

RIVEREAST

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Lucy, Meet Gordy... Lucy Schatz (right) and her father Mike got to meet Gordy the dog, who was visiting the green last Sunday with his owner America Williams for the eighth annual Spring Bark for the Park in Colchester. See story on page 22.

Middle School Sports On Chopping Block?

by Elizabeth Regan

The Portland Board of Education this week considered the elimination of the middle school sports program as one way to help address budget woes in the upcoming fiscal year.

The school board is weighing its options in the face of a \$217,000 cut to the proposed 2019-20 budget that was ordered by the Board of Selectmen after the spending plan failed at its first referendum last week (see related story on page 29).

Board of Education Chairman Meg Scata emphasized that a list of potential cuts identified by Superintendent of Schools Philip O'Reilly is not a "proposal" or a "recommendation." Instead, she called it a "starting point" for a conversation.

Middle school sports is the largest single cut under consideration. The program currently serves 207 students for \$60,180, according to data provided by the school board.

O'Reilly said he worked with his administrative team to find "the right combination of cuts that would have the least impact on students."

Reservations about getting rid of middle school sports were raised by school board member Tim Lavoy, who said his "jaw kind of dropped" when he saw the cut on the list of possibilities.

"It does impact kids [in] their growth and development. It's a pipeline to high school sports and creating that cadre of students who are going to move forward," he said.

He asked O'Reilly to provide more alternatives for discussion at their next meeting on June 4.

While O'Reilly said the only other cuts that could be made would result in teacher layoffs, some on the school board and some in the audience had different ideas.

Parent Stephanie Tatro objected to middle school athletes bearing the brunt of the cuts.

"That cut alone is 27.7 percent of the \$217,000 [reduction]. That one line is a quarter of what they're asking for," Tatro said.

She asked officials to consider a pay-to-play framework instead of getting rid of the middle school program altogether.

"There are lots of districts, not just in Connecticut but around the country, that have a pay-to-play program," Tatro said.

Based on a total of 572 athletes at both the middle and high school, she said charging \$150 per student for each of the three sports seasons would "more than cover" the \$60,000 program.

Parent Lauren Christensen said sports help children academically, socially, emotionally and physically.

"It's not just about the movement of bodies on the field," she said. "It's so much more than that."

Athletic Director Christopher Serra said after the meeting that he recommended the elimination of the middle school sports program instead of discontinuing the high school football

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Andover Swimmer Inducted into Hall of Fame

by Sloan Brewster

Marcella MacDonald, an Andover resident known for multiple swims across the English Channel, has been inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame.

MacDonald, 55, flew out to Fort Lauderdale, Fla., for last weekend's induction ceremony and returned home Tuesday night. She said the "fantastic" three-day event honored "anybody who's involved with water." In all, 11 people were inducted – a mix that included swimmers, divers, coaches and even a water polo player.

MacDonald, who was honored for Open Water Swimming, is best known for her multiple swims across the English Channel. She is currently planning her 17th swim for this summer. It would also mark the 25th anniversary of her first channel swim.

MacDonald said her motto is "Dream, prepare, succeed."

"That's my message to the kids," she said. Last September, MacDonald swam the channel – and had hopes of crossing to Belgium. However, after about 11 hours of swimming, the seas became choppy in the 12th hour and she was thrown around and pulled a muscle.

"I said 'okay, I know I'm not going to be able to stay in here another 15 hours,'" she said.

Instead, she swam for three more hours, in order to finish another channel swim. She came ashore in France.

"I was swimming with one arm," she said. "With every stroke I just felt like someone was kicking me in my rib."

MacDonald said that was not the first time she swam with one arm.

She hasn't done a long swim since then, as she has been recuperating in preparation for number 17.

In 2015, MacDonald swam Scotland's Loch Ness and was the oldest person to do it and the first American, she said. It is a swim she has no plans to replicate any time soon, or ever.

"It was a monster to swim," she said.

Loch Ness was 51 degrees when she swam it. To get herself through, she repeatedly told herself that it was a one-time deal.

"I just had to tell myself that I won't go back there again," she said. "I was so glad that I made it because if I hadn't made it I would have had to give it another try."

Swimming in cold water is a mental challenge and requires focus, according to MacDonald.

Last June, she completed the 13-mile Lake Washington Mercer Island Swim in Seattle,

which she called "a training swim."

"I try not to do too much if I have a big swim because I don't want to get hurt doing a training swim," she said.

MacDonald, who works as a podiatrist in Manchester, said she also avoids doing land sports because she doesn't want to get hurt, though she said she "used to be a pretty good athlete." When she was in Fort Lauderdale, she declined a ride on a scooter for the same reason.

"I'm better off just staying in the water," she said.

MacDonald said she was "shocked" when she learned she was going to be inducted into the Hall of Fame and added that the induction was special.

"I'm very honored," she said. "I'm truly honored and just so blessed."

While there, she met other well-known swimmers being inducted into the Hall of Fame, including Jason Lezak, who, according to his bio, helped Michael Phelps win an unprecedented 8 gold medals.

According to Lezak's write-up on Swimmingworld.com, he was also an eight-time US Olympic medalist, two-time U.S. Olympic team captain, and a four-time Olym-

pian.

MacDonald also met Olga Sedakova, whom she described as a beautiful synchronized swimmer from Russia.

She also had the opportunity to meet the family of Alfred Nakache, whom she called "a pioneer swimmer."

According to his write-up, Nakache passed away in 1983, when "in a sad irony of fate," he had a heart attack and drowned during his daily swim in the port of Cerberus.

Born in 1915 in Constantine, French Algeria, Nakache, according to the write-up, was a French Olympic swimmer and water polo player, who competed in the Olympic Games after surviving being in a concentration camp in Auschwitz during the Holocaust.

"He was arrested and went to a concentration camp in 1936," MacDonald said. "His wife and child were killed and he survived. They rescued him at 75 pounds."

MacDonald said the two-day event was "overwhelming"

"Everyone that is there has fantastic stories," she said.

This isn't the first Hall of Fame MacDonald has been inducted into due to her swimming

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cooperative recently forged with Cromwell. He cited the school's commitment to Cromwell and said the football program has lured back Portland students who had been attending schools outside of the district for the sports opportunities.

According to figures provided by the district, there are currently 14 football players from Portland in the cooperative.

Serra said the availability of recreational and travel programs at the middle school level also factored into the equation.

"We've weighed everything," he said.

According to Serra, there are options for instituting the cuts that could buy the district time to save the middle school program – such as putting fall sports into the budget and waiting to see if funds become available for winter and spring sports as the year progresses.

He also pointed to a lease agreement being negotiated between the district and the Oak Hill School for elementary-aged students with multiple disabilities. Officials have said the special education school is looking to rent space in Brownstone Intermediate School.

First Selectman Susan Bransfield said Tuesday the rental agreement could yield approximately \$40,000 to \$60,000 per year, though the lease is still being negotiated.

O'Reilly told school board members during the meeting that earmarking any lease proceeds for the middle school sports program will be "the first priority" for the district.

