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Janayah Adrien (left) and Lanayah Mandeville, both 10, are embarking on a new school year at Brownstone Intermediate School in Portland. The fifth graders attended a district-wide open house on Wednesday, the day before doors officially opened for the school year.

Excitement, Nerves as Portland Schools Start

by Elizabeth Regan

Portland schools were open Wednesday for a sneak peek prior to the official start of school as students – some nervous, some excited, and some who were both – checked out their classrooms and met their teachers for the first time.

Fifth grade teacher Maria Searles welcomed Danny Glezen, 11, to her math classroom at Brownstone Intermediate School during its open house, which preceded the first day of school on Thursday.

After a brief introduction, she asked him if he played any sports.

“Baseball,” he replied.

“You’ll have to bring me your schedule,” she said. “I love to go to games.”

Danny’s eyes got wide.

He told the *RiverEast* afterward what he was thinking at the time.

“I was like, ‘yay!’” he said.

Danny’s mother, Kara Glezen, said their experience in the Portland school system has been “awesome.”

“He’s had really fantastic teachers that have been challenging and fun. And he’s made wonderful friendships,” she said.

This year’s fifth grade class is arriving amid budget constraints that led to the reduction of one teacher. The move was made after an unexpectedly large incoming kindergarten class prompted the Board of Education to add a teacher at that grade level. To mitigate the expense, school board members decided to proceed with a plan to shrink fifth grade by one teacher since it is expected to be one of the smallest grades in the district this year.

There will be about 23 students in science and social studies classes, according to the July

10 school board meeting minutes. Math and reading specialists will each teach an 80-minute class to keep class sizes down to 18-19 students per class in those subjects.

The move was criticized at school board meetings by some staff members and the parents of rising fifth grade students.

But Danny’s mom, despite initial reservations that led her to write to the school board asking them not to cut the teacher, expressed optimism on the last day of summer vacation.

“I think the teachers are phenomenal and will do the best for the kids to make it work,” she said. “We just have to have faith in them.”

Principal Allison Hine said the change means there are five sections for reading and math, but only four sections for homeroom and the remaining subjects.

“Having to go from five sections to four sections is not ideal, but I do think we’ve come up with a really good plan in order to address it,” she said.

Hine described it as “really exciting” to be able to give math and reading specialists – who traditionally provide one-on-one or small group instruction – the chance to teach a whole class of students at once.

“One of our curriculum specialists is brand new this year, so it gets him deeply involved in the program and he will know it inside and out. I think that’s a benefit,” she said.

At the open house, reading specialist Stephen Jewell welcomed students to his classroom further up the hall from Searles’ math classroom. He is the new curriculum specialist Hines was referring to.

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Major Portland Parcel Purchase to Voters Next Week

by Elizabeth Regan

The latest Portland riverfront redevelopment effort to purchase three contaminated parcels on Brownstone Avenue will be sent to taxpayers for approval on Sept. 4 at a town meeting.

Officials have been eyeing the former petroleum storage and distribution site for roughly four years. A remediation grant from the state Department of Economic and Community Development was secured in 2016 for \$775,000, which is how much the town’s consulting environmental engineer said it will cost to clean up the site. The grant can only be released upon purchase of the properties.

Public hearings were held Aug. 22 and 27 as officials made their push for the move.

A purchase-and-sale agreement was signed by First Selectman Susan Bransfield over a year and a half ago for \$385,000. The sale is contingent upon approval by taxpayers at town meeting.

The net cost will be \$381,500 after taking into account an additional \$15,000 in closing costs and a reduction of \$19,000 for a deposit that was already paid, according to Bransfield.

The money would come from funds set aside

for land acquisition and preservation, as well as the contingency fund. Bransfield emphasized at Tuesday’s public hearing that “there is no need for any additional taxation or any borrowing” to fund the purchase.

If approved by the voters on Wednesday, Bransfield said she will immediately recommend that the Board of Selectmen form a Brownfields Redevelopment Commission to decide how to use the property.

“I think it’s very important that the community be involved in this process, and it’s something we are committed to doing,” Bransfield said.

The brownfield site at 222, 230 and 248 Brownstone Ave. was a petroleum storage and distribution operation of Port Oil Company before it was vacated about a decade ago, leaving five conspicuous oil tanks on the site.

The estate of the late owner has since paid to empty a pipeline on the property of oil, transport the oil for disposal, and rinse the pipe. Selectmen subsequently ordered pressure testing of the pipeline to see if there were any leaks; the results came back this May stating the pres-

sure test “passed the established criteria,” according to Bransfield.

She said the town has already paid a \$19,000 deposit, \$9,700 for a property survey, and \$2,800 for a ground-penetrating radar.

Proponents of the redevelopment plan say the town has the unique opportunity to bring the dormant, blighted property back to life with grant funding that private developers don’t have access to.

Opponents say the town shouldn’t be in the development business.

According to land use and economic development coordinator Mary Dickerson, the Brownfield Redevelopment Commission would be responsible for coming up with a preliminary plan – with details like “the types of buildings, where they’re going to go, how many square feet we can fit, [and] how many parking spaces we can fit” – and then issuing a request for proposals from interested developers.

It’s a situation not unlike the one that brought the popular Brownstone Exploration and Discovery Park to Portland a decade ago, Dickerson said. The business has paid the town \$3.1 mil-

lion in lease fees since the park opened in 2005.

The Brownfields Redevelopment Commission would also be charged with making a recommendation to selectmen about whether to lease the property or sell it outright.

A concept sketch from Portland resident Susan Fiedler, who volunteered her services as a landscape architect, shows one possible layout for the space. Dickerson during the hearing described the sketch, which she said includes parking lots, a public dock, a pavilion near the riverfront, space for food trucks, and an existing building that could be used as a brewery.

The sketch took into account the contaminated “hot spots” identified by the town’s environmental engineering consultant Amy Vaillancourt, of Tighe and Bond. Some of the contaminants could be dug out and moved to other areas on the site to be capped by parking lots or buildings.

A brownfield is identified in state statute as an abandoned or underutilized site where redevelopment, reuse or expansion has not occurred due to the presence or potential presence of

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A town meeting will be held Wednesday, Sept. 4 to determine if the town's redevelopment efforts will include the purchase of three contaminated parcels on Brownstone Avenue for a net cost of \$381,500. The money would come from funds set aside for land acquisition and preservation, as well as the contingency fund. Photo by Jim Tripp.

