

RIVEREAST

# News Bulletin

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**Sharing a Book and a Laugh...** John Kimball, the AHM volunteer who built the Little Free Library and Steven Fish, vice president of AHM's Board of Directors, laugh over a book they found in the Little Free Library recently installed in front of AHM. See story on page 15.

## Should EHHS Guard Carry a Gun?

by Elizabeth Regan

Should the East Hampton High School security officer carry a gun?

That's the question being raised by the Board of Education as they consider a pilot program that would allow former Connecticut State Police Trooper Dave Luke to wear a concealed handgun while on the job.

Luke, who has been the school's security officer since September, was a first responder to the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012 as part of the state police tactical team. He said he was directly involved in searching, clearing and securing both the school and shooter Adam Lanza's home.

He retired from the state in 2017 after 18 years as a trooper and three years working in juvenile detention. He was an East Hampton police officer for three years before becoming a trooper.

Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith told the *RiverEast* Wednesday that the discussion began when a few teachers and people from the wider community came to him to ask if he'd ever considered arming the school security officer.

"My reaction was that I hadn't, and it wouldn't be a unilateral action on my part," Smith said. "It really requires a board decision and a community conversation."

Roughly 100 people attended a school board policy subcommittee meeting Monday in the high school auditorium to weigh in on the issue.

Smith told the audience that the purpose of the proposal is to protect students and staff and to provide the safest possible school environment.

He said a gun gives the school's security officer a chance to "match the lethal force" of

any attacker – "and that's the whole extent of the program."

The armed security guard – known in short form as an ASO – is paid for by the school district to work in the schools only. The position is different and less expensive than a School Resource Officer (SRO), who would be a member of the local police force and would be paid out of both the general government and education budgets.

Luke is currently paid \$19.79 per hour, according to school business manager Karen Asetta. She said the pay increase for an armed security officer has not yet been determined by the school board, but would likely be in the 20-25% range.

The pilot program would last from September to December, leaving the school board to decide if it should continue. Smith said officials can decide at that point if the program should be altered or expanded into other schools. A forum would be held in November to gauge public sentiment.

Peter Levy, who has a child in the high school, stood up during the public comment period to question the effectiveness of a handgun in the face of an attack.

"Unfortunately, in the school attacks, people are not coming in with a sidearm. They're coming in with an assault rifle. And the likelihood a security officer is going to have the same firepower as whoever is coming in has not been proven out in any school shooting in recent memory," Levy said.

He added that arming the officer is a reactive measure when the schools should be looking at proactive ways – like installing metal detectors – to keep guns out of the schools.

See EHHS Guard page 2

## Singer-Songwriter Returns for Founder's Day

by Allison Lazur

A wide array of representatives from the Bacon Academy community gathered Wednesday in the burial grounds behind the original high school to honor popular singer-songwriter Jonathan Coulton and the late Annie Hutchinson Foote – and to celebrate the founding of the school 216 years ago.

Members of the Board of Education and Bacon Academy Board of Trustees joined high school students and administrators for the annual Founder's Day celebration.

The toll of the recently restored Bacon Academy bell – which hasn't been rung in over 50 years – kicked off the ceremony with 12 rings.

"It was the third week in May in 1803 that the General Assembly of the state of Connecticut granted a charter to a school named Bacon Academy," said Founder's Day Chairman Dolores Sawchuk.

With Old Bacon Academy in the background, Bacon Academy Principal Matthew Peel said the town gathers every year to cel-

brate the founding of the third oldest school in the United States.

"That's a fact that should not go unrecognized by the town of Colchester and the students and the graduates of Bacon Academy," Peel said.

Members of the Bacon Academy Chamber Choir provided music between remarks from the Board of Trustees and honorees while the Bacon Academy Jazz Combo played for attendees filing in and out of the burial grounds.

Founders Day honoree Jonathan Coulton, a member of the class of 1989, was welcomed with remarks from current Bacon Academy band director Thomas Kessler and retired French and English teacher Mark Lander.

Coulton, a singer and songwriter, attended Yale University upon graduating from Bacon Academy. He became a member of the the Whiffenpoofs, a collegiate a cappella group, before going on to become a computer pro-

grammer and subsequently deciding to follow his passion for music.

He is the in-house musician for the National Public Radio (NPR) quiz show *Ask Me Another*.

Kessler referred to portions of Coulton's NPR bio that state the artist "speaks to the outcast in all of us" and has "internet superstar status."

"This is understated because it's all true – and it's how he makes a living," Kessler said.

Lander spoke of Coulton's popular JoCo cruises, covered by the *NYTimes* earlier this month.

"He can attract up to 2,000 people a year to participate in an annual ship cruise dedicated to his music, his talent and his sense of humor," Lander said.

He recalled a school trip to Quebec during which Coulton serenaded fellow classmates and faculty with "Lunch Lady," an original song about the women who work on the serving line in school cafeterias.

Lander said the song was "probably some-

thing that was appreciated by every one of the students who heard it."

Lander went on to say his research revealed Coulton's music could be described as "alternative, indie, folk, pop, geek and rock."

Those are genres, Landers said through chuckles, that he would "not attempt to explain any further."

"John has found great success in the world of music beyond high school and college and that of course is one reason why we are celebrating him today," Landers said.

Coulton's quirky style was evident in his demeanor at Wednesday's ceremony.

He approached the podium and immediately joked about the laceless sneakers he had been teased about, just minutes earlier, by Board of Trustees member Andrew Norton.

He assured attendees the laceless footwear was a "style thing," and then drew attention to his eyeglasses.

See Founder's Day page 2

**EHHS Guard cont. from Front Page**

“All that an armed school officer can do is lessen the casualties. And frankly, that is not good enough,” Levy said.

Retired U.S. Navy service member Shawn Sharpe said safety upgrades to the buildings are a key part of any safety plan; so is developing policies and procedures to prepare for emergencies.

But those are just part of a “multi-pronged” approach, according to the former anti-terrorism officer at Naval Submarine Base New London.

“The third piece of that is armed security,” Sharpe said. “You can have all the building modifications you want; unless you have someone to be able to react to a scene, those modifications are pointless.”

Safety enhancements approved over the past few years include the completed installation of shatterproof laminate on all exterior, ground floor windows up to nine feet as well as interior classroom locks set to be put in this summer. A plan to put laminate over the inside of large glass areas in the schools was cut from the proposed budget as part of this year’s ongoing budget process.

Resident Audrey Stein said this week that talk of arming a security officer feels like “putting the cart before the horse.”

“It is heartbreaking to me that so many are enthusiastic about the reactive measure of putting a gun in our schools – yet, at the same time, are unsupportive of funding other, safer, preventative measures,” she said.

Stein cited the cuts made to the proposed capital budget by the Town Council that ended up cutting funding for the shatterproof interior window laminate along with video surveillance equipment for the schools. Before the budget proposal even got to the council, she said, Town Manager Michael Maniscalco refused a request from the social services department to pay \$7,488 for a previously grant-funded position working with at-risk youth.

**Law Enforcement Perspective**

East Hampton Police Chief Dennis Woessner spoke in favor of the proposal at Monday’s meeting.

Woessner, who worked in the Glastonbury Police Department for almost 31 years before coming to East Hampton, noted armed security guards have been in place in Glastonbury schools for several years.

Armed security officers are required by state statute to be a retired police officer or state trooper. They must go through full background checks and complete annual training.

“Highly-trained individuals can help you, even if they’re going up against an assault rifle,” Woessner said. “I know Dave Luke; he’s going to protect the kids and the teachers in this school. But he needs the tools to be able to do that.”

Woessner emphasized “time is of the essence” when it comes to responding to an active shooting. He described a typical process that involves multiple steps between hearing gunshots and the eventual rollout of police officers.

“If Dave Luke is in that building and he hears the shots, he’s trained to go direct the threat,” he said. “You’re basically eliminating four steps.”

Members of the school board, most of whom

said they felt conflicted, called for more information about policy implications and available research. They also asked for a better sense about how students feel on the topic.

School administrators said they would work on a plan to seek input from students.

The school board will be taking the resident feedback into consideration when they meet again to discuss what a draft policy might look like, according to Smith. A date for the next meeting had not been scheduled by press time.