Serra also cited the pay-to-play framework as another funding possibility for the middle school program.

"There are other things that can happen to allow the experiences for athletes to continue," Serra said.

Other possibilities to address the selectmen's \$217,000 cut included eliminating a non-teaching position in the technology department and dropping fifth grade from the 1-to-1 Chromebook program that currently gives each student in grades 5-12 a dedicated computer tablet to use throughout the school year.

O'Reilly said the school board can seek support from the local nonprofit Gildersleeve Wheeler Education Fund to mitigate a \$25,747 reduction to instructional supplies and textbooks. The fund was established in the late 1800s to support public education in town.

But the clear message from a couple dozen parents at the meeting was gratitude that the proposed cuts did not affect any current teaching positions. They were there to object to large kindergarten class sizes projected in the coming year, which they hoped can be augmented by an additional teacher or paraeducators.

The parents all agreed classes of roughly 20 kids in each of five classrooms are too difficult for a teacher to manage alone.

O'Reilly on Wednesday confirmed there are 97 students enrolled for the upcoming school year, but said the numbers are subject to change.

"Just this week, we had two different kindergarten parents inform us that they had moved or intended to move this summer. Sometimes, we get a summer influx of registrations. Sometimes, we also have parents of 4-year-olds with summer or fall birthdays decide to wait for a year before sending their child to kindergarten. It is a dynamic and often quickly-changing situation," he said.

The Board of Education will continue its deliberations on Tuesday, June 4, at 7 p.m. in the Portland High School library.

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Every year, typically in November, I'll climb up onto my soapbox and preach the value of voting. It's important for everyone who's able to do so to come to the polls in their town and cast their ballot. You never can tell when your vote is going to mean a difference.

Well, it's May, but I'm trucking this lecture out because the recent votes in Andover and Portland have only shown how right I am.

In Andover, one vote meant the difference between somebody joining the Board of Finance and someone staying home. Seriously – one vote. A single vote cost Kevin Williams a seat on the finance board. I ask any one of the hundreds and hundreds of Andover residents who opted to stay home on Election Day: could that vote have been yours?

Turnout in Andover was 24 percent – which is nice, but it still means three quarters of the town's registered voters stayed home. I know I argued just recently for early voting, theorizing that it would only help the number of people who participated on Election Day. I still very much believe this is true – but in Andover, I don't know if even early voting would've pushed that turnout rate to, say, 50 percent or so. And yes, while part of the problem lies in Andover's refusal to join the 21st century and hold its elections in November like everyone else, a much larger problem is voter apathy. Voters, it seems, just don't care.

Well I'll say it again: One vote. One vote was all it took for Williams to not obtain a seat on the Board of Finance. Still want to be apathetic? Still want to think your vote doesn't count? Think again.

Meanwhile, in Portland last week, the town's proposed 2019-20 budget went to referendum and it lost by a mere 33 votes. That's it. That's a neighborhood.

Turnout was even more pathetic in Portland than it was in Andover. All told,

599 of the town's 6,134 eligible voters cast ballots in last Monday's referendum. That's not even 10 percent.

The budget failure had some immediate, and very real, consequences. The Board of Selectmen opted to reduce the budget by nearly half a million dollars – removing \$254,255 from general government spending and \$217,000 from the education budget.

And while Portland Superintendent of Schools Philip O'Reilly said the school system would be "fine" even with the additional cuts, parents were extremely upset, some openly crying at last week's Board of Selectmen meeting, where the hefty cut was levied.

There is absolutely no excuse for turnout to not even reach double-digits. There was plenty of notice. Reporter Elizabeth Regan wrote several stories about the budget. Town officials sent letters in imploring people to vote. And still, they couldn't be bothered.

As a result, 33 votes were all that was needed to send the budget to defeat – and back to the Board of Selectmen for some cutting.

Portland residents better head to the polls next week when the second referendum is held. As per town charter, that's it for budget votes; if it fails again selectmen will be required to set the budget themselves – and you can be sure they'll cut it further.

While I personally think it's silly the town charter allows for only two referendums before selectmen must approve a budget themselves, those are the conditions that prevail.

So in Portland, just like in Andover, people need to get off their duffs and head to the polls when it's election or referendum time and spend the five minutes – if that – it takes to cast a ballot.

Your votes matter – and you should act accordingly.



Marcella MacDonald stands beside a collage of pictures of her at the International Swimming Hall of Fame 2019 Induction Class and Annual Ceremony. MacDonald, who was inducted for Open Water Swimming, is best known for multiple swims across the English Channel.

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prohess. She is a member of the Manchester Hall of Fame as well – and also has a pool in

that town named in her honor. Born and raised in Manchester, she moved to Andover in 1995.

Hebron Voters to Weigh In on School Pipe Replacement Plan

by Sloan Brewster

The Boards of Selectmen and Finance want voters to weigh in on a \$1.22 million plan to replace lead-infested pipes at Hebron Elementary School.

At a joint meeting last Thursday, the boards agreed to hold a special town meeting on May 30 to present the project and have residents vote on it.

The plan is to dip into the town's unassigned fund balance or rainy day fund for the \$1.22 million – approximately 54% of which would be reimbursed through a grant from the state Department of Administrative Services.

The percentages of the reimbursement could go down if the state does not approve the grant by June 30, Malcolm Leichter, chairman of the Hebron Elementary School Drinking Water Remediation Building Committee and also a member of the Board of Finance, said.

Using the rainy day fund to pay for the project means it won't raise taxes, officials said.

If the \$1.22 million is taken from the rainy day fund, there will still be \$4.92 million in the account, Finance Director Elaine Griffin said. Currently, there is \$6.34 million in the fund, which represents 17.59% of the town's budget.

"If it costs the full \$1.2 million, the unassigned fund balance would still remain at 13.2%," she said. "Since it was kind of desired to utilize some of these funds, this is a good opportunity to do so."

Griffin explained why it is actually beneficial to Hebron for the town to use some of the fund balance.

First, she said, if the account is "very healthy" the state could reduce grants to the town. She

also said using it could reduce some of the burden on taxpayers, which is something the Board of Selectmen has said it would like to do.

That said, she added that the healthier the fund balance the higher the town's credit rating will be. The town currently has the highest possible rating, AAA.

"As the town will be looking to bond a future sewer upgrade project possibly in the fall, the fund balance needs to remain stable and with a higher percentage for a better borrowing interest rate," Griffin said.

According to Leichter, more than \$300,000 of the total is for contingencies – or to cover unexpected scenarios that arise during projects.

"We're very young in this project," he said. "We don't know what they're going to find."

The town's portion, after state aid and assuming the final price is as high as estimated, would be approximately \$460,000, Leichter said.

"But we do need to approve the total amount and we want to approve the total amount, just in case something of a disaster comes in," he said.

At the meeting, Silver & Petrucelli engineers Ken Eldridge and Scott Michelac gave a presentation on the project, which will include replacing pipes, valves and fixtures.

