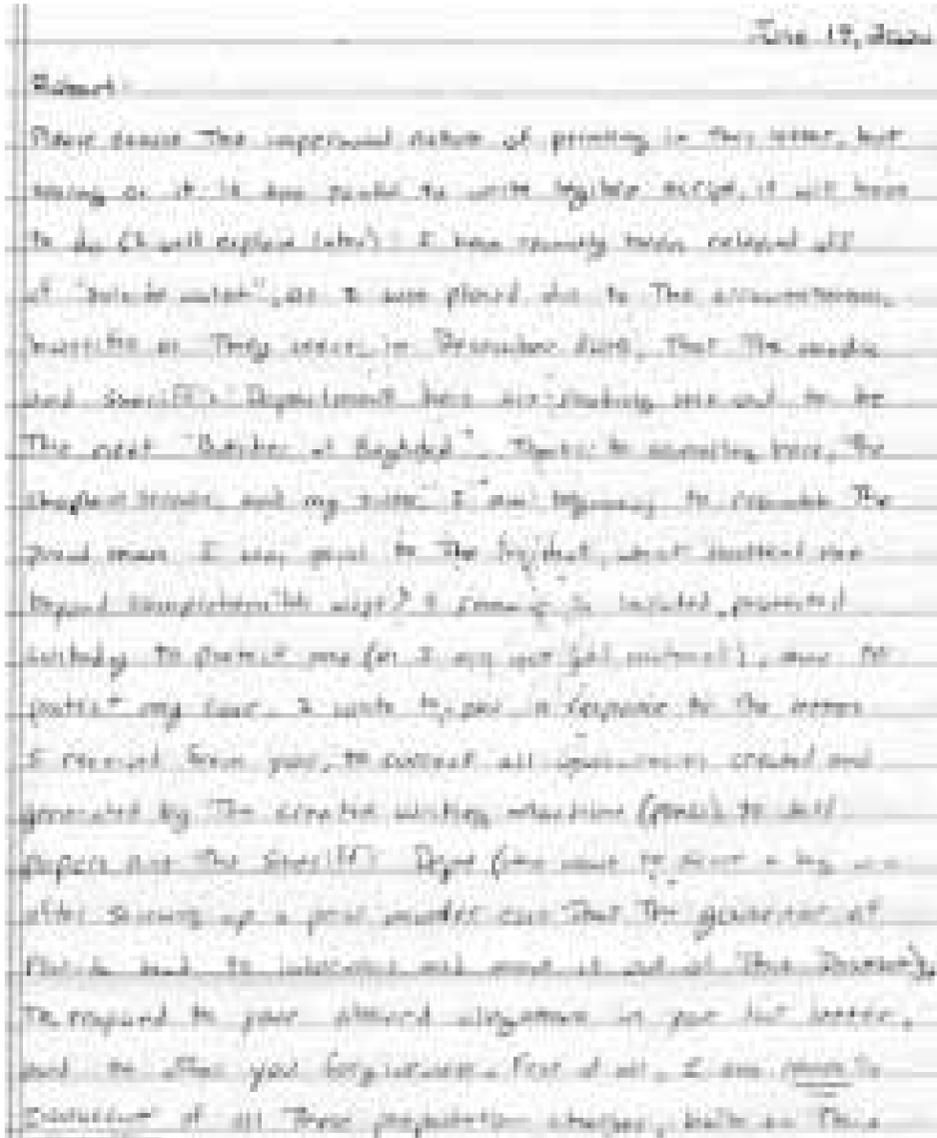




RIVEREAST

News Bulletin

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



In a detailed, meandering 27-page letter sent last month to his father, former Colchester resident Anthony Todt said it was his wife who killed their three children before committing suicide. He wrote he is "10,000% innocent."

Todt Claims Wife Killed Their Children

by Karla Santos

In a letter sent last month to his father, Anthony Todt – the former Colchester resident charged with killing his wife, three children and family dog at their Florida home – said his wife Megan, troubled by a host of physical and mental ailments, poisoned her three children and then killed herself.

The state's attorney's office of Ninth Judicial Circuit of the Orange and Osceola Counties released the letter, dated June 19, earlier this week.

The letter was sent to Todt's father, Robert Todt, at a Westfield, Mass., address.

In the letter, Todt wrote he is "10,000% innocent" of the murders. The bodies of Megan Todt, 42; Alek, 13; Tyler, 11; Zoe, 4; and the family dog Breezy were all discovered Jan. 13 when Osceola County sheriff's deputies were serving a federal arrest warrant on Todt, after he had allegedly fraudulently billed insurance companies thousands of dollars for services not rendered at his two Colchester physical therapy practices from 2015-19.

Todt also professed his innocence in relation to the fraud charges.

Todt told his father Megan killed their children when he was not home, and then "committed suicide in front of me."

Todt went on to say he has forgiven Megan because he knows she had been "chronically sick" for the previous seven or eight years following a bug bite. He explained she had liver failure, drug-induced hepatitis, vagus nerve dysfunction, depression, tachycardia, breathing difficulties, Lyme disease, chronic pain and joint laxity. Todt said the family moved to Florida because the sun and warmth made his wife feel better.

Todt also wrote in the letter that Megan had suffered two miscarriages – including one just last September.

In the detailed letter, Todt wrote about his relationship with his wife and the family they had. Throughout the letter he explained his version of what happened the day his family was murdered. The family lived in a home in Celebration, Fla., but they also owned another property that Todt in the letter called a "condo." Todt lived part-time in Florida, as he spent part of the week in Connecticut, running his Colchester business.

Todt wrote that the night of the murders – which he said was in late December, though he didn't specify a date – he had left to go to the condo where he was going to do some work, gather things and spend the night. When he left that night, he wrote, Megan was making dessert. He said that before going to the condo, he fell asleep in the car and woke up that morning around 4 a.m. He said he went back to the house and found the plates in the table where the family had eaten dessert. He said it was some sort of fruit pudding pie that smelled "horrible." Then he learned the "pudding" was in fact made of Benadryl and Tylenol PM.

According to the letter, at that time his wife was awake and she started to tell him what happened. He said Megan told him about a vision she had while meditating telling her that the end of the world was beginning. He said she gave the children the pie, separated them, woke up at 11:30, stabbed and then suffocated each one.

"At the news of this, I ran to the bathroom and puked, I was weak," Todt said.

He said when he went to see his children's

bodies, he was horrified. He got a warm washcloth and wiped the kids' faces. He said that when his wife told him what she did, she was calm, oriented and "with it."

In the letter, Todt said that when he told Megan she "murdered our children," she responded, "relax and believe in what I saw...I released their souls."

Then, Todt said that his wife gave him an empty bottle of Benadryl to throw in the garbage. While he was out of the room and stabbed herself. They then had a conversation while she was still alive. He said he told her he would take responsibility as he felt guilty for not being there. Todt said his wife put a pillow on her face and told him to help her die because she was in pain. She told him she had to be with her babies. He said although he didn't try to help her die, she died before he could help her.

Before she died, Todt asked Megan various times for the phones, as he wanted to call for help, he wrote in the letter. But she had hidden them, he said.

Todt wrote he had failed as a father because he wasn't there to protect his children. He said he failed as a husband because he wasn't able to fix his wife. He said he wanted to die to be with his family. He said he then moved the children into one room, covered them and put a rosary in each of their hands.

When the officers discovered the bodies Jan. 13, Megan's was found on the bed, covered in a blanket. The bodies of Alek and Tyler were found on a mattress on the floor, also covered with blankets. The body of Zoe, meanwhile, was found wrapped in blankets at the foot of the bed. All were in states of decomposition. Megan, Tyler and Alek all had stab wounds to their abdomens, while Zoe did not have any visible injuries.

Todt wrote in the letter he was recently released from suicide watch. He said he attempted suicide about eight times. He said on Jan. 12 – the day before the bodies were found – he attempted suicide with Benadryl.

There are many other things Todt said in the lengthy, meandering letter – including that he doesn't know the status of his finances because his wife "handled all of that." He also mentioned his own health issues such as wrist pain, lumbar radiculopathy, daily migraines and more. He said he is "mentally healthy" and even boasted about the re-emergence of the "six-pack" he had when he played college soccer.

He added that, with the help of counselors and his sister, he is returning to the "proud man I was prior to this incident, which shattered me beyond comprehensible ways."

Todt said that while in jail he is working to create a nonprofit in memory of his family. He said he is also working on a "list of lawsuits." He didn't specify who the lawsuits would be against, although in the letter he criticized the press – which he called "the creative writing machine" – and the sheriff's office for "inaccuracies."

Reached this week for comment on the letter, Robert Wesley, one of the public defenders handling Todt's case, said, "We don't talk about our cases."

