12.35 million spending plan for 2019-20, \$926,000 of which will be taken from the fund balance to cover capital needs and draw down the town's comfortable rainy day fund.

The proposed budget will go to town meeting on May 9. It reflects a \$1.16 million increase, or 10.18%, over last year's spending plan and translates to a projected 1.04 mill rate increase, which would bring the mill rate to 34.99 mills.

The finance board budget proposal includes a \$2.36 million town operations budget that's up \$64,017 over the current year.

The \$4.07 million local Board of Education budget is a decrease of \$90,000 compared to the current budget and Andover's \$4.90 million portion of the RHAM schools budget is up \$378,502 over the current levy – which brings the total increase for education to 3.33%.

Board of Finance member Adrian Mandeville and fellow board members after a lengthy public hearing said they wanted to spend some excess funds in the fund balance, otherwise known as the rainy day fund. The fund currently amounts to approximately \$2.2 million, or 18% of the town's general fund expenditures.

Finance board members said the state takes the local fund balance into account when calculating municipal aid – and that guidance suggests it should make up no more than 10% of the total budget. That would mean there is a \$1 million surplus in Andover's account, finance board members said, adding that they worry the town will lose state funding if the surplus is not eliminated.

The surplus is the result of repeated over budgeting by town departments, Mandeville said.

Other capital items to be funded by the fund balance are \$412,000 for a new fire truck; \$350,000 for a multi-use building; \$200,000 for paving and road work; \$39,000 for a work truck; and \$25,000 for repairs to the transfer station.

Capital items in the budget that will be funded by new tax revenue instead of the fund balance are \$33,000 for a new plow truck and \$25,000

for a new shed for the transfer station.

The board also created a new technology account, transferring \$20,000 from funds slated for a future revaluation to pay for proposed costs to update the town's website, a plan the board said it favors. Mandeville said it is so difficult to navigate the website as it now stands that he often gives up trying to find items such as meeting dates and instead calls people to get the answer he needs.

The board added \$1,200 to the budget to pay for the assistant town clerk to work fulltime during the town clerk's vacations. The funds will be raised through taxes, not taken from savings.

The board did not agree to add capital funding to pay for additional paving of local roads, a matter that was raised in the public hearing by Board of Selectmen member Cathleen Desrosiers.

Desrosiers took issue with the fact that the finance board was spending more than \$900,000 from the town's savings, yet only putting \$200,000 toward roads. She wanted that number increased to \$400,000.

According to a survey taken by the Board of Selectmen, there are 12 roads in town that have deteriorated, she said.

Sunset Lane residents John and Paula Bailey spoke of the unpaved state of their road, which is off Lakeside Drive going down to Andover Lake. The road is dangerous as there are exposed boulders that can catch on snow plow blades, John Bailey said. Two years ago, a snow plow got stuck on the road.

"Something's got to be done before someone gets seriously injured," he said.

On Wednesday, Paula Bailey showed the *Rivereast* several boulders showing through the top layer of dirt on the road, pushing at them with her foot to indicate that they would not budge and are not simply rocks that can be moved.

Mandeville, during the public hearing, said funding for the roadwork was not included in the selectmen's budget request.

After the public hearing closed, the finance board deliberated over taking more money out



**Sunset Lane, a short dirt road off Lakeside Drive, is on a list of roads that need to be paved in town. With exposed boulders that can catch on snow plow blades, residents say it is potentially dangerous and needs to be paved soon.**

of the fund balance to pay for the additional paving. In the end, the board knocked down a motion to take an extra \$130,000 from the fund to put toward the roads. Board members Eric Shevchenko, Jeffrey Murray and David Hewett were opposed to the notion and Mandeville, Linda Fish and Robert England were in favor.

Shevchenko said he was concerned that the proposal cut too deeply into the rainy day fund.

The board also knocked down a motion made by Fish to take \$50,000 out of \$250,000 set aside for a project to convert the third and fourth grade wing at Andover Elementary School to a senior center.

The board also added \$30,000 to contingency – an account that Adrian Mandeville, who ran the meeting, said the board initially overlooked. The \$30,000 came from the fund balance.

Desrosiers during the hearing said she did not support the budget.