"All the valves will be replaced to make sure that we're minimizing the exposure of lead as much as we can," Leichter said in a phone call Monday. "The goal is to get as low a number of lead [as possible], from an engineering perspective."

The project will also create closed loop hot and cold water systems.

Hebron Elementary School is "a small building with several additions with water systems that were independent of themselves but linked in some way," Eldridge said. "We're trying to consolidate."

Water will flow continually, keeping cold water cold and hot water hot, and preventing such things as algae from settling, Leichter said.

The source of the lead, which was first discovered in November 2016, is believed to be solder used in piping in the wing of the school that was built in 1963, Superintendent of Schools Timothy Van Tassel has said. There was no lead problem in pipes in the wings added in 1988 and 2000, as lead solder wasn't used either year.

While solder no longer contains lead, it will not be used in the project, Leichter said.

The plan also involves putting in a new steel soffit, getting two new hot water heaters and new drinking fountains.

"Don't choke on the price," Leichter warned finance board members and selectmen, before saying the estimated total cost was \$1.22 million.

The estimate assumes the entire system would be constructed with copper, but at the meeting, the engineers recommended only using copper directly off the mechanical units – and from there, putting in plastic pipes.

Using plastic pipes will knock the price from about \$13 per foot to about \$1, Michelac told the board.

"[Plastic is] easier to snake down walls, to get it from the ceiling to the fixtures," Leichter said. "It's just easier to use."

When lead was detected, the Board of Education was put on an Administrative Order with the state Department of Public Health. Officials gave the department monthly reports regarding an injector system installed to treat the water with zinc orthophosphate, a corrosion inhibitor, and monitored the water by taking regular samples.

Ultimately, DPH removed the board from the order and shifted it to an agreement to continue monitoring the water. When the lead continued to be detected, the district combined the corrosion inhibitor with a flushing protocol.

In November of last year, Van Tassel and the education board reported to selectmen that measures the district had taken to mitigate lead had not proven successful and that the time may have come to consider replacing the affected pipes.

Assuming the expense is approved by local voters at next week's town meeting and the state gives the go-ahead on the project, it will go to bid in the fall. Some of the work will be completed during the school's spring break next year, with the rest being done over the summer.

Leichter said the goal is to submit the application for the state grant by June 3, in the hopes it would be approved before the June 30 deadline. With that in mind, he said he wants people to come to the meeting – held Thursday, May 30, at 7 p.m., in the Town Hall community room – and vote in favor of the project.

Portland Memorial Day Ceremony to Honor WWII

by Elizabeth Regan

Memorial Day this year is a solemn prelude to the 75th anniversary of two of the deadliest battles in American military history: The Normandy Invasion and the Battle of the Bulge.

The holiday will be marked in Portland with the annual parade along Main Street and a ceremony at Veterans Memorial Park.

American Legion Ormont Post 69 Commander Reg Farrington, a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel, said the commemoration of D-Day – which falls slightly more than a week after Memorial Day – exemplifies the significance of the nation's sacrifice.

Farrington will be delivering the keynote address during the ceremony.

The allied invasion of Normandy is recognized as the turning point in World War II. More than 160,000 allied troops from the United States, Great Britain and Canada converged on a 50-mile stretch of French coastline on June 6, 1944, to lay the groundwork for the destruction of the Nazi forces in Europe.

Farrington said he will only speak long enough to direct everyone to the American Battle Monuments Commission website, abmc.gov. The site is a glimpse at the 14 cemeteries that serve as the final resting places for many of the 405,399 Americans killed during WWII.

There are 9,380 Americans buried in the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial in Colleville-Sur-Mer, France, according to the commission.

"That's the meaning of Memorial Day. Not some old man standing up there, doing a 20-minute speech," Farrington said.

The Portland parade will also feature a nod to the Battle of the Bulge in the form of honorary parade marshal Paris Kollias.

Kollias, 94, served in the U.S. Army from

June 27, 1944 to Dec. 7, 1945 as part the 135th engineer combat battalion.

Kollias fought the winter elements and the German offensive in what is recognized on his discharge papers as the Ardennes campaign, which began roughly six months after Allied forces stormed the beaches of Normandy.

It became popularly known as the Battle of the Bulge because of the depiction on maps of the Allied front line bulging inward under pressure from the Germans.

More than 19,000 Americans died in the freezing, desolate forest spanning Belgium, France and Luxembourg.

In addition to the Battle of the Bulge, Kollias' discharge papers show he fought in the Northern France, Rhineland and Central Europe campaigns.

Kollias this week recalled clearing mines and liberating a concentration camp during his bloody tour of duty.

He was wounded by shrapnel that wasn't removed for two months, he told the *Rivereast* earlier.

A past commander of the Disabled American Veterans chapter in Middletown, Kollias has participated in many parades. He said he feels good about serving as the honorary marshal this year in honor of fallen troops.

"There's a lot of people to be remembered," he said.

* * *

Parade organizer Sara Sterry Rutter said this year's parade will also be dedicated to the memory of local trumpeter Jeffrey Kelsey, who died in October at the age of 59. Kelsey played Taps at the parade for the past 25 years and at veterans' funerals for the past 42 years, according to Rutter.

She said Kelsey's daughter, MacKenzie – who has played alongside her father since high



This year's Memorial Day Parade will be led by honorary parade marshal and World War II veteran Paris Kollias, 94. The U.S. Army combat engineer fought in numerous campaigns in the European theater, including the Battle of the Bulge. He is seen here in this photo from Memorial Day 2016.

school – will keep the family tradition going this Memorial Day.

"She hopes to carry on the legacy – hopefully as long, if not longer, than he did," Rutter said.

"Singing Trooper" Dan Clark will perform patriotic songs in front of Brownstone Intermediate School for the fourth year in a row as the parade lines up a mile-and-a-half up the road

at the intersection with Victoria Road. Rutter said Clark will start his set at approximately 1:30 p.m. and will continue until the American Legion Color Guard reaches the school.

Clark has appeared at several thousand federal, state, local and military events, according to a biography on his website. Among them have been numerous funerals for fallen troopers, firefighters and military members.

East Hampton Voters Shoot Down Belltown Budgets

by Elizabeth Regan

East Hampton voters this week shot down a \$46.71 million spending plan that would have raised the mill rate by roughly 4.13% in 2019-20.

The \$15.45 million town government budget proposal went down by 83 votes. The \$31.25 million education budget proposal failed by 19 votes.

Republican Registrar of Voters Lori Wilcox said the education vote was not close enough to trigger a recount. State statute specifies a recount is warranted when a referendum fails by less than 0.5% of the total votes.

That equates to about 8 votes in this case.

The 1,680 ballots cast included eight absentee ballots, according to Wilcox. That means 19.80% of all registered voters participated in the referendum.

The turnout is roughly equivalent to the 20.8 percent of voters who came out to last year's first referendum in May, when voters rejected only the general government budget question. The move spawned three more referendums before the contentious season came to an end.

Advisory questions showed a majority of voters thought both budget proposals were too high.