Parcel Purchase cont. from Front Page

pollution. Remediation projects are eligible for federal and state funding.

An environmental study from Tighe and Bond found that roughly 10,000 cubic yards of petroleum-contaminated soil will need to be remediated, possibly by capping the soil on site. About 1,500 cubic yards will need to be removed from the site due to contamination by PCBs or other significant environmental hazards, the study said.

Officials stressed the property purchase is part of riverfront revitalization efforts going back decades. The town purchased a 40-acre swath of riverfront property and the adjacent quarries in 1999 for \$1.05 million, which now includes the private Brownstone Exploration and Discovery Park as well as the municipal Riverfront Park.

Dickerson said the focus on riverfront development emerged over the course of several studies and reports over the past 20 years that identified long-range goals for downtown development.

State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) brownfields coordinator Mark Lewis at the public hearing said the project "checks off all the boxes" for a successful brownfield redevelopment effort.

He recommended the town apply for the state's Brownfield Remediation and Revitalization Program, which provides liability relief from the state and from third parties as long as the owner remediates pollution within the site boundaries. The program is free to the town; if the town sells the property, however, the new owner would have to pay the state 5% of the land value.

Towns must apply and be accepted prior to property acquisition, according to the DEEP.

The application process would take an additional four to six weeks if the purchase is approved by voters at next week's town meeting, according to Bransfield. Closing on the property would not occur until the Brownfield Remediation and Revitalization Program approval is "in the hands of the town," she said.

Public Input

A majority of those at Tuesday's public hearing spoke in favor of the purchase, while some objected to certain elements of the plan.

Caroline Murray, a Portland resident for the past 16 years, described the property purchase as a way to expand options in town and to provide much-needed riverfront access.

"We have the most riverfront of any town on the Connecticut River and, oh my gosh, let's grab a choice to be able to use more and in multiple ways," she said.

Mattabesec Audubon Society Conservation Committee Chairman Larry Cyrulik said his only problem with the project was using the open space and recreational acquisition fund to pay for it.

The fund was created in 1999 to set aside at

least \$50,000 per year for the purchase of land. A list of nine qualifying types of land range from wildlife corridors to property that is near or contiguous to the Connecticut River, lakes or ponds.

Cyrulik said the fund should be used to protect open space.

While acknowledging a small portion of the property immediately along the riverfront could qualify as conservation, he said it's unclear how the bulk of the property is going to be used.

"I guarantee you there is going to be more commercial development here than conservation," he said.

Frank Winiski, a member of the Brownstone Quorum nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving Portland's natural history and resources, said revitalizing a brownfield site is an example of conservation.

"Part of that, in my mind, is to restore polluted property," Winiski said. "We did that with the quarry, we did that with Riverfront Park, we can do it again. If we let it go, we're going to miss a golden opportunity."

Resident Melissa Gerrier-Satagaj objected to the predominance of parking lots in the concepts revealed so far.

Dickerson has said establishing a seasonal public parking lot on the two parcels adjacent to Brownstone Exploration and Discovery Park would add "significant additional revenue" for the town. She estimated solar-powered, "smart" parking kiosks could bring in \$63,000 per year in parking fees over the eight-week summer season.

Gerrier-Satagaj said she understands the owners of Brownstone Exploration and Discovery Park want more parking – "but we want open space; we want to be able to use that water; we want to be able to have fun on the river; we want to be able to walk down the river on a boardwalk and enjoy that open space."

Sean Hayes, owner of the adventure park in the quarries, stood up to say his business has paid \$4 million in fees to the town since the doors opened in 2009 and that it has paid out \$9 million in payroll to its employees, many of them from Portland.

"A total of \$14 million from a flooded quarry that had oil stains popping up from the cars underneath on a nonstop basis. Conservation? This is the ultimate conservation. This is restoring the land to a useful and productive part of this community," Hayes said.

He said the parking lots can serve as a cap for contaminated soil brought in from the rest of the site and will provide a buffer between the revitalized area and the liquid asphalt plant on the other side. While the plant is not active now, he said he has been told it will be in operation next summer.

The town meeting will be held Wednesday, Sept. 4 at 7:30 p.m. at Brownstone Intermediate School, 314 Main St.



Danny Glezen, 11, checked out a composition book with his name on it that had been laid out for him in the classroom of new Brownstone Intermediate School reading specialist Stephen Jewell at Wednesday's open house. The teacher, who would typically offer one-on-one and small group instruction for readers, will have an added responsibility this year: teaching a language arts class to help keep class sizes low amid budget constraints.

School Starts cont. from Front Page

"I have some of the same nerves our new students do," Jewell said.

He was a reading specialist at Windsor High School previously, and had worked as a classroom teacher before going for his reading certification.

He said he chose to focus on reading because it is such an important, lifelong skill.

"Reading follows you everywhere," he said. Twins Zain and Danesh Raza, 11, were two of the students who came into Jewell's classroom to check it out.

Both boys said they love reading. "It gives you something to do when you have nothing to do," Zain said.

Danesh said it's his favorite subject in school.

"If you find the right book and you get somewhere cozy, it's just really nice," he said.

The twins' mother, Laura Raza, said her sons were thrilled to get that "older kid feel" in the intermediate school.

It is a new concept for the fifth grade students who have never switched classes or struggled with combination locks before.

The boys explained why the experience was so exciting for them.

"You finally get to do something..." Zain started.

"That you've been waiting for," Danesh finished.

Rising fifth grade friends Janayah Adrien and Lanayah Mandeville, both 10, were leaving Wednesday's open house when they told the *Rivereast* the intermediate school layout was much more complicated than the setup at the second- through fourth-grade Gildersleeve School.

"It's really hard to find your way around here," Janayah said.

But they remained optimistic about the coming year.

Janayah, who lives in Hartford and first came to the Portland school system last year, said she's most looking forward to her math classes.

She acknowledged it's not a subject that always comes easy to her – but she added that's why she's excited about it: "So I can get better."

Colchester Resident Publishes Second Book of Poetry

by Karla Santos

David Wasserman of Colchester, who teaches elementary school in Marlborough and grew up in East Hampton, recently published his second book, *Dealing: Tarot Poems and Pictures*.

The book includes illustrations by Helen Castillo, a designer featured on the popular television show *Project Runway*.

"My first book was a collection of short poems that I just kind of had in a notebook and my wife encouraged me to send out to different places," Wasserman said.