**For and Against**

As parents and students lined up for their chance to speak in front of the school board, there were more in favor of the proposal than against it – but there were strong feelings on both sides.

Student Hailey Lefebvre said the idea of an armed security officer doesn’t scare her.

“It actually makes me feel safer, knowing there’s someone already here to protect us if anything were to happen,” Lefebvre said.

A student named Sophia said knowing the security officer is armed would make her “much less comfortable” than she is now.

“Just personally, the idea of having any kind of weapon in my school everyday, I don’t think I would be able to focus as well, or at least not subconsciously think about it every minute,” she said. “Because just the idea of being around any kind of weapon is just a little worrying.”

Parent Shauna Lee Lange, a critic of the proposal, stood up first to express her respect for school officials and law enforcement.

“But I also am a veteran. And I did not serve my country and I did not serve 25 years as a federal civil servant to stand in front of you tonight to have to argue for my child’s right to attend school without guns,” Lange said.

She said there’s no research about an armed officer’s ability to prevent a shooting or about how the presence of the officer’s gun might affect students.

Kim Fentress, the parent of a high school student and the assistant principal in a nearby school district, acknowledged she didn’t know what kind of studies have been done.

“Quite honestly – and this is going to sound really strange coming from me – I don’t care about the statistics out there as to whether or not an ASO made a difference. I think here in East Hampton, if this is something that our superintendent believes is important, that our police believe is important, that we should absolutely fund it,” Fentress said.

Substitute teacher Bob Hein brought up the specter of a school shooting in the neighboring town of Portland back in 1985.

Hein said his son was in sixth grade at Portland Junior High School when an eighth-grader opened fire, killing custodian David Bengston.

According to the recently-published book *Mass Shootings in America: Understanding the Debates, Causes, and Responses*, 13-year-old Floyd Warmlesley was convicted of murder and kidnapping and sentenced to four years in a juvenile correctional facility. He was released for good behavior after three years.

Hein said he’s always wondered if having a security officer in the school back then would have changed the outcome.

“And of course you’ll never really know,” he said.



**Honoree Jonathan Coulton received the Founder’s Day Award from Board of Trustees member Arthur Liverant. Coulton graduated from Bacon Academy in 1989 and went on to become a successful singer and songwriter, landing prominent positions such as the in-house musician for National Public Radio’s *Ask Me Another*.**

**Founders Day cont. from Front Page**

“I also want to say that I forgot these were transition lenses and that they were going to turn into sunglasses the whole time I was outside; so any illusion of coolness or aloofness – both are fake. None of that is true,” he said.

Coulton went on to recall playing guitar in Bacon Academy’s jazz band under the direction of Kessler and “the one time the solo went well,” while playing his acoustic Ovation guitar.

“I played an acoustic guitar, which is not a thing you normally do in jazz band, and it was also an Ovation acoustic guitar, which is not a great one, but you go to war with the army you have,” he said.

Coulton said he was “very happy and proud to be here,” calling the return to Colchester a “surreal experience.”

When Liverant presented the glass Founder’s Day award, Coulton replied with characteristic humor.

“Now the trip is worthwhile because I have this Lucite thing for my desk,” he said.

Celebrating the Past

The legacy of trailblazer Annie Hutchinson Foote was introduced through remarks from a descendant of the Foote family, Susan Ferling Poole, who graduated from Bacon Academy in 1983.

Foote was a member of the class of 1905. She died in 1986 at the age of 98.

Poole referred to Foote as “a superwoman in her own right” and a “pioneer woman who was very much ahead of her time.”

Foote was the first female Hebron resident to receive a bachelor’s degree after graduating

as valedictorian from Bacon Academy.

She also wrote the words to “Baconia,” the alma mater still sung at Bacon Academy today.

Poole revealed Foote “became a Connecticut state legislator and focused much of her time and energy on furthering her favorite cause, which was education.”

She was responsible for writing a book of her hometown titled “In Gilead” and kept consistent record of her life and town, Poole said.

“You could say she was journaling before journaling was hip,” she said.

Bacon Academy students during the ceremony also honored founder Pierpont Bacon by reading excerpts from his will and placing a wreath on his gravesite.

Bacon, who died Dec. 30, 1800, left behind \$35,000 for the founding of what would eventually become Bacon Academy. In 1803, his dream of establishing an institution of learning in Colchester came true as Bacon opened its doors for the first time as a private school.

But local historian and Board of Trustees member Arthur Liverant told the *Rivereast* that Bacon’s wife, Abigail Newton, also deserves credit for the founding of Bacon Academy.

Bacon married Newton in 1751 and owned 800 acres of real estate, including a farm where he kept several slaves.

“[Newton] was there too working the farm; she should be getting fair billing especially in this time of equal rights for women,” Liverant said. “It’s time we start recognizing that Abigail Newton had as much to do with the founding of Bacon Academy as Pierpont Bacon did.”

**Pierpont vs. Pierpoint**

by Allison Lazur

Is it Pierpoint or Pierpont?

A remark, made by Bacon Board of Trustees Chairman Andrew Norton at Wednesday’s Founder’s Day ceremony, resulted in questions about the correct spelling of the name of Bacon Academy’s founder.

“We know how very important it was to start a school in Colchester because, if you look at the grave, Pierpoint Bacon’s name is misspelled,” Norton said.

The crowd responded with laughter.

The tombstone reads Pierpont – not Pierpoint, as it is spelled in the Founder’s Day ceremony program.

The *Rivereast* discovered not everyone agrees on the answer to the Pierpoint vs. Pierpont question.

Bacon Board of Trustees member and local historian Arthur Liverant said Wednesday the founder’s first name is Pierpont.

Founder’s Day Chairman Dolores Sawchuck said the name is Pierpoint, citing a copy of his will that she said shows a signature with the letter “i” positioned “very close” to the letter “n.”

“I feel very strongly that it’s Pierpoint,” she said this week, chuckling over the longstanding disagreement with Liverant.

However, Liverant said he believes the name is Pierpont based on his research of 18th century names.

“Dolores and I have had this running discussion for a long time,” Liverant said. “I do believe it’s ‘pont.’”

It’s not uncommon in historical records to see various spellings of the same person’s name, according to Liverant.

“How many people came through Ellis Island and their name was spelled three different ways?” he said.

# Summer Brings Increased Patrols for Marlborough Police

by Allison Lazur

While the start of summer is just around the corner, the lake's beachgoers will increase and with it cars from out of town, speeders and traffic issues.

But Marlborough's constables are on it with increased patrol times, speed monitors and a newly-established neighborhood watch group.

Any of the several Marlborough social media groups will reveal numerous concerns expressed by residents over speeding or drivers who fail to yield to neighborhood stop signs.

"So typically what we have are the speeding complaints, the stop sign complaints, and then this time of year it starts picking up with parking complaints because of Blish Park and the boat launch," Director of Public Safety Services Jay Kehoe said this week.

Kehoe said the goal is to start enforcement now regarding parking violations at the lake so once the summer is in full swing, people are more aware of the rules.

Blish Memorial Park is open to residents only who must display a resident parking sticker. Those who violate that rule are subject to a \$35 fine for violation of a town ordinance, Kehoe said.

"What people don't understand is if they don't pay [the fine] it turns into an arrest warrant for failure to pay an infraction and you actually get a bond for \$35," he said. "It's crazy."

And a new speed monitor purchased last year has helped crack down on speeding and stop

sign issues, by helping Kehoe decide where and when enforcement efforts should be focused.

He said the "couple thousand dollar" monitor is placed in a new location each week based on verbal complaints from citizens or accidents. The location results in a "definite reduction" in the overall speed of motorists as a result of increased citizen awareness.

But, Kehoe said, as soon the monitor goes away, speeding "starts to creep back up again. That's why I like to play a 'Where's Waldo?' with the sign."

The new battery-run monitor replaces a 20-year-old speed sign, and has even been upgraded with a solar panel installed by Kehoe for "extra life," he said.

Aside from speed, the monitor also accumulates additional data based on time of day, range of time and number of cars.

"The speed monitor most people think is just a flashy sign that tells how fast you're going, but it does so much more because what I can do is use it to analyze traffic pattern behavior for any particular street at any time," Kehoe said.

Through the computer program Stalker Traffic Analyst, Kehoe is able to accumulate data that reveals the maximum, average and 85th percentile speeds.