The rejected general government spending plan – composed of town operations, debt and capital projects – would have been an increase of \$645,471, or 4.36%, over the current budget.

The rejected education plan represented an increase of \$614,025, or 2.00%, over the current budget.

Based on figures provided by the town, the budget would have resulted in a mill rate of 32.21 mills. The 1.33 mill increase would have equated to an extra \$266 in the upcoming fiscal year for a property owner with a house assessed at \$200,000.

The Board of Finance was set to meet Thursday after press time to discuss and possibly vote on the revised budget recommendation to send back to the council for approval on its way to a second referendum.

Town Council Chairman Melissa Engel said Wednesday she was surprised the finance board was moving “this quickly” to discuss a new budget.

“If they’ve got something to send over to us, we’ll certainly be talking about it on Tuesday,” she said of the upcoming council meeting.

She said the failure of both budgets, combined with the advisory question results, made it “very clear” that people thought the budget was too high.

“So the Board of Finance has some cutting to do,” she said.

Engel also pointed to the “How Your Tax Dollars are Spent” mailing, which went to all

East Hampton taxpayers in March at the behest of the finance board.

The document was personalized for every taxpayer, showing them how much of their current tax bill goes toward different town departments.

But critics said the mailer was misleading because it included education spending in one large lump sum while separating general government spending into eight different categories.

The finance board has said the goal in distributing the information at the start of the budget planning cycle was to educate taxpayers and to rouse their interest in the budget season. The board plans to include the informational text as part of tax bills going forward.

Engel described the mailing as “an eye-opener for many, many people.”

Finance board Chairman Richard Brown said Wednesday he asked members to come to Thursday's meeting with a list of suggested cuts.

“I think it'd be easy enough to come up with the numbers we need to come up with,” he said.

When asked how much money he thinks needs to be cut, he said that's for the finance board as a whole to decide.

Brown said he scheduled the meeting two days after the failed referendum in an effort to prevent the budget season from “dragging out” as long as it did last year.

“The tone of the budget discussion this year was very favorable and I'd like to see that continue. I don't want to see it progress to the nastiness of the name-calling that it degenerated into last year,” he said.

The 2018-19 education budget was approved at the first referendum last May, but the town government budget didn't get voter approval until October.

The protracted battle culminated with a compromise by Town Manager Michael Maniscalco and Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith to bring back some of the teaching positions that were cut by the finance board before the spending plan even went to referendum.

Last year, education advocates grudgingly approved the school budget – which included the reduction of eight teaching positions – at the first referendum out of fear it would be cut further if they voted down the proposal. However, the voting bloc subsequently mobilized to reinstate some of the cuts. The basis of their argument rested on an unexpected allocation of \$715,415 in Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funds from the state that they said should be applied to the education budget.

That spirit of compromise carried through this year when the finance board agreed the town 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 agreed to reduce its \$31.58 million budget by \$323,232.

Brown said the sooner a budget can be finalized, the better.

“Let's do what needs to be done and get a budget and move on,” he said.

Smith, the superintendent, acknowledged the majority of voters thought the budget was too high.

“When the vote is so clear, [and] both budgets go down, it's obvious how people feel,” he said.

He said concerns about property taxes are combining with uncertainty at the state level on issues such as tolls, teachers' pension costs, and grants to offset local education spending.

“We did our best, I thought, to come in with a very reasonable budget, considering the multitude of unknown factors. Now I respect the work of the Board of Finance and Town Council to come up with a reasonable figure to put forth for referendum two,” he said.

He reiterated several staffing cuts were made during last year's budget process.

“I am concerned about the implications about losing any more staff,” he said.

He said it's too soon to tell what kind of cuts the school board will have to consider without knowing what the finance board will do.

The finance board is authorized by state statute to make changes to the proposed education budget's bottom line, but must leave it up to the school board to decide how the changes are itemized.

Smith said he hopes the finance board will consider how close the budget vote was on the education question.

“I've made my case with the original budget, and now that the voters have spoken, it's in

the finance board's hands,” he said.

Tania Sones, a former school board member and the parent of children in the school system, said Thursday that she believes the advisory questions asking if each budget was too high, too low or just right were “misleading.”

She noted 849 out of 1,679 voted to reject the education budget, while 906 described it as “too high.”

“What happened to those 57 votes? It appears that voters answered “too high” but voted ‘yes’ anyways. We also need to take into account others voted ‘no’ because the budget was too low,” Sones said.

She said the advisory questions should not remain on the ballot if there's no follow-up analysis.

“Since we are unable to review the ballots one by one, we cannot accurately determine voters' intentions,” she said.

A letter issued to the town by the Office of the Secretary of the State in August stated ballots should “not be made available for public inspection.”

The letter was a response to an ongoing complaint lodged with the state Freedom of Information Commission by the *Rivereast* related to the 2017 municipal election.

The Secretary of the State maintains the right to vote privately and secretly is “of the utmost importance to the integrity of Connecticut's elections” as a way to ensure voters are not victimized by fraud or intimidation.

“It is the opinion of the secretary that the right to secret voting is undermined if, after voting, a voter's individual ballot is routinely subjected to public inspection and scrutiny,” the letter said.

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The Board of Finance meeting was set to be held Thursday after press time. The Town Council will meet Tuesday, May 28 at 6:30 p.m. in the Town Hall.

Referendum Results

Voters at Tuesday's budget referendum rejected the 2019-20 budget proposal at the first referendum. Here are the results:

Shall the town government annual budget for the fiscal year 2019-20, in the amount of \$15,451,679, as recommended by the Town Council be approved?

Yes - 800 No - 883

Shall the Board of Education annual budget for the fiscal year 2019-20, in the amount of \$31,253,693, as recommended by the Town Council be approved?

Yes - 830 No - 849

Is the general government budget of \$15,451,679:

Too high - 825 Too low - 322 Just right - 491

Is the Board of Education budget of \$31,253,693:

Too high - 906 Too low - 418 Just right - 324

Portland Budget Heads Back to Referendum, Sans Tax Increase

by Elizabeth Regan

The proposed 2019-20 annual budget is going to referendum again, this time with no tax increase – and Portland officials are emphasizing the importance of supporting the \$34.58 million spending plan.

The referendum will be held Wednesday, May 29, at Portland Middle School. It includes almost half a million dollars in cuts to town and school operations that were ordered unanimously by the Board of Selectmen after the initial budget proposal failed last week.

Selectmen cut \$254,255 from the general government spending plan and \$217,000 from the proposed education budget.

It's up to the Board of Education to decide where to make specific reductions to the schools' spending plan.

Even as the school board on Tuesday weighed a host of options for itemizing the selectmen's reduction, members worried it could get much worse.

If the budget fails again at referendum and further cuts are ordered, Superintendent of Schools Philip O'Reilly said the district will look at teacher layoffs.

One of the most glaring possibilities already on the table to help reduce the schools' operating budget is the elimination of all middle

school sports. The program currently serves 207 students at a cost of \$60,180, according to data provided by the school board. (A related story appears on the cover of this week's *Rivereast*.)

