

# RIVEREAST News Bulletin

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**Send in the Cows...** Grace MacLachlan, Julia Moreland, Jack Caplan and Dana Zareski dressed up as cows at a previous Maple Fest to plug the Hebron Historical Society's various maple-flavored products. Be on the lookout for the cows again this year, when the Maple Fest returns March 21 and 22.

## Regional Officials Say Low Risk from Virus

by Sloan Brewster, Karla Santos and Jack Lakowsky

Officials from local health districts said this week that residents are at a low risk of infection by the new coronavirus, COVID-19.

"Based on that information right now, based on today's information, the risk to local residents and Connecticut residents remains very low," said Eastern Highlands Health District Director of Health Robert Miller.

Hebron's Town Manager Andrew Tierney, who is also chairman of the board of the Chatham Health District, said he stays in contact with health officials and has asked for them to keep him updated on all things related to the spread of the virus.

COVID-19 is an outbreak of respiratory disease caused by coronavirus that was first identified in the city of Wuhan, China in January and has since spread globally, including to the United States, Vickie Han, a Public Health nurse at Chatham Health said Tuesday in a presentation at the East Hampton Public Library.

According to *The New York Times*, as of Thursday morning there were 162 confirmed cases across the country, and 11 deaths have been linked to the virus. While as of press time there are no confirmed cases in Connecticut, there are cases in Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New York, Miller said Wednesday.

In those states, the cause of the illness was linked to traveling or close contact with people with confirmed cases, Miller said. They do not suggest community transmission, unlike cases out west.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, during the week of Feb. 23, community spread of the virus was reported in California, Oregon and Washington. In Washington, it resulted in the first death in the U.S. from COVID-19, as well as the first reported case in a health care worker, and the first potential outbreak in a long-term care facility.

During the presentation, Han explained that this most recent outbreak presents a new, or novel, version of the coronavirus, COVID-19. She said health officials have seen other versions of this disease, but this particular virus is unknown.

Han said the virus has been named "SARS-CoV-2" and the disease it causes has been named "coronavirus disease 2019," abbreviated "COVID-19."

The virus is thought to spread through droplets sprayed by coughing or sneezing and is transmitted person-to-person by people within about six feet of one another, she explained. Droplets can land in the mouths or noses of nearby people and are then inhaled into the

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## RHAM Pay-for-Participation is Out

by Sloan Brewster

Pay-for-Participation at the RHAM high and middle schools has been eliminated.

At a community forum at RHAM High School on Monday, Hebron resident Brenda Shapiro asked about the program, under the assumption it had only been cancelled for students participating in sports. In fact, the entire program has been eliminated and students will no longer be expected to pay fees to participate in sports or to join in other activities or clubs.

During the discussion, some board members said they too were unaware that the costs for non-sport activities had also been cut.

Shapiro pointed out that there was a fee for participating in school clubs and said her son did music.

"There's a lot of costs associated from non-sports activities," she said. "Is there a consideration of the costs of these other clubs and activities?"

Kathleen Goodwin, board vice chairperson, said it would be great to hear from others with similar concerns and that they "should have the same accessibility [of] not having to pay."

Schools Superintendent Patricia Law finally cut in and clarified.

"Pay-for-Participation is what was removed," she said, explaining that the \$40 activity fee for clubs was a thing of the past.

Some board members appeared surprised. "That wasn't articulated very well," said

Susan Rapelye, chairperson.

The program had been in effect since 2004 and was increased two years ago, Rapelye said.

Students playing sports at RHAM middle and high schools paid \$170 per athlete per season, with a family cap of \$510. Students participating in extracurricular activities paid \$40.

Last month, the board decided to eliminate the program, though throughout the discussion members referred to it as "Pay-to-Play" and only discussed students paying for doing sports and did not mention other activities, according to the minutes from the Feb. 3 meeting.

At the February meeting, some board members recommended changing the fee structure, while others said the program should be completely cut.

Vince Colonna, who is also president of the RHAM Sports Boosters organization, said he would like the fees reduced to a flat fee for all sports. He noted there was a budget surplus and that money went back to the towns.

Board member Scott Fleher said it didn't make sense to maintain the pay-to-play model and that athletics are an integral part of the district – and voiced support for the fees going away completely.

Joseph O'Connor, who in January requested the topic be included on the board's February agenda, said he was not in favor of the fees but would be in favor of a compromise of

bringing fees back to what they were before the increase.

Judy Benson-Clarke said she has been against the fees from the start and would be in favor of completely removing them.

Stephanie Bancroft said she would like a compromise made. She pointed out that there are many improvements being made to the athletic facilities, but agreed the fees were expensive and suggested bringing them down to a more manageable level.

Goodwin said she wanted to ensure the fees benefited athletic programs, noting the need to maintain uniforms.

In the end, the motion to eliminate the fees passed with O'Connor, Fleher, Robert Schadle, Benson-Clarke and Colonna in favor and Rapelye, Bancroft, Goodwin, and Jessica Dapsis opposed to the motion.

While students in after school clubs will no longer be charged \$40 to participate, there are still some clubs that charge students for additional activities, such as travelling, going on ski trips or taking part in competitions, Law said at Monday's meeting. The school budget includes some help for such costs.

"Those types of things vary year to year," she said.

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Last year, when crafting the 2019-20 school budget, the RHAM board shot down a motion

to reduce pay-for-participation rates.

In spite of a lengthy discussion in which residents weighed in, the board opted to keep the fees as they were.

Colonna, who was not on the board at the time, said there was understanding among the community that the fees had been increased due to cuts in the budget, but a current surplus cancels the need for the extra funds. He said other towns do not have pay-for-play and said the increase is "huge" for some families.

Ultimately, the board voted to keep the fee.

### Spring Ahead!

Daylight Saving Time takes effect this weekend.

At 2 a.m. Sunday, clocks move ahead one hour – leading to one extra hour of daylight at night.

Daylight Saving Time will continue until Sunday, Nov. 1.

So don't forget to change those clocks before going to bed Saturday night!



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lungs.

Han said the virus can spread by touching surfaces contaminated with the virus, however this is not believed to be its main mode of transmission and information on how long it survives on an inorganic surface without a host isn't yet clear.

Russel Melmed, director of Chatham Health District, said studies of other coronavirus strains have revealed them to be a relatively weak virus that can only survive for a short while on an inorganic surface.

"With this coronavirus, we really aren't 100 percent sure," Melmed said.

**Good Hygiene Practices are Crucial**

Han recommended washing hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoiding contact with sick people, not touching the eyes, nose or mouth, staying home when sick, covering sneezes and coughs with a tissue, frequent sanitation and disinfection with EPA-registered cleaning agents – those that are labeled as deadly to 99.99 percent of harmful microbes.

Some commonly-known EPA-registered cleaning products include Clorox Disinfecting Cleaning Wipes, Lysol Toilet Bowl Cleaner and Barbicide Disinfectant.

Melmed said disinfectants should remain on a surface to kill viruses and bacteria, and should not be dried right away. He recommended letting spray cleaners remain on surfaces for about 10 minutes.

"Disinfecting is different than cleaning dirt," he said.

The majority of laundry detergents will kill any coronavirus clinging to clothing, according to Melmed, who recommended drying clothes on high heat if infection is discovered.

Alcohol-based sanitizers should be at least 60% alcohol, Han said, adding that it was in high demand.

"There's not a lot left in the community," she said.

Facemasks are also flying off the shelves, according to Josh Byington, a manager at Hope Hardware & Plumbing Supply in Colchester, who said they are in short supply in that store.

Han said the CDC does not recommend wearing facemasks as protection against respiratory illnesses, but said they should be worn by people diagnosed with COVID-19 and symptomatic.

Han compared COVID-19 with influenza.

Both are infectious respiratory illnesses; however, different viruses cause them. Antibiotics are not used in their treatment. Addressing symptoms, such as reducing fever, can treat both and frequent thorough hand washing can prevent them.

Vaccines and antivirals, such as Tamiflu, exist for influenza but not for COVID-19.

"As of right now, we have nothing," Han said. "Both [vaccines and antivirals] are being worked on right now."

**Symptoms to Look For**

According to Han, fever, cough and shortness of breath are the three main symptoms of COVID-19.

Symptoms can appear between two and 14 days after exposure and can range from mild to severe. Han recommended that anyone who visited China within the last two weeks and is displaying any symptoms consult their healthcare provider.

Although there are no treatments available yet, Han told the community, most people can recover from the disease on their own with conscientious homecare.

Taking pain and fever reducers, using humidifiers and taking hot showers can ease a sore throat or cough, she said. Drinking liquids and homebound bed rest are all prevention methods.

"Not everyone who's exposed will see symptoms," Han said.