That first book, *Tiny Footcrunch*, was published by the Unsolicited Press, a company based in Oregon, Portland. The same publishing company was also interested in Wasserman's second book, which was released July 30.

Dealing: Tarot Poems and Pictures is a book of small poems, all based on tarot cards.

According to Wasserman, his inspiration for a second poetry book came from the fact that, in the first book, readers took poems in a very literal way.

"I was trying to get across that poetry is very subjective and it can mean different things to different people," Wasserman said.

Wasserman said he used tarot cards because they also are subjective and can mean different things to different people.

"I was thinking of those tarot cards and fortune-telling and how the cards can read differently to different people so that's why I wanted to combine poetry and tarot cards together," Wasserman said.

During the process of writing the book, Wasserman realized that for the book to have the impact he wanted on readers, it needed illustrations, but finding an illustrator was a challenge, Wasserman said.

Wasserman said his wife gave him the idea

of reaching out to artists that appear on television, which is why he ended up contacting Castillo.

"I didn't expect to hear anything back at all but she got back to me the very next day and said yes I'm in, let's do it," Wasserman said. "That was really exciting."

The book includes approximately 25 illustrations. Wasserman was able to travel to New York to collaborate with Castillo on the different drawings.

Wasserman and Castillo explored the options of giving a portion of the book sales to charity or nonprofit organization.

"I wanted to give back to some kind of an organization that worked with children because I'm an elementary school teacher," Wasserman said. "She wanted to give back to an organization in New York City and we brought the idea to Unsolicited Press and they said, 'Well that's great but for us we would want to give back to some kind of a charity that deals with literacy or reading.'"

After researching, Wasserman said they decided to give back to Literacy, Inc., a non-profit based in New York City that promotes literacy to children that are disadvantaged.

Literacy, Inc. is receiving 10% of the proceeds of every sale of Wasserman's new book.

"We have kind of everything come together with this book where it was my second book and we had Helen Castillo do the illustration and we are giving back to charity so it turned out really nice," Wasserman said.

"It was a really cool experience and I'm glad that I was able to illustrate for him," Castillo said.

The best part is that some of the proceeds go to charity, according to Castillo.

She added, "I think it kind of gave me a new confidence in feeling that I should be illustrating more often and I should be sharing that too."



David Wasserman of Colchester recently published his second book, *Dealing: Tarot Poems and Pictures*.

According to Wasserman, the community reaction to the book has been great. He said he recently did a reading and book-launch at River Bend Book Shop in Glastonbury, which went well.

"I read the poems as you would do a tarot card reading, where you would flip over a card and read a poem, so I kind of framed it in that way," he said.

Wasserman said about 20 people attended the event and he is interested in doing similar events in other areas of the state, such as in Mystic where he said they have a similar bookstore to River Bend.

Copies of *Dealing: Tarot Poems and Pictures* are available at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and [barnesandnoble.com](https://www.barnesandnoble.com).

Traffic Reconfigurations Okayed for RHAM Campus

by Sloan Brewster

Hebron's Planning & Zoning Commission has approved plans for traffic reconfigurations on the RHAM school campus.

With the approval in place, the plan is to move forward with construction at the end of the school year, RHAM Superintendent of Schools Patricia Law said.

"We will be working with Luchs [Consulting Engineering] to develop the RFP for the project later this year and plan to move forward with the project as soon as school is out in 2020," she said.

In January, with the intention of completing the work before the start of school in 2019, the Board of Education moved forward on a design for the modifications.

Then in April, Law told the school board the project had been stalled while awaiting permit approvals from the Department of Transportation's Office of the State Traffic Administration.

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

Mallory died from injuries sustained in 2014 after a driver backed up and ran into her in the parking lot. Police at the time said Elizabeth Everett, 50, of Hebron, reversed her vehicle after she realized she had driven into the bus lane.

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

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

In light of the stall, Law added \$10,000 to RHAM's 2019-2020 budget to pay for a crack sealing project that would have been included with the modifications, as the sealing still needed to be completed, she said.

Last week, evidence the sealing was done while students were on break was apparent by the shining new tar in the parking lot and the bright paint lining and numbering student and staff parking spaces and indicating where visitors should park.

At last Monday's board meeting, Law brought board members up to speed on what else was completed over the summer, noting her relief about one project on the list.

"The new floor in the media center smells so much better," she said.

Law had long bemoaned the odor in the center and in the past two budget cycles requested funding to fix the problem, which was caused by moisture, dampness, humidity and dehumidification.

"The media center, it smells, it's humid, it's damp," she said at a board meeting last year. "It needs to be addressed. It needs to be taken care of."

The 2018-19 budget did not include the funding. Then, this past spring, after the district spent two years trying and failing to fix the problems through cheaper alternatives, the \$410,000 project, which includes fixing the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) unit and replacing the carpet, was funded in the capital budget for the 2019-20 fiscal year.

The HVAC portion of the project is still in progress, Law told the board. An engineer was selected to create a Request for Proposals (RFP) and is working on the timeline for drawings and bid documents.

The project will go to bid in September and the plan is to complete the work during the April break, she said.

A \$50,000 security project that includes upgrading surveillance cameras and installing double locking doors at the schools' main entrances is also underway, Law said. That was another project for which the superintendent pushed during budget season, saying she felt

"very strongly" about the safety measures.

The high school and middle school manufacturing rooms were painted over the summer and the old floors in the middle school technology room were replaced with tiles, Law said. In addition, sidewalks on campus were repaired.

Meanwhile, hallways and classroom were given fresh coats of paint, floors throughout the schools were waxed, gym floors refinished and stairways repaired.

Also over the summer, a thorough cleaning took place in the schools during which 200 trophies dating from 1968 to the present were counted in the high school, Law said. She is working with the sports booster clubs, coaches and school administrators to determine which ones to keep.

She said she was considering giving the remaining trophies to a company that will refit them and donate them to organizations that can't afford trophies of their own.

Board members chimed in on other ways to give the trophies new life, including Judy Benson Clarke, who asked if they could be sent to the students who earned them.

Another idea Clarke suggested was to create a display with the old trophies.

Board member Thomas Tremont said that at Bulkeley High School in Hartford students created a digital project with old trophies.

Law said she would consider all the ideas.

Change is in the Air at Belltown Schools

by Elizabeth Regan

East Hampton students in the district's four schools will be greeted on the first day of the academic year on Tuesday by changes that have figured prominently in public discussions about safety, necessity and cost over the past several years.

