



RIVEREAST

# News Bulletin

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## Vigil Remembers Todt Family

by Karla Santos

Last Friday night was cold and dark, but sadness could be seen clearly through the candle lights reflecting the faces of Colchester community members who showed up to honor the Todt family.

The candlelight vigil was organized by Randi Gallagher and other employees of Family Physical Therapy. The business was owned by Anthony Todt and the vigil was held to remember the lives of his wife, three children and family dog – all of whom he confessed to killing at their home in Celebration, Fla.

During the vigil, a recording of a 13-year-old girl was played. She was friends with Alek, the Todt's older child. In the recording, Alek was playing the piano while his friend sang the song "Amazing Grace." Gallagher said the two 13-year-olds were supposed to perform together in Florida in May of this year.

A poem called "The Dash" was read during the vigil and a prayer was said by a priest from St. Andrew Catholic Church.

The vigil, which was held at the Colchester Town Green, was attended by dozens of community members who quietly gathered and held their candles while mourning the deaths of Megan Todt, 42, her children Alek, 13, Tyler, 11, Zoe, 4, and the family dog, Breezy.

"I was really sad but seeing everybody come together and hugging everybody, it just made me feel better," Gallagher said.

She said she still couldn't understand what had happened.

"He obviously wasn't the person we knew," Gallagher said of Anthony Todt. "I just can't understand."

The Family Physical Therapy employees

were moved by the tragedy and felt the vigil had to be held for the community, she added.

"We as employees were very close," Gallagher said. "It was like a family. We knew we just had to do it sooner rather than later. We just all felt it needed to get done just for the community because so many people knew the family and knew Tony."

Elizabeth Campbell, her husband Peter and their daughter Michelle are relatives of the Todt family who attended the vigil and held a sign that read "Remember Them with Love."

"I think the most important thing is to not remember how they died but to remember how they lived," Campbell said. "They are a beautiful family."

Campbell described Megan as "the sweetest person you'd ever want to meet."

"She had such a big smile, pretty blue eyes, delicate hands," she said.

But Campbell, like many community members, is still not over the tragedy, something she doubts will ever happen.

"It's not right that they are gone," Campbell said. "It's just not right. We'll never get over it, but we'll get through it."

She said she wants to try to remember them for the smiles and the good times and not their last days.

Campbell said she always met the Todts for Thanksgiving – except for the last two years or so.

"Even though they moved to Florida, they came back for Thanksgiving," she said. "We know now that's why they couldn't come up [this year]; they couldn't afford to come up because he had such financial trouble."



Michelle Campbell, far left, and her parents Peter, center, and Elizabeth, right, were among the many that attended a vigil last Friday evening on the Colchester Town Green in honor of Megan Todt and her three children. They described the Todts as "a beautiful family."

Campbell said her brother was very close to Alek and Tyler and they had a tradition of going to the lake together.

"My brother doesn't have any children and those two little boys became his," she said.

Harry Bolden said he knew Anthony Todt because many of his family members went to see him for therapy.

"This is the last guy that you would ever expect this thing to come from," he said.

Joan Bolden, meanwhile, told the *RiverEast* about the Anthony Todt she knew.

"We knew [the Todt family] from therapy but became friends, very good friends," Bolden said. She added that Anthony Todt "was a big part of the community. He was always with the students taking care of them, teaching them,

showing them different ways to take care of themselves. He had so much to do with the community and was always with the family, always with a smile."

When Bolden was asked what her impression was after learning about the tragedy she said "devastated, shocked, unbelievable – I refused to believe it."

She said her "heart aches for the whole family."

### Affidavit Paints Grisly Scene

Earlier in the day last Friday, down in Florida, the Osceola County Sheriff's Office released the arrest warrant affidavit that told how officers came to discover the tragic crime scene in Todt's Celebration, Fla., home.

See Vigil Remembers page 2

## Belldown Residents Approve Sale of Town Hall

by Jack Lakowsky

With the opening of the new municipal hub just weeks away, East Hampton residents Monday approved the sale of the current town hall building.

The sale passed 16-11. Among those 11 dissenters was one Town Council member – Democrat Derek Johnson. Johnson said in the meeting that he had issues with the lack of appraisal, the cost of the appraisal and the price of building maintenance, according to Kyle Dostaler, a former town council member who attended both the Monday town meeting and Tuesday's meeting of the Town Council.

Johnson did not respond to requests for comment before this story went to press.

The sale has also received approvals from the Planning & Zoning Commission and the Board of Finance.

The 13,382-square foot building on East High Street sold for \$316,000 to James Calciano, a real estate appraiser based in Bristol, according to the town's legal notice regarding the sale.

Calciano has yet to reveal his plans for the

building's future use. The appraisal company he represents was the only bidder.

Calciano did not reply to requests for comment.

For decades, officials have decried the deteriorating foundation, persistent flooding and contaminated water at the current town hall.

The town had originally requested \$500,000 for the building. In 2014, Eversource Energy offered \$1 million to a previous council to buy the building. This offer has since lapsed and expired. Former town manager Mike Maniscalco reached out to Eversource when the bidding process began early last year. He told the *RiverEast* last April that Eversource said it was no longer interested in the property.

According to East Hampton assessor data, the town hall property was assessed at a value of \$713,280 and has an appraisal value of \$982,870.

Dostaler also expressed concern about the sale process at a Town Council meeting Tuesday evening. He said he believes the council

and town officials should have done a better job disseminating the information to residents and that a new appraisal should have been performed.

"The whole manner in which the council has gone about this sale is a sham," Dostaler said following the meeting. "They failed to uphold their fiduciary duty to the taxpayers, which is to secure the best price in the public interest. This is not their property."

Dostaler said he believes that several evaluations should have been done by both the town and the buyer, as well as by third parties.

"They're the board of directors for this town," Dostaler said of the Town Council. "You have a responsibility to the people who elected you."

Dostaler questioned why the property was sold to a buyer who has not revealed a plan for the property's use.

East Hampton Town Manager David Cox said in a follow-up interview that a real estate market evaluation had been performed. He said that, typically, the buyer of a parcel of land per-

forms property appraisals.

"There are instances where a municipality needs an appraisal," Cox said. "There were no such requirements for this transaction."

"Typically, in a real estate deal, the buyer does the appraisal. They have lenders who need the information," said Dean Markham, a council member with experience in real estate development.

Cox and the council discussed the next steps for the sale in an executive session after the Town Council meeting Tuesday.

Cox told the council that the plan is to move to the new 34,000-sq. ft, \$18.98 million building by March 1. The new building, which is in the Edgewater Hills multi-use complex, will also house the police department and the Board of Education.

At a Planning and Zoning Commission meeting in early January, East Hampton planning and zoning official Jeremy DeCarli said the sale makes total sense because the building is in the heart of the town's commercial area.

### Vigil Remembers cont. from Front Page

According to the 19-page affidavit, federal agents arrived at the home to serve a warrant against Todt, who was the subject of a federal investigation into alleged health care fraud committed in Connecticut.

After being unable to reach Todt, agents conducted surveillance outside his home. On Jan. 13, the affidavit said, agents observed Todt sitting on the front porch and then entering his home. Additional deputies arrived at the scene and approached the front door of the condominium, making announcements while standing at the door. They called Todt to the door and told him they had an arrest warrant. Agents had the residence surrounded. There was no response from Todt, and agents and deputies proceeded to enter the home.

The warrant states the officers saw Todt walking down the stairs, and that he appeared to be shaking. Several officers stated in their report that upon entering the home they smelled a “foul odor.” Officers asked Todt if there was anybody else in the house and he said his wife was upstairs sleeping. The agents called out for Megan and got no response.

Deputies and agents then proceeded to check the residence. Reports from the deputies stated that they went upstairs and saw an open bedroom door to the right. They entered and found the bodies of Megan, her three children and the family dog.