"I do recommend that you vote the budget down. I don't think you're addressing the needs of the town," she said. "We need to address the

roads ... the money should be fixing the roads."

Desrosiers also said she does not support a \$5,000 line item for attorney fees for the finance board.

Mandeville said the money is there in case it's needed, but that it won't necessarily be spent.

According to Mandeville, the finance board in the past has had concerns about the way selectmen were doing things related to the finance board – and selectmen have refused to give the finance board permission to get input from the town attorney.

"It's in the best interest of the town for the Board of Finance to have access to the town attorney," Mandeville said. "This isn't something that's definitely going to get expended."

"The Board of Selectmen runs the town," Desrosiers said.

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The town budget meeting will be held Thursday, May 9 at 7 p.m. at the Andover Town Hall.

## Andover 'Day of Reckoning' Coming for Town Administrator?

by Sloan Brewster

Board of Finance member and First Selectman candidate Adrian Mandeville said this week he was "very frustrated" with Town Administrator Joseph Higgins' disappearance from Tuesday's Board of Finance public hearing.

"This guy's getting paid \$87,000 a year for not doing his job," Mandeville told the *Rivereast* in a phone call Wednesday. "The day of reckoning is coming."

Mandeville Thursday expanded on his comment, saying he was "sick of begging" Higgins to do his job, and that the Board of Selectmen should be holding him accountable for both what he is going and what he is not doing. He said when the new board is seated after next month's elections, things will change.

"He's going to have to answer to the new board for the things that he's doing and not doing," Mandeville said. "No one's holding him responsible."

After taking a recess during Tuesday's meeting, the finance board had questions for the town administrator but found his seat empty. Mandeville – who was chairing that night's meeting in place of the absent Dan Warren – threw up his hands in dismay.

"I don't understand; did Joe tell anybody he was leaving?" he said. "Isn't he supposed to be here?"

In a phone call Thursday, Higgins said he is supposed to be at Board of Selectmen meetings, and only has to attend finance board meetings "as needed."

"If they put something for me on their agenda I would definitely attend," he said. "My treasurer is there."

Mandeville also expressed frustration that Higgins has not cleaned up the local bidding

process during his two years as town administrator.

"With this new administrator we were promised that they would take care of Public Works," he said.

Mandeville said Higgins does not abide by the charter when he issues requests for proposals (RFPs) and that he has spoken to him about it, but that Higgins insists he is handling RFPs correctly.

Department of Public Works foreman Edwin Kasacek, during a discussion on paving local roads at the hearing, said the public works department had called prospective contractors, some of which came to town and walked roads needing repair with the foreman.

Higgins said he provides Kasacek with contractors from the state's approved list, which he said the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) said was okay to use.

"It's state-contracted pricing; there's a formal RFP process that they go through for the state and that's typically done for road work because it's more difficult to do an RFP," he said. "The RFP process is done for us."

Mandeville said Higgins told him the same thing about the process being approved by CCM and that he told Higgins "You don't work for [CCM]." Per the town charter, that is not the way an RFP is issued, he said.

Vice First Selectman Jeff Maguire, who is running against Mandeville for first selectman, echoed Mandeville's assertion that RFPs are not done correctly and that Higgins was hired to clean up such processes.

"The way that it's always been done in town, and especially for the roads, is that Edwin Kasacek would go out and get a one-page,

sometimes-handwritten quote for a project and that's not how, when we hired the town administrator, that we wanted things to be looking," he said Wednesday. "Adrian and the Board of Finance are 100% on point by requesting that the town administrator do things correctly and in accordance with the charter and I support the Board of Finance 100%."

According to Mandeville, before a contract can be awarded, an RFP must be issued and bids that come in must be sealed.

When asked by the *Rivereast* if the bids were sealed, Higgins simply said contractors provide bids in writing.

Another matter of concern, according to Mandeville, is a potential conflict of interest between Kasacek and Haines Material of Windham, the company that was awarded the roadwork contract.

In an argument with Mandeville during the recess at Tuesday's public hearing, Kasacek was heard shouting that his brother and nephew work for the company that was doing the roadwork. Mandeville told the *Rivereast* Wednesday that hiring someone with connections to his family was a charter violation as well.

"The town's road foreman is choosing his brother's company," Mandeville said.

