

RIVEREAST

News Bulletin

Serving Amston, Andover, Cobalt, Colchester, East Hampton, Hebron, Marlborough, Middle Haddam and Portland

Volume 44, Number 28

Published by The Glastonbury Citizen

June 12, 2020



Signs were held and loud chants were said during the two-hour Black Lives Matter rally in Colchester last weekend. The peaceful protest drew hundreds to the Town Green.

Emotional, Peaceful Protest Against Racism

by Karla Santos

In 2015 Jomila Schand and her brother were walking home from school when a man called them the 'n' word.

A year later, Schand's sister was walking home from school and someone driving by rolled down the window and also called her the 'n' word. She ran home the rest of the way because "she was scared for her life."

These were only two of the countless times Schand or a member of her family have been the target of hateful, racist language over the years.

With tears in her eyes, Schand explained that's the story of growing up black in America as she spoke during a Black Lives Matter protest that took place last Friday at the Colchester Town Green. During the event, hundreds of members of the Colchester community came together as one; and despite the humidity, a

few raindrops and the ongoing threat of COVID-19, they joined together – most clad in masks – to create awareness for the Black Lives Matter movement.

Protest signs were held up for two hours by attendees, who were mainly dressed in black. Among the attendees were many young faces that were full of energy as they chanted, clapped and listened to the speakers.

CJ White, a Bacon Academy senior who is black, also spoke during the protest. White said she was recently sent a video titled "Why 'Black Lives Matter' is a Joke." She said that after seeing the video, she cried for several hours as she wondered why her life "is not valued in this country."

During her speech, White could not hold her tears and at times she even had to take a break

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Portland Selectmen Commit to Discussion of Race

by Jack Lakowsky

The Portland Board of Selectmen last Wednesday, June 3, committed to an ongoing discussion of how to train town employees and residents against racism in the wake of continuing anti-police brutality protests, including in Portland.

"We're definitely going to discuss ongoing training for all staff, including police, fire, public works and administration," First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said in a Monday interview with the Rivereast.

The commitment to anti-racism training follows the alleged murder of George Floyd by a former Minneapolis police officer. In a bystander video, now-former police officer Derek Chauvin kneels on the back of Floyd's head for almost nine minutes, all while Floyd begs for his life. Anti-police brutality protests have erupted on an international scale. Protestors have marched in every U.S. state.

Last Friday, June 5, a protest was held in Portland. Bransfield guessed up to 200 people marched through town. She added that all the protestors she saw wore protective masks and adhered to social distancing guidelines.

"We'll talk about how we can formulate ongoing awareness," she said. "With the full board, we can come up with important topics. This is very important, and it deserves to be on our agenda."

Bransfield and the board chose to add to their agendas "Racial Equity, Diversity, Inclusion," as an ongoing item.

At last Wednesday's meeting, Bransfield read a proclamation of solidarity with minority communities.

"Portland stands strong against injustices," Bransfield read. "There is no room for racism, bigotry, prejudice or violence in our town. The death of our fellow citizen, George Floyd, cannot be tolerated. His death affects all of us, and the suffering caused by his killing is immense and widespread. We stand in solidarity against this. We encourage everyone to stand up against

racism."

Bransfield said in her proclamation that the Portland Police Department supports all peaceful protests.

"Proclamations are nice, but a lot of work needs to occur," Bransfield said.

Bransfield said in the meeting that the selectmen are not the only people who can help formulate plans for anti-racist training. Inclusivity, she said, will be the most crucial factor in creating effective anti-racist training.

"It needs to be profound, visible and effective," Bransfield said. Public input, she explained, will be extremely valuable in planning.

"We need to do more," said selectman Louis Pear. "Racial equity must be a continued piece on the agenda."

The public gave much testimony at last Wednesday's meeting.

Bransfield read a letter from April Graves, who serves on Portland's Brownfield Redevelopment Focus Group.

Graves wrote that as the wife of a black man and as mother to three black boys, she fully supported groups bringing change and racial equity. To enact change, she wrote, a long-term plan that identifies the concerns of minorities in Portland must be implemented. Any issues mentioned, Graves said, must be rectified.

Graves added that her experience with town officials has always been positive.

Laurel Steinhauser, a member of the education and library boards, said she is grateful for the declaration of solidarity, but that "niceties do nothing."

"As white people in government, we have to fight the racism and bias that is so widespread," Steinhauser said.

Steinhauser said inaction will result in further violence.

"What comes next?" Steinhauser asked the selectmen at last Wednesday's meeting. "What can be done better?"

Steinhauser explained that the Portland Board of Education has begun a process that,



International outcry against police brutality has reached Portland, and at a protest held last Friday, a large group of locals gathered on Main Street to show their support for the black community.

she hopes, will result in a more equitable and inclusive school environment.

"I'm asking you to begin a conversation about how to make life better for black and brown people in Portland," Steinhauser said.

Steinhauser suggested community conversations and workshops. She said town government should reach out and gauge how Portland's minority groups view local police. She suggested anti-bias training for police officers and recruiting more people of color into town jobs.

"Representation matters," she said.

Portland Selectman Mike Pelton affirmed Steinhauser statements, saying it is important that the town make tangible, consistent efforts to fight racism. Pelton also said a first step in this would be training town officials and police against racism.

"We need to ask, 'What do people need that we don't know about?'" Pelton said in the meeting.

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**Colchester Protest cont. from Front Page** from talking. Words would not come out of her mouth easily as she cried with deep emotion while trying to share her story.

The audience cheered her up when she took breaks from talking.

“Why am I so scary?” she asked twice, and members of the audience replied, “You are not.”

She said that part of the problem is the lack of love and understanding that we have for one another.

“I’m so tired,” White said after asking why we couldn’t fight racism together.

Jah-Marley Wright, moderator of the event, he introduced the speakers and called for chants in between speeches.

About 14 people spoke during the event including First Selectman Mary Bylone, Selectman Denise Turner, state Rep. Brian Smith (D-49) and the Rev. Lauren Lorincz, pastor at Colchester Federated Church.

The event was organized by current and former Bacon Academy students.

Some of the chants that were said during the event include “Peaceful Protest,” “Black Lives Matter,” “No Justice, No Peace,” and “Say His Name – George Floyd,” referring to the Minnesota man whose death while in police custody has sparked outrage and protests across the state and across the nation.

There were many calls for action shared during the protest.

“We are in 2020 and Martin Luther King’s dream is still a dream,” Izzy Murphy said.

A prayer was led by Cole Brackett and a moment of reflection was held near the end of the event. The moment of reflection was held for 9 minutes to represent the amount of time Floyd was knelt on by now-former police officer Derek Chauvin during the fatal May 25 incident.

Courtney Lusk, a local math teacher, also spoke during the event. She said she wanted to start her speech with some statistics, and proceeded to ask the crowd a series of questions, and for those who had experienced it to raise their hands. She asked folks to look around at

the others raising their hands so they could get an idea of how often people went through the things she mentioned.

She asked the audience to raise hands if they had ever been called a racial slur. She asked them for a raise of hands if they had ever been denied of an opportunity because of their skin color; if they had ever been stopped by the police for no apparent reason at all; if they have ever had their parents teach them what to do when getting pulled over by a cop just to avoid being viewed as a threat; if they have ever feared for their lives when they were pulled over or approached by a cop; if they were followed in a store with obvious suspicion when they were doing nothing but shopping; and if they have ever been asked to speak on behalf of all the people who make up their racial group.

Few hands were risen up as most of the protesters were white. Lusk said she wanted the exercise to show those who are not black that will never know what it feels like to walk in the shoes of a black individual.

“We will never know the pain in their hearts every time another one of their brothers and sisters is murdered by law enforcement,” Lusk said. “We’ll never know the fear that they experience when they encounter those who are supposed to be our protectors. But that does not mean that we cannot stand with them and fight for them.”

Lusk also told the audience that it is “not okay” for individuals to only stand for things that directly affect their own person.

“It is not okay to support leaders just because their bad decisions don’t impact your life,” Lusk added.

In addition, she reminded the group that they are all full of purpose, full of life and that they all matter.

“However we are here today for one reason alone - because Black Lives Matter,” Lusk said. “All lives will never matter until we can all come to agreement on the fact that Black Lives Matter.”

Diane Daniels, former president of the Norwich chapter of the National Association for



**The protest was attended by not just Colchester residents but people from nearby towns as well – including Hebron residents, from left, Dan Mixer, Kevin Tulimieri and Carla Pomproicz.**

the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), also spoke during the event. She said that we are living in interesting times – that are anger-inducing.

Her speech was about the “inherent worth and dignity” every human has and should be treated with.

“Think hard about how you can be true to yourself even when challenged by tough situations and how you can reaffirm the inherent worth and dignity of your fellow human being, whether you agree with their every word and action or not,” Daniels said.

Isaiah Stewart of Colchester spoke at the event, and discussed some of the times he has been treated differently or offended because of his skin color.

