

News Bulletin

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

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Salmon Hit the Salmon... Students from Carrieann Benigni's and Eileen Erlandson's fifth grade classrooms at Center School in East Hampton recently released about 240 fry, or juvenile salmon, into the Salmon River. This program is sponsored by the Connecticut River Salmon Association and the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. Approximately 300 eyed eggs were delivered to the classroom in January. Students monitored their development while adjusting the temperature of the tank's water to mirror the temperature of the Salmon River.

Schools Chief Resigns Amid Financial Scrutiny

By Toriana Williams

Colchester Superintendent of Schools Daniel Sullivan abruptly resigned this week amid ongoing concerns over the shared health reserve fund used by both the town of Colchester and the school district. This fund is used to directly pay employee health insurance claims.

During a special meeting held on April 27, the Colchester Board of Education voted unanimously to accept his resignation and immediately appointed Colchester Elementary School Principal Judy O'Meara as acting superintendent.

BOE Chair Stefanie Tracey-Calash then read aloud a written statement, which detailed the transition and highlighted Sullivan's tenure. She described the decision as "a mutual agreement to transition leadership of the district."

She credited Sullivan with "meaningful" progress made in areas such as special education and expanded opportunities for students. The board said Sullivan "remains committed to supporting a smooth transition," and thanked him for his service.

The school board also emphasized O'Meara's "thoughtful decision-making, a commitment to transparency and a steady, student centered approach to leadership."

First Selectman Bernie Dennler wrote that he was "excited" to welcome O'Meara as acting superintendent. "I am glad that the Board of Education has selected a Colchester resident, taxpayer and longtime leader in our schools to serve in this important role," Dennler added that he believes O'Meara "is the right choice for this moment."

Board of Finance Chair Karen Belding, a Democrat, agreed and only had further com-

pliments to add. "I'm really looking forward to working with someone as well-rooted in our community as Judy O'Meara."

O'Meara "already knows our schools and has the relationships and trust of the staff," Belding added.

The leadership change comes while a forensic audit is underway to investigate a million-dollar shortfall in the shared health reserve fund.

In a joint statement made in March, Dennler and Tracey-Calash explained that a review by a new insurance broker revealed the BOE's portion of the fund could face a roughly \$1 million shortfall. Because the fund is shared, officials stressed the issue affected both municipal and school finances.

Town officials attributed part of the deficit to a "misapplication" of the formula used to calculate contributions on the school side. Sullivan said the "reserve issue was really driven by the misallocation of a funding methodology coupled with increased claims."

As a result, the district did not request enough funding for the health insurance reserve in recent budget cycles, which contributed to the current deficit. "That resulted in us not asking for adequate funding the last couple of years for the health reserve and that has put our health reserve into a precarious spot," he added.

See *Schools Chief Resigns*, page 29

Students Shine with Mini Capstone Projects

By Anne Lilburn

Spread out throughout the hallways, library and cafeteria of Portland Middle School, roughly 100 eighth graders presented their Personal Interest Projects (PIP) on Friday, April 24, to roaming teachers, parents and other observers. The annual PIP Fair culminated the end of the projects, which serve as a sort of middle school version of the high school Capstone projects that graduating seniors must do.

The projects ranged from baking projects, where some students perfected their mother's cookie recipes, to murals painted on the wall near the school's arts section, to a custom built and welded motorized walker that one student made for his grandmother, to "trashion" dresses made out of old newspapers, and even a plan for composting food waste that extended throughout the entire school district. All of the students had been working on their projects for months, with their planning carefully guided by advisors,

and some had been thinking about what they would do (and getting excited about it) for years.

Teachers roamed the fair talking to students about their projects, while parents and even some older former students stopped in to see what students had worked on. Each teacher had been assigned a small number of projects to evaluate, and students were ready to talk about what they had done, why they had done it, and what their process had entailed.

Principal Michael Searson said he was proud to see the hard work that the students had put into these projects, and noted that, when the teachers walked around, they were doing so with the knowledge that any finished project or poster did not reflect the entirety of the work that the students had put into their PIP.

The teachers, he said, weren't necessarily looking to give "a grade in terms of an A, B, C, D. It was more of a grade in terms of, I want you

to tell me about not just the process, the start to finish, but I want you to tell me about what was difficult, and how did you overcome that?" he said. "What did you get out of this? How would you use this moving forward?"

He noted that some of the projects didn't end up fully completed, but were nonetheless successful. For those students, he said, he asked them what they would do differently, now that they know what worked or didn't work.

"There's a lot of these projects that are not completely finished," he said, "but we're still able to score them on, how well did they communicate? Does it highlight civic engagement? When they faced those problems, were they innovative when they tried to solve them? Were they trying to create something meaningful? Instead of it being connected to a letter grade it's connected more to our vision of the graduate."

See *Students Shine*, page 28

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Baseball Learning on the Fly

By Josh Howard

Through the first eight games this season, RHAM High School baseball has experienced peaks and valleys, posting a record of 4-4.

Head coach Bill Eller said the up-and-down start is expected for a young team that is searching for the right chemistry on the field.

"We've had some games that we won that we probably shouldn't have and we've lost some games that we probably should have won," noted Eller.

Last Thursday (April 23), the Raptors hit a dip when they fell to Enfield, 5-3, in an odd game that featured just as many errors as it did runs or hits.

Playing at home, RHAM jumped out to a 2-0 lead in the bottom of the first inning behind runs from Derek Barone and Brendan Connolly.

In the following inning, Barone doubled to center field to send home Justin Tyrol, providing the Raptors a three-run advantage.

Enfield got two back in the third inning before a pair of errors by RHAM in the fifth inning led to three more runs by the visiting Eagles. All three runs in the fifth were scored after RHAM had forced two out with no one on base.

Eller called the loss a "strange game," adding he thought his team played better in six of the seven innings.

The veteran coach is leading a group that has also excelled at points this season, including a dramatic 9-8 victory over South Windsor – the defending Class LL champions.

In the victory over the reigning champs on April 13, the Raptors scored three runs in the bottom of the seventh inning to rally for a walk-off win as Tyrol drew a walk to send home Nate Melzen for the game-winner. Robert Schadtler had three hits, sending home two runs and scoring another. Peyton Sullivan added two hits, scoring three more and driving in another.

The win over South Windsor was part of a three-game winning streak for the Raptors which included a 9-4 victory over Wethersfield and a 4-2 triumph over Platt Tech.

In the win over Wethersfield, Connolly had

four RBIs on four hits and scored three times. Sullivan had a pair of hits, scoring twice and driving home two.

Pitching led the way in the win over Platt Tech as Connolly, Cole Zavaski, and Brady Topulos combined to strike out eight and allow only five hits.

Prior to the loss to Enfield, the team defeated Maloney 5-2 on April 22 behind a complete-game, four-hitter from Topulos. Connolly had two RBIs on two hits, while Ethan Boisvert scored two runs on a pair of hits.

Losses to Southington, Platt, and Bristol Central have rounded out the even-even start for the Raptors.

"We're young [and] we have guys in new positions," Eller said. "At the beginning of the season I knew we'd have to work through some things, but by May we'll be ready."

Eller's squad is coming off a 13-win campaign a year ago and in 2024, the team made the state championship game for the first time in two decades.

Following last season, the team lost a pair of all-conference players (Fayz Baig and Dan Chomick) to graduation and welcomed back an evolving lineup this spring led by Barone, an all-conference shortstop.

The biggest challenge has been finding consistency in the pitching rotation where the team has allowed double digit runs twice.

But Eller believes the tools are there and now it's just about plugging in the right pieces in the right places.

"We've been moving guys around and giving guys different opportunities," added Eller. "I think we are hitting the ball, but we just have to throw some more strikes and make some more plays."

The Raptors next play on the road, traveling to McKenna Field to take on the Hornets of East Hartford tonight (Friday, May 1) before they return to RHAM High School to host East Catholic on Monday, May 5. First pitch for both games is 3:45 p.m.

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From the Editor's Desk Observations & Ruminations

By Mike Thompson

Even if you don't necessarily follow baseball as closely as I do, you may have heard that my beloved New York Mets are off to a rather terrible start this year. How bad is it?

Well, it's so bad that they're even the brunt of jokes in newspaper correction boxes.

The Mets recently ended a horrendous losing streak, but not before it had stretched to 12 games. After the losses has gone up to 11, the *New York Times* ran a story – and then shortly afterward, issued a correction addendum to the story.

"Because of an editing error, an earlier version of this article misstated which day the New York Mets suffered their 11th straight loss. It was on Sunday, not Monday."

Okay; so far, so good. Mistakes happen in the newspaper business.

But then the *Times* added, "Even the Mets cannot lose on an off day."

Ouch, *New York Times*. I mean, warranted, but.....ouch.

I see a lot of new and returning names in the letters to the editor pages this week. Welcome! Or, if the case may be, welcome back! Just remember: we have a new policy with the letters, and if you're writing about local political issues – including budgets, board meetings, potential land purchases, etc. – include in your letter if you're a member of your town's Republican or Democratic town committee.

This doesn't apply if you're a member of a

town board or commission, as our policy has long been to identify when writers are also board members. But if you're not on a board but are on your town's RTC or DTC, we'd like to know. Thanks for your cooperation – and keep writing!

Do you like pottery? This weekend might be for you. The CT Clay Guild will host its first-ever Connecticut Clay Crawl from 10 a.m.–4 p.m. Saturday, May 2, and Sunday, May 3.

What's a clay crawl? It sounds kind of like a bar crawl – only I'm presuming with less alcohol involved. The public is invited to visit 14 pottery studios – including one right in Colchester – meet 42 local ceramic artists, and purchase handmade work directly from makers across the state.

The crawl will connect visitors with Connecticut's ceramics community through open studios, demonstrations, and hands-on experiences. Participating studios will offer insight into the creative process and information about classes and workshops available throughout the year.

As mentioned earlier, one of those participating studios is in Colchester: Purring Pottery, located at 167 Lebanon Ave. It's a delightful name for a pottery studio – and, as it turns out, there's a delightful story behind it.

"Purring Pottery began in my small apartment kitchen/studio," Heather Abel writes at

Editor's Desk continued on page 8



Cleaning Up for Earth Day... The Town of Colchester honored Earth Day with a town clean-up on Saturday, April 25. The town's Coffee House group of military veterans tackled Lebanon Avenue that day. They met at Colchester Donut just prior to heading out. Pictured from left are Al Letendre (U.S. Army) Dana Ferris (U.S. Army), Mary Gura (U.S. Army) Don Balducci (U.S. Army) Arnold Ewing (U.S. Marine Corp) and Emerson Goodrich (U.S. Army).

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Bulletin Board

I had my annual physical the other day. If you've had any contact with the medical profession recently, you are presumably aware that inquiries into the state of your health are no longer limited to "How are you feeling?" and "Where does it hurt?" accompanied by some prodding and poking and a review of your blood and urine to see if you maybe picked up a venereal disease since your last visit, or clogged up your circulatory system with too many forbidden cheeseburgers.

No. Now the patient (at least patients my age) is obliged to fill out a lengthy questionnaire regarding their health history, and their forebearers' health histories dating back to the dawn of time. Okay, not the dawn of time, but typically a couple of generations.

I'm not complaining about this requirement. It makes sense for the physician to know that heart disease or cancer or insanity runs in your family. I mean, the same ancestor that gave you his or her blue eyes may just as easily have passed on a susceptibility to anything from colon cancer to chronic flatulence.

Still, I found some of the questions aimed at we older folks – I believe they are required by Medicare – a little amusing. For instance, one section of the questionnaire was titled "Activities of Daily Living – Are you able to do the following with limited or no assistance? Circle yes or no."

Seems simple enough, but I soon found that the problem with this "yes/no" thing is that the answers are not always that simple. Honestly, they really should leave some space for elaboration.

Nevertheless, I began working my way down through the series of questions as to what I am still able to accomplish alone or with limited assistance. And while I did in fact confine my answers to yes or no, I will share with you, dear reader, my unwritten remarks/thoughts as I proceeded through the interrogatories. The section, as I noted earlier, is: Can you, alone or with limited assistance:

Take a bath/shower. Yes. (I would welcome some assistance now and again, but my wife stubbornly refuses to cooperate.)

Control your urination and bowels. Yes. (Except for that one time when I ran across a snake while working in the garden. Really, it was just that one time. I'm pretty sure.)

Get dressed. Yes. (Though the older I get, the further away my feet seem to be when I'm trying to put my socks on in the morning.)

Groom myself. Yes. (Though it may not look like it.)

Feed myself. Yes. (No worries there. As long as I can still reach the drive-thru window at McDonald's or Taco Bell I won't starve to death.)

Get out of a chair/bed. Yes. (But only when I want to.)

Get to and use the toilet. Yes. (Actually, this has become quite a familiar destination as I've gotten older. It is also one of the few things that motivates me to "get out of the chair/bed.")

Do housework. No. (Okay, I was going to put down Yes, but my wife said she'd call the doctor and tell him I lied and that I don't even know what housework is. Seems to be a sore point with her. Go figure.)

Manage my medications. Yes. (I'm pretty sure I'd be dead by now if I couldn't.)

Manage my finances/money. Yes. (I mean I could if I were allowed to handle money.)

Prepare my own meals. Yes. (As long as the microwave works and there's popcorn in the house, I'm golden.)

Do grocery shopping. Yes. (But not by myself since the day I was sent out to "pick up a few things," and returned with six varieties of salted chips, a bag of peanuts and a six-pack.)

Use the phone. Yes. (At least I could if there was anybody I actually wanted to talk to.)

Use public transportation/drive. Yes. (I can still drive. I just have trouble sometimes staying in my own lane.)

I think there might also have been a question as to if I "felt safe at home." I agonized over this one a little, but my wife suggested that I should answer "yes." I mean, I typically do feel safe except on those rare occasions when she threatens to kill me, like the time I tried to hard boil an egg in the microwave. Actually, it's a wonder I wasn't killed outright when the thing exploded.

If she didn't kill me over that one, I think I'm pretty safe. Heck, she didn't even divorce me. Yeah, I know. You don't have to say it.

Jim Hallas

Riverast Hours of Operation

The offices of the *Riverast News Bulletin* and *Glastonbury Citizen*, located at 87 Nutmeg Lane, Glastonbury, are open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m.–4 p.m. The *Riverast* can be reached any time via email at bulletin@glcitizen.com.

Correction

In last week's article dealing with the proposed Colchester budget, it was reported the mill rate for the upcoming fiscal year would be 33.50. This is incorrect. That was based on the original budget numbers. But following adjustments made during subsequent Board of Finance workshops and discussion, the proposed mill rate is actually 32.38.

The *Riverast* regrets the error.

Thank You, Sponsors!

To the Editor:

The Marlborough Preservation Society and the Committee on Marlborough's American 250 Celebration would like to thank our local sponsors who are helping to make Marlborough's 250 Celebration possible!

Thank you Marlborough Bakery and Café, New China Sea, Marlborough Pizza, Zina's Cucina, and Sanctuary Hair.

For more information about our sponsors and Marlborough's American 250 Celebration events, please visit our website at www.marlboroughhistory.org

Marlborough Preservation Society

Marlborough's Taxes

To the Editor:

On May 4th, there will be a public hearing to present information on the proposed budgets for the Town of Marlborough, the local Board of Education and for RHAM. On the following day, Tuesday, May 5th, the taxpayers will vote on those budgets. Polls will be open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. You can also reach out to the town clerk if you need to obtain an absentee ballot.

If you would like to determine your new property tax for the next year, please visit www.Marlbo.info/propertyrecords to determine your home's new assessed value. Please make sure you use the ASSESSED value, not the appraised value. Then use the proposed mill rate of 27.71 to calculate your 2026-2027 property tax.

Having this information will help you to be better informed as you go to the Public Hearing and when you vote at the referendum.

For example, I checked my new assessment and determined that the property tax on my home will be increasing by 15% (over \$900).

Once again, I encourage everyone to be aware and involved as taxpayers decide whether or not to approve the budgets for the town/local BOE and for RHAM.

Ken Hjulstrom – Marlborough

Note: Hjulstrom is a member of the Marlborough Board of Finance, but said he is speaking as an individual.

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Letter Writers: Letters must be 400 words or less, and must be submitted by **Tuesday** at noon. Email is preferred; send to bulletin@glcitizen.com. All letters must include the writer's town of residence and daytime contact phone number. Letters focused solely on national issues or national public figures will not be published. Anonymous letters will not be published. All letters are subject to editing for grammar, spelling and clarity, and are also subject to fact-checking. No bullying or name-calling will be tolerated. There is no guarantee that all letters will be published.

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A Difficult Decision

To the Editor:
Our town stands at a turning point. Do we want to preserve the small, rural character and open space that define our community – or allow widespread sewer expansion that enables dense housing and commercial development?

Sewers make high-density development possible by eliminating the need for large septic lots. Once sewered, land that once required two acres per home can be converted to quarter-acre lots and dense commercial development. The town planner and the Plan of Conservation and Development Steering Committee are proposing to extend sewers across much of the town, opening the door to far more intensive development.

This decision will shape our town for generations. If you value open space, rural character, and thoughtful growth, now is the time to speak up. Let the POCD Steering Committee and the Planning and Zoning Commission know what kind of town you want to live in.

Alannah Coshow – East Hampton
Note: Coshow is a member of the East Hampton Republican Town Committee.

The High Price of 'I Told You So'

To the Editor:
The recent resignation of our Superintendent, an emergency financial audit, and the discovery of a \$945,000 health reserve deficit are no surprise to me. These are the exact systemic failures I spent my tenure as Board of Finance chair trying to prevent.

During my time as chair, I identified \$3 million in "hidden" special education tuition and fund balances. I repeatedly requested Munis reports to provide taxpayers with a transparent audit trail. Instead, I was stonewalled by the BOE, which relied on hand-edited Excel spreadsheets – a method that allows for data to be obscured in ways a professional accounting system would never permit. This was enabled by an education financial manager who was far too amenable to the superintendent's wishes rather than the town's need for accountability.

While I sounded the alarm, the response was a coordinated "vote no" campaign. The BOE rallied parents with claims that a responsible budget was "too low," using "scare tactics" about cutting Kindergarten to force through higher spending. Most concerning, the town was encouraged to vote for a much-needed \$20 million field project while leadership knew education finance was in the red, choosing not to disclose the true state of the reserves.

The BOE now blames "bad data," but data is only "bad" when leadership bypasses the systems designed to keep it accurate. Even now, they continue to bypass Munis in favor of manual spreadsheets. The drop of special education revenue I warned about was used to prop up a house of cards that has finally collapsed.

Colchester taxpayers are now paying the price for the very lack of oversight I fought to correct. Accountability is not found in an Excel file; it is found in the transparency our town is still being denied.

Andrea Migliaccio – Colchester

No Intent to Use Reserve

To the Editor:
I stand corrected. I'm told by the first selectman that there is no intent to use the Board of Education Capital Reserve for anything other than capital needs. He also advised that the last transfer into the BoE Capital Reserve were funds from the 2016-17 fiscal year! Glad we got that cleared up.

This infers that we are not violating the Capital Reserve Fund Policy and arguably that following the rules are important after all. The fact remains that this money was never properly allocated which is more of an egregious financial mismanagement than the proposed current use of it.

In a different reality the BoE's end of the year surplus money should have been used toward the insurance account since as far back as 2018 and, as a result, there should be nothing to discuss today. But, isn't that the point? If our elected officials had been paying attention and following convention this could have been managed and there would be no need to hide this from the taxpayers in order to push through a \$20M referendum in February.

This bill has to be paid, that's clear, but I question the lack of transparency and accountability along the way. Why was it done this way?

Respectfully,
Robert Esteve
Taxpayer, Town of Colchester

Note: Esteve is a member of the Colchester Republican Town Committee.

The Bigger Picture

To the Editor:
Reading letters to the editor can be entertaining, informative, and/or aggravating. (I expect that my occasional contributions fit these categories.) However, it gives me pause to wonder at the worldview of some writers, who seem to have an extremely limited field of vision. They carry on about Colchester's government, budgets, cost of living, taxes, and such. They do not appear to notice that all area towns have the same problems and the same complaints. If they are aware that state and national "problems" and "solutions" impact our local situations, they can't seem to equate them.

The writers of whom I speak are conservative. Presumably they approve of the current administration in Washington and the cuts to public funding, social services, healthcare, and science under the guise of eliminating waste and fraud. They don't comprehend that such policies have real impact on us average citizens and our ability to afford living in Colchester. They can't see that the effects of national economics make local governing more expensive, more difficult. Further, they don't seem to appreciate that the people they complain about are average citizens also, equally impacted by budgets and taxes.