Megan was found on the bed, covered in a

blanket. The bodies of Alek and Tyler were found on a mattress on the floor, also covered with blankets. The body of Zoe, meanwhile, was found wrapped in blankets at the foot of the bed. All were covered with blankets – and all of the bodies were in states of decomposition.

As reported last week, Megan, Tyler and Alek all had stab wounds to their abdomens, while Zoe did not have any visible injuries.

Officers checked the rest of the home, but did not find anybody else, the warrant states.

According to the affidavit, Todt was taken to the hospital because he had taken an unknown amount of Benadryl, in an attempt to kill himself. He was later held for making threatening comments, the affidavit states.

#### Funeral Today

A Mass of Christian Burial for Megan and her children will be celebrated at 10 a.m. today, Jan. 31, at St. John the Evangelist Church in Montville, with a reception to follow in the church community center after the Mass. A private burial ceremony will take place at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations in honor of Megan, Aleksander, Tyler and Zoe’s legacy may be made to the scholarship fund created in their honor: ATZ Scholarship Fund c/o Bank of America. Donations can be sent to any Bank of America branch.

### From the Editor’s Desk

## Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

First off, deep, deep apologies are in order not just for Colchester residents but all *Rivereast* readers.

Last week’s paper contained a pretty horrific mistake. On page 22, right underneath the continuation of the front page story on the Todt murders, was a photo collage the group Colchester is Kind sent me of 12 folks who were particularly kind in 2019. It seemed like a harmless enough photo collage – but it very much wasn’t.

One of the 12 people pictured, and named in the caption below, was Tony Todt. To make matters worse, the picture that represented him in the collage wasn’t just him – it was him with his kids. The same kids he’s confessed to murdering in the family’s Florida home.

That the collage was published at all last week was a terrible oversight. The fact that it appeared literally directly underneath a story about the killings was even worse. I was absolutely mortified when I learned of the mistake Friday afternoon.

Clearly, it was a failure in proofreading on our end. Every page of the *Rivereast* is carefully proofread before being transferred to the press – or is at least supposed to be. This obviously slipped through the cracks, and for that I am truly, truly sorry. We’ve taken the steps to make sure nothing like this ever happens again.

The *Rivereast* – and myself in particular – was the target of a fair amount of criticism last weekend because of the error. That’s fine; I deserved it, and I can take my lumps. But the Colchester is Kind group was also the subject of attacks, and that’s truly unfortunate, as this was definitely not their fault.

Colchester is Kind sent me that photo collage on Dec. 23, well before there was any hint of the tragedy that was to come in Florida. Now, there was no paper that week due to the Christmas holiday, but the collage could’ve been printed in the first issue of 2020, the Jan. 3 one. It wasn’t, nor was it published in the subsequent two weeks. Simply put, there wasn’t space for it. It was a large photo collage – understandably so, considering it included 12 individual headshots and there is a finite amount of space in the Colchester section of the paper each week.

So, we had to wait until the right amount of space presented itself – and unfortunately that came last week.

Obviously, the collage should’ve been edited to remove Tony and let the others have their moment. But, just as obviously, that didn’t happen. Again, it was a horrific proofreading oversight.

My sincerest apologies to everyone.

\* \* \*

I realize this may not exactly be the right time for me to weigh in on the state of journalism. But what happened this past Tuesday with Fotis Dulos wasn’t a great look for the Connecticut news industry, and it bears mentioning.

It was discovered that Fotis Dulos had attempted suicide. That was about the one thing everybody could agree on. Was the attempt successful? Depends on who you asked – and when you asked them.

TV and print outlets went back and forth as to whether Dulos was actually dead. Some sources were saying yes, others were saying no. Some said yes and then said no. Some said no, then yes, then back to no.

I watched one website change virtually before my eyes. The news story said Dulos was dead and then not 30 seconds later that exact line had been altered to remove any mention of death.

It was a rush to be the first with the news – and accuracy took a back seat. Is it so important to be first that you’re willing to sacrifice your reputation? As a friend of mine, who used to work in news, said, “It’s okay to not report something if you don’t have it confirmed.”

I’m sure stations wanted to be able to put together self-congratulatory ads touting that they were “first in the state” with the news that Dulos had died. But, to what end? You should never sacrifice your integrity for the chance to “scoop” somebody – especially if your so-called scoop turns out not to be true.

A similar situation played out on a national scale just two days earlier, with news of the helicopter crash that claimed the life of Kobe Bryant and his daughter. First five people were reported to be killed – it later turned out to be nine. Among the victims were all four of Bryant’s daughters – as we know now, only one of his daughters was tragically aboard that helicopter.

One of the victims was allegedly former NBA player Rick Fox – he turned out to be very much alive, and in fact texted an ESPN reporter saying exactly that. The NBA supposedly cancelled all of that day’s games after news of the death – except whoops, the games were all played after all.

Again, everyone wanted to be first with the news that stories went out with no confirmation – prompting retractions and egg-on-your-face moments later. It was not a great moment for news reporting.

The 24-hour news cycle can be a great thing. But it can also be horribly misused. Sunday nationally, and Tuesday here in Connecticut, brought great examples of that.

\* \* \*

See you next week.

# East Hampton Principals Press for Teacher Restorations

by Jack Lakowsky

Principals from each school in the East Hampton district discussed why they believe restoration of teaching positions eliminated in previous budgets should be a priority of the proposed 2020-21 Board of Education budget at the Jan. 27 budget workshop.

Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith has proposed a 3.75% budget increase for East Hampton's schools, totaling \$32.5 million. This is about \$1.17 million more than the current budget year.

Smith's figure is presented under fixed costs. Including fixed costs would have increased the proposal to a 4.31% request, a figure Smith said he avoided through staff realignment, transfer of staff and a re-prioritization of accounts.

Eight teaching positions have been cut in the last two years, according to Smith.

The teaching positions for which East Hampton's school principals advocated were not included in this year's requested budget. They are largely in the science, math and world language subject areas.

According to East Hampton High School principal Eric Verner, a new state statute requires an additional credit of health and wellness education to be taught to the Class of 2023 – this year's high school freshmen.

Verner, along with East Hampton Middle School Principal Jason Lehman, explained that, currently, the high school and middle school physical education teachers split time between the two buildings. This makes for both larger class sizes and fewer PE sections offered. According to Lehman, this has created additional study hall time in the middle school. The two principals explained that these factors, coupled with the new state requirement, have made necessary the addition of a health/PE instructor.

"Right now, sixth-graders have PE twice a week," Lehman said. "Our goal is to have three."

According to the proposal summary supplied by Smith, a health education/ PE teaching position was eliminated in the 2017-18 budget year. This high school position was salaried at \$76,000, according to the document.

Board member Jim Radavich Jr. asked the principals if the excess study halls at the middle could be used for additional teaching time. Radavich asked if it's more complex than giving a teacher a textbook and asking them to teach.

Smith explained that teaching hours are limited by contract and that any increase in instruction time would need to be compensated with additional salary.

Verner then went on to include in his presentation was the restoration of the math teaching position cut in the 2017-18 budget year. The position's salary and benefits would total \$76,000 per year, according to documentation supplied by the superintendent's office.

Verner said the restoration of this position would allow the school to include a financial algebra course and one additional section of Advanced Placement (AP) Statistics. He also said that this would make for smaller class sizes, allowing for higher quality instruction.

Verner also discussed the need for updated robotics equipment at EHHS. Smith has said previously that fostering more science; technology, engineering and math (STEM) will be a priority for the coming budget.

According to Verner, the high school's current robotics equipment is not appropriate to facilitate higher-level learning relevant to a dynamic field. Smith added that both the high school and middle school use the same robots.

Another step in advancing East Hampton's STEM learning would be the creation of competitive robotics teams at both the middle school and the high school. According to the proposal, this will expose students to advanced robotics learning.

The effort to improve STEM learning also extends to Belltown's elementary schools.

The proposal reads that a kindergarten teaching position at Memorial School was not included in this year's budget proposal but will be considered in future budgets. The cost of this position's salary and benefits would be \$76,000 per year.