Stewart said that most of the people at the protest had no idea of what he means when he

says he lives in fear of the police.

He said most recently his mother has been checking in on him every time he drives his car to ensure his registration is not expired, that he is wearing a seat belt or that he is not driving with a damaged tail light.

Stewart said he was always one to believe that those tragedies he saw on the news against minorities would not happen in Colchester. But he changed his mind when he learned it also happened in small towns.

“No doubt in my mind Colchester, Connecticut could’ve been the next place,” he said.

Stewart said he respects law enforcement but those acts of violence against African Americans made him wonder, “What is so scary about my skin color?”

As was the case with CJ White earlier, many in the crowd yelled in reply, “Nothing!”

## East Hampton Police News

5/20: Tammy Dorfman, 56, of Cromwell, was arrested and charged with operating under the influence and failure to drive right, East Hampton Police said.

5/31: Brooke Fanion, 26, of Norwich, was arrested and charged with failure to drive right, driving under the influence, possession of less than half an ounce of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia, police said.

5/31: Erik Brunsgaard, 32, of 24 Tarragon

Drive, was arrested and charged with second-degree criminal mischief, second-degree breach of peace, possession of less than half an ounce of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia, police said.

Also, from May 25-31, officers responded to eight medical calls, three motor vehicle crashes, one alarm and two calls for vandalism, and made 19 traffic stops, police said.

## Colchester Police News

6/2: State Police said it is investigating the report of a theft of a firearm that was taken from a residence on Buckley Road. The case remains an open investigation. Anyone with information is asked to contact Officer Shannon Owens at 860-465-5400.

6/9: State Police said Max Whitehead, 34, of New London, was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear.

## Marlborough Gas Station Robbed

State police said they are investigating a reported burglary last week at a gas station located at 394 North Main St.

According to a police press release, taken from the store were a variety of items, primarily cigarettes. Police said that at around 2:32 a.m. June 6, they received an alarm activation from the business. Police determined the

suspect entered through a side window. Police said the suspect is visible on the surveillance video, and ultimately drove away in a white Mercedes-Benz. DNA found on scene was sent for analysis, police said.

The case remains under investigation and anyone with information is asked to contact Trooper Philip Soucy at 860-465-5400.

# Hjulstrom Sharply Criticized, But Remains on Marlborough Board

By Karla Santos

Following a poorly-received comment made “in jest” on Facebook last Friday, Republican Board of Finance member Ken Hjulstrom was officially asked by three of his fellow board members this week to resign.

But a motion introduced at Wednesday’s meeting to have the board formally request Hjulstrom’s resignation ultimately failed by a 3-3 vote. Board chair Susan Leser, a Republican, and board members Dieter Zimmer and Deborah Bourbeau, who are both unaffiliated but caucus with the Democrats, voted in favor of the motion. Hjulstrom and fellow Republicans Liz Gorgoglione and Jennifer Pietrzak voted against it.

The vote was a response to a petition that was signed by nearly 800 individuals – 108 of whom were Marlborough residents – asking for Hjulstrom’s resignation after a recent Facebook comment that was interpreted as a call for violence.

The post that led to this controversy was in response to a post on the Marlborough CT Bulletin Board last Friday, which announced a Black Lives Matter protest planned for New Haven. The post also spread rumor the protest would take place on Interstate 95.

“Those who have snow plows for their trucks...get them mounted!” commented Hjulstrom as a response to the post.

Hjulstrom’s comment drew many replies – most criticizing it for its perceived violent tone.

Hjulstrom, who is also former chairman of the Republican Town Committee, later wrote a Facebook post clarifying that his intention was not to offend or incite violence.

“The comment was made in jest to point out my frustration with the highway blockages,” Hjulstrom told the *Rivereast* this week. “I did not anticipate the reaction I received and in hindsight should have left it as a simple statement of concern over the fact that protesters

were interfering with the traffic and impinging on the rights of others to travel freely.”

During Wednesday’s meeting, Hjulstrom said he “would never intentionally wish harm to anyone, nor do I harbor any racist thoughts.” Hjulstrom added that he realized his comment was “inappropriate and foolish.”

“In hindsight I wish I had not said it and I apologize,” he said to the board.

During the meeting, Gorgoglione said that while Hjulstrom’s comment may have been inappropriate, she had a hard time figuring out his intention.

“Who are we do decide what his intent was when he said it?” she asked. “We are not judge or jury to decide whether or not Ken’s comment was a joke or whether he meant it or whether it was intentional.”

Bourbeau said during the meeting she was “appalled and disgusted” when she read Ken’s comment.

Zimmer said Hjulstrom’s behavior was a violation of the “code of ethics of public officials” which was “published by the office of state ethics.” Zimmer also said the comment was a violation of the code of conduct.

Gorgoglione questioned Zimmer’s statement because she didn’t know where Zimmer received the information.

Pietrzak, normally an alternate but seated as a voting member Wednesday, said she agreed that Hjulstrom’s comment was inappropriate, but accepted his apology.

Resident Shawn DeFelice told the *Rivereast* this week he feels Hjulstrom was “sincere” in the post where he explained his intentions for the comment.

“As for his comment, I understand from his apology he said it in jest,” DeFelice said. “If you knew the man, he is quite engaging to speak to and his joking was misinterpreted as a threat.”

DeFelice also said he has lived in

Marlborough for 30 years and doesn’t know Hjulstrom as a threatening person.

While there are those showing comments of support for Hjulstrom and highlighting the time he has devoted to the town, there are others who have said that his behavior is not appropriate as he is an elected official and consequently has higher visibility.

First Selectman Greg Lowrey, a Republican, said he reached out to Hjulstrom to express his feelings on the matter. He has a letter to the editor on the matter in this week’s *Rivereast*.

In an interview with the *Rivereast* earlier this week, before Wednesday’s meeting, Leser said she was “appalled” by Hjulstrom’s comment.

“I personally believe that any elected official who publicly promotes violence should resign from their position,” Leser said.

She said his comment was “insensitive and incendiary.” In addition, Leser said his comment implied a “violent response” to a protest that was meant to be “peaceful.”

“The death and destruction experienced in our country recently is very distressing, to say the least, and certainly nothing to joke about,” she added.

Leser said she also felt the kind of comment made by Hjulstrom is not appropriate for an elected town official.

“As an elected official, one must remember that you represent the community, and your personal thoughts on social matters should be kept out of the media,” Leser said.

Current selectman and former first selectman Amy Traversa, a Democrat, told the *Rivereast* that while the First Amendment gives people the right to express themselves, elected officials are responsible for the way in which they represent the town.

“While I can’t speak to his intention in making the post, I am disappointed that he chose to project Marlborough’s image this way,”

Traversa said. “Our citizens deserve to be represented as the caring and inclusive community we’ve worked to be.”

Dianne Greco, chair of the Marlborough Democratic Town Committee, told the *Rivereast* that a call to violence “needs to be condemned.”

“It is a time to listen, strive to understand the pain and suffering that can bring on heartfelt peaceful protests,” Greco said. “It is also a time to pull together not pull apart the fabric of our country, state and community. Marlborough is a caring community. It has been affirming to hear the outpouring of concern for the protestors expressed by so many in Marlborough.”

Hjulstrom said the people speaking against him are not simply having an “emotional response to a Facebook comment.” He said that their comments are part of “an organized politically-motivated attempt at intimidation.”

“The attacks are pretty much all from registered Democrats,” he said.

Hjulstrom also said that his comment has led to “personal attacks” toward him.

“Very nasty ones,” he said, adding that people have sent him private messages and even contacted his place of business. He also noted someone even left a Facebook comment implying that his son Justin’s GoFundMe fundraiser might be a scam. Justin Hjulstrom suffers from primary lateral sclerosis, prompting him to retire early from his job and relocate to Arizona for health reasons; the fundraiser is to help pay for relocation and other related expenses.

“The nastiness of what I am receiving vastly exceeds the level of the comment I made,” Hjulstrom said. “It’s one thing to attack me and quite another thing to attack my family. With the advent of social media there are people who feel they can attack and bully from a distance and do so when they don’t even know the person or the details of the issue.”

## Andover Dems Slam GOP Endorsement of Linddy

by Sloan Brewster

Andover Republicans want to keep Jay Linddy on board as a justice of the peace. And town Democrats aren’t happy with the GOP’s decision about the embattled former selectman.

This week, the Democratic Town Committee’s Facebook page was alight with posts alluding to “shock and disgust” over the Republican endorsement for Linddy. One post, by Bernadette Kasacek, asked if Linddy was “going to wear an apron in lieu of a robe.”

In August 2017, Linddy, who was then the town’s animal control officer and the transfer station attendant, as well as a member of the town boards of selectmen and education, was accused of sexual harassment and fired after he allegedly brought an explicitly adorned apron to his office in Town Hall and showed it to his coworkers, according to complaints submitted to then Town Administrator Joseph Higgins and a lawsuit filed by former tax collector Donna Doyker.