In the minds of these complainers, Colchester should somehow be able to do more with less: provide services and infrastructure on a shoestring budget. Presumably also, they think that Andover, Hebron, Portland, East Hampton and likely all Connecticut towns have equally incompetent local governments: yesterday, today and tomorrow. Consider the total context of circumstances. Consider the big picture and how state and national policies impact Colchester. It's not just local officials and your local tax burden.

John Barnowski – Colchester
Note: Barnowski is a member of the Colchester Democratic Town Committee.

Vote 'Yes' on Town Budget

To the Editor:
I write as an individual resident and taxpayer of Hebron — not in my capacity as vice chair of the Town Council — to urge my fellow citizens to vote yes on the Town Budget and to share why I believe this budget reflects exactly the kind of responsible governance our town needs right now.

The fiscal reality is straightforward. Our Grand List – the total assessed value of taxable property that funds our municipal services – grew by just 0.5% this year. That anemic rate of growth, far below inflation, left the Town Council with very little room to maneuver. When revenue barely moves, responsible governance demands discipline. The council responded by conducting a rigorous, line-by-line review of every department and expenditure, ultimately reducing the Town Budget by more than \$650,000. These were not symbolic trims. They required difficult trade-offs and real sacrifice from our departments and the residents who rely on town services. The resulting budget is lean, honest, and limited to what Hebron genuinely needs.

I urge every resident to vote 'yes.' Rejecting this budget does not make the underlying costs disappear – it only delays and compounds the problem. The work that went into reducing spending by over \$650,000 reflects a serious commitment to your tax dollars, and this bud-

get deserves your support.
At the same time, we cannot cut our way to a thriving Hebron. Short-term austerity is necessary, but it is not a long-term strategy.

Growing our Grand List is the only sustainable path forward, and that means embracing thoughtful development in our Town Center. I envision a Town Center that welcomes affordable and market-rate housing so families of all incomes can call Hebron home, mixed-use development that brings activity and investment to our streets, and both local businesses that reflect our community's character and national employers whose tax contributions support the services and infrastructure we all depend on. Done well and done deliberately, this kind of growth reduces the tax burden on existing property owners and gives Hebron the revenue base it needs to prosper.

That future starts with making sound decisions today and including all of our town boards and citizens working collaboratively towards this strategic plan and execution. Please vote yes on the Hebron town budget.

Respectfully,
Jan Lawrence – Hebron
Note: Lawrence serves as vice chair of the Hebron Town Council, but said the views expressed here are his own.

Safety is Not a Gamble

To the Editor:
As a 20-year Hebron resident and a first responder with 25 years of service – including time as Hebron's assistant chief—I am deeply concerned by the Town Council's recent decision to cut \$63,000 from the fire department's per-diem payroll within the proposed town budget.

I eventually had to step back from active volunteering to focus on my family. My story is common; the days of dozens of available volunteers are over. We now rely on roughly six volunteer EMTs to cover the entire town. Because of this, we depend on paid per-diem staff to ensure that an ambulance is ready when you call 911.

This last-minute cut was made without consulting fire department leadership. It means that for one full day every week, there will be no paid staff on duty. We are left "hoping" a volunteer is available and in town to respond to our emergency. In a crisis, every second counts. This isn't fiscal responsibility; it is a dangerous gamble with the safety of every resident.

Some argue that a 'no' vote only leads to more cuts, but that is only true if the council misinterprets our silence. A 'no' vote on the town budget is a mandate for better priorities. By emailing the Town Council and Board of Finance and stating that you are voting 'no' specifically to put public safety first, you take away the guesswork. It tells our leaders exactly what must be restored to pass a budget the community can support.

I urge residents to email the Town Council (towncouncil@hebronct.gov) and Board of Finance (bof@hebronct.gov) immediately. More importantly, please join me in voting 'no' on the town budget referendum on Tuesday, May 5. Let's tell the council that public safety is non-negotiable.

Matthew Barrett – Hebron



No Kings March

To the Editor:
After the latest attack on the POTUS, it got me thinking about the No Kings march. These events are instigated in the blue states that are totally controlled by Democrats, so doesn't it stand to reason that one finger pointing at the POTUS, there are three fingers pointing back at you?

The point being: Connecticut government is a one-party state that controls all aspects of everyday life. Colchester, with the current administration, also controls the happenings that go on here. They do as they see fit, with no regard to the finances of the public and give themselves pay raises because they can. So, the way I see it, shouldn't we have a No Kings march here?

Frank Grande – Colchester

Swan Song

To the Editor:
Observing over the years, I've watched citizens and board members make 'final' statements. The statements most often encapsulated a respect for the institutions and their announcement that they were leaving town. To myself, I labeled this phenomenon as the citizen's/official's swan song.

Coming into this budget cycle, I tasked myself with participating through the whole thing. Participating as a citizen I've always held to be my responsibility. And I kind of knew this to be the last time. Getting a bit old, a bit creaky, a bit cantankerous and a bit broke.

I had no intent to use FB or the *Rivereast* to bring up questions for board officials. By happenstance, this occurred this cycle. I believe that I've added as much as I can to the process.

With that said, I wish all of us good luck as we proceed.

Adieu,
Terry McManus – Hebron

A Taste of Tradition

To the Editor:
There is something special about food that tells a story, and at the Portland Senior Center, those stories come to life in the most meaningful ways.

One of our recent conversations began with a simple question: What is Schiacciata? Thanks to Marilyn's upcoming Cooking for One class, we are excited to share not only how to make this delicious dish, but also the rich history behind it.

Schiacciata is a traditional Italian bread that originated in the Tuscany region as a simple flatbread. Over time, as it spread throughout Italy, especially in areas like Sicily, it evolved into a stuffed bread filled with a variety of savory ingredients. It is now enjoyed as an appetizer, a meal, or even a satisfying snack. Here in Middletown and the surrounding communities, it has become a familiar and beloved comfort food for many.

What makes this even more meaningful is how these traditions are shared. Marilyn recently spoke about a visit from her college roommate, also of Italian heritage, who had never

See Letters, page 6

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The "East of the River" Real Estate Report

What Updates Actually Add Value Before Selling?

Many homeowners preparing to sell ask the same question: What should I update before putting my home on the market?
The honest answer is that not every project adds value — and some improvements cost more than they return. Before spending money, it helps to focus on updates that improve buyer perception, reduce objections, and help the home show well.
One of the highest-return areas is paint.
Fresh, neutral paint can make a home feel cleaner, brighter, and more move-in ready. It is relatively affordable and often has a bigger impact than more expensive projects.
Flooring can also matter.
Worn carpet, damaged flooring, or mismatched rooms can turn buyers off quickly. In many cases, replacing tired carpet or refinishing hardwood floors creates a stronger first impression.
Kitchens and bathrooms are important, but full renovations are not always necessary.
Often, smaller improvements such as updated lighting, cabinet hardware, mirrors, faucets, or reglazing surfaces can create a fresher look without the cost of a complete remodel.
Deferred maintenance should also be addressed whenever possible.
Leaky faucets, broken handrails, damaged trim, loose doorknobs, or visible repair issues can make buyers wonder what larger problems may exist. Small repairs often prevent bigger concerns during inspections.
Curb appeal matters more than many sellers realize.
Basic landscaping, mulching, trimming shrubs, pressure washing, and cleaning the front entry can improve first impressions before buyers ever walk inside.
What usually adds the least value?
Highly personalized upgrades, luxury projects for the neighborhood, or expensive renovations done right before selling without a clear strategy.
The best updates are often the ones that make a home feel clean, cared for, and move-in ready.
Before investing heavily, homeowners should evaluate which improvements are likely to help the sale — and which may simply cost money without increasing the final price.

Market Snapshot – Past Week

Hebron, Andover, Marlborough, Colchester, East Hampton & Portland

Single-Family Homes	Condos
• 7 homes sold	• 1 sold at \$390,000
• Average sale price: \$575,714	• Sale-to-list ratio: 111%
• Average sale-to-list ratio: 106%	• Days on market: 4 days
• Average days on market: 9 days	Results vary by price point, condition, and pricing strategy.
• Median days on market: 4 days	

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★ Letters, cont. from page 5

heard of Schiacciata. That moment of curiosity led to discovery, conversation, and connection, which is exactly what programs like this are all about.

At the Portland Senior Center, we offer more than just classes. We create spaces where people can learn, share, and connect through experiences that feel both familiar and new. Whether it is through cooking, storytelling, or simply spending time together, these moments help strengthen our community.

We invite you to join us for Marilyn's Cooking for One class and experience it for yourself. You might come for the recipe, but you will leave with something much more.

To learn more or register, please contact the Portland Senior Center.

**Sarah Elliott Caratasios, LMSW
Director and Municipal Agent
Portland Senior Center**

Shame on You

To the Editor:

Colchester BOE, you have done the taxpayers wrong. How do you accept a letter of resignation from Superintendent Sullivan?

How, when you have a fiscal oversight and/or mismanagement of the health fund? Someone knew about this long before it came to the taxpayers of Colchester's attention. Someone had their hands on this and hid it and or lied about it for quite some time, and Superintendent Sullivan being top dog at the Board of Education administrative office should be the one accountable. This in itself is reason for termination. No resigning, no severance package, no nice letter or accolades. Just termination; let us show you to the door. Period!!!

And then there is First Selectman Dennler. Is he doing his job? Shouldn't he as the top dog in town government be looking at these funds and line-item balances at some point? Shouldn't a question have been asked when the signs of the large deficit amount started appear? We as taxpayers say 'yes' to both.

We clearly do not say 'yes' to a 28% raise when he is not doing his job!!! Hold the door...

Joseph Fraulino Sr. - Colchester

School Vote

To the Editor:

The vote on May 11 is an opportunity to help Portland move forward. Our school buildings are in urgent need of an upgrade. Roofs are leaking, windows are emitting heat, the HVAC and plumbing systems are outdated, etc. The schools have not been upgraded for over 50 years. The short-term solution of fixing and patching is in the long run the most expensive. To do it as proposed takes advantage of state matching funds which are not available for the short-term solution.

Portland is on the verge of a Renaissance. The commercial part of Brainerd Place is soon to blossom, the Spa by the water park is moving toward completion and other smaller projects are moving forward. Improving the schools is an essential part of forming a wonderful community. We owe this to the teachers, staff, students and each other.

Even if you do not have students in the school system, excellent schools enhance the attractiveness of the town. Everyone benefits. Please vote on May 11 for this wonderful opportunity.

Jan and Bruce Jope - Portland

Andover Budget

My Fellow Andos:

We all like living in our small, safe uncomplicated town. We are all pro-education but we have to make this budget work for everyone. This budget will increase our taxes by two mills - that's a lot!! Over \$500K - a.k.a. thousand - in the school budget alone, 11%, and another 4% on the town side - a 6.7% increase in spending in a year where the cost of living has gone through the roof. You name, it the prices of every single item you purchase is at an all-time high - and a lot of price-gouging in my opinion.

Here's my list: School salaries up 17%; first-year teachers are making \$50K - thousand - plus 80% of their health benefits. Teachers with their master's degree and 10 years of service - thank you - exceed \$90K in most cases and the benefits of course. Not too shabby with two months of summer vacation. Just saying.

New town administrator, \$92K. A little less

than his predecessor but selectmen want to give him an assistant? More staffing for the Community Center Are we adding programs and more services?

Public Works - \$350K with no breakdown on the salaries. How much does the foreman make - \$90k or more.

Town office treasurer salary, a part-time position, doubled from \$15K to \$30K and another Leap to \$40K in 2026-27. Nice part-time gig.

Senior transportation: \$34K in 2023/2024 up to \$45 in 2025/2026.

It just keeps going up and up. I'm not seeing any fiscal restraint.

I know I missed the April 9th meeting. That will not happen again.

We need to reject this somewhat bloated budget, and revisit both budgets.

We live in one of the most densely populated states and one of the highest-taxed states (#4 I Believe) and Connecticut has a very generous welfare/SNAP program. Well, what about the people who have worked for 40 or more years, paid their taxes, put their kids and other kids through school, and would like to kick back a bit and enjoy the "golden years"? We are one of 11 states to tax Social Security - unconscionable! Some kindly states have passed legislation freezing property taxes on seniors at ages 65-70. Wouldn't that be nice? Of course, it will never happen in Connecticut.

Please: A more fair budget is needed. Please vote 'no' on May 5th.

Don Denley - Andover

Do They Have Solutions?

To the Editor:

Colchester Democrats love to frame anyone who questions them as a complainer. To them, if you speak up you are not engaging in good faith, you are simply negative. They present themselves as the adults in the room, the ones with all the answers, while anyone who disagrees is painted as having bad motives or a flawed character.

There is just one problem with that narrative. They can never actually tell you what their solutions are.

Over and over again, the only thing they

point to is the budget. That is their grand answer to everything. Spend more, take more, and trust them that it is necessary. By their own admission, their only real solution is to reach deeper into taxpayers' pockets.

Look at something as simple as garbage cans on the town green. When that issue came up, the solution was not to find a reasonable option or explore creative funding. It was to spend \$2,500 per can. That is not thoughtful leadership. That is careless spending with someone else's money.

The same pattern shows up in much more serious issues. The health reserve problem did not appear overnight. It was known and discussed in private meetings years ago, meetings that included First Selectman Bernie Dennler. So what was the solution then? Nothing. The problem was ignored until it could no longer be hidden. Now the so-called solution is to raise taxes and dip into the unassigned fund balance to clean up a mess that should have been addressed long ago.

All of this is happening while more than a quarter of Colchester households fall below the ALICE threshold, meaning they cannot meet the basic cost of living in our town. That reality is brushed aside. We are told costs have gone up for the town, as if that somehow justifies taking more from families who are already struggling with those same rising costs.

Since Bernie took office, spending has climbed by millions, driving a near 10% increase in taxes for Colchester residents, and that is before even considering this year's proposed budget. Those increases are not abstract numbers on a page; they are real burdens carried by thousands of Colchester families.

So do they actually have solutions? Or do they just have a plan to spend more of our money and attack anyone who dares to question it?

Jason LaChapelle - Colchester

Note: LaChapelle is a member of the Colchester Republican Town Committee.

Compensation Facts

To the Editor:

It's budget time in Colchester and facts are sometimes altered to fit specific agendas. For all the years I've served as a selectman, I strived to present accurate and clear facts to Colchester citizens so they can make informed decisions.

In 2014-15, the Board of Selectmen (BOS) and Board of Finance worked together on creating a Non-Union Employee and Elected Officials Compensation Policy, due to the lack of parity between union and non-union pay increases. After comparing statistics on wage index increases, our non-union employees and elected officials were far below. They had not received wage increases in three of the previous five budgets.

Our discussion centered on treating each position objectively and providing a mechanism to keep our non-union employees and elected officials fairly compensated in the budget process each year. The proposed raises are applied to the position not the individual holding the position.

The policy is the following: In an effort to ensure that compensation for non-union employees and elected officials remains relevant over time, commencing with the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2015 the town will include in the proposed budget an annual salary/wage increase for non-union and elected officials equal to the average increase computed from all contracts in effect at the time.

The policy was followed diligently until budget years 2021-23 when First Selectman A. Bisbikos chose to ignore the policy, reduce the salary for the position of first selectman by \$10,000 each year, and not include the proper compensation amount in the budget for the position of first selectman as required by policy.

To bring compensation for position of first selectman back to its proper level, the BOS at its Nov. 6, 2025 meeting passed the following motion unanimously, with the first selectman recusing himself from that part of the meeting: "A. Shilosky moved to restore the annual salary of the First Selectman to \$103,171.79 in accordance with the Town Compensation Policy for Non-Union and Elected Officials effective the new term of office beginning on Nov. 17, 2025..." This action brings compensation for the position of first selectman back to its amount by policy moving forward.

Elected officials do not give themselves raises. Each year the percentage increase is calculated by policy and applied to the salary of that position in the budget.

Sincerely,

Rosemary Coyle - Colchester

Note: Coyle is a member of the Colchester Board of Selectmen, but said she is speaking as an individual.

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Unruly Children

To the Editor:
I am a 28-year resident of Colchester. My children attended and graduated from our public schools and moved on to living productive and healthy adult lives. While my involvement with our youth then was limited to the kids I knew and what my kids told me, I never heard the concerns from our local businesses that I hear now in terms of unruly and disrespectful public behaviors by some of our school-aged children.

I have personally had to ask children to keep the volume down as I was trying to get some work done in the library. I've overheard the staff speaking with the kids about running around in the library as well as noting vandalism in the bathroom stalls and outside areas of other businesses. These are not isolated incidents. I've heard mention of these behaviors over the past few years.

Certainly, appropriate civic behavior lessons should begin at home. However, I am wondering why our police cannot be a greater, more influential, and present friendly feature of our community. We have a nice, fairly compact town center. Why can't a uniformed police officer be present on the Green, walking the beat, and checking in on the local businesses between the hours of 2-4 p.m.? I think this is a lost opportunity in getting to know our youth, modeling citizenship, and building trust between law enforcement and residents, particularly the youth. I consider this an investment in the future for our town, our families, and our children's lives and I'd bet the local merchants will appreciate the support, too.

Mary Gura - Colchester

Portland Schools: 20% +

To the Editor:
Our school consolidation referendum comes down to one simple requirement: if we don't reach the 20% voter turnout mandated by our town charter, the measure fails automatically, no matter how people might have voted.

If that happens, it won't be a reflection of the project's merits. It will mean we didn't show up. Failing to meet the threshold means walking away from \$67 million in state funding, funds supported by our own tax dollars. It means choosing inaction over decision, and letting an opportunity of this scale disappear without even counting the votes.

Other towns will move forward. Portland will be left explaining why we couldn't rally enough participation for something this important. That outcome is entirely within our control. Please make a plan to vote. Encourage friends, family, and neighbors to do the same.

If this effort fails due to low participation, we won't get another chance. And the cost of addressing our aging school infrastructure later, without these unprecedented state funds, will fall entirely on Portland. Let's not put ourselves in that position. Please show up and vote 'yes' on May 11th.

Respectfully,
Vin Pitruzzello - Portland

Note: Pitruzzello is a member of the Portland Board of Selectmen, but said he is writing as an individual.

Don't Rob Our Children

To the Editor:
In a time when budgets are tight and every dollar is scrutinized, it can be tempting to view education as just another line item. It is not. Investment in our schools is an investment in our community's future - our workforce, our property values, and the well-being of our children.

A challenging budget climate calls for careful decision-making, but it should not come at the expense of opportunities for our students. Strong schools are the foundation of strong towns. When we support education, we are not choosing excess—we are choosing stability, growth, and long-term success.

Our schools are more than buildings—they are where our children grow, learn, and prepare for their futures. Supporting education means supporting families, protecting property values, and maintaining the strength of our town.

Voting in support of education is not about ignoring fiscal responsibility; it is about recognizing that cutting corners in our classrooms today will cost us far more tomorrow. Our students deserve the resources, support, and environment needed to succeed.

A 'yes' vote for education is a vote for our children, our community, and our future. Even in a tough budget climate, especially in a tough budget climate, we must choose to invest wisely - and nothing is a wiser investment than education.

Heather Petit - Hebron

Note: Petit is chair of the Hebron Board of Education but is speaking as an individual.

We Can All Do Better

To the Editor:
At the recent budget town meeting, I was assisting our regular moderator, Wally Barton, the Republican registrar of voters. Regrettably, there was a brief instance of disruptive reactions, including booing and shouting down fellow voters with differing opinions.

The role of the moderator in this process cannot be understated. Moderators are tasked not only with guiding the meeting and facilitating discussions but also with fostering a respectful environment where all voices can be heard. Such behavior detracts from our goal of collaborative solutions and must not be tolerated. As an in-training moderator, unfortunately, that evening, I froze in the face of this disruption and was unable to offer constructive re-direction. To further improve our democratic process, we need to support anyone moderating a town meeting to focus on a thorough understanding of the charter guidelines, Robert's Rules of Order, and also, strategies for maintaining respectful discussions.

These skills equip moderators to handle diverse opinions - whether they concur or dissent - while fostering an environment conducive to well-reasoned deliberation.

At last week's state annual conference of registrars of voters, the focus was on de-escalation skills and emergency measures regarding the election process. We are often struggling within a culture of fear, anger and ignorance and an often-debilitated capacity (think stress induced amygdala hijacking) to discuss controversial topics, such as budget/how to spend our money as a community, in a calm and respectful manner.

We have the opportunity to enhance our community by building collaborative relation-

ships and nurturing a culture of respect and understanding on behalf of the greater good. By fostering healthy dialogue, we can ensure that the democratic process thrives in Andover. Let's commit to maintaining the foundation of our local governance through robust and respectful discussions. The inclusion of all voices enriches the final outcome.

Whether or not this budget passes on May 5, we will have future opportunities to develop our skillfulness. I hope our community can come together with calm mutual respect, to engage in meaningful conversations when discussing and planning for our future. I hope that I/we as moderators find courage, confidence and skillfulness to help guide us in that direction. We can all do better in this regard.