However, Mandeville said the biggest issue was that the bid from Haines Material was not an official sealed bid – and that his concerns are about transparency and added that the onus is on Higgins.

"There is no belief, none from our board believe, that there is anything wrong or nefarious going on," he said. "Honestly, this isn't [Kasacek's] fault. This was Joe's responsibility to make sure it was done correctly."

Selectman Cathleen Desrosiers came to Higgins' defense at the public hearing.

"Our town administrator has gotten no leadership," she said. "[First Selectman Bob Burbank], who should have taken Joe under his wing, did not do that and refuses to do that."

Burbank was not present at Tuesday's hearing, but, when told Thursday about Desrosiers' comment, admitted he hasn't worked with Higgins in the manner Desrosiers described. But, he said, his salary was cut "drastically" after Higgins was hired, and he "can't afford" to spend that much time in Town Hall. When Higgins was hired as town administrator, many of Burbank's duties as first selectman were transferred to him.

Still, Burbank said, he does talk with Higgins.

"When he needs advice, I give it to him," Burbank said. "He's on the phone with me quite often and I support him when I can."

Maguire said Tuesday he was planning to request adding a discussion of RFPs to the agenda for the next Board of Selectmen meeting – and that he would ask Higgins why he was not doing things the way the Board of Finance has asked him to do them.

Maguire said there was "a disconnect" between what he believes the town administrator should be doing and what Higgins believes.

"There's just a disconnect between what Joe believes his role to the community is and what I believe it is," Maguire said. "The RFP is just a symptom. It's just one of the many disconnects that we have."

The Board of Selectmen next meets Wednesday, May 1, at 6 p.m., at the Town Hall Community Room.



# Andover Selectmen Candidates Spread Good Feelings

by Sloan Brewster

With the town's municipal elections coming in a week and a half, the slate of candidates for the Board of Selectmen and first selectman said they all get along and want what's best for the town.

And many of them stressed all this love is a big plus and something that's been missing from the board for a while.

Democrat Jeff Maguire, 53, is running for first selectman against Republican Adrian Mandeville, 46. Current First Selectman Bob Burbank is not seeking re-election.

Maguire, who is currently vice first selectman and has been on the board for four years, said he can't wait for the new board to be seated.

"I think it's been too long for Andover, we have a lot of things that need to be accomplished and we need to work together and accomplish the things that need to be done," he said.

Maguire said he does not even feel like he is running against Mandeville, and said he's looking forward to working with him, regardless of the outcome of the May elections.

As per the town charter, the loser of the first selectman race can still get a seat on the board if he or she is still among the top vote-getters among the other selectmen candidates.

Maguire ran for first selectman in 2015 and ultimately lost to Burbank, but he still gained a seat on the board. This time around, he said, the race has a different feel.

"This is the first time I'm not running against something," Maguire said. "This time I'm running for something because I see the opportunities we have in front of us."

Maguire said one of the things on his to do list is evaluating how things are done in Town Hall for cost and efficiency.

"Every department in our town needs to have a complete evaluation of what they do how they do it and how we can either do it better or for less money," he said.

Like other candidates who spoke with the *Rivereast*, Maguire said the town should put more effort into services for seniors, including providing them with a center. He also wants to make sure there are adequate recreational opportunities for local children.

"We haven't done a good enough job in the past providing services to our seniors and our youth," he said. "We need to have some focus on that."

Mandeville, who has been on the Board of

Finance three and a half years, said a big issue he's hoping to fix is the lack of public engagement in local activities and politics. He said he'd liked to increase opportunities to get folks involved.

"There's not a lot of civic engagement," he said. "I don't know; it could be a little ambivalence."

Mandeville also wants to clean up the town's website. On Monday, at a Board of Finance meeting, he supported a motion to add \$20,000 to the proposed 2019-20 budget to have a new website built.

Mandeville said he also wants to expand the way information is disseminated, possibly through a Facebook page or a town newsletter.

"Just try to get people more involved; I think that's the thing we suffer from the most," he said, referring to a lack of civic involvement.

The current Board of Selectmen has featured sometimes-heated arguments among board members, and selectmen getting visibly frustrated with one another. Mandeville said he also wants to "bring some civility back" to Board of Selectmen meetings.