Linddy did not relinquish his seats on the selectmen and school boards, but did not attend any meetings for the following two years, until his terms ended in May 2019.

Linddy remained on the Recreation Commission, but continued to attend those meetings until about April 2018, Town Clerk Carol Lee, who was also on the commission, said at the time.

Linddy has served as a justice of the peace [JP] in town since January 1997, according to Lee.

Republicans endorsed Linddy for another term at a May 22 Republican caucus, said Republican Town Committee Chairman Carol Barton. She said there was a shortage of volunteers for the position and even with Linddy, there remain two empty slots.

“We asked him and he said he would very much like to be justice of the peace,” she said. “When the vote came nobody said no.”

JPs, who have four-year terms that end the same year as presidential elections, are not included on any Election Day ballot, Barton said. Rather, they are endorsed by caucus or voted in by committee. Once they are voted in, their names and contact info are sent to Town Hall.

There are 10 endorsed JPs in town – five Democrats and five Republicans. There are also others that are not party-endorsed. Among their duties is officiating weddings.

The town maintains a list of current JPs, Lee said. Anyone needing one can request a copy of the list and call one of them to request services.

Linddy, who spoke with the *Rivereast* on Monday, said he enjoys being a JP, especially officiating weddings, and that he doesn’t do it for the money.

“The most nice thing is bringing two people together and doing a ceremony,” he said.

He said he hasn’t performed any weddings in the “last couple months.”

When asked why he thinks he should remain a JP, Linddy said he was “going to just end this call and be very respectful and say thank you.”

“I’m not going to stir the pot,” he said.

As far as Republicans who spoke to the *Rivereast* for this story are concerned, if someone has an issue with Linddy, they can use a different JP.

“If you see his name on [the list] and you don’t want him, you don’t use him,” Barton said. “If you don’t want him to do what the job entails don’t ask him to do it. It’s as simple as that.”

Barton said that while the Democrats’ Facebook page was full of posts about the matter, she has not heard from anyone personally and that it’s the Democrats that “are upset.”

The incident with the apron is long since over and Linddy has paid for it, she and other Republicans argued.

“That happened three years ago,” she said. “He is no longer a selectman; he is no longer on the Board of Education; he’s no longer on the Recreation Commission; he no longer works at the transfer station; he no longer has an office in town and he no longer is a dog warden in town.”

Republican Jeff Murray, who penned a Facebook post in response to Democrat backlash about Linddy’s endorsement, reiterated what Barton said about the incident having taken place three years ago – and noted Linddy was never brought up on any legal charges.

“This was a workplace matter and he was terminated,” Murray said. “Jay’s supposed to be punished for the rest of his life?”

Murray said everybody has something in their past that they are ashamed of and that he believes in giving people a second chance.

“This whole thing is just so hypocritical of the Democrats,” he said. “They’re the party of second chances and they’re the party of giving people a break.”

Murray also reflected on some of the volunteerism for which Linddy was known, including organizing summer concerts the Town Hall gazebo, hosting recreational activities for local children and being an auctioneer for library fundraising auctions.

When Linddy worked at the transfer station he would put aside bikes people threw away to add to collections of bikes Murray fixed up, Murray said. Then he would join Murray at bike giveaway events in Hartford.

Murray called Linddy a “character” and said while he has “his shortcomings” and has made “some poor decisions,” he is not “evil.”

Selectman Adrian Mandeville, also a Republican, said that while he is “not a Jay fan,” he feels that “enough is enough.”

“If this allows him to feel that he’s a part of the community in some way, isn’t that impor-

tant too, if he’s not harming anyone?” Mandeville said. “I’m not going to be the first person to throw a stone at him, let’s just say that. Nobody’s perfect.”

Kasacek, who also wrote a letter to the editor of the *Rivereast* this week about Linddy’s endorsement, said after the incident with the apron there was “a division,” in town. She said people in one corner said, “That’s Jay” – and others took a harder stance.

“This was gross and it’s beyond my ability to comprehend that he didn’t know this was not a way to act in a professional environment,” she said some said.

Kasacek’s opposition to Linddy’s JP endorsement comes from another place, however, she said. Her primary concern is that he did not give up his seats on the boards of selectmen and education and “ghosted them” for two years, which she said indicates a lack of respect for Andover citizens and the children represented by the education board.

“He went off the radar and he did not resign either so, in essence, he left both boards short a person, short a vote, short a spokesperson for the board,” she said. “Even though [JP is] not really a position where anybody is forcing interaction with him and people can choose to use his services or not, endorsing him, it speaks to, I think, downplaying everything that happened.”

Kasacek also does not agree with the Republican response to Democrat concerns.

“It’s been three years, shouldn’t we just forgive and forget? It’s been three years, isn’t that’s what the Democratic Party is about? Are you kidding me? Are you kidding me? It’s a slap in the face against the women who were employed by the town who made the allegations and it’s a slap in the face for everybody in Andover where we should just forgive and forget.” she said. “It’s like a good ole boys club. I don’t care how wonderful Jay was.”



# Andover Town Hall Still Closed, but Gatherings There Allowed

by Sloan Brewster

Offices in Andover's Town Hall remain closed to the public, but at the same time the Board of Selectmen has decided that gatherings in the community room are permissible.

At Monday's meeting, the board directed Town Administrator Eric Anderson to come up with a plan to bring Town Hall employees working from home since March back to their offices by June 17 but to keep them closed to the public. First Selectman Jeff Maguire and Selectman Jeff Murray were opposed because work is getting done remotely.

Selectmen Adrian Mandeville and Paula King were vocal about the need to bring folks back to Town Hall.

Mandeville said employees would operate more efficiently in the office.

"I just kind of feel like we're at the point where we should be, if we can [bring them back], we should be doing it," he said. "I get that everybody loves working from home but it's not practical to keep doing that forever."

King said she agreed it was time "to get that ball rolling."

Currently the offices are at half-staff, Anderson said in a phone call Wednesday, with some folks working there while the rest work remotely.

Anderson and some board members said that, per Gov. Ned Lamont's order, sneeze guards would need to be in place before the workers could return but Mandeville insisted that as long as desks are six feet apart and the building remains closed to the public they won't be needed.

On Tuesday, Anderson said some physical adaptation will be made in work spaces to meet state requirements.

The board also approved a motion to allow gatherings in town as long as they follow all the governor's orders pertaining to COVID-19.

Anderson recommend the motion, which he said would put an end to an edict the board made in April that disallowed face-to-face meetings of two or more people.

Mandeville, who ultimately abstained, was the sole voice of opposition and said he was concerned that if gatherings were permitted and 50 people showed up at Town Hall, the town would have to allow them to meet.

"I would say we wait another month on that because we can't control who comes through the door," Mandeville said. "Because there's a limit on size and they have to be six feet apart."

Maguire pointed out that adherence to any executive orders from Lamont, including meeting size and social-distancing requirements, was intrinsic within the motion – meaning gatherings of 50 people would not be allowed anyway, as the governor does not permit them at this time.

Opening the community room means some boards and commission will be able to go back to holding regular, in-person meetings, Anderson said. There can only be 10 people present and people must remain six feet apart.

According to Anderson, the governor currently allows meetings of up to 10 people but that under the rules the town had in place prior to Monday's meeting, those were not permissible. That made it difficult on the Fire Department and the Community Emergency Response Team [CERT], who can't meet for training ses-

sions.

"They can't technically meet," Anderson said during the meeting. "That's why, if you notice, when they have a fire call they leave everybody outside standing in the parking lot and only the officers go into the building, bring the vehicles out and then people get in."

Board members said the ban on meetings of two or more people was made because there were meetings taking place in Andover Elementary School despite the governor's ban on any in-person meetings.

Selectman Jeff Murray asked how the directive against face-to-face meetings would affect summer camp, for which with 30 children have registered.

Summer camp takes place at Andover Elementary School in the gym, music room and on the music stage, Anderson said. It is scheduled to open later this month.

Anderson said that the way the rule was written summer camp would not be allowed.

"We need to reverse that policy to allow summer camp to happen," Murray said.

Maguire pointed out that the governor has issued different rules on summer camp.

"All we're trying to do is open up our public gatherings per the governor's orders," he said. "Everyone has to follow the governor's orders."

Mandeville could not reconcile Maguire's support for public gatherings with his opposition to bringing Town Hall employees back to work.

"I'm just pointing out your hypocrisy in voting for a summer camp and not allowing people

to go back to work," he said.

## Entering the Digital Age

In other town news, the town has received a \$17,000 grant under the Public, Educational and Governmental Programming and Educational Technology Investment Account (PEGPETIA) Grant Program through state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Public Utilities Regulatory Authority, Anderson said. The funds will be used to modernize the town's ability to livestream public meetings.

The town, Andover Elementary School and Andover Public Library will all have the ability to make high-quality recordings.

"As soon we get back to holding meetings in Town Hall, we are going to be able to film and live-broadcast them," he said.