While Han said asymptomatic people can spread coronavirus, Melmed added that they are rarely the "main drivers" in spreading a disease.

Han said most data she has read reveals people aged 60 and older, those with chronic diseases, such as diabetes, and people who are immunocompromised, or with impaired immune systems – which can occur in Down syndrome or HIV/AIDS patients – are vulnerable to the disease.

"If left completely unchecked, if none of us cover our sneezes and coughs, [the number of cases] can grow exponentially," Melmed said.

Severity of the disease, Melmed said, varies widely. He said 80% of cases identified in China were very mild; 14% were severe, and about 5% had critical symptoms. Most fatalities were in the latter category.

"The vast majority of cases of COVID-19 are mild," Melmed said.

Melmed said officials "have no idea" if coronavirus is subject to seasonal fluctuations, like those seen with influenza.

"We may see it wane in the summer months and we may see it come back in the fall, we just don't know," he said. "Right now, we're dealing with a situation that is both fluid and evolving."

Melmed said Chatham Health is in daily contact with the CDC and the Connecticut Department of Public Health [DPH]. He said health agencies are reviewing and updating mass vaccination plans and communicating these plans to town officials.

Melmed explained that travelers returning from countries with high rates of the disease are assessed for risk. If exposure is discovered, people will be quarantined, which is done when a person has been exposed but is not showing signs of infection.

If infection is discovered, officials will suggest isolation in the home. It is also suggested that anyone living with an infected person self-quarantine.

Personal protective measures Melmed highlighted include voluntary home isolation of ill people for the duration of disease; respiratory etiquette, such as covering coughs and sneezes and hand hygiene. He advised anyone sick with COVID-19 who must go out to wear a facemask to prevent droplets from spreading.

Environmental measures include routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently-touched surfaces, such as doorknobs and phones.

Community mitigation efforts, which are reserved for a pandemic declared by the World Health Organization, include working remotely, postponing or cancelling mass-gatherings and dividing school classrooms into smaller groups.

In the event of a public health emergency, state officials and the governor would announce preemptive school closings, Melmed said. Local officials, such as the superintendent of schools, on the other hand, would lead time-sensitive, reactive responses.

Melmed said school closures would only occur in severe situations.

"If we do nothing, and we walk around sneezing in each other's faces, the number of cases can grow rapidly," Melmed said. "You run the risk of overwhelming our healthcare system. The time for preparation is now."

Melmed recommended employees speak to their company's management or administration about protection plans and protocols.

**Preparing for the Worst**

East Hampton and Portland officials are working to monitor the spread of the virus and are preparing for the worst.

Portland First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said her office meets monthly with Chatham Health Officials. Her staff has been reminded of universal sanitation practices, including frequent hand washing and respiratory etiquette.

Bransfield said updates will be communicated via Facebook and posted on Portland's and Chatham Health's websites.

"Get plenty of sleep and drink a lot of fluids," Bransfield recommends to residents.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, sleep deprivation decreases production of infection-fighting antibodies and cells, making the body more susceptible to infection.

Bransfield said residents concerned about the outbreak can contact the sanitarians at Chatham Health, their private healthcare provider or her office.

"Follow good [healthcare] practices," Bransfield said.

East Hampton Public Library Director Ellen Paul said she and staff have begun enhanced cleaning procedures for high-touch areas in the library.

Tierney has met with Hebron Superintendent of Schools Thomas Baird and RHAM Superintendent of Schools Patricia Law, he said. He has issued Purell to town buildings and sends out email blasts as information regarding the virus trickles in.

"The biggest thing is education," he said. "We're being proactive and this is the time of year, spring break is coming up and people are going on vacation."

At a Board of Education meeting Monday, Law said she was taking the lead on all the pandemic planning for RHAM and regularly communicates with officials from the state and federal health departments, Chatham Health and with local leaders.

"We are inundated with updates and school reports," she said. "We also have a district physician that we spoke to as well."

Law said school officials had been given guidelines for cleaning, put signs about handwashing in bathrooms and were provided with hand sanitizers to put in school spaces.

"Handwashing, really it is the most important deterrent to the spread of that," she said.

Andover Town Administrator Eric Anderson said he gets regular updates from the Eastern Highlands Health District.

Miller echoed much of what Melmed and Han had said, adding that Eastern Highlands is working with the DPH to supervise and monitor the health of travelers who have arrived in Connecticut from China, whom, he said, are asked to self-quarantine and self-monitor health for a 14-day period.

He said he would be meeting with town leaders from the district next week to discuss what they can do if there is a public health crisis, including ways to continue town operations and ensure services are not interrupted.

He plans to spread the same message to school heads and will give them resources and references to rely on to sustain learning if "this thing ramps up."

As with Chatham Health, Eastern Highlands is "promoting and pushing" basic practices, such as frequent handwashing, covering coughs and avoiding people who are sick.

"Respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene can't be stressed enough," Miller said.

The district is also working with towns to make sure custodial services and cleaning activities are appropriate and can address any issues with disinfecting surfaces, he said.

Miller said at this point in time it was difficult to predict other issues or if there will be the need for social distancing.

He said he will work with the DPH and health

providers to evaluate any local cases but reiterated there were none as of yet.

**School Trip to China Cancelled**

On Feb. 27, Superintendent of East Hampton Public Schools Paul Smith announced that a schools' trip to China scheduled for April vacation had been cancelled. Students were slated to visit Jianhua School – a sister school in Beijing. They would have also visited Xian, the ancient capital of China and home to the famous terracotta soldiers and a panda research lab in the modern city of Chengdu, Smith said.

Smith said the trip's cancellation, while disappointing, was logical and wise.

"With coronavirus, it reached a point where United Airlines cancelled our flight," he said. "We hope to do it again next year, if things have subsided."

The schools do not have any scheduled trips to Europe during April vacation week.

Administrators have not yet restricted out-of-state field trips and the superintendent and/or the East Hampton Board of Education can cancel any trip scheduled and they will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, Smith said.

The East Hampton school district is working to create a continuity of educational programming in the event of a required school shut down and Smith said he keeps in contact with DPH, the state Department of Education and Chatham Health.

Andover School Superintendent Sally Doyen said there are sinks in each classroom and students are encouraged to frequently wash hands.

The administration is keeping families informed of what they can do at home, such as washing hands, taking general precautions, monitoring their children for signs of illness and keeping them home if they become sick, Doyen said.

"We will certainly provide them with work, if necessary," she added.

As of Wednesday, the district had not cancelled any field trips but Doyen said teachers and administrators were keeping abreast of updates that could change plans.

Baird said he sent a letter to parents in January apprising them of preventative measures being taken at the schools, including daily cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing. Since then, the district has put in place enhanced cleaning protocols and has been preparing in case there are extended school closures.

The Town of Marlborough is also working to keep residents informed and aware of the virus and works with the DPH, Chatham Health, the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, according to First Selectman Greg Lowrey, who encourages citizens to periodically check the CDC for updates. Its website is [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov).

In addition, Tolland County dispatchers, which cover Marlborough, include interview questions for medical calls and town first responders wear personal protective equipment as needed.

Colchester First Selectman Mary Bylone said the town is also following directions from Chatham Health as well as the director for Emergency Management and Homeland Security Region Four, which encompasses the eastern portion of the state including Tolland, Windham and New London counties.

Hand sanitizer stations have been added to entrances of community buildings, Bylone said, and she advises residents to wash their hands, avoid handshakes and stay home if they are sick.

A press release with information about the virus is posted on the town's website.

"As more information breaks, we will modify our plan," Bylone added.

# Tierney Presents \$36.68 Million Proposed Budget for Hebron

by Sloan Brewster

The town manager presented his \$36.68 million proposed 2020-21 budget to the boards of finance and selectmen Tuesday.

The \$1.03 million, or 2.88% increase, when calculated with the recently released \$787.12 million grand list, translates to a 37.40 mill rate, which is .35 mills more than the current 37.05 mill rate, Town Manager Andrew Tierney told the boards.

The general government side of the budget request calls for \$10.07 million; for Hebron Public Schools, \$11.56 million is allotted and for the RHAM Board of Education \$15.045 million is set aside, Tierney said.

The general government totals represent a \$1.03 million or 11.51% increase from current year and they include \$723,372 in capital improvement costs; \$140,000 for open space; \$118,488 for capital projects; \$50,000 toward future revaluation; and \$1.20 million for debt service.

“The big one, the driver, is the debt services payment,” Tierney said. “The reason that it’s up so much is because we added to the debt.”

Due mostly to the \$7.6 million sewer upgrade project approved by voters last November, debt service is up by \$475,784 or 65.34% over the current year’s \$728,149, Tierney said.

Capital improvement, Tierney and the Capital Improvement Plan Committee recommend included spending \$293,697 for road resurfacing and improvements.