He also said he wants to get projects rolling more quickly, such as paving the track at Long Hill Field, which has not been done despite going to bid months ago and repairing the roof on the Andover Museum, a project that went to bid several times before it was completed.

He also wants to market the town and attract economic growth.

"My biggest thing is I just want to figure out how to get the town moving again, how to move forward," he said, and added, "We have this fantastic public school but we have declining population so how do we protect that school?"

Democrat Eric Anderson, 49, who is currently chairman of the Planning and Zoning Commission, is running for a seat on the Board of Selectmen

Anderson said he wants to get strategic with planning, including budgeting for projects "year by year."

"So when it comes time to pull the trigger you've got a pool of money and you don't have to start from zero," he said.

He also wants to build on things "that make life better for residents" such as the rail trail and getting a senior or community center in town.

Anderson said all the candidates for the Board of Selectmen know each other and while



With Election Day coming, roadways are peppered with signs endorsing the Democrat (left) and Republican candidates.

there are six candidates and only five slots, "none of us are particularly concerned about which five of the six of us comes in because we're all kind of pushing the same agenda."

Anderson's only complaint is that there isn't a woman on the slate.

"It's kind of unfortunate that neither party found a woman to run," he said. "It would've been nice to have a woman on the board."

After the election, Anderson said he hopes to sit with the boards of finance and selectmen and the Capital Improvement Planning Committee, which he is also on, and draft a common set of procedures for how things are done in town.

"It's just unclear who's responsible for what task," he said. "We really need to solidify that and have one way of doing that."

Democrat Scott Person, 62, also a member of the Planning and Zoning Commission, is running for the Board of Selectmen as well. He takes the place of candidate Daniel Warren, who is currently the chairman of the Board of Finance. Warren is moving out of town, so he had to drop out of the race.

Person also said he feels selectmen meetings can go more smoothly.

"We all want the meetings to go better," he said, "and if the meetings go better the town will run better."

He also wants to see more services for seniors and wants the town to "give the seniors a place that they can call their own."

Republican Brian Clate, 46, is also running for a seat on the board. His biggest concern is growing the town while maintaining its rural character. He pointed to declining enrollment at the school and a lack of commercial development in town and said he'd "like to turn those trends around."

Republican Jeff Murray, 50, is also running for a seat. He wants to improve the planning process and wants the town to be more organized.

"We've got a slate of candidates that want to get things done," he said.

Murray also wants more services for seniors and kids.

"I want to kind of find a balance and not just for one segment of the population," he said.

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The municipal elections take place Monday, May 6. Voting takes place from 6 a.m.-8 p.m. at the Town Hall community room.

## Shilosky Endorsed for Third Term as Colchester First Selectman

by Allison Lazur

Republican Art Shilosky, the town's first selectman since 2015, is seeking another two years in office.

Shilosky and fellow selectmen Stan Soby and Denise Mizla were all endorsed for re-election by the Colchester Republican Town Committee on April 9. The municipal elections come up in November.

Shilosky, 76, has served as first selectman since 2015, winning a second term in 2017. He'll be opposed by Democrat challenger Mary Bylone, 63.

Shilosky said, if re-elected, his goal is going to be the completion of a new senior center.

"We've been trying to build a new senior center for seven or 10 years and it's been put on the backburner," Shilosky said.

After purchasing the senior center building from the Bacon Academy Board of Trustees in 2016 and subsequently purchasing the land behind Town Hall that adjoins the property,



Art Shilosky

selectmen are proposing a 2022 completion date.

"That's what I want to get done," he said. "If I am re-elected that's the only major thing that I will concentrate on to get done."

Shilosky also spoke of the need for continued economic growth and development, though he admitted "it's hard to get economic development downtown because there is no land available, and because the way the land is laid out, you can't really build anything of any size."

Shilosky has spent over 30 years involved in the town's volunteer and civic organizations and local government, and spent 36 years as a project manager at Shepherd Steel, according to a press release from the Republican Town Committee.

Shilosky also had high praise for the other selectmen who serve on the board – saying they all have a common bond.

"I don't look at it as I am the first selectman and they are the selectmen," he said. "We work for the same common goal of making Colchester a little bit better every year."