The full 27-page letter from Todt to his father can be seen at facebook.com/RivereastNewsBulletin

# Haines Announces Re-Election Bid

by Jack Lakowsky

State Rep. Irene Haines (R-34) has announced she will again seek to represent East Hampton in the legislature in Hartford. If elected, Haines will serve her second term in the capital.

Along with East Hampton, Haines' district includes East Haddam and a portion of Colchester.

In an interview with the *Rivereast*, Haines said her first year as a state lawmaker was far from typical, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, she added that it did not detract from her first term.

"One of my biggest takeaways from my first term is that, in this state, we're lucky to have a legislative process that is available to all," said Haines.

Haines said she is impressed with the acute testimony she reads and hears from constituents. She said she encourages voters to contact her and other lawmakers to make their voices heard.

"We deal with tough, tough bills," said Haines. "When important issues are at stake, everyone's voice matters."

As an example of the power of public voice, Haines said a major reason Gov. Ned Lamont and his administration haven't been able to begin construction of their controversial highway tolling stations is that public pressure has "turned the tables."

Haines said, aside from highway tolls and the dynamic challenges brought about by the coronavirus pandemic, she will continue to tackle issues like what she calls a mismanaged state budget, state overreach, the opioid crisis and trade workforce development.

Haines said she does not think Lamont has adhered to his "debt diet" approach to the state budget. For example, she said the State Bond Commission recently approved about \$500,000 in funding for new state projects.

"I think [Lamont] signed his approval without looking at the long-term repercussions of the pandemic," said Haines. "To his administration's credit they've kept money in the state's rainy-day fund, but that will be gone in a year."

Haines said more state spending is irresponsible because Connecticut has yet to recover from the 2008 recession.

Haines said the cost of living in Connecticut must be curbed, adding that high property and income taxes are contributing to the large num-

bers of people moving out-of-state. She said state overreach and excessive regulation incur needless costs to businesses and individuals.

Haines said businesses like restaurants have enjoyed less rigid regulations since the state's phased economic reopening began. She explained that relaxing some regulations, like the state's rigid outdoor dining laws, are key to helping small businesses stay open – and thrive – during the current economic turbulence.

"Our businesses are doing everything they can to muster the income they need to keep going," said Haines. "They deserve all the credit in the world."

Haines said excessive taxation is why so many have resisted the governor's toll proposal. Haines said she would raise the question of lowering the state's income tax as a compromise that would help the administration reach its goal.

Haines expressed concerns about how for years the state has redirected funds from transportation infrastructure improvements. She said lawmakers voted to have transportation improvement funds under "lock and key," but that legal loopholes have allowed the funds to be diverted.

"I'm sure tolls will come up again in January," said Haines. "And I'll fight them again."

Haines said she wants to see more regulation to help combat opioid abuse in Connecticut. She said she co-sponsored a proposed bill that requires pharmacists to offer patients counseling about the use of opioid painkillers. The bill also prohibits life insurance companies from denying people coverage based solely on a prescription for an opioid "antagonist," like naloxone.

Haines has also pushed for a restriction on the intentional release of helium balloons, a ritual often performed at celebrations. Balloons are made of rubbery plastic and are a major environmental hazard.

In March, about a week before the state began closing, Haines advocated for "An Act Prohibiting the Release of Helium Balloons into the Atmosphere" before the state Environment Committee.

Currently, state law allows for the release of no more than 10 helium balloons. Haines said this law does not do enough – and said no balloons whatsoever should be allowed to be released.

"We know that the [release] of helium [balloons] hurts our environment and presents a serious hazard to marine wildlife and birds," Haines said in March.

Haines has co-sponsored several acts and bills to help expand the manufacturing sector in Connecticut. She said Connecticut high schools can get state funding to help offer manufacturing certificates to students.

"Students need to know there are options other than college," said Haines.

Haines said she is in regular communication with a task force of technical education teachers who study career demands in technical fields like manufacturing.

"A lot of trade workers are retiring, and taking their great trade secrets with them," said Haines.

Haines recently participated in an all-night legislative session wherein lawmakers voted on several bills, one of which was the highly publicized act concerning police accountability.

New laws in the act require police to always wear body cameras and for all police vehicles to have dashboard cameras. The act also requires police to undergo mental health assessments every five years and allows the creation of a civilian police review board within individual towns.

Haines said she voted against the bill. She said it was a "good bill with bad parts", but that she could not support it in its entirety. Haines said she agrees with anti-bias training for police, as well as drug and psychological tests. She said cops who willfully break the law themselves should "absolutely" be held accountable for their actions.

However, Haines said ultimately, she couldn't support the bill because of the added costs it asks of taxpayers to help buy new

equipment.

"I think more time should have been taken," said Haines.

Haines said she also voted against required climate change education curriculum in schools because, although the bill itself attempts to achieve a worthwhile goal, some of its contents "didn't make sense."

Haines also opposed minimum wage increases when the issue came to vote in 2019.

East Hampton Town Manager David Cox was complimentary of Haines, saying she has been instrumental in the effort to bring additional public water resources to Belltown.

"She's a very helpful resource," said Cox.

East Hampton Town Council Republican Mark Phillhower said he supports Haines "wholeheartedly" and that she does a great job in Hartford, especially given she that she serves in the minority party. He said Haines brings reason to many debates in Hartford.

In the state congress, Haines serves as a member of the education, transportation, and planning & development committees.

Locally, she serves as East Haddam's economic development coordinator. Haines is highly involved with the Girl Scouts of Connecticut

Haines has also served as president of the East Haddam Business Association, as a founding board member of *East Haddam News*, a business sector leader with the Local Prevention Council, former Girl Scout troop leader, and founder and former president of the Colchester Civic Orchestra. Professionally, Haines has worked as an insurance sales agent, marketing manager, and small business owner. She lives with her family in East Haddam.

# Uncertainty Shrouds Reopening of RHAM Schools

by Sloan Brewster

In the ever-changing situation regarding COVID-19, RHAM Interim Superintendent of Schools Scott Leslie is unsure if schools will open fully or partially to students in the fall.

That uncertainty came a day after Gov. Ned Lamont announced on Monday that districts can decide for themselves whether to allow 50% of students in schools in September or all of them. A week earlier, Leslie made a presentation to the Board of Education in which he gave three possible scenarios – all students returning to school; a hybrid model with 50% of the student population in the buildings at one time; and an entirely remote learning model.

Based on what he had been told by the commissioner of education at that time, however, Leslie focused primarily on the expectation that all kids would come back to school five days a week.

He put a \$1.078 million price tag on the prospect.

"The direction that each district received was that we were to develop three reopening plans," Leslie said in a phone call Tuesday. "And the commissioner of education was very clear that the expectation was that everybody would be returning to school."

All that changed after the press conference Lamont gave Monday, in which he announced the decision between a full or partial return would be up to districts, Leslie said.

"Overnight, now districts are forced to, kind of, determine what we're going to do going forward," Leslie said.

Leslie said he must confer with area elementary school superintendents before finalizing any plan.

If one school in a district decides to bring all the kids back at once and another school goes with a hybrid model, parents of elementary school children who rely on older high school siblings for babysitting could face childcare challenges, he said. To prevent those challenges, he said he would collaborate with superintendents from Hebron, Andover and

Marlborough.

"I don't think it's a decision that any one school can make on their own," he said. "We're all still trying to process it and look at what's best for our students."

## What School Will Look Like

The hybrid model he described to the board would bring students to school on certain days depending where their names fall in the alphabet, with all students doing remote learning on Wednesdays, when custodians would perform deep cleaning at the schools.

"Every student would be engaged in education every day of the week," Leslie said.

If the education board opts to return all children to school, they would have block schedules with a reduction in movement from room to room. Students would be physically distanced and all students would wear face-masks.

"In the state guidelines really one of the only non-negotiables is that students and staff should wear masks at all times," Leslie said.

To account for mask breaks – which the state also says need to occur – there will be picnic tables set up outside where as often as possible classes would do outside learning and students could eat.

Hallways and stairways would mostly be one-way. Those that would be two-directional would be marked to indicate which direction students can go.

Where necessary, classrooms would have Plexiglas dividers and teachers would have face shields.

There would be extra cleanings and some evening custodians would take day shifts.

"The goal will be to provide the custodians as much time as possible for cleaning," Leslie said.

An additional issue Leslie informed the board about is teachers in high-risk categories who will not be returning to classrooms. In a survey of staff, 38.7% indicated they were in

a high-risk category, which, he added, doesn't mean they won't return to school.

Solving that is part of the next challenge. "Whatever model we come back with is going to still require a great deal of planning on the instructional side of it," Leslie said. "We've been looking at, kind of, the how and what more so than what does the instruction look like."

## Costs

Leslie presented the board with a long list of unbudgeted costs associated with returning all students to school, adding that Eva Gallupe, business manager, had found budget savings and possible grant money.