## Roadwork Delay

According to a press release from the town, chip-sealing previously scheduled to have started Wednesday on Jurovaty Lane, Jurovaty Road, Parker Bridge Road, Oak Farms Road, School Road, Lakeside Drive, Riverside Drive, Stanley Road, Chesterbrook Lane, Island Street and Wales Road has been delayed, and will now run June 16-18.

Each road will be closed approximately 4-6 hours while it's being chip sealed. After the chip sealing is finished, the speed limits on the road will remain at 15 mph for several days until the roads are swept.

The exact time each road will be closed will vary, but no road will be closed before 7:45 a.m. or after 4:30 p.m., according to the press release. School and Wales roads will not be chip-sealed on Wednesday to allow normal traffic to the school lunch program and the transfer station.

# Hebron Clergy Hold Vigil for Racial Justice

by Sloan Brewster

On Tuesday evening as the sun set, local congregations prayed for racial justice on the hill behind Gilead Congregational Church.

About 40 or 50 cars were parked in the parking lot above the hill during the half-hour vigil. Folks remained in the vehicles to abide social-distancing requirements, rolling down their windows to hear as clergy members gave readings, prayed and spoke.

By Wednesday afternoon just before 3 p.m., there were 238 views of the service on Facebook, said the Rev. Denise Esslinger, pastor at Gilead Congregational.

The interfaith event was a way for people to come together in prayer and unity, Esslinger said in a phone call earlier Tuesday. The vigil came after more than a week of protests across the state and the nation sparked by the death of George Floyd, a black man allegedly killed by Minneapolis police while being taken into custody.

"We stand with the calls that are going out for racial justice," she said.

Esslinger began the vigil by thanking folks for joining the call for racial justice.

"God stands with those who are on the margins," she said. "God cares about those who are oppressed and God loves all of the children, no matter the color of their skin."

Bruce John, of Hebron, who, according to Esslinger, has played for Gilead Church for 50 years, cajoled attendees with song and guitar music, starting with Bob Dylan's "Blowing in the Wind."

"I thought that I would start tonight with a song about social injustice that I learned when I was 11 years old in 1962," he said. "Bob Dylan wrote this song about social injustice. It turned the country's head around, this one song and I really wish that after 58 years that we wouldn't

have to sing this song anymore but here we are singing it again."

Jill Zorn, president of the congregation of the United Brethren of Hebron, read a poem by Tanya Maurer, a Hebron resident who attends the Gilead Church.

Called "Walking in Your Shoes," it was inspired by a conversation Maurer had last week with a black co-worker about the protests rooted in a long silent history of racism and inequality, according to Esslinger.

"I can't walk in your shoes nor you mine, I can walk beside you and you beside me, we walk together and positive change is born," reads the poem. "Be the change, be together, see it through."

The Rev. Ron Kolanowski, of St. Peter's Episcopal Church led the group in prayer.

In his prayer, he remembered a long list of people – including "those who have for decades cried out for justice;" "all those whose lives groan under the weight of redlining, segregation, underfunded schools, unequal economic opportunities, indignity and ever present fear;" protesters demanding "justice and change;" public officials; police officers; and "every citizen of our nation who have been traumatized, grief stricken, enraged and heart sickened by the video of our neighbor slowly snuffing the life out of another, by riots and looting, by the sound of flash-bang grenades, the sting of tear gas, the scent of smoke, and by our own helplessness to correct it."

"We acknowledge that each of us carries racist ideology within us," he said at the end of the prayer. "Help us to turn away from the sin of division."

The Rev. Michael Phillippino, pastor at Church of the Holy Family, also prayed for the end of racism.



The Rev. Denise Esslinger, pastor of Gilead Congregational Church, holds the microphone as Hebron resident Bruce John sings at a special vigil for racial justice Tuesday evening at the church. The Rev. Ron Kolanowski, pastor of St. Peter's Episcopal Church, looks on.

John ended the vigil with a rendition of The Youngbloods' "Get Together."

As the music came to a halt, drivers honked their horns.

Betty Close, a member of St. Peter's and a former Hebron resident who now lives in West Hartford, was among the attendees.

"I wanted to be with other people," she said. "I miss the protests of the 60s. I feel very chal-

lenged by what's going on in our country. It's been going on for a while but this is just beyond the pale."

David Henry, of Hebron, a member of the Gilead church who volunteered as a parking attendant at the vigil said he attended the service because he supports the cause.

"I believe wholeheartedly in what's happening with Black Lives Matter," he said.

# Hebron Selectmen Voice Support for Peaceful Protests

by Sloan Brewster

Hebron's Board of Selectmen is offering its support of peaceful protests that have ignited across the country in response to a video showing the brutal killing of George Floyd.

At its meeting last Thursday, the board – after a lengthy discussion – unanimously passed a motion offering its support of “peaceful protests that are occurring nationwide for the purpose of having a meaningful discussion on the pernicious effect of racism on our people in our country.”

Floyd, a black man, died after Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin allegedly held a knee on his neck for more than eight minutes following an arrest for allegedly passing a counterfeit \$20 bill. Chauvin has since been charged with second-degree murder.

The motion, which was also included an assertion that the board supports the right to assembly and encourages townfolk to exercise their First Amendment rights, came at the behest of selectman John Collins, who said he has been watching what has been happening in the country “with confusion and sadness” and has spent time reflecting and talking with people.

“And I’m worried, I’m worried, I’m worried about our country,” he said.

Collins quoted General [James] Mattis, President Donald Trump’s former defense secretary, calling him a “man of great integrity.”

Mattis resigned in December 2018 over the president’s policy on Syria. He read a speech by Mattis that he said better articulates his own feelings.

“I’ve watched this week’s unfolding events, angry and appalled. The words ‘equal justice under the law’ are carved in the pediment of the

United States Supreme Court. This is precisely what protesters are rightly demanding,” Collins read. “It is a wholesome and unifying demand, one that all of us should be able to get behind. We must not be distracted by a small number of law-breakers. The protests are defined by tens of thousands of people of conscience, who are insisting that we live up to our values, our values as people, and our values as a nation. We must reject and hold accountable those in office who would make a mockery of our constitution.”

Collins said he wanted people to know town officials support the First Amendment, and that they should be able to assemble and speak their minds without concerns for their safety.

“In fact, we want to encourage that,” he said. “The thing that really broke me here was when I saw, in Washington, bringing in troops to confront peaceful assembly.”

Collins, in a phone call Tuesday, said he was referring to an incident in Lafayette Park on June 1, when, shortly before Trump walked through the park on his way to St. John’s Church, the United States Park Police dispersed protesters.

According to a press release from park police, it used “smoke canisters and pepper balls” to disperse protesters.

While Collins and some news reports have said the protesters were peaceful, the park police have a different take.

At approximately 6:33 p.m., “protestors began throwing projectiles, including bricks, frozen water bottles and caustic liquids,” park police said in the press release. “As many of the protestors became more combative, continued

to throw projectiles, and attempted to grab officers’ weapons, officers then employed the use of smoke canisters and pepper balls.”

According to the statement, park police made no arrests during the incident and “will always support peaceful assembly but cannot tolerate violence to citizens or officers or damage to our nation’s resources that we are entrusted to protect.”

Collins said the reaction to the protest was unusual and a violation of the First Amendment – and the motion was the board’s way of reaffirming its support of the constitution.

“Not only did I think that people’s First Amendment rights were being violated, but Mattis did,” he said. “We feel this is not a usual thing, our government is not respecting people’s First Amendment rights.”

Selectman Marc Rubera, the town’s police sergeant and a retired Hartford police officer, said he supported the motion.

“And I’m in a unique position to say that. I’ve stood on those lines with police. I’ve been rocked and bottled. I’ve had urine thrown on me, I’ve been spit on. I’ve been called every name you can imagine, but the people’s right to protest is sacred and I’ve been in protests, which were beautiful and almost brought tears to my eyes.”

He said he has also been at riots, which he called “abhorrent and unjustified” and added that, at times, peaceful protests and riots occur simultaneously.

Rubera also spoke about how he and other police were affected when they saw the video of Floyd’s death.

“It’s also unjustifiable for a police officer to

put his knee on somebody’s neck for nine minutes and kill them,” Rubera said. “Most of the police officers that I know, we’re angry and upset and horrified that that took place, and that the public would somehow view me and my fellow police officers, or my brother police officers, as individuals that are like that.”

Selectman Peter Kasper called Rubera’s comments “very meaningful” and said it was important for the board to articulate its support for people in the community.

Board chairman Daniel Larson supported the motion and said peaceful protest is a constitutional right – but sharply rebuked violent protests.

“The second that it ends up not being peaceful and the second that it starts either infringing upon other people’s rights or the breaking and rioting and looting and burning at that point, in my estimation, they have forgone their rights,” Larson said. “They are nothing at that point other than mobsters and human garbage.”

Vice chairman Gail Richmond also voiced support for the motion.

“We have to put ourselves on record as supporting basic life,” she said. “And that’s what this motion will do.”

Collins, when all was said and done, thanked his fellow board members.

“I’m so proud of this board,” he said.