The 85th percentile speed reflects the speed that 85% of the people are driving, Kehoe said.

"If you use averages, the low and high [speeds] skew it badly," he said.

Kehoe further discussed the traffic issues that occur between Saner and Portland Roads.

"Saner Road is a huge cut-through for people from the western side, whether it be East Hampton or Portland, to get to Route 2," he said. "So we are constantly having issues with speed. There's an unbelievable amount of traffic that comes through those roads and is usually concentrated in the morning and evening."

Route 66 has the most accidents in town simply because of the volume of traffic, Kehoe said, while the less-traveled Ogden Lord Road lends itself to stop sign violations.

"It's not a busy road, but the stop signs on that road are horrendous."

Kehoe said he finds that 50% of infractions issued are to people who live on the road that is being enforced.

"When you do enforcement you end up issuing infractions on a road like Ogden Lord and it's almost everyone who lives there. It's not like it's used as a cut-through for many people," he said.

Other areas of concern in town include accidents in the new Big Y parking lot because of the tight parking spaces and busy atmosphere, he said.

"It's a private-property accident, so unless it's involving something criminal like evading

or something like that, there's nothing we do other than make sure people get the correct information and exchange it," Kehoe said.

While the majority of Marlborough's issues surround traffic, neighborhood efforts, guided by the police department have helped increase overall town safety.

A Roberts Road neighborhood watch group had its first meeting last month, Kehoe said, and approximately 25 citizens attended.

"The point of a neighborhood watch group is to band together a neighborhood to watch out for each other. It's something we assist with, but don't want to run," he said. "To make it work the neighborhood needs to run it."

Kehoe said the neighbors not only get to know each other, but also one another's habits such as who works when and what cars are familiar to the area.

A "block captain" then reports any suspicious issues back to police.

Kehoe said he also offers advice to neighborhood watch members on home security upgrades of varying costs.

The hiring of part-time constables Victor Otero and Christopher Lundberg last October has also allowed for "much better nights and weekend coverage in town which we didn't have for quite a long time," Kehoe said. "People like to see the visibility of the police department because it's definitely a deterrent."

## Marlborough Business Association is No More

by Allison Lazur

The Marlborough Business Association (MBA) has dissolved.

Members of the decades-old organization are now part of the Connecticut River Valley Chamber of Commerce, after making the decision to "partner" with the regional group earlier this month, said Jenny Bergeron, sponsorships officer for the Connecticut River Valley Chamber.

"It's technically not a merger," said Bergeron, who is also the now-former president of the MBA. "We are partnering because of the benefits both in regional and staffing and such."

The Connecticut River Valley Chamber serves both Glastonbury and East Hartford.

Initial discussions over dissolution began about three years ago, MBA's former first vice president, Craig Robinson, said. He said the discussions were a result of funds and staffing running "pretty thin."

"A lot of it was an income situation," he said.

Of the 45 members of the MBA, about 35 voted on whether to dissolve, and the vast majority – 95% – were in favor, Robinson said. He added that the organization's eight directors were unanimously on board with dissolving.

The dissolution "takes stuff out of the hands of all volunteers and puts it in the hands of people who are being paid," he said.

Bergeron said the fact she and now-former MBA secretary Sharon Reiner were also members of the Connecticut River Valley Chamber

board gave Marlborough "some dedicated representation at the board level."

Additionally, "several MBA executive board members have been asked to become ambassadors specific to the Marlborough area," Bergeron said.

Former MBA members will be joining the approximately 630 members that comprise the Connecticut River Valley Chamber, said the group's marketing and communications director, Travis Dahlke.

He attributed the chamber's decision to incorporate Marlborough to the town's "close proximity to Glastonbury" and "great energy" from the recently-opened Big Y Supermarket and Marlborough Tavern.

"The Marlborough Business Association is a little smaller and I think it just kind of made sense to assemble together," Dahlke said.

Dahlke said the Connecticut River Valley Chamber is a result of a "big merger" between the Glastonbury and East Hartford chambers of commerce about three years ago. The chamber will now be tasked with the responsibility of presenting the ever-popular Marlborough Day.

The Marlborough Business Association, according to Robinson, was established over 30 years ago and is known as the usual presenter of the town's annual Marlborough Day, which will be entering its 13th year this August.

This year the tradition will continue under the direction of the Connecticut River Valley Chamber of Commerce.



**After the dissolution of the Marlborough Business Association earlier this month, members are now a part of the Connecticut River Valley Chamber of Commerce. Pictured is the recent inaugural meeting of Marlborough ambassadors and chamber staff.**

Dahlke said the chamber will be "streamlining what already exists," while also bringing in more bands and food trucks.

A new Lightning Bug 5K Road Race is scheduled for Friday, Aug. 23 – the evening before Marlborough Day, he said, with discussion of giving people light-up shoes to keep with the lightning bug theme.

The Connecticut River Valley Chamber is also responsible for the yearly Glastonbury

Apple Harvest Festival, which draws between 18,000 and 23,000 attendees, Dahlke said.

Each of the MBA's 45 members will automatically be a part of the Connecticut River Valley Chamber of Commerce for the first year, Dahlke said. After that, members will have the option to renew by paying the chamber's annual dues, which begin at \$250 for a baseline membership.

# \$12.37M Budget Heads to Referendum in Andover

by Sloan Brewster

With a projected mill rate increase of 1.04 mills – or 3.06% – the \$12.37 million proposed 2019-20 budget is on its way to referendum.

At last Thursday's annual budget meeting, residents voted 55-17 to send the spending package to referendum, which will take place Tuesday, May 21.

The overall budget numbers represent a \$1.19 million, or 10.64%, spending increase, with the largest chunk of the budget being \$4.47 million for the RHAM schools, a \$378,502, or 8.39%, increase from the current year. Still, the mill rate would only go up by 3.06%, as a large chunk of the spending hike would be funded through the unassigned fund balance.

A total of \$976,000 of the \$2.27 million fund balance is proposed to be spent to cover a list of capital needs and long-term planning commitments.

Adrian Mandeville, co-chairman of the Board of Finance, said cutting into the fund balance was the finance board's way to address a "growing fund balance issue" and bring the account down to 10% of the town's budget, which is more in keeping with state recommendations.

The capital items to be funded by the fund balance are \$200,000 for paving and road work; \$39,000 for a work truck; \$250,000 for a multi-use building; \$412,000 for a new fire truck, \$25,000 for repairs to the transfer station and \$20,000 for a new website.

Capital items in the budget that will not be funded from the savings account are \$32,615 for a new plow truck and \$25,000 for a new shed for the transfer station.

During the lengthy meeting, residents made three motions to tweak the budget that ultimately failed.

Debbie Scanlon, who was responsible for two of the failed motions, moved to cut contingency funds from \$50,000 to \$15,000.

At last year's budget meeting, Scanlon made a motion – which failed – to eliminate the contingency line item altogether. Last week, Scanlon said that previous suggestion was a mistake – but that \$50,000 was still too much for the line item.

In past years the town has made do with \$15,000 in the contingency fund, she said.

"I would like to see it go back to that \$15,000," she said. "Cut that contingency line back to the \$15,000 amount that we've been happy with in the past."

Members of the boards of selectmen and finance, however, did not agree.

Selectman Cathleen Desrosiers said the contingency fund gives the town a buffer to cover underfunded projects, and that this year selectmen have used the funds to put \$3,500 toward the Andover Museum roof, a project that came in over budget when it went out to bid several times.

Desrosiers said she would support a motion to cut the contingency fund to \$40,000, but that slashing it to \$15,000 was too drastic.

"We have another \$15,000 coming out of this fund to cover the paving [around the town's soccer field]," she said. "This contingency gives us a little bit of buffer."

At its May 1 meeting, the Board of Selectmen agreed to tap into the funds toward paving the walking path around the soccer field, which also came in over budget when it went to bid.

Board of Finance member Robert England recommended keeping the line item as funded and said the board had "stripped a lot out of

this budget" and left "essentially zero wiggle room."

"It's not like an easy to use slush fund," he said of the contingency fund.

Scanlon argued that taxpayers were being overtaxed.

"We wouldn't have ended up with a \$2 million surplus [in the unassigned fund balance] if we weren't continually being taxed on money that wasn't spent," she said.