Memorial School Principal Andrew Gonzalez explained that the purpose of adding this position would benefit students by reducing class sizes. He said kindergarten classes at Memorial average 26 students.

"If we have a growth mindset, that number should really be between 13 and 17. This is an investment that will have a big return in a short time," he said.

Meghan Ryczek, a kindergarten teacher at Memorial school, explained some of the difficulties that arise from teaching large class-

rooms.

"A high number of students make personal needs more difficult to meet," Ryczek said. "Small size classrooms maximize teaching opportunities."

Ryczek is a recipient of the "Life Changer of the Year" award, which recognizes "educators...who make a positive difference in the lives of students all across the country."

The issue of classroom size was also raised by Center School principal Chris Sullivan, who has said the restoration of a fifth-grade teaching position that was cut in the 2017-18 budget year would lessen the class size average of 26 students.

"Equity is lost," Sullivan said. "An added section lightens the load on the kids."

Sullivan said it would be irresponsible to maintain this large classroom size. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, Connecticut classroom average about 20 students.

Along with STEM, restoration and improvement of East Hampton's world language curriculum is a goal listed in the proposal. In a previous Board of Education meeting, Smith said that East Hampton schools are at a disadvantage in world language instruction.

According to the proposal, a world language teaching position for grades 3-5 at both Center and Memorial was considered for but not included in this year's budget proposal.

Middle school principal Lehman explained that, currently, 6<sup>th</sup> grade students are not offered a world language course. He said that this prevents students from taking any AP language courses in high school, as enrollment in this advanced class requires five years of language instruction.

Lehman proposed that sixth grade students be taught one-half of a year of French instruction and a half-year of Spanish. Students would then choose which language to pursue throughout middle and high school. Smith has said that restoration of a sixth-grade language teacher should be a focus of the school board.

Smith has proposed online world language instruction software to be introduced at the high school. Smith said that Mandarin/Chinese would be a focus; but that students can choose any language they wish to learn. Also considered, but not included, in the proposal was the

restoration of a world language teacher at EHHS, also salaried at \$76,000 a year. Smith said that he knows of three students who have expressed interest in this.

To communicate the importance of world language learning, the proposal includes reference to a *New York Times* article detailing the enhancement of the brain's executive function – a command system directing planning, problem solving and other demanding cognitions-through bilingualism.

Student support was another priority listed in Smith's proposal. It presents a district-wide, no-cost plan to train East Hampton School's employees in mental health first aid. As of early 2020, 25 teachers and staff have been trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid.

"We want to create a culture where kids can discuss anything," Smith said in a previous interview with the *Rivereast*.

In a Board of Education meeting in December, East Hampton Public Schools Technology Director Rich Fielding told the board that extra money is needed to replace much of the district's aging technological infrastructure. He said that the hefty request – \$571,771 – is the result of cuts made by the Town Council. He said that, had the council not made these cuts, his requested amount would have been less than \$300,000.

The superintendent's proposal included a graph depicting the money savings secured by the school system through offering an in-district special education program rather than outsourcing such services to other areas. According to the proposal, this effort has saved the community \$3 million.

The proposal also states that East Hampton's per pupil expenditures are less than the state average; \$16,204 in 2018-19 compared to the Connecticut average of \$16,988.

Earlier this month, former Board of Education member Laurie Caldwell resigned from her position. The board will interview four candidates in an executive session on Feb. 10. The chosen member will serve until the end of Caldwell's term, in November 2021.

If the Board of Education does not decide on a candidate within 30 days of the resignation, the Town Council assumes control of the process.

## RHAM Budget Timeline

The RHAM Board of Education will hold budget workshops Monday, Feb. 3, at 6:30 p.m., at RHAM High School, 85 Wall St., Hebron, and Monday, Feb. 10, at 6:30 p.m. at Marlborough Elementary School.

The board will hold its next regular meeting Monday, Feb. 24, at 6:30 p.m. at Andover Elementary School.

A public budget hearing and special Board of Education meeting to set the budget number for referendum will be held Monday, April 6, at 6:30 p.m.

The budget referendum will take place Thursday, May 5.

# East Hampton Launches New Mattress Recycling Service

by Jack Lakowsky

East Hampton's Department of Public Works has introduced a new mattress recycling service at the transfer station on Bear Swamp Road. According to public works director Matt Walsh, this will save taxpayer dollars.

"The town is charged a \$30 fee for every decent mattress in our waste stream," Walsh said. "We got this started when we saw our bulky waste invoice."

Walsh added that eliminating this bulky waste was a major goal of his department. He said that, on Saturdays, the transfer station receives between five and ten mattresses from residents.

Residents can recycle their mattresses for free, as the Connecticut chapter of the Mattress Recycling Council (MRC) provides the service. Mattresses can be dropped in a designated bin at the transfer station. The mattresses must be in reasonably decent, usable condition.

"They can be stained or used. Bedspings can be taken in, too," Walsh said.

Walsh explained that the State of Connecticut

introduced a statute in 2013 requiring that producers and retailers join the Mattress Recycling Council. According to this statute, retailers were required to establish a statewide mattress stewardship program. It reads that recycling discarded mattresses will be the preferred disposal method. The statutes stated goal is to minimize public sector involvement in managing discarded mattresses.

Walsh added that, when a person replaces their mattress, retailers are required to take the unwanted mattress from the buyer and dispose of it properly.

"The mattress recycling council really turned this around in about two weeks," Walsh said.

MRC is a nonprofit organization that develops and implements mattress-recycling programs across Connecticut. MRC's "Bye Bye Mattress" program has collected more than 184,000 beds, diverting almost 3,000 tons of material from the state waste stream in the 2018-19 reporting period, according to MRC's website. Since May 2015 – when CT MRC

began – the service has collected more than 680,000 mattresses and 11,000 tons of material.

MRC has collected more than 4 million mattresses in Connecticut, California and Rhode Island combined.

The program has expanded to 139 locations across Connecticut, according to the website. MRC serves 136 municipalities and 239 private entities including mattress retailers, hotels, universities and junk removal services. Consumers can find free recycling locations across the state at [byebyemattress.com](http://byebyemattress.com).

Mattresses collected through the program are deconstructed, according to MRC information. Materials can be made into new products like carpet padding, insulation or mulch.

An MRC infographic reads that 80% of a used mattress' materials can be recycled. Interior materials are organized by type. Soft commodities are compressed. Metal and box springs are extracted, sent to scrap recyclers, and then sold to steel mills and foundries. Wood from

the frame can be reused for fuel.

MRC is unable to recycle the following: damaged, wet, frozen or soiled mattresses or box springs; items infested with bed bugs; mattress pads or toppers; sleeping bags; pillows; and car beds.

"As a whole, East Hampton recycles whatever it can – batteries, oil, anything," Walsh said.

The Department of Public Works page on the town's website lists instructions for recycling and items that can be recycled. The website reads that cleaned glass and aluminum cans, flattened corrugated cardboard, plastics #1-#17, magazines, junk mail, office paper, newspaper, paper bags and paperboard can all be recycled and diverted from landfills and trash-to-energy plants.

The East Hampton transfer station also offers electronics recycling. Computers, printers, televisions, DVD players, video game consoles, phones and microwaves can all be recycled. For a full list of recyclable items, visit the town's website at [easthamptonct.gov](http://easthamptonct.gov).

# No Lead Detected in Gilead Hill School Drinking Water

by Sloan Brewster

A thorough testing of water at Gilead Hill School that, according to school board members, left no stone unturned indicates there is no lead in the school's drinking water.

At last Thursday's Board of Education meeting, the board unanimously passed a motion authorizing the immediate release of the GHS Lead & Copper Drinking Water Sampling report by TRC Companies, Inc., of Windsor.

"We are very pleased to communicate that our consultant, TRC, did a robust sampling at our directive," Board of Education Chair Heather Petit said.

The board received the report that day and spent a lengthy time in executive session going over it before opening the meeting to the public and announcing it indicated the water was free of lead.