## Protest Planned

Tomorrow, Saturday, from 10 a.m. to noon, the Democratic Town Committee will hold a protest in support of Black Lives Matter in the town center, said committee chair Tiffany Thiele. State Sen. Cathy Osten (D-19) will attend.

## East Hampton School Business Manager Receives Award

by Jack Lakowsky

Karen Asetta, business manager of East Hampton Public Schools, was recently recognized with a 2020 Best Practices Award by the Connecticut Association of School Business Officials (CASBO).

Asetta was recognized by CASBO for “innovative strategies” that have resulted in improvements to East Hampton’s special education programming. Asetta is cited for improving the quality of special education and for developing ways to save the district money while doing so.

Asetta helped to reduce expenses for transportation and specialized services. Cost savings from educating East Hampton’s special education students in district totaled more than \$2.5 million.

“What’s key is we built an internal capacity to better serve East Hampton students,” Asetta said in a Tuesday interview with the *Rivereast*. “They can go to school with their neighbors, they can see their friends.”

“I’m honored,” Asetta said. “But I’m just here to make this the best place possible for the kids.”

CASBO also cited Asetta’s maintenance of contracts with other school districts. These contracts allow for tuition revenue to be generated into school programs. This was among several accomplishments mentioned, which included Asetta’s managing of funding redistributions to help buy new furniture for school buildings and to help remodel classrooms. Asetta also advocated at town meetings in support of budget adjustments and increases. Finally, CASBO cited Asetta’s writing of a comprehensive, readable guide detailing employee benefits to differentiate East Hampton from other districts looking to hire special education professionals.

“This is a team award,” Asetta said.

Asetta said much team strength is drawn from Superintendent of Schools Paul Smith, who she said is willing to take risks to improve education in town. Asetta said Smith trusts her judgment

and that of other school employees. She said this trust is important to the district’s high morale.

Asetta said the work to keep East Hampton’s special education students in-district began as a team effort during Smith’s first budget season.

“We saw an opportunity to improve programming to meet student needs,” Asetta said.

Asetta said Rodney Mosier, Director of Special Education for East Hampton schools, was a leader in helping to develop changes to school programming to help specific learners.

“Karen’s done a great job in supporting us,” Mosier said.

Mosier said Asetta has helped to make possible supporting students in district who would otherwise be outplaced. Mosier said the program’s success is owed to great supporters like Asetta, and to the staff who work with special education students.

“I really love what I do,” Asetta said.

The demands of managing an entire school district’s finances don’t prevent Asetta from pursuing passion projects that also improve Belltown schools.

Asetta practices her love of photography by posting photos to the East Hampton School’s social media accounts. Asetta’s photographs were featured as a winning entry in the 2018 *Food Service Magazine* best school sandwich contest and won the 2020 Gold Medal Award for the USDA Foods’ “Show us Your Tray” photo competition. East Hampton High School staff, including food service director Jennifer Bove, were awarded for their “savory street tacos” and “fiesta corn salad.”

“I’m proud of my photography,” Asetta said.

Asetta is a certified school business manager and certified public accountant and has worked for East Hampton schools since 2007. She earned an MBA from Pace University, and a BS in accounting from Clarkson University in Potsdam, N.Y.

## Giving Back in a Time of Need in Colchester

by Karla Santos

When Martin Lopez realized that people were struggling through the COVID-19 pandemic, he felt an urge to give back.

That’s why Lopez, a resident of Colchester Commons, decided to create a food drive and give the donations to the Colchester Food Bank. Donations were to be brought to Town Hall yesterday (Thursday) after press time.

Susan Soule said that Lopez emailed the Board of Directors of Colchester Commons – a 55-and-over community of 95 houses – looking for a volunteer to run the food drive.

Soule, a member of the Board of Directors, who stepped forward, becoming the head of the project.

Soule said that for about a week she helped collecting the donated food items from the people that live in the Colchester Commons community.

The donations were mainly non-perishable items, soups, cereal, beans and rice among other items, Soule said.

According to Soule, the community donated a fair amount of food, including Lopez, who made a “pretty big donation.”

She said she was “happy” they collected as much as they did.

“It’s great,” Soule said of being to be a part of this effort.

“It was a wonderful idea for Martin to have and it worked out great,” Soule added.

Soule said the food drive was for a good cause, “especially now that more people than normal are needing assistance.”

For Soule, the drive was more successful than she expected.

“Some of the people here are [of] limited income, which is why I was so surprised we got such a good amount of food,” she said.

Soule said that in the future she would like to run another food drive.

Amber Albee, the administrative and program coordinator for the Colchester Youth and Social Services Department, said the people in her department love it when groups get together and think of other people during

a time of need.

“It’s just so nice to see the spirit that this town has to be able to pull together to help everyone,” Albee said.

Albee said she realizes that donating can be difficult depending on each person’s finances.

“It’s wonderful to have senior citizens just kind of grouping together and giving what they can,” Albee said. “We all know that finances are difficult for everyone and especially people on fixed incomes.”

She said the donations from the seniors really show the “big hearts” they have and “how wonderful” they are to have reached out and give to the food bank.

Albee said this is a special time to give because of the struggles caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“All of our resources have absolutely just been stretched to their limits right now,” Albee said.

In addition, she said the food bank has been making sure that people are still receiving the same services, the same foods and amount that they had received in the past.

The Colchester food bank has seen an increase both in need and in donations, Albee said.

She said the food bank has been able to handle the increase in need with the extra gift cards and food donations they have been receiving.

“It’s really been wonderful,” Albee said. “We have seen a slight increase with families that have needed our food bank during this time. Honestly because of these donations we’ve been able to serve these new families with no problem.”

Since Town Hall has started a soft reopening, the food bank is now welcoming donations. Town Hall has a donation cart near the front entrance at which people can drop off food items Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.



# East Hampton Library's Summer Reading Program Still a Go

by Jack Lakowsky

COVID-19 is an unavoidable pandemic. Summer learning loss is not. "Our summer may look different this year, but we're using it to provide meaningful literacy experiences to our community's children and families," said April Hannon, children's librarian at the East Hampton Public Library.

The 2020 East Hampton Library Children's Summer Reading Program will begin virtually on June 26 at 3 p.m. with the music variety show "Fiddle N' Fun." Programs for teenaged readers will begin on June 29.

All events are geared toward children and will be hosted on Zoom. Reservations can be made at the library's website.

More than 400 kids participated in last summer's program, according to a report from East Hampton Town Manager David Cox – and each participating child read more than six books last summer. Cox cited research that said reading between four and five books throughout the summertime equates to attending summer school.

This year's theme will be "Imagine Your Story." Children and teens will set personalized reading goals.

"You can choose whether to read a certain number of books, or to read for a certain amount

of time," Hannon said in a message to the Library Board of Directors. Throughout the eight-week program, children can read independently or can be read to. Each week, once a goal is achieved, readers are rewarded with raffle tickets for prizes.

Families can attend livestreamed library events. Staff and performers will entertain and educate. This year, the Belltown library has teamed up with local schools, the senior center, and Epoch Arts.

Hannon said local balloon artists and puppeteers will perform for children ages 6-12. Toddlers can enjoy a virtual tea party or a cooking class. The teen program, Hannon said, has a comic art workshop taught by a professional comic book artist.

Any interested in summer programs can visit the library's website for sign-up and further details.

Staff and members of the library board are also looking to expand the library's programming.

In a Wednesday night meeting of the East Hampton Town Council, the chair of the Library Advisory Board, Amy Ordonez, advocated for the restoration of a full-time young adult/ reference librarian, a position cut some

years ago.

Cynthia Shirshac, the board's vice chairperson, cited the results of the library's January survey. She said many patrons requested more programming for adults and young adults.

"Young adults are not served as well in East Hampton as in other towns," Shirshac said Wednesday. She said Colchester, a town of comparable size to Belltown, offered 140 programs for young adults. East Hampton, she said, offered fewer than 20.

The added position, Shirshac said, is also needed to help meet the library's increasing demand. Shirshac said in 2018 the library loaned more than 70,000 items. She said before the disruption wreaked by the COVID-19 pandemic, the library was "well on-track" to loaning out more than 100,000 items this year.

## Preparing Against the Pandemic

The East Hampton Public Library began contactless curbside pickup of materials on May 26. Card holders can request and hold items online through the library's catalog or by calling the library.

Hannon said library staff will prioritize above all else the health and safety of patrons and themselves. She said they are adhering to the protocols listed in Gov. Ned Lamont's "Reopen-

ing Connecticut" rules.

According to the state's library reopening plan, libraries must log employees, stagger shifts to minimize personal contact, and enforce a 50% capacity limit. The state guideline also suggests encouraging patrons to use book drop returns instead of returning in-person at the circulation desk. Books returned to the library will be quarantined for at least 48 hours, or as recommended by the CDC. The state also suggests waiving fines and extending due dates to discourage patrons from entering the library physically.