Board of Education Vice Chairman Meg Scata emphasized that potential budget reductions submitted for board consideration by O'Reilly are only “a starting point” for deliberations, which will continue at their June 4 meeting. But she also warned fellow members and a couple dozen parents in the audience that the cuts will be much deeper if the budget fails on Wednesday.

“And that would be disastrous,” Scata said.

A clause in town charter ensures this year's budget process will not drag out beyond this month. The town's guiding document specifies selectmen are obligated to approve a budget by May 31. That means selectmen – not voters – have the final say in approving a budget if the spending plan goes down on Wednesday.

First Selectman Susan Bransfield this week urged voters to come out to the polls.

“I firmly believe people in our town should set the budget. That's something that's in our charter, and there's two opportunities for it,” she said.

Only 9.77 percent of eligible voters turned

out for the initial referendum this month.

“I'm hopeful voters will agree with the selectmen that the budget we put forward with a zero mill rate increase meets their satisfaction,” she said.

Bransfield said taxes will not go up based on the revised budget because increased revenue – from slight bumps in state funding, investment income and the Grand List – will offset the increased spending in order to keep the mill rate flat.

The revised \$34.58 million budget proposal is an increase of \$822,885, or 2.42%, over the current year.

The proposed general government spending plan comes in at \$13.40 million - an increase of \$40,934, or 0.31%, over the current budget.

The spending plan for education comprises \$21.18 million of the total budget - an increase of \$499,951, or 2.42%, over the current budget.

The education budget has been whittled down from the 3.78% increase initially proposed by the Board of Education in January. The new 2.42% increase reflects a \$65,000 cut requested by First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield in March and the \$217,000 reduction made by selectmen last week.

Selectmen last week also cut \$254,255 from the general government side of the town operations budget. Reductions affect numerous town departments, with most of the cuts amounting 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 capital plan within the general government budget proposal comes in at \$797,064, reflecting a cut of \$227,500 made by selectmen last week. The change strips the Board of Education of almost \$100,000 in capital funding but leaves enough to complete Wi-Fi upgrades at the secondary schools. The selectmen also decided to replace only one police cruiser instead of the planned two – resulting in a \$44,000 reduction. Other cuts include \$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.

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

Program Puts Colchester Ahead of the Curve

by Allison Lazur

Bacon Academy is ahead of the curve – and school counselor Ron Sefchik has helped them get there.

The Colchester school system touted in a recent press release that it offers one of the largest dual enrollment programs in New England.

By currently partnering with four post-secondary institutions to offer over 50 dual enrollment classes, students are able to leave Bacon with, on average, a minimum of six college credits, Sefchik said. In some cases, students are also able to manage a better dorm room if credits accumulated at Bacon equate to that of a college upperclassman.

“It’s not everybody yet, but there’s going to come a time where almost every kid is going to have some [college] credit,” he said.

In order for a dual enrollment class to be offered, Bacon Academy faculty must be approved by the college or university the school has partnered with as an adjunct professor.

While the teachers are not paid any additional money from the high school or college, “perks” include the option to teach a summer or evening course at the college that has approved them.

“Every one of our departments has at least one dual enrollment class at this point,” Sefchik said.

Sefchik said approval typically includes the faculty member sending a resume and cover letter to the college reflecting course work and degrees obtained, as well as possibly some sort of professional development depending on the college.

The curriculum offered at the high school for any given class must also be closely aligned with a college’s curriculum and be approved by the partnering college, in order to be considered a dual enrollment class.

“We don’t write curriculum just for the college. I think that speaks well to the quality of the teaching here in Colchester,” Sefchik said.

Bacon Academy offers courses ranging from Physics and Introduction to Geography to Environmental Science and Architectural Engineering.

Currently the school has partnerships with Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU), Gateway Community College, University of Connecticut and Three Rivers Community College (TRCC).

When a student successfully completes a dual enrollment course, there is actually a transcript at the college for that student, Sefchik said.

“They’re essentially non-degree students,” he said.

Depending on the college, successful completion is measured by scoring between a 73 and 75 as a final class grade, while Bacon’s passing numerical grade is a 60.

Students can also obtain credit from more than one post-secondary institution for taking one class, Sefchik said.

For example, an Environmental Science class offered at Bacon Academy equates to ECSU’s Ecology & the Environment class – earning the student a total of 3 college credits.

That same Environmental Science class is also equivalent to UConn’s Environmental Science class – a total of 3 college credits.

The Dual Enrollment program differs from the commonly-offered Advanced Placement (AP) courses where students could only earn college credits through scoring a 3, 4 or 5 – depending on the score required by the college the student would attend – on an Advanced Placement exam.

“An AP class is a curriculum that the College Board has and the teachers teach it, but then they have to pass a test,” Sefchik said.

In addition to college credits, the dual enrollment program is also saving families money.

While the numbers differ between colleges, a three-credit course might be offered at \$25 a credit to high school families while that same course taken at a post-secondary institution as an incoming undergraduate student might cost around \$2,000, Sefchik said.

Data collected by Sefchik and Bacon office professional Marlene Blumberger reveals college savings have totaled about \$2.68 million from 2014 to 2019.

Blumberger assists Sefchik with the program’s clerical and administrative duties.

Sefchik, who began working at Bacon Academy in 2004, “inherited a small fledging program in 2006” that offered courses at two post-secondary schools – TRCC and UConn.

At that time, he says he realized this sort of program is “the wave of the future.”

“I figured that we could either design how this works so that other people fall in line and other schools eventually follow what we do or



School counselor Ron Sefchik (right) pictured with Bacon Academy Principal Matthew Peel, has been honored by the Connecticut School Counselor Association, the College Board and the New England Association for College Admission Counseling for his work in the development of the high school’s Dual Enrollment program, which offers over 50 courses where students can obtain college credits.

we could follow the rest of the herd,” he said.

From there, Sefchik contacted dual enrollment coordinators at any post-secondary institution where he thought a relationship could be established and a partnership created.

“I basically went through our course catalog and said ‘where can we make this [course] fit’ and if there wasn’t a good fit I looked for another partner,” he said.

The colleges in turn have found that it helps to increase their enrollment, Sefchik said.

The program was also praised by Superintendent of Schools Jeffrey Burt, who said he was impressed by it after he joined the school system last year.

“It was not advertised so it wasn’t something I knew the extent of until I got into the district and saw the number of courses that are available,” Burt said. “I really think it’s something the town and district should celebrate – a hidden gem, if you will.”

Colchester School Resource Officer Retiring After 10 Years

by Allison Lazur

School Resource Officer Rob Suchecki is retiring after spending a decade fulfilling his assignment of protecting Colchester’s children.

His retirement day is June 30.

Humble, grateful and gleaming when he spoke with the *Rivereast* about his time in the district, Suchecki called his role “at times the most challenging” but also the most “rewarding” job he’s ever done.

“I’m policing the highest population density of our town during the daytime,” he said.

The school district has approximately 2,300 students.

When things happen with children “it’s real immediate,” he said, adding that he is often wrapped up in situations that require his prompt attention.