By a show of hands, however, voters agreed with officials.

"It's the opinion of the moderator, overwhelmingly [the motion has] been defeated," moderator Wally Barton said.

Among the \$976,000 in capital needs is \$250,000 for the multi-use building fund – money that can be used toward a senior or community center. Scanlon made another motion to take \$150,000 of that amount and use it to offset the tax increase – but she was told by England that anything the finance board had taken from the unassigned fund could not be moved around.

First Selectman Robert Burbank seemed annoyed by this, and asked where the "legal opinion came from that we can't move money."

Mandeville explained that the finance board was specific when it took money from the surplus that it would only be for each particular line item it covered – and said that while those funds could be cut from spending, they could only go straight back from where they came.

"You take the spending away, you're also taking the funding away," he said.

Some audience members took issue with Scanlon's idea to cut money from something for seniors and others said the funds should stay

put.

"I'm not in favor of that [cut]," Eric Anderson, chairman of the Planning & Zoning Commission and also a newly-elected selectman, said. "I think we should have a chunk put aside for a multi-use building."

The money in the multi-use building fund may also be used to convert the third- and fourth-grade wing of Andover Elementary School into a senior center. There is already \$200,000 earmarked for that project.

"If we have \$450,000, we should be able to" convert the wing, Board of Education Chairman Shannon Loudon said.

In the end, Scanlon's motion to reduce the \$150,000 was defeated.

Georgette Conrad made a motion to remove \$5,000 the finance board had set aside in case it needs to consult with the town attorney. Conrad said she did not agree that the finance board should be able to consult with the attorney, and that that was for selectmen to do.

"I just think you can only have one set of bosses," she said.

"What if it's the person who's leading the town that's doing something wrong?" Mandeville asked.

Conrad said she still did not concur, but other residents did.

"Any elected office should have access to the town attorney, period," resident Dennis Williams said. "If you want it, you budget it for it."

That motion was also defeated.

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The sole motion that was not defeated was to move the budget to referendum. Voting will take place from 6 a.m.-8 p.m. Tuesday, May 21, in the community room at Town Hall.

## Recount Keeps Maguire as Andover First Selectman

by Sloan Brewster

A recount of ballots from the May 6 municipal election has confirmed Jeff Maguire's victory in the first selectman's race, but swapped out one of the winners of the Board of Finance seats – and overall showed lower vote numbers than first reported.

In the town clerk's office midday this past Monday, Julie Victoria, head moderator, who oversaw the recount, finalized the new list of tallies, which included numbers from a second recount – a hand count – for the finance board.

"The recount went well," Town Clerk Carol Lee said. "There are new numbers."

On Election Day last Monday, May 6, Democrat Maguire collected 264 votes to Republican Adrian Mandeville's 249 – a mere 15-vote margin of victory that, as per state statute, mandated a recount.

The new numbers give Maguire a 13-point lead with 256 votes versus Mandeville's 243.

"We're not 100% sure why they changed but according to the secretary of the state's office, stray marks on the ballot could be interpreted by the memory card [as votes]," Victoria said.

A memory card is what was put in the voting machine to count the ballots, Victoria explained. Of the two machines in use on Election Day, one machine had picked up the stray marks and one did not.

Maguire, who is currently vice first select-

man, is the only member of the Board of Selectmen who sought re-election. The current first selectman, Republican Robert Burbank, did not run again, nor did Republicans Jay Lindy and Cathleen Desrosiers and Democrat Julia Haverl.

The board, which had been Republican-controlled, will have a 3-2 Democratic majority when the new board members take their seats in July.

Maguire said he wants to work with the newly-elected members and set some goals for the future.

"Basically I want to get together with all of the members that were elected to the Board of Selectmen and come up with a plan for what we can realistically get accomplished and develop a plan to accomplish those goals," he said.

Maguire also discussed outgoing Town Administrator Joseph Higgins. Higgins handed in his resignation last week, with his last day in office set for June 6. Maguire said the position is being advertised on the town's website, but that he would like to see it advertised in other places as well.

"I would like to see the job advertised as soon as possible to get a replacement so that we don't take two to three months from his exit to replace him," Maguire said.

Maguire said he has a meeting scheduled with "people including Joe" to determine what tasks will need to be completed after he leaves. Maguire added that he would rather see the incoming Board of Selectmen choose a replacement for Higgins, as those will be the people working with the administrator in the future.

But, Maguire added, "I'm not the first selectman just yet."

Maguire said he would like to see either an interim town administrator hired, to fill in while the board looks for someone permanent, or for himself and other town officials to "pinch hit and figure it out."

He said he didn't think it would be a problem for people to fill in for the 30-40 days he anticipates it will take to find a permanent replacement for Higgins.

Burbank said the position will also be going up on Connecticut Conference of Municipalities' website in the next day or so.

At its next meeting – on June 5 – the board will appoint a Review Committee to go through the applications that come in, which are due by June 1, Burbank said.

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Due to the tightness of last week's election – just three votes separated three candidates – the Board of Finance race also recounted Monday.

It was actually recounted twice, first by machine and then by hand.

The recount changed the victors.

When all was said and done Monday, Republicans Linda Fish, Curtis Dowling and Diane Choquette, and Democrat Louise Goodwin, all wound up with seats on the finance board. All four lost several votes each from the numbers initially reported on Election Day.

In the first recount, done by machine, Fish collected 339 votes, Dowling won 310 and Choquette took 277. Goodwin, meanwhile, took 274, placing her in a tie with fellow Democrat Dennis Williams.

This necessitated a second recount, done by hand. In this one, Goodwin again finished in a tie, but this time with Choquette. They each had 274 votes to Williams' 273.

Since Goodwin and Choquette both were among the top four vote-getters, the tie did not trigger a third recount, Victoria said.

"We don't have to break this tie," she said.

The initial Election Day count gave seats to Fish, Dowling, Williams and Goodwin.

The new finance board members will join Democrat Robert England and Republicans David Hewett and Jeffrey Murray, whose seats on the staggered board will expire in 2021.

# \$46.71M Budget Proposal to Referendum Next Week in East Hampton

by Elizabeth Regan

East Hampton voters will head to the polls Tuesday to weigh in on a \$46.71 million budget proposal forged through compromise and political wrangling.

The proposed 2019-20 spending plan is an increase of \$1.26 million, or 2.77%, over the current budget.

The budget features a projected mill rate of 33.54, an increase of 1.33 mills – or 4.13% — over the current rate.

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 budget has evolved over the past several months as spending plans from the town manager and Board of Education were revised by the Board and Finance and then the Town Council.

The council last month cut \$442,560 from the spending plan recommended by the Board of Finance. Negotiations between Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith and Council Chairman Melissa Engel, which occurred via text message during the council's budget deliberations, resulted in a decision by the council to let the school board decide how to itemize a \$300,000 cut to the capital plan for education.

The council's budget proposal, which also slashed one of two half-year police officer positions originally added by the finance board, was criticized by the council's Democrat minority. They said the fair thing to do would have been to hold off on a vote until they could get more information about the impact of the cuts – prompting Engel to advise them “nobody said politics is fair.”

In a previous compromise between Smith and the finance board, it was decided the general government side of the budget would absorb a possible \$151,185 increase related to a proposal

from Gov. Ned Lamont for municipalities to pay a portion of teacher retirement costs. In exchange, the Board of Education would reduce its proposed budget by \$323,232.

It remains unclear if and when the pension cost-sharing plan will come to fruition.

The \$15.45 million general government spending plan – 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 \$31.25 million, a 2.00% increase over the current budget.

## Education

The proposed education budget includes several positions not in the current budget: a sixth grade world language teacher, a middle school literacy specialist, a district autism specialist and both a psychologist and special education teacher at Memorial School.

A Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) coordinator for grades 4-8 was eliminated during the budget process after it was initially proposed by Smith and endorsed by the school board.

The proposed budget retains several elements of a district-wide focus on the sciences evident in proposed advanced placement classes in physics, computer science and forensics at the high school, a new robotics team at the middle school, and a technology-centered “makerspace” at Center School.

According to Smith, there are no new teachers being hired despite the added positions. That's because of a supplemental allocation late last year that restored several teachers in the current budget as well as a “realignment” of existing teachers.