During the first week of curbside service library staff logged over 100 contactless pickup orders, accounting for a checkout totaling more than 700 items, according to Hannon. Patrons can call or go online to hold their items, which are then packaged by staff. Once packaged, staff will contact patrons, check out their items, then schedule a one-hour pick up window.

Hannon said staff is working on book lists and helpful videos designed to offer suggestions and to help residents browse.

Residents without a library card can register for one on the library's website. In the last few weeks, Hannon said, more than 140 online cards have been issued.

# East Hampton Residents, Officials Call for Scrutiny of Local Police

by Jack Lakowsky

East Hampton resident Priscilla Gomez on Wednesday said the Town Council needs to introduce a policy that prohibits any member of the East Hampton Police Department from involvement in hate groups.

"There needs to be transparency," said Gomez, who lives on Maplewood Drive. "Police officers do not have a contract with the town. Their contract is with the people."

Gomez also said that local police need to be equipped with foolproof body cameras. Funding for these, she said, is available through state grants and other programs.

"People need to be part of the process," she said.

Gomez's requests follow the highly-publicized case of former East Hampton cop Kevin Wilcox.

Last year, it was reported that Wilcox was involved with the group Proud Boys, an organization that has been classified by the Southern Poverty Law Center as a hate group. Wilcox retired in October 2019, soon after his involvement was reported. Town Manager David Cox told NBC New York at the time that Wilcox's retirement as "revision" of a previously-planned retirement that was scheduled for December 2019.

Wilcox, who started policing in East Hamp-

ton in 1999, followed Proud Boys social media and sent online payments to one of the group's leaders. Proud Boys founder Gavin McInnes has been quoted as saying; "I want violence. I want punching in the face. I'm disappointed in [President] Trump's supporters for not punching enough."

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law called for Wilcox's removal from the department after it discovered his social media connections with the white supremacists.

In September 2019, East Hampton Police Chief Dennis Woessner said Wilcox's affiliation did not violate the department's policies.

Following Gomez's comments, Democratic Town Council member Derek Johnson asked Cox to scrutinize police conduct in East Hampton. Johnson added that he is pleased with the police department's commitment to proper conduct and integrity, but that accountability and analysis are necessary to make sure the department adheres to these values.

Johnson questioned the idea of the qualified immunity given to police officers in the United States.

Qualified immunity is a legal doctrine that protects government officials from being held personally liable for "discretionary actions" performed within their official capacity, unless

said actions "clearly violated established federal law."

"In theory, it's qualified immunity," Johnson said. "But really, it's absolute. And it's often used to nullify complaints of excessive force."

The concept of qualified immunity began with a 1967 U.S. Supreme Court Case, *Pierson V. Ray*, first used to prevent public officials from frivolous or malicious lawsuits. The modern, two-pronged test of the concept was introduced in 1982's *Harlow v. Fitzgerald*. In the latter case, the Supreme Court granted immunity to government officials only if the officials acted in good faith that their conduct was lawful, and if the conduct was objectively reasonable.

Therefore, the application of qualified immunity depends on whether or not a reasonable person in the same position would have known their actions aligned with, or violated, established law.

Johnson's concern stemmed from the fact that qualified immunity allows police brutality to go unpunished. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor has noted a "disturbing trend" of police officers using excessive force without consequences under the qualified immunity doctrine.

"As long as we're looking at the police, we must look at the whole spectrum of appropri-

ate conduct," Johnson said.

Republican Town Council member Mark Phillhower questioned if restricting police conduct would put officers' lives in danger.

Johnson said his concern is not about conduct "per se," but the qualified immunity granted to all conduct, and the behavior this can encourage.

"We need established thresholds," Johnson said.

Cox said the town is reviewing policies of the police department, and how they can be changed to better address issues like an officer's membership in a noted hate group. Any underlying issues surrounding racial biases will also be addressed, he said.

"We understand this is an issue," Cox said. "Our officers support transparency and clarity."

Kyle Dostaler, of William Drive, said the town should negotiate with the local police to better improve services to the town. Dostaler said EHPD is "stuck in the 20th century." Dostaler also spoke against East Hampton's policy of having police officers act as first responders. He said this is inappropriate because cops are not medical or behavioral professionals.

"Given national events, now is the time to look at these things," Dostaler said.



## Obituaries

### Amston

#### Kathleen Frances Smith

On Sunday, April 26, God called Kathleen Frances (Grimes) Smith home. Kathleen was born Dec. 9, 1940, to her late parents James Grimes Sr. and Mabel (Jones) Grimes. Kathleen is finally at peace, accompanying her parents and her oldest son, Donald "Bucky" Smith in heaven.



Her smart, charismatic, and genuine soul left this earth leaving behind her son, Darren Smith and his lifelong partner, Melaine Ho; her daughter-in-law, Kelly Smith; two granddaughters, Jenna Valenti and her husband Mathew Valenti and their son, her great-grandson, Mario Valenti and Sarah Smith and her fiancé, Michael Cook; her grandson and best friend, Kyle Smith; her sister Sandra (Grimes) Mistretta; her brother, Jim Grimes and his lifelong partner, Fionnuala Purcell; as well as various nieces and nephews.

Kathleen attended Middlesex Hospital School of Nursing, where she became an RN. She was devoted to those she loved and conducted countless selfless acts of love. She enjoyed playing Parcheesi with the grandkids, frantically cheering on the UConn women's basketball team, and spending summers in a lounge chair on the lake with her favorite book in hand.

Kathleen will forever be remembered for her famous apple pies, sense of humor, and heart of gold.

Graveside services will be observed at a later date at Saint James Cemetery, 368 Broad St., Manchester.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made in her name to The Alzheimer's Foundation of America at [www.alzfdn.org/donate](http://www.alzfdn.org/donate).

The Aurora McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester has been entrusted with care of arrangements.

### Portland

#### Melvin Strickland

Melvin Strickland, 92, passed away peacefully at Middlesex Hospital Friday, June 6. He was born Oct. 16, 1927 to late Warren Strickland and Anna Strickland.

He was a resident of Portland until his retirement when he moved to Englewood, Fla., with his second wife Judy, where he enjoyed working on their house and spending time with Judy and their friends. He was the proud owner of Strickland Farms and partner of Southern New England Egg Company. Many local people came to the egg farm to buy their fresh eggs.

He was predeceased by his first wife Betty, the mother of his five children. They enjoyed vacationing and going out with their friends. They were partners in the business and he always said that he couldn't have accomplished what he did without her.

He was also the owner of Strickland Quarry and eventually sold it and a golf course was built on the property.

Melvin is survived by his ex-wife Judy; his daughters, Sandy Baines, Carol Winn and her husband John, Susan Ogorzalek and her husband Rick; his sons, David Strickland and Robert Strickland and his wife Susan. He has eight grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. He is also survived by his sister June Goodrich and brother Roger Strickland, both of Portland, and several nieces. He was also predeceased by his sister Nancy Organek.

Services will be held at a later date. The Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St, Portland, is in charge of arrangements.

### East Hampton

#### Carla S. Weiman

Carla S. Weiman, 87, of East Hampton, beloved wife of Dale Weiman, died peacefully Friday, June 5, in the care of Middlesex Hospital Hospice. Born Nov. 8, 1932, in Hartford, she was the daughter of the late Otto and Elsie (Clark) Swensen.



Carla had a career as a computer programmer at both UTC and Pratt & Whitney before her retirement. Carla loved gardening both flowers and vegetables and enjoyed bird-watching. She also enjoyed traveling with her family and camping.

Besides her husband Dale, she is survived by her two sons, Scott Weiman of South Windsor and Craig Weiman of East Hampton, and her sister, Donna Mack of Columbia. She was predeceased by her two brothers, Stuart and David Swensen.

Funeral services will be private at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers memorial donations may be made to the Salvation Army at [www.give.salvationarmyusa.org](http://www.give.salvationarmyusa.org).

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

### Marlborough

#### Charles W. Lane Jr.

Charles W. Lane Jr. "Butch," 74, of Marlborough, formerly of East Hampton, passed away quietly in his sleep at Marlborough Health & Rehabilitation Center on Sunday, June 7, from complications of the COVID-19 virus. Born in Middletown on July 8, 1945, he was the son of the late Charles and Lydia (Miller) Lane. As a young man, Charles enlisted with the United States Army and proudly served our country during the Vietnam War.



Charles worked as a mechanic for International Harvester as well as Laidlaw Bus Company. He enjoyed the outdoors and was an avid hunter and fisherman, as well as a loyal follower of WWE professional wrestling.

Charles will be forever loved and missed by his three daughters, Valerie Lane of Marlborough, Deborah Garcia of Dallas, Texas, and Julie (Ernest) Smith of Courtland, Va.; his twin, Barbara (David) Hock of Colchester; sisters, Helen Spencer of North Guilford and Grace Nedobity of New Hampshire; six grandchildren; numerous great-grandchildren; three special nieces, Carol (Adam) Ashman of North Guilford, Sharon Floyd of Colchester, and Frances (Sam) Park of Kentucky; as well as numerous extended family members and friends.