A \$45,000 bucket truck for the Public Works Department would replace a 30-year-old truck from 1988 that has 135,495 miles and is used constantly to take down hundreds of dead and

dying ash trees from the emerald ash borer and oak trees damaged by gypsy moths, Tierney said.

A \$134,000 sidewalk installation would bring sidewalks to Wall Street, extending north from the entrance to RHAM to Ridge Road, Tierney said.

First Selectman Daniel Larson said they are part of the plan for modifications on the school campus scheduled to be completed this summer.

A fire engine tanker would be refurbished for \$35,000.

A connector between the Air Line Trail and the town center would be funded in part by \$60,000.

A dump truck with a plow would be purchased for \$152,000.

To help with an issue in the restoration of the Peters House, \$25,000 was added to the capital improvement budget. The funds will be the last ones the town gives to the project, Tierney said, adding that he realized that was the promise made last year but “they needed a shot in the arm.”

A bridge over the brook between Pendleton Drive and the Douglas Library would be paid for with \$87,692. The project will include adding lighting to the bridge, Tierney said. The town has been planning to put it in for a while as a safety measure for residents who walk to the library and to increase walkability in the downtown area.

“We did apply for a grant a while ago and the grant dried up,” he said. “We actually got notice of award, but then it got taken away.”

“It’s great,” selectman John Collins said about building the bridge. “It’s the first step toward incorporating, in the future, the Horton property. I think it’s a great idea.”

Last March, voters approved the purchase of the 130-acre parcel owned by Horton Brothers, LLC on John E. Horton Blvd. tucked behind the senior living facility in the Village Green District.

The total recommended CIP budget is \$832,389, which Tierney broke into a \$723,372 government contribution and \$109,017 in revenues from state grants.

For capital projects, Tierney recommends, getting a new vehicle lift for the public works department for \$22,278, fuel tank management units \$19,910 for the fire department, \$35,000 for flooring at the Douglas Library, \$22,500 for new windows at the library and \$18,800 for software for the building department.

Noting that the current proposal does not do so, Collins said he hoped to get the numbers down so they calculate to a decrease in taxes.

The current mill rate does not elicit an influx of new residents, he said.

“I hope we’re able to reduce the mill rate,” he said. “We want young people to move here.”

Selectman Gail Richmond said she would like the mill rate to remain stable but not at the expense of health and safety.

“I’m concerned about the health and safety of the residents of town; I’m concerned about preserving our quality of life in town, which makes it the place that we want to live in and other people want to come to; so we can’t start chipping away on that,” she said. “Public safety

is our primary purpose.”

There was also some discussion about saving money through shared services.

“We’ve got to take the next step in looking at how to consolidate, in looking how to share services, in looking at how to do things more efficiently,” finance board vice chairman Mal Leichter said.

Larson, while concurring with the need to look into consolidating and sharing services, said for a first draft, the budget was “at not a bad place.”

Selectmen encourage folks with questions or comments about the budget to contact the town at [hebronbudget@hebronct.com](mailto:hebronbudget@hebronct.com). Budget information is available in the Town Clerk’s Office, at the Douglas Library, at the Senior Center and online at [hebronct.com/budget-information](http://hebronct.com/budget-information)

The boards of selectmen and finance will continue to review the budget through the month of March.

On Tuesday, March 24, in the Douglas Library at 7 p.m. the Board of Selectmen will hold a public hearing on the budget. On Tuesday April 21 in the RHAM High School auditorium at 7 p.m., the Board of Finance will hold a public hearing on the budget followed by a Board of Finance meeting to set the budget.

On Monday, May 4 at 6:30 p.m. in the RHAM High School chorus room, the RHAM Board of Education will hold a Budget District Meeting.

The budget referendum will take place Tuesday, May 5 at Hebron Elementary School from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

## 10.85% Spending Hike Sent to Andover Finance Board

by Sloan Brewster

The Board of Selectmen, at a special meeting last Monday, Feb. 24, decided to push the town’s \$13.70 million 2020-21 budget proposal onto the Board of Finance.

The numbers represent a \$1.34 million or 10.85% increase over the current year’s expenses.

The decision to move the proposal onward was unanimous, according to Town Manager Eric Anderson. The finance board received the budget two days later.

As of press time, the finance board was scheduled to run through the numbers at a budget workshop last night. Once that board approves a final proposal, it will go before voters.

In the meantime, at a Board of Education budget workshop last Thursday, that board made some cuts to its proposed 2020-21 school budget, Anderson said.

“The Board of Education have agreed on some things that gets them down to a budget that’s basically the same as last year,” Anderson said. “Now they will look at downing it further.”

In January, selectmen requested that the education board slash Superintendent Sally Doyen’s proposed \$4.39 million to \$3.6 million budget for 2020-21.

In a phone call Wednesday, Doyen said that while the education board had not yet approved the numbers, it had slashed some of the new items in the budget, including two new classes added to combat overcrowded classrooms.

“Some items we had been considering as new items, we just took out because they will not be missed,” she said.

The basic drivers for the town’s budget are road and culvert work, bridges, building maintenance and the capital improvement budgets for the public works and fire departments, Anderson said.

“We’re trying to fund what I would call the material deficits the town has,” he said.

The Capital Improvement Planning Committee looked at the Public Works Department’s 15-year capital plan, comparing it to typical replacement plans and determined the town needs to fund \$110,000 for equipment, Anderson said.

Specifically, the department wants to replace an 18- to 19-year-old roadside mower, the town

manager said. Called a boom flail, it’s an expensive model, with a side arm to reach over obstructions, such as guard rails and mow the other side. The plan is to buy a model known as a side arm flail, which will mow more quickly and use the older mower when there’s something in the way.

“So we can increase the life of the boom flail and we can mow faster,” Anderson said.

The department also wants a material spreader, which will be used to take sand and loam from dump trucks and spread it on the sides of the road.

“It allows us, after paving, to get back in and do all the landscaping,” Anderson said.

For the Fire Department, the committee looked at its 10-year plan and determined \$100,000 a year would be an appropriate amount toward equipment replacement.

“Their equipment lasts a really long time, most of the big vehicles, they have lifespans more than 30 years but they’re increasingly expensive to replace,” Anderson said.

The plan is for the department to buy a sport utility vehicle that can carry a stretcher, Anderson said. The department needs the vehicle because it must respond to events on the Rail Trail and at Bishop Swamp State Forest.

The last time something happened that required such a vehicle was in the back of a property, Anderson said. In that case, the homeowner had an all-terrain vehicle, which the department used.

The department also responds at local sporting events, including mountain biking and running series and has been relying on mutual aid from surrounding towns.

“We’re about the last town without a UTV,” Anderson said. “The chief is concerned that we’re constantly using other towns’ UTVs.”

When the town borrows vehicles like that, it also has to borrow manpower because no one from town is trained on the piece being used, said Vice First Selectman Adrian Mandeville. Often that means someone from the neighboring town must be at an event waiting with the vehicle, in case there’s an emergency.

“We’re asking an outside ambulance crew to come down and sit,” Mandeville said.

Mandeville said the money for the UTV was already set aside and would require no new

taxation.

The next large purchase for the department will be a replacement for a 1991 engine, which has been refurbished once, Anderson said. The plan is to put the money in the budget ahead of time so it’s there when the new engine must be purchased.

According to Mandeville, the town used to put money away every year for future fire truck needs, capital expenses and paving but has moved away from the practice. The proposal puts that practice back into play and sets the town up for years ahead.

“I think the biggest frustration that I have is that we used to do this,” Mandeville said. “We don’t want to have to come to the public and say we need a new plow truck, we need [to increase taxes by] a mill for a plow truck.”

Another capital expense is establishing a fund for building maintenance as opposed to paying for it “haphazard,” Anderson said.

The last part of the capital needs is roads, bridges and culverts, Anderson said.

Of the \$400,000 request for road work, \$300,000 will come from taxation and \$100,000 will be drawn from state grants for roadwork, Mandeville said.

“If the residents take one thing from this budget, it’s what we’re trying to do is set the town up for long term longevity,” he said. “We’re asking for enough money to keep every road in working condition and then every road would be repaved every 30 years.”

Selectmen are asking for \$250,000 for the Bunker Hill Bridge and \$160,000 for overall bridge work.

The Bunker Hill Bridge is “literally falling in the river,” Mandeville said, explaining that the culverts beneath it are badly deteriorating.

It is currently a Class C bridge, he said. If it drops to a Class D, the town will have to impose weight restrictions and school buses and snow plows would not be allowed to use it.

On the operating side, the major request is adding a fourth person to the public works crew, Anderson said. Doing so will allow for two two-person crews.

The expense is “intertwined” with funds proposed for paving, Mandeville said, explaining the roadwork cannot be completed without the additional person.