The list includes a licensed practical nurse for approximately \$47,000; \$235,000 for substitute teachers; additional teacher coverage for \$250,000; more paraprofessionals for \$151,000; and Zoom and instructional tools for \$15,500.

He also listed about \$306,000 in personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies and building modifications; \$22,000 in student supports; \$24,000 in technology upgrades and \$5,000 in additional police coverage.

The hybrid model will be less costly, Leslie said.

Additional challenges associated with bringing everyone back, include that state guidelines encourage students be put into cohorts, or groups that stay together throughout most of the day, he said. That is more difficult at the high school level as students take so many different classes.

Also, he said, it would be more difficult to keep high school students socially distant.

The board gave Leslie the go-ahead to spend \$46,000 for items he said are non-negotiable – upgraded filters for the air filtration system and a means to keep fire doors between the middle

and high schools open.

He told the board the items must be ordered as soon as possible.

"Anything we buy right now related to COVID, it's on backorder or it's not available," he said.

Even if the board selects the hybrid model, the filters and doors remain a necessity, Leslie said Monday.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommended filters will cost \$29,000 and are meant to filter out COVID-19 particles, Leslie said.

The fire doors, as they are now, must be pushed open each time someone wants to go through them.

"So you've got doors in the building that will be touched hundreds and hundreds of times during the day," he said.

It will run \$17,000 to get them magnetized to stay open throughout the day and automatically close in the event of a fire.

The plan is to take the \$46,000 from the capital non-recurring account.

Leslie said he anticipates a 75% reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency as the agency has set aside funds for projects related to safety improvements in conjunction to COVID-19.

"The filters and door magnets are really specific to responding and enhancing safety due to COVID," he said.

Leslie said he expects to make a decision between the hybrid or 100% return models by next week.

"I can promise you that every district in the state is asking themselves this question, 'What do we do?'" he said. "Obviously our decisions are going to be based upon what is in the best health interests of our students and staff."

# Hebron Cops Talk about Police Accountability Bill

by Sloan Brewster

The day before the state senate passed a police accountability bill, a Hebron selectman and candidate for state office held a virtual Town Hall on the measure with two local police officers.

On Tuesday, the bill passed 21 to 15, along party lines with the exception of Democrat Joan Hartly of Waterbury, who “defected,” said selectman John Collins, a Democrat who is looking to unseat Republican Robin Green as state representative for the 55th Assembly District. The district covers Andover, Bolton, Hebron and Marlborough.

The bill was a state response to the slaying of George Floyd, an African American who died after Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chavin allegedly held a knee on his neck for more than eight minutes after arresting him for allegedly passing a counterfeit \$20 bill. Chavin has since been charged with second-degree murder.

Since Floyd’s death, people all over the country have been calling for reforms to prevent such things from happening again.

The large Connecticut bill “has a lot of good stuff,” Collins said. It includes de-escalation and bias training, more recruitment, additional requirements for body cameras and certification as well as de-certification, which Collins

said he favors.

“Basically, there’s certification and decertification, which requires all police be certified and allows decertification if there are times when they don’t behave the way they should – treat people the way they should,” he said.

A proposed amendment in the bill that would have removed a clause eliminating qualified immunity – which in most cases grants cops immunity from civil suits – failed by a 72-72 vote, Collins said.

“There were 15 Democrats who voted with Republicans to remove qualified immunity,” Collins said. “And I would have been one of them.”

Collins said he was opposed to eliminating qualified immunity because it does not do anything to “deter bad cops” and puts the onus for paying for civil suits on municipalities.

“It puts all the financial responsibility on towns like Bolton, Andover, Hebron and Marlborough,” he said. “There’s a real possibility there’ll be more lawsuits and insurance rates will go up and the cost to towns will increase and our taxes will go up again.”

Eliminating qualified immunity was one of the concerns Hebron Sgt. Marc Rubera and Officer Ricardo Martinez discussed during

the Town Hall, which was held over the Zoom platform.

Rubera, who worked for the Hartford Police Department for 25 years, said he knows of cops planning to retire because they are worried they will be sued.

“I’ve had three or four of my friends say they’re going to retire,” he said. “These are guys you don’t want to retire. These are guys you want to stay.”

“It’s going to be difficult to get police if we don’t have qualified immunity,” Martinez, who worked in Hartford with Rubera, said.

Collins, in the phone call, reiterated that cities and towns would take the financial responsibility of civil suits as cops are indemnified. The exception to that is when the court finds an officer’s actions to be “malicious, wanton or willful,” he said, in which case the officer must reimburse the municipality for any financial damages awarded the plaintiff.

Collins said he thinks the senate will have another look at that part of the bill.

“They’re already talking about taking it up in the next session, improving the bill,” he said.

Rubera and Martinez also voiced concerns about part of the bill that limits lethal force as it puts cops in jeopardy.

Rubera said he had been in at least 15 situations in which he could have used lethal force

and did not. He described a scenario that took place when he and his partner answered a call at St. Francis Hospital where a man was chasing nurses with a knife. His partner asked Rubera to cover him and managed to get close enough to the man to flick the knife from his hand with his night stick.

“If you have time on your side and that person is not going to hurt anybody” a good police officer will not use lethal force, Rubera said.

“The bill is not going to stop [a] bad cop,” he said.

The bill also eliminated choke holds, but Rubera said police in Connecticut haven’t used them since the 1980s “except for in extreme circumstances.”

One thing Rubera and Martinez did support was bringing social workers into certain situations, which Rubera said was commonplace in the 1980s and then cut in the 1990s when money was tight.

“[Police officers] loved the social workers,” he said “I don’t know what cop wouldn’t want you to come and help you at a domestic.”

Collins began holding weekly virtual Town Hall meetings this month. Next week he will discuss voting and absentee ballots with Secretary of the State Denise Merrill. The meetings take place on Zoom on Mondays at 6 p.m. To participate enter meeting ID 857 1757 5322.

# Host of Changes Planned for Colchester Schools

by Karla Santos

Schedule changes, transportation procedures and prohibited use of lockers are only a few of the wide range of changes students in the Colchester School District might see when schools reopen this fall.

Last Friday, the Colchester Public Schools administration submitted the school reopening plan to the state – a plan prepared for the new COVID-19 era.

Superintendent of Schools Jeff Burt presented the proposal to the Board of Education, last Thursday.

Burt said he and other school administrators followed state guidance when devising the plan, and also took into consideration some of the preferences of the parents in the district.

Adjustments to the school year calendar have been made as the first day of school has been moved from its original date, Aug. 26, to Aug. 31. Training days for staff will take place from Aug. 24 to Aug. 28.

During his presentation of the plan to the Board of Education on July 23, it was made clear that actions including extra cleaning are to minimize – not eliminate – the risk associated with the spread of the coronavirus.

“We are not going to be able to provide 100% risk-free environment,” Burt said. “The only 100% risk free environment would be staying home or if there’s a vaccine.”

Measures are being taken on school buses where students will be required to wear a mask and to fill the seats from back to front. Between bus runs, there will be a general cleaning and once a week, the buses will go through a deep clean. Upon arrival to the school, each grade will have a specific entry point.

In the classrooms, students must wear a mask as well. According to Burt, each classroom has at least six feet of space between the teacher’s desk and the students’ seats. The plan requires no shared materials, including pens, papers, scissors and more.

All grades will have restricted restroom use, with staff monitoring outside to prevent students from congregating in the restrooms. Restrooms will be cleaned at least twice per school day in addition to their regular cleaning at night. The restrooms will have no air hand dryers; instead, they will have paper towels.

Hallways and stairways will be marked so that traffic goes either one way only or the hall will be divided so that students going in one direction stay on one side and students going in the opposite direction stay on the other side.

In terms of learning, at the point when the plan was made the state had required districts to plan for opening with 100% in-person classes. Since then, on Monday, Gov. Ned Lamont announced at a press conference that districts would be able to decide for themselves if they

will open fully or go with a hybrid model, in which students would learn part-time at home and part at school. Districts were also asked to develop a model that features exclusively distance learning.

Burt said that about 50% of surveyed parents said they were uncomfortable in sending students back to school. Another survey was sent out this week to help figure out exactly how many students will not be sent back to school.

Grades pre-k through eight will be cohort, he said, meaning students will remain in the same classroom and teachers will be the ones rotating. Physical education classes will be outside if the weather is appropriate. Music classes including chorus and classes featuring wind instruments will be limited – and will be held outside when possible.

Bacon Academy High School will be going into a semester model.

Bacon Academy Principal Matt Peel explained that at the high school, students normally take eight classes spread over two days – four classes on one day and four on the next. However, he said, the plan for the fall would eliminate that model. Instead, Bacon will adopt a semester model similar to college: four classes would be completed that first semester, and then another four classes the second semester.

“That limits their exposure,” Peel said. “So

even though the building is full, it limits them to only those four classes that they are in. So they are not going to eight classes; they are only going to four.”