Linda Derick - Andover

Note: Derick is the Andover Democratic registrar of voters, but said she is writing this letter as an individual.

Portland School Referendum

To the Editor:
As the May 11th School Renovation Project referendum approaches, I want to address one of the most important questions on residents' minds: can Portland afford this project?

I believe the answer is a resounding 'yes' - and more importantly, we can't afford to miss this opportunity.

This project is supported by a once-in-a-generation state reimbursement of approximately \$66 million on a \$108 million project - a net cost to our taxpayers of \$42 million. That is funding that we simply will not see again at this scale. It dramatically reduces the burden on local taxpayers and allows us to complete a transformative project at a fraction of the true cost.

At the same time, Portland is experiencing meaningful growth. Projects like Brainerd Place, Birdon and the Nordic Spa are expanding our tax base, bringing new residents, new business activity, and new energy to our community. This growth helps offset costs and strengthens our financial position moving forward.

When you combine significant state funding with a growing grand list, the result is a project that is not only achievable - but responsible.

This is about making a smart investment at the right time. It's about leveraging outside dollars and local momentum to improve our town in a way that benefits everyone - today and for decades to come.

As a long-time resident and local business owner, I urge my friends and neighbors to support this project. Please come out and vote 'yes.'

Sincerely,
Michael Pelton - Portland

Note: Pelton is Portland first selectman, but he said he is writing this letter "as a taxpayer, resident and small business owner in town."

Vote 'Yes' on Hebron Budget

Dear Hebron Residents:
Hebron's budget referendum is on May 5th. This year, I've been invigorated by the number of folks who have participated in the budget process. Thank you!

I am writing in support of the town government and education budget. This year's mill rate increase - 1.94 mills - is significantly lower than last year's proposal under different board leadership. However, any increase, given the state of our economy and inflation, is challenging. It's difficult for my family too. That's why I'm

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★ *Letters, cont. from page 7*

actively working on solutions to help taxpayers. Before that, I'd like to talk about the Town Council's work.

Working collaboratively with the Board of Finance, the council came up with solutions that included leasing a fire truck with an aggressive repayment schedule, reducing our CIP. Additionally, the council reduced overall spending, going line by line over six hours of review. And, for the first time in my tenure, the Council reviewed capital expenditures, removing two projects. This resulted in a nearly \$650,000 reduction from the town government budget. It's true that the town's needs are often overlooked. However, I felt these cuts were necessary. And I'm grateful for our incredible town staff in preparing the budget and working through this process.

We cannot make up for years of deferred maintenance and planning in one budget. We can, however, look at this year as a reset with an eye to the future. To that end, I am committed to bringing forth a homestead exemption for taxpayers by the end of this year. I am consistently advocating for urgent property tax reform to our state leaders. Additionally, I am committed to developing our downtown. We need a diversified grant list, and that means more businesses. I look forward to collaborating with various boards and commissions to make this happen.

Like many of you, I feel the strain of everyday costs rising. I know any increase is an enormous ask. This budget reflects our values of maintaining important town services. On May 5th, I will be voting yes for the town government and education budget, and I encourage folks to consider doing the same.

Sincerely,

Tiffany V. Thiele – Hebron

Note: Thiele is chairwoman of the Hebron Town Council but said she is writing this letter as an individual.

Ballot Questions

To the Editor:

1. The proposed \$43M Portland budget with a +1.50 mill increase will be the highest mill rate increase in decades. A home valued at \$400K would see a \$420 increase in taxes this year. The budget excludes money for future planning projects and charter revisions. The average increase over 30 years has been 2%/year (\$100).

2. The \$109M school funding plan is based on two businesses under planning/ development, \$500K in retirement debt, and savings from closing BIS to consolidate schools.

To qualify for high state funding the plan includes, increasing the Open Choice Hartford students up to 10% of the school population, adding pre-K classes, "stripping walls down to the studs", and "removing bricks from the exterior," per comments from a BOS March meeting. Full state reimbursement isn't until completion, potentially 5 years from today.

If the state denies funding Portland taxpayers would foot the entire cost.

A Land & Building Usage Assessment committee evaluated the conditions of our schools in 2024. The committee reported that the schools were structurally in good shape and in need of cosmetic updating, and repair to the roofs and HVAC. No major hazardous materials

or structural issues exist in the school buildings. So, why rip the schools apart?

A *Rivereast* flyer insert looked like an appliance sale ad with the actual cost buried in the small print. Online information shows a .80 mill rate for each of the first two years, increasing to 1.65 mills in the third year. A home valued at \$400K would see a +28% increase in yearly tax bill by the third year, including estimated minimum increases of 1 mill in yearly budgets. The final cost, including principal & interest, is estimated at \$72.7M over 25 years.

The purpose of the school project was to save the town money and address declining enrollment. This plan will substantially increase taxes, long-term debt and hamper future spending/bonding on critical infrastructure projects necessary for the function and growth of the town's tax base.

This plan is a slow drip of misleading and hidden information that fails as a financially responsible plan based on today's property tax revenue with homeowners bearing most of the cost in an unstable economy.

Repair, update and consolidate. Vote 'no' to keep taxes low.

Rose Aletta – Portland

Andover, Vote Yes

To the Editor:

Andover voters, on May 5th, please vote 'yes' to support the proposed budget for our town.

I am writing specifically in response to a recent letter that was personally mailed to you by our first selectman, Jeffrey J. Maguire, regarding the funding of the pre-K program at Andover Elementary School (AES), telling you that he would be voting 'no' on the budget on May 5. It is important that you are provided with accurate information and a full understanding of the facts.

First and foremost, the assertion that Andover taxpayers are unknowingly subsidizing the pre-K program is incorrect. The program is supported through a combination of approximately \$200,000 in grant funding and roughly \$248,000 in tuition revenue. These funding streams are separate and cumulative; they are not interchangeable. Simply multiplying total enrollment by the maximum tuition rate, therefore, does not reflect the true financial structure of the program.

It is also important to clarify a key legal requirement that was correctly referenced but not fully explained. Andover is mandated by law to provide preschool services at no cost to students with special education needs. This is not optional. If the town operated only a special education preschool program, taxpayers would see a direct and significant line item in the budget that likely would exceed \$200,000 to pay for the staffing, services, and operational costs. This alone would result in a 5% increase to AES' budget!

Andover, however, has chosen to operate a high-quality, inclusive pre-K program that is robust, in demand, and fully enrolled. Because of this model, tuition-paying families and grant funding collectively offset the cost of the required special education services; in other words, the current structure reduces – not increases – the burden on taxpayers.

For more information, call Wesleyan Potters at 860-347-5925, or visit www.wesleyan-potters.com.

Speaking of plant sales, the Friends of the Salem Free Public Library will hold its annual Plant Sale Thursday, May 7, through Saturday, May 9, at the library, located at 264 Hartford Rd. (Route 85) in Salem.

The hours for the sale are: Thursday, May 7, from 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Friday, May 8, from 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; and Saturday, May 9, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Plants are mostly from local gardens and include indoor and outdoor plants, including aloe, Christmas cactus, butterfly bushes, lemon balm, and ornamental grasses. This year will also feature an expanded number of vegetables, herbs and annual flowers.

The sale will also feature some specialty items for Mother's Day, including hanging baskets. The Friends will also have an assortment of ornamental pots and vases for sale and, if you're already thinking about the holidays, the Salem Seniors will be selling assorted Christmas ornaments.

Setup for the sale is on Wednesday, May 6, all day at the library. To donate plants or pots, or for more information, call Elizabeth Lane at 860-859-1125.

See you next week.

Equally concerning is the tone of ongoing commentary that risks portraying Andover as unwelcoming to young families. AES and our community should be places that support children, value early learning, and encourage families to put down roots here. Early childhood education is not "just daycare"; it is a critical foundation for lifelong learning and success.

Finally, the Andover Board of Education has consistently shared detailed financial reports at public meetings, and those documents clearly outline the revenue and expenditures associated with the pre-K program. I encourage you to review those materials directly rather than rely on incomplete or inaccurate interpretations.

Andover is fortunate to have an accredited pre-K program that meets its legal obligations and does so in a fiscally responsible way. The facts show that our current model is not only educationally sound but financially prudent.

Please vote 'yes' on May 5th!

Sincerely,

Shannon O. Loudon – Andover

Note: Loudon is vice chair of the Andover Board of Education, but said she is writing as an individual.

An Unsustainable Budget

To the Editor:

I am writing to express concern over the recently proposed budget, which appears not only excessively ambitious but ultimately unsustainable. While investment in public services and infrastructure is essential, the current tone of the budget suggests a level of spending that outpaces realistic revenue projections and long-term fiscal responsibility.

A budget should reflect careful prioritization, balancing immediate needs with future stability. Instead, this proposal leans heavily toward short-term expansion without adequately addressing how these commitments will be maintained over time. Rising costs, potential deficits, and the burden on future taxpayers are risks that cannot be overlooked.

Moreover, the tone of the budget seems to dismiss legitimate concerns about efficiency and accountability. Fiscal discipline is not an obstacle to progress; it is a prerequisite for it. Without clear safeguards and sustainable planning, even well-intentioned programs may falter.

The budget needs to be revisited and trimmed so that it aligns spending with realistic forecasts and ensures that today's decisions do not become tomorrow's liabilities.

Angela Corentin – Amston

Note: Corentin is a member of the Hebron Republican Town Committee.

Vote No: Hebron Needs A More Sustainable Path

To the Editor:

As Hebron approaches the upcoming referendum, the question is not just about this year's budget. It is about long-term direction.

Across all three major budgets, the Board of Education, RHAM, and Town Government, spending has increased significantly, and more recently, that trend has accelerated. And it's happening without comparable growth in population, student enrollment, or the tax base.

That creates a real problem. When spending rises faster than demand, the burden doesn't disappear, it shifts to taxpayers.

For residents, that impact is real. Depending on assessed value, the proposed increases can translate into hundreds to thousands in additional annual taxes. When layered with future obligations, the cumulative effect raises serious questions about long-term affordability.

This is not a one-year issue. It's a trend.

We are also seeing a continued reliance on short-term solutions for long-term costs, including the use of one-time funds to support ongoing expenses. That approach may close gaps today, but it pushes pressure into future years and increases the likelihood of larger adjustments later. Equally important is the process behind these decisions.

There is a more sustainable approach. Methods like zero-based budgeting require each expense to be reviewed and justified, while stronger capital planning helps manage long-term costs and reduce financial pressure over time. These are practical steps that improve transparency, strengthen accountability, and support better decision-making.

A 'no' vote isn't a rejection of our town. It's a recognition that we can do better, by setting clear priorities, improving the process, and building a budget that is sustainable over time. Because the goal isn't just to pass a budget. It's to pass one that holds up.

These budgets don't meet that standard. And approving them doesn't fix the problem, it guarantees it. Plan Smart. Spend Smart. Vote 'no'!

Rob Poudrier – Chair, Hebron VOICE

Here We Go Again

Hello Neighbors:

Well, here we go again: the hard-working residents of Andover are being bullied into yet another tax increase. The town budget is bad enough with its unnecessary spending but this school increase is completely ridiculous. Andover does not have the tax base to sustain this type of spending. We should have regionalized many years ago, which would serve these children just as well but at much less cost to us taxpayers.

The fantasy that a small town like Andover benefits from an elementary school is untrue. The only benefits are the convenience to parents and the faculty/staff getting paid with taxpayers' dollars. These people will say or do anything to protect their little fiefdom as seen at stacked town meetings. I will be voting no on this upcoming tax increase and I urge my neighbors to please do the same. Let's make living in this beautiful town affordable again.

Sincerely,

Vincent Grimaldi – Andover

April is Volunteer Month

To the Editor:

In recognition of Volunteer Appreciation Month each April, Colchester Parks & Recreation proudly extends its heartfelt thanks to the many dedicated community members who generously give their time and energy to make Colchester a better place to live, work, and play.

Throughout the month – and especially during the annual Spring Clean-Up – volunteers of all ages came together to help beautify parks, trails, and public spaces across town. From picking up litter and clearing debris to assisting with event support and programming activities, their contributions have made a lasting impact on the community.

Volunteers are the backbone of so many of our programs and events. The success of our events, programs and other initiatives would not be possible without the commitment and pride our residents show in caring for our community.

Colchester Parks & Recreation encourages residents to continue getting involved throughout the year. Volunteer opportunities are available for community events, youth programs, park stewardship, and more.

For more information about volunteer opportunities, please contact Colchester Parks & Recreation at 860-537-7297 or parksandrec@colchesterct.gov.

The department extends its sincere gratitude to all volunteers – your time, dedication, and spirit truly make a difference.

Thank you,

**Tiffany Quinn, Director
Colchester Parks and Recreation**

Vote 'No' on Budget

To the Editor:

Vote 'no' on Andover's budget referendum. While our school's education leaders beg for large increases in their funding, they tell us how rigorously they have strived to constrain spending and costs. Increasing the AES budget by 20% in just two years, including 17% increases in salary for just this most recent proposal, does not lend itself to this characterization!

I fail to understand how a small elementary school like Andover has both a principal and a superintendent (especially one preparing to receive an 11% salary increase), and a host of other non-teaching administrative positions. Why is Andover considering hiring a child psychologist for AES? If a child is experiencing psychological difficulties, it is the parent's responsibility to seek and obtain the appropriate care – not the town's!

There seems to be an expanding mission creep in our elementary school. Last year, we were assured by our cost-conscious superintendent that Andover taxpayers would incur no financial burdens resulting from the proposed daycare program to be offered. Now I hear we are going to have a pre-K program, which is just glorified daycare. Our state mandate is to provide education for children K-12. Parents desiring pre-K for their own children need to pay for it themselves.

It is critical we call timeout on increasing any spending. A tidal wave of dramatic change is going to inundate traditional methods of instruction which have become anachronistic. Our classrooms differ very little from what they were a century ago despite the exponential improvements in communication technologies. Artificial intelligence is going to completely reshape how education is provided. We need to temper our hiring and spending while we decipher what the coming changes mean for our processes.

Defined-benefit pensions were eliminated by most private sector companies because their

Editor's Desk continued from page 4

www.purringpottery.com. "My kitty Mischief was completely intrigued with the spinning disc that threw wet mud everywhere. My living space became a clay paw print and the vessels I created were paw and fur stamped, texture in her eyes."

The studios in the Connecticut Clay Crawl stretch across the state, from Milford to Granby, so you could really create quite the fun weekend. Learn more, view locations, and plan your visits at www.ctclayguild.com/clay-crawl.

Another of the participants in the Clay Crawl is, not surprisingly, Wesleyan Potters in Middletown. If you can't squeeze them in to this weekend's studio tours, though, don't worry.

On Saturday, May 9, Wesleyan Potters will hold its annual Spring Sale from 9 a.m.-3 p.m., rain or shine, at 350 South Main St., Middletown. Admission is free. The sale features:

More than 30 artisan booths of pottery, jewelry and woven pieces handcrafted members, faculty and students; pottery and weaving demonstrations; a raffle of artisan works; a plant and flower sale; a table with assorted works donated by Wesleyan Potters artists (sales benefit Wesleyan Potters' Scholarship Fund); and snacks and drinks.

Parking is in the lot at the rear of the building (accessed from Birdsey Avenue).

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fiduciaries warned that funding the pension amounts promised would require taking unacceptable levels of investment risk. Government entities are subject to the same realities, but they don't seem to care because they merely pass on the excessive risk to taxpayers.

Connecticut's pension funds for both state employees and teachers are negligently underfunded. As of June 30th, 2023, TRS (Teacher's Retirement System) is only funded at ~59.8% and SERS (State Employee's Retirement System) at ~52%. Federal Guidelines for businesses with defined-benefit pensions (ERISA) recommend funding in the low 80% level. Continuing to add unfunded pension liabilities is unconscionable and unacceptable.

Sam Prentice – Andover

A Cover-Up So Sneaky, They Announced It

To the Editor:

I've seen some misleading posts and conspiracies on Facebook about the town's budget situation, so I wanted to remind neighbors of a few facts.

First, the first selectman does not control the Board of Education budget. The BOE sets and manages its own budget. That is how it works in Colchester and in every Connecticut town.

Second, when the joint employee health insurance shortfall was discovered, the Board of Education and First Selectman Bernie Dennler went out of their way to share the information with residents before the February roof and fields referendum. That is the opposite of a cover-up. That is doing the hard thing on purpose.

Third, a forensic audit is underway, and the findings will be made public. If something went wrong, we will know about it. That is how accountability works.

You can disagree with how the town is being run. That is fair. But the creative story being pushed online right now does not match what actually happened.

Note: I'm a proud member of the Colchester DTC, but I'm writing this because the town deserves better than a rumor mill.

John Farrell – Colchester

Health Insurance Shortfall

Colchester Friends and Neighbors:

On April 29, the Board of Finance (BOF) will vote on how to pay for a shortfall in the funds available to pay health insurance claims in the current budget year (ending June 30). This is separate from next year's budget, so I want to explain details about this in plain language, even though this will be in the paper after the meeting.

What's happening: Colchester uses a "self-insured" health plan. That means the town and the Board of Education (BOE) share one health insurance fund, and we pay employees' medical claims from that fund. Like many towns, we work with an insurance broker to estimate costs, but the exact number of claims can change month to month.

Right now, the fund does not have enough money to pay this year's claims, due to several years of under-funding on the BOE side. Based on conservative estimates, the boards agree that \$945,000 needs to be added to the health insurance fund to cover this year's bills.

What's the decision: The remaining question is where to take that money from. Two options discussed are:

Excess Cost Reimbursement: State money provided to help pay for special education costs. The needed amount is used for the schools first, and any remaining (i.e. extra) amount moves to the Town's general fund.

Unexpended Funds: Board of Education funds that were budgeted but not spent, and are earmarked for the BOE.

Some residents asked if unexpended funds can be used in this way. The town attorney says yes, our auditor raised no conflicts, and the Board of Finance voted to use these funds in a similar way in 2023. For more details about these points, please see the agenda materials, recording, or meeting minutes for our meeting on April 29.

Information and Who's Involved: If you want to learn more, you can watch recordings or review minutes of the Insurance Subcommittee and Board of Finance meetings online. Most importantly, we know that not everyone has time to review all of those materials, but please know that a dedicated mix of people from the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Board of Education, school administration, and both finance offices are working together to fix this in the best way possible.

Please reach out to the BOF with any questions.

**Sincerely,
Karen Belding
Chair, Colchester Board of Finance**

Supports Schools Project

Dear Portland Neighbors:

On Tuesday, May 11, Portland voters will consider Question 2, a bond proposal related to the town's schools. The proposal reflects feedback from last year's referendum and outlines a plan intended to address facility needs while maintaining certain existing features valued by the community.

If approved, Question 2 would authorize the issuance of up to \$58,000,000 in town bonds to support the project. The estimated net cost to the town is \$41.9 million. The remaining \$16,095,000 will be financed during the course of the project and reimbursed by the state upon completion.

The proposal is designed to preserve Portland's small school structure and maintain access to gym space for town sports. Many viable options have also been identified to transition the town's beloved Brownstone building from a school to other uses. This proposal reduces the town's long term costs of overhead and maintenance of aging buildings.

For the referendum to pass, at least 1,400 of us must turn out to vote. Voting will take place on Tuesday, May 11, from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Portland Middle School. Please join me in voting Yes to Question 2.

Sincerely,

Sarah Spear – Portland

Supports Schools Project

To the Editor:

My children are long grown, and I have no personal stake in the May 11 schools referendum — except that I am a Portland resident and taxpayer, and so I have every stake in it. I am writing to urge my fellow residents, particularly those of us without children in the schools, to vote yes.

I understand the hesitation. The project carries a \$109 million price tag, and that number gives sensible people pause. But the picture changes once you understand the financing. The state will reimburse Portland \$66.5 million of that total. If we vote no, we simply leave that money on the table and solve nothing. The town's true out-of-pocket cost, financed over 20 to 25 years, comes to approximately \$42 million. That is the real number before us.

For that investment, Valley View and Gildersleeve Elementary Schools receive full renovations, Brownstone Intermediate — originally built as a high school and the most expensive building to maintain — is decommissioned, and the secondary schools receive needed capital improvements. This is a coherent, long-term plan, not a patchwork fix.

I know some neighbors worry about the future of the Brownstone building. That concern is understandable. But "historically beloved" and "appropriate for modern elementary education" are not the same thing, and the selectmen are right to weigh its future uses practically rather than sentimentally.

What I keep returning to is this: the quality of a town's schools shapes everything — property values, community character, whether young families choose to stay. Those of us no longer in the classrooms still live in the town those classrooms help define.

The charter requires 20% voter turnout for this bond question to count. Please don't let it fail for lack of showing up. Vote yes on May 11.