“So many things are intertwined,” he said. “[The budget] really is... it’s a sum of its parts.”

The total amount proposed for public works is \$313,269 – a \$70,706 increase from the current year.

Another cost increase would cover additional hours for the zoning enforcement officer, bringing that line item to \$16,340 – a \$5,740 increase from the current year.

There are also additional hours for the inland wetlands agent and a new line item for a part-time senior services coordinator, which is currently a voluntary position.

As far as reducing costs, the transfer station has saved about \$10,000 through reduced tipping fees, Anderson said. The town is also working on reducing costs in the finance office by integrating with the school district’s finance department and will be talking with the union about reducing the tax collector’s hours to part-time save in January and July, when taxes are due.

“We’re a fairly small town and there’s really only a couple months a year where we need full-time staffing in that office,” Anderson said. “Were just trying to realign staffing to what our needs are.”

The biggest driver to the budget is RHAM’s proposed \$31.53 million 2020-21 budget, Anderson said.

“What I want to stress is we’re not going after things that are kind of optional,” he said. “This budget focuses primarily on the big-ticket items that are all kind of necessities that are hitting now because of past deferred spending.”

Mandeville, who is the Board of Selectmen liaison to the finance board, said much the same, and called it a common sense budget. He said he and fellow selectmen “poured through” every single line item in the budget.

“I generally am very fiscally conservative and to be honest this is a fiscally conservative budget,” he said. “This is bread and butter stuff; it’s not fancy.”

Mandeville said increases from the town side would likely translate to about a one mill increase in taxes and that the bulk of tax increases would be due to increases for RHAM.

The Board of Finance will hold a special meeting budget workshop next Thursday at 6:30 p.m. in the Town Hall Community Room.

# Portland Brownfields Redevelopment Group Meeting Recap

by Jack Lakowsky

Portland's Brownfield Redevelopment Focus Group began the discussion about converting two of the three Brownstone Avenue brownfield parcels into summertime parking to be used by visitors of Brownstone Exploration Discovery Park at their meeting last week.

Portland Economic Development Coordinator Mary Dickerson said these parking spaces will generate extra revenue from space that would otherwise be unoccupied and, therefore, unproductive to the town.

Next, the Board of Selectmen will negotiate a rental agreement with Brownstone Park. Brownstone would manage the parking area and the town's revenue will flow from whatever amount the parties decide Brownstone should pay in rental fees.

Portland First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said after the meeting that, in the past, Brownstone paid approximately \$5,000 in rental fees when the two Brownstone brownfields were owned privately.

At the group's meeting in late January, Bransfield said the properties previously generated about \$16,000, annually.

"This is only temporary, to help prioritize the cleanup," Dickerson said in an interview following the meeting.

Dickerson said the sites, located at 222 and 230 Brownstone Ave., will be cleaned of the most significant environmental hazards before being converted into a gravel parking area. Contaminants will be consolidated onto the third property that is within the group's scope, 248 Brownstone Ave., the largest of the three parcels, accounting for more than three of the five acres that the properties occupy.

Environmental engineering firm Tighe & Bond will begin working when the company receives approvals from the state Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to proceed with consolidating the significant environmental hazards onto 248 Brownstone Ave. Work cannot proceed without state approval, Bransfield said.

Bransfield said at the group's meeting in late January that this project is not only an environmental clean up, but also an economic devel-

opment project.

"This project is being monitored and approved by DECD and DEEP every step of the way," Bransfield said in an interview after the meeting. "We have an excellent group of advisors."

Bransfield said she sent Tighe & Bond's initial proposal to DECD, DEEP and the law firm representing Portland, Murtha Cullina LLP. These agencies made suggestions to the proposal. Bransfield returned the amended proposal to Tighe & Bond, who accepted the amended contract.

Bransfield said after the meeting that the three parcels were kept as separate properties to allow a variety of routes for town officials and the focus group to take, such as selling them individually or keeping them under town ownership, or some combination of these options.

In the focus group meeting last week, Dickerson provided a survey naming businesses that Portland's zoning ordinances would allow to operate on the three properties. She asked group members to name which businesses they believe to be the most desirable.

Some types of businesses listed in Dickerson's survey include a variety of types of restaurants, a food truck patio, a brew pub and/or brewery and a list of more recreational uses, like a hotel, a fishing pier or a public boat launch facility.

The group will share and discuss their answers to the survey at their next meeting.

In the January meeting, Dickerson provided the group with the Connecticut Economic Resource Center's (CERC) profile of Portland to help guide them in deciding what kinds of businesses would be interested in operating in Portland based on its population and other characteristics.

The focus group, created in early January by Bransfield and the Board of Selectmen, will evaluate how to best redevelop three-town owned properties along Brownstone Avenue.

The group is also tasked with communicating their efforts to the public, reviewing Portland Zoning regulations and gathering questions and information from residents, businesses and town officials.

After remediation, the properties will be zoned for commercial use, not residential, according to Tighe & Bond's Amy Vaillancourt, the licensed environmental professional (LEP) working with Portland officials and the Brownfield Redevelopment Focus Group.

Vaillancourt said in the January meeting that her charge is to remediate the property with grant funds allotted to the town by the state. Her efforts and processes will be directed based on the focus group's suggestions and goals for the location's use. Vaillancourt will also draft suggestions and estimate costs.

The town was awarded a \$750,000 by DECD, who ranked Portland as a first priority, according to Bransfield. The focus group and Tighe & Bond will use this award to fund the project, negating the cost to taxpayers.

Grant funds are valid until December 2021.

This award did not initially cover the \$800,000 price tag initially attached to the property by the former owner of the Brownstone properties. In the group's January meeting, Bransfield explained that, after intensive negotiations between the proprietor and the town, the owner reduced the asking price to \$385,000.

Before receiving the \$750,000 grant, Portland was also awarded a \$200,000 assessment grant to investigate the brownfields. This investigation uncovered significant environmental hazards. Discovering these contaminants, in turn, motivated the town to apply for the larger grant and pursue remediation.

Portland has engaged in a series of intensive studies about the properties, the earliest of which dates back to 2001, according to documentation provided by Dickerson, with a second study performed in 2004.

The results of these studies were intended as a long-range plan for downtown and riverfront development, Dickerson wrote, and to provide a blueprint for redevelopment that spans decades.

Elements of both studies continue to be used in the town's Plan of Conservation and Development.

Dickerson wrote that the acquisition of the three Brownstone brownfields is the next proscribed step in the plan to revive the riverfront,

provide more public access and spur economic development.

During remediation, Dickerson wrote, the town will gather information about the parcels including engineering data, flood zone designations, dock and riverfront development permitting and construction requirements. Income, demographic and population data will also be collected, along with information on the state's economic climate, available grants and time sensitive real estate and market studies.

In January, Dickerson recommended the group revisit the marketing studies from the 2000s.

This information will guide officials and the focus group when deciding whether to maintain ownership and guide redevelopment, or, to sell one or more of the properties for commercial development.

In January, the group elected Bob Petzold, owner of Petzold's Marine Center on Indian Hill Avenue, as chairman. Last week the group elected members Shaun Manning as Vice Chair and April Graves as secretary.

Prior to last week's meeting, group members walked the sites within their scope to help in their planning, according to Petzold.

DEEP 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 are required before any restoration, redevelopment or further work can proceed, as required by state statute.

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

Brownfield sites exist in every corner of the state, in towns and cities of every size, according to the DECD website. In many cases, the polluter is no longer a viable entity and/or the pollution occurred before modern environmental laws were enacted.

## Portland Air Line Trail Update

by Jack Lakowsky

Portland's Air Line Trail Steering Committee Chairman Rosario Rizzo updated the community on the status of the ongoing Air Line Trail project at Wednesday's Board of Selectmen meeting.

The second phase of trail plans, Rizzo said, is now in the first stages of discussion by the committee.

The efforts of the committee have spanned years, according to Rizzo.

Phase 1 of the Portland trail officially opened on June 3, 2018. Rizzo said the 2.7 miles of trail have been actively used in this time. Final construction of Phase 1 was completed in fall 2019 with the expansion of the Middle Haddam Road parking area.

Grant funds were used in this construction. In 2016, Portland completed an agreement with Eversource. The utility company leased land to the town. This contract allowed the town to secure a \$600,000 grant from the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP).

Rizzo said Phase 2 will involve extending the trail from its current terminus at YMCA Camp Ingersoll to Route 17, adjacent of Route 66.

Rizzo said the committee has reached tentative agreements with owners of Camp Ingersoll, Butler Construction, Eversource Energy and the new location of Portland's Dairy Queen to allow trail access through their properties.