The school board budget proposal allocates \$22,000 to bring popular high school choral teacher Ehren Brown to full-time.

It also adds a Memorial School psychologist to support the special education program, which is designed to provide a therapeutic environment and help to avoid costly outplacements.

Smith said a psychologist was hired mid-year in the current budget at \$82,525 and will now need to be carried through into the next school year.

One of the largest budget drivers for the increase in an estimated 6% health insurance hike, according to Smith. The district in 2017 switched to the Connecticut Partnership Plan, which allows municipal employees to become part of the same plan offered to state employees.

Smith this week called the proposed 2.00% increase a “fair” number.

“We haven't asked for any additional staff this year, but I feel like we've made some nice moves at low cost to increase AP and STEM offerings throughout the buildings,” he said.

## Town Operations, Debt and Capital

The general government budget proposal includes a new, half-year police officer and building maintainer that cost an additional \$90,809 in the proposed budget. There's also an increase of about 5 hours per week in the fire marshal's office and a pay increase for hourly library staff.

A health insurance increase of \$161,750 reflects benefits for the two new hires as well as an overall 8% hike in premiums.

The capital plan now comes in at \$946,500 after the council's \$300,000 reduction to the education section. While line item details will have to be approved by the school board after the referendum, budget documents produced by the school district show the cut will likely result in the elimination of the middle school “1-to-1” Chromebook program, video surveillance upgrades to all schools, the addition of shatterproof window laminate to the inside of large glass areas in the schools, and the replacement of worn floor tiles and carpeting.

The Chromebook program provides a computer tablet for each student to use throughout the course of each school day. While the middle school students would no longer have access to a dedicated tablet, the 1-to-1 program would

continue in the high school.

Revenue numbers in the general government budget proposal show an estimated decrease of \$278,483 in funding from the state in the coming fiscal year. The figures are based on funding recommendations made by Lamont in February. Most of the reduction shows up in the Education Cost Sharing grant, which is a way for the state to help municipalities bridge the gap between the cost of education and local taxpayers' ability to pay for it.

The latest state budget figures coming out of the state Capitol indicate the town might end up with more education aid than Lamont initially proposed.

The \$263,925 reduction to East Hampton's education grant factored into the local budget is now looking like it might end up being a \$108,622 reduction, based on the budget proposed by the legislature's Appropriations Committee.

The state budget ultimately must be approved by both chambers of the General Assembly and signed into law by the governor.

That means the town could end up with a surplus of \$155,303 if the Appropriation Committee's proposal goes through when the legislative session ends in June, according to Town Manager Michael Maniscalco.

Maniscalco urged residents to come out to the polls on Tuesday.

“It's probably one of the most important votes they can make in terms of affecting their community and having a say in how their community is run,” he said. “It's important that our residents get out there and exercise their responsibility to vote.”

\* \* \*

The budget referendum will be held Tuesday, May 21, from 6 a.m.-8 p.m. at East Hampton Middle School. It will include two advisory questions asking if the general government and education budgets are too high, too low or just right.

## Consultant Chosen to Aid East Hampton Town Manager Search

by Elizabeth Regan

The executive recruitment consultant chosen to lure a new town manager to East Hampton has positioned the small town of 13,000 residents as a well-situated, charming community in search of someone with a bachelor's degree and at least five years' experience.

Current Town Manager Michael Maniscalco resigned in March to become South Windsor's chief executive officer. His last day in East Hampton is July 15.

The Town Council in April appointed itself the executive search committee in a 6-0 vote. Council Chairman Melissa Engel said members subsequently hired an executive search firm for \$19,000 after discussing several possibilities.

Joellen Cademartori, of GovHR USA, devised the town manager job description with input from members of the council and town hall department heads, according to Engel.

The job was posted on the GovHR website late last week.

Cademartori did not return a call for comment.

A timeline of the recruitment process shows

the firm aims to have a new town manager in place by the beginning of August.

Starting salary for the position is \$135,000 to \$145,000. Maniscalco has been making \$138,000 in East Hampton since receiving a 7.14 percent raise just over one year ago.

Engel told the *Rivereast* this week that the higher salary range was an effort by the council to attract more experienced candidates.

Maniscalco was the youngest town manager in the state when he was hired at the age of 30.

Engel said he's good at his job now, but he didn't start out that way. That's why it “makes more sense to offer a little more money” to get someone who needs less on-the-job training, she said.

Requirements in the job description include a bachelor's degree in political science, business administration or a related field. Five years' experience as a manager or assistant manager in local government is “highly desired,” according to the posting.

Engel said this week members of the Town Council did not feel it was necessary to indi-

cate a preference for a higher level of education.

“I think the majority felt that experience was more important than the master's degree,” she said.

Maniscalco has a graduate degree in public administration from the University of South Dakota.

There are currently several municipalities in the state looking for town managers. Candidates for the position in Tolland must have a master's degree in public administration or a related field as well as at least five years' experience, while the Bloomfield town manager job posting described the same qualifications as “preferred.”

The East Hampton town manager job specifications also require strong finance and human resources skills. “Highly desirable” qualifications include economic development skills, labor relations experience and a knowledge of water utilities.

Engel said the council was eager to get the job description published in order to beat out

several looming vacancies across the state.

“The pool of town managers is only so big,” she said. “Time is of the essence.”

Maniscalco said other towns that have current or imminent town manager job openings include Clinton, Bolton and Berlin. The town administrator in Andover also resigned recently.

Engel said councilors have not yet decided on an interim town manager to cover the time between Maniscalco's departure and his replacement's start date. She expects that decision to be made in June.

The search timeline estimates a two-week gap if all goes according to plan.

Interim town managers the last time around – when former Town Manager Jeffery O'Keefe resigned amid controversy related to the firing of Police Chief Matthew Reimondo – were former Public Works Director Robert Drewry, the late former Southington Town Manager John Weichsel, former probate judge Anne McKinney and town Finance Director Jeff Jylkka.

# New Little Free Library Installed at AHM

by Sloan Brewster

If you're in the mood for some good reading – or simply have an extra book you want to get rid of – check out the Little Free Library in front of AHM Youth and Family Services on Pendleton Drive in Hebron.

Little Free Library, according to [littlefreelibrary.org](http://littlefreelibrary.org), “is a nonprofit organization that inspires a love of reading, builds community, and sparks creativity by fostering neighborhood book exchanges around the world.”

The small book-bearing structures, which come with the philosophy of “take a book, share a book,” are spots where folks can take or leave books at no cost.

The website offers maps to find the book giveaway boxes.

The one in front of AHM opened April 17. Installing one was the brainchild of Heather Holbrook, a teacher at KinderRHAMa, the preschool located at RHAM High School. AHM Executive Director Michelle Hamilton said Holbrook approached her with the idea last fall, “and I said, ‘I love it!’ and we found John.”

That would be John Kimball, a volunteer with AHM's Lanterns Mentoring Program, a school-based mentoring program. Kimball, who built the sign at the entranceway to the St. Peter's Preserve AHM Trail, said he's become known as one of the AHM volunteers “who can build stuff.” He received an email last fall from Joel Rosenberg, AHM director of fund development, asking for someone to volunteer to construct the Little Free Library, so he stepped up.

Having traversed the streets of Boston while visiting his son, Kimball was already familiar with the idea of Little Free Libraries, which are commonplace in that city.

“It's such a cool thing,” he said. “Guys with rudimentary skills with a hammer can build them.”

[Littlefreelibrary.org](http://littlefreelibrary.org) offers plans for building the units, but Kimball wanted to build one that was less plain so he designed one himself, getting ideas from the small libraries he saw in Boston.

One difference in his was that he made it “a little more sturdy,” with a two-legged support rather than the typical one-legged supports he had seen.

“Walking around Boston, anytime I saw one

I took a picture,” he said, explaining that he didn't just take a shot of what the structure looked like, but of how it was put together underneath and the shingles on top.

AHM employees and volunteers donated some of the supplies, including the shingles, which came from Holbrook and were leftovers from putting a new roof on her house, and the Plexiglas and tar paper, which were donations from volunteer Peter Yorio.

Kimball, in the meantime, dug through scraps of wood he had laying around to find pieces for the structure.

“I just have a reputation of never wanting to throw away a single board,” he said.

He also bought items, such as hinges, for the project.