Peel said the new semester model can impact the number of electives offered and the class capacity.

“There is going to be a mountain of changes and quite frankly it’s going to really change what the experience at Bacon Academy is going to look like because we are just not going to be able to offer as much as we typically do,” Peel said.

The plan also includes that students with underlying conditions will have an individual plan to meet their health needs. Visits from parents and outsiders to the school buildings will be limited. After school clubs will be either virtual or cohort and according to Burt, the district has not received any guidance from the state in terms of sports. Normally, the district has one shared substitute teacher, but now they are looking into having a permanent substitute per building to minimize exposure.

Burt said the state is expected to get back to him with any suggested changes in the plan.

# Damaged Mural in Andover to be Cleaned

by Sloan Brewster

Damage to the mural at the Andover Public Library, which was hit by vandals earlier this month, will be cleaned – possibly this weekend.

Town Administrator Eric Anderson said Manchester artist Jeff Reid, who is vice president of the Manchester Art Association, will begin cleaning the defaced mural Saturday and, depending how it goes, it could be finished in one or two days.

The length of the cleaning project will depend which solvent removes the black paint vandals sprayed over parts of the mural. A less-invasive solvent will take the shortest amount of time. If the damage doesn’t come off with that approach, a stronger solvent will need to be applied and the process will take longer.

“If we’re able to separate the spray paint without disturbing the varnish that’s the simplest way,” Anderson said. “It means we don’t have to strip the varnish.”

Reid was found after the town “solicited far and wide” for someone to do the job, Anderson said. An artist the town has used to restore a sign recommended him.

Anderson and Library Board member Dianne Grenier met Reid at the mural last weekend.

He showed them some examples of his work as an artist and talked through what his ap-

proach and methodology would be for cleaning the mural, Anderson said. They decided it “was a reasonable approach.”

“The guy is, I think, the right person for the job; he gets it,” Grenier said. “He knows how important this mural is to the residents.”

Reid has been in contact with Hebron artist Sara Walling, who painted the mural last year, Anderson and Grenier said.

Walling used robust acrylic paint, and a coat of anti-graffiti sealer topped with two coats of sealer, Grenier said.

“So there’s three coats before you get to the actual artwork,” she said.

Anderson said he does not know how much the cleanup job will cost as the price will depend which method ends up working. He said it would be under \$1,000 if the varnish does not need to be stripped but would cost much more if the sealer has to come off.

Grenier said she has received a lot of questions from folks wondering why the vandals, who were caught on videotape in the July 5 act and have already been identified by police, have not been arrested.

According to Darrell Tetreault, Andover resident state trooper, the warrants are still pending approval at Rockville Superior Court.

The courthouse is closed due to COVID-19 and there is a backlog on warrants being signed and approved, the trooper said. Once the warrants are approved, he can make an arrest.

“I have cases pending from March that have still not been addressed,” he said. “I do not anticipate an arrest being made anytime soon.”

Grenier said she does not believe the vandals should face jail time, but she wants them to pay for the damage, write a letter of restitution and perform community service.

Anderson said the town has received a letter of apology from one of the vandals.

The mural, which Walling completed last November, is dedicated to former first selectman and library board member Jean Gasper, who passed away in 2015 and had long spoken of having a mural put on the library.

The 40-foot painting, which stretches over three walls in the back of the library, portrays a

sampling of Andover’s historic, people, places and events, including an image of General Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau as he marched with his troops through town to aid George Washington – whose image is also on the painting – in the Revolutionary War; the old town hall; First Congregational Church; a hiker strolling along the covered bridge; the train depot; Monument Park; the old creamery, which was located where Monument Park is now located and was known for its award winning butter; and a bald eagle flying over Andover Lake at sunset.

The steam train – which, according to Grenier, “was a big deal,” with 50 trains rolling through town per day in the 1920s and ‘30s – is also depicted and seems to be rushing toward onlookers as it rolls along the tracks on one of its many routes, such as bringing local students to Willimantic High School.

# Marlborough

## Public Hearing Next Week on Possible Library Funds

by Karla Santos

The town of Marlborough wants residents to weigh in on an idea to apply for state funds for upgrades to the town's library building.

Next Tuesday, the Board of Selectmen meeting will feature a public hearing to find out if residents want to use potential funding through the Small Town Economic Assistance Program [STEAP] for the upgrades.

First Selectman Greg Lowrey spoke about the town's opportunity to apply for a STEAP grant at the July 21 Board of Selectmen meeting. The \$128,905 grant funds economic development, community conservation and quality-of-life capital projects. According to the State of Connecticut's Office of Policy and Management, the program requires a municipal match, though there is not a set percentage or dollar amount for the requirement.

But the program comes with a challenge since the application deadline is on Aug. 14 and requires action from the boards of selectmen and finance, plus the public hearing. In addition, Lowrey said the program has a new rule, in which towns are asked to secure funds for the project before applying for the grant. Lowrey noted that selectmen recently completed the town budget but didn't set aside money for a STEAP project as they didn't anticipate the new rule.

Lowrey also noted that the grant amount has been lowered over the years. At one point STEAP grants were \$500,000, then they decreased to \$250,000 and this year the grant is \$128,905.

Lowrey said that with the grant, the state typically looked for long-term stimulation of the economy, but now the dual focus is to get

people to work and stimulate the economy down the road.

Lowrey said he looked at a variety of projects to see which would be the best fit for the grant given its rules and requirements. Some projects he explored include installing several hundred feet of road at the town's business park, running a gas line from the East Hampton town line into the center of town and completing accessibility upgrades at the library building, which has no elevator and an unfinished second floor.

Town Planner Peter Hughes spoke at the meeting via teleconference. He said he received a construction estimate of \$781,000 for the construction at the library on July 20. Hughes mentioned some options including completing part of the project with the grant and match, and finishing the rest on a second phase.

Lowrey said he is looking into possible match sources.

The town may be able to put together the financing needed to finish the project, meet the match and secure the competitive grant, he said. Approximately \$12,000 in design costs would be part of the match.

Another potential source of money for the project is a special appropriation, Lowrey said. While special appropriations typically involve a public hearing and town meeting and require a majority vote from the boards of selectmen and finance, he said executive orders enacted by Gov. Ned Lamont due to COVID-19 allow towns to bypass the town meeting and in person voting.

Another potential source of money for the project would be a transfer of surplus funds

from retired projects, Lowrey said.

"I think there is room with the transfer and the grant and the special appropriation that does not exceed 1% of the annual budget," he said.

Selectman Joe Asklar suggested that selectmen pay attention to the public hearing because that would give them a chance to hear how the rest of the town feels about the project.

"If we get an overwhelming 'yes' for it, then I think we should move it forward," Asklar said. "If for some reason the town residents don't feel that this is the best investment for their money, then I think we should re-consider the project."

He said that before he votes yes or no on the

library project, he wants to hear from the public.

Selectman Amy Traversa said the town has looked into finishing up the library building for a number of years and noted that in the past, people have shown that they are in favor of the project.

The meeting will be via teleconference and the information to dial in can be found on the meeting agenda on the town website, marlboroughct.net.

## Marlborough Elementary Set to Return September 8th

by Karla Santos

Marlborough Elementary School is preparing to return to full time in-person instruction on Sept. 8 based on a reopening plan submitted to the state last week.

The plan includes increased cleaning at the school, restricted hallway traffic and a protocol for bus transportation.

The plan was presented to the Board of Education last Thursday by MES Principal Dan White, Assistant Principal Kim Kelley and Superintendent of Schools David Sklarz. In addition, Tuesday evening, the school administrators held a public forum with 137 attendees, in which they reviewed the plan and held a question and answer session.

Marlborough's back-to-school plan follows the state guidelines as well as input from the superintendent of schools, parents and the reopening taskforce – a group with representation from members of the community.

According to the plan, to ensure a successful school year, teachers and school administrators will not only pay attention to academics but also safety, social emotional health and instructional options that would meet families' needs.

The district is in the process of making modifications to the school building to increase touchless surfaces. As part of that, touchless faucets and soap dispensers are being installed in the school restrooms. In addition, the school building will have physical distancing signage and the traffic flow in the hallways will be limited. The plan states that restrooms will be cleaned multiple times per day.

Per state guidance, the district created three learning models, full time in-person learning; a hybrid model, which would have students learn part time in the classroom and part time online; and a distance learning model for full time online classes.

White said the school will provide instruction to those families that chose the distance learning option rather than sending children back to in-person learning. The children will be taught online by teachers and those families will have the option of returning children to school at any point.

According to the plan, students will be placed in classroom groups where they will spend the school day, including lunch time. Desks will be wiped before and after eating. Students will have outside breaks planned by teachers.