Rizzo said this would expand the trail an additional mile and increase accessibility to local roads, residences and businesses. Rizzo added that the trail committee will explore an alternative trail route along Route 66 in cooperation with the Connecticut Department of Transportation.

Completing Phase 2 will position the trail for the beginning of Phase 3, intended to extend the trail to downtown Portland and the Arrigoni Bridge.

Rizzo said the committee will explore a usage agreement with the private owners to establish a parallel trail from Marlborough Street to Airline Avenue. The trail will work with the Complete Street Groups to connect the Air Line Trail to other streets, the Arrigoni and the Riverfront Park.

Rizzo also presented possible actions the committee will take during Phase 4, including connecting the Portland Trail to the Riverfront

Park and continue north along the Connecticut River.

Rizzo said he plans to work with the Town of Glastonbury to develop a bike trail on Tryon Street to the Glastonbury-Rocky Hill Ferry, the oldest operating ferry service in the country, beginning operation in 1655.

Progress on the trail, however, has been stalled in East Hampton.

East Hampton and DEEP have been working to extend the trail from Main Street to Depot Hill Road, connecting to Portland's trail. However, the proposed trail would go through wetlands. Eversource telephone poles also stand in that area. Rizzo said the cost to remove these would be about \$400,000.

"Right now, the trail ends at the Portland border," Rizzo said. "That's not going to be an easy sale."

Rizzo said the committee plans to make the trail accessible year-round, including snowshoeing in the winter.

Selectman James Tripp said the trail is being used heavily.

Economic Development Coordinator Mary Dickerson said her department, the trail com-

mittee, and the town's technology department have introduced an online app indicating to hikers and bikers where on the trail they can shop at local businesses.

"Economic development is all about connectivity," Dickerson said in an interview after the selectmen meeting. "This will connect people to local businesses. We're a tiny town, but we can use technology to have amenities of bigger towns."

On the town's website, [portlandct.org](http://portlandct.org), trail users can select the "Our Community" tab, scroll down this page, then select the "Hiking Trails" thumbnail.

This will connect users to the "Portland Tourism" page, which presents the options of parks and culture, restaurants and grocery stores and outdoor recreation & agriculture. Users can then select any business they're interested in visiting and be directed to its location.

Dickerson said the town hopes to add a tab of seasonal options in the future.

The trail committee hopes to eventually connect Portland's trail with the state-owned trail that begins in Windham and extends to Thompson in the northeast corner of the state.

# Portland Man Arrested for Selling THC Cartridges to Minors

by Jack Lakowsky

Joseph LeCara, 38, of 185 Summer St., was arrested Feb. 26 on multiple charges stemming from his alleged selling of THC infused vaping cartridges to local youths, Portland Police said.

LeCara was charged with the following; four counts of risk of injury to a child; possession of a controlled substance; possession with intent to sell and; sale of illegal drugs within 1,500 feet of a school.

LeCara's Summer Street home is less than a mile from Gildersleeve School on Main Street.

LeCara was transported to the Portland Police Department for processing and was released on a \$5,000 non-surety bond. He is due in Middletown court on March 10.

According to police, LeCara does not have any prior arrests.

The Portland Police Department and Middletown Street Crime Unit received information from a concerned citizen indicating LeCara was selling vaping cartridges infused with THC, the main psychoactive ingredient in marijuana, according to Middletown police officer Anthony Knapp.

The two units observed a transaction between LeCara and four youths, according to the police report. The four youths purchased a cartridge.

This probable cause gave officers enough reason to arrest LeCara. Knapp said LeCara would drive to Massachusetts to purchase products that are legal there and then sell them illegally in Connecticut. LeCara would store these products at his home.

"It's easy to travel there," Knapp said.

Knapp said he has seen a rise in incidents involving THC vaping products, and said the number of these situations will increase, as they are made more available.

"We're concerned about any drug sales," Knapp said. "But this one caught our attention because of the kids."

Knapp said police have responded to several THC vaping-related incidents at Portland High School.

Portland High School Principal Kathryn Lawson referred media inquiry to the school district's central office.

Superintendent of Schools Phillip O' Reilly did not reply to request for comment on how schools are discussing vaping with students.

LeCara was arrested at his home. His home was searched by police, who found a variety of marijuana consumption products, including oils, wax, edibles and green leaf totaling more than 10 ounces.

According to the Connecticut Department of Public Health, 51 people in Connecticut have suffered lung injuries through use of e-cigarette or vaping products as of Jan. 21. One patient died. Connecticut DPH continues to work with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and other states to determine all of the causes of these lung injuries, according to CT DPH.

Eight of the 51 patients were under the age of 18. Zero of the 51 patients were from Middlesex County, according to DPH statistics.

In January, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) released a report discouraging the use of THC vaping products, particularly those from "informal sources" like friends, family or from dealers.

According to the CDC, 82 percent of patients hospitalized with e-cigarette or lung injury reported using a THC product. As of January, all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico reported 2,668 patients hospitalized from lung injury.

Adult use of these products continues to increase, according to DPH. The appeal of these devices has become especially high among

youth and young adults. Their popularity rose to new heights when the product JUUL entered the market in 2015, according to DPH.

The rate of use among adolescents has risen so quickly that U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams labeled vaping among youth an epidemic in fall of 2018.

Vaping products come in many varieties. Some e-cigarettes are made to resemble regular smoking paraphernalia like cigarettes, cigars or pipes. Others resemble everyday electronic devices like USB sticks. Most are compact, concealable and transportable. DPH also reported the schools have had trouble with students using them in bathrooms and classrooms.

Data from the 2017 Connecticut Youth Tobacco Survey highlighted that Connecticut high school students are vaping at an increasing rate – up to 14.7 percent in 2017 from 2.40 percent in 2011 – while smoking of conventional cigarettes has declined. More than half of the state's high school students have reported using their devices for substances other than nicotine, including marijuana, THC or hash oil.

The electronic smoking and vaping industry reported \$3.5 billion in sales in 2015, according to a DPH report.

## Marlborough Budget Proposal Represents 2.36% Hike

by Karla Santos

In a finance board meeting Wednesday, First Selectman Greg Lowrey presented a \$26.60 million town operations budget proposal for fiscal year 2020-21.

If the \$612,240 or 2.36% increase is approved as presented, residents could face a higher mill rate, Lowrey said.

Lowrey's proposal includes town operations, debt service, capital, contingency, RHAM operations, RHAM capital and local Board of Education operations and capital budgets.

The Board of Education capital budget is an estimate as the numbers have not yet been finalized, he said.

While the overall budget presents an increase, capital spending and debt service have decreased, Lowrey said. Debt service is down by \$278,000 and capital is down by \$68,000.

The \$100,000 increase in road preservation – specifically in crack-sealing – is the biggest hike in the budget, according to Lowrey, who said he wants to focus on the road system.

"We have 60-something miles of road in town," he said. "The pavement condition index is 81% on the hundreds of the roads that are

generally in good repair. The consultant indicates that in order to maintain the roads in their current condition, we would need to spend \$450,000 per year for each of the next five years. So you'll see that on our five-year plan."

Road preservation funding for the 2020-21 fiscal year is spread across a couple different areas, Lowrey said. In addition to crack sealing, culvert work is funded and there is about \$280,000 in capital items.

Lowrey said it costs about \$7,500 a mile to do crack-sealing, which he called a preventative measure.

"If we wait and we have to rebuild the road completely, the cost of building a mile of road is in excess of \$385,000," he said. "We can pay that \$450,000 now, or we can pay far more later."

Lowrey started his presentation by saying he had met with leaders from the surrounding towns and was "happy" to tell residents that the town is in a "strong financial position."

Some of the things that have contributed to the town's financial stability are grand list

growth, the projection of a fiscal year surplus and bond payments, he said.

Lowrey said the preliminary working budget was developed through discussions with department heads, and is based on what's needed to provide essential services, retain qualified personnel and promote morale.

Based on the proposal, operations, capital and debt are down by \$166,000, he said.

During budget meetings with department heads, four vehicles were requested, Lowrey said. Upon further discussion, they decided to include two in the request.

The vehicles will be paid for with reserved cash and Lowrey said he did not anticipate any bonding in the coming year.

In regards to personnel, the town has a vacant position in public works and management is looking at options on how to fill that, Lowrey said.

"Certainly, the town would benefit by having an expert in roads and drainage and we will be able to limit the consultant fees we pay," he said. "We are also contemplating bringing in a

third constable under the director of public safety to cover the same budgeted hours, so we don't expect there would be an additional staff cost."

Lowrey said he will be providing departments with reports on salaries and benefits "so the folks can better understand the cost of running each department."

He said there were a couple different ways to look at capital items and explained the focus includes public works projects, revaluation and construction.