Martha Taylor Dumas – Portland

Note: Dumas is a member of the Portland Democratic Town Committee, but said she is writing as an individual.

Dennler, BOE Fleecing Taxpayers

To the Editor:

First Selectman Bernie Dennler has raised the town budget by almost \$4 million in the last three years. \$1.4 million in 2024, \$984,000 in 2025, and this year a proposed \$1.4 million increase again if the budget passes. The three largest increases in the last 15 years (probably in town history). At the same time, his salary is increasing by \$23,000 over what was approved by voters last year, while the average homeowner will be facing an additional \$1,000 tax increase this year. Many people that have lived in their homes for decades will be forced to move away while he enjoys a 28% raise. He could refuse to accept it like the former first selectman did, but not Bernie. He does not care about keeping Colchester affordable for others; he is only in it for himself.

The Colchester BOE has just accepted the resignation of Superintendent Sullivan who it appears to be responsible for the failure of the health reserve fund. It sure looks like he resigned before the results of the forensic audit come to light. Not only did the BOE allow him to resign before the audit becomes public, but they read a statement praising all of the great things he has done for the school system, but failed to mention why he would suddenly resign as the forensic audit is happening. Sounds more than fishy to me. I'm sure they're giving him a substantial severance check too, as he leaves the town with a \$5 million budget increase to cover his blundering of the health reserve fund.

Colchester is facing an unprecedented three-mill increase this budget season and it appears the Board of Finance is going to send it to referendum as is leaving the taxpayers on the hook for Sullivan and Dennler's irresponsible misuses of our hard-earned tax dollars.

Don't let them get away with. Vote 'no' on the town and the BOE budgets until we get full transparency about what happened to the health reserve fund and until the BOE forces the BOE and the town to make severe cuts and comes back with a budget that is affordable to all Colchester taxpayers.

Jeff Mattson – Colchester

Note: Mattson is a member of the Colchester Republican Town Committee, but said he is speaking as a private citizen taxpayer.

Was Sullivan Dennler's Scapegoat?

To the Editor:

For three years, officials across multiple boards supported Superintendent Sullivan, including FS Dennler; BOS members Coyle and Turner; BOE members Rivers, Millington, Calash, Gignac, and Antonacci; BOF members Belding, Chapman, Vinci, Kardys, Egan, and Hayes; and DTC member John Farrell.

They defended his leadership and supported his exorbitant salary, while criticizing citizens who raised concerns about budget spending, central office staffing, FOIA violations, office renovation costs, and cronyism.

They said, "CPS is so lucky to have someone of Dan's caliber," while brushing aside concerns about his lack of transparency and perceived shadiness.

With the Board of Education preparing to vote on his continued employment, residents are now asking: Why now?

During a recent BOF workshop, Sullivan disclosed that Rivers and Vinci were aware of issues with the health reserve fund in April 2025. That raises new questions about when FS Dennler and BOF Chair Belding became aware — and why this information wasn't disclosed publicly at the time.

Was this a political calculation?

This development takes on added significance in 2025, as Dennler had just announced his reelection bid in February. A developing financial crisis involving the health reserve fund would have undermined his campaign, which emphasized "getting the town's finances under control."

In the weeks leading up to the November election, Dennler remained silent, while Sullivan said he had spoken with Dennler about the looming crisis. Why did neither Dennler nor his team disclose it publicly?

Months later, at the Feb. 6, 2026, Insurance Subcommittee meeting, the insurance broker projected the health reserve could be depleted by April 2026. Despite that warning, Dennler advocated moving forward with a \$20 million spending referendum scheduled for Feb. 10.

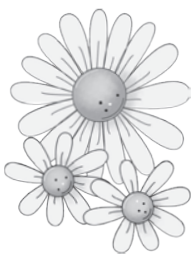
On the day of the referendum, calls intensified to postpone the vote following a major snowstorm that left schools closed, roads un-

See Letters, page 12

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Local Crews Clean Up Blish Park

By Toriana Williams

A group of local business owners in Marlborough came together on a beautiful spring day to give back to their community on April 9. In an act of selflessness, they completed a full cleanup of Blish Park in just a few hours.

The kind effort was organized by Kyle Szemrelyo, owner of KES Lawn Care LLC, who said the idea came from something he already does each year.

“Every spring, I bring my skids down to the public beach, and I rake it all out and fluff up the sand,” said Szemrelyo. “I get a lot of really good feedback from the people in town, and I thought to myself, ‘Why not spread this amongst some other local businesses?’”

Szemrelyo then reached out to fellow business owner Josh Vigue of J&M Lawn Care to share his idea.

“I said, ‘Hey Josh, I have this crazy idea. ... I want to get a bunch of local businesses together and do a give back to the people in town,’” he said. “He loved the idea.” From there, the idea grew quickly. Szemrelyo contacted other local companies, and the response was immediate.

“There were 10 companies in total that I talked to, and not a single one of them even had a second thought,” he shared. “Everybody jumped at it.”

In total, 22 people – including business owners and their employees – showed up to help. Together, they completed a cleanup that would normally take days, according to Szemrelyo.

“Something like this would have taken a smaller crew up to a week to complete. ... We completed it in three hours,” he explained.

The group worked across the park, cleaning and clearing the beach area, playground and fields. They raked sand, cleared leaves and sticks, cut grass and refreshed the overall appearance of the park. All for free.

“We all came together for one common goal,” Szemrelyo said. “Make the park, the playground area, the beach and the fields look really nice.” Beyond the physical work, Szemrelyo said the event also helped strengthen relationships be-

tween local businesses.

“Why compete with them when you can work with them?” he said. “It helps break some of that ice. [We can] meet each other, see that we’re all great people and help each other out when we need it.” The event eventually turned into an opportunity to network with one another.

Szemrelyo described the atmosphere as positive and welcoming throughout the day.

“Everybody was laughing, smiling, joking with each other,” Szemrelyo said. “People who didn’t know each other were talking, getting to know each other. ... It was actually quite awesome to see.”

The cleanup also eased the burden on the town’s public works department, which is still recovering from extensive (and expensive) winter work due to the large amount of snow several towns received. “To alleviate some of the stress on their plate by doing this was pretty cool,” he said.

Onlookers who saw the work being done were appreciative once they understood what was going on.

“One group didn’t quite understand at first,” Szemrelyo laughed. “But once I explained it ... they were very thankful. One of them kept texting me about how great it was and how grateful she was.”

Szemrelyo said giving back is important because local businesses depend on community support. “I’ve been in business for 15 years, and without the support from the residents, I wouldn’t be where I am,” he said. He hopes the effect encourages people to continue supporting local companies in and around town.

“Why shop somewhere far away when we have ... great companies right here?” he said.

The event may also become a regular tradition. Many participants were already asking when they could do it again. “They just kept asking, ‘When’s the next thing? How can we give



Owners and employees worked together on April 9 to give back to their community by cleaning up Blish Park. With their own equipment, 10 local businesses spruced up the park in just three hours. Something like this would usually take an individual crew up to a week to complete. Photo by Kyle Szemrelyo.

back next?” Szemrelyo said, excited to hear the participant’s eagerness.

He also expressed thankfulness to everyone who shared their day in the sun. “I would just like to express my gratitude to these companies that showed up and paid their employees to be there. ... [they] used their equipment and their time,” he said. “It was an incredible force from local businesses.”

For Szemrelyo, the day was about more than just cleaning up. It was about community.

“[Today was] a bunch of like-minded people getting together for one common goal,” he said. “It was really cool to be a part of it.”

Alongside KES Lawn Care LLC and J&M Lawn Care, several other local businesses helped give back to the community, including Certified Arborists of Marlborough, C&C Lawn & Tree Removal, CT Ground Works LLC, MJS Landscaping LLC, Lawn Barber Lawncare, DB Stump Removal, JBE Landscaping LLC and Green Earth Solutions LLC.

Vacancies on Town Boards, Commissions

The Town of Marlborough is seeking residents to serve on various town boards and commissions. All residents of Marlborough who are registered to vote are eligible.

Interested candidates should go to the town website and search ‘Vacancies’ in the search bar, then click on ‘Vacancies – Marlborough, CT’ and then click ‘Application for Appointment to Boards, Commissions, or Committees for the most recent application.’

Please submit applications for full positions on the following committees by the date indicated:

- May 29: Zoning Commission
 - May 29: Water Pollution Control Authority
- Applications can be dropped off at the Town Hall in the Town Clerk’s office, or you can mail them to: Marlborough Town Hall, Town Clerk’s Office, P.O. Box 29, 26 North Main St., Marlborough, CT 06447.

Lions to Collect Medical Equipment

The Marlborough Lions will hold a durable medical equipment collection Saturday, May 9, from 9 a.m.-noon, at Marlborough Elementary School, 25 School Drive, in the parking lot outside the cafeteria.

The Marlborough Lions, in conjunction with the human relief organization Orphan Grain Train, will seek the following items in new or good used condition (commodes and CPAP machines are NOT needed at this time): rehabilitation equipment, blood pressure cuffs, walkers, wheelchairs, shower chairs, crutches, otoscopes, canes, lifting devices stethoscopes, grab bars, bed tables, unopened packages of bandages,

adult diapers and other medical items.

Anyone with large items, such as hospital beds, are urged to call ahead to make special arrangements. Donated items will be shipped to impoverished areas in the southern states, with some items being given to people locally who may be in need of their use.

For further information, call Lions Club secretary Ken Hjulstrom at 860-490-9116.

Those interested in joining the Marlborough Lions Club should call club president Jean Paul Bolduc at 860-798-2054. New members are always welcome.

Congregational Church News & Notes

Sunday Worship at Marlborough Congregational Church, located at 35 South Main St., is held at 10 a.m. The service is also broadcast live every Sunday at mcc.marlconchurch.org and recorded for later viewing. Church pastor is the Rev. Valerie Seaver.

May 3 is a Communion Sunday and a welcome to Charles Denler as the new music director. The service will be led by Seaver. Her sermon title is “Let Not Our Hearts Be Troubled.” Holy Communion is open to all, regardless of church affiliation, including children with parental guidance. After worship all are invited to Coffee Hour in the Thienes Lounge.

Spring Tag Sale is Saturday, May 2, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Community Sings, led by Seat of Our Pants

member Carolyn Brodgerski, is Saturday, May 2, at 7 p.m. upstairs in the Thienes Lounge. All who enjoy singing, including musicians, are welcome. Music is provided.

General Information: Marlborough Congregational Church is an Open and Affirming faith community and all are welcome. Storm closings are listed on the local TV stations. The church does not pass a collection plate, but free-will giving boxes are found by the doors in the sanctuary. Donations can also be made through the church website, or mailed to the church at P.O. Box 57, Marlborough, CT 06447. For more information on the church or its programs, call Seaver’s direct line at 860-295-0432, email her at pastorval@marlconchurch.org, or contact the church office at office@marlconchurch.org.

Spring Art Show Reception

Marlborough Arts Center (MAC) will hold a Spring Art Show reception Sunday, May 3, from 2-4 p.m., at the center, 231 N. Main St.

Experience an array of paintings, collages, photography, sculpture, ceramics, written pieces and more, all created by MAC artists.

There is no admission fee and the building is fully accessible. Mingle with the artists and enjoy finger foods, beverages and sweet treats.

Classifieds Pay

The Glastonbury Citizen & Rivereast News Bulletin

Call 860-633-4691 or email your line ad to admin@glcitizen.com

Country Line Dancing Fundraiser

There will be a Country Line Dancing Fundraiser Friday, May 1, from 6-9 p.m., at the Marlborough American Legion, 128 East Hampton Rd. The event is open to the public.

Aric Lemeiux of Sound Train Music will DJ and lead country line dancing. Cost is \$15, which includes a buffet and dancing. Open to the public.

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New Classes at Arts Center

The Marlborough Arts Center at 231 North Main St. has a new lineup of classes in watercolor, drawing, acrylics and en plein air.

There are half-day workshops and six-week classes for those who want more in-depth experiences. A new Drawing I class is being offered for those who want personalized instruction in realistic drawing. Watercolor for Mixed Abilities is for those who have painted in other mediums or are new to painting. This class provides a good introduction to watercolor techniques. Or learn the impressionistic style of watercolor

painting and even try en plein air to paint in this style outside at the arts center woodlands and other local spots. More acrylic painting and zentangle workshops are being scheduled too.

For more information on current offerings and new classes, visit MarlboroughArts.org. There you will find the course descriptions and other important information and can register online. If you want advance notice, consider becoming a member. You can also find this information at MarlboroughArts.org or call 860-467-6353.

Senior Center News and Notes

Marlborough Senior Center, 17 School Drive, is open for activities. For more information about any senior center program, or to register, call 860-295-6209 or email socialservices@marlboroughct.gov. Also contact the senior center for a list of regularly occurring weekly and monthly programs, such as billiards, chair massage, the Cookbook Club, Parkinson's Disease Exercise Class, blood pressure screenings, and more.

Senior Center Hours: Monday-Thursday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Friday, 8 a.m.-3 p.m.

Events: Budget Referendum: Next Tuesday, May 5, will be the annual budget referendum at Marlborough Elementary School. Transportation is available. Call in advance to coordinate a ride. Call for more information on absentee ballots.

CT Department of Insurance: Friday, May 8, 10-11 a.m. Learn how to read your home/auto/life insurance policies. Q&A session included.

Timeless Beauty: Monday, May 11, 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Make-up tips from make-up artist and teacher Joby Rogers. Learn tips and tricks about everything from lip liner to foundation and more. Fee is \$10/residents, \$12/non-residents.

Chair Yoga: Next session: 5/12, 5/19, 5/26, 6/2. Cost is \$35/residents, \$40 non-residents. RSVP by 5/8.

Line Dancing Lessons: All levels welcomed, ages 55+. May session: 5/7, 5/14, 5/21, 5/28, from 5-7 p.m. each week. Cost: \$50/residents,

\$60/non-residents. RSVP as soon as possible.

Caregiver Guide to Fall Prevention: Wednesday, May 27, noon-1 p.m. Join the rehab director of the Visting Nurses of the Lower Valley in this informative hands-on presentation on falls. Learn practical ways to reduce the risk of falls, common causes, etc.

What I Need to Know About My Electric Choices: Friday, May 29, 11 a.m. AARP will present on how to read your bill, where to go for reliable electric rate information and more. Bring your bill. Shoshana Merced, director of human and social services and municipal agent for the elderly, can add a low-income discount rate the same day for those that qualify.

Friendship Tours: City Island Lobster House - Lunch Feast: Thursday, June 4, departing at 8:30 a.m. and returning at 7 p.m. For ages 18 and up, open to all towns. Cost is \$171/person. Enjoy a seaside village in New York. After lunch, shop Little Italy.

American Legion Setback Tourney

There will be a Setback Tournament Friday, May 15, at the American Legion Post 197, 128 East Hampton Rd. Registration is at 6 p.m. and games start at 6:30 p.m.

Fee for this Round Robin-style tournament is \$10/person. Prizes will be awarded for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place. Raffles and a 50/50 will be featured. (All proceeds go to the ladies auxiliary.)

For more information, call Sharon at 860-805-6917.

Budget Referendum Next Tuesday

By Toriana Williams

Voters in Marlborough will decide on the proposed town and school budgets during a referendum on Tuesday, May 5, from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m., at Marlborough Elementary School.

The second Public Hearing will be held the day before on May 4, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Total Budget

The proposed 2026-27 town budget is \$28,948,571. This is an increase of 1.74% from last year's \$28.6 million. The proposed Marlborough education budget is \$9,327,184 (net request due to funds being paid partially by grants), a 4.49% increase from last year's budget of \$8,926,425.

Voters will also decide on the Regional School District 8 (RHAM) budget, which is \$33,161,483, and a RHAM CIP budget of \$500,000. Marlborough's portion of RHAM's budget is \$11,384,314, a \$52,283 decrease from last year's portion of \$11,436,597

Key Drivers

Town officials said rising costs are the main reason for the increase. At the latest Public Hearing, Town Manager David Porter explained, "Almost across the board ... we have a 3% cost of living adjustment."

He also pointed to rising insurance costs. "We also experienced a 21% increase in health insurance premiums. ... That is a theme that you will probably hear over and over again."

Other cost drivers include energy, software and services, staffing and benefits, payments for a new fire truck and expanded senior services and staffing.

Tax Impact

The proposed mill rate is 27.71, compared to 37.74 last year. However, officials warn this does not necessarily mean lower taxes because property values increased after a town-wide revaluation. Motor vehicle taxes are expected to decrease.

Parks and Rec. Programs

Marlborough Parks & Recreation has announced the following. For full program descriptions or to register, visit www.marlboroughct.gov. For more information, call 860-295-6203.

Kids Fishing Derby: Saturday, May 2, 9-11 a.m., at Blish Park. This event is held for anyone from 4 to 15 years of age. Registration is \$10. Prizes will be awarded for biggest fish, smallest fish and first fish caught.

Youth Programs: Spring Into Yoga - Kids Yoga & Mindfulness Series: For ages 3-10. Tuesdays through May 19, 5:15-6 p.m., at the Marlborough Senior Center. There is a \$20 drop-in fee.

Affinity Esports (Gamers Retreat): For ages 7-17. Fridays, May 1-June 5, 3:15-4:15 p.m., in the Marlborough Elementary School cafeteria. No class May 22. Fee is \$135/resident, \$140/

non-resident.

Skyhawks Multi Sports: Thursdays, May 7-June 4, at MES. Ages 2 & 3 are 5-5:45 p.m., and Ages 4 & 5 are 6-6:45 p.m. Parent participation required for ages 3.5 and younger. Fee is \$90/resident, \$95/non-resident.

Kids Sewing - Pajama Bottoms: For ages 6 and up. Thursday, May 7, 5:30-7 p.m., at Marlborough Senior Center. All supplies included. Fee is \$79/resident, \$84/non-resident.

Tennis Lessons: Wednesdays, May 13-27, at Blish Park. For ages 5-7, time is 3:45-4:30 p.m. and fee is \$65/resident, \$70/non-resident. For ages 8-12, time is 4:30-5:30 p.m. and fee is \$85/resident, \$90/non-resident.

Safe at Home: For grades 4-6. Tuesday, May 19, 5-6:30 p.m., at Marlborough Senior Center. Fee is \$50/resident, \$63/non-resident.

Spring Craft Fair

The Marlborough American Legion Auxiliary will hold a Spring Craft Fair Sunday, May 3, from 10 a.m.-3 p.m., at Marlborough American Legion Post 197, 128 East Hampton Rd., Marlborough.

Ladies Luncheon and Tea

All women are invited to the Fellowship Community Church Ladies Luncheon and Tea, on Saturday, May 9, from 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., at the church, 24 South Rd.

The legacy of godly women will be celebrated at the Roots and Wings Mother's Day Ladies Luncheon and Tea. Come enjoy tea, food, fellowship and encouragement. RSVP by April 25 to Wendy Worley at shopgirl53@sbcglobal.net or text with name and number attending to 860-338-1060.

The speaker this year is Laurie Devernoe, a Christian speaker, author, and mental health coach. Find more information at LaurieDevernoe.com.

Cemetery Clean-Up Saturday

The annual cemetery spring clean-up is scheduled for Saturday, May 2, at Marlboro Cemetery. Volunteers are invited to participate and are asked to meet at 9 a.m.

Residents are asked to remove seasonal pots and any personal items prior to the clean-up. All items found to be in violation of cemetery rules and regulations or a hindrance to maintenance will be removed. These items include shepherd hooks, glass objects, items hanging from trees, pots, or items beyond the front of the stone.

If you plan to reuse the item next season, please remove and take home.

Happy 21st Birthday Grace!

LOVE Mom, Dad, Taylor & Jayna

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★ *Letters, cont. from page 9*

plowed, and residents recovering. Despite those conditions, Dennler refused to postpone the vote, even after a fellow BOS member urged that public safety be prioritized.

Why? Was it because: Just two days after the referendum vote, Dennler knew the BOE had scheduled a meeting for a forensic audit vote – one that would have revealed a projected \$4–5 million deficit in the health reserve fund before voters went to the polls.

Could that have impacted the referendum? Of course. By refusing to postpone the vote, Dennler ensured voters went to the polls without the full financial picture.

So much for those campaign promises of transparency!

Sullivan resigned 4/27.

Colchester deserves better.

Cyndee Laribee – Colchester

Don't Sacrifice Progress

To the Editor:

While Colchester's proposed budgets present a possible tax increase above what we have seen in the recent past, the 33.50 proposed mil rate reported by the *Rivereast* last week was a misprint. In fact, after over \$2 million in cuts made by the Board of Education, the proposed mil rate will fall approximately one mil less than the *Rivereast* reported. Errors do happen, but this one emphasizes how important it is for our community, which is already trying to manage a shortfall in the health insurance account, to log in to the town website to review budget presentations and documents, as well as listen to the recent BOE and BOF meetings, regarding the budget for correct information.