The enVision Math Program, which has a distance learning component, will be implemented in the district. Classes such as music and physical education will be held outside when appropriate. Students in pre-k through kindergarten will use iPads and first through sixth graders will use Chromebooks. These technologies will be used in the classroom.

Protocols for school buses have also been implemented. Students and school bus drivers are required to wear face masks. Buses will be loaded from back to front and unloaded from front to back. Students will be assigned a seat on the bus.

Having bus monitors will be the rule at least to kick off the school year, White said, adding that officials have not determined exactly for

how long buses will need monitors.

The district is asking families to screen children at home to ensure they don't have COVID-19 symptoms. School staff is also being asked to self-screen. Those who feel sick are asked to stay home. If a child tests positive for the virus, Chatham Health will make decisions regarding contact tracing, closure of school, cleaning and reopening of school. Student or staff members who become sick during school time will be moved to an isolation room until they are dismissed or picked up.

Chatham Health District Director of Health Russell Melmed said during Tuesday's forum that his recommendation would likely be to close the school for at least one day if a child becomes infected with the virus. That out-of-school day would be used for contact tracing and testing, that way the school would know who really needs to quarantine.

Before the school year starts, staff will be trained on health and safety protocols, includ-

ing proper hand washing, appropriate use of personal protective equipment - with a focus on face masks - and respiratory hygiene. Staff will also be trained to help identify signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

While school staff and students are required to wear a mask, there will be dedicated mask breaks during the school day.

Student desks will be placed six feet away from the front of the room to enable teachers to physically distance.

Ruth Kelly, Chairperson of the Board of Education, said the plan was well-thought out and had an emphasis on safety. She said there was consensus among the board members that it was a good plan.

Kelly said she gives credit to Kelley, White and Sklarz for making the plan a reality and soliciting input from parents and school staff. She said they are doing a "wonderful" job and expects to have a successful start of the school year.

# Middle Haddam Science Pioneer Passes Away at 87

by Jack Lakowsky

Throughout her long life, Cynthia Peterson educated and enriched her family, her students, and her community through science, discovery, and a lifelong enthusiasm for teaching prospective scientists. Through community outreach and during her many years as a professor, Cynthia taught many that wonderment can be found simply by looking up at the night sky.

Cynthia passed away in her home on July 8, at the age of 87. Cynthia's daughter, Celeste Peterson, said her death was unexpected. Celeste, her brother Tycho Peterson, and their father and Cynthia's widower, Gerald Peterson, miss Cynthia dearly, but they will remember her for her many achievements, her wealth of knowledge, her unwavering positivity, and her efforts to teach as many as she could.

Cynthia lived with her husband, Gerald Peterson, in Middle Haddam for many years. She was a native of Chestnut Hill, Pa., born April 28, 1933.

An avid runner, Belltown residents may remember Cynthia as an energetic participant in East Hampton's Old Home Day Race, even in her golden years.

Cynthia enjoyed a distinguished career as a professor of physics and of astronomy at the University of Connecticut. For more than 30 years, she was the only woman teaching in the university's physics department.

In 2014, Cynthia told *UConn Today* that she taught more than 9,000 undergraduate students. For many years she was the only tenured female professor. She started at UConn in the 1960's. She ran the university's planetarium for decades.

She has also published research in astronomy, biophysics and chemistry in outlets such as *The Astrophysical Journal* and in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. Cynthia retired from UConn in 2016.

"It was hard for her, being the only woman in the department," said Celeste. She is named for Galileo's daughter, Celeste, a name derived from the word "celestial." Cynthia's son Tycho, is named for the astronomer Tycho Brahe, who pioneered astrological observation in the 16th century.

"She was always very positive, and very supportive of other women in science," said Celeste.

Nora Berrah, a physics professor at UConn and former head of the physics department, spoke highly of Cynthia in an email to the *Rivereast*.

"Cynthia was a heroic pioneer in physics," said Berrah. "She is one of the few women who graduated with a PhD in physics in the early '60s."

Berrah said Cynthia was the only woman in the UConn physics department until 2002.

In addition to teaching, Cynthia served on the College of Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee at UConn, as well as the Physics Department Undergraduate Affairs Committee.

"Cynthia regularly gave astronomy workshops and public lectures on astronomical subjects, in libraries over the state and in public school systems, and she served as an astronomy consultant for newspapers and radio stations," said Berrah.

Berrah organized public outreach events during her tenure as head of the physics department. Berrah said Cynthia attended an average of 12 events per year, sometimes attending as many as 18 events. Berrah said, after retirement, Cynthia returned daily to the physics department at UConn to work on her private research, and to work with students.

"Cynthia Peterson was, and will remain to be, and inspiration to all of us," said Berrah.

Winthrop Smith, another UConn professor of physics, said Cynthia was to him and his wife a friend and mentor.

"For her, teaching was more than imparting facts," Smith told the *Rivereast*. "It included an introduction to research, how facts in science were discovered."

Smith and Cynthia worked together for nearly fifty years. Smith said she was one of the first colleagues he met when he moved to Storrs from New York in 1969. He said Cynthia introduced him to practical astronomy.

Smith said, since he and Cynthia retired, UConn's physics program has advanced and increased in popularity. UConn increased its physics and astronomy faculty as a result. Smith said he joked with Cynthia about how the school had to hire three people to replace her.

"She has left a strong legacy," said Smith. "Not only in the field of astronomy, but also as an inspiration for women in science in general."

Ronald Mallett, also a physics professor at

UConn, said Cynthia was a very dear friend who played a key role in his professional life. Mallett first met Cynthia in 1973, soon after he earned his PhD from Pennsylvania State University.

"She, along with then-department head Joseph Budnick, introduced me to the [UConn] physics department and paved the way for my becoming the first African-American faculty member in the physics department," said Mallett.

"Cynthia was always kind and gracious, and I miss her greatly," said Mallett.

## Before UConn

Before Cynthia began her illustrious career at UConn, she taught at Wesleyan University in Middletown. Celeste said Cynthia taught at Wesleyan when it was an all-boys school. Celeste and Gerald both researched their fields at Yale University. Celeste also worked for a time at the Harvard University Blue Hill Atmospheric Observatory.

Cynthia held an undergraduate degree in physics and mathematics from Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, and a PhD in experimental physics from Cornell University, a premier school for the field.

Cynthia's enthusiasm and unquenchable thirst for knowledge began in Philadelphia's Franklin Institute in 1950.

While at the Franklin Institute, she was recognized in the Westinghouse Science Talent Search 1950, a prestigious competition for high school scientists. For placing in the top 10, Cynthia met President Harry Truman.

Celeste said her mother gained much confidence from her experience at the Franklin Institute. She said Cynthia's focus in college was intense.

"She didn't really take part in socialization in college," said Celeste, who herself has a PhD in microbiology from Princeton University. Celeste was also an undergraduate at Yale. During her time there, she and her mother researched in the same lab while Cynthia was on a research sabbatical.

Celeste said her mother's career and study began in the "heyday" of physics, in a time when the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan in World War II was a fresh memory, and when feverish Cold War political hostilities strained relations between the United States and the Soviet Union.

At Cornell, Cynthia was adjacent to famed physicists Hans Bethe and Richard Feynman, both of whom produced esteemed research and helped to develop the atomic bomb. Celeste said Albert Einstein and Marie Curie – who discovered radium – were great influences on her mother.

Along with discovering her ambition to become a professor, Cynthia found love at Cornell. Her longtime husband, Gerald, charmed Cynthia in a research basement at Cornell, where they were both graduate students, and the pair began a lifelong relationship.

Gerald, who also has a PhD in physics, earned a Fulbright Scholarship upon graduating from Cornell. Gerald and Cynthia went to Oslo in Norway where they studied the aurora borealis, or northern lights, for a year. They were married in Norway. Cynthia and Gerald tried for 15 years to have children. They were a bit older than most new parents, having their first child in their 40s.

## Mother, Runner, Expert Stargazer

At home, Cynthia shared with her two children her love of science and discovery. Celeste and Tycho both recalled myriad backyard experiments and nights spent stargazing. Cynthia often invited locals to attend the family's "star parties." She also hosted star parties at local libraries and schools, combining her passions for science and public outreach.

Tycho Peterson said his mother was a founding member of the Kids Are Scientists Too (KAST) Space/Astronomy summer camp for young students, a program providing activities to encourage the pursuit of a science career. She hosted a radio show in the 1980s called *The Scientists*. UConn stopped hosting KAST when she retired in 2016.

"She really put a lot of time into educating the public," said Celeste. "She went so far beyond her job description."

The Petersons' enthusiasm for science took them around the globe, chasing astronomical events like eclipses and comets.

In the days following Cynthia's death, the comet NEOWISE, visible with the naked eye, was at its brightest.