Budget highlights, according to Lowrey, include increased technology and town hall computers that need to be updated, as well as administrative expenses, such as an increase in contracted services and the IT vendor. Other highlights are increased facilities maintenance of the food bank and increases in road maintenance, tree removal, catch basin cleanings and supplies to add more fish to the lake.

There are also budget decreases in areas such as snow removal, canine control and public safety, Lowrey said.

## Marlborough Proposed School Budget Increase Dips

by Karla Santos

Staffing and insurance tweaks have resulted in a slightly lower proposed school budget than what was originally presented in January.

Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz shared the news with the Board of Finance Tuesday when he presented the board with the proposed 2020-21 school budget. The proposed spending package now totals \$7.72 million, a drop from the \$7.74 million Sklarz originally presented Jan. 23.

The proposal would be a 4.25% increase over current year spending.

The changes in the budget include one less paraeducator, with a total of 18.5 paraeducators for the 2020-21 school year. The budget Sklarz presented originally included 19.5 paraeducators. Sklarz also presented changes made to the insurance rates. In his original budget, the health insurance increase was at 7.5% and on Tuesday's budget presentation, the health insurance increase was at 5.8%. Insurance rates are still subject to change.

Items that stayed the same in the latest bud-

get include the superintendent's base budget, an additional classroom teacher and an additional out of district placement.

The Marlborough school District only has one school, Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School, which currently has a total of 440 students, Sklarz said during his presentation.

Sklarz said that salaries, benefits, electricity, sewer, water, student transportation, magnet school tuition, diesel, gasoline, propane and heating oil are contractual obligations that represent 91% of the total budget.

Salaries represent 68% of the 2020-21 budget and the average general wage increase in Marlborough Elementary School teacher salaries is 2%, Sklarz said. Benefits account for 14.6% of the budget.

Sklarz's presented budget includes \$4.15 million for certified staff; \$1.11 million for noncertified staff; \$1.12 million for employee benefits; \$171,959 in purchased professional services; \$287,335 in purchased property services; \$622,134 in other purchased services;

\$222,150 in supplies and materials; \$13,200 in capital outlay; and \$19,245 in other objects, such as membership fees, meetings and conferences.

In the budget presentation, Sklarz identified alternative funding sources and cost savings such as a technology and security grant.

"We got a technology grant and it's provided an incredible boost and allows us at this point and time to say all we need to do now is to replace Chromebooks because they've worn out," Sklarz said.

Other alternative funding sources and cost savings that Sklarz identified include the REAP grant, rental fees to support building improvement plan, Title I, II & IV Federal grants, Medicaid reimbursement, excess cost reimbursement for special education, shared services and outsourcing.

After the meeting, Board of Finance member Ken Hjulstrom said in an email he personally feels the elementary school is well man-

aged and that it benefits the community with "quality education" and by "positively influencing property values."

Although the capital improvements budget for the school has not been finalized yet, Hjulstrom said neglecting the facilities can only cost more money and agrees on spending on needed repairs.

"Nearly 20 years ago we spent over \$16 million to renovate a deteriorating and dated elementary school," Hjulstrom said. "We need to consistently fund current capital needs in order to maintain our school building and to avoid a much larger bill in the future should we neglect the facility as was done back in the 1990s."

"I am optimistic that our first selectman will work cooperatively with the Board of Education to maximize the sharing of services and resources, while minimize costs," he added.

The Board of Finance will continue to work on the school budget for the rest of the month.

# Unlocked Car Reported Stolen in East Hampton

by Jack Lakowsky

The East Hampton Police Department is investigating the reported theft of a motor vehicle early Tuesday morning from Depot Hill Road.

According to police, the car was unlocked and the keys were inside.

Police said they have received several other complaints of vehicles having been broken into on West High Street, Terp Road and Hog Hill Road.

Police said that, in all reported incidents, the broken-into cars were unlocked.

Anyone with any information on the car break-ins or the stolen vehicle is asked to call East Hampton Police at 860-267-9544.

EHPD has posted numerous reminders to Facebook reminding residents to lock their cars and secure their keys to help prevent break-ins and thefts.

This issue is spread throughout Greater Hartford suburbs.

Earlier this year, a report by the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee found that, with the exception of Waterbury,

car thefts in all major Connecticut cities are declining, but that suburban areas have seen a sharp rise in these crimes.

Car thefts decreased in Bridgeport, Hartford, New Britain and New Haven by more than 38% from 2008 to 2017, according to the report.

Car thefts are up by almost 21% in the suburbs with populations of up to 25,000. The highest concentration of car thefts has move from the New Haven area to the I-91 and I-84 corridors running through central Connecticut suburbs. According to the Juvenile Justice report.

In summer 2016, three cars were stolen in East Hampton from the Mountain View Road and Waterview Circle neighborhoods. All three vehicles were unlocked with keys inside.

Last year, state lawmakers passed a new act aimed at curbing juvenile car thefts. Instead of putting offenders through the juvenile justice system, it looks to treat root causes and expands the court's ability to detain repeat offenders.

## Police News

2/14: Michelle Nesbitt, 29, of 77 Lookout Rd., Westbrook, was arrested and charged with possession of a controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia and illegal storage of drugs in an improper container, East Hampton Police said.

2/17: Jon Grimshaw, 54, of 26 N. Main St., was issued a summons for operating under suspension, operating without insurance, misuse of plates and operating an unregistered motor vehicle, police said.

2/19: Michael Slade, 19, of 9 Curry Ln., turned himself in pursuant to an active warrant for his arrest and charged with second-degree assault and second-degree criminal mischief,

police said.

2/22: After an investigation into a car vs pole accident in the area of 94 W. High St., Paul Heidel, 60, of 2 Keighley Pond Rd., Middle Haddam, was arrested and charged with failure to drive right, driving under the influence and driving a motor vehicle without a Connecticut license.

2/22: Caleb Bowe, 21, of 101 Julia Ter., Middletown was arrested for failure to obey a stop sign and driving under the influence, police said.

Also, from Feb. 10-23, officers responded to 20 medical calls, six motor vehicle crashes and 14 alarms, and made 36 traffic stops.

## Colchester Man Charged with Criminal Impersonation

A local resident was arrested last week after, police said, he falsely represented himself as a former state trooper during a traffic stop last fall.

Steven Schuster, 75, of 386 Westchester Rd., was arrested Feb. 27 and charged with criminal impersonation, stemming from an incident that occurred last September.

According to the arrest warrant, Schuster was stopped by Trooper Eric Watrous for speeding on Route 16 at 11:30 a.m. Sept. 4, 2019. Police said Schuster presented Watrous a police officer badge after being stopped. Watrous said he asked Schuster if he was a police officer or a Connecticut state trooper, and Schuster said he was a retired state trooper on the "Bomb Squad from '68 until '83," the warrant states. Schuster also said the badge he presented was a retired trooper badge.

Watrous said he called two other patrol officers to ask if they knew that Schuster was a retired officer and they said they didn't know. He proceeded to question Schuster again about being an officer. Schuster eventually confessed that he was not a trooper, but had

previously worked for a company that provided equipment to the "Connecticut Bomb Squad." The warrant said that Watrous then issued Schuster an infraction for speeding and said they would be in touch about Schuster's actions during the traffic stop.

Watrous took pictures of Schuster's badge and compared them with what he knew to be an authentic retired state trooper badge – and determined Schuster's badge not to be that of a retired state trooper's.

Over the course of the investigation, Watrous learned Schuster had been pulled over for speeding a month earlier – and had also flashed a "Special Honorary State Police" badge, which he said was given to him by a former state police administrator. Schuster was given the speeding ticket anyway.

All of this information provided Watrous with what he felt was probable cause to arrest Schuster on the criminal impersonation charge.

Schuster was released on a \$500 non-surety bond and is due in court March 19.

## Colchester Police News

3/1: State Police said Gabriel Rodriguez, 39, of 35 Tavern Ln., Colchester, was arrested and charged with reckless driving and failure to obey a stop sign.

3/1: State Police said John Coppola, 40, of 95 Pleasant St., Colchester, was arrested and charged with extradition arrest by warrant.

3/1: State Police said Jennifer Dzialo, 34, of Lebanon, was arrested and charged with driving under the influence.

## Andover Police News

2/29: State Police said Isaiah Hernandez, 23, of East Hartford, was arrested and charged with improper use of marker, driving without insurance, driving without a license, failure to notify change of address to the Department of Motor Vehicles.

## Marlborough Police News

3/2: State Police said Vladimir Slavin, 26, of Rocky Hill, was arrested and charged with fifth-degree larceny.

# Obituaries

## Colchester

### Ronald Edward Moroch

Ronald Edward Moroch, 77, of Colchester, passed away at Middlesex Hospital Thursday, Feb. 27, after a long and valiant battle with lung disease. Born in Manchester July 25, 1942, he was a son of the late Edward and Anna Moroch.