As for Bylone, she said she plans to keep the campaign positive. She said she's worked with Shilosky on several occasions, and has always enjoyed doing so.

"I think we have different leadership styles and I'm looking forward to helping the people in the community understand our platforms," she said. "We promised each other we'd keep it positive and I wouldn't expect anything less."

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Also endorsed by the Republicans were selectmen Denise Mizla, 63, and Stan Soby, 66. Like Shilosky, they agreed on the importance of a new senior center.

Mizla, a lifelong resident of Colchester, called the construction of a new center "the biggest thing" on the Board of Selectmen's future agenda – and said a building committee would likely be established in the next few months.

Soby, 66, also mentioned the senior center when he spoke with the *Rivereast* Wednesday. He said the town has been able to be fiscally responsible while also building the town's general fund, by using more money from reserves instead of bonding for projects.

The senior center project has a preliminary cost estimate of \$3.5 million, which Soby said the town would have to bond for – but he noted the town was able to pay the \$90,000 purchase price of the land behind Town Hall outright, without having to bond.

Like Shilosky, Soby stressed the need for

continued economic growth and development – but he also added it's important to acknowledge the agricultural community's role in that continued growth.

Soby has been on the Board of Selectmen since 2006, with two breaks in service to serve as interim first selectman from January to November 2007 and from May 2014 to November 2015.

He currently serves on the Chatham Health District Board of Directors and has over 35 years of local government and volunteer experiences, the Republican Town Committee said.

Mizla has served on the Board of Selectmen since 2013 and has been involved with volunteer and local government for about 22 years.

She said the entire five-member Board of Selectmen was "very cohesive."

"We have a good debate [and] we make common sense decisions together after some discussion," she said.

Soby, meanwhile, said both Shilosky and Mizla are "terrific people."

"They bring a variety of perspectives," he said. "It's a really good team to be running with – good people and good perspectives."

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Election Day is Nov. 5.

### Info Session on Paramedics Program

All are invited to join Chief Walter Cox from the Colchester Fire Department and Fire Marshal Sean Shoemaker Thursday, May 9, at 10:30 a.m., to learn more about the Paramedics Program, which is being budgeted for the next fiscal year, and how it can benefit Colchester.

Pre-register for this program by calling Colchester Senior Center at 860-537-3911.



## Obituaries

### Portland

#### George S Brede Jr.

George S. Brede Jr., 89, of Portland, husband of the late Kathleen (Foster) Brede, died Friday, April 19, at Middlesex Hospital.

He was born in Middletown on April 17, 1930, the son of the late George S. Brede Sr. and Nellie Miriam (Cornwall) Brede. A lifelong resident of Portland, George graduated from Portland High School in 1949. A veteran of the Korean War, George served with the US Army in Germany. Prior to his retirement, he was a general line foreman with Henkels & McCoy of Portland. Some of George's many community involvements include being a lifetime member and volunteer with Portland Fire Department, Engine Co. #1, a 50-year-plus member with the Exchange Club of Portland, B.P.O. Elks #771, a former chairman of Portland Parks and Recreation Commission, a member of IBEW, Local #42, a member of the Portland Sports Hall of Fame, a recipient of the Michael Green community service award, past sexton of the Trinity Church Cemetery, Portland, and a parishioner of St. Mary Church, Portland.

He is survived by a loving son, David F. Brede and his wife Annie of Cromwell, and a devoted daughter, Colleen Brede of Portland; two dear grandchildren, David F. Brede Jr. and his wife Emily of Middletown, and Michael B. Brede and his wife Whitney of Anchorage, Alaska.

He was predeceased by a sister, Betty Granata.

George was a humble, gentle man with a warm smile and a big heart who was always ready to help out anyone in need. His family already misses him but feels so blessed to have been touched by his love.

His funeral liturgy was held Wednesday, April 24, at Saint Mary Church, Portland. Burial was held at Saint Mary Cemetery. There were no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers, those who wish may make memorial contributions to St. Mary Church, 51 Freestone Ave., Portland, CT 06480, the Portland Volunteer Fire Department Engine Co. #1, P.O. Box 71, Portland, CT 06480 or the Exchange Club of Portland, P.O. Box 866, Portland, CT 06480.