Tycho recalled his family's trip to the island of St. John in the Caribbean Virgin Islands to



In this 2018 photo (left), Cynthia Peterson, then 85, smiles as she completes East Hampton's Old Home Day Race. Peterson passed away July 8 at the age of 87. At right, Peterson poses with one of her favorite scientific instruments, a telescope, this one in the UConn planetarium

watch Halley's Comet hurtle past the earth in 1986. Tycho said Halley's Comet was one of the most "dramatic" he and his family witnessed together.

Another major celestial event in Cynthia's lifetime was the Hale-Bopp Comet, which passed perihelion in 1997 and is widely considered the most-observed comet in centuries. It is predicted to return to our planet's galactic neighborhood in a little over 2,000 years. The Petersons observed Hale-Bopp from their backyard, due to its exceptional visibility.

"She loved constellations and comets," said Tycho.

Eclipses were another of Cynthia's favorite celestial events. Celeste said, in total, the family globetrotted to get the best view of 11 different eclipses, including events in Mongolia and Botswana.

During their Halley's trip, they stopped by the Arecibo Observatory, a radio telescope in Puerto Rico used for radio astronomy, atmospheric science, and radar astronomy.

Tycho and his mother also shared a love of running. As well as running in East Hampton's Old Home Day parade, Cynthia was a regular runner in Marlborough's Lake Terramuggus race. Cynthia ran until she was 85.

Celeste said that, in her later years, Cynthia

could be seen smiling and waving at the end of the Old Home Days race, tailed by the race's police escort. Celeste said spectators always cheered when Cynthia crossed the finish line.

"She was well known in the local racing circuits," said Celeste.

Along with running, Cynthia also enjoyed downhill skiing.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, many seniors, for their safety, isolated at home. Although some may feel some resulting alienation or loneliness, this was not the case for Cynthia.

Celeste said her mother was extremely well-read. Celeste said Cynthia never felt bored or lonely if she had ample reading material. At home, Cynthia's reading chair was orbited by books and scientific magazines, which Cynthia consumed voraciously.

Cynthia also enjoyed nature documentaries and the films of Alfred Hitchcock. She played the harmonica and was a longtime subscriber to performances at the Metropolitan Opera House on Broadway in New York.

In her obituary, Cynthia requested donations be made to the Sierra Club, the National Audubon Society, and the American Association of University Women.

# Another Suspect Arrested in 2015 Home Invasion

by Jack Lakowsky

A Norwich man was arrested July 20 in connection with a 2015 Middle Haddam home invasion – bringing the number of arrests made in the case to four.

Freddy Ruperto, 36, was charged with home invasion, first-degree burglary, second-degree larceny, and conspiracy to commit these same acts, according to a press release from the East Hampton Police Department.

Ruperto was unable to post the \$1million cash bond and was arraigned in Middletown Superior Court the day of his arrest. According to court records, Ruperto’s court date is scheduled for Oct. 20.

According to police, Ruperto was arrested by DEEP officers during a traffic stop. During the stop, Ruperto attempted to flee from police. DEEP then identified Ruperto as a suspect in the Middle Haddam home invasion, then arrested the 36-year-old. Ruperto was processed by East Hampton Police.

East Hampton Chief of Police Dennis Woessner said Ruperto has eluded law enforcement ever since he with other individuals armed with knives invaded the Middle Haddam Road home of an elderly couple.

Woessner said Ruperto is suspected of having fled the state for an unknown amount of time after the 2015 home invasion. Woessner said Ruperto may have lived in either New York, New Jersey, or both, under an assumed name. United States marshals were also unable to locate Ruperto, Woessner said.

“We had exhausted all of our investigative leads,” said Woessner.

Woessner, who was not chief when the home invasion occurred, said it is among Belltown’s most serious cases.

According to the *Norwich Bulletin*, Ruperto was in 2010 arrested by Norwich police along with 11 other suspects during a major narcotics sweep intended to tackle drug dealing in the city. Charges included the sale and possession of heroin. Ruperto was on parole at

the time and sent back to prison after the 2010 arrest, according to the *Bulletin*.

Ruperto is one of four people charged in connection with the invasion – the first being William Andre Colton of Norwich, who was arrested in 2016 and faced charges similar to Ruperto’s.

An arrest warrant affidavit from the time of Colton’s arrest described the 2015 home invasion like this:

On Dec. 7 at around 11 p.m., the Middle Haddam Road homeowners, both in their 70s at the time, awoke to hear their dog barking. The homeowner said that he saw two “ninja-like” men, wielding knives. The man threw a large mirror at the intruders then turned to get his gun from a locked safe. The pair fled and the couple was unharmed.

When local police arrived, they discovered at the bottom of the home’s long driveway a Chicago Bulls hat and a receipt from the Sunoco Gas Station in Norwich. A purse belonging to the female homeowner and one of the knives was found on Rock Landing Road in Haddam Neck. The purse was missing \$50.

Later in 2016, Steven Maringola, 28 at the time, of Middletown, was arrested in connection with the home invasion and charged with conspiracy to commit home invasion, first-degree burglary and sixth-degree larceny, according to the *Connecticut Post*.

He was convicted of first-degree trespass and sixth-degree larceny in November 2016, according to state judicial records.

In December 2017, the *Post* reported that authorities also had arrested a 27-year-old Barbados man named Shane Lashley in connection with the home invasion. He also faced several burglary and larceny charges. Lashley attempted to flee to Barbados but was stopped at the Canadian border and detained by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

*From the Editor’s Desk*

## Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

Cheers to the Colchester Board of Selectmen for exploring the idea of forming a new diversity and inclusion commission.

But jeers to selectman Taras Rudko for opposing the commission – for reasoning I don’t quite get.

As Karla Santos reported last week, Rudko said he wants “factual data” racism exists in town, and criticized First Selectwoman Mary Bylone, who first pitched the idea for the commission to her fellow selectmen, for “calling our town racist.”

But I don’t feel that’s what Bylone is doing. Look, Colchester is hardly the Jim Crow south, but if you don’t think there’s racism in town, you’re kidding yourself. There’s racism in every town. I’ve witnessed it quite often, from childhood, in my town of Manchester – which is a pretty diverse community. I’ve seen it in Glastonbury, where I had the police beat for the *Glastonbury Citizen* and would regularly see logbook entries where police were called to reports of “suspicious Black male” – who was sometimes doing nothing more than walking down the street.

I’ve spent a lot of time in both the smaller towns in this state and the bigger cities, and I’ve witnessed racism in all of those places. So to think Colchester is immune? No way.

Plus, as other selectmen said at the meeting, pointing out that racism exists in town isn’t the same thing as saying Colchester is a racist community. It’s simply acknowledging something that is everywhere. The unfortunate reality is that in the year 2020 racism is still very much a problem in this country. You see it everywhere. And I’m sure Colchester is no exception.

Selectwoman Denise Turner, who is Black, very much indicated it isn’t. She said her family has lived in town for 80 years, and that it hasn’t always been ideal – and said a lot of that has to do with the color of her skin.

“I am insulted that you sit there and can think that this is not an important issue,” Turner told Rudko.

Fellow board member Denise Mizla hit the nail on the head when she said, quite accurately, it wouldn’t hurt to at least look into the matter.

“It certainly can’t hurt to look at it, come outside of our white bubble and look at maybe what some other people are going through,” she said.

Indeed, that’s the way to approach it. Any racism is too much racism. No one deserved to be attacked or discriminated against in any way because of the color of the skin. It’s certainly not too much to ask to look into the matter, and how to make things better for our Black and Brown neighbors. Kudos to the Colchester Board of Selectmen for taking this step.

\* \* \*

Kudos as well to the state Senate, which early Wednesday passed the police account-

ability bill that had already been approved by the House. The vote was tight – 21-15 – as every Republican in the Senate voted against it. Some denounced the bill as “anti-police,” the *Connecticut Mirror* reported. But I disagree. It’s bringing some small reform to an institution that was very much in need of it.

The bill, according to the *Mirror*, will: create the office of an inspector general to investigate complaints of police misconduct; require police and correction officers to intervene when witnessing brutality; mandate body and dash cameras; ban chokeholds in most circumstances; and clarifies that deadly force can be used only when police exhaust all reasonable alternatives.

Another big component of the bill, which garnered a lot of attention in the past week, is the limiting of qualified immunity – which, as the *Mirror* reported, has long protected police officers from liability in litigation over police brutality and other misconduct.

The qualified immunity portion of the bill caused quite a bit of controversy – and indeed a proposed amendment in the state House last week, stripping that portion of the legislation, failed in a tie vote.

Opponents of limiting immunity have argued that it may cause officers to hesitate in life-or-death situations out of fear of being sued. But I disagree. If a situation is truly “life-or-death,” I think the appropriate force will be used. The problem is, as we saw with George Floyd and we’ve seen with so many other police shootings both in Connecticut and across the country, deadly force is often being used when it’s not necessary. There seems to be almost a “shoot first, ask questions later” mentality sometimes. If this can discourage officers from such thinking, then I’m all for it.