On the issue of the first selectman's salary, it should be clear that Bernie Dennler did not give himself a raise. The previous first selectman, because his living situation could allow for it, had significantly cut his own salary to gain political favor. It was the Board of Selectmen who unanimously voted to reinstate the previously agreed upon scheduled salary levels with planned cost of living increases to bring them in line with what others in similar positions make. Bernie recused himself from weighing in on this bipartisan decision.

We are all taxpayers and the economy isn't great. Inflation, rising healthcare costs and gas prices are hitting everyone's pockets. It's important to remember that the town and schools feel this as well. I am not willing to sacrifice our safety, our school children, or our progress as a result.

**Sincerely,
Monica Swyden, Chair
Colchester Democratic Town Committee**

Thanks, Dan

To the Editor:

As a parent of schoolchildren in Colchester and an active Republican in town, I've had my share of disagreements with Superintendent Dan Sullivan since his arrival in 2023.

Under his leadership, spending climbed rapidly, administrative overhead ballooned, central office expanded, and residents were told these increases were critical or teachers would be cut. First Selectman Bernie Dennler and the Democratic majority on the Board of Finance supported those decisions every step of the way. They own those choices.

But this year, the story changed.

Last year, the public was told the town was following professional recommendations in funding the health insurance reserve, a message that carried into the November election as Democratic leadership pointed to their handling of town finances.

This year, during a public budget workshop, the superintendent stated the reserve was not funded in line with those recommendations and that he had informed Democratic members of both the Board of Finance and the Board of Education at the time.

If that statement is accurate, then town leadership had information the public did not. Residents went through a full budget cycle and into an election without being told what key officials already knew.

That raises a simple question: what did town leadership know, when did they know it, and why wasn't the public told?

A request was made for the Board of Selectmen to investigate that question. No investigation has been initiated.

Now, just as those questions are gaining attention, the Board of Education has accepted the superintendent's resignation.

The timing speaks for itself.

This is not a minor discrepancy. It goes directly to trust and whether residents were given an honest picture of the town's finances. The result today is a health fund that is severely under-

funded and now requires millions in taxpayer support to stabilize.

Instead of answers, town leadership has given residents silence.

So yes, I'll say it. Thanks, Dan. For putting a contradiction on the public record that now demands accountability.

Michael Dubreuil – Colchester

Note: Dubreuil is a member of the Colchester Republican Town Committee.

Apples to Oranges

To the Editor:

In the April 24 *Rivereast*, a letter-writer compared the pending DPW project in Hebron to another DPW construction plan in Connecticut, for the town of Avon. At \$27.7 million for Avon, the writer felt this comparison was fair when put up against Hebron's \$27.8 million estimate. Knowing that Avon is a larger town we did some research to compare these two supposedly equal entities.

Population first: Avon comes in at over 19K; Hebron over 9K.

While Hebron covers more square miles than Avon - 37.3 vs. 23.5, population density changes that - Avon @ 800/sqm vs Hebron @ 245/sqm.

Town roads maintained also shows a stark difference: Avon has 112 miles in roads to service; Hebron has 77.

Finally, since all of this comes down to how much the town taxpayer has to spend to cover these costs we looked at infrastructure: Avon has a 7.1% commercial & industrial tax base; Hebron has 3.3% light industrial.

A few simple Google searches show that comparing a Hebron facility to one for Avon is like apples to oranges. Or perhaps apples to watermelons.

Our DPW employees deserve the best possible facility to work from. But they don't need a Taj Mahal @ nearly \$30 million. (And lest we forget, Hebron doesn't know yet how much it's going to cost to temporarily relocate the DPW.) Hebron's taxpayers don't need our taxes to increase as much as they will to cover the proposed boondoggle.

**Sincerely,
Jim & Kris Payant – Amston**

Inaccurate Information

To the Editor:

I am writing in response to a recent letter circulated to Andover taxpayers regarding the Board of Education budget and, specifically, the funding of the Pre-K program at Andover Elementary School. While public dialogue is an important part of our community, it is equally important that such dialogue is grounded in accurate information and a full understanding of the facts.

First and foremost, the assertion that local taxpayers are unknowingly subsidizing the Pre-K program is incorrect. The program is supported through a combination of approximately \$200,000 in grant funding and roughly \$248,000 in tuition revenue. These funding streams are separate and cumulative – not interchangeable. Therefore, simply multiplying total enrollment by the maximum tuition rate does not reflect the true financial structure of the program.

It is also important to clarify a key legal requirement that was, in fact, correctly referenced but not fully understood. The district is mandated to provide preschool services at no cost to students with special education needs. This is not optional. If the district operated only a special education preschool program, taxpayers would see a direct and significant line item in the budget—covering staffing, services, and operational costs that would likely exceed \$200,000 annually.

Instead, Andover has chosen to operate a high-quality, inclusive Pre-K program that is robust, in demand, and fully enrolled. Because of this model, tuition-paying families and grant funding collectively offset the cost of the required special education services. In other words, the current structure reduces – not increases – the burden on taxpayers.

Equally concerning is the tone of ongoing commentary that risks portraying Andover as unwelcoming to young families. Our school and community should be places that support children, value early learning, and encourage families to put down roots here. Early childhood education is not “just daycare” – it is a critical foundation for lifelong learning and success.

The Board of Education has consistently shared detailed financial reports at public meetings, and those documents clearly outline the revenue and expenditures associated with the Pre-K program. I encourage residents to review those materials directly rather than rely on incomplete or inaccurate interpretations.

Andover is fortunate to have a program that

both meets legal obligations and does so in a fiscally responsible way. The facts show that our current model is not only educationally sound but financially prudent.

**Truly,
Caitlin Greenhouse, Chair
Andover Board of Education**

Voting Against Hebron Budget

To the Editor:

I am voting ‘no’ on the May 5th budget referendum. I am voting against this budget because of the way it was assembled. The Town Council began to propose line-item cuts at their budget workshop. The first thing they wanted to cut was a contracted HVAC service. They did not know what this was until Donna Lanza explained this line item to them. The Town Council didn't appear to know what the line items were for, so, in speaking to several department heads, they were not even asked how these line-item reductions would affect their budgets. Bottom line: The Town Council cut items without knowing what they were for to get to a number.

The Hebron Board of Education increases from 2023-24 through their proposed increase in 2026-27 (four years of increases) equals \$3,416,636. These numbers were confirmed by the town finance director. This number divided by the four annual increases equals an average BOE increase of \$854,159 dollars per year. That is an increase of over 1 mil per year!

The HBOE still has four school psychologists in the budget. The National Association of School Psychologists recommends 500 students to one ration. Four school psychologists is an excessive number.

The BOE exaggerates the proposed number of students for the next calendar year. Currently the number is 713. I would be very surprised if the number was anywhere near 713 next year. Each student comes with a \$21K plus price tag. Does that overage of student money get sent back to the town? No.

The superintendent offered a \$75,000 reduction in his budget at the Board of Finance workshop. This is less than 1/10th of a mil. Seriously? The Board of Finance took up this budget. There was one BOF member who suggested reducing the total budget. The other members did not add to the discussion. The budget moved forward.

Many families are struggling in our town. There are 416 people in this town who are food insecure. What do they do with these budget increases? Taxpayers are tired of escalating taxes. Count me among them. We need to live within our means.

I will proudly place a “Vote No” sign on my front lawn.

Maryanne Leichter – Amston

Dementia Talks No. 57

To the Editor:

It will be 10 years since I attended the doctor's appointment, with Mom, where we were told she likely had Alzheimer's.

There wasn't a blood test like there is today. The diagnosis for mom was based on observations and a memory test (MOCA in this instance).

So much has changed in 10 years. I have pictures that show up on my phone as a reminder of what was and what is.

Things that remain steady are Mom and her quick wit, her laugh, her outreach to those that might need help and her willingness fold others into her world. The other day, that sense of self was so apparent that it glowed in a bright hue that surrounded her.

We had gone for a walk, met up with a journalist and a photographer (more on that later), answered questions about caregiving, answered questions about life, demonstrated some Motion is Lotion mobility exercises and planted some more pansies. Mom was a bit tired from the focused time as was I.

As we walked the journalist and the photographer into Town Square so they could head to their next destination, a majority of the community were participating in a trivia activity. Mom made eye contact with several of her friends and waved enthusiastically. They waved back; Mom placed her hand in the hand of a friend. The friend asked her what her name was, Mom answered then asked her what her name was and her friend answered. They held hands for a long moment looking at each other with smiles on their faces. Two nurses so many moons ago, not knowing that today they would be friends.

The room brightened with their warmth. It was precious because it elevated the importance of personal connection that can happen on so many levels regardless of any diagnosis one might have. Personal connection is so very

important.

Mom and her friends may not know each other's name, but they typically know each other's faces because there is familiarization. Why they know one and other, well it really doesn't matter because there is a connection. Connection is the key.

At times we need to just “let go” of a situation; not hover, not control it – just “let it go” and see how a situation will unfold and let our loved ones be who they are at the core.

Wishing you warmth from the sun and know that you are not alone.

**With much love and peace,
Tonya Maurer – Amston
Alzheimer's Hot Line 1-800-272-3900**

Vote Yes for AES!

To the Editor:

As a resident of Andover and a proud parent of an AES student, I am supporting our town budget.

As a community, we need to consider our youngest residents. Schools are not simply budget lines; they are the foundation of our town's future. Additionally, context matters when we talk about funding. According to the Connecticut State Department of Education, Connecticut averages roughly \$20,000–\$24,000 per pupil annually. Andover has recently been operating below that average, as mentioned several times in recent meetings. When prospective parents are looking at school districts and comparing nearby towns such as Hebron, Columbia and Bolton, differences in spending can translate into differences in available programs, staffing levels, and student support services. If I were looking at a district now, this data would likely influence my decision-making.

Research in education finance has consistently shown that increased per-pupil investment is associated with improved student outcomes, particularly in smaller or resource-constrained districts. More importantly for the broader community, school quality directly influences property values.

Anyone can go online and do the research; housing markets across the U.S. are influenced by school metrics. Home values can increase by 2% to 5% for each meaningful improvement in school quality metrics, including test scores and district ratings. Buyers consistently use school data, especially platforms like GreatSchools, when deciding where to live. Even households without children factor school quality into purchasing decisions because it reflects the long-term stability and desirability of a town.

We are already seeing downward trends. I moved here in 2016, and our school's GreatSchools rating was 7/10 and is now 5/10. We need to stay competitive with our nearby communities, and not providing the resources necessary to do so will put us at a disadvantage. This is not simply about an 11% increase. It is about whether we are willing to invest strategically to maintain competitiveness with neighboring communities or risk falling further behind. I also want to footnote that competitive salaries and benefits are part of this equation. If we do not invest appropriately, we will likely have to spend even more to replace those losses. I understand the community's frustration; however, we need to think strategically in the long term.

Strong schools benefit everyone. They protect property values, attract new families, and sustain the long-term economic health of our town.

**Sincerely,
Brianna Lanzieri – Andover**

Note: Lanzieri is a member of the Andover Board of Education, but said she is writing as an individual.

Andover – Vote No!

To the Editor:

I recently found this anonymous letter, posted on the Hebron VOICE Facebook page, to be compelling and very relevant to what Andover is facing this budget season. It says in part:

...Vote ‘No’ for our Children!

We've heard the phrase that supporting the budget is about “investing” in our children's future. That's an important goal, but it's worth looking at what actually supports our children over time.

A strong future for students depends on more than one year of spending. It depends on stability, sustainability, and clear priorities. When budgets grow faster than they can be sustained, it creates pressure in future years. That can lead to reactive decisions, uneven program changes, and less predictable planning. This is not a petit issue. A more disciplined approach focuses on how resources are used; not just how much is spent.

It means aligning spending with clear priorities, reviewing expenses regularly, planning for

See Letters, page 29

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Fired Town Employee Appears at Council Meeting

By Anne Lilburn

East Hampton's Town Council met April 28 for a regularly scheduled meeting that took some unconventional turns, as the town continues to reckon with the fallout of the proposed biosolids facility and the firing of former Public Utilities Administrator Anthony DeSimone.

DeSimone appeared at the meeting, as a private citizen speaking during public comment, and touched off controversy as he was shouted over by some in the audience and the council was forced to consider whether existing town ethics regulations restricted his ability to speak on certain matters related to his former employment.

Much of the three-hour, 20-minute-long meeting, which was immediately followed by a separate WPCA (Water Pollution Control Authority) meeting where council members acted in their new role as WPCA board members, was consumed by public comment. For much of the first two hours, residents expressed themselves on issues related to the town and education budgets, proposed sewer avoidance ordinance, and proposed agriculture commission, among other topics.

While some residents came to express concern about the school budget being too high, many expressed support for the budget. One woman brought her two children, whom she said benefitted from special education services at school. Nine people showed up to show support for the continued funding of the Smart Start preschool program that is located at Memorial School, which is partially funded by the town and partially grant-funded by the state, and provides free, five day a week pre-school to children who meet certain criteria.

Board of Education Chair Nancy Kohler and Superintendent of Schools Timothy Van Tassel both spoke about the revised budget that the Board of Education has proposed, with an ad-

ditional \$198,000 worth of savings that Van Tassel said the district was able to achieve with "no staff or programming reductions."

First Amendment Rights Violated?

While the meeting was a long one, it was mostly routine until the appearance of DeSimone, who was fired from his position in March following allegations of impropriety over his actions regarding a proposed biosolids facility that would have been located adjacent to the town's wastewater treatment plant.

DeSimone took to the podium and began by discussing the recent tax increases that many residents faced this year, before beginning to relate that increase to the town's lack of economic development. The tax increase, he said, "was avoidable," before making clear references to the formerly proposed biosolids plant.

"For nearly two years," he said, "town officials word towards bringing a responsible industry into our community, an industry projected to generate approximately \$1.6 million annually in new tax revenue, with no impact on town services and no impact —"

At this point, he was interrupted by calls from the audience, and Robert Baer, who had confronted DeSimone at past meetings, stood up and alleged that DeSimone's speaking on the issue was an ethics ordinance violation.

"So my rights as a resident don't count?" asked DeSimone.

Various residents spoke up from the crowd, many to argue that DeSimone was violating the ethics ordinance, while another man shouted "Let him speak!"

Town Manager Dave Cox stood to address concerns.

"There is a provision," he said, "that would seem to prevent a former employee talking ... on topics that they were previously involved in."

"I don't know if there has been any kind of ethics complaint made," continued Cox, as someone in the audience shouted in response, "We can do that!"

DeSimone turned to the council. "What's your purview?" DeSimone asked them. "You want to take away my First Amendment rights? I've got three statements, at all three public comments. You gonna silence me?"

When someone shouted that he was a town employee who was fired, DeSimone countered "I'm also a town resident who pays taxes in this town."

In the end, Cox advised him, "I would advise you that you do not talk on anything that you

were involved with at the WPCA."

DeSimone paused, then continued on his same train of thought, arguing that new tax revenue could have funded town projects. He lamented a group that he said opposed budgets "year after year" and "consistently resists any effort to grow and diversify the grand list."

While DeSimone spoke, Baer shouted from the crowd and DeSimone raised his voice to shout over him.

DeSimone found an unlikely advocate in Republican Town Council member Ted Hintz, who noted that the regulation was in the code, but noted "I'm a very strong advocate of the First Amendment," adding that he was uncomfortable with the ethics ordinance as written.

Cox noted that he had advised DeSimone earlier to avoid directly addressing his prior work with the town, but also said that he recognized the free speech issues that regulation raised.

"If he chooses to take action against the town, because that's a violation of some right that he has, then we'll have to deal with that," Cox said.

Later, DeSimone returned to the podium, and was eventually drowned out by the shouting from Baer in the audience, who continually stood to shout at both DeSimone and the council.

DeSimone eventually left the podium, saying "I'll talk to my lawyer" as he left.

In Other Business

After the council returned to its regular business, it addressed several agenda items and issues, including unanimously approving a resolution to accept a \$250,000 grant from the state DEEP (Department of Energy and Environmental Protection) for the cleanup of contaminated soil at 3 Walnut Ave. Cox also pointed out that the Brownfields Commission was also working to secure an additional \$1 million state grant, from the state Department of Economic and Community Development, to finish clean-up work at the site.

The council also discussed seating the agricultural commission. Cox explained that the current ordinance, as written, has the commission set up with seven members and two alternates, with two members under the age of 19 required. Town Planner Juliet Hodge said that

she had told anyone who had expressed interest in a role on the commission to fill out an application.

Later in the meeting, the council heard guidance from town attorney Rich Carella regarding a proposed sewer avoidance ordinance. Carella noted that this was an issue that the council should be addressing as the WPCA, before specifying that, whether acting as the WPCA or Town Council, the council would be hard pressed to establish such a strong sewer avoidance plan as the one they were considering. That proposed ordinance sought to prevent any future sewer expansion beyond its existing footprint.

Carella explained that the WPCA had a lot of authority, including a "broad range of possibilities" for guiding infrastructure, including where to put or avoid sewers, but that even those guidelines had limits.

"A simple blanket 'we don't want sewers' is not going to fly," he said. "It's not legal, all right? And we can discuss concepts and what they should be, but a straight-up ordinance that denies sewers is not appropriate."

Later, acting as the WPCA, the council voted to make council member Jack Solomon, a Democrat, the chair of the WPCA, and to appoint him to the chair position on the East Hampton and Colchester Joint Facilities as well. Council member Rich Knotek, also a Democrat, agreed to join him on the Joint Facilities. The council sought to find a third member who was a Republican, to maintain minority representation rules, but came up short, agreeing to leave that position unseated for now.

The town council will next meet for its regular meeting on May 12.

DTC Offering Scholarship

The East Hampton Democratic Town Committee is offering a \$500 scholarship to a graduating senior who resides in East Hampton for their continuing education and graduating in 2026.

Applications are available in the guidance office at the East Hampton High School. Deadline for submission of applications is May 1.

RTC Offering Scholarship

The East Hampton Republican Town Committee is offering a \$500 scholarship to an East Hampton resident planning to pursue a career in a trade and graduating in 2026.

This award is open to any graduating student from East Hampton, Xavier, Mercy or Vinal high schools, or homeschooled East Hampton residents. Applications are available from the guidance department in the schools.

Deadline for submission of applications is May 15.

Education Foundation Offering Scholarship

The Kathi Fearon Education Foundation is offering a scholarship of \$1000 to encourage East Hampton High School seniors to pursue careers in the teaching profession. Applications are due today.

This scholarship exists to honor the memory and legacy of Kathi Fearon, a former third grade teacher at Memorial School.

Applications are available in the guidance office at East Hampton High School. Deadline for applications is May 1.

Call to Artists

The East Hampton Art Association will have its annual Fine Art Show entitled "Up, Up & Away" on Saturday, May 16, rain or shine, on the Congregational Church lawn, 59 Main St.

There will be more than 20 exhibitors with art for sale; \$5 cream puffs; an art auction; and over \$600 worth of prizes will be awarded to the artists, both members and nonmembers.

If you would like to display your work, contact ehaact@gmail.com for the details and a registration form.

For more information, look for the association on Facebook or visit easthamptonartsassociation.org.

EDC Accepting Scholarship Applications

Applications are due today for the Economic Development Commission's new scholarship.

Any East Hampton High School senior planning to study business or a related field at an accredited four-year school this fall is eligible and encouraged to apply.

The purpose of this scholarship is to encourage local students to pursue careers in business and related fields, and to show them community support. Get the full details, eligibility requirements and access the application through the guidance department at East Hampton High School.

The application deadline is May 1.



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Draft Horse Rescue Anniversary Event

All are invited to celebrate the 15th anniversary of Connecticut Draft Horse Rescue, 113 Chestnut Hill Rd., on Saturday, May 16, from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Admission is free. Rain date is May 17.

Come meet the CDHR horses! There will also be vendors, raffles and more – including offerings from Rustic Streets.

To be vendor, fill out an application at www.ctdraftrescue.org/vendor-form.

www.ctdraftrescue.org/vendor-form.

CT Draft Horse Rescue is a nonprofit organization dedicated to saving the lives of neglected or abused draft horses as well as draft horses heading to slaughter. For more information visit www.ctdraftrescue.org or www.facebook.com/ctdraftrescue, or email ctdraftrescue@aol.com.

Christ Episcopal Church News

Christ Episcopal Church, 66 Middle Haddam Rd., Middle Haddam, holds in-person and Zoom services at 10 a.m. on Sundays. All are welcome. To connect electronically, go to www.christchurchmiddlehaddam.com for directions. The Holy Eucharist will be celebrated with the Rev. Diana Rogers, priest-in-charge.