Biega Funeral Home has care of the arrangements. To share memories or express condolences online, visit [biegafuneralhome.com](http://biegafuneralhome.com).

### Colchester

#### Shirley Mary Gauthier

Shirley Mary Gauthier of Colchester, formerly of Vermont, passed away peacefully Saturday, April 13, at Harrington Court, at the age of 90. She was born Oct. 2, 1928, a daughter of Cecil and Mabel (Foster) Adams, late of Florence, Vt.

Shirley worked at the Vermont Marble Company before marrying Henry Gauthier in 1952. They ran a farm before moving to Sudbury, Vt., where Shirley lived for many years. After her husband's death in 1971, she worked in food services first at Otter Valley Union High School and then the Brandon Training School. She lived in Forestdale, Vt., before moving to Connecticut in 1998.

Shirley is survived by three daughters, Gail Gauthier Johnston and her husband Russell of Marlborough, Connie Tormey and her husband Dennis of Columbia and Linda Gauthier of Vergennes, Vt.; three grandsons; three great-grandchildren; a sister, Esther Tonucci of Brockton, Mass.; and a number of nieces and nephews, including Flossie McLaughlin of Forestdale, Vt., with whom she was particularly close. In addition to her husband and parents, she was predeceased by two sisters, Mildred Dewitt and Janet Martin.

She will be laid to rest alongside her husband at St. Genevieve's Cemetery in Shoreham, Vt., at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital ([stjude.org](http://stjude.org)), an organization Shirley supported regularly for many years.

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



### Andover

#### John Pyle Bushey

John Pyle Bushey, 71, born September 23, 1947, of Andover, husband of Mary Ellen (Horn) Bushey, ascended into Heaven on Friday April 19, 2019 at Windham Hospital at 7:05am. He was the son of the late Edward and Emma (Pyle) Bushey.

John was a devoted and loving husband, father, grandfather & great grandfather. He loved telling stories, jokes and teaching card tricks to his grandchildren. In his spare time his passion was building country furniture. He had a contagious smile and would give anything to help anyone he would meet. He was such a genuine, kind-hearted soul that was a Papa Bear to everyone.

Along with his wife, Mary Ellen, of 50 years this upcoming November, he leaves his children; Karen Lussier and her husband Jim, Kim Boisvert and her husband Rick and Debbie Doucette and her husband Gary; grandchildren, Emma and Abbey Lussier, Ashley and Brittany Lovett, and Cody and Kyle Doucette; also, a great-grandchild, Lincoln John Tate.

We would like to say a special thank you to Marlborough Volunteer Fire Department and Marlborough Emergency Room, as well as the Windham Hospital staff. Also, a special acknowledgment to the staff at Marlborough Health and Rehabilitation for the extraordinary care given to John in his last few months.

Relatives and friends may call Sunday, April 28, from 1-3 p.m., at Bacon Funeral Home 71 Prospect St, Willimantic.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Andover Fire Department, (11 School Rd, Andover, CT 06232), who dedicated many hours to help John whenever he was in need, and to whom we are forever grateful for.

To send an online expression of sympathy, visit [baconfh.com](http://baconfh.com).



### Colchester

#### Barbara Anne Savitski

Barbara Anne Savitski, 79, of Colchester, widow of the late Joseph Savitski Jr., died Monday, April 22, at Yale New Haven Hospital, after a long illness. Born June 24, 1939, in Queens, N.Y., she was the daughter of the late John and Mary (Higgins) Higbie.

Barbara is survived by her children, Roger Kennedy of Colchester, Kevin Kennedy of Middletown, Robin Fontana and husband Salvatore of Colchester, Sheryl Verrill of Colchester; a brother, Michael Higbie; three sisters, Nancy Shumbo, Patty Zeleznicky, Kathy Fedus; eight grandchildren, Anthony Fontana, Jonathan Fontana, Stephen Fontana, Brianna Fontana, Tiffany Kennedy, Kylee Verrill, Tanner Verrill, Hunter Verrill; and six great-grandchildren, Thomas, Dylan, Sage, Anthony, Colby and Paisley.

She was predeceased by her son, Todd Savitski, and her brother, John Higbie.

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

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to St. Jude Children's Hospital at [stjude.org](http://stjude.org).