Besides, as the *Mirror* reported, the bill still protects police officers in civil cases, specifying that officers will be indemnified against loss unless a jury enters a judgment against them for “a malicious, wanton or willful act.”

These are all good changes – necessary changes. As I’ve written here before, police serve a valuable purpose. They do not need to be abolished, and I truly believe the number of good cops far outweighs the number of bad ones. But reform is long overdue, and this

These are all good changes – necessary changes. As I’ve written here before, police serve a valuable purpose. They do not need to be abolished, and I truly believe the number of good cops far outweighs the number of bad ones. But reform is long overdue, and this bill is a step in the right direction. No one, including police, is above the law.

Congratulations to the House and Senate for recognizing this and passing this much-needed bill.

\* \* \*

See you next week.

## Obituaries

### Hebron

#### Christel Hedi Philbrick

Christel Hedi Philbrick, 83, of Hebron, passed away peacefully at home Sunday, July 26. Born in Mambachel, Germany, on Jan. 11, 1937, she was a daughter of the late Karl and Hedwig (Decker) Muller.

Christel leaves a legacy of beloved family members: five children and their spouses, Ronald Philbrick, Ernest (Vicki) Philbrick, all of Plymouth, N.H., Alexander Philbrick of Hebron, Heidi (Craig) Warren of Columbia, Kathleen Philbrick (Jim Shea) of Amston; 13 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; a brother, Karlheinz Muller of Germany; a sister, Alice Spitsberg of Minnesota; and numerous extended family and friends.

Christel married her beloved husband, Frank, on Dec. 19, 1957. The couple shared 49 years of marriage before he predeceased her in September 2006. Christel retired several years ago after a diverse career in retail sales. She loved shopping, impromptu lunch and dinner dates, gardening, watching *Jeopardy!* and *Wheel of Fortune*, and her two pet cats. Most importantly, she will be remembered as a patient, loving, and devoted mother and grandmother.

A celebration of her life will be held at a later date to be announced. She will be laid to rest beside her beloved husband in the Pleasant Valley Cemetery in New Hampshire.

Donations in her memory may be made to the Hebron Interfaith Human Services, 20 Pendleton Dr., Hebron, CT 06248.

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

#### Frederick R. Maher

Frederick (Ted) R. Maher, 89, of Marlborough, beloved husband of Mary (Keane) Maher, died Thursday, July 23, at St. Francis Hospital. Born May 28, 1931 in Ashley, Pa., son of the late Frederick and Kathleen (Everett) Maher, Ted soon moved with his family to Lewiston, Maine, where he grew up with his seven brothers and sisters.

Ted graduated from Lewiston High School, Maine Central Institute Prep School, and the University of Maine, where he starred as the Black Bears' tailback and set records in track and field. He turned down an offer to try out for the Baltimore Colts to instead pursue his career in education.

Ted moved to Hartford after accepting his first teaching position, and attended the University of Hartford, where he attained his sixth year master's degree in education. He worked for nearly 40 years in the Hartford school system, serving as vice principal at multiple schools and retiring as principal of Henry C. Dwight School in 1992. Ted and Mary moved to Marlborough in 1993, enjoying travel and being close to family.

Besides his wife he is survived by his two sons and their wives, David M. and Cathy Maher of Colchester, Kevin R. and Tracy Maher of Hebron; two sisters, Kathleen Ryder and Aileen Maher, both of Maine; two sisters-in-law, Irene Maher of California and Elayne Maher of Florida; cousin, Ralph Tuttle of Maine; seven grandchildren and their spouses/partners, Danielle King-Watkins and Adam Watkins of Colchester, Kelly and Anthony Fontana of East Hampton, Casey Verito of Groton, Caitlin and Patrick Custy of Portland, Meaghan Maher and her fiancé Theus Banks of Hebron, Daniel Maher and his partner Brenda Nguyen of West Hartford, Kelsey Maher and her partner Sebastian Olczyk of Glastonbury; and 12 great-grandchildren, McKenzie, Brendan, Eli, Thomas, Dylan, Aubrey, Julia, Brayden, Kenzley, James, Emma and Madison.

He was predeceased by his siblings, Richard, Brock, James, Nancy and Maureen.

Ted was also adored by his numerous nephews and nieces, as well as all who met and knew him.

Funeral service will be private and there are no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Alzheimer's Association, 19 Ohio Ave., Norwich, CT 06360.

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



### Colchester

#### Barbara Tennien Murphy

Barbara Tennien Murphy, 95, of Colchester and Manchester, wife of late William T. Murphy, died Friday, July 24, at Apple Rehab of Colchester. Born Feb. 17, 1925, in Proctor, Vt., she was the daughter of the late Jerome F. and Mary A. (Harrington) Tennien.

Barbara was raised in Pittsford, Vt., and went on to graduate from the University of Vermont in 1947 – one of the two members of the inaugural class of the School of Nursing. Then living in Boston, and working on a polio ward at Children's Hospital, she met William Murphy. They married on October 9, 1954 in Pittsford, Vt., and moved to Connecticut. They lived in Manchester from 1955-88 and raised their five children, while she worked at Manchester Memorial Hospital and Crestfield Rehab as an RN. She finished her professional career as an instructor of nursing at the St. Francis School of Nursing in Hartford. Barbara and William were charter members and longtime communicants of St. Bartholomew Church, Manchester.

In retirement, the Murphys moved to Putney, Vt., where Barbara was very active in her parish, Our Lady of Mercy. Later, Barbara lived in Providence, RI, and ultimately back to Connecticut where she spent time with family in both Manchester and Colchester.

She is survived by her children, Barbara M. Gozzo and her husband Joseph of Colchester, William G. Murphy and his wife Kimberly of Apopka, Fla., Brian J. Murphy and his wife Susan of Manchester, Colin T. Murphy and his wife Katie of Cranston, R.I., and Neil F. Murphy and his longtime companion Jennifer Jandreau of East Haddam; and her grandchildren, Teresa, Robert, Mark, Sean, Joe, Thomas, William, Oliver and Olivia.

Funeral service will be held today, July 31, at 10:15 a.m. from the John F. Tierney Funeral Home, 219 West Center St., Manchester, with a Mass of Christian Burial celebrated at 10:30 a.m. at St. Bartholomew Church, 736 Middle Tpke. East, Manchester. Family and friends may call at the funeral home on Saturday, Aug. 1, from 9-10 a.m. Burial will be in St. Alphonsus Cemetery, Pittsford, Vt.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to a charity of the donor's choice.

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



He is survived by his son, Alan Thibodeau of East Hampton; his daughter, Vicki Thibodeau Walker, and his two grandsons Derek Walker and Carson Walker, all of Rochester, Mich.

He is also survived by his wife, Celine Ryan of Marlborough, and his grandsons, Gabriel Ryan of Columbus, Ohio and Jeremy Ryan of Norwalk; Deborah Ryan-Degray and Bryan Degray of Coconut Creek, Fla., Chris Ryan of Minneapolis, Minn., Laura Ryan of Norwalk, and David Ryan of East Hartford.

He also leaves behind a brother, Al Thibodeau of Apache Junction, Ariz.; a sister and brother-in-law, Jean (Thibodeau) and John Lagasse of Willington; and countless lifelong friends and family.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to his favorite charity, the Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation ([fidelco.org](http://fidelco.org)) in his memory.

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

### Marlborough

#### Avery Elizabeth Siggia

Avery Elizabeth Siggia of Marlborough died peacefully Monday, July 20, after spending more than half of her short life battling leukemia. Beloved daughter of Raymond and Melissa (Tait) Siggia, Avery was born June 12, 2015 in Hartford.

Avery loved her town, neighbors and friends, doctors and nurses, but most of all her family. Avery loved life and found happiness in even the most difficult times. She created songs for every task and was always singing, dancing or performing.

Avery spent a great deal of time at Connecticut Children's Medical Center where she was treated like family and loved by all in the clinic and on the 8th floor. Avery will be remembered as the mayor of the 8th floor, zooming along on her red car and greeting everyone in the hallways with her adorable and distinctively sweet voice.

Avery wanted to be a firefighter, police officer, ambulance driver, nurse, doctor, builder and space explorer. With her vivid imagination, Avery planned elaborate missions to save the day, rescue people, and chase away the bad guys. A born leader, she easily took command and assigned hero tasks to family and friends. Avery always wanted to know how things worked and chose science and animal books over princesses and fairy tales. She loved craft projects, especially ones with glue, string, and tape. A lover of tools, she spent countless hours building with her construction playsets.

Avery loved to run and engaged her family in daily games of freeze tag or racing around the driveway. She loved sandy beaches, collecting shells, rocks and pinecones, her magic wand, tire swings, riding her bike, splashing in puddles, bounce houses, tending her garden, and planting flowers. Mostly, she loved being helpful and being with her family.