Kimball worked on the project on a part time basis throughout the winter.

“It's kind of a labor of love, I like to putter around in my workshop,” he said. “Like most projects, it took more time than I thought. Part of that was because I was winging it as I found scrap material.”

Once the library was completed and installed, Kimball helped stock it with books from his wife – a former teacher.

Hamilton said the finished product was “perfect” and “eye-catching.”

“Oh my gosh, we are so thrilled and happy how it came together,” she said. “The way he has put that together and painted it in vibrant colors, it actually matches our doors.”

Kimball said he had the yellow paint he used on hand as it was left over from a project.

Hamilton also gave Kimball kudos for successfully protecting the books inside from the rain that has plagued the state for the past couple of weeks.

“It's waterproof,” she said. “I've come in and checked it out [when it's raining] and it's dry as a bone.”

In addition to books from Kimball, the library has books donated by a member of AHM's Board of Directors, and Hamilton said folks have stopped by and either taken or left a book – or both. She also noted that on a recent warm day a staff member was outside reading with her child near the structure.

“There are books for adults; there are books for teens; there are books for kids,” Hamilton



**John Kimball leans on the Little Free Library he built and – with the help of other volunteers – recently installed in front of AHM Youth and Family Services. The small book-bearing structure comes with the philosophy of “take a book, share a book.”**

said, adding that the structure could use a larger supply of teen books.

The Little Free Library ties in with AHM's goal to build literacy, Hamilton said.

Rebecca Murray, AHM Resource Center Coordinator, will act as the “librarian” of the Little Free Library, making sure it is well-stocked and has appropriate books, Hamilton said.

Kimball is planning to build a Little Free Library for outside the KinderRHAMa classroom. He said he would start it after the end of summer, as he said he doesn't like to be in his basement workshop over the summer.

According to a press release from AHM, the Little Free Library is part of a nationwide initiative that was started 10 years ago by founder Todd Bol. Bol created the first Little Free Library book exchange and set it up in his front

yard. When he saw how his neighbors embraced it, he recognized its enormous potential to bring people together around the love of reading.

According to [littlefreelibrary.org](http://littlefreelibrary.org), today, Friday May 17, is Little Free Library's tenth birthday and in celebration, the nonprofit has invited booklovers to participate in *The Big Share* all weekend by stopping by a Little Free Library, sharing a book and taking a photo of the visit. Share the photo with #LFL10 on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. Those who prefer not to share their photo can click the participation button on the big share counter. Folks who participate in the event will be entered to win a \$20 e-gift card to Little Free Library's online store.

Participants can also get free 10th anniversary bookmarks and sticker designs.

## Portland Motorcyclist Seriously Injured in Crash

by Elizabeth Regan

A local woman was arrested and charged with DUI after a Main Street crash that seriously injured a Portland motorcyclist Wednesday evening.

Portland Police Officer Paul Liseo said Raymond Stebbins Jr., 28, of Portland, sustained life-threatening injuries in the crash. He was transported by ambulance to Hartford Hospital.

A hospital spokesman said Stebbins was in critical condition Thursday morning.

Donna Downing, 64, of Portland, was pulling out of a private driveway on Main Street

around 6:31 p.m. near the Marlborough Street intersection when the collision occurred, according to Liseo.

Stebbins was traveling south on Main Street, he said.

Liseo emphasized Downing's DUI charge “doesn't necessarily mean she's at fault” for the crash. He said the investigation is ongoing.

Portland Fire Chief Robert Shea said paramedics requested a Life Star helicopter but decided to do a rapid transport on the ground when the flight was delayed.

## East Hampton Police News

5/2: After an investigation into a three-car motor vehicle accident at the intersection of Route 66 and Spice Hill Drive, Gabriel Jerjies, 18, of 3 Curry Ln., was issued a ticket for Failure to obey a stop sign.

5/8: Taylor Bernier, 22, of 171 Injun Hollow Rd., East Haddam, was arrested and charged with DUI, traveling unreasonably fast, possession of less than half an ounce of marijuana and driving under the influence, police said.

Also, from April 29-May 5, officers responded to 12 medical calls, two motor vehicle crashes and four alarms, and made 29 traffic stops.

## Colchester Police News

5/11: State Police said Scott Troisi, 54, of 99 Kirsten Ct., East Haven, was arrested and charged with first-degree failure to appear and second-degree failure to appear for two separate cases.

5/11: State Police said Jeremiah D. Jeffries, 31, of 390 Garden St., Apt. 3, Hartford, was arrested and charged with DUI and failure to drive in proper lane.

## Marlborough Police News

5/10: State Police said Nicholas Martino, 58, of 51 Mountain Ave., New London, was arrested and charged with operating an unregistered motor vehicle, operating a motor vehicle without minimum insurance, reckless driving greater than 85 mph, DUI and operating a motor vehicle without a license.

# Portland Budget Trimmed After Referendum Rejection

by Elizabeth Regan

Portland's proposed budget has failed at referendum for the first time in more than a decade.

The \$35.05 million spending plan for 2019-20 went down by a vote of 316-283 at Monday's referendum.

First Selectman Susan Bransfield said Wednesday the proposed budget hasn't failed since 2007. It was also rejected in 2005.

But a clause in town charter ensures this year's budget process will not extend past May. The town's guiding document specifies only one more referendum can be held before selectman are obligated to approve a budget by May 31.

Taxpayers were looking at a projected mill rate increase of 0.58 mills, or 1.71%, over the current mill rate when they voted down the budget.

They'll be looking at no tax increase at all when they go back to the polls on May 29.

The Board of Selectmen on Wednesday unanimously approved a revised budget with no projected increase to the mill rate at a joint meeting with the Board of Education.

The new \$34.58 million budget proposal reduces the general government budget – including operations, debt and capital — by \$254,255. It cuts the proposed budget for education by \$217,000.

While the total budget proposal represents a 1.59% increase over the current budget – with a 0.30% increase in general government and a 2.4% uptick in education – Bransfield said the town is set to bring in more revenue in the coming year than it receives currently. That means the mill rate doesn't have to go up because increased revenue will offset increased spending.

Bransfield attributed the solid revenue projections in part to a slight increase in education aid from the state, combined with a modest uptick in the Grand List and investment income.

Bransfield chalked up the rare failure of the budget to concern from residents about uncertainty at the local, state and federal level.

"What they're concerned about is they want a break from raising taxes," she said. "People feel very taxed right now."

But at least some people at the standing-room-only meeting – which was dominated by the parents of school-aged children – expressed willingness to pay more taxes in order to properly fund the schools.

Bransfield noted only 599 of 6,134 eligible

voters came out to the polls or submitted an absentee ballot for Monday's referendum.

She told those in the room to vote – and to tell their friends and neighbors to vote, too.

"We have to exercise democracy or it's going to fall apart," she said.

Several selectmen said they don't want to get to the point where another failed referendum forces them to approve an even lower budget by May 31 with no ability to send it back to voters.

"I can tell you, that's a very distasteful thing to do," Bransfield said.

Becky Burke, a parent in the school system, stood up during the public comment period to say she was "ashamed" she didn't vote at the referendum. She didn't even know it was happening, she said.

"I failed. We failed. We're not that busy to not take five minutes to go and vote," she said.

Several parents were in tears as they described the crucial role of school in their children's lives and their fears that services would be diminished.

Superintendent of Schools Philip O'Reilly said the school board will have to look at numerous possibilities to figure out how to itemize more than \$200,000 in cuts.

He assured the room that no current teachers will lose their jobs – but he said some positions vacated by teachers who retired or moved on may not be filled.

He said open positions by the end of the school year will include a third and fourth grade teacher, math and English teachers at the high school, and a custodian.

Board members will also have to reconsider the recently-added football cooperative with Cromwell and the annual musical production as they decide "how to do the most with the least negative impact on children," O'Reilly said.

The school board last year submitted a flat budget that cut one teaching position each in kindergarten, first grade, third grade and fourth grade. A special education teaching position, a full-time custodian and a full-time library assistant position were eliminated through attrition.

But O'Reilly was optimistic the district could move forward in the face of the cuts.

"This will work," he said. "We will be fine."

He cited a pledge by Bransfield that the se-

lectmen will be receptive to the school board's requests for additional appropriations as needs arise throughout the year; he also pointed to the Gildersleeve Wheeler Education Fund.