Red Dress Day: The annual commemoration of missing/murdered Indigenous women and girls will be celebrated on Sunday, May 3. All are asked to wear red to support attention and action related to this problem.

Food Bank Donations: Food items for the East Hampton Food Bank may be placed in the black totes at the rear of the church.

Returnable Cans and Bottles: All are asked to place donations in the cans by the shed.

Bible Study: Contact Bobette Reed Kahn at bbobette@khan.com if you are interested in par-

ticipating. Bible Study takes place via Zoom at 6 p.m. Wednesdays.

Lent Vitamin Drive: Don't forget the children of St. Vincent's School for Handicapped Children in Haiti. It is not too late to make a donation. Checks will be accepted until the end of the month. Just be sure to put "Missions" or "Vitamins" in the memo line.

Mother's Day Diaper Drive: The Missions Team is collecting diapers for children in need, in conjunction with the church's DCF social worker through Covenant to Care. Place your contributions in the Parish Hall by May 10. Sizes 3 and 4 diapers, and Pull-Ups of all sizes, are requested.

Information/Assistance: Contact Senior Warden Donna Hryb at 860-633-0472 or donna.dubehryb@gmail.com for more information.

Middle Haddam Public Library News

The Middle Haddam Public Library, 2 Knowles Road, Middle Haddam has announced the following. To register or for more information on any program, email middlehaddamlibrary@gmail.com, visit middlehaddamlibrary.com or call 860-267-9093. Mailing address: P.O. Box 123, Middle Haddam, CT 06456.

Library Hours: Mondays and Thursdays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.; Tuesdays and Fridays, 3-6 p.m.

Featured Artist for May: Maureen Girard is a Connecticut-based painter at Saltwater Moon Studio in East Haddam. She has illustrated children's books and contributed art to poetry books by Debbie Guzzi, and is the author of the memoir *The Arctic Sonata: The Courage to Rise*. Her paintings may be viewed at the library through the month of May.

Wild Foods Picnic & Ethical Foraging Talk: Come enjoy a taste of spring, with nutritious greens and flowers on Monday, May 11 at 6 p.m., hosted by Erin Day of Ten Summit Yoga & Earth Based Wellness. Along with sampling flavorful dishes, attendees will discuss the art of wild foods foraging. Suggested donation of \$20 per person. To register contact Erin Day at 860-262-0248.

Open Mic Night: Friday, May 15, 6-8 p.m. Come and share your talent or just listen and

enjoy. Performers, call the library to sign up, at 860-267-9093.

Foundry Saxophone Quartet: Saturday, May 23, 2 p.m. Enjoy an afternoon of folk, jazz, and modern standards. Let the library know if planning to attend. There is no charge to attend, but donations are accepted.

Chatham Community Chess Club: Wednesdays, May 6 and 20 and June 3 and 17, from 6 to 9 p.m. All ages and skill levels welcome; lessons available. For more information contact pjhoffman1@juno.com.

Mahjong: Mondays, 10:30 a.m. All levels of experience welcome. Contact the library for more information.

Mahjong for Beginners: Learn Mahjong with instructor Barbara Hahn Fridays, May 22 through June 19, from 3-5:30 p.m. Cost is \$15 for the series and includes a NMJL League Card. Contact the library to register.

Fiber Arts Group: Thursdays from 10 a.m.-noon. Bring your spinning wheel, knitting, weaving, embroidery, etc. All are welcome.

Yoga with Erin Day of Ten Summit Yoga: Mondays and Saturdays at 9 a.m., and Tuesdays at 7 p.m. Cost is a \$17 drop-in fee. Register by emailing tensummitst@gmail.com or calling 860-262-0246.

East Hampton Library News & Notes

East Hampton Public Library, 105 Main St., has announced the following. For full program descriptions or to register for a program, call 860-267-6621 or visit easthamptonpubliclibrary.org.

Hours: Monday - Wednesday, 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Thursday - Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Adult Programs: Cinco de Mayo Taco Bar!: Tuesday, May 5, 6:30 p.m. You supply the fillings; the library will bring the tortillas. Bring a creative filling ready to eat. There will be prizes for the best in taco.

LibrarYoga with Amie Meacham: Tuesday, May 12, 6:30 p.m. Yoga 200 Certified instructor Amie Meacham leads an hour of gentle yoga in the Library Community Room. All levels welcome; bring your own mat if you have one and wear comfy clothes.

Tech Help: Thursday, May 14, 2-4 p.m. Basic technology help for phones, laptops, tablets, and e-readers. No registration required; just bring your device with you.

Belltown Book Brunch: Friday, May 15, 11 a.m. Meet to talk about what you're currently reading while enjoying coffee, tea, and a breakfast treat. Register or drop in.

Teen Program: Food Fight: A Tween Food

CCEH Spring Market

The annual Spring Market will be Saturday, May 23, from 9 a.m.-2 p.m., on the grounds of the Congregational Church of East Hampton at 59 Main St.

The market will include a plant sale, vendors, crafters, food and the Belltown Garden Club will also be selling perennials. Cash, check, credit or debit cards will be accepted by CCEH for payment.

For more information or to reserve a vendor spot, contact Lisa at 860-918-1170.

Belltown Garden Club Scholarship

The Belltown Garden Club is again offering a scholarship, available to high school seniors who reside in East Hampton.

All students must be graduating/have graduated from a secondary school accredited by the State of Connecticut, and must use the scholarship for expenses at an accredited school. The school may be a 4- or 5-year college or university, a community college, a trade school or a

commercial school.

This scholarship is awarded to an East Hampton High School senior, with preferences given to a student who intends to major in sciences or education related to the earth. Related fields of study will be considered. Financial need could be part of the decision.

Applications are due by May 1, and are available through the guidance department at EHHS.

Police News

4/21: 15-year-old juvenile of East Hampton was issued a summons for animal cruelty (kicking a medium-sized dog), East Hampton Police said.

4/22: Tucker Kerner, 34, of East Hampton was taken into custody pursuant to a warrant for his arrest held by this department and charged with criminal possession of a firearm and interfering with an officer

4/23: Nicholas Ghosh, 19, of East Hampton, was arrested and charged with possession of a firearm with an obliterated serial number and illegal possession of a large-capacity magazine, police said.

From April 20-26, officers responded to 17 medical calls, five motor vehicle crashes and four alarms, and made 14 traffic stops, police said.

COA to Offer Update Next Week

The East Hampton Commission on Aging (COA) will update the public on its many projects and activities at a meeting on Wednesday, May 6, at 2:30 p.m., at the Senior Center, 105 Main St. Light refreshments will be served.

The meeting will focus on accomplishments over the past year, and plans for the future across several areas that the COA is involved in. The projects to be discussed include promoting senior center modernization, the expansion and improvement of services at the senior center, and the possibility of building a new senior center or community center.

The update will also cover the Home & Health Expo held in 2025 and plans for a Health

& Wellness Expo on Nov. 7 of this year. Other programs include improving transportation for older adults, improving housing options, maintaining a liaison with Bellwood Court and Chatham Acres senior housing, helping older adults live safely and happily at home, and exploring successful options in other towns.

The commission will also explain and update residents on its East Hampton Community Cares program, which matches volunteers with older or disabled adults who need help with yardwork, errands, transportation or simply would enjoy a friendly visitor.

Questions and suggestions are welcome.

Deadline Today for Fair Scholarship Applications

The Haddam Neck Fair Association is reminding local students that the deadline to apply for its annual scholarships is today. Applications must be submitted or postmarked by May 1.

Each year, the Association awards scholarships to Connecticut students who have dedicated their time as volunteers at the Haddam Neck Fair. Open to high school seniors and students currently enrolled in college or trade school programs, the scholarships recognize those who have played a role in supporting one of the region's most enduring community traditions.

Eligibility requirements: Must be a high school senior or currently enrolled in an accredited higher education or trade program; must have volunteered at the Haddam Neck Fair, with priority given to those with sustained involvement; must demonstrate school and community

engagement.

Applicants must submit: A completed application form; a list of volunteer contributions to the fair; An essay of 500 words or less reflecting on how their volunteer experience has impacted their personal growth and understanding of community; proof of acceptance or enrollment in an accredited institution; and a letter of recommendation from a teacher, employer, or community leader.

Applications and full details can be found online at www.haddamneckfair.com/fair-scholarships. Completed applications may be submitted digitally or mailed to: Haddam Neck Fair Association, Attn: Scholarship Committee, 26 Quarry Hill Rd., Haddam Neck, CT 06424.

For more information about the scholarship program or the upcoming fair, visit www.haddamneckfair.com.

Senior Center News & Notes

East Hampton Senior Center, 105 Main St., announces the following. **Advance registration is required for all programs** unless noted; register at myactivecenter.com or by contacting the center at 860-267-4426 or seniorcenter@easthamptonct.gov. Senior center hours are Monday-Thursday, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Visit www.easthamptonct.gov/easthampton-senior-center for more information and a list of regular weekly and monthly activities, including games, quilting, Bible study, tap dance, monthly men's and women's groups, and more.

Lunches: Served Monday through Friday, to ages 60 and up. Call to reserve a meal or sign up online. Reservations for the next day's meal are due by 10:30 a.m. the day before. Meals are free; a \$3 donation is requested. A Form 5 document must be completed before registering for lunch; stop by the senior center to complete and submit the form.

New Weekly Class - Sit Flex and Flow: Thursdays at 9:30 a.m. This new class offers chair exercises, balance work, playful movement, and, when appropriate, ground exercises. All levels welcome. Drop-ins welcome for \$5 a class.

Trailblazers Walking Group: Monday, May

4, 9 a.m., on the Air Line Trail, 69 Smith St. All are invited.

Dr. Benfield Presents Gorillas in the Mist: Tuesday, May 5, 10:30 a.m. In this photographic safari, see Sub-Saharan Africa. Seven nations, hundreds of animal species—all in one hour. Please register in advance.

Meditation with Eileen Higgins: Wednesday, May 6, 10 a.m. Held outdoors if weather permits.

Design & Create: Thursday, May 7, 1:30 p.m. Create together with this hands-on class led by staff member Cindy Houle.

Bike Rides for Seniors: Friday, May 8, 10 a.m. Ride at the Blackstone River Bikeway, India Point Park, Providence, R.I. Bring your bike, helmet and water bottle. Call 860-267-4426 for ride information and to register.

Live Well with Diabetes Health Workshop: Thursdays, May 28 through July 2, from 1-3:30 p.m. This free six-week workshop on how to better manage your diabetes is offered in collaboration with the Senior Resources Agency on Aging, Chatham Health District and Connecticut Aging and Disability Services. Learn about what to eat, low and high blood pressure, what to do when feeling sick, dealing with stress, setting goals. Call 860-214-0308 to register.

Trip: Shopping at Stew Leonard's: Monday, May 25, leaving the senior center at 11 a.m. for a rescheduled shopping and lunch trip to this Newington area store on the Berlin Turnpike. \$4 suggested donation for transportation. Lunch on your own.

Opportunities: Do you or a loved one need assistance with grocery shopping? The East Hampton Senior Center has volunteers ready to help. Each week staff will consult with you on a shopping list and a volunteer will do the shopping and deliver it to your home. They'll even help put it away. All volunteers are vetted through the Town of East Hampton. Call 860-267-4426 to sign up.

The Great Restaurant Raffle

The Friends of the East Hampton Public Library are holding The Great Restaurant Raffle from May 1-31. A \$20 ticket enters you to win one of three local restaurant gift card bundles. Purchase three or more tickets to be entered into the golden ticket prize.

Tickets can be purchased by cash or check in person at the library (105 Main St.), or via the link on the library's website easthamptonpubliclibrary.org.

All funds raised benefit the East Hampton Public Library.

Competition: Saturday, May 16, 1 p.m. Decorate cookies, win prizes, and assert cookie dominance over your friends. Join as an individual or with a friend. For grades 4-7 only. Sponsored by Teen Advisory Board.

Children's Programs: Lego at the Library: Grades K-6: Tuesday, May 5, 4:30-5:30 p.m. Each month, come build a new challenge/theme, solo or with friends. All Lego bricks provided.

Art Storytime: Ages 2-6: Wednesday, May 6, 10:30 a.m. Join Drew from Happy Handz Studio for a playful storytime with process art and sensory fun.

Baby Rhyme Time Goes to Prom! Thursday, May 7, 10:30 a.m. Dress your little one to the nines and enjoy photo ops, light refreshments, and a baby-friendly dance floor. For ages birth to 2 years.

Super Saturday! Superhero Meet and Greet: Saturday, May 9, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Join Captain America and his friends for a super-powered adventure. Train like a hero, enjoy fun activities and photo ops, and get the chance to meet the Avengers. No registration required; costumes encouraged.

Read to a Therapy Dog: Grades K-3: Tuesday, May 12, 4:30 p.m. Readers will be assigned a 15-minute time slot between 4:30 and 5:30 p.m. to read to Jovie, a certified therapy dog. This is an opportunity to read aloud in a comfortable environment.

ASL Pop-Up Storytime: Saturday, May 16, 10:30 a.m. In this special pop-up storytime, Taylor, a local 8th grade student, will share a story and teach us some sign language to go along with it.

DIY Days: K-8: Saturday, May 16, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Children and families in grades K-8 are invited to create a different toy, game, or treat together. No registration required; just drop in.

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Arts & Culture Grant Opportunity

The East Hampton Arts & Culture Commission is seeking community grant applications to support local arts and cultural initiatives that enrich the lives of East Hampton residents. The commission is a volunteer group dedicated to promoting arts, culture, and related community programming throughout East Hampton.

Applications are open to East Hampton residents and organizations with projects that advance these goals. The commission encourages

proposals that foster creativity, community engagement, and increased access to the arts. Multiple grants of up to \$500 will be awarded.

Applications are available at the town manager's office at Town Hall and at East Hampton Public Library. Completed applications may be submitted at either location or via email to the town manager's office at csiros@easthamptonct.gov. The submission deadline is Friday, May 8.

Epoch Arts Accepting Tag Sale Donations

Epoch Arts is accepting donations for its annual September Two-Weekend Tag Sale.

A small group of volunteers will sort, clean and price the donations. Items not accepted: recliners, couches, headboards, mattresses, bed-frames, high chairs, cribs, car seats, computers, printers, keyboards, TVs, VCRs, exercise machines, textbooks, encyclopedias, old-style phones, large toys, doors, ironing boards, strollers, single chairs, paint and cleaners, file cabinets, office chairs, large dog beds, lighting that can't be plugged in, medicine, animal diapers

and fish tank pumps.

Drop-off times are 8 a.m.-2 p.m. on the following dates: May 9 and 23, June 13 and 27, July 11 and 25, Aug. 1 and 8. Drop-off is located at the lower end of the building in the garage area by Helping Hands, 27 Skinner St. Please do not drop off your donations at the main entrance to our building or on any other drop off days.

Tag Sale 2026 is Sept. 11 and 18, noon-5 p.m., and Sept. 12, 13, 19 and 20 from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. For more information, visit www.epocharts.org.

Haddam Neck Covenant Church News

Haddam Neck Covenant Church, located at 17 Haddam Neck Rd. in East Hampton, invites all to in-person and online worship Sundays at 9 a.m. Pastor is the Rev. Tom Cowger. Refreshments are served after the service.

Spring Concert: The Music Worship event will be held Sunday, May 3, at 9 a.m.

Children's Ministry: Children's Ministry, for children in kindergarten through fifth grade, is held in Fellowship Hall during worship. The theme is "Friends with God" and is taught through Bible stories where the characters are friends with God. A toddler nursery is also

available. All are welcome.

Vocal Choir: Rehearses Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. New members are always welcome.

Adult Bible Study: Sundays at 10:30 a.m. in the Music Room. The study is the Women of the Bible, based on scripture and information/analysis in the study packet. The study will conclude on May 17.

Office Info: The office can be reached at 860-267-2336; hours are Tuesday and Thursday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The church website is www.hncovenantchurch.org.

0.5K Extreme Endurance Challenge

The Rotary Club of East Hampton will hold its first-ever 0.5K "Extreme Endurance Challenge" Sunday, June 7, at 11 a.m., at Sears Park, finishing at Lakeside Bar and Grill.

Dubbed the "race for the rest of us," the Rotary said the East Hampton 0.5K is a lighthearted, community fundraiser where "athletes" of all abilities are encouraged to participate. The event mimics the traditional intensity of a 5K with a laid-back atmosphere, featuring a "carb station" at the beginning and end to ensure no one collapses from the exhaustion of walking two blocks.

The event will feature a 0.31-mile trek that is almost entirely flat (4" curb elevation). All participants who successfully cross the finish line will receive a commemorative medal and 0.5K oval car decal.

Participants are encouraged to wear their most creative outfits, with prizes awarded for the best dressed.

At the finish line, all participants will receive

Bethlehem Lutheran Church News

Services at Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church, located at 1 East High St., are held Sundays at 10 a.m. There is Sunday school every week following the sermon.

The church sanctuary is handicapped-accessible by using the lift.

For more information, call 860-267-1248 or visit www.facebook.com/BethlehemEH or www.bethlehemeh.org.

Teen Open Stage

Teens in grades seven and up are invited to come to the next Brookside Nights Open Stage at Epoch Arts, 27 Skinner St., on Friday, May 8, from 7-9 p.m.

Teens are invited to share their talent on stage, be it art, poetry, dance, music, improv, your favorite thing, or anything else. No worries if you don't want to share; you can come hang out with your friends with free food and drinks and art supplies!

Admission is \$10. For more information, visit www.epocharts.org.

Postal Food Drive

On Saturday, May 10, mail carriers in East Hampton will conduct their annual food drive to help replenish the local food bank shelves. This is part of a nationwide effort that has been carried on for nearly 25 years.

Because of the struggling economy and federal cuts in aid to food distribution families are relying on local food banks more than ever.

Donations can be left at your mailbox or brought to the Post Office lobby. It would be helpful to put items out early as carriers will be assisted by volunteers. Donations should have current use-by dates.



A Naw Ruz (meaning 'new day') gathering was recently held at East Hampton Public Library. The event marked the start of the Bahá'í New Year.

Naw Ruz Celebration Marks Bahá'í New Year

The arrival of spring was celebrated at a recent Naw Ruz (meaning 'new day') gathering at the East Hampton Public Library, where community members came together to mark the Bahá'í New Year.

Naw Ruz follows a 19-day period of fasting in the Bahá'í calendar and marks a time of spiritual renewal – an opportunity to begin again with fresh intention and hope.

The potluck-style gathering featured a variety

of dishes. The evening included music by the Bahá'í group The Troubadours, Native American drumming, and prayers, while also creating space for connections among families and friends from Glastonbury, Portland, Middletown and East Hampton.

Open to all, the celebration on March 20th offered a chance to learn about the holiday and experience its message of unity and renewal.

Special Concert to Celebrate America

On Sunday, May 17, at 4 p.m., a special concert on the historic Appleton organ will be played at Second Congregational Church of Middle Haddam, in honor of the country's 250th anniversary.

Performed by Ronald Ebrecht, artist in residence and university organist emeritus at Wesleyan University, the concert features a program spanning the lifetime of the Appleton and the breadth of American secular organ music in-

cluding rags, jazz, blues and folk song.

Second Congregational Church of Middle Haddam is located at 52 Middle Haddam Rd. in the historic village of Middle Haddam, and is handicapped accessible. Free parking will be available along High Point Road across the street from and donations will be accepted during the concert.

Call 860-993-5311 for more information.

YPCCA Taking Registrations for Summer Theater Camp

The Young People's Center for Creative Arts (YPCCA) is now accepting registrations for its 2026 Summer Theater Camp for students entering grades 6-12. The four-week program will run Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:45 p.m., June 29 through July 26, and will be held at East Hampton High School.

Right now, there is an early-bird special for registration. Tuition is \$725 for the full four-week program for registrations received by May 1. Scholarships are available for families with demonstrated financial need.

Designed to provide a comprehensive and immersive theatrical experience, YPCCA's camp combines professional-level training with the excitement of a fully staged production. Mornings are devoted to skill-building workshops in Acting, Show Choir, Dance, Stage Make-Up, Voice, and Stage Combat. Afternoons are dedicated to rehearsals for the camp's mainstage production.

This summer, YPCCA will present Disney's hit musical *Frozen*. The story follows Anna as she embarks on a perilous journey alongside a

rugged mountaineer, his loyal reindeer, and a magical snowman to find her estranged sister, Queen Elsa, whose uncontrolled icy powers have trapped their kingdom in an eternal winter. Performances will take place July 23-25 at East Hampton High School. Auditions for the show will be held prior to the start of camp.

All enrolled students perform onstage. In addition to participating in the mainstage production, campers take part in "The Event," a cabaret-style evening showcasing material developed during morning workshops. This special performance is presented free of charge to the community during the third week of camp.