"All drinking fountains are non-detect for lead," Petit said. "We are very happy with those results."

In October, the board hired the consultants to assess the drinking water at the suggestion of Interim Superintendent of Schools Lynne Pierson. Pierson said she made the suggestion after John Collins, selectman, asked about lead at GHS.

Collins, a scientist with a background in en-

vironmental chemistry in iron metals, such as lead, has been very vocal about his assertion that that levels of the neurotoxin should be zero.

At a Board of Selectmen meeting in December, Collins read a letter from Pierson, in which she stated that the school had started flushing pipes but that lead levels were in compliance with EPA standards.

Compliance or no, the levels should be reduced, Collins insisted.

No amount of lead is safe, he said. The EPA, in a report released last year, said the same.

"The threshold standard is not a health-based standard," he said. "It doesn't protect children."

Echoing Collins' concern, parents spoke or read letters to the Board of Selectmen, some saying the water at the school should not be used for eating or drinking.

According to the newly-released report, however, 13 out of 13 water fountains came back "non-detect" for lead and well below EPA action levels for copper.

One of the 52 non-drinking water sinks – the custodial closet slop sink – was at the EPA action levels for lead on first draw, the report states. The second draw, after the tap was flushed for 30 seconds, indicated amounts "well below the EPA action level."

According to the report, the drop in lead concentration after flushing could mean the tap was not flushed the night before. Before testing, school personnel were instructed to flush the pipes and then allow water to sit stagnant overnight in the lines.

The report adds that, due to the sink's location, there is a "very low" chance that water from the sink will accidentally be consumed and it does not pose an immediate health concern.

In addition, three well house taps, a storage room sink and the tap in the boiler room detected lead concentrations below the action level on first draw but indicated the water was clear after a 30-second flush.

After reading the report, board members commented that no stone was left unturned and that the results speak for themselves.

"I think it's great, not only as a board member, but as a mom," Amanda Veneziano said. "You know what your child is drinking."

"I'm so happy we have data that says lead levels at all drinking fountains are non-detect," Alyson Schmeizl said.

"We went above and beyond to protect community members," said Keith Petit.

The board also directed Superintendent of Schools Thomas Baird to implement recommendations outlined in the report.

Those recommendations include labeling the fixtures that had led on first draw "not to be used for human consumption," and that the district should consider replacing them. In the meantime, the district should implement best management practices, such as daily flushing and regular cleaning of taps and aerators.

The district is currently in the process of replacing pipes at Hebron Elementary School after three years of failing to reduce lead levels in drinking water there.

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, Former Schools Superintendent Timothy Van Tassel has said. There was no lead problem in pipes in the wings added in 1988 and 2000, when the solder was no longer used.

While solder no longer contains lead, it will not be used in the project, Mal Leichter, chairman of the Hebron Elementary School Drinking Water Remediation Building Committee and Board of Finance member, said.

# RHAM Proposed Capital Budget a Drop from Current Year

by Sloan Brewster

RHAM's schools superintendent is asking for \$448,232 to put toward capital projects in the next school year – a dip of about \$69,000 from the current fiscal year.

Superintendent of Schools Patricia Law, who presented the numbers at Monday's education board meeting, told board members that the Facilities Subcommittee considered a total of \$1.56 million in projects before honing in on the list.

Law pointed out that amount was a decrease from the current year's capital budget.

In total, the request is a \$68,744 or 13.30% less than the current year's \$516,976 expense.

Law told the board that the capital non-recurring account has a balance of \$20,389, which could be used towards contingencies for the upcoming project for traffic reconfigurations on the RHAM school campus project scheduled for this summer.

The highest-priced project on the list is \$150,000 to regrade the athletic outfield portion of the high school baseball field and remove surface irregularities and depressions.

The plan is to remove grass, regrade the field – assuring there is appropriate drainage – and replace the grass, Law said in a phone call Wednesday.

The depressions and uneven spots are not good for athletes running on the field, she said. The district has tried to remedy the issues with patches, but that has not solved the problem.

Similar issues on the infield playing area were already repaired, Law said.

A proposed athletic turf project is for a separate field – the competition field – Law said. The issue there is that the field material was not put down properly. Parents have long decried drainage issues on the field and at often attend board meetings to complain about games being cancelled or moved because of the wet field.

Last October, the board held three public sessions on the proposal to install a \$2.5 million artificial turf field to fix the drainage issues. Most speakers at the session were in favor of installing the turf.

Law proposes spending \$15,000 to hire an engineering firm to develop a strategic plan for athletics facilities.

She is requesting \$62,000 to refinish the floors in the school gyms. According to the Power Point presentation she gave at the meeting, the 7,533-square foot middle school gym would cost \$24,000. The 13,950-square foot

high school gym would run \$38,000, which was the lower of two bids, with the second bid coming in at \$53,000.

Annual light sanding and re-varnishing done on the floors creates tiny spaces between the planks that lets dirt in and leads to buckling and bumps in the floor, Law said. The plan is to sand the floors down – allowing the planks to reposition – repaint in the lines and add varnish.

The original floors in the school, they have never been completely sanded and re-varnished, Law said. The result will be a "nice new floor that's a little bit smother."

To upgrade cameras on the exterior of the buildings would cost \$40,000.

For new chairs in the media center, Law is asking for \$18,000.

For the current school year, the capital budget includes \$410,000 to fix the heating, ventilation and air conditioning unit and replace the carpet in the media center, which Law complained had an unpleasant odor due to moisture, dampness, humidity and dehumidification issues.

Law is also asking for \$20,000 to repair sidewalks around campus, which, according to her

presentation, is less than earlier \$40,000 and 30,000 estimates for the project.

To put in new rubber treads on the stairs and ramp in the high school cafeteria, Law is asking for \$15,800. The price includes materials and labor.

To replace the carpet in a classroom and add moisture control, she is asking for \$15,874. The price also includes moving services. She wants \$11,129 to replace a carpet in another classroom with vinyl tile flooring.

For a new dump truck and plow, Law is asking for \$14,870. To get a new mower, she is asking for \$18,000.

A \$15,000 request would pay for a landscape architect to redesign the main entrance at the high school, keeping security a priority.

Adding gates at the high school and middle school to reduce off hour access to the building would run \$10,559.

The list also includes \$10,000 for some exterior repairs, including to insulation, control joints and caulking.

In the call, Law said many of the items on the list were "small general maintenance projects, things that need to get done, but they add up over time."

# Brownfields Focus Group Formed in Portland

by Jack Lakowsky

"Dream big."

This was the advice offered by Portland's Economic Development Coordinator, Mary Dickerson, to the newly formed Brownfields Redevelopment Focus Group in its inaugural meeting held Wednesday evening.

"You're developing a piece of the Connecticut riverfront," Dickerson said to the group. "This will be a major economic driver for the region."

Dickerson explained that the decisions made by the group would influence Portland's economy, aesthetics and quality of life for the next few decades.

The focus group, created in early January by First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield and the Board of Selectmen, will evaluate how to best redevelop three town-owned Brownfields along Brownstone Avenue, an area totaling about five acres. They are also tasked with communicating their efforts to the public.

When remediated, the properties will be zoned for commercial use, not residential, according to licensed environmental professional (LEP) Amy Vallencourt, who works for Tighe & Bond, an environmental and engineering consulting firm.

"My charge is to remediate the property with grant funds," Vallencourt said.

Vallencourt will direct her efforts and pro-

cesses based on the group's suggestions and goals for the location's use. Vallencourt will also draft suggestions and offer cost estimates.

The focus group consists of more than 20 members. Bransfield and the selectmen wanted a large group of people with various professional backgrounds-including lawyers, real estate developers and landscape architects- to spearhead this effort, which is the first of its kind in Portland, according to Bransfield.

"This is not just an environmental clean up," Bransfield said. "This is an economic redevelopment project."

Bransfield explained that, when the properties were in use, the town was receiving \$16,000 a year in tax revenue.