The fund has about \$120,000 between this school year and the next to give out for initiatives that benefit Portland children, according to treasurer Mary Dickerson. She said the fund does not cover expenses that should be the responsibility of government, such as salaries and building projects.

O'Reilly after the meeting said the effect on the school system will be "catastrophic" if the budget fails again.

The general government side of the budget includes numerous cuts throughout the departments. Most of them amount to less than a few thousand dollars each. One of the larger changes comes from updated municipal liability figures that save the town \$13,000 compared to original projections.

The \$797,064 capital plan represents a cut of \$227,500. The change strips the Board of Education of almost \$100,000 in capital funding but leaves enough to complete WiFi upgrades at the secondary schools. Other cuts include one \$44,000 planned police cruiser replacement, \$25,000 in fire department communication equipment, \$30,000 in municipal parking lot paving materials, and \$10,000 in Air Line Trail improvements. Bransfield said the trail improvements should be covered by funds left over from a state grant.

Bransfield told the *Rivereast* after the meeting that the budget already includes a \$300,000 cushion from the town's undesignated fund balance – or rainy day fund. She said the idea of using more money from the fund to offset the mill rate in the place of at least some of the budget cuts was considered but rejected.

The comfortable fund balance has helped the town secure an AA+ bond rating that translates to favorable interest rates on bonding projects. It's also an important source of funding in case of emergencies, according to Bransfield.

## Taxpayer Dissatisfaction

Some signs of the proposed budget's demise began showing up on a Facebook group made up of Portland residents in the days, weeks and months leading up to the referendum. One of the most vocal opponents on social media has been Zoning Board of Appeals Chairman Rose Aletta, who has had her own zoning dispute

with a Marlborough Street neighbor.

Aletta told the *Rivereast* this week she didn't support the proposed budget because it doesn't include the full-time town planner she has been calling for. She said the position would address the sentiment among residents that not enough is being done to encourage new business in town and to reduce the burden on taxpayers.

She said a full-time planner could work toward modernizing land use regulations in town and making sure they are administered fairly.

"I believed that was a reasonable request out of a \$35 million budget," she said.

Aletta attributed the budget's failure at least in part to fears that municipalities could be taking a big financial hit in coming years as the state looks to shift the responsibility for teachers' pension payments to cities and towns.

The cost-sharing arrangement, championed by Gov. Ned Lamont, could result in a bill of \$59,327 for Portland's share of teachers' pension costs in the upcoming budget if the governor gets his way – a figure that's likely to grow in subsequent years.

There's also a feeling among some voters that they're not reaping any benefits from ever increasing taxes, according to Aletta.

"The people I talk to also feel frustrated with the 'business as usual' attitude at the expense of the taxpayer and will vote no until changes are made so the [Board of Selectmen] stops coming back year after year with no plan to ease the tax burden," she said.

Town Clerk Ryan Curley this week noted attendance on Monday was up slightly compared to last year, when the budget passed by 54 votes.

"What's interesting is that this budget failed by 33 votes with an increase of 43 votes from last year," he said.

He suggested the increase in voting – and the failure of the budget – could be related to conversations on social media.

Bransfield urged residents at the Board of Selectmen meeting to come to the town hall or speak with selectmen about any budget concerns, instead of getting information from Facebook.

"All of that negativity that's out there is really not true," she said.

The second and final budget referendum will be held Wednesday, May 29, from 6 a.m.-8 p.m. at Portland Middle School.

## Obituaries

### East Hampton

#### Eugene J. Snow

Eugene "Gene" J. Snow, 80, of East Hampton, beloved husband for 54 years of Evelyn (Sazinski) Snow, passed away peacefully at home under hospice care surrounded by his loving family Thursday, May 9. Born in Manchester Aug. 29, 1938, he was the son of the late Charles Eugene and Blanche (Barber) Snow.



He flew before he drove, becoming the youngest pilot in Connecticut at the age of 15. Gene was a graduate of Manchester High School, earned his aeronautical engineering degree at South Carolina State University and his accounting degree at San Jose State University. He served proudly in the U.S. Navy, just like his father before him and now his two grandsons.

Gene was a commercial pilot (FTL) who flew 747s and stretch DC8s, and he was a captain of the Civil Air Patrol. Gene was, in his words, "a jack of all trades but master of none." He enjoyed doing projects with his brother-in-law and grandchildren which "will only take a few minutes." He was bigger than life, always humble and suffered a life of pain from heart disease but never complained. He wanted more time with his grandchildren, so he chose to have an LVAD put in, which allowed him to enjoy four more years with them. In that time, he enjoyed going to the Sportsman Club for ham and turkey shoots and their annual fishing derby with his grandchildren. He is finally at peace and pain-free and will "put out his hand to touch the face of God."

In addition to his devoted wife Evelyn, Gene will be forever missed by his two daughters, Elaine Snow of East Hampton and Elizabeth Gayhart and her husband Robert of North Windham; and his three adored grandchildren, who lovingly called him "Dampa," Brandon C. Goff, USN and his significant other Morgan Slossberg of Washington, Nathan D. Goff, USN of East Hampton and Madison E. Goff of East Hampton, who will be graduating high school in June and attending CCSU in the fall. Gene is also survived by his brother-in-law and friend, Richard J. Sazinski of Glastonbury; sister-in-law, Ann E. Cassidy of New Jersey; many dear nieces and nephews and their families; his best friends, Robert R., Robert H. and Ron R., as well as his canine companion, Yoshie.

In addition to his parents, Gene was predeceased by his two sisters, Blanche Pudlo and Virginia Armstrong.

Funeral services and burial with military honors in Mt. St. Benedict Cemetery, Bloomfield already took place.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Gene's memory may be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105 or the Wounded Warrior Project, P.O. Box 758517, Topeka, KS 66675.

The D'Esopo Funeral Chapel, Wethersfield assisted the family with arrangements. To share a memory of Gene with his family, visit [desopo.funeralchapel.com](http://desopo.funeralchapel.com).

### Portland

#### Douglas John Bransfield

The life of Douglas John "The Judge" Bransfield came to a tragic end the morning of Monday, May 6, in Middletown. He was only 53, born April 6, 1966, to Douglas Thomas Bransfield and Rita (Manzoli) Bransfield of Portland.

Doug was a compassionate soul, always willing to roll up his sleeves and help a friend in need. He loved history, Holmesian mysteries, and strived to be a family man. A proud pressman, he struggled to find a new place in the world as his trade was eroded by time.

Doug is survived by his sons, Justin Douglas and his wife Elizabeth, Daniel Joseph and his partner Jessica; his lifelong partner and wife Marsha; his mother Rita; sisters, Michelle and Laura; brothers Michael and Daniel; and numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, aunts and uncles.

Douglas will be sorely missed by his many loved ones both friend and family alike. He long suffered silently with depression. The loss of his life is a cosmic injustice the proportion of which we only wish he could have understood or that we could have prevented. While he is gone, we will remember him fondly and will cherish the time we had with him.

Friends called at Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, on Monday, May 13. Services were held that evening. Burial was private.

### Andover

#### Donald L. Ayrton Sr.

Donald L. Ayrton Sr. of Andover passed away Tuesday, May 7, after a brief illness. He was born Oct. 27, 1932, to Halstead B. Ayrton Sr. and Dorothy Pimer Ayrton in New London.

He spent his youth in Waterford on Niantic River Road. He graduated from the Bulkeley School in 1951 and enlisted in the Navy as an airplane mechanic, serving on two carriers: USS Palau and USS Gilbert Islands.

Upon returning home after serving his country in the military, he began working for the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation with the surveying department, working his way up to District Supervisor, supervising maintainers. He retired in 1987. In addition to his state job, he also worked as a journeyman with an independent land surveyor during the 1960s to become a licensed land surveyor, running his own business in Waterford, and later in Canterbury.

After moving to Canterbury, he was a member of many town boards and in 1972 founded the Canterbury Lions Club, holding the first meetings in the living room of the family home. The Canterbury Lions Club is still active today - an achievement of which he was so very proud.

Don's greatest joy was spending time with his very large extended family. At each family gathering, he could be heard asking when the next gathering would be. In their younger days, he and his parents, siblings, children, nieces and nephews spent many hours gathered around a piano or organ singing songs of the 1940s, Christmas carols and everything in between. Music was very important to him and he enjoyed it immensely.