Among them is the replacement of the Center School boiler, which brings to a conclusion over a decade of debate about how to deal with the outdated and unreliable heating system.

Facilities Director Don Harwood said the single boiler was replaced with two smaller, more energy efficient units that bring the system in line with the other buildings in the district. Already nicknamed "the twins" by staff, the two natural gas-fired boilers increase efficiency and provide a fallback if one fails or has to be taken offline for maintenance.

"The old relic, or the battleship boiler, is now gone. The twins have been installed, so now we have redundancy," Harwood said.

Voters at a town meeting in March approved a bonding package with \$277,000 earmarked for the boiler project. Harwood at the time said the town already spent approximately \$200,000 in emergency repairs over the past five years.

Harwood said the new boilers have come in "significantly under budget." Punch list items are still being addressed as crews work to prepare the system to fire up for the first time.

Harwood could not specify how far below budget the project is running since work is not yet complete. He expects the boilers to be fully operational by the end of the first week in September.

"The total cost of the project will certainly be below the budgeted value we had put in there," he said.

The new school year also features safety enhancements in the form of an interior locking

system at the district's elementary and middle schools. The \$150,000 capital project, approved last year, allows teachers to lock doors from within their classrooms so they don't have to go into the hallway in the case of an emergency lockdown.

The system ensures classroom lockdowns can take place in less than five seconds, according to Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith.

East Hampton High School was outfitted with the interior lock system as part of the renovation completed in 2017.

New this year, a pilot security program in place at the high school will bring an armed security guard to the campus. Dave Luke, who has served as the school's security officer for one year, was authorized by the Board of Education in June to carry a concealed handgun when school starts.

The pilot program ends on March 9.

The school board will conduct a public hearing and survey of both students and staff during the pilot period. Smith said the school board will then decide whether to keep the program, abandon it or continue to study the issue.

Luke, who retired from the Connecticut State Police in 2017, 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.

Smith said a survey conducted this past spring found 72% of both students and staff were in favor of the armed security officer pilot program.

STEM in the Schools

A focus on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) will meld physical and academic changes in the district this year, accord-

ing to officials.

The district is operating on a \$31.18 million budget approved by voters in June. That's an increase of 1.75% over the previous year's spending plan.

While a STEM coordinator for grades four through eight was eliminated through this year's contentious budget process, money was allocated for several new Advanced Placement courses at the high school, a robotics team and two new science laboratories at the middle school, and a STEM laboratory at Center School.

Middle School Principal Jason Lehmann said the two new science laboratories were funded through a donation of approximately \$10,000 from the Parent Teacher Organization.

He said the labs, which he hopes will soon include a telescope and a 3D printer, will allow students to "get their hands dirty with science."

"[They'll] really be able to dig in deep and not just have a superficial approach to it," Lehmann said. "That's something we've been lacking and have really been looking to bolster."

The concept will also be put in place at the STEM Lab pilot program in Center School, according to principal Chris Sullivan.

The \$4,000 upgrade was funded through a Title IV grant from the state. He said students will rotate through the lab to work in student-led, collaborative groups as they figure out how to solve various problems.

"[They'll be] placed in an innovative environment where they can experiment with coding, engineering and different practices where they're taking the lead," Sullivan said.

New principal Eric Verner, who arrived in the district earlier this month, said Advanced Placement courses in physics and computer science also strengthen STEM study in the district.

"Computer science is now a pathway to get kids really excited and looking forward," he said.

Verner replaces former principal Frank Rizzuto, who resigned to take the helm at South Windsor High School.

Smith, the superintendent of schools, said the district's focus on the future is also evident in efforts to develop a vision for the future known as "East Hampton 2030." Building on the East Hampton 2025 "vision project" developed several years ago to look at what life would be like in 10 years, the district will host forums, discussions and surveys to examine what has been successful to date and what needs to be improved upon in the face of rapidly changing technological and societal realities.

Smith in newsletters this summer has described his fascination with rapidly changing technological and societal realities that futurists have predicted will include the rise of artificial intelligence, increased climate crises, dramatic political shifts and even regular space travel by the public in 2030.

He noted the class of 2030 entered second grade this year.

"We've got to educate children for their future, not what parents had in school or what they got out of school," he said. "[Those parents] are saying, 'why isn't my kid getting that?' It's because their future is going to look very different."

East Hampton Again Assigned Prestigious Bond Rating

by Elizabeth Regan

S&P Global Ratings has again assigned East Hampton a AAA long-term bond rating, which this week helped the town secure a 2.03% interest rate on several big-ticket projects.

East Hampton has maintained the prestigious AAA rating – which brings higher investor confidence and lower interest rates – since December 2015, when the agency upgraded it from AA+.

East Hampton is among 29 municipalities – including many of the state's wealthiest towns – that have been identified as the most credit-worthy municipal entities in the state. In addition to East Hampton, only three of those towns can be found east of the river: Glastonbury, Hebron and Tolland.

The agency rates a total of 96 cities and towns in the state.

The bond rating agency's Aug. 22 report came in advance the issuance of \$13.67 million in 20-year general obligation bonds on Wednesday, according to Finance Director Jeff Jylkka. That leaves about \$49 million of direct debt outstanding, according to the agency.

Wednesday's issuance of bonds and notes includes debt from the construction of a \$19 million municipal hub on Route 66, the town fuel island replacement project costing \$475,000, and a roughly \$1.75 million bond package approved this year to fund public safety

radio upgrades, a new pumper-rescue truck for the fire department and a boiler replacement at Center School. It also includes a portion of the debt from the \$52 million high school renovation project completed in 2017.

S&P said the continued AAA long-term rating is based on a "very strong" local economy, strong financial management and the town's proximity to the Hartford metropolitan area.

The current operating budget for general government and education is \$46.40 million, a 2.1% increase over the previous year.

"In our opinion, a history of positive financial operations and continued maintenance of what we consider [to be] strong reserves, coupled with limited capital needs and low retirement liabilities, further support this rating," the report said.

S&P cited a consistent rainy day fund over the past three years, which in fiscal year 2018 amounted to \$5.4 million – or 10.8% of the total operations budget.

The report noted local officials do not plan to draw down reserves or issue additional debt over the next few fiscal years.

"Therefore, we expect budget flexibility will likely remain strong," the agency said.

East Hampton Finance Director Jeff Jylkka on Wednesday reiterated there are no imminent projects to be bonded out.