“Something happens and it becomes a very intense scenario because you’re dealing with teenagers who are more impulsive – everything becomes a little bit more dramatic,” he said.

While Suchecki, 55, spends the majority of his time at Bacon Academy, he also visits every school in the district at least once a day whether that means visiting the students inside or patrolling the perimeter.

“I basically go where I’m needed in the moment,” he said.

Suchecki is no stranger to working in Colchester or with kids.

He joined the Colchester Police Department in 1990, becoming the town’s fourth full-time police officer to be hired.

In 1993, Suchecki was trained to teach the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program. He taught the program in the school system for the next 18 years – which, he said, led to the SRO position being “more of a natural fit.”

“I love working with kids. I love trying to make a difference in their lives. My philosophy has always been pretty simple: I don’t know what they left when they left home in the morning, so my goal is to at least have one positive interaction with every kid I see every day,” he

said.

With that philosophy in mind, Suchecki said kids are in turn able to view school as a “safe haven” and can then focus on their education.

When asked by the *Rivereast* if he would share some of his most positive memories, Suchecki said there were “thousands” to include.

He mentioned “having the kids that say ‘thank you’ at the end of the school year – the kids that really appreciate the fact that I’m here and it makes them feel safer” as one example.

While working with students that are struggling and “being a small part” of their ultimate success was another.

During his role as SRO, he also served in a teaching capacity in several of the classrooms.

“I love teaching in the classroom. I get invited to teach in health classes. I teach some law issues, some forensic things; It’s just very rewarding,” he said.

Throughout his interview with the *Rivereast*, Suchecki continually called the job “rewarding” and himself “fortunate” for the opportunity.

“This is the best career choice for me to help people,” he said. “I absolutely love what I do and that’s what makes leaving it so difficult, but I also know that it’s time – 29 years of being a police officer is a long time to do anything.”

Suchecki’s departure brings a new SRO, Shannon Owens – a female officer who will serve as a role model for the district’s young women, Suchecki said.

He called her “awesome, energetic” and someone who will be a “great addition to the district.”

With a new face patrolling the schools, Suchecki said he thinks the hardest part for the incoming SRO will be the time it takes to earn the students’ trust.

“They have to know that you’re really there because you care about what you’re doing and you care about them,” he said.

As the interview with the *Rivereast* con-



Colchester Public Schools’ Resource Officer Rob Suchecki is retiring at the end of the school year after 29 years as part of the Colchester police department – of which 10 were spent as a school resource officer. He was presented last week with artwork created by Bacon Academy’s art teacher Jodi Mendlinger for his nearly three decades of service to the town.

cluded, Suchecki continued to express his gratitude.

“I just want to let everyone know how thankful I am that I was given this opportunity,” he said. “I’ve been entrusted with a huge respon-

sibility of protecting all of our school kids and the staff and it’s not something I’ve ever taken lightly. It’s something I’ve always strived to work hard at.”



Donna Roberts (left) and Lisa Hesser facilitated an introduction between Roberts' dog Brady and Hesser's dog Bodi last Sunday as canines and their human counterparts flooded the town green for the eighth annual Spring Bark for the Park event.



From left, Marco Laufer, Erica Strong, Sarah Laufer and Sara Puhlick gathered to enjoy Colchester's Spring Bark for the Park with their canines last Sunday by perusing 35 vendors who offered everything from artisanal dog treats to training tips.

Dogs Have Their Day in Colchester

by Allison Lazur

The Colchester town green went to the dogs last Sunday as the eighth annual Spring Bark for the Park was celebrated by canines and owners alike.

Portly, wrinkly and lanky dogs of all types occupied the green as their owners perused 35 vendors ranging from artisanal dog treats to training and rescue groups promoting adoption.

The event hosted by the town's Dog Park Committee and sponsored by donations from local businesses like Dime Bank, Mackey's and Colchester Dental is a way for the committee to raise money for dog park upkeep and enhancements, said Dog Park Committee Chairman Debi Marvin.

Marvin said the dog park not only allows for canine-to-canine bonds, but also human-to-canine – as well as human-to-human.

"There's a whole lot more to it than a place for dogs to go and pee," she said.

The importance of the dog park to the community was evident through those who spoke with the *Rivereast* at Sunday's event.

Resident Donna Roberts was seen introducing her dog Brady to a wrinkly, stout pup named Bodi when she expressed her satisfaction with the dog park.

"This is my first year, but I just started coming to the Colchester Dog Park a couple weeks ago and met some wonderful people and dogs and I thought I really want to support that because the proceeds go to the dog park," she said.

Canines had a chance to participate in a Lucky Duck Egg Hunt or be blessed by the Rev. Lauren Lorincz of Colchester Federated Church leaving the pooches with a dangling Saint Francis medallion from their collars that read "bless and protect my pet Saint Francis."

Owners had a chance to win canine-themed raffle baskets that had items ranging from dog

bowls and tough toys to steps so smaller dogs are able to easily access a couch or bed.

Marvin said over \$3,000 worth of goodies, prizes and gift cards were donated by local businesses.

"The businesses in town have been fantastic," Marvin said. "I think 99% out of 100 donated."

Jamie Roach-Decker, owner of Border collie mix Rebel, said she was visiting the event Sunday as a way of supporting the dog park, adding that she was impressed with the park's quality.

"The dog park really is nice," she said. "They have Frisbees, drinking areas of all heights for different-sized dogs, which I thought was really cool, stairs they can go up and a tube they can go through."

Connecticut Greyhound Adoption showcased retired racers from Florida across the

green from Hebron Veterinary Hospital while Paws to the Wall Training had a booth to answer questions and provide owners with information about their services.

The event ran from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and Marvin said the number of attendees is "impossible" to gauge.

"There's just no way to keep an inventory [of who comes]," she said.

The event does not sell tickets for entry and attendees can come and go freely.

Marvin said the funds from the event will go towards maintenance of the dog park and an upcoming "beautification project with the Colchester garden club where flowers will be planted."

Marvin said the event will "definitely" continue for man's best friend and those who love them. Indeed, the next Spring Bark for the Park is already scheduled, for Sunday, May 17, 2020.

Drunk Driving Spot Check

State Police Troop K of Colchester will conduct a drunk driving spot check Saturday, May 25, on Route 16.

In a press release, police said state troopers will specifically look for motorists operating under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Troop K Commanding Officer Lt. Marc Petruzzi also said in the release state troopers will strictly enforce seat belt and distracted

driving laws as well.

There will also be roving DUI enforcement patrols throughout the Troop K coverage area – which includes the *Rivereast* towns of Colchester, Marlborough, Hebron and Andover – during the entire Memorial Day holiday weekend, running through Monday, May 29.

East Hampton Police News

5/9: A 16-year-old juvenile of East Hampton was issued a summons for first-degree threatening and second-degree breach of peace, East Hampton Police said.

5/12: Jennifer Marcaurel, 42, of 40 Mountainview Rd., was arrested and charged with driving under the influence, failure to drive right and failure to renew registration, police said.