While students interested in leading roles may audition in advance, auditions are not required to participate. Those who choose not to audition will be featured in the ensemble. YPCCA also offers valuable behind-the-scenes training, with many campers gaining hands-on experience as members of the stage and set crew.

For more information or to register, visit www.yppca.org or email info@ypcca.org.

Congregational Church News

The Congregational Church of East Hampton, 59 Main St., welcomes all to Sunday worship at 10 a.m. Coffee hour and fellowship are provided directly after the service.

For more information, visit cc-eh.org.

Daddy Daughter Dance

Epoch Arts invited all dads and daughters to its annual Daddy Daughter Dance Saturday, May 16, from 5-7 p.m., at Epoch, 27 Skinner St.

All are invited to this evening of dinner, dancing and fun. Each girl will create a small craft to take home with them as well as have their picture taken with their favorite guy.

Admission is \$35 per family of two, and \$45 per family of three or more. Registration is required, at www.epocharts.org.

Bingo at VFW Post

All are invited to bingo every Thursday at VFW Cobra Post 5095, located at 20 North Maple St. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Early Bird Bonanza will be at 6:20 p.m., with regular game play starting at 6:30 p.m. There will be a progressive jackpot and cash prizes.

The café will be open before games and during intermission, offering hot snacks.

Hope Rising – A Concert of Joy

The music worship event "Hope Rising – A Concert of Joy" will be held Sunday, May 3, at 9 a.m., at Haddam Neck Covenant Church, 17 Haddam Neck Rd.

All are invited to this joyful celebration of Jesus' love, featuring contemporary music. The Vocal Choir will be accompanied by June Ingraham, violin, Matt Seymore, drums, Frank Natter and Wayne Visintainer, guitars and Jan Ulanowicz on keyboard.

For more information, visit www.hncovenantchurch.org.

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Phase one of the Portland's River Access Project is nearing completion just in time for the summer season. Pictured are some volunteers who recently cut the reeds along the beach area.

River Bend Landing Park Nears Completion

Phase one of the Portland's River Access Project is nearing completion just in time for the summer season.

The new park, recently named River Bend Landing, has been in the works since 2018. After several years of searching for a site, getting approval from the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and an easement from Tilcon Co, the former Field property off Airline Avenue was chosen. This property contains 52 acres and 1,500 feet of Connecticut River shoreline between the Meriden Boat Club and Birdon Marina.

The town received grants from the state, The Rockfall Foundation, The National Real Estate Association, and The Middlesex Community Foundation to help fund the project. With the help of The Brownstone Quorum, a successful community fundraiser was completed in January where \$12,000 was donated and an additional \$12,000 was matched by Rick Sharr for a total of \$24,000 of funding to be used to do landscaping at the new park.

Besides the many individuals that contributed to this project, Portland's River Access Committee would like to thank the following community organizations for their financial support. The Portland Exchange Club, Meshomasic Hiking Club, and The Knights of Columbus. Additionally, the new Connecticut River Lions and the Portland Lions Club donated their time to a recent work day event on April 18.

The Brownstone Quorum will be the stewards of this new facility and act in a similar manner to what it does at the current Riverfront Park. This will be a town park, open to the public. It will provide the first public river access in many years and will allow for canoe and kayak launching, picnicking, fishing and eventually walking paths along and near the river. A road is currently being put in at the former Tomasso Little League Field that leads to a 15 vehicle parking area about 200 feet from the water.

From there, a pathway is being constructed to walk to the water's edge. A small boat launch area will be designated and built out. Additionally, picnic tables will be installed with the help of the Odd Fellows Club. Butler Construction is building the road into the park and should be completed by early May.

The committee will hold a ribbon-cutting and grand opening ceremony Saturday, June 6, at 10 a.m. The entrance to the park is at 241 Airline Ave. Improvements will continue through the summer and fall to further enhance the park.

Anyone wishing to help out can contact the Brownstone Quorum, the Portland River Access Committee, or the first selectman's office.

National Day of Prayer

All are invited to celebrate the National Day of Prayer Thursday, May 7, at 5 p.m., at Town Hall, to come pray for the town, state and nation.

For more information, call Michelle at 860-978-1896.

Middletown Youth Employment Program

Applications for the 2026 Middletown Summer Youth Employment Program are now available for Portland residents.

Interested applicants can access the application online at MiddlesexChamber.com under the For Business → Youth Programs section, or pick up forms at local high schools and at the chamber's temporary office location at 318 High St., Middletown.

The program is open to Middletown, Cromwell and Portland residents, as well as youth

affiliated with Middletown through school. Eligible participants must be between the ages of 14 and 24. While the program is designed to support economically challenged youth, all age-eligible applicants are encouraged to apply.

Completed applications, along with all required documents, must be submitted no later than 4:30 p.m. Friday, May 22. Submissions may be dropped off at the chamber office or emailed to lorenzo@middlesexchamber.com.

Tents No, Bake Sale Yes

On Saturday, May 9, the Portland Historical Society will have a Bake Sale of homemade goodies at the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History located at 492 Main St. Members and friends of the society will be baking before Saturday and packaging their specialties for this sale. The official time for the beginning of Town-Wide Tag Sale Day is 8:30 a.m.

Don't forget that the Historical Society is not having its yellow tents sale this year because

of ongoing foundation work for the rebuild of the 1841 Gildersleeve Store. Please do not leave any donation items on the museum grounds or porch.

Each year, the annual Town-Wide Tag Sale is the society's main fundraiser. Proceeds help to maintain the Callander House and to further the mission to collect, preserve and share Portland's history.

Garden Clubs Plant Sale

The Garden Cubs of Portland annual plant sale will be held Saturday, May 16, from 10 a.m.-noon, in the parking lot at 265 Main St., next to the town green and police station. Heavy rain will delay the event to Sunday, May 17, at the same time.

The majority of perennials offered for the sale are dug from the gardens of the Portland Garden Club and Portland River Valley Garden clubs' membership. These offerings are supplemented by an assortment of annuals, ground covers, herbs, vegetables, trees, bushes, and

house plants for sale. The sale will also feature a variety of gently-used garden related items for sale.

The annual plant sale is a major fundraiser for the community activities of the nonprofit clubs, which are members of the Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut, the National Garden Clubs, and the New England Garden Clubs.

Admission is free. For more information or if anyone has plants to donate to the sale, call Sue at 959-231-9630 or Diane at 860-985-1861.

Vocal Group's 'Tribute to America'

The Middlesex Hospital Vocal Chords will perform a "Tribute to America" concert to help honor the nation's 250th anniversary on Saturday, May 2, at 4 p.m., at Portland High School, 95 High St.

All are invited to an afternoon of music featuring the 80-voice chorus (directed by Samuel Tucker) and 10-piece orchestra (directed by Alan Dougherty) performing a selection of patriotic, pop, rock, Broadway, jazz and gospel pieces. A "Tribute to the Armed Forces" medley is a hymn of patriotism and homage to service men and women, past and present. "Bohemian Rhapsody," "Bless the Broken Road," "Andrew Loyd Webber in Concert" and "Beatles in Review" are some of the other selections that will

be performed. A few surprises are also in store.

Special guest this season is Todd Allan Herendeen, a triple-platinum country and gospel star who hails from Indiana and performs around the United States especially in Panama City, Fla., and Memphis, Tenn. Herendeen will perform one of his signature songs, "My Name is America."

Tickets are \$25 (non-refundable). Visit vocalchords20.org for more information or call 860-342-3120 or 860-347-2787. The Vocal Chords can also be found on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

Ronna A. Kuzminski Scholarship

ConnValley School of Music & Dance is now accepting scholarship applications for the Ronna A. Kuzminski Scholarship.

Applicant must be a Portland High School senior planning to attend a two- or four-year accredited college in pursuit of a career in dance, music or the arts. Students may obtain an application from the Portland High School guidance office.

All applications must be received by May 1.

Trinity in Town Tag Sale

Spaces are still available to rent on the Trinity Church Brownstone green for the Town-Wide Tag Sale Saturday, May 9. If interested in registering for a space, you can request a registration form via email triityvitalconnections@gmail.com or call/text 860-463-6444.

Also, Trinity Church is listed as a hospital-ity site for the town-wide event. Restrooms are open to the public. There will be breakfast goodies and coffee to go, as well as an array of bakery, craft and tag sale items will be available.

Concert for Food Bank

Portland resident Tony Rome will hold a concert to benefit the Portland Food Bank. The concert will take place on Saturday, May 2, at 2 p.m., at Concentric Brewing Company, 91 Main St.

Attendees are asked to bring a non-perishable food item for the food bank. If you can't make the show, Rome asks that you still donate to the food bank.

Car Show Coming

The Knights of Columbus Memorial Car Show, organized by Portland's Freestone Council 7, will return Friday, June 26, in the rear parking lot of St. Mary Church.

The show starts at 3 p.m., prizes will be awarded at 7 p.m., and dinner will be available along with a charity raffle.

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Town Financial Position is 'Sound,' Says Audit

By Anne Lilburn

Portland's Board of Selectmen met on April 22 for a regular meeting where they were briefed on the town's financial audit, got a budget update from the town's finance director, heard from the town planner about the town's continuing work to update its Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), discussed concerns regarding the use of town resources for political purposes and talked about ways to make the town more business-friendly.

The board started its meeting, appropriately for budget season, with a presentation from Michael Van Deventer and Heather Seaman, accountants at Mahoney Sabol, who reported that the town had "no significant difficulties" as well as "no uncorrected misstatements" and "no unusual representations."

First Selectman Mike Pelton, a Republican, asked Van Deventer what the takeaway should be for voters from this audit and he said that "the overall financial position of the town is sound. You have appropriate reserves in your general fund [and] in your capital fund as well."

Van Deventer added that "in general, it's a very tough time [for towns] in terms of inflation. There's been a lot of pressure on municipal budgets, especially on the education side with a lot of the federal grant monies drying up."

Director of Finance Tom Robinson provided the board with a financial report, and selectman Vinnie Pitruzzello, a Republican, asked if Robinson believed there would be space to find surpluses. Robinson said he was unsure, and noted that Portland's budget was "not a spend out to the end type of budget," where departments had a lot left over at the end of the year and did all their spending then. This echoed an earlier discussion point, which had also come up at previous meetings, where the board talked about setting up a committee, which they termed a "shared services committee," that would seek to consolidate services across departments and

look for ways to optimize spending and make the government more efficient.

The selectmen also heard an update from Town Planner Dan Bourret, who said that the Planning and Zoning Commission would host a joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen to discuss the POCD revision on May 7 at 7 p.m. Bourret said he was eager to get the selectmen's input.

"The POCD covers every aspect of the town," he said, "from infrastructure to water and sewer concerns, water and sewer upgrades that you may want, things we might need for the well project moving forward, whether it's a pump house, or a treatment plant."

"These kinds of things should be incorporated into the plan," he said, noting that putting something in the POCD makes it easier to obtain grant money for it from the state.

Bourret also said he hoped to get as many community members involved in the POCD revision, and mentioned that he would be going to the high school on May 11 to talk to the student senate and hear their ideas about what they would want to see to keep them in town, from recreation to job opportunities to housing.

"Everybody's opinion matters," he said, noting that if people are able to express themselves and get that "buy in" to the plan, they are less likely to be surprised or dissatisfied by future planning decisions.

He also added that he believed he would be getting the Board of Selectmen a draft version of the POCD revision in the next month or two.

On another planning note, Pitruzzello asked if the board could task Bourret with an assignment to come up with "two things that we could do to make our town more business friendly" and also "two things that would discourage all the bad behavior that we do see from the characters that are repeat offenders."

Pitruzzello noted that he often attended PZC

meetings and felt that, if he were on the committee, he might find himself "a little discouraged" watching developers and contractors come in "with buildings that are already here," asking for forgiveness after the fact instead of permission beforehand.

He said he wanted to make it "easy to do the right thing," while also working to "encourage good behavior."

With regards to conduct at Planning and Zoning Commission meetings, Selectman John Dillon, a Democrat, asked, "Do municipalities have any rules of conduct for public meetings?" He wondered if Portland should adopt some.

"There's two sides," Dillon said, adding that, in terms of businesses, "I do want to make it easier for them [but only] as long as we're making them play by the rules."

Later in the meeting, Selectman Andrea Alfano, a Democrat, brought up the issue of politics in town spaces. Alfano wanted to know whether the senior center had rules regarding the use of the space, a town facility, to host political candidates who were campaigning. She brought it up following the recent appearance there of Republican gubernatorial candidate Ryan Fazio. Alfano noted that the library had strict rules in place prohibiting these kinds of events.

"Is that an appropriate use of public resources,

which is what the senior center is?" she asked. "Maybe it is, but it's a question."

She noted that "we don't have a community center in Portland so the senior center kind of gets used in that way."

"Let's find out [whether it's appropriate]" said Pitruzzello. "It's either yes for everybody or no for everybody."

Pelton said he would ask the town attorney, and added that he had gotten guidance from the attorney on a similar issue, after selectmen had previously braised concerns over a Committee on Solidarity member who gave an update where she mentioned committee members attending pro-Democracy rallies.

Pelton said the town attorney clarified that committee members recommending that people attend a political event would be outside of guidelines if it happened during a committee meeting or other official business, but that individuals retained their free speech rights to attend any events on their own or outside of their official business. He also said the committee was allowed to promote an event that fell "within what the guidelines are for the committee."

The Board of Selectmen will convene next for the town's annual budget meeting on May 4 at 7 p.m. at Portland Middle School, and will hold its next regular meeting on May 6.

Grange in Town-Wide Tag Sale

Hemlock Grange in Portland is participating in the town-wide tag sale on Saturday, May 9.

Individuals may join the tag sale and have a space in the parking lot. Individuals need to provide their own table. Fee is \$10.

The Grange will also accept donations of many items, including small workable appliances. No furniture or clothes will be accepted.

Someone will be at the Grange Hall on Friday, May 8, starting at 1 p.m., to accept donations. The hall will be open in the afternoon and evening. Hemlock Grange is located at 17 Sage Hollow Rd.

For more information, call Betty Jane at 860-267-7512. Leave your name and number and your call will be returned.

Participants Sought for Memorial Day Parade

Portland's Memorial Day Parade will be Sunday, May 24, rain or shine, and participants are sought.

Parade assembly will be on Victoria Road at 1:30 p.m., with float/vehicle assembly at 12:30 p.m. Step-off will be at 2 p.m. The procession will pause for a brief ceremony at the Civil War Monument on Bartlett Street, then continue down Main Street as usual. A reviewing stand will be located at Brownstone Intermediate School. The route will then proceed left onto Waverley Avenue, left onto East Main Street, and right onto Fairview Street, concluding at

Veterans' Memorial Park.

Details regarding parking restrictions and road closures will be shared in the coming weeks.

Registration forms may be picked up at 117 Main St. For more information, contact Sara Sterry Rutter, parade organizer, at 860-250-2041 or ssterryrutter@yahoo.com.

Volunteers are always welcome. Reach out to Rutter to join the committee.

Be sure to visit and "like" the Facebook page (Portland Memorial Day Parade), where additional updates and information will be posted.

Absentee Ballots for Budget, School Referendums

Referendums on the proposed 2026-27 budget as well as the proposed school consolidation project referendum will be held Monday, May 11, from 6 a.m.-8 p.m., at Portland Middle School, 93 High St. There is no early voting for referendums.

The Portland town clerk's office is currently issuing absentee ballots for the referendums. Registered voters and property owners can obtain an application in person at the office, by calling 860-342-6743, or visiting the town clerk's page of the Town of Portland website,

www.portlandct.org.

Any applications or completed absentee ballots should be mailed back to the Town Clerk's Office at: P.O. Box 71 Portland, CT 06480, brought to the Town Clerk's Office in person, or left in the election drop box located by the rear entrance of the Town Hall. Completed absentee ballots must be received back no later than 8 p.m. on May 11 in order to be counted.

Portland residents can also obtain a voter registration card at the town clerk's office.

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Final Days to Get Ready for Town-Wide Tag Sale

The registration deadline for the Portland Historical Society's 30th annual Town-Wide Tag Sales Day on Saturday, May 9 has passed and everyone is now gearing up to sell or buy. There are more than 140 registered tag sales scheduled, in town and out on the country roads.

Portland residents who signed up will be assigned a spot on the society's official Tag Sale Map issued for that day, which lists the sale locations and types of items featured at each one. Registered tag sales will be marked with a numbered pole sign corresponding to sale locations

on the map. Printed maps will be available in the barrel at 492 Main St. on Wednesday, May 6. The map will be posted online at www.PortlandHistSoc.org.

The annual Town-Wide Tag Sale is the major fundraiser for the museum. Funds raised are used to maintain the Callander House and to continue the society's mission to collect, preserve and share Portland's history.

For more information about Tag Sale Day, call 860-982-1486 or send an email to portlandcthistory@gmail.com.



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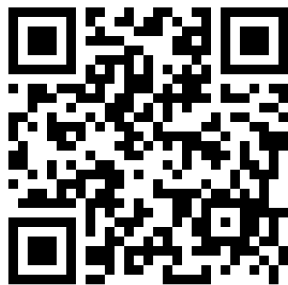
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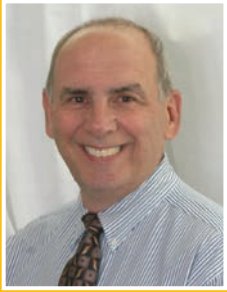
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Applications Due Today for Lions Scholarships

The Hebron Lions Club is offering a total of \$12,000 in educational scholarships to support local students in their pursuit of higher education and career aspirations.

This year, the Hebron Lions will award two \$4,000 scholarships for students entering a four-year college program, and two \$2,000 scholarships for students pursuing an associate degree or trade/career education.

The scholarships are open to residents of Hebron and Andover, as well as active RHAM Leos members in good standing.

Applications are now available on the He-

bron Lions website under the Lions Scholarships section (www.hebronlions.org/lions-scholarships). Completed applications must be submitted by May 1 and can be sent to Hebron Lions Club Scholarship Committee, 347 Gilead St., Hebron, CT 06248. Alternatively, applications may be emailed to RStrumskas@HebronLions.club.

The scholarships will be awarded during a special ceremony on Wednesday, June 3, at 7 p.m., at the Hebron Lions Fairground/Den.

For further information, email Russ Strumskas at RStrumskas@HebronLions.club.



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It has definitely been a very busy start to the spring season with for Andover Elementary gardeners! In this photo, AES kindergarteners work on turning the compost tumbler during recess.

School Collaborates with Town Gardeners

Andover Elementary School students have started their annual collaboration with the Andover Community Garden gardeners, working with Jeff Ballard, Amy March and Michelle Lorentz. They have once again provided AES students many opportunities to be involved.

Jennie Morrell, AES early childhood specialist, ran three after-school clubs related to gardening. The first was a two-session club where the students learned about composting – its importance on our Earth and how to actually compost. A new school Green Team has been formed, with 86 students signing up to participate. Students will be collecting food scraps from the cafeteria and students' lunches to turn into compost. Over the next seven weeks, they will care for the compost ingredients, then do-

nate the rich organic material to be used at the Andover Community Garden.

A group of older students also met after school to work cleaning up the school and community gardens. This group of students is working on a surprise for the town garden – painted garden signs to mark the number assigned to each garden bed.

Our students wrapped up the garden activities during the school day with several groups of students; the preschool classes and Charlene DelMastro's second-graders. These classes worked on planting flower and vegetable seeds that will be transferred to the community garden to beautify their property and to allow the town gardeners to donate to the town food pantry.

Norton Commission Scholarship Available

The Norton Children's Fund Commission invites Andover high school seniors to apply for the \$1,000 Chester D. Norton Scholarship. The scholarship application can be found at tinyurl.com/chesternorton and can be submitted through 11:59 p.m. May 1.

Each year the Norton Children's Fund Commission awards at least one \$1,000 scholarship

to a graduating high school senior who is an Andover resident planning to attend a two- or four-year college or technical school after graduation.

Anyone wishing to apply for financial assistance can pick up an application at the town hall or use the digital application at tinyurl.com/nortonaid.

Basketball Goods and Services Auction

The Andover Youth Basketball Goods & Services Auction will be held on Friday, May 15, at 6 p.m., in the Andover Elementary School cafeteria.

There will be baskets and many gift certificates to area businesses, museums, restaurants, bowling and more. Pizza and baked goods will be available.

Donations Sought for Book Sale

Donations of gently-used books, DVDs, CDs and audiobooks are welcome for the upcoming Andover Friends of the Library's Book & Bake Sale on Saturday, June 6.

Bring your donations to the library on these days only: any Wednesday through May 27 between 10 a.m. and 7 p.m., or on Saturdays, May 2 and May 16, between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Do not leave items outside.