While proposals have been submitted to the town by two private water companies looking to build out a large-scale, centralized water system, the concept is still in its formative stages. Cost estimates from the companies range from \$12.5 to \$42.88 million.

It's too early to tell the scope of the water system project or the ultimate cost, according to Jylkka.

"In our rating presentation, we did talk about water and the need for water, but there's nothing that's really been solidified," he said.

Other factors cited by the bond rating agency in the town's favor included an improved debt collection rate combined with proceeds from a tax sale that helped mitigate a \$1.3 million shortfall in municipal aid from the state in fiscal year 2018.

The tax sale process allows municipalities to sell properties of delinquent taxpayers at auction for the amount owed.

According to Jylkka, the ability of town management to come up with a revenue plan in the face of decreased funding separates East Hampton from communities with lower bond ratings.

"We laid out a plan, and we exceeded what that plan was," he said. "A lot of communities, I don't think they had a plan at that time."

Property tax collections have averaged 99% over the past three years, the report said. Those

taxes generate 73% of general fund revenue, which the agency indicated leaves the town less reliant on state and federal aid.

The report said officials estimate ending the past fiscal year with a \$258,536 general fund surplus due to "conservative budgeting that led to higher-than-expected property tax collections, investment income, conveyance tax receipts, and building permit fees" – as well as lower-than-budgeted costs in several town departments.

Town Council Chairman Melissa Engel in an email attributed the continued AAA rating to Jylkka.

"And we are very pleased with him," she said.

Jylkka has been East Hampton's finance director for 19 years.

She said a Board of Finance and Town Council that adheres to "sound fiscal practices" also played a role.

"This is great news for us as we continue to bond for the new town hall (and future projects)," she wrote. "Our interest rates will remain lower and we could see a potential savings of \$1 million on the town hall alone."

Jylkka said the estimate of \$1 million in savings is based on a AAA rating compared to a AA+ rating over 20 years.



Hebron Lions Club members were hard at work Wednesday getting ready for next week's Hebron Harvest Fair. At left, sawdust is hauled in a pay loader to be placed in animal pens. At right, Lion Gordy Rathburn gets the goat barn ready for the fair, which runs Sept. 5-8 at the Lions Fairgrounds on Route 85.

Hebron Fair Promises Food, Fun and Farm Facts

by Sloan Brewster

An ever changing and evolving fair, the Hebron Harvest Fair will open next Thursday with some new additions.

On Wednesday, the fairgrounds were populated with folks putting up tents and preparing barns for next week's arrival of animals.

Russell Strumskas, fair superintendent, brought the *Rivereast* on a golf cart tour of the activity and chatted about new things to come this year. For starters, there will be a new courtyard where folks can take a load off their feet and sit down while enjoying some entertainment or a quick bite of fair food.

The Hebron Lions Agricultural Society, which hosts the annual affair, took down some old buildings in the back of the grounds, next to the Kids Edutainment Tent, and created the new area, where there will be picnic tables and a small stage for musical acts and children's entertainment.

"We're trying to make it have that hometown fest feel to it," Strumskas said. "We needed more space for people to relax and enjoy their food. Food is a big part of the fair – it's a huge part of the fair – so just a place to sit down with your family and enjoy."

Another new attraction this year will be agricultural educational tents in which farmers will talk about what they do and explain how food gets from the farm to the table.

"I'm a bit into agriculture; it's something I love and I know it's a big part of our country and our area. The food you eat comes from agriculture and a lot of people forget that," Strumskas said. "I think it's important that people know where their food comes from, how things are done."

Farmers will offer information on such things as raising cattle, pigs and goats; what it takes for a successful dairy operation; and how to run

a Christmas tree farm.

Tom Satkowski, who raises pastured chickens and pigs, will talk about things including the importance of grass fed versus grain fed. Satkowski, of Hebron's East Willow Farm, will also offer raffle tickets to win membership in his Community Supported Agriculture farm share.

"I'm really passionate about farming," he said. "And I think everybody should know where their food comes from."

Also new this year will be a frozen T-shirt contest for adults and children. Contestants will endeavor to open up and put on a shirt that was soaked in water, rolled into a ball and frozen overnight.

There will be a husband-calling contest in which wives will offer their best methods for getting the attention of their men.

There will also be a skillet toss. In the women-only contest, which will take place in the animal pull ring, competitors will throw a 4-pound cast iron skillet to see who has the farthest reach.

There will be a brand new petting zoo. Eudora Farms will bring a variety of exotic animals.

"I wish I could tell you that we got the giraffe, but that's still up in the air," Strumskas said.

Another big change will be a new traffic pattern meant to alleviate backup, Strumskas said. All exits from Gate A will be a right turn only, and Gate B will be a left hand turn. There will be plenty of signage to alert folks to the change.

There will also be a new drop off area at Gate A, he said. Last year, drop offs were only allowed at Gate B.

The Beer & Wine Garden will be returning as will a long list of old favorites, including

DockDogs, Rosaire's Racing Pigs, Axe Women of Maine, a Demo Derby, a Double Figure 8 and a tractor pull.

Kids contests will include corn-shucking, pie eating, watermelon-eating and bubble-blowing. There will also be a hay maze.

Dreamland Amusements will bring the rides, including a roller coaster and Strumskas' 12-year-old daughter Mya Strumskas' favorite, the Delusion.

"I don't really like many rides that are scary like that," Mya said. "It was actually cool because you go upside down and your seat spins while you're upside down. I like roller coasters and it's sort like a roller coaster that goes upside down."

As far as Mya's favorite fair activity is concerned, she favors checking out the monkeys in the petting zoo.

And her favorite food? Corndogs, which her dad called a "good choice."

There will be live entertainment by the country music duo Kari and Bill, who are back by popular demand, according to Strumskas.

Sunday's headliner will be country artist Joe Nichols.

Thursday night is Hebron Night, with admission and parking \$1 and all rides for \$1 with a minimum purchase of 10.

Strumskas said his favorite part of the fun is the barns with animals.

"I love the barns," he said. "I'll never get it out of my system. I love going to see the animals. I love seeing the different showmanship shows down there. I learn something every time."

As a parent of three children, he also is in favor of the Edutainment Tent.

"The chicks are great for kids," he said. "I enjoy DockDogs but that's a given, everybody

loves that."

The popular dogs jump off a dock with the goal of hitting a target before splashing into the water.