5/15: Paul Russell, 68, of 14 Huckleberry Acres, was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear, police said.

Also, from May 6-12, officers responded to 18 medical calls, three motor vehicle crashes and six alarms, and made 20 traffic stops, police said.

Portland Police News

5/10: Dillon Haines, 30, of 766 Tobacco St., Lebanon, was charged with possession of narcotics and possession of drug paraphernalia, Portland Police said.

5/15: Donna Downing, 64, of 5 Adorno Dr., was charged with operating under the influence, police said.

5/18: Debra Deakin, 42, homeless, with a last known address of 82 Ridge St., Manchester, was charged with second-degree breach of peace and misuse of 911, police said.

Andover Police News

5/13: State Police said David Brault, 54, of 209 Lake Rd., was arrested and charged with second-degree breach of peace and second-degree threatening.

Andover Voters Approve Big Budget by Slim Margin

by Sloan Brewster

At Tuesday's referendum, voters approved the \$12.37 million budget that will increase taxes by 1.04 mills.

With 270 total votes, the yesses had it 148 to 122, according to the numbers released by the Town Clerk's office Wednesday.

The totals put voter turnout at approximately 12.53%.

The budget represents a \$1.19 million, or 10.64%, increase, while RHAM's \$4.47 million portion amounts to an increase of \$378,502 or 8.39%.

But the mill rate – which was set Wednesday by the Board of Finance at 34.99 mills – is increasing by a lesser 3.05% because a large chunk of the spending increase will be funded through the unassigned fund balance.

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

Finance board co-chairman Adrian Mandeville said he was happy the budget passed.

"I realize it was a tough decision for people because we were asking for a mill rate increase and we were also doing some math," he said, referring to cutting into the fund balance to bring the account down to 10% of the town's budget.

At the town budget town meeting, Mandeville and other officials said having 10% in the fund balance was more in keeping with state recommendations for how much the account should carry.

The \$976,000 from the fund balance will cover \$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 web site.

Mandeville said while some taxpayers were leery of spending the money, he hopes they will understand in the coming years that it was the right thing to do.

"We get myopic," he said. "As a town we

need to look at budgets over a range of years and understand what they do."

The polls were dead midday Tuesday, with no one showing up at all between noon and about 1 p.m. Head Moderator Linda Derick said 89 voters had made their way to the ballots by noon and that turnout was "steady and slow. Very slow."

Derick had a few thoughts about why so few people were showing up to cast their votes. She said the amount of information the town put out about the budget leading up to the referendum was "overwhelming" and that people were tuning it out.

"Also, I don't think they realize the impact their vote has in a small town in a local election," she said, adding that folks do turn out to vote for presidential elections.

Another possible rationale Derick offered was that "maybe it's not all that hot and contested, so people aren't irate."

She also contemplated that with RHAM's budget already passed, some folks may have thought there was little reason to vote on the local spending package.

"RHAM already passed, that's about 40% of our budget, and that's done," she said. "General operating budget is pretty fixed, it doesn't go down. [Those are] fixed expenses. That leaves a small portion that's flexible, is mutable."

She also said that the town budget meeting went well and folks made their thoughts clear on the budget so may not have felt it was necessary to show up at the polls.

"People had the opportunity to dissent and they did; and they had the opportunity to vote on those dissensions and when they left they seemed to think it was good process," she said. "It was a well-run meeting."

Resident Frank Chaves was on his way out of the polls at about 1 p.m. when he said he didn't think folks should have had to go out a second time to vote on the budget after making

their feelings clear at the town meeting.

During the lengthy May 9 meeting, residents made three motions to tweak the budget that ultimately failed.

Debbie Scanlon, who was responsible for 2 of the failed motions, moved to cut contingency from \$50,000 to \$15,000. Selectmen and finance board members said the contingency was a needed buffer and recommended keeping the line item as it was.

Voters ultimately agreed with the officials. Scanlon also made a motion to reduce \$150,000 from the multi-use building fund, funds that can be used toward a senior or community center. Scanlon wanted the motion to specify that the \$150,000 would be used to offset the tax increase, but was told by Board of Finance member Robert England that since the funds were coming from the unassigned fund, they could not be moved around.

With grumbles from some audience members unhappy about cutting funds allocated for seniors, the motion failed.

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.

Voters, however, agreed with officials and speakers who said the finance board should have access to the attorney and the motion was defeated.

At the Polls

Frank Chaves and his wife Pat Chaves said they voted in favor of the budget because they thought it was reasonable.

Pat Chaves said she was in favor of setting funds aside for the senior center and that seniors need a place to call their own.

She and another afternoon voter, Barbara Steele, said the town hall, where seniors are currently meeting, is not adequate. They griped

that there is no refrigerator for drinks and condiments, that they have to set up tables before meetings and take them down afterward and that there is no place to wash dishes or get water for coffee, except the bathroom.

Both women said they were looking forward to the senior center moving into Andover Elementary School.

Converting the third and fourth grade wing into a senior center is a reaction to the closure of the Old Firehouse on Center Street, which has been used as a senior center since the early 1990s and was also a meeting spot for boards and commissions. In October, selectmen officially closed the building after air quality tests confirmed what folks around town have said they have known for decades – it is infested with mold.

Morgan Steele, Barbara's husband, also said he concurred with the need for seniors to have a place to call their own. He also said he was in favor of spending down the unassigned fund balance for capital needs including needed equipment.

"It saves us some money and when it comes to getting money from the state, we won't be penalized," he said.

Officials have said if the fund balance is too high, the state will be less apt to offer up grants to the town.

A Sliver of Local History

As he was exiting the polls, Morgan Steele said he was Andover's last elected treasurer and quipped that he wasn't paid enough for the job. When he was first voted in, in 1975, he said he made \$100 a month. Then in 1998 – his last year in office – he was making \$140 a month.

Steele, who was treasurer and manager of Heublein Employees Credit Union in Hartford and treasurer of the Andover Fire Department, said he remained town treasure despite the low pay out of "dedication to the job" and "to help the town."

Obituaries

East Hampton

Gertrude Dakers

Gertrude "Jane" Dakers, 80, of East Hampton, passed away Monday, May 20, at her home. Born in New Haven Nov. 1, 1937, she was the daughter of Gertrude Sayers (Nelson) and Andrew Michael Sayers.

Jane was predeceased by her loving husband of 56 years, Donald Dakers. She leaves behind six children, Andrew Dakers of Austin, Texas, Susan Joyce and husband Terry of East Hampton, Lynne Dakers of East Hampton, Lisa Audet and husband Dean of Woodstock, Elizabeth Havican and partner John of Simsbury, and Jennifer Stroker and husband Jon of Littleton, N.H. She also leaves behind 10 beloved grandchildren, Megan, Emily and Michael Audet; Ashley, Caitlyn and Jack Havican; Gillian and Liam Stroker; Wyatt Joyce and Derek Phillips.