After his retirement from the State of Connecticut, he joined the Manchester Symphony Chorus as a first bass baritone. His beautiful singing voice afforded him many opportunities to sing solos with the symphony. Many friends and family visited him at the time of his last illness, and each and every visitor brought him so much happiness. During his final weeks he was absolutely thrilled when his nieces and nephew gathered around his bed singing those old songs of his youth as he sang along with them wearing a great big smile.

After his retirement, he was able to pursue his great passion of raising and showing his pug dogs. Together with his wife, they bred champion show dogs under the name Cado Pugs and traveled throughout the country to attend shows, making numerous friends along the way. Competing was not his only objective in this endeavor. He truly enjoyed mentoring newcomers to the sport, lending valuable advice to all who wanted it. He will certainly be greatly missed in his sport.

In addition to his parents he was predeceased by all of his siblings: Arlene Kilpatrick, Halstead B. Ayrton Jr., Robert J. Ayrton and Judy Dole.

He is survived by his spouse, Carol G. Ayrton of Andover, and his children, Donald L. (Lee) Ayrton Jr. of Pawtucket, R.I., Darlene L. Ayrton of Canterbury, and Peter H. Ayrton of East Falmouth, Mass.; grandchildren, Sabrina L. Ayrton of Bethlehem, N.H., Cameron H. Ayrton of East Falmouth, Mass., and Michael Collins of Bloomington, Minn., and one great-grandchild, Olivia Collins of Bloomington, Minn. He is also survived by sisters-in-law, Esther Ayrton and Tina Ayrton, and by his brother-in-law Richard Aguiar.

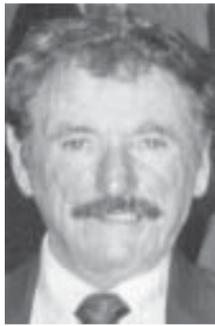
Calling hours were held at Potter Funeral Home, 456 Jackson St., Willimantic, on Tuesday, May 14. The funeral service was Wednesday, May 15, at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 220 Valley St., Willimantic, followed by burial at Dean Cemetery, Cemetery Road, Canterbury.



### East Hampton

#### Roderick Joseph Meara

Roderick Joseph Meara, 83, of East Hampton, formerly of West Hartford, died Monday, May 13, at the home of his son David. Born April 15, 1936, in Hartford, he was the son of the late John and Eileen (Devaney) Meara.



Roderick proudly served his country in the U.S. Army, and was a retired firefighter for the City of Hartford, where he worked for over 30 years. He was a member of the Knights of Columbus, the Emerald Society and the Niantic Rotary Club. Rod enjoyed dabbling in real estate and cars. He also enjoyed going to the beach and his dogs.

Roderick is survived by his loving son David Meara of Waterford, and many nieces and nephews, great nieces and nephews and cousins.

He was predeceased by his wife, Mary Ellen (Rogers) Meara; his brother, John Meara; and two sisters, Eileen Arnini and Mary Metherell.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, May 18, at 11 a.m., in Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton. Burial will follow in Mt. St. Benedict Cemetery on Cottage Grove Road, Bloomfield. Friends may call at the funeral home on Saturday from 9:30 a.m. until the time of the service at 11 a.m.

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

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

### Marlborough

#### Barbara C. Reed

Barbara C. Reed, 80, of Marlborough, wife of her loving husband James Reed Sr., passed away Wednesday, April 24. She was the daughter of late Charles and Margaret (Lepke) Csaszar. Barbara was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and raised in South Windsor. She enjoyed being a supporter of sports, especially the UConn women's basketball.

She also enjoyed traveling, arts and crafts, and she was a member of the former Marlborough Community Arts. She also loved her Australian shepherd dogs, the current one named Dusty. Barbara was a graduate of Ellsworth Memorial High School and Becker College. In addition to her husband, Jim, Barbara leaves a son, James Reed Jr. of Marlborough; a daughter, Karen Reed of Arlington, Va.; a sister, Kathleen Hockla of Ashford; a brother, Charles Csaszar and wife Karen of Nokomis, Fla.; sisters-in-law, Joanne Brown and husband John of O'Fallon, Mo.; Mildred Lucas and husband James of Colorado Springs, Colo.; and many nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by sister-in-law, Mary Szepanski, and her husband Robert.

Burial will be private, at the convenience of the family. Calling hours are from 4-6 p.m. today, May 17, at St. Thomas More Hall in the basement of St. John Fisher Roman Catholic Church, 30 Jones Hollow Rd., Marlborough.

The family requests that no flowers be sent, but instead donations be made in Barbara's memory to Middlesex Health Hospice Program at Middlesex Health Office of Philanthropy, 28 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457 or the Roy B. Pettengill Ambulance Association, P.O. Box 308, Marlborough, CT 06447.

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

*From the Editor's Desk*

# Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Unfortunately, early voting – which I championed in this space not too long ago – won't be coming to Connecticut anytime soon.

The state Senate voted last week in favor of a constitutional amendment that would create an early voting system – but there won't enough 'yes' votes to ensure the question could get on the 2020 November ballot.

According to *The CT Mirror*, the Senate endorsed the proposed amendment 23-13 – falling four votes short of the three-quarters margin that was needed to place it on the 2020 ballot.

Now the best that can be hoped for is being on the November 2022 ballot – and that's assuming it passes the 2021 legislative session.

Why didn't it get enough votes? Well, blame Republicans. According to the *Mirror*, it was a straight party-line vote – with the exception of Sen. Tony Hwang, R-Fairfield, who voted in favor of the measure – and while Democrats control the Senate, it's not by a high enough margin to get a three-quarters vote unless more Republicans play ball.

As the *Mirror* reported, Republicans have expressed opposition to the proposal – worrying about what they felt was a lack of detail in how it would work, and worried about fraud.

I think those were unwarranted fears – considering a whopping 39 of the 50 states allow early voting, and the country hasn't collapsed.

The *Mirror* reported state Republicans have also argued early voting wouldn't give much of a boost to civic engagement, as they feel voters already have sufficient access to the polls with absentee ballots and same-day registration.

But, as I've explained in the past, there are conditions you have to meet in order to obtain an absentee ballot – it's not like anyone can just walk into Town Hall off the street and get one. As for same-day registration: I think it's a great idea, and am glad the state has enacted it, but all you have to do is look at the local TV news on Election Day to see what a freaking nightmare it's been the last couple of years in some cities. If there was a way to vote that would let people avoid all that – well, why wouldn't it increase voter turnout?

Again: Connecticut is one of just 11 states

that don't allow early voting. And one of only three that actually forbids it in the state constitution. I know we're the Land of Steady Habits, but we need to get with the times, get with the vast majority of the states in this country, and allow for early voting.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: The more people that can participate in a democracy, the better off the democracy is. Early voting is one of the best ways I can see to maximize participation in elections. It's a shame there weren't enough votes to get the measure on the 2020 ballot. I can only hope now that there will be enough for 2022.

\* \* \*

Kudos to those members of the Boston Red Sox – including manager Alex Cora – who opted not to go to the White House last week to meet President Trump in celebration of last fall's World Series victory.

I've been pretty frank here the last couple of years about my disdain for Trump; I really, really don't like the guy. But I'm not sure I'd have the guts to skip out on a visit to the White House to stand on my principles. It's the White House; the highest office in the land. There's zero guarantee any of those Red Sox will have that chance again. I'd be awfully tempted to just grit my teeth and go.

I can't fault any of the Red Sox who opted not to do that, though. It takes courage to stand up for what you believe in. Cora and those players who skipped were angry with the president, very angry with him, and decided to stand with their principles and not shake his hand and smile and pretend everything's okay.

I'm not sure I'd be that brave, so I salute them for that.

I do hope this doesn't lead to any division in the clubhouse. As has been noted, the players that went to the White House were all white, while Cora and the ones that stayed behind were people of color. Be that as it may, the players themselves have said there are no hard feelings, and in fact after leaving Washington the team went on a nice little winning streak – something Trump gleefully boasted about in a tweet over the weekend. I want to say the tweet was tongue in cheek – but let's be honest, it's awfully tough to tell with him sometimes.

\* \* \*

See you next week.