The Lions Club uses proceeds from the fair to give back to the community, Strumskas said. With funds from the 2018 fair, the club donated more than \$80,000 to charities.

This year's fair is dedicated to Bernice Barrasso, who passed away in February, said Brenda Johnson, Lions Club member. A Lion since 1987, Barasso was president in 1996, Lion of the Year in 1999, and twice received the Progressive Melvin Jones Fellow award, the highest level of recognition given to a Lion. She also received the Knight of the Blind award.

Known for her homemade chocolate chip cookies, Barasso acted as a mentor to other members, teaching them all aspects of the fair before they would take their place in the information booth, Strumskas' wife Krystin Strumskas said.

"She was like a mother and a grandmother to everybody here," Johnson said, choking away tears.

Barasso was also very involved with Church of the Holy Family and Hebron Interfaith Human Services, Johnson said.

The Hebron Harvest Fair will take place Sept. 5-8. Hours are 4-10:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 5; noon-11 p.m. Friday, Sept. 6; 9 a.m.-11 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 7; and 9 a.m.-7:30 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 8. General admission is \$1 on Thursday and \$10 for all other days. Children under 12 are free, as are active military. Military family members and veterans get a \$2 discount on each ticket. Friday afternoon is "Senior Day," and from noon-4 p.m. that day ages 60 and up are admitted free.

Parking is \$1 on Thursday, free on Friday from noon-4 p.m., and \$5 all other times.

Andover Seniors Support Shared Space in Elementary School

by Sloan Brewster

According to a survey taken of Andover senior citizens, they want to move into the elementary school.

As of Tuesday, 249 surveys that Cathy Palazzi, senior coordinator, sent to local seniors had come back with answers, she said. Among the replies were 208 yeses to the sole question asking if respondents “support the move of the Andover Senior Center to the Andover Elementary School: Yes or No.”

At 34, far fewer respondents replied “no”, and a mere seven said they had no opinion.

Palazzi said she sent out the surveys to show the new Board of Selectmen, which took office in July, how seniors felt about the proposal to convert the third and fourth-grade wing at Andover Elementary School into a senior center. The wing has been emptied out due to declining enrollment.

She plans to present the answers and an overview of the comments to the board at its September 11 meeting, she said.

Between July 22 and 29, Palazzi sent out 387 surveys to anyone 65 and older living in town, she said. The deputy registrar of voters, Palazzi got the names and addresses – which are public information – from the office of the registrar.

Palazzi said she also received phone calls from a couple people requesting a survey as they had not received one.

Some folks added comments with their responses.

“I feel this would be a very wise move. A no brainer,” wrote one respondent. “The space is available, why not go ahead and use it? Other-

wise will the space remain empty if not used for seniors? That seems like a waste.”

For the most part, the responses were positive, Palazzi said. As she read through some of the comments, she got a few chuckles.

“Ooo, I like this one,” she said. “Somebody told me I have good sense, I have good common sense. I like to hear that.”

One commenter said it was a good idea to share space between the generations and that it would be a “great move for the seniors.” The writer went on to bemoan the time it has taken for the town to make the move happen, penning “too bad things move so slowly.”

One commenter referenced safety concerns raised by parents who have come to meetings on the matter.

“I would be more concerned about the trail in back of the school for children’s safety,” someone wrote. “This brings many more outsiders.”

There is a system of trails on the 70-acre parcel behind the school, though administrators do not allow people to access it from school grounds during school hours. Instead, folks can hop on the trail from the open space parcel at the corner of Hebron and School Roads.

One commenter said it was a good idea “so long as the school doesn’t need the space for students.”

Some of those who responded no to the question also included comments with ideas on where the seniors should go instead of the school, such as a dedicated community center some said they would prefer, or back to the Old

Firehouse on Center Street. Selectmen officially closed the old building last October when air quality tests confirmed it was infested with mold.

“Fix the senior center at the Old Firehouse,” one person wrote.

“What about the property on Center Street?” another wrote. “Is it going to sit and rot?”

Some folks complained the plan was too costly and others were displeased that it is not a permanent fix.

“No,” one person wrote. “And it’s not because we don’t need a facility, this plan is a Band-aid, an expensive stop gap plan.”

First Selectman Jeff Maguire said the board will take the survey responses into consideration.

In July, Silver Petrucelli & Associates completed a feasibility study on the proposal to convert the wing, knocking preliminary estimates down by hundreds of thousands of dollars.

According to the final report, the estimated cost of the project is now \$130,400 – versus the \$400,000-\$500,000 estimates in the firm’s initial report handed in in March.

The original estimates were too high, so Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen sat down with the architects and cut the plan back to essentials, she said in a meeting with the *Rivereast* after the study was released.

The town currently has \$250,000 set aside for multi-use building projects, according to the \$12.37 million budget approved by voters in the spring. But it will ultimately be up to vot-

ers to approve the expenditure.

Town Administrator Eric Anderson said Tuesday that the figures in the study are still higher than what he expects the project would actually cost, as they include items that don’t necessarily need to be done combined with “significant contingencies.”

Whether the contingencies will have to be tapped remains an unknown until construction, but Anderson said he suspects the final cost will be less than the \$130,000 estimate.

“My previous experience is that the town should be able to do it for less than that,” he said.

Anderson is a former chairman of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

He said he will present the study to the Board of Selectmen at its September 11 meeting.

Doyen presented it to the Board of Education in July.

“At this point the Board of Education has completed its role so far in this project,” she said then. “The rest is up to the town.”

It will ultimately be up to voters to decide if they want to foot the bill for the move, Maguire said. He said he does not know when that will happen.

“If you ask me, I think it should be sooner than later, but it’s going to be up to the residents if they want to spend the money.”

Before closing the conversation, Maguire slipped in a compliment for the new town administrator, who started the job this month.

“Eric Anderson is doing an awesome job,” he said.

Past Hebron DTC Chair Named State Election Director

by Sloan Brewster

Former leader of the Hebron Democratic Town Committee, Ted Bromley, has been named state Election Director.

According to a press release from Secretary of the State Denise Merrill’s office, which the *Rivereast* received this week, Bromley took over the post on August 2. He replaced Peggy Reeves, who was in the position since 2011 and retired August 1.

“I’m delighted to promote Ted Bromley to the role of Election Director,” Merrill said in the press release. “Ted has long been an integral member of our legal team, tasked with interpreting Connecticut election law, advising local election officials, and drafting proposed legislation. I am looking forward to working with him in his new role!”