"Right now, we're getting nothing," she said.

Bransfield said the town was awarded a \$750,000 grant by Connecticut's Department of Economic and Community Development. She said state officials ranked Portland a first priority. The focus group and Vallencourt will use this award to fund the project, negating the cost to taxpayers.

The grant funds are valid until Dec. 2021.

According to Bransfield, this award did not initially cover the \$800,000 price tag requested by the owner of the Brownstone Avenue properties. She explained that, after intensive negotiations, the owner reduced the price to

\$385,000.

Before the \$750,000 grant, Portland also received a \$200,000 assessment grant to investigate the brownfields. This investigation uncovered significant environmental hazards, according to Bransfield. This, in turn, motivated the town to apply for the larger grant and pursue remediation.

Portland has engaged a in series of intensive studies about the properties, the earliest of which dates back to the early 2000's, according to documentation supplied by Dickerson. These were more commercial studies that provided a development blueprint for a decades-long span of time.

Elements of both studies have been incorporated into Portland's Plan of Conservation and Development.

Dickerson expressed enthusiasm for the project, citing the success of the public/private partnership with the Brownstone Exploration and Discovery Park.

"Fourteen years ago, no one would have guessed Brownstone would bring 80,000 people-or \$400,000- a year to Portland," Dickerson said.

"The riverfront is a huge advantage," she added. "Not everyone can offer riverfront property. Luckily, we don't have as much pollution as a lot of towns."

Bransfield noted that communicating with other towns in the region, including Glastonbury, Middletown and East Hartford-all of which have engaged in successful brownfield redevelopment projects- will be of great benefit to the group's proceedings.

The group elected Bob Petzold, owner of Petzold's Marine Center on Indian Hill Avenue, as chairman. The group forewent selecting a vice chairman or secretary, believing it best to wait until work begins.

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection defines brownfields as a site once used for industrial, manufacturing or commercial use that has been abandoned due to known or suspected contamination from past uses.

These brownfield parcels then become inert and are a hindrance to revitalizing local economies. Investigation and remediation is required before any restoration, redevelopment, or remediation can occur, as required by state statute.

According to the DEEP website, the following are benefits of brownfield remediation: reduction or elimination of public exposure to pollutants; reducing industrial sprawl by returning abandoned sites to productive use; creating new tax revenue; reversing urban decay and revitalizing municipalities and; creating short and long-term jobs.

# Proposed RHAM Budget Would Cut Woodworking

by Sloan Brewster

RHAM's schools superintendent wants to spend \$31.53 million in the 2020-21 school year – and bring in some new programs, while cutting staff and an existing program, in the process.

The number, which includes \$954,553 in anticipated state revenues, combines operating and capital expenses, which the Board of Education separates when preparing budgets and when bringing the numbers to voters at referendum.

Superintendent Patricia Law, who presented the numbers at Monday's education board meeting, said the net cost to taxpayers – the total minus the state revenues – would be \$31.02 million – an \$868,993 or 2.88% increase over the current year.

The net for operating the schools minus the capital costs calculates to \$30.57 million – a \$937,737 increase or 3.16% over the current year.

To get to her numbers, Law proposes cutting the middle and high school woodworking program and bringing in some new courses, namely business communication, sports and entertainment marketing, IT fundamentals and software applications.

Law also proposes adding an SAT math skills course “to fill holes in skills, to build on those skills,” she said.

In addition, she wants to hire a technology technician for \$23,000, a hall monitor for \$21,512 and a school psychologist for \$41,030.

In addition to eliminating the woodworking program for \$82,705, Law proposes cutting five paraprofessionals, at \$21,512 each.

Cutting the paras would be done in conjunction with an alteration in how special education classes are scheduled and the students supported, Law said. Instead of relying on the paras, more certified English, math and social studies teachers would be incorporated into the classes.

“There's a fine balance that we have to keep with helping to support those students with their social-emotional needs and their academic needs,” Law said.

\* \* \*

The woodworking and metals programs compete for students, leading to a decline in enrollment in both courses, according to Law. Metals is part of the Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Program, so administrators want to sustain it.

“We have taken a very collaborative look at this; I have spent hours and hours with the department coordinator and the high school principal and the middle school principal” she told the board. “We believe that we need to sunset the woods program.”

As a potential alternative, Law proposed transitioning woods to a part-time program and incorporating lessons in pipeline skills, such as blueprint drafting and construction measuring. The measure would run the district \$34,000 for the teacher's salary and \$9,500 for supplies and materials – and was not her chosen solution.

“We really don't feel this is best,” she said, adding that the better option was to eliminate the program.

The proposed cut did not sit well with board members, who agreed the program was needed.

With 72 students currently enrolled and a maximum of 12 students per class, Joseph O'Connor said the program was not declining and that the numbers do not justify making it part-time.

“I personally believe that the woods program is a valuable asset to any school,” he said. “It's helped me in my career. I went on to become an engineer.”

David Gostanian did not support the proposal to incorporate blueprint-making into the class and pointed out that there were offerings aplenty for college-bound students.

“What about the kids that don't want to go to college?” he mused. Cutting the woods pro-

gram “would be a real disservice to a lot of kids.”

Stephanie Bancroft said there are competing programs in every department.

“To make a big deal out of competition between woods and metal doesn't really mean anything to me,” she said.

Bancroft attributed declines in sign-ups for woods classes to overall declining enrollment.

“I really don't see that as a lacking program,” she said.

\* \* \*

Enrollment is projected to go down by 400 students in the next four years, according to Law. Next year, she projected a 93-student reduction, from 1,391 at the two schools this year to 1,298 at the two schools next year. She said there would be 66 fewer at the middle school and 27 fewer at the high school.

Per a suggestion by O'Connor, the board directed Law to research what other districts are doing about declining enrollment and, in June, bring in ideas, possibly including adding sixth graders to the RHAM population and looking at regionalization.

\* \* \*

Also at O'Connor's behest, the board will discuss pay-to-play at its next meeting – which is in existence at both schools and requires students to participate in sports and extracurricular activities. O'Connor indicated he is not a fan.

“I personally don't believe in pay-to-play, have never believed in pay-to-play,” he said.

\* \* \*

While not exactly a topic during the budget talks, the board minced into the context of the budget a request by an unnamed physical education teacher for a one-year sabbatical to complete his nurse's training.

If the request is granted, during his time off, he would continue to get his full \$68,000 salary and would be obligated to work in the dis-

trict for three additional years after returning.

He is in his 13th year in his position, Law said.

Requesting the time off is allowable per the teacher contract, Law told board members. The board, on the other hand, said it was not required to approve the request.

Members went back and forth about whether it was a fair request with some saying the degree would benefit him in his position and others saying it would not.

Robert Schadtler said he was opposed to paying the teacher's salary while he worked toward a new career and suggested he should take a leave of absence instead of a paid sabbatical.

Judy Benson-Clarke, while saying she was not planning to vote against the proposal, requested more information and said she was concerned that the board would be “nickeling and diming” the budget and making cuts on such things as textbooks while paying the teacher's full salary while he was not working.

“I care about him,” Benson-Clarke said, adding she does not know him but cares about people in general. But, she said, “I care about the students more.”

The board tabled the discussion to give Law time to get more information on the matter and will revisit it at its February meeting.

\* \* \*

The budget would be split between the three towns in the district with Andover contributing 16.22% or 4.96 million; Hebron doling out 50.45% or \$15.42 million and Marlborough putting in 33.33% or \$10.19 million.

Law called the budget reasonable and noted that there is \$411,880 in surplus from the 2018-2019 school year. The district can use \$304,959 of that – 1% of the total budget for that year – in supplemental appropriations.

The \$106,920 remainder will offset the levy contributions of each of the towns for the 2020-21 budget.

## Sklarz Proposes \$7.74 Million Budget

by Karla Santos

Marlborough Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz last week proposed a 4.49% increase to the 2020-21 school budget – bringing it up \$333,000 to \$7.74 million.