In addition to both of his parents, Charles was predeceased by his beloved wife Josephine in 2008.

In accordance with his wishes, all services will be private.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to the East Hampton Police Department, 20 East High St. #2, East Hampton, CT 06424 or to the East Hampton VFW, 20 N. Maple St., East Hampton, CT 06424.

The Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester has been entrusted with care of arrangements. For online condolences, please visit [www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com](http://www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com).

### Portland

#### Deborah Leary

Deborah (Harmon) Leary, 54, of Portland, passed away Thursday, June 4, after a long and courageous battle with cancer. Debbie was a 1988 graduate of Ona M. Wilcox School of Nursing and worked as an RN in various positions until her diagnosis in 2018.



Debbie is survived by her husband and best friend, Michael Leary of Portland; her pride and joy, Joshua Leary, and his fiancé, Jennifer Owens; her parents, Sidney and Gertrude (Ghent) Harmon and her brother Bryon W. Harmon, as well as her "puppy" Brutus, and granddog Maddy.

She was predeceased by her little sister, Pamela G. Harmon.

She also leaves behind her lifelong friend, Kelly Long, as well as many aunts, uncles, and beloved nieces, nephews, cousins, and her wonderful in-laws. She also had many supportive friends who stuck with her through thick and thin. She felt very blessed with the people she had throughout her life that made even some of the worst times, some of the best.

Debbie cherished her camping trips with her beloved friends and family, sipping patron or one of Kenny's stellar margaritas. Sifting through sand, especially in OBX, looking for sea glass or cool shells was one of her favorite things to do. She could sit on the banks of the river at "Riverbend Campground" listening to the stories of "the tent revival" all day long. She will forever be missed at her spot around the fire.

The family would like to thank the doctors and special team that took care of her for the last two years at Mass General Hospital for the amazing care she received.

A private burial will be at convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Debbie's name to Massachusetts General Hospital Cancer Center, 55 Fruit St, Boston, MA 02114.

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

### East Hampton

#### Leanna M. Lavigne

Leanna M. Lavigne of East Hampton journeyed home to loving arms of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on Thursday, June 4. She was born Dec. 9, 1947 to the late Dennis J. Lavigne and Louise (Flemke) Lavigne.



She is predeceased by her brothers, Dennis J. Lavigne Jr., Charles E. Lavigne, James Lavigne, Albert Lavigne and Arthur "Artie" Lavigne; and her sisters, Mary Barber, Margaret Braun, Theresa McArthur, Jacqueline Chester and Kathleen Lavigne.

She leaves behind her loving sister, Alice Langlois of South Carolina. She is survived by her lifelong friend Lottie J. Burger of East Hampton and her extended "adopted" children James Burger, Mitzie Burger, Joseph and Lisa Burger, John Burger and Joshua Burger; as well as many nieces and nephews whom she loved dearly and numerous friends all over East Hampton.

From her youth, Lee loved and lived the farm life. When she was a teenager, she saved up enough money to buy her first horse. She was a golden palomino named D.J.; she cared for D.J. very much and entered her into local horse shows, fairs and competitions and won numerous awards and ribbons with her. She also had a great love for the animal kingdom, especially her German Shepherd Heidi. When not enjoying nature, you could find Lee watching her favorite western, usually with "HER JOHN WAYNE."

Lee worked for Pratt & Whitney, several companies in East Hampton including Talco where she was a lead and abatement supervisor until she retired.

Leanna was a totally selfless woman that always put others needs before her own. She was quite the social woman, once she met you, she would refer to you as her friend; she knew everybody's first name she ever met! If you were lucky enough to cross her path, you were definitely lucky enough.

Her family will miss that infectious Jolly belly laugh, and her thoughtful giving nature that touched so many lives. We know that as Lee enters her glorious new life, she will be greeted by her many family members and friends and her

horse D.J., and her dog Heidi just over the rainbow bridge. Fly high Lee, ride like the wind and touch the face of God.

Lee's family would like to thank all her caregivers at Middlesex Hospital Hospice and Marlborough Rehab that selflessly and compassionately cared for her. They helped her fight a valiant battle and we are truly thankful for them.

Leanna will be laid in eternal rest in Marlboro Cemetery Saturday, June 13, at 10 a.m.

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

### Colchester

#### Marlene Joanne Edwards

Marlene Joanne Edwards, 81, of Colchester, passed away into the arms of the Lord Thursday, June 4, at Hartford Hospital, with her loving children by her side. Born in Ishpeming City, Mich., in 1938, she was a daughter of the late Eugene and Ellie (Kaminen) Hill.



After high school, Marlene earned a degree in nursing from the Augustana Nursing School in Chicago and worked as a registered nurse for a short time. She married her beloved husband, the Rev. Doran J. Edwards, on Sept. 5, 1959. The couple embarked on a journey of faith and love for the Lord, moving to Colchester where they started the Colchester Bible Baptist Church on Chestnut Hill Road, where she remained a member for 52 years. Marlene was a true steward of her faith, organizing and leading women's Bible study, teaching Sunday school, outreach to the Colchester community, and joining with prayer groups. She loved music and singing songs of faith, hope and love to worship God.

Marlene will be remembered fondly for her sweet smile, and as a loving woman who happily devoted her life to her Savior and Lord, to her family, and to her community.

She will be missed dearly but remembered with love by her children and their spouses, Carole Edwards of Colchester, David (Kathy) Edwards of Summerville, S.C., Debbie (Tony) Wiggins of Pauline, S.C., Diane (Randy) Oliver of Colchester; 14 grandchildren, David, Jessica, Jonathan, Nathaniel, Annalee, Caleb, Timothy, Kate, Frank, Jeffrey, Philip, Matthew, Connor, Alexa; one great-grandchild, Lillie; a brother, James (Ruth) Hill of Michigan; sister, Elaine (Doug) Kari of Michigan; and numerous extended family members and friends.

Marlene will be laid to rest beside her beloved husband in Linwood Cemetery, Colchester.

A family graveside burial service was held Monday, June 8. A celebration of her life will be held at a later date to be announced.

Donations in her memory may be made to Marlene's Memorial Fund at Colchester Bible Baptist Church, 38 Chestnut Hill Rd., Colchester, CT 06415.

The Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester has been entrusted with care of arrangements. For online condolences, please visit [www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com](http://www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com).

### Marlborough

#### James Deay Cherry Jr.

James Deay Cherry Jr. passed away Monday, June 8, in Crawfordsville, Ind. He was the husband of Linda Smith Cherry. They shared 52 years of marriage together.



Born Dec. 13, 1945 in Chicopee, Mass., James was the son of James Deay Cherry Sr. and Claire Wood Cherry. He received bachelor's and master's degrees in chemistry education from Central Connecticut State University and the University of Connecticut, respectively. A teacher of chemistry, AP chemistry, and organic chemistry, James served for 36 years in Connecticut schools, primarily in Enfield at Enrico Fermi High School. In later years, he also served as a consultant on laboratory safety practices for many school districts, and taught the chemical laboratories course at Eastern Connecticut State University.

Over the course of his career, James was the recipient of many awards and recognitions, including the Connecticut Chemistry Teacher of the Year awarded by the American Chemical Society (1999). He was a Finalist for Connecticut Teacher of the Year (2001), and was recognized by the New England Chemistry Association for Excel-



## Obituaries continued

lence in Teaching. He was one of twelve national recipients of an Einstein Fellowship (2003-2004), and advised Sen. Norm Coleman (R-Minnesota) on science policy and veterans' issues.

James was dedicated to serving his community. He was elected to two Connecticut boards of education (Marlborough and RHAM), and served on two library boards (Richmond Memorial Library in Marlborough and the Crawfordsville District Library in Crawfordsville, Ind.). He performed NASA grant evaluations through the National Science Foundation, and scholarship assessments for the Montgomery County Community Foundation. He also served as a youth soccer coach in Somers, a tennis coach for Enrico Fermi High School, and was recognized with his wife as "Democrats of the Year" in Marlborough (2007).

He was a devoted father, always attending his son's many soccer games, tennis matches, and theater performances. He eventually traveled to the Midwest so he could be as dedicated a grandfather as he was a father. James was a gifted tennis player with a shelf of trophies, and he was an enthusiastic cross-trainer at the gym. He loved to garden with his wife, drink craft beer with his son, and go for walks on the beach with his grandchildren. He will be deeply missed.

He is survived by his wife, Linda Smith Cherry; his three sisters, Marilyn (Eugene) Scheck, Linda (Stephen) Child and Nancy (John) Couture; his son, James Matthew Cherry and daughter-in-law, Crystal Benedicks; his three grandchildren, George Benedicks Cherry, Rebecca Helen Cherry, and Katherine Jean Cherry; and numerous nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his parents.

Due to COVID-19 precautions, a memorial service will be held at a later date. Sanders Priebe Funeral Care of Crawfordsville, Indiana entrusted with care. Share memories and condolences online at [www.sandersfuneralcare.com](http://www.sandersfuneralcare.com).