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

### Colchester

#### Marie Becka D'Onofrio

Marie Becka D'Onofrio, 91, of Colchester, widow of the late Leonard F. D'Onofrio, passed away Wednesday, March 27. Born Aug. 18, 1927, she was the daughter of the late Boger and Buenie (Gannon) Stiltner.

Her memory will be carried on in the hearts of her three daughters, Carolyn and her husband Robert Damarjian of Colchester, Marie and her husband Dennis Kuchy of Colchester, and Rosalie D'Onofrio of Colchester; her grandchildren, Nicole and Alan Damarjian, Lisa and Seth Kuchy and Zachary, Heather and Holly Tirrell; great-grandchildren, Tyler and Connor Tuttle, John and Erik Feidler.

The family would like to express their heartfelt thanks to the staff of Beacon Hospice (111 Founders Plaza, #1803, East Hartford, CT 06108) and therefore encourages those who wish to make donations to them in lieu of flowers.

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

### East Hampton

#### Julia Roy

Julia (Chasse) Roy, 83, of East Hampton and Andover, widow of the late Armand Roy, died Monday, April 22, at Hartford Hospital. Born Aug. 23, 1935, in Matawaska, Maine, she was the daughter of the late Eddie and Arteline (Lausier) Chasse. Julia was a communicant of St. Patrick Church in East Hampton.

She is survived by her four sons, James Roy and Louise of East Hampton, Steven Roy and Jody of Fla., Edward Roy and Denise of East Hampton, William Roy and Carol of Middletown; seven grandchildren; and six great-granddaughters.

Friends called at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, Thursday, April 25. A funeral liturgy will be celebrated today, April 26, at 11 a.m., in St. Patrick Church in East Hampton, with burial to follow in St. Patrick Cemetery.

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



### Colchester

#### Raymond John Tesla

Raymond John Tesla, 80, of Colchester, formerly of Marlborough, passed away Monday, April 22, at Hartford Hospital, after a sudden illness.

He leaves to mourn his loss his beloved wife of 29 years, Nancy Frangiamore Tesla; children and their spouses, Bonnie and her husband Patrick Talbott of Springtown, Texas, Bradley and his wife Julie Tesla of Lincoln, Neb., Karen and her husband Shawn Fortin of Enfield; grandchildren, Ambyr Privett, Austin Talbott, Savannah Tesla, Zachary and Alexandra Smith; a great-granddaughter, Makani Privett; and numerous extended family members and friends.

Raymond was born March 15, 1939, in Watervliet, N.Y. He was a son of the late Walter and Caroline Tesla. Ray was a proud veteran and ardent patriot, having served in both the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. Army. While in the U.S. Army, he was awarded two Purple Hearts, engaging the enemy during the Vietnam War as a lieutenant colonel in the Green Beret service. He later served the Army as a recruiter and also was a member of the American Legion Post 95 in Hebron.

Ray was a gun and marksman enthusiast. He was a member of the Bozrah Rod and Gun Club. He also enjoyed the outdoors, especially during fishing season or in his garden or watching and feeding the birds in his own backyard. Ray and his wife Nancy were communicants of St. Andrew Church in Colchester. He will be remembered and admired by his loved ones for the way he approached life, head on to every challenge or project, persisting until the job was completed to perfection. He was a devoted and loving family man who will be dearly missed but always remembered with love.

Calling hours will be held Saturday, April 27, from 10 a.m.-noon, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A memorial service will follow at the funeral home at noon with full military honors. Burial will be private at a later date.

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



### East Hampton

#### Margaret Daly Mass of Christian Burial

Margaret Quinn Dennehy Daly, the wife of the late Martin J. Daly and mother of William J. Dennehy, Michael J. Daly and Patricia Daly Banning, passed away Saturday, Oct. 13, 2018, in East Hampton.

Her family will be holding a Mass of Christian Burial at St. Patrick Church, 47 West High St., East Hampton, CT on Saturday, May 4, at noon. All are welcome.



### East Hampton

#### John F. Lambert

John F. Lambert of East Hampton passed away peacefully Monday, April 22, at the Portland Care and Rehab Center. He was born in Presque Isle, Maine, on April 5, 1935, to Frank N. and Ruth McHugh Lambert.