Bromley, a graduate of Hobart College and Western New England School of Law and a member of the bar in both Connecticut and the District of Columbia, will oversee the Legislation and Election Administration Division and serve as a liaison between the Secretary of the State’s office and local election officials throughout the state, according to the press release.

In a phone call Wednesday, Bromley, who resigned from the chairmanship of the town committee in March, said that he “sort of” knew he would be named to the position when he made the decision to step down.

He has been working for the state since 2001 and has always been in the Elections Administration Department, where he worked as a staff attorney, he said. He was interim election director for about one-and-a-half or two years back when Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz was secretary of the state.

Bromley said he is looking forward to the new gig, which he called a “very high profile opportunity.”

With 169 towns in the state and presidential, gubernatorial and municipal elections to administer, every day brings a new and different issue to untangle, he said.

“I think it’s going to be a new challenge,” he said. “I’m certainly looking forward to it.”

Situations he has played a role in resolving include when the city of Bridgeport ran out of ballots in 2010 and when old voting machines were traded in for the optical scans currently used, Bromley said.

He was also on hand when the state implemented a statewide voter registration system that facilitates communication between communities.

“So all the communities talk to each other,” Bromley said. “They know who is registered, and you can only be registered in one town.”

New challenges he said he expects to face include threats by people and foreign governments attempting to inject themselves into U.S. elections.

“I think the thing that we’re going to have to deal with now is cybersecurity,” he said.

Tiffany Thiele, who replaced Bromley as chair of Hebron’s Democratic Town Committee, wished Bromley the best in his new role.

“We are so proud of Ted and his many accomplishments,” she said. “Ted was instrumental in rebuilding the Democratic Party in Hebron, and it is this determination and work ethic he will bring with him in this new role. We wish him all the best and remain grateful for all his support.”

East Hampton Police News

8/14: Gabriel Jerjies, 19, of 3 Curry Ln., was issued a summons for operating a motor vehicle while under suspension and traveling unreasonably fast, East Hampton Police said.

8/14: Scott Young, 48, of 23 Plains Rd., East Haddam, was issued a summons for operating a motor vehicle while under suspension, police said.

8/16: Roxann Turnage, 41, of 35 White Birch Rd., was charged with possession of a controlled substance, possession of less than half an ounce of marijuana and sixth-degree larceny, police said.

8/21: Erik Brunsgaard, 31, of 24 Tarragon Dr., was charged with second-degree threatening, police said.

Also, from Aug. 12-19, officers responded to 12 medical calls, 10 motor crashes and four alarms, and made 19 traffic stops, police said.

Portland Police News

8/20: Matthew Solek, 51, of 608 Main St., was charged with risk of injury to minor, third-degree assault and second-degree threatening, Portland Police said.

A Fond Farewell

by Elizabeth Regan

[Editor's Note: This is Elizabeth Regan's final week as a *Rivereast* reporter, so she is writing this week's column.]

I consider my journalism career a trial by fire. It began when I woke up one morning as a 35-year-old, stay-at-home mom struck suddenly by the idea to start a news website devoted to my small town. Ever since then, I've been learning as I go along.

My first big story came when the quintessentially local package store burned down. Weeks later, I reported to the scene of a blaze tearing through a perfectly maintained log cabin at the center of a divorce dispute. It was there I witnessed – and caught on video – the shooting of the home's unarmed owner and suspected arsonist by a state trooper. It was my first experience with tools that have become as important to me as my pen and notebook, like assessor's records, court filings and the state Freedom of Information Act.

I came to the *Rivereast* – after stints with a daily newspaper in southeastern Connecticut and an online news outlet covering the state Capitol – to focus on the towns of East Hampton and Portland. It wasn't long before I was covering another fire, this time at the popular banquet facility that spanned both my towns. Guests at a June wedding reception being held at the marina had just been served cake when flames started to eat through the rafters. After the television news crews disappeared, I was the one who discovered the business lacked zoning, building, and food service permits necessary to conduct business on the East Hampton side of the border.

Portland and East Hampton have informed my abiding interest in, and deep respect for, local zoning regulations. These guidelines, as much as the local charter or any voluminous book of ordinances, form the foundation of a town. Zoning touches everything, from economic development to watershed protection to the very health, welfare and safety of each resident in town.

I will never forget the East Hampton Planning and Zoning Commission member who threw down a binder of stormwater management requirements for a subdivision in the lake watershed when confronted with allegations from concerned citizens that the commission had not done enough to protect the lake from overdevelopment. The spiral-bound book made a massive thud as it hit the table.

"We don't let people just do what they want," the commissioner said.

That is what I always tried to capture in my stories – the messy intersection between the governed and those who govern. Seldom is either party all right or all wrong. Seldom are their intentions totally altruistic or truly evil. So where is the truth? It is not enough for me to report the different sides of an issue; I try to truly understand them.

The people who have taught me the most, however, are the few who think the rules don't apply to them and those who have made an art out of manipulating the rules to their own advantage. I have seen because of them how crucial it is to have clear and uniformly-enforced rules and regulations, even as I've come to understand that all laws are fluid. They are the ones who, in trying to hide behind or subvert the status quo, inadvertently proved to me it is in the citizen's power to change things.

Through our quirky, frustrating and fundamentally beautiful form of local government, anyone can petition for an ordinance change, apply for a text amendment to update zoning regulations, vote at a town meeting or cast a ballot in an election. Heck, sometimes your votes even count twice.

I am writing today's column because this issue marks my last as a reporter with the

Rivereast. I have decided to pursue a more flexible writing career as part of that neverending and elusive search for career/life balance. My children are getting older and it is becoming abundantly clear to me that our time together is fleeting. I am trading in the evening-intensive job as a *Rivereast* reporter for a schedule of my own making: one that leaves time for family dinners and ballgames even as it allows me to explore opportunities with media outlets across a wider swath of the state on a freelance basis.

I'm asking you, in my absence, to keep an eye on things. There's a public hearing on Sept. 4 where representatives of Saint Clements Castle will ask the East Hampton Planning and Zoning Commission for zone change and permit approval to resume operations that were shut down by local authorities in the aftermath of the fire. While the property was grandfathered into the current residential zone as a marina, zoning officials contend the business is not allowed under existing regulations to operate as a banquet facility.