In lieu of flowers, we ask that donations be made in this name to any of the follow organizations: League of Women Voters (Crawfordsville, Ind.); Christ Lutheran Church (Crawfordsville, Ind.); Wabash College (Crawfordsville, Ind.); Concordia Lutheran Church (Manchester); Richmond Memorial Library (Marlborough).

### Portland

#### Frederick Gross

Frederick Gross, 88, formerly of Portland, passed away Friday, June 5. He was a graduate of Portland High School, and graduated from UConn in 1954 with a degree in engineering.

His hobbies included spending time with his children, boating, woodworking, and building model airplanes. He was always intelligent beyond his years, and was a beloved friend, father and grandfather, and husband. Fred was an inspiration to all who knew him.

He is preceded in death by Betty Gross, his wife of 60 years. He is survived by his daughter, Sharon France and her husband John, and his son, Frederick and his wife Peggy, and his three granddaughters, Heidi Gross, Katie Sanzari and Cindy France.

He will be dearly missed, but never forgotten.

Funeral services and burial will be private in Swedish Cemetery, Portland.

Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland, is in charge of arrangements.

### Colchester

#### Monica S. Knapp

Monica S. Knapp, 77, of Colchester, passed away peacefully at home with her loving husband by her side Tuesday, June 9, after a courageous and valiant battle with pancreatic cancer. Born in Bridgeport Oct. 18, 1942, she was a daughter of the late Walter and Alice (Sniecinski) Suchodolski.



Monica grew up in Pine Meadow, New Hartford and Wethersfield, where she met her beloved husband, John; the couple fell in love and "Johnica" were married Aug. 19, 1971.

Monica retired as a customer service representative after 30 years for CIGNA. A 1960 graduate of Wethersfield High School, her favorite hobbies were John, keeping her Polish family up to date on their history, and being an active Lifetime Member and past President of the Colchester Hayward Volunteer Fire Company Auxiliary.

In addition to her beloved husband of over 48 years, Monica will be forever loved and missed by her siblings, Jerome Suchodolski of Pompano Beach, Fla., Daniel Suchodolski of Zihuatanejo, Mexico, and Anne Cummings of Vineyard Haven, Mass., her grandson Joseph Paul Strycharz (Meredith Saunders) of Newton, N.C., and great-granddaughters, Scarlet Marie and Elizabeth

Rose.

Also missed by her nieces, Lynn Warriner of Westbrook, Tamsen Huver (Greg) of Vancouver, Wash., Kelley Knapp of San Antonio, Texas and Dawn Coggins (John); nephews, Steven Brodeur of Cromwell, Eric Suchodolski (Dana) of Hereford, Ariz., Sean Cummings (Kerry) of Vineyard Haven, Mass., Eric A. Knapp (Eileen) of Wethersfield, Theron J. Knapp (Jackie) of Trumbull, John L. Knapp (Rachel) of Holly Springs, N.C., and Justin Carreiro (Shannon) of Parker, Colo., her Class of '60 luncheon group, her Colchester Hayward Volunteer Fire Company family, and an abundance of grand nieces and nephews, extended family members and friends.

In addition to her parents, Monica was predeceased by her cherished son, Joseph Walter Strycharz in 2005.

Calling hours will be held on Sunday, June 14 from 4-7 p.m. at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. A funeral liturgy will be held on Monday, June 15 at 10 a.m. directly at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave., Colchester. Burial will follow in Linwood Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to the Colchester Hayward Volunteer Fire Company Auxiliary, 18-54 Old Hartford Rd. Colchester, CT 06415.

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

### East Hampton

#### Agnes Zaverton

It is with great sadness that the family of Agnes (McSorley) Zaverton, widow of the late Stephen Zaverton Sr., announce her passing Saturday, June 6, at the age of 82. Agnes passed peacefully in her home, surrounded by her loving family.



Agnes was born in Blantyre, Scotland on Jan. 31, 1938, daughter of the late James "Jack" and Rose Ann (Scullion) McSorley. Agnes immigrated to the United States in 1957 and during a visit to Niagara Falls, she met Stephen, whom she later married on June 4, 1960.

Agnes was an active member of St. Patrick Church, serving as a Eucharistic minister for many years. She met many friends as a member of the British Club, and while working at Cobalt Lodge. She enjoyed bowling, reading and regularly attended bingo.

Agnes was preceded in death by her husband Stephen and four brothers, James, Peter, Patrick and John. She is survived by her five children, son Stephen Zaverton Jr. and his wife Kathy, of East Hampton, CT, sons Mark Zaverton and Clifford Zaverton, both of Wichita, Kansas, daughter Kimberly Zaverton of Colchester and her fiancé Terry Fapier, daughter Lorraine Gieras and her husband John; two brothers, Bernard (Ann) and Hugh (Liz) of Scotland, sister Catherine Beattie of Australia, sister Mary (Ken) Dunne of New Jersey, eight grandchildren Melissa, Stephen, Elizabeth, Tyler, Nicole, Miranda, J.P., and Cole, four great-grandchildren and several nieces and nephews.

A private funeral Mass will be held at St. Patrick Church with burial to follow.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Radio and Television Mass c/o St. Patrick Church.

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

### Colchester

#### Jack Clarence Kochera

Jack Clarence Kochera, a.k.a. John C. Kochera, passed away Friday morning, June 5, at his home in Colchester. Born March 21, 1934 in Johnstown, Pa., he was the son of the late John and Susan (Kolesar) Kochera.



Jack attended Windber High School and graduated in 1952. Shortly after graduating he proudly served our nation by enlisting in the United States Army serving as a medic. During his enlistment Jack was stationed in California, where he met his wife Marilyn Williges; the couple married in 1957 in San Francisco. Jack worked at and retired from the Bend School District in Bend, Ore. Jack and Marilyn escaped the snow and retired in northwest Arkansas, where their daughter and son-in-

law lived. In 2016, they followed them to back to the snow in Connecticut.

Jack was an avid reader, enjoyed gardening, and loved traveling – seeing most of this great country. He also had a wonderful sense of humor and truly enjoyed a good joke, even if it was on him.

He will be forever loved by his wife of 63 years, Marilyn Kochera of Colchester, and their daughters, Yvonne (John) Kirby of Colchester and Kara (Terry) Surface of Sisters, Ore.

In lieu of flowers the family asks that donations be made in Jack's name to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, ASPCA Gift Processing Center, P.O. Box 96929, Washington, DC 20077-7127.

Care of private funeral arrangements have been entrusted to the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester. For online condolences, please visit [www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com](http://www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com)

Of course, my greatest pride and joy is knowing that I have the gift of everlasting life. This is how you can know: Jesus said, "Whoever looks upon a woman to lust after her, has committed adultery already with her in his heart." Have you lied or stolen or looked with lust? Then you will be guilty on the Day of Judgment, and therefore end up in Hell. That's not God's will. He sent his Son to take your punishment: "God commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." To receive God's gift of everlasting life, pray something like this: "Dear God, I repent of all of my sins (name them). This day I put my trust in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Please forgive me and grant me your gift of everlasting life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen." Then read the Bible daily and obey what you read (see John 14:21).

### Obituary Policy

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### Hebron

#### Jean Lawrence Rohde

Jean Lawrence Rohde, 97, of Hebron, formerly of Meriden, wife of the late Arthur M. Rohde, passed away Friday, June 5, at the Middlesex Hospital, from pneumonia complications. Born April 27, 1923 in Meriden, she was the daughter of the late Raymond and Vera (Ungerma) Lawrence.



A graduate of Meriden High School, she was a National Honor Society member and class secretary. After graduating from Eli Whitney Technical School, Jean worked as an LPN at WWII Veterans Memorial Hospital in Meriden. She was a lifelong member of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Meriden, serving on the Altar Guild, Vestry and volunteer committees. At St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Hebron, Jean was involved in knitting pocket prayer shawls.

She is survived by her son and daughter-in-law, Richard and Diane of Ashland, N.H., and daughter, Amy Stone of Hebron; grandchildren, David and wife Fiona and Angela Ferguson; great-grandchildren, Emma and Christopher Rohde, Andrew and Trevor Ferguson; several nieces; many extended family and friends, especially Vicki Burch and Barbara Parkyn. Two sons-in-law, John Augustus and Everett Stone, predeceased her.

Funeral services will be held at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Route 85, 30 Church St., Hebron, CT 06248, on Monday, June 15th at 11 a.m. COVID-19 protocol with social distancing to be followed. In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to the Hebron VFD/EMS, P.O. Box 911, Hebron, CT 06248 or Our Companions Animal Rescue and Sanctuary, P.O. Box 956, Manchester, CT 06045 or to the charity of one's choice.

Care of arrangements has been entrusted to the John J. Ferry & Sons Funeral Home, 88 E. Main Street, Meriden, CT 06450. For online condolences, please visit [jferryfh.com](http://jferryfh.com).