As is the case most years, salaries and benefits account for the vast majority – more than 80% – of the budget. Sklarz has also proposed adding a kindergarten teacher for the 2020-21 year.

Out of the \$7.74 million in the budget, \$4.15 million will go towards the personnel and certified staff of the school. That's a 2.73% increase from the 2019-20 budget. The \$4.15 million in personnel includes contractual salaries for administrators, teachers and other similar items.

Of the proposed budget, \$1.11 million will go toward non-certified staff. That's a 12.48% increase from last year and it includes salaries for office and technology support, paraprofessionals, school nurse and custodians.

Employee benefits are \$1.14 million of the proposed budget. That's a 4.04% increase from the 2019-20 budget and it includes group health insurances, social security, pensions, workers compensation and unemployment.

In addition, purchased professional services account for \$171,959 of the proposed budget for the fiscal year 2020-21. That area has a decrease of 27.73%, since last year, purchased professional services were \$237,940 of the adopted budget. Purchased professional services include AHM Youth and Family Services, legal and audit fees, consultants, occupational and physical therapy.

Purchased property service will also see a decrease compared to last year's budget. The 2019-20 adopted budget had \$300,000 of purchased property service. The proposed budget for 2020-21 includes \$287,335 in purchase property service, a 4.22% decrease from last year. Purchased property service includes electricity, sewer fees and contracts for facility maintenance.

In addition, other purchased services account for \$622,134 of the proposed budget, a 25.18% increase from last year. Other purchased ser-

vices include bus contract, liability insurance, magnet school tuition, phone and email and postage services.

The superintendent is proposing to have \$222,150 for supplies and materials. That would be a 3.48% increase from last year's adopted budget. Supplies and materials include curriculum, custodial and office supplies. Textbooks, heating oil, diesel and gasoline are also included in the supplies and materials proposed budget.

Capital outlay – which includes new or replacement of furniture and equipment – accounts for \$13,200 of the proposed budget, a 12.44% increase from last year.

The “other objects” – which includes membership fees, meetings and conferences – account for \$19,245 of the budget, a 3.25% decrease from last year.

While the school is planning to spend \$156,833 in out of district placement, there will be some reimbursement for an in-district student and two out-of-district placements.

During his presentation, Sklarz stressed the importance of sticking to adopted class size guidelines – which means about 17-18 students per class – and that there has also been an increase in the needs of special education students.

First Selectman Greg Lowrey was at the meeting, and afterwards told the *Rivereast* it is important to maintain a high level of communication and cooperation among boards and commissions throughout the budget preparation process.

“I encourage citizens to attend meetings, watch recordings of meetings and read minutes,” Lowrey said. “The largest segments of our budget are related to the elementary and regional schools.”

The Board of Education will work on the budget throughout February, and is set to adopt it on Feb. 27. On March 2, the board will submit the budget to the Board of finance and in April they will hold a public hearing. On May 28, the board will vote to adopt the 2020-21 budget.

## East Hampton Police News

1/16: Ann Sehl, 21, of 72 Childs Rd., was issued a summons for operating an unregistered motor vehicle and operating a motor vehicle without insurance, East Hampton Police said.

Also, from Jan. 13-19, police said officers responded to 11 medical calls, three motor vehicle crashes and four alarms, and made 18 traffic stops.

## Hebron Police News

12/26/19: State Police said Michele Mcnaughton, 46, of 213 West Main St., Hebron, was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and third-degree assault.

## Hebron Police News

1/08: State Police said Bernard Wagner, 43, of 37 Senate Brook Dr., Amston, was arrested and charged with first-degree violation of condition of release.

## Colchester Police News

12/20/19: State Police said Benjamin Baker, 40, of Lebanon, was arrested and charged with third-degree assault and disorderly conduct.

12/21/19: State Police said Christopher Dickey, 50, of 84 Brookstone Dr., Colchester, was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct, second-degree assault and second-degree reckless endangerment.

## Colchester Police News

1/08: State Police said Cynthia Onofrio, 52, of East Haddam, was arrested and charged with violation of probation.

## Marlborough Police News

1/06: State Police said Michael LaDuca, 41, of Waterford, was arrested and charged with operating an unregistered vehicle, improper use of marker, drug paraphernalia, possession of controlled substance and possession of weapon in vehicle.

# New Salon Promises Many Good Hair Days in Marlborough

by Karla Santos

Good Hair Day, a new hair salon in Marlborough, will be hosting an open house on Saturday Feb. 1, from 6-8 p.m., featuring a meet-and-greet with the stylists, drinks, finger foods and a showcase of the salon.

Good Hair Day is Shauna Falkowski's dream made a reality. Falkowski is a Marlborough resident who has been in the hair industry for over 20 years.

Located at 2 Independence Dr., Good Hair Day features a team of experts that independently showcase their own talents and strengths.

Falkowski is offering the opportunity to other hair stylists to work with her independently. She already has rented a chair to Kristee Slyman and has one more available.

Because the stylists at Good Hair Day are independent, they also offer a variety of services depending on their specializations.

"What I do is men, women and children coloring and cutting," Falkowski said. "And Kristee does barbering so she just does men. And then in the back room she is an esthetician. She does facials and she does body waxing."

With the next person coming in to rent the available chair, Falkowski hopes to continue the mix of services pattern, she said.

"I'd be kind of cool if they did something a little bit different," she added.

Falkowski said she had a full clientele that came with her to the new business, but she has also picked up some new clients.

Claudia Naturski has been Falkowski's customer for 20 years. She said she has chosen her to style her hair for so long because "she does an amazing job," Naturski said.

"She's great with color and with cut, both of which I get," she added. "Shauna also has done my husband's hair for about the same amount of time and both of my sons went to her but one of them only still lives in the area so he still goes to her as well."

Naturski also said that Falkowski is a "sweet" and "wonderful" person.

"She's fun to spend an hour with when you are getting your hair done and I'm excited for her with this new salon," Naturski said. "I think it's a great space."

Although she continues to welcome new customers, Falkowski said she wants her salon not to feel too busy or chaotic.

"I like it to feel very calming, very inviting and warm," she said.

Services at Good Hair Day are offered to everyone in the family.

"I'm not an egotistical person just do what I love," Falkowski said. "This is what I love and I want to help people find the right style and look for their life, making every day a good hair day."

This is the first time Falkowski has owned a salon. She had been working under other people for the past 20 years, she said.

Her favorite things about the new business are her independence, freedom, the location and the fact that she's continuing to do what she loves in her own way, she said.

"Everything about it has been great, there's no downside," Falkowski added.

The space where Good Hair Day is located used to be a hair salon in the past called Inspirations by Robin.

When Falkowski learned that the space was available, she saw an opportunity to become independent and start a new business venture.

She said when she worked under other people, she had different ideas but had no place to make them a reality.

Good Hair Day opened on November 1, 2019.

"I am very happy," Falkowski said. "I wish I had done it sooner but I think this was the right time."

Good Hair Day was completely renovated before it opened. Although the space used to



**Pictured are Good Hair Day's barber and esthetician, Kristee Slyman, left and business owner Shauna Falkowski, who specializes in hair cutting and coloring for everyone in the family. Falkowski is offering the opportunity to other hair stylists to work with her independently. She has one more chair available.**

be a salon, it was completely empty, Falkowski said. The space now has new floors, a fresh coat of paint and new stations. The space also features a brand new room in the back of the salon.

The style Falkowski chose for the design of the business is what her home feels like, she said.

"I wanted it to feel like my home," Falkowski said. "I like the wood and I like the concrete tops, I like the black and white, I like little pieces of metal places. I just like different materials. I like a little bit of rustic, but not too rustic and green plants. I just love the mixture of all of it together."

One of the things she enjoys about the new place is the windows, which allow for natural light to go in while enabling clients to look at the outdoor area of the plaza.

Good Hair Day is on Instagram at goodhairday2019 and on Facebook as Good Hair Day.