On Sept. 19, the Portland Planning and Zoning Commission will open its second public hearing on a text amendment to tighten regulations that have allowed Selectman Ben Srb, a local developer and businessman, to excavate a large but unspecified amount of sand and gravel from a property at the Four Corners for more than five years outside of special permit oversight. It's an issue land use officials have been struggling to address since Srb first applied to build a single-family house on the site back in 2014, when he said he was simply making room for construction – not running a commercial sand pit.

And on Nov. 5, polls will open for this year's municipal elections as voters cast ballots for offices ranging from town council and board of selectmen to zoning board of appeals. Not only is it critical to vote, it's also crucial to look at the way elections are conducted.

Unfortunately, there is now a terrible precedent in Connecticut with my name on it that makes it more difficult for the public to view ballots after an election when questions about the process or the outcome arise. The state's opinion is basically that the right to privacy laid out in election law trumps the public's right to know as enshrined in the state Freedom of Information Act. It all stems from my efforts to inspect hand-counted ballots from the 2017 municipal election after a recount revealed an unspecified number of ballots had been counted twice. The Freedom of Information Commission upheld on two occasions the town's refusal to disclose the ballots, and the town subsequently destroyed them.

The election that year included a referendum question on the construction of the \$18.98 million municipal hub. It passed by only 30 votes and, despite election officials' realization that an error had been made, there was no recount for that particular question. Now, the public will never know with certainty whether or not it actually passed.

On the eve of my departure from the *Rivereast*, I'd like to thank everyone who made these past four years such an enjoyable and fulfilling experience – as well as the ones who made it difficult. I'm a better reporter for having known all of you.

It's hard to believe that just over six years ago, Snarski's Liquors was still standing and the log cabin on Witter Road seemed so peaceful in the shade. That's what it looked like in Salem the day I woke up and decided to be a reporter. That's when it all changed.

I look forward to the next phase of a career forged by fire – one that continues to be shaped by the truth and the lies found in the rubble.

Obituaries

East Hampton

Charlene Culbert Ford

Charlene Culbert Ford of Ormond Beach, Fla., formerly of East Hampton, Moodus and Westchester, passed away Friday, July 19, in Daytona Beach, Fla. She was born Feb. 26, 1947, in Houlton, Maine, daughter of the late Charles and Sylvia Culbert.



Charlene moved to Connecticut at an early age and attended Connecticut schools. In 2012 she moved to Ormond Beach and became a member of the Crossroad Calvary Church.

Charlene is survived by her loving husband of 32 years, Oliver; son John and his wife Carol Witherly and daughter Terry and her husband Michael Perry of Connecticut; four stepchildren, Karen Ford, Jonathan Ford, Douglas Ford of Connecticut and the late Bonnie Ford and her loving five grandchildren, John, Johnny, Corrie, Caroline and Thomas.

Charlene was one of seven children, Wayne Culbert, Eddie Culbert, Carletta and her husband Ken Benjamin, Ellen and her husband Jimmy Kracowsky of Connecticut, Gary Culbert and his wife Margaret of Holly Hill and the late Cliff Culbert. She is also survived by several nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were held Wednesday July 24.

East Hampton

William J. Dickenson

William "Billy" J. Dickenson, 60, of East Hampton, died Sunday, Aug. 25, at Middlesex Hospital. Born Oct. 11, 1958, in Hartford, he was the son of the late Robert Dickenson and Mary Driscoll.

Billy was a lifelong resident of East Hampton and had worked as a pipe insulator and was a member of the Heat Frost Insulators Union Local 33. Billy was an avid Red Sox and the New England Patriots fan.

He is survived by his companion of over 30 years, Elizabeth "Liz" Boudreau of East Hampton; three sons, Brian Dickenson, Patrick Burbank, Art McKinney; three daughters, Melissa Dickenson, Holly Visone, Tara Harrington; two brothers, Patrick and Robert Dickenson; two sisters, Debbie Dickenson, Donita Dickenson; and 10 grandchildren.

He was predeceased by his son, Jason McKinney, and his sister, Donna "Peaches" Dickenson.

A graveside service will be held Saturday, Aug. 31, at 10 a.m., in St. Patrick Cemetery, Maple Street, East Hampton.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

East Hampton

Debra Ann Naughton

Debra Ann Naughton, daughter of the late William J. Naughton and Jean Blackford Naughton, passed away recently at her home in East Hampton.



Debra was a proud graduate of East Hampton High School, Class of 1974, and she attended Central Connecticut State College. Debra played basketball in high school and competitive women's softball for several years, where she was a standout pitcher. She was a talented photographer and for a while she had her own little business, 'Photography by Naughton.' Debra worked many years for SNET and also served as a volunteer EMT for the East Hampton Ambulance Association. She loved her golden retrievers, Misty and Honey.

Debra was predeceased by her parents; her brother, James; and her nephew, Kevin. She is survived by her brothers, Bill Naughton Jr. and Robert Naughton; her nieces, Katy, Kelly and Vanessa; her nephew, William; and several aunts, uncles and cousins.

Arrangements for interment in the family plot at St. Patrick Cemetery in East Hampton will be private.

Amston

John L. Salvas

John L. Salvas, 53, of Amston, husband of Kasey (Esteves) Salvas, died Monday, Aug. 19, at Yale New Haven Hospital.

He was born Dec. 6, 1965, in New London, the son of Rosemary (Annin) Salvas and the late Leonard R. Salvas. John attended schools in Groton, graduating from Fitch Senior High School. He had an A.A. in business management from Axia College and a B.S. in manufacturing management from Goodwin College. John was currently employed as quality assurance manager at Satellite Tool and Machine Company in South Windsor. He was a member of various groups associated with aviation and aerospace industry.

John was a devoted family man. He always had ongoing home improvement projects. An avid Red Sox fan, he enjoyed many trips with his family to Fenway each season.

In addition to his wife and mother, John is survived by his sons, Alex, Brandon, Christian, Joshua and Jack; father and mother-in-law, Alfred and Isabelle (Donahue) Esteves of Portland; two brothers-in-law and their wives, Steven (Kristen) and Jason (Jen); several nieces and nephews and his large extended family in Vermont.

The funeral liturgy was held Monday, Aug. 26, at St. John Church, 19 St. John Sq., Middletown. Burial was at the convenience of his family. Friends called at Biega Funeral Home, 3 Silver St., Middletown, on Sunday, Aug. 25.

In keeping with John's loving and generous spirit, it was his decision to donate life so that others may live. Those who wish may send memorial donations to charity of their choice.