His early years were spent in Norway Maine and he graduated from Presque Isle H.S., where he lettered in baseball and basketball. John was a proud veteran of the U.S. Army. He graduated from St. Bonaventure University in 1961 with a Bachelor of Science in education. In 1962 he married Carol Ricci of Wethersfield. He went on to obtain his master's degree at UConn.

He was a teacher and a coach at Vinal Technical Regional High School in Middletown for five years. He taught and coached at Weaver High School in Hartford for many years and was the head basketball coach in 1971 when the Weaver Beavers won the State of Connecticut LL basketball championship. Coaching was a passion for John; he never forgot his players and always enjoyed hearing from them. He retired from the Hartford School system in 1992 and enjoyed his retirement volunteering his time for the Special Olympics in his area as well as coaching basketball clinics for the Knights of Columbus at St. Patrick Church.

John and Carol enjoyed many trips to Maine spending time with his family and visiting dear friends in Europe. His greatest joy was spending time with family and his beloved grandchildren. John was a devout Catholic and parishioner of St. Patrick Catholic Church in East Hampton for over 50 years and belonged to the Knights of Columbus.

John's family wants to express their deepest gratitude for the wonderful care that all the employees of Portland Care and Rehab gave to John during the last months of his life.

Coach John is survived by his three sons, Eric Lambert of Providence, R.I., Sean Lambert of East Hampton, Jonathan Lambert and wife Renee of Amston; two grandchildren, Simon Lambert and Sydney Lambert.

He was predeceased by sisters, Phyllis Currier and Patricia B. Rolfe.

Friends may call at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, Sunday, April 28, from 4-7 p.m. A funeral procession will leave the Spencer Funeral Home on Monday, April 29, at 10:30 a.m., with the funeral liturgy at 11 a.m. in St. Patrick Church. Burial will follow in St. Patrick Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made in John's memory to St. Patrick Church, P.O. Box 177, East Hampton, CT 06424.

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



## Obituaries continued

### Hebron

#### Herbert Kilby Sargent

Herbert Kilby Sargent, 82, of Hebron, beloved husband of Angela M. (DiBenedetto) Sargent, passed away suddenly Monday, April 22, at Windham Hospital, surrounded by his family. He was born Nov. 4, 1936, in Gloucester, Mass., son of the late Herbert K.P. and Jean A. (Trenholm) Sargent.



Herb grew up in Manchester, and enjoyed spending his summers at his family home in Gloucester, Mass. After graduating from Manchester High School in 1955, he worked with the youth in the community of Manchester. He joined the Air National Guard for four years and then joined the Air Force serving in Germany as a jet engine mechanic, where he enjoyed exploring Europe. After returning home he joined Pratt and Whitney and eventually became a technical writer.

Herb met and married his wife, Angela, in 1965 and they began a life together in Manchester. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Hartford in 1967. He owned and operated the West Side Package Store in Manchester for many years in the late '70s and early '80s, and then worked at JC Penny Warehouse in Manchester before retiring.

Everyone who knew Herb enjoyed his quick wit, his many stories from his time in Gloucester and the Air Force, and his love of history, motorcycles, planes, his dog Zeppelin and his maroon Corvette.

Along with his wife, Angela, he leaves his son, Scott Sargent and his wife Jennifer; his beloved grandchildren, Trent and Aidan Sargent, who brought him much joy; his sister-in-law Margaret Cassano and her husband Anthony; nephew, Anthony Cassano and nieces, Christine Greco, Pamela Mazey, Bonnie DeWitt, Teri Lee Wedderspoon, Sheri Shvonski and Holly Dibble; and his lifelong friends, James and MaryAnn Doering and Gerald and Laura Lee Donahue.

He was predeceased by his sister, Alice Jean Dibble, and his brother-in-law, Richard (Dick) Dibble, and his niece, Laurie-Ann Siff.

The family would like to thank the extraordinary nursing staff at Windham Hospital who took great care of Herb in the last days of his life.

Services will be private.

For an online memorial guestbook, visit [potterfuneralhome.com](http://potterfuneralhome.com).

## Maarlborough Police News

4/17: State Police said Michael S. Parks, 46, of 80 Mink Rock Circle, Westbrook, was arrested and charged with failure to keep narcotics in original container.