Good Hair Day offers services by appointment only. The business is open Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Thursdays and Fridays from 12 p.m. to 8 p.m. and on Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

To contact Falkowski, call 860-467-6942, or for Slyman, call 860-576-8355.

## Marlborough Charter Revision Commission to Consider Town Manager

by Karla Santos

After a lengthy discussion, the Board of Selectmen, at its last meeting, saw the first fruits of an in-depth project the town has failed to complete in more than 35 years – charter revision, which could include changing the form of government in the town.

At the Jan. 21 meeting, the board selected the members of the Charter Revision Commission, issued a charge and assigned a due date for the draft of the document.

Selectmen are charging the commission with looking at specific items in the charter, including the form of government, which Selectman Amy Traversa said was one of the things that will need the most attention.

She added that when she talks about form of government, she refers to "defining the role."

Traversa also wants the commission to look at the number of members on the Board of Selectmen.

"Those two things are probably first and foremost," she said.

Since selectmen haven't gone through all the documents, it will be difficult to identify other things that should be looked at, she said.

In agreement with Traversa's comments, Selectmen Joe Asklar said the current Board of Selectmen may be the last one in town, meaning that this administration could be the last with a first selectman and the town may end up having a town manager or a different form of leadership.

"I've watched this government for the last 40 years, from a Board of Selectmen, and as the town has grown and I've seen the political wheels go to the left, go to the right, come off the tracks, go back on the tracks," Asklar said. "It's a strong possibility that we may be the last Board of Selectmen that has the authority that we have. It's time for a change in our government. It's time for a structural change."

The goal is to have the revised charter go to referendum on the Nov. 3, during the presidential election.

First Selectmen Greg Lowrey made a motion to launch the commission because "charter revision is something that hasn't been done completely for a number of years."

Lowrey said "enormous improvement" was made in charter revision when the last administration transitioned budget referendums to all day voting.

During the meeting, Lowrey said there were "a variety of other changes" to the charter that would benefit the town.

The charter revision process includes launching the commission, appointing the commissioners, setting a due date for the draft report, holding public hearings and presenting the revised charter at referendum.

Lowrey said that for the charter revision to pass during referendum, it needs to be approved by 15% of the town's registered voters.

"Our best shot at doing something like that would be during a presidential election such as the one in November," Lowrey said.

During the meeting he also said that 12 candidates had informed him they wanted to be a part of the commission.

Traversa said that, while she is in favor of charter revision, she wasn't in favor of sitting a commission before the whole board became familiar with the charter and the process of revising it. She also wanted the board to put together a charge before sitting a commission. In addition, Traversa was concerned that not too many people were aware that the town was looking for members for such a commission.

"It hasn't been widely publicized," Traversa said. "A single letter from a resident in the *Rivereast* really just doesn't cut it."

Lowrey, however, disagreed saying the way Traversa wanted to move forward with the process would take more time.

To get charter revisions to the polls by November, avoid the additional cost of a second referendum and assure 15% of voters weigh in on the changes, the draft report should be submitted to the Board of Selectmen by Aug. 18, Lowrey said. That gives the commission only seven months to put together the draft.

"We should move forward soon," he said.

Lowrey suggested that work with the charter began immediately because there are several things the commissioners need to look at when revising the charter.

"The idea is that the Charter Revision Commission has a free hand to explore the possibilities," Lowrey said. "It could be that the charter revision would have a different idea of what consultant to use, if any."

Asklar said he agreed with Lowrey in terms of giving the commissioners freedom to revise the charter in their own way.

"If we give these residents that responsibility, if someone else is to assist them in it, it should be up to that commission to determine how they should do it and how they should go," Asklar said. "They have the ultimate responsibility of presenting this new charter to us and how they want to do it is their job."

But Traversa had a "concern" with those comments because there have been two charter revision commissions seated in the past and "both failed miserably, nothing changed," she said.

Lowrey said that commissions are subject to failure if they "go in an all or nothing package."

"If we allow the voters to express their preference for each individual change, some of it may pass and something may fail, and that's a step forward."

By vote, the board appointed seven commissioners and one alternate out of twelve citizens who stepped up for consideration.

Before selectmen appointed the members, Traversa questioned Lowrey about the amount of people who knew they were looking for members.

"Do you believe that it has been well publicized?" Traversa asked.

Lowrey's answered, "I do."

Traversa said she disagreed. "I think we can't wait for perfection," Lowrey said. "Our best chance at getting the most people in front of this is in November and now is the time to begin."

When Lowrey asked for a motion, he and Asklar were in favor, but Traversa wasn't.

The members of the new charter revision commission are Gar Fellman, Sue Nilsen, Joseph Blanco, Louise Concodello, David

Porteus, Robert Ragusa, Julie Revaz and Terry Laliberte, who serves as the alternate.

All members of the Board of Selectman voted positively to move forward with the candidates selected for the commission. The board then proceeded with the motion to craft the commission's charge.

Lowrey suggested the new commissioners look at the notes from the previous commissions, including their work product and the consultants that were used in the past for this project.

The charter revision commission must hold a minimum of three public hearings throughout the charter revision process and must submit a draft to the Board of Selectmen by Aug. 18. The Board of Selectmen will hold a public hearing after that.

Board of Finance member, Dieter Zimmer was present at the meeting and during the public comment section of it he said commissions normally have 12 months to present a final report.

"You cut it in half, you gave them only seven months, so therefore I'm quite a bit concerned that there's not enough time to do it," Zimmer said.

While he is concerned, he said he is also glad for the progress that was made in the process of revising the charter.

"I appreciate that the Board of Selectmen finally made a decision to establish a committee to revise again our charter," he said.

Board of Finance member Ken Hjulstrom told the *Rivereast* he is also glad the process for revising the charter has been started.

"I am pleased to see that the First Selectman took the initiative to start the process without being required to do so in response to a petition from the public, which was the case the last two times," Hjulstrom said.

He also suggested adding two more selectmen to the Board and changing the form of government.

"Having a town manager would be a big step towards reducing the level of 'politics' in Marlborough's town government," he said.

# Obituaries

## Colchester

### Megan Todt and Children



Megan Todt, 42, of Celebration, Fla., formerly of Colchester, recently passed away unexpectedly, with her darling angels, Aleksander, 13, Tyler, 11, Zoe, 4, and their loyal canine companion, Breezy.

Born Jan. 28, 1977, in New London, Megan was the beloved daughter of Albert Gula and Gail (Kopko) Gula. She was raised in Montville and attended Montville High School where she was a drum major and played tennis. Following her undergraduate studies, she earned her master's degree in physical therapy from Sacred Heart University. Megan was very interested in leading a health-conscious lifestyle for her and her family, and she promoted the importance of being environmentally responsible in her home and her community. Megan's joy from healthy living brought her closer together with her family; not only did she enjoy tending to her garden and cooking from scratch with her Grandma Gladys and Aunt Cindy using organic, homegrown ingredients, but they would always be joined in the kitchen by Alek, Tyler and Zoe.

Megan always treated others with kindness and patience and could light up a room with her brilliant smile. Her love of music was pervasive; as a talented singer, flute and piano player, she shared her passion with her children and was excited about expanding her folk guitar instruction with Tyler. Most of all, Megan's life was defined by the love she held so strongly for her children. Her entire being was encompassed in her motherhood and she did whatever she could to support her family. Megan will always be remembered as having an exciting zest for life and learning, and for giving her children that same enthusiastic curiosity for the world around them.

Aleksander J. Todt, Megan's oldest son, was exceptionally bright and gifted in all his pursuits. With striking blue eyes, Alek had a quiet confidence about him. He excelled in his schoolwork, especially English and History. He was an avid reader and particularly interested in World War I and military history – he loved to learn from his Great-Grandpa Max and Grandpa Bud all about their military experiences. A gifted musician, Alek played the piano and was learning how to play the violin. He loved to play soccer (as the goalkeeper) and to ride bikes and skateboard with his brother, Tyler.