Ronald attended Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology in Boston, Mass., where he earned his associate's degree. He went on to become a master mechanic for Arborio Construction in Cromwell until his retirement in 2008.

Ronald loved to cook and was a volunteer at St. Andrew Church, helping to make pierogis. He was a member of the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 478. He also was a member of the Early Ford V-8 Club of America, where he was able to share his love of classic cars. Ron was a peaceful man who took the time to enjoy the little things in life such as a good book, a calm lake for fishing, or a serene hike in the woods.

Kindness emanated from Ronald. He had a way of making friends everywhere he went. People were drawn to him and he would always find a way to make everyone smile. Even during his final days at the hospital, Ron was able to share jokes and laughter with his family.

Ronald will be forever missed but remembered with love by his beloved wife of over 26 years, Barbara (Dombroski) Moroch of Colchester; his sons, Jeffrey Moroch and his fiancé Kristin Ahrens of Hebron, Craig Moroch and his wife Gloria of Lisbon; his step-son, David Proto of Kansas City, Mo.; his brother, Gary Moroch of Providence, R.I.; grandchildren, Amber, Katerina, Kyle, Sarah, Jessie; great-grandchildren, Elliott, Liam; his faithful dog, Greta; as well as numerous extended family members and many friends.

In addition to both of his parents, Ronald was predeceased by his brother, Daniel.

"Big rocks, little rocks, Morochs"

Calling hours were held Tuesday, March 3, at the Aurora McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., in Colchester. Funeral services were held Wednesday, March 4, directly at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave., in Colchester. Burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the American Lung Association 45 Ash St. West Hartford, CT 06108 ([lung.org/donate](http://lung.org/donate)) or The Watkins Glen Farm Sanctuary, P.O. Box 150, Watkins Glen, NY 14891-150 ([farmsanctuary.org/donate](http://farmsanctuary.org/donate)).

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

## East Hampton

### Joshua Robert Beamer

Joshua Robert Beamer, 41, of East Hampton, husband of Marissa (Woodhull) Beamer, passed away unexpectedly Wednesday, Feb. 26. Born Jan. 11, 1979 in Landstuhl, Germany, he was raised in East Hampton and graduated from East Hampton High School.

Joshua was employed as a pipe fitter with the Union Local 777 for the past 10 years. Joshua loved the History Channel, working on cars and Notre Dame football. Joshua played high school football for Middletown when East Hampton didn't have a team yet. But most of all Joshua loved and adored his children.

He is survived by his wife, Marissa; his two children, Cassidy and James Beamer, his mother, Carolyn Beamer of East Hampton; his brother and best friend, Jeremy Beamer of East Hampton, his maternal grandmother, Caroline Clark; uncle Chuck and wife Lori Clark, cousins, Michael and Bryan; aunt Cheryl Lynn Kimball and husband Frank, cousins Ronnie, Caitlin and Robyn.

Friends may call at Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, today, March 6, from 5-7 p.m. A funeral liturgy will be celebrated Saturday, March 7, at 11 a.m., in St. Patrick Church in East Hampton. Burial will be at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Autism Speaks at [act.autismspeaks.org](http://act.autismspeaks.org).

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



## Marlborough

### Mary Grace Bratton Rankl

Mary Grace Bratton Rankl, 77, of Marlborough, passed away peacefully Monday, Feb. 10, in Florida with her beloved daughter, Gerie, and granddaughter, Sydney, by her side. Born July 18, 1942 in Waterbury, she was the daughter of the late Edith King Bratton and Gerald Bratton.

Mary was an entrepreneur, starting at the early age of 18 she was a jack of all trades. If she could buy it or start it, it became a business. She owned a driving school in her early 20s, antique shops, pub bars in both Connecticut and Florida and was a commercial and residential real estate owner and maintenance guru. When it came to fixing something, Mary was your gal, she could fix anything as she was a perfectionist.

As much as she loved to work, she also loved to play, roulette and blackjack were her favorite. She and her late husband, Tom, would host card games at their house on many occasions – if there was a card game to be had, it was at their house. They loved gambling and even married in Las Vegas. Her nickname was "Midnight Mary" – she would be up all hours of the night, cooking a meal, cleaning the house or fixing something, all while others were sleeping. She had a zest for life and lived life to the fullest. If she wanted to do it, she did. She never met a person she didn't like. She always spoke her mind – you never wondered what she was thinking. She had many friends, from all walks of life, everywhere she went, she knew someone. If anyone needed help, Mary was there.

In the early years, Mary played softball and was an over the fence hitter and great outfielder. People came to the ballfield just to watch her play. She was also a gun enthusiast and was an NRA instructor for most of her adult life. She was heavily involved and an active member in many organizations including the American Legion Auxiliary, Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, Women of the Moose, Elks, and the DAV Auxiliary.

Mary is survived by her daughter, Gerie Vogt of Lake Mary, Fla., and her granddaughter Sydney Vogt of Lake Mary, Fla. She was predeceased by her husband, Thomas Edward Rankl and son-in-law, Robert Scott Vogt.

A celebration of Mary's life will be held Sunday, March 15, at 1 p.m., at the VFW Post 5095, located at 20 N. Maple St., East Hampton, CT 06424. There will also be a Mass held in her name at St. John Fisher in Marlborough at 8:30 a.m. on March 15.

In lieu of flowers, make donations to the American Cancer Society for lung cancer research, 800-227-2345 or [cancer.org](http://cancer.org).

To leave online condolences, visit [degusipe.com](http://degusipe.com), DeGusipe Funeral Home.



## East Hampton

### Lisa Ellen Newman

Lisa Ellen (Dolce) Newman, 58, of Middletown, formerly of East Hampton and Higganum, passed away Monday, March 2, at Middlesex Hospital. Born June 19, 1961, in Middletown, she was the daughter of Barbara H. (James) Dolce of East Hampton and the late Jack C. Dolce.

Lisa was a graduate of East Hampton High School. She was a valued and treasured employee of Bull Metal Products for the past 12 years as the company's purchasing agent. Lisa was very proud of her dedication to the company.

A fun-loving person, Lisa always enjoyed a good laugh and some good country music. She had a strong faith in God and knew He supported her throughout her life. She loved her cat and dog, and showed compassion for all animals. Lisa was proud of the success of her son's business, and proud to be a part of her daughter's wedding. The birth of her granddaughter Freya brought her much happiness and she cherished the time spent with her.

Lisa is survived by her daughter, Ashley (Rand) Tuchmann and her husband Zachary of Old Saybrook and their daughter, Freya Tuchmann; her son, William Taylor Rand of Portland; brother, Richard Dolce and his wife Yolanda of Myrtle Beach, S.C.; brother, Steven Dolce and his wife Mary of East Hampton; brother, Timothy Dolce of Avon; brother, Gregg Dolce and his fiancée Nicole Beaulieu of East Hampton; niece Lauren and nephew Adam; and Lisa's boyfriend of many years Steve Bull.

Friends may call at the Spencer Funeral Home at 112 Main St., East Hampton, Sunday, March 8, from 4-6 p.m. A funeral liturgy will be celebrated Monday, March 9, at 11 a.m., at St. Patrick Church in East Hampton. Burial will be private at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in her memory to the Connecticut Humane Society at [cthumane.org](http://cthumane.org).

To share memories or send condolences to the family, visit [spencerfuneralhomeinc.com](http://spencerfuneralhomeinc.com).



## Hebron

### Doris Marie Horton

Doris Marie (Rigby) Horton died peacefully in her home at Brookdale Fillmore Pond in Bennington, Vt., in the morning of Friday, Feb. 28, eight days after her 90th birthday. She is reunited with her husband of 65 years, Robert (Bob) Henry Horton, and her son, Matthew Francis Horton, both from Hebron. Doris and Bob lived in southern Vermont, near their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren for the past 20 years.

Doris was the middle child of Mary Agnes Moran and James Frank Rigby, with an older sister, Joyce, and a younger brother, Jimmy. She was born Feb. 19, 1930, and lived her early years in East Milton, south of Boston, where her father worked for RCA. The family moved first to Westchester County, N.Y., and then settled in Greenwich.

She attended the College of New Rochelle and the University of Connecticut, where she was part of a group of friends who would sing songs and dance, with Bob at the piano. After she left UConn, their friendship grew into deep and abiding love. They were married June 30, 1951, and settled in Bob's hometown, Hebron. Over the next years she focused on raising seven children, while also earning her teacher's certification from Eastern Connecticut State University, and teaching elementary school, first at Andover Elementary School and later with Bob at Lebanon Elementary School. Life was a full, rich, and sometimes challenging feat of choreography, which she managed with precision and grace.