Avery leaves behind her adoring parents; sister and best friend Liddy; brother Shayne; Grammy and Papa, Grady and Pauline Tait of Lisbon; Grandma and Grandpa, Timothy and Penny Siggia of East Hartford; great-grandmother Marion Poisson of Enfield; aunts and uncles, including Robert and Caitlin Siggia of Manchester, Brian and Erynn Tait of Ewa Beach, Hawaii, and Michael Siggia of East Hartford; cousins, Brandon, Delaney, Ainsley, Lily, Dylan, and Connor; best friends, Laney, Riley and Kayla; her pups, Benny and Dewey; and countless other family and friends.

The family would like to thank Drs. Isakoff and Moss, Nurse Katie, Kelly from Child-Life, and the entire staff at CCMC for their friendship, care, love and support.

Friends called at Mulryan Funeral Home, 725 Hebron Ave., Glastonbury, on Friday, July 24. The funeral service was private.

In lieu of flowers, please make donations in Avery's name to the Connecticut Children's Medical Center Foundation, 281 Washington St., Hartford, CT 06106 ([www.connecticutchildrensfoundation.org](http://www.connecticutchildrensfoundation.org)), or to Make-A-Wish Foundation of Connecticut, 56 Commerce Dr., Trumbull, CT 06611 ([www.ct.wish.org](http://www.ct.wish.org)).

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



### Colchester

#### Richard John Julian

Richard John Julian, 76, of Colchester, passed away Wednesday, July 15. He was born Nov. 8, 1943, in Hartford, where he would remain until he met the love of his life Jacqueline. They would move to Colchester where they would raise their three children, Lisa, Richie, Steven and granddaughter Shauna.

Richard in his early days was a Colchester constable and he was a member of the local fire department for many years. He retired from Local 33 Insulators union in recent years. Spending time with his family especially his grandchildren was something that would bring a smile to his face. He would spend most of his days at Broadway Auto with his dear friend Tom and the crew. He also found relaxation in sitting on his back porch in the fresh air. He loved animals of wild nature who found him trusting and would come onto the porch for him to hand-feed. This became a daily interest to him.

Richard recently moved to Summerville, S.C., to be there for the expected arrival of his new great-grandchild. Although his time in South Carolina did not last long, he was able to meet Kynlee and spent many nights on Facetime talking to her.

He is predeceased by his wife, Jacqueline and son, Richard Julian.

He is survived by his sister Linda and her husband Joseph Pereira of Newington, sister Dianne Papacostas of New Britain, daughter Lisa Slade and husband Jeff Slade of Oakdale, son Steven and wife Sandra Julian of Summerville, S.C., grandchildren, Shauna Julian of Boynton Beach, Fla., Emily Slade of Watervliet, N.Y., Tanner Slade of Oakdale, Nathan Julian of Summerville, S.C., Carina Julian of Summerville, S.C., and great-granddaughter Kynlee Julian, also of Summerville, S.C.

Dad/Papa, you have no idea how much you will be missed but we know Mom finally did not walk away. We are so grateful for your willingness to fight and you taught us until the end that you are the strongest person we will ever know. Give Mom/Mommy and Richie a kiss from all of us.

Services for Richard and Richie are tentatively scheduled for late September when family can safely travel.

Belmont Funeral Home LLC is entrusted with the arrangements. Please visit [www.belmontfh.com](http://www.belmontfh.com) for service updates and to leave condolences for the family.

### Portland

#### Michael Pacholski

May 7, 1958- July 15, 2020

We are sad to share that Mike Pacholski passed away peacefully at home from natural causes.

Having lived in Portland his whole life, he knew the woods and river like the back of his hand. He was an avid lover of nature; most comfortable with a fishing pole, hunting gear, and a beloved dog at his side. Mike was a very skilled big-game angler; in fact, was on the crew to win "largest tuna" off Montauk in a tournament in 2012. He learned to appreciate nature early on, as both his parents taught him that animals were to be respected and that the purpose of hunting and fishing was sustenance.

At Portland High, Mike excelled at soccer. Ten years later, as a dad, he gave his son Eddie advice on the sport, just as our father gave sports advice to Mike. Growing up, he was his father's sidekick watching the Giants play football. His younger brother has fond memories of staying up all night together, watching nature documentaries, stand-up comedy and MTV. Mike was a master at auto body repair as well as boat fiberglass and teak refinishing. His ability to bring the delicate intricacies of teak to life was amazing.

Mike is survived by his mother, Fran Pacholski; his son, Edward Pacholski and Eddie's significant other Valerie Peters; his sister, Linda Liprot; and brother, Joseph Pacholski.

In lieu of a service, Mike's ashes will be scattered at sea, where he was the happiest.

We ask that you honor Mike's memory by providing a kindness to someone in need or adopting a pet.



### Marlborough

#### Herman Thibodeau

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Herman "Chuck" Thibodeau Wednesday, July 22. He was born Aug. 20, 1936 in Van Buren, Maine, and was preceded in death by his wife Jean Stannard Thibodeau in 1980; his sister Shirley (Thibodeau) Lagasse in 2009; and his son Gary Scott Thibodeau in 2013.

A private, military ceremony will be held with immediate family.

At the young age of 17, he enlisted in the Marines and was stationed in the Panama Canal. He was a proud veteran who served our country in the United States Marine Corps, from which he received an honorable discharge in 1957.

His love for baseball began at an early age – from "pick-up" games in his local neighborhood to more organized baseball throughout his school years. He was proud to share his love for the game, and became a well-respected umpire in Hartford. His passion for the game became most obvious when he played baseball with his grandsons, and through them, his legacy and love for the game will live on.

His passion for travel brought him across the globe, starting in his earlier days as a Marine, to later in life while fully enjoying his retirement with Celine. The U.S. National Parks were a favorite, as well as the many countries throughout Europe and Asia, to which they traveled. His appreciation of history came to life as he stood on the Great Wall of China; felt the gravity while visiting Pearl Harbor; enveloped himself in the overwhelming depth of walking Omaha Beach, in Normandy; to the peacefulness of a night cruise alongside the Notre Dame Cathedral, in Paris.

Chuck was the man whom everyone loved. He was proud, kind, genuine, honest, loving, and had impeccable ethics and values, combined with the strongest sense of loyalty. He was your best friend, outstanding role model as a parent, and simply adored being a grandfather.



## Obituaries continued

---

### *Andover*

#### Victoria Laurel Nelson

Victoria Laurel Nelson, who also goes by Vicki or Tori, is a former resident of Lebanon on Amston Lake. She passed away unexpectedly Saturday, July 11. Victoria was born March 1, 1998, in Windham. She was a daughter of Neal and Maria (Torrey) Nelson. Victoria, who grew up in Lebanon, was a Lyman Memorial graduate in 2016.



Throughout her childhood, Victoria showed an interest in all things pertaining to art. During her time at Lyman she took many art classes and obtained a medal for outstanding oral, visual presentation. She was known for her creative talents amongst her friends and family when it came to painting and writing. She was known in middle school for being a part of the Lebanon Middle School band and choir.

Victoria was a compassionate soul who enjoyed the subtle pleasures in life; she was always at her happiest when she was out in nature or spending time at Amston Lake. She was a former employee of Dunkin' Donuts and her current job was a personal care assistant, which she enjoyed doing.

Victoria will be forever loved and remembered by her parents, Neal and Maria Nelson; her siblings, Miranda (Christopher Grover) Chase, and Wesley (Elizabeth) Nelson; grandfather, Ross Nelson; and numerous aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews and friends.

Care of private arrangements has been entrusted to the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home of Colchester.

### *East Hampton*

#### Jayson David Lanzi

Jayson David Lanzi, 27, of East Hampton, died unexpectedly at his home Tuesday, July 28. Born Nov. 9, 1992, in Middletown, he was the son of David J. Lanzi and Michelle McKay.

Jayson was a lifelong resident of East Hampton and was a graduate of East Hampton High School where he was a member of the basketball team. Jayson loved his hometown and he enjoyed riding BMX bikes as a kid and had recently taught his brother Chapman to drive a car. He was employed by General Mechanical Insulation.

Besides his father and mother he is survived by his stepmother, Nicole Lanzi; his three brothers, Ryan Lanzi of Middletown, Dylan Lanzi of East Hampton, Chapman Judkins of East Hampton; aunt and uncle, Debbie and William Mott of East Hampton; and cousin, Amanda Silveria of Southington and several other cousins.

Jayson's family will receive friends at Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, Sunday, Aug. 2, from 2-5 p.m. Because of social distancing guidelines the funeral home is limited to 50 people at one time. Therefore, we ask that if you plan to attend please wear a mask, pay your respects to the family and then exit so that others may enter.

The funeral service will be private with burial in Lake View Cemetery.

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