Tyler J. Todt was the comedic relief and loved to make everyone laugh and smile. He was quick to joke and play around, but his carefree nature always carried a concern for others – he often wanted to know how he could help someone who needed something. Like his brother, Tyler was also intellectually gifted, and excelled in mathematics. He was an accomplished piano player and was learning folk guitar. A hard-working competitor, Tyler loved to play soccer with his brother, and they went swimming any chance they had.

Zoe Todt was full of life and was known to everyone as "Princess Zoe." Her beautiful blonde curly hair framed a face that was always laughing and smiling and singing. Zoe loved her time at school and being part of the Montessori Academy of Celebration community. Zoe treasured any moment she got to dance and sing, and she was eager to start her ballet lessons. She also had a musical spirit and wasn't shy about playing her harmonica all around the house. With two older brothers, she naturally developed a strong personality; when Alek and Tyler went head-to-head, she was never shy to put her hands on her hips and tell them authoritatively, "Now my boys...stop!" Her brothers, like everyone in the family, thought the world of Zoe and would do anything in the world to see her happy and smiling.

Breezy, the family dog, became part of the family in June 2014. Everyone loved Breezy with a full heart and with unconditional love. Breezy went everywhere with the family and served them well as their loyal and faithful companion.

Megan and her children were beautiful, talented and passionate about life. They were all devoted to each other and lifted their family to aspire to greater accomplishments so that they could compassionately help others. They will be forever loved and greatly missed, and their adored family and friends will never let them be forgotten.

Megan and the children are survived by her mother, Gail Gula; her grandparents, Max and Gladys Kopko; her aunt, Cynthia Kopko and uncle Stewart Peil; her uncle, Larry Gula and his wife, Mary Lou; cousins, Katie Mitchell and Melissa Gula; sisters-in-law, Chrissy Caplet and her husband Tim, Kellie Ball and her husband Jon and Alicia Schmidt and her husband, Derek. Megan's children are also survived by their cousins, Ella Caplet, Austin and Autum Hockenberry, Serenity Ball and Nora and Rowan Schmidt; and by their paternal grandmother, Lorie Schmidt and her husband, Erwin "Bud" Schmidt.

Megan was predeceased by her father, Albert Gula, and her paternal grandparents, Peter and Ana Gula.

The Todt family received friends Thursday, Jan. 30, at St. John the Evangelist Church, 22 Maple Ave., Montville. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 10 a.m. today, Jan. 31, at St. John the Evangelist Church with a reception to follow in the church community center after the Mass. A private burial ceremony will take place at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations in support of Megan, Aleksander, Tyler and Zoe's legacy may be made to the scholarship fund created in their honor: ATZ Scholarship Fund c/o Bank of America. You may send your donation to the Bank of America branch most convenient for you.

The Woyasz & Son Funeral Service of Uncasville is entrusted with the arrangements.

## Portland

### Dorothy Elizabeth Trella

Dorothy Elizabeth Trella, 81, beloved wife for 53 ½ years of the late Joseph J. Trella, died peacefully Sunday, Jan. 26, at her beloved lake cottage in Portland.

Born Monday, Jan. 31, 1938, in Meriden, she was the eldest daughter to John J. and Victoria (Yedziniak) Kopala. She is survived by her two sisters Florence Fair and Barbara Nowacki. Dorothy graduated St. Stanislaus School where she met her lifelong pal, Marie Smith. She graduated from Meriden High School and became employed as a legal secretary to Attorney Pulaski. On Sept. 7, 1959, Dorothy married the love of her life Joseph Trella and began her career as wife and mother.

She is the mother to Kenneth (Susan) Trella, Karen (Mark) Young, Andrea (Darwin) Blakemore, John (Arlene) Trella and Karl (Cristal) Trella.

Dorothy spent many hours volunteering at St. Stanislaus School. She was one of the first librarians in the Community Center. She was a Brownie leader and encouraged her children's participation in Polish dancing and stage performance. She sold Stanley Home Products, pioneering the idea for home parties. Dorothy sold PNA insurance, a great saleswoman; she earned a trip to Chicago. She was the biggest cheerleader for all her children and once worked their shift at Towne & Country grocery so they could go to rehearsal. When her children were grown, Dorothy worked at Meriden Auction Rooms as credit manager. After the store closed, she worked at Canberra Industries, where as her job as credit investigator she uncovered a fraudulent company and was thanked by the F.B.I.

Her biggest loves were her grandchildren, Scott, Chelsea and Spenser Trella; Nicholas, Sarah (Jeff) and Jessica Mather; Elizabeth and Sarah Young; Amy, Benjamin (Samantha) and Haley Blakemore; Katie Trella; and Kaelyn and Gabriel Trella. She was so pleased to be great-grandmother to Aubrey D'Amico.

Dorothy, or "Babci" as she was affectionately known to all, loved Scrabble, bingo and card games. She was an organizer of women's setback at the Polish Knights Club. Dorothy was recording secretary for many years at the Polish Knights Club and was the buyer for the children's Christmas parties. Dorothy will be most missed for her hospitality for holidays and lake parties. Her home was always open and she welcomed many a family member or friend to her nest over the years. She leaves behind many cousins, nieces, nephews, and friends that she loved and enjoyed talking with. Dorothy was a wonderful matriarch, keeping the family informed with her love of telephone conversation.

Her funeral will be held on Saturday, Feb. 1, at 9:15 a.m., from the Stempien Funeral Home, 450 Broad St., Meriden, when the funeral cortege will proceed to St. Stanislaus Church for a Mass of Christian Burial at 10 a.m. Burial will follow in St. Stanislaus Cemetery. Family and friends are invited to pay their respects today, Jan. 31, from 4-8 p.m., at the Stempien Funeral Home.

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



## Colchester

### Elizabeth McNamara

Elizabeth "Betty" McNamara, 83, of Colchester, widow of Cornelius Paul McNamara, passed away peacefully Tuesday, Jan. 14, at Middlesex Hospital in Middletown. Born July 23, 1936, in Norwich, she was the daughter of the late Clarence Parkhurst and Dorothy (Dupont) Parkhurst.

A graduate of Norwich Free Academy, Class of 1954, and Thames Valley State Technical College, Class of 1977, where she received an Associates of Science degree in Data Processing. She retired from The Hartford in 2001.

She enjoyed singing and joined the Sweet Adelines International chapters Mountain Laurel Chorus and Valley Shore Acappella, where she held the office of treasurer. She was a member of the Norwich chapter of AARP where she held the office of secretary and then the Colchester chapter of AARP where she also held the office of secretary.

She enjoyed spending her summers at the family cottage on Beach Pond in Voluntown, and traveling with her husband each year to Florida and visiting with her daughter and family in Georgia. They would travel to various US cities and Quebec where the Sweet Adelines held their annual International competitions. They enjoyed cruises, traveling to various locations around the world. They also visited Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

She was a fan of the New York Yankees, and UConn men's and women's basketball teams.

She is survived by her children with her first husband, Wilfred (Fred) Rabideau Jr., pre-deceased: Doreen Rabideau of Colchester, Allison Terpe and husband Fred of Preston, Lynn Semmelrock and husband Edward of Franklin, Kenneth Rabideau of Claremont, N.H., Thomas Rabideau of Danielson and Carolyn Gorman and husband David of Milton, Ga. She is also survived by her stepchildren, Kim Seaberg and husband Lewis of Oakdale, Eileen McNamara of New Britain and Dawn McNamara of Oakdale. She leaves behind 15 grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.

She was a loving mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, who accepted her children's friends and made them part of the family. She enjoyed spending time with her close extended family and occasionally organizing family reunions. Her family, friends and acquaintances are going to miss her smile, laugh and caring manner.

Her family wishes to thank the Middlesex Hospital Hospice Unit nurses, aides and doctors for their compassionate care.

There will be no calling hours. A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date.

Donations may be made in her name to: Middlesex Hospice Unit, c/o Development Office, 55 Crescent St., Middletown, CT 06457.