Jane graduated from Mount St. Joseph Academy High School in Hartford, and attended Marymount University where she received an associate's degree. During Jane's time at Marymount, she was an active participant in the Democratic Party and was proud to have marched alongside John F. Kennedy in his campaign for presidency. Jane went on to raise her six children with her husband, Don, in her beloved town of Madison. She was proud to be active in the community by volunteering for Girl Scouts of America and the catechism programs for St. Margaret's Church. Jane was most proud of her children's accomplishments, and could often be seen sporting a Georgetown Hoyas sweatshirt or UConn T-shirt while she watched the games from her living room.

Jane enjoyed cross stitching and each of her children have a sample of her work. She was an avid gardener, and always preferred a "fresh" tomato. Jane enjoyed traveling, especially with and to see her children, and was a planner before the Internet, thanks to the library. Jane had an affinity for animals and saved more than a few strays in her lifetime. Living most of her adult life just a block away from Long Island Sound, Jane enjoyed her walks to the beach, although she never did learn to swim. Jane enjoyed cooking and loved trying new recipes; a favorite of all was her beef stew. Most recently, Jane had been enjoying her final years in East Hampton, with a stack full of library books – most biographical or political in nature – and visits from her children and grandchildren.

Although Jane's keen intellect, generosity and straightforward nature will be missed, her legacy will live on through the countless stories of her family history that she enjoyed sharing.

A funeral liturgy will be held today, May 24, at 11 a.m., at St. Patrick Church in East Hampton, with a private burial in St. Mary's Cemetery, Hamden.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.



Colchester

Alison Jane Woronecki

Alison Jane (Behan) Woronecki, 62, of Colchester, passed away Sunday, May 19, at Middlesex Hospital in Middletown. She was born April 26, 1957, in Staten Island, N.Y., a daughter of Mary Jane Behan of Shelton and the late Thomas Behan.

Alison worked as a pharmacy technician at Big Y in Manchester for many years. In 1981 she married Roger Woronecki; the two settled in Colchester and had two daughters, whom she loved dearly. Alison was a communicant of St. Andrew Church in Colchester and she enjoyed reading in her spare time. Most importantly, she will be remembered by her family as a loving and devoted wife and mother whose compassionate nature put everyone before herself.

She will be forever loved and remembered by her husband, Roger Woronecki of Colchester; her daughters, Amanda and Sarah Woronecki, both of Stamford; sisters, Pamela Behan Miano of Shelton, and Tamara Behan of Bridgeport; and many extended family and friends.

The family will receive guests today, May 24, from 9:30-10:30 a.m., at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral Mass will follow at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave., Colchester; burial will be in the New St. Andrew Cemetery.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.



Portland

Marie L. Duff

Marie L. (Peterson) Duff of Portland peacefully passed with her family by her side Tuesday, May 14.

She was predeceased by her parents, Albert and Olive Peterson, and her sister, Jean Gates.

She leaves her husband of 63 years, Duffy (Wayne) Duff, and her sister, Shirley Sullivan; two daughters, Tami M. Geuser and her husband Wally of New Hampshire, and Cheryl B. Duff and fiancé Rick Robley of East Hampton. She also leaves five grandchildren, Jason, Shannon, Felicia, Tyler and Alex; and great-grandchildren Ari, Konnor, Kingston and Kollin.

Marie had wishes for a celebration of life that will take place at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to St. Jude Children's Hospital.



Colchester

Carlo B. Parola

Carlo B. Parola, 85, of Colchester, passed away Monday, May 20, at Harrington Court Genesis Health Care. Carlo was born in Jersey City, N.J., on March 12, 1934, a son of the late Bernard and Frances (Monuse) Parola.

Carlo was a very proud veteran. Immediately following high school, he joined the U.S. Air Force and worked as a communications technician, retiring after 20 years of service. He met his beloved wife, Anna Melus Navarro, while serving on active duty in Spain. They were married Jan. 6, 1968, and moved to Colchester after his retirement from the Air Force in 1971. He worked for AT&T for many years as an Electronic Technician and later owned and operated the Schwab Spirit Shop on South Main in Colchester.

Carlo was a communicant of St. Andrew Church and was also a member and Grand Knight with the KOC, Spellman Council. He was very active with the Boy Scouts, Troop 72 in Colchester when his son was young, helping him earn the Eagle Scout Award. Carlo was proud of his Italian heritage. He traveled to Italy with his family and reconnected with other family members living there. Carlo and his wife Anna retired to Englewood, Fla., where they stayed until 2016 when they moved back to Colchester to be close to their grandchildren.

Carlo will be remembered as a gregarious, open and jovial man whose sense of humor and outgoing nature left a lasting impression on people he knew.

He will be dearly missed but always remembered with love by his wife, Anna, of 51 years; his son, Taber and wife Kelly Parola of Colchester; two sisters, Veronica Fisher and Gloria Negrete; three grandchildren, Cameron, Madison and Marissa; and numerous extended family and friends.

Calling hours will be held Tuesday, May 28, from 5-7 p.m., at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A memorial Mass will be celebrated Wednesday, May 29, at 10 a.m., directly at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave., Colchester, CT 06415. Burial will follow in the State Veterans Cemetery, Bow Lane in Middletown.

Donations in his memory may be made to the church.

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.



East Hampton

John Weinzierl

John "Jack" Weinzierl, 76, of Rockingham, Vt., passed away Tuesday, May 14. He was born in Middletown April 19, 1943, to John and Mary Weinzierl, and raised in East Hampton.

He married his late wife Nina on Oct. 1, 1966. During the Vietnam War he served six years in the National Guard. In the 1970s, John owned and operated the White House Motel & Laundromat in East Hampton. In 1975 he moved to southern Vermont, where he built a new life for his family. During this time period he owned a cider-making business, home insulating business and later operated another laundromat in West Rutland, Vt. He then went to work for Whitney Blake in Bellows Falls, Vt., for over 20 years. He also volunteered at Meals on Wheels at the Springfield, Vt., meal site.

Jack was known for his love of the outdoors, camping, snowmobiling, gardening, firewood processing, traveling, and love of music.

Nina, his dear wife of 50 years, died two years ago. The surviving family includes son David Weinzierl of Bellows Falls, Vt.; daughter Julie Strong and son-in-law Donald Strong of Saxtons River, Vt.; brother Robert Weinzierl of New Port Richey, Fla.; sister Mary Loos and husband George Loos of East Hampton; sister Teri Havens and husband Ralph Havens of Colchester. Jack loved his six grandchildren: Elijah Weinzierl, Mikayla Weinzierl and Caleb Strong of Bellows Falls, Vt.; Joseph and wife Allison Strong, Jacob and wife Lee Ann Strong, and Isaiah Strong of Lynchburg, Va.

Jack's family will be holding a memorial celebration and picnic at noon Saturday, July 27, at the Saxtons River (Vt.) Recreation Area.

If you would like to make a donation in Jack's memory, the family asks that you consider the following: Gideon's International (P.O. Box 140800 Nashville, TN 37214-0800) or Community Christian Church of Athens (1 Miller Rd Athens, VT 05143).