Doris was a dancer. She started ballet when she was four years old and continued lessons throughout high school. Later, she was often a member of the dance cast in shows, and she returned to practicing ballet in her retirement. Doris also loved swing dancing the jitterbug and foxtrot. A love of music and dancing remained a constant, and she and Bob were major players in community theater ensembles in Hebron and Manchester, and Wilmington, Vt.

Doris was also active behind the scenes, setting the stage with care so that others could shine. She sewed costumes for countless shows at Memorial Hall in Wilmington, Vt., and maintained the costume collection with the exactitude of a librarian or accountant. Her precision and generosity came together with a keen focus on empowering others. One might see her sorting donations at Twice Blessed, sewing hygiene kits for Shining Hope for Communities, or knitting hats for premature infants. She enriched communities with her energy and kindness, and her determination to make things better, for everyone.

Doris is survived by six children: one son, Paul Horton of Middletown, five daughters, Kathleen Horton of Greenwich, N.Y., Karen Horton of Wilmington, Vt., Bethany Morelli of Bronxville, N.Y., Marietta Formanek of Manchester Center, Vt., and Sarah Horton of Freuchie, Scotland, and Matthew's widow, Nathalie Horton Peltier of Hebron. She also leaves a large and loving extended family, with 13 grandchildren, Jessica, Jack, Charlie, Stefan, Abigail, Anthony, Ben, Sabina, Peter, Maggie, Elena, Nicolás and Ricardo, and three great-grandchildren, Alice, Matthew and Ava.

At family gatherings, Doris would gather everyone together, hands clasped, heads bowed, hearts overflowing, to say grace. We will miss her in those moments, and so many more. But we see her in each other and in the grace she extended to all whose lives she touched.

A celebration of Doris' life will be held in Hebron in late spring. Donations may be made in Doris' name to Shining Hope for Communities ([shofco.org](http://shofco.org)), an empowerment program for women and girls that was important to her.



## Colchester

### Alberta Murphy-Mader

Alberta (Anderson) Murphy-Mader, 88, of Colchester passed away peacefully with her family by her side at Harrington Court. On Monday evening, March 2, Alberta's 20-year battle with Parkinson's disease came to an end.

She was born Oct. 21, 1931, in Four Falls, Canada, to the late Ernest and Dorothy (Hitchcock) Nichols. She grew up in the potato fields of Maine. She retired from Kmart.

Alberta enjoyed reading romance novels, shopping, people watching, dining out and snacking on her favorite candy, peanut butter cups. Alberta loved to spend time in her gardens, she was a lover of animals and pink was her favorite color. Her grandchildren and great-grandchildren were her favorite people. Alberta and Chester shared 26 years of marriage together, blending two families into a wonderful life. Together they enjoyed camping, taking care of their vegetable garden and spending time with their family. In addition to both of her parents, she was predeceased by her daughter, Donna Murphy; her granddaughter, Brandi Vanese; and two brothers, Ervin and Fred Nichols. Alberta will be forever missed by her husband, Chester; her children, Robert Murphy III, Chester (Rachel) Anderson III, Mary (John) McGuire, Rev Cheryl (Jim) Caronna, Nicole (Rich) Hosford, Margaret Mader; 10 grandchildren; 14 great grandchildren; and numerous nieces, nephews, extended family members and friends.

The family would like to extend a huge thank you to the staff of Harrington Court for all the care they have provided over the past two years.

Family and friends are invited to wear pink in celebration of Alberta's life. Calling hours will be held on Thursday, March 5, at the Aurora McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. Funeral services will be held today, March 6, at 10 a.m., directly at Colchester Federated Church, 60 S. Main St., Colchester. Alberta will be laid to rest in Maplewood Cemetery at 1 p.m. following church services and reception.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to Colchester Federated Church.

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



## East Hampton

### Mary Gail Sanville

Mary Gail (Kay) Sanville, 81, of East Hampton, widow of William D. Sanville died Wednesday Feb. 26, at Middlesex Hospital, surrounded by her family. Born Aug. 23, 1938, in Lowell, Mass., she was the daughter of the late John J. and Julia M. (Carter) Kay.

She is survived by her two sons, William J. Sanville of New Jersey, Timothy Sanville of South Carolina; two daughters, Sharon DeCarlo of Washington, Julianne Gerzabek of East Hampton; 10 grandchildren, Joey, Cameron, Kyle, Brendan, Danny, Nicholas, Olivia, Holly, Jennifer, Rachel; and a great-grandson, Mason.

A graveside service will be held Saturday, March 7, at 11 a.m. in the Connecticut State Veteran's Cemetery on Bow Lane, Middletown.

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



## Obituaries continued

### Portland

#### James Michael Probolus

James Michael Probolus, 71, of Portland, beloved husband of Catherine (Howe) Probolus for 49 years, passed away Saturday, Feb. 29, at Yale-New Haven Hospital, after a short illness. Born in Worcester, Mass., he was the son of the late George and Lillian (Sexton) Probolus.



Jim always enjoyed visiting family and friends, skiing in Vermont and spending time in the mountains, relaxing on the beach in Cancun and traveling the world. He was an avid UConn women's basketball fan. Even though Jim tried hard, he was terrible at photography, slept through Tanglewood and wasted countless hours trying to keep the squirrels out of his blueberries.

Jim worked at Travelers Insurance for 23 years, at IBM as a national and international IT Project Manager for many years and spent his retirement driving for NAPA Karl. He served on the board of directors of Gilead Community Services, for the Middlesex Community College Foundation, and was a former chair of the Portland Board of Education and Town Ethics Commission. He also volunteered as a senior advocate for Department of Consumer Protection in the Connecticut attorney general's office.

Along with his wife, Jim is survived by two sons, James Andrew Probolus and his wife Marianne Smith of Lancaster, Pa., and Matthew Franklin Probolus and his wife Jessica of West Hartford; three brothers, George F. Probolus (Judy) of Pleasant Valley, N.Y., Paul C. Probolus (Sallie) of Brewster, Mass., and his twin brother, John X. Probolus (Susan) of Boston, Mass.; two brothers-in-law, Thomas A. Howe (Margaret) of Goshen, N.Y., and David G. Howe of Brazil; six grandchildren, Zachary, Henry, Maxwell, Skyler, Annabel and James II; five nieces, Kimberly, Katherine, Alison, Katherine and Yara and two nephews, Nicholas and Daniel (predeceased).

Family and friends called Thursday, March 5, at the Doolittle Funeral Home, 14 Old Church Street, Middletown. Services will be at the convenience of the family in the spring.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Jim's memory may be made to Gilead Community Services, 222 Main Street Extension, Middletown, CT 06457.

To share memories or send condolences to the family, visit [doolittlefuneralservice.com](http://doolittlefuneralservice.com).

### Andover

#### Gilbert Adam Soucy Sr.

Gilbert Adam Soucy Sr., 72, of Andover, passed away after a brief illness Saturday, Feb. 29, with his beloved family by his side. Born in Hartford Feb. 25, 1948, he was a son of the late Gilbert J. and Elizabeth (St. Pierre) Soucy.



He graduated from Hartford High School and went on to earn a vocational degree at Prince Tech. Gil utilized his education to attain a long and successful career as a printer.

He married his beloved wife Joaneen Meli on April 19, 1969. The couple made their home in Andover where they raised their family and contributed to their community by volunteering as co-directors and founders of the Andover Food Pantry. He was also a member of the First Congregational Church of Andover.

Gil was an avid outdoorsman. He loved nature, fishing and hunting. He was a lifetime member of the Windham Fish and Game Club, where he leaves behind many beloved friends. Gil will be remembered by those who knew him well as a kind and gentle soul, with a great sense of humor, and as someone who would do anything to help another in need. Most importantly, he will be remembered by his family as a devoted and loving husband, father and grandfather.

He leaves to mourn his loss his wife and best friend of nearly 51 years, Joaneen; children, Julie and her husband Patrick Hurley of Southridge, Mass., Karen Nieves of Colchester, Gilbert Soucy, Jr. of Andover, Daniel and his wife Jennifer of Mansfield; a brother, Sandy and his wife Judy Soucy; a sister-in-law, Kan Nan Soucy; nine grandchildren, Vanessa, Amanda, Justin, Alexis, Devon, Charleigh, Jeffrey, Adam, Lucas; his dog Sadie; and numerous extended family and friends.

In addition to his parents, he was predeceased by a son-in-law, Richy Nieves; a brother, Harold Soucy; and a sister, Betty Ann Milbrandt.

Calling hours will be held today, March 6, from 5-7 p.m., at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral service will be held Saturday, March 7, at 10:30 a.m., directly at the First Congregational Church of Andover, 359 Route 6, Andover. Burial will follow in Townsend Cemetery in Andover.

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