Things the Friends group doesn't want: VHS tapes, encyclopedias and textbooks, magazines, or *Reader's Digest* condensed novels.

The last day to accept donations for this sale is Wednesday, June 3.

Congregational Church News

Andover Congregational Church, UCC, located at 359 Route 6, invites all to worship, held Sundays at 10 a.m. All are welcome. The service also streams live on the church's Facebook page (First Congregational Church, Andover, CT). For more information, call the church office at 860-742-7696, email andoverctchurch@gmail.com or visit www.andoverctchurch.org.

Children's Church: Is provided. **Choir:** At 9 a.m. Sundays in the sanctuary.

Food Pantry: Mondays from 5-7 p.m. Bring your own bags. The **Foodshare Van** comes to the church every other Wednesday from 8:30-10 a.m.; **Senior Pantry** is on the opposite Wednesdays.

AA Meetings: Saturdays and Mondays, 7 p.m.

Sunshine Stampers: Tuesdays, 9:30 a.m.

Items Needed for Auction

The Andover Youth Basketball Program will hold a goods and services auction Friday, May 15, to raise funds for equipment and other program needs.

If you would like to donate a gift certificate or an item to auction, call Carol Lee at 860-989-6988.

Scholarship Available for Local Students

Andover Elementary School is now taking applications for the Andover Education Association and the Andover PTA Annual Scholarship, which is being offered to any Andover student.

Applications may be obtained from the RHAM High School guidance department or by contacting Andover Elementary School at 860-742-7339. Application deadline is May 1.

Spring Tea

Andover Congregational Church, 359 Route 6, will hold a Spring Tea/Luncheon on Saturday, May 2, from 1-3 p.m. The tea will include an assortment of teas, a basket raffle and homemade delicacies.

Admission is \$10. Call the church office at 860-742-7696 and leave a message with the number of seats you would like to reserve.

Bingo & Basket Raffle Night

Andover Congregational Church, 359 Route 6 in Andover, will hold a Bingo & Basket Raffle Night on Friday, May 15, starting with dinner at 5:30 p.m. The game starts at 6:30 p.m.

Admission is \$15 and includes dinner, drink, dessert and bingo. No reservations required.

Leave a message at the church at 860-742-7696 for more information.

Untimely Death Due to Gunshot Wound

By Toriana Williams

An individual died after a shooting on Gilead Road on Sunday, according to Connecticut State Police.

Troop K responded to the area of Gilead Road for a medical assist that resulted in an untimely death after the individual was transported to the hospital via LifeStar.

According to the Willimantic *Chronicle*, ini-

tial reports indicated a welfare check had been requested for an address on Gilead Road, and responders had to force entry into the home, where they found the victim with a gunshot wound to the torso.

Police said there was no criminal aspect, and the investigation is still ongoing.

Budget Vote is Next Week

By Toriana Williams

Voters in Andover will decide on the proposed town and school budgets during a referendum on Tuesday, May 5, from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Town Hall community room.

Total Budget

The proposed 2026-27 town budget is \$4,362,487, a 3.91% increase from last year's budget of \$4,198,432.57. The proposed Andover education budget is \$5,063,651, a 10.91% increase from last year's budget of \$4,565,461.

Voters will also decide on the Regional School District 8 (RHAM) budget, which is \$33,161,483, and a RHAM CIP budget of \$500,000. Andover's portion of RHAM's budget is \$4,258,178, a 2.97% increase from last year's portion of \$4,237,348.

There will also be optional advisory questions asking residents if they think the budgets are "too high, too low or just right."

Key Drivers

Town officials said several factors are increasing costs, including salary increases, a 21% increase in healthcare costs, higher legal fees for easement projects, added funding for administrative and senior services positions and increased community and senior center programming.

School officials said drivers for Andover's education budget included hiring a new 6th grade teacher, adding a full-time school psychologist,

loss of grant funding, special education costs, higher transportation costs and the 21% increase in health insurance.

Tax Impact

Officials estimated a 6.7% tax increase if the budget is approved. The proposed mill rate is 33.50, compared to 31.59 last year.

What Officials Want Voters to Know

Board of Finance Chair Robert England, a Democrat, said the board "made some small cuts to the town capital budget where we believed there were sufficient funds already available. We actually made a mix of small increases and small cuts that net out to a \$30,000 decrease."

He also emphasized that the budget avoided using reserve funds. "This budget, if passed, leaves our reserves intact," England said. "Based on our last audit figures, we're in good shape," England said.

Andover Board of Education Chair Caitlin Greenhouse, a Democrat, said the new teacher is necessary. "Combining them into one class would be at detriment to the individual students."

She added that, "Between 2015 and 2020, \$418,000 was cut from the AES Budget. Our 10 year increase has been \$244,000. Between 2015 and 2020, we lost 6.5 staff members that have not been gained back fully."

Community & Senior Center Happenings

The Andover Community and Senior Center, located at 25 School Rd., is open Monday-Thursday from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. and Friday from 9 a.m.-noon. Coffee is always on. All are welcome. For all questions or concerns, call the director, Tess Grous, at 860-742-7305 ext 4510 or at 860-798-6862.

The center's monthly newsletter, "Community Connections," is available at www.andover-connecticut.org. Copies are also available at the center, Town Hall, and Andover Public Library. To receive the newsletter by email each month or to reserve space, call 860-742-7305.

Volunteer Opportunities Available: High school students who need volunteer hours – the center can help! The center is looking for Cards & Games helpers, kitchen servers, people to make phone calls, fitness instructors, art teachers, cooking/baking instructors and other volunteers with special talents willing to share with the community. Evening hours are available. Please call or stop by the center if interested. High school students who need volunteer hours are welcome.

Special Upcoming Events: Step into the Summer Kickoff MOVEMENT: Starting in May, enjoy new activities and refreshed favorites designed to get everyone involved.

Bring a Friend Program: For the month of May, bring a friend to your current fitness or art class and they attend free. One free pass per class type. Registration is required. Call the center for more information.

Mother's Day Brunch: Thursday, 5/7, 10 a.m. Free. Get a taste of The Ivy. Enjoy a special brunch as you celebrate and share appreciation for mothers and role models. The Ivy – Ellington will be the host bringing quiche, fresh fruit, pastries and MOMosas! Registration is required. Call the center.

Open Art: Monday, 5/18, 5-7 p.m. This is

Transfer Station Stickers Available Now

Transfer Station stickers are now available at the Town Clerk's Office, 17 School Rd.

The cost is \$50, payable by cash or check. Please bring your vehicle registration and note that the vehicle must be present at the time of issuance.

Current Transfer Station stickers expire on June 30, so be sure to renew in advance.

For your convenience, the Town Clerk's Office will remain open until 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 5 (Budget Referendum Day) for sticker sales.

not a traditional art class but more of a shared studio environment. All skills are welcome. Call the center if you are interested.

Shopping Trips: Tuesdays, 8:30 a.m. Shop Manchester 5/12 and 5/26, and Willimantic 5/5 and 5/19. Transportation is available. On Thursday, 5/14, shop Trader Joe's & Michael's.

Tai Chi & Qigong: Tuesdays, 6-7 p.m. Through gentle movements and mindful breathing, you'll improve balance, flexibility, and overall wellbeing. Perfect for all levels. Call the center to sign up.

Kid's Art Class with Kim: Wednesday, 5/13 and 5/20, 3 p.m. Cost is \$18 per class or \$35 for both. Discount for siblings available. Space is limited. Supplies are provided. To register, contact the center.

The Summer Scoop! A Passport to Ice Cream: The center is hosting a summer-long journey for residents, where passports will take people to area ice cream shops. On 5/15, head to the UConn Dairy Bar. To register, call the center.

Senior Garden Club: Saturday, 5/16, 10 a.m. Bring your seeds and take part in a seed swap. Also, the center is looking for Seniors who would like to participate in the joy of gardening. The center has two beds waiting to be planted and cared for. Call the center to join.

Travel In Time Club: Friday, 5/22, 3 p.m. This is an intergenerational partnership with Andover Elementary School. Students and seniors will work on stories and interviews. Call the center to join or for more information.

Casino Trip: Friday, 5/29, 10 a.m. Hop on the bus for a trip to Mohegan Sun. The bus will return at 3 p.m. Space is limited. To reserve a seat, call 860-498-2326.

Photography Class: 5/23, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Fee is \$85. Instructor Peter Glass teaches how to take high-quality photos using your smartphone. iPhone & Androids welcome. Registration is required by 5/15 and a minimum of 5 people needed.

CPR and First Aid Class

All are invited to learn CPR and First Aid Sunday, May 3, from 9 a.m.-2 p.m., at the Andover Volunteer Fire Department. Cost is \$20 for CPR or CPR and First Aid.

Classes include use of training materials, CPR for Adult, Child and Infant, AED training, Choking, first aid and two-year certification from the American Heart Association.

Registration is required. Contact Mindy He-gener at 860-706-3074.

From the First Selectman's Desk

Maintaining Progress

Dear Colchester Neighbors:

There has been a lot of attention on the Board of Education budget and its challenges. I want to make sure you also understand what's happening on the town side, which I oversee as first selectman.

Despite the funding issues facing the Board of Education, the town's finances are stable. Two years ago, that was not the case.

Colchester was over budget and unable to pave roads or maintain buildings and parks. We were drowning in legal fees. Worst of all, we were unable to bond for millions of dollars in debt. On top of that, the Town's portion of the health insurance fund was in a deficit of over \$700,000.

My top priority in my first term was turning the ship around. We put in place new financial management, got our budgets in order, bonded outstanding debt with big savings, and started seeking grants to address infrastructure and public safety needs.

Today, on the town side, the health insurance fund is positive. That is allowing us to help temporarily cover costs for the Board of Education which is now facing a deficit in their portion.

Last year, I put in place several new efficiency operations which included consolidating water and sewer payments with tax collection, moving animal control services to Montville ACO, and using funding sources to cover Youth Services and Senior Services programming without impacting taxpayers.

By balancing budgets and budgeting conservatively, we have also helped grow a "rainy day fund" (a.k.a. the Unassigned Fund Balance) that can now help the Board of Education and taxpayers as the BOE works to get their own financial house back in order.

In the meantime, this year's town proposed budget is focused on keeping our progress going. It supports public safety and keeps up maintenance for roads, buildings, and parks. It completes a multi-year plan to fully staff Colchester Fire & EMS on all shifts. Grant funding will also allow us to assign a full-time police officer to enforce traffic laws and reduce speeding across town. These have been top priorities for residents in surveys, and now we are able to address them.

The town budget has received strong support from residents over the past two years. Because of that, we've been able to make steady progress on the issues that matter most. With your continued support, we can keep moving Colchester forward.



Dennler

Sincerely,
Bernie Dennler
Colchester First Selectman

Bacon Trustees to Honor Ron Goldstein

"I don't consider myself a founder, just a part of this community with a rich tradition of giving back," said Ron Goldstein, who will be honored by the Trustees of Bacon Academy at their annual Founder's Day event on Wednesday, May 20, at 11 a.m., at Colchester Federated Church.

"While Ron is humble about his accomplishments, anyone who knows him knows he is very deserving of this award," said Cathy Marvin, Bacon Academy Trustee and member of the Founder's Day Committee.

Founder's Day was established by the Trustees to honor Pierpont and Abigail Bacon's legacy gift that established a "school of higher learning" and to recognize graduates who have gone on to distinguish themselves in their areas of expertise.

Goldstein graduated as salutatorian of the Bacon Academy Class of 1985. He was born and raised in Colchester, and was a latecomer to the Colchester public school system, having attended Hebrew Day School through eighth grade.

"I entered high school without really knowing or having attended school with other kids from town," he explained. "I had to learn the schedules, the inner workings. It was very confusing. On the first day, I was placed in a senior English class by mistake!"

It didn't take long, however, for Goldstein to find his footing. Soon, he was involved in class leadership, various clubs, and the school newspaper. "I felt from the start that the environment at Bacon was great — the teachers, the students," he said. "I felt right at home very quickly."

After Bacon, Goldstein received his undergraduate degree from Brandeis University and his law degree from Harvard. He began his legal career at Shipman & Goodman in Hartford, but when his father became ill, he returned to Colchester to help with the family business, Paradise Agency, LLC.

"I longed to return to the town I grew up in," Goldstein said. "I always knew I wanted to be in the family business, and I knew I'd return." He now runs the business with his brother Bruce, and he has a solo legal practice.

Many people know Goldstein through town politics — he was on the Charter Adoption Committee, a member of the Board of Finance, and as a member, then chair, of the Board of Education. Others recognize him through his charitable work as a prior Bacon Acad-



Ron Goldstein is the 2026 Bacon Academy Trustees Founders Day honoree. The ceremony will be on Wednesday, May 20, at 11 a.m., at the Colchester Federated Church. All are welcome.

emy Trustee, his service on the Cragin Library Board, or his involvement with the Colchester Community Theater. Goldstein was also just inducted into the newly established Bacon Academy Hall of Fame.

"I am proud to be selected this year," Goldstein said. "To be recognized among folks like Dolores Sawchuk or Dave Shea is quite an honor. I was speechless! I'm not done, though. I still want to be involved in the growth and heritage of our community — to continue to honor what's important and what links us to our past. Bacon is a great example of that. The tradition of Bacon Academy, the emphasis on the importance of education, and its graduates, including governors, senators, and community founders."

Founder's Day is free and open to the public. The ceremony will include the Bacon Academy Choir and a graveside tribute to the Bacons with the singing of *Baconia*. A reception at the church will follow.

For more information, email info@baconacademytrustees.org.

Christian Life Chapel News

Christian Life Chapel is located at 392 S. Main St. For more information, call 860-398-9119 or email chapel.colchester@yahoo.com. The Rev. Don Rivers is the church's bi-vocational pastor, who also serves as president for "Racing with Jesus Ministries," The Racer's Church since 1980.

Worship Service: Sundays at 10 a.m. A livestream is available on YouTube and Facebook.

Children's Worship: Sundays at 10:45 a.m. Kids will learn about Jesus in ageappropriate

ways.

Women's Bible Study: Tuesdays, 10-11:30 a.m., studying the book of Revelation.

Community Bible Study: Wednesdays at 7 p.m. All are invited.

Vacation Bible School (VBS): Monday, July 20-Friday, July 24, 9 a.m.-noon. This year's theme is: Illumination Station: "Shine a Light on Jesus." This is a week of faith, fun, and discovery for children.



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Senior Center Upcoming Trips

Colchester Senior Center has announced a trip coming up. Trips are available to senior center members and their adult guests over the age of 18. Membership is free for Colchester residents aged 55 and older. There is an annual fee of \$15 for seniors residing outside of Colchester. For more information or full trip descriptions, or to register, call 860-537-3911 or email csc@colchesterct.gov.

Goodspeed - Jesus Christ Superstar & Lunch at Gelston House: Wednesday, June 3, departing at 10:30 a.m. Have lunch and then see the classic rock musical. Cost is \$105 per person. Includes transportation and lunch at the Gelston House.

City Island Lobster House - Bronx, N.Y.: Thursday, June 4, departing at 8 a.m. Take a ride across the bridge from the Bronx to the village City Island. Have lunch at City Island Lobster House, and afternoon shopping at Little Italy's Arthur Avenue. Cost is \$171/person, which includes transportation and lunch.

Amish Country Two-Day Adventures: June 23-24, departure time TBD. Experience an authentic Amish dinner prepared by an Amish family, visit the Lil' Country Store & Miniature Horse Farm, and go to Sight & Sound Theater for *Joshua*. Cost is \$509 per person (double or triple occupancy) and includes transportation, one night hotel, one breakfast, one dinner, admissions, tour escort, driver and tour director gratuity.

Majestic Cities of Central & Eastern Europe: Oct. 4-17, departure time TBD. Enjoy multi-night stays, local tours, food and more in Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, and Krakow. The 14-day, 13-night trip includes airfare, hotels, and meals (12 breakfasts, one lunch, and six dinners). Contact senior center staff for availability and pricing.

Ocean City, Maryland: Oct. 13 -16, departure time TBD. Spend three nights directly on the beach. Explore Assateague Island, visit the historic town of Berlin and board the Assateague Tour Cruise and look for dolphins, horses, and more. Also, explore Fenwick Island Lighthouse, visit the Discover Sea Museum and enjoy an afternoon on the boardwalk. Cost is \$949/person (double or triple occupancy).

Germanfest - Inn at East Hill Farm, Troy, N.H.: Thursday, Oct. 8, 7:45 a.m. Enjoy a homemade Oktoberfest luncheon at the Inn at East Hill Farm, a working farm and inn in the shadows of Mount Monadnock. After lunch you will be entertained with live German music, and there will be a stop at Yankee Candle on the ride home. Cost is \$158/person and includes transportation and lunch.

Studio Two - The Beatles Tribute Band: Thursday, Oct. 15, at 10 a.m. Enjoy the music of this Beatles tribute band, and enjoy a family-style menu at the Farmington Polo Club. Cost is \$132/person, and includes transportation, entertainment and lunch.

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The Glastonbury Citizen & Rivereast News Bulletin

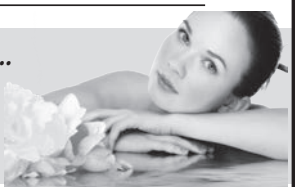
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Sweet Traditions Inside Angelo's Bakery

By Toriana Williams

Angelo's Bakery is more than just a place to buy pastries. It is a story of family, resilience and a lifelong love of baking. For Domenica DiBenedetto, the bakery's manager, every loaf of bread and every decorated cake carries decades of history, hard work and heart.

In an interview with the *RiverEast*, DiBenedetto recalled that the bakery began in 1994. Back then, Angelo's wasn't even a storefront. It was a wholesale operation based in Wallingford, where she and her husband, Angelo, delivered baked goods.

"We were only wholesale," she explained. "We delivered to 40 stores every single day ... in a little red truck."

That little red truck became the start of something much bigger.

As customers began to fall in love with their baked goods, they started asking where they could buy them directly. That demand led the family to try something new.

"We actually started doing the Redwood Flea Market in Wallingford," DiBenedetto said. "[Angelo] sold there for 15 years."

But the journey was not always easy. One day, everything changed. "My husband was delivering one morning, got into a serious accident and almost ended up paralyzed," she said.

After such a frightening experience, the family decided to make a big move. "We moved to Florida," she said, after recommendations from a doctor that moving around might be easier in warmer weather.

Life in Florida, however, came with its own challenges. "In 2004, we got hit with four major hurricanes," DiBenedetto explained. That was enough for Angelo to make up his mind. "My husband was like, 'Oh, no, we're going back.'"

When they returned to Connecticut, they settled in Colchester. They chose the town because it was where their son and daughter-in-law had found work. It didn't take long before Angelo felt the pull of baking again. "He's like, 'I have to do something. I just can't sit still,'" DiBenedetto recalled.

In 2006, Angelo's Bakery began again, this time on Chestnut Hill Road. "We were only open on weekends," DiBenedetto said. But even with limited hours, the bakery quickly grew popular. "It got so busy ... there were too many cars," she laughed, remembering how the small-home-based setup couldn't handle the crowds.

That success led them to open their current location on 32 Halls Hill Road in 2012. Today, the bakery has been part of the Colchester community for nearly 15 years. It continues to grow with the help of the next generation: her son Giovanni and her grandson Andrew.

For DiBenedetto, baking has always been

more than just a job.

"It's always been a passion," she said. "I've baked since I was little all the time." Many of the recipes she uses today came from family traditions. "A lot of the recipes are passed on. From my mom, my grandmother, Angelo's mom."

Before fully stepping into the bakery world, DiBenedetto spent years working in food-related roles. "I was a stay-at-home mom first, and then once my kids started school, I was working in school lunch," she said. No matter what she did, food was always part of her life.

Her love for baking even earned her a nickname. "They would call me Betty Crocker," she laughed. "They would come home and say, 'What did Betty Crocker make today?'"

That playful nickname reflected her curiosity and creativity in the kitchen.

"I always love to experiment with different things, and I still do here now," DiBenedetto said. These days, she even experiments alongside her grandson. "We kind of experiment and put different things together. ... and believe it or not, a lot of the stuff just sells."

Angelo's Bakery offers a wide variety of treats. While many items represent Italian tradition, the bakery aims to serve everyone. "There's a lot of Italian pastries, but we try to accommodate everyone," DiBenedetto explained.

Customers can find everything from cannolis and eclairs to sfogliatella, cupcakes and custom cakes. The bakery's fresh bread and stuffed breads are especially popular. "A lot of people will come in," DiBenedetto said. "It's like their dinner."

The bakery's success is deeply tied to its connection with the community. "The community has been wonderful," DiBenedetto said warmly. "They've accepted us like their own family." Many customers have been coming for years, even since the flea market days.

Over time, those customers have become more than just familiar faces. "I know them like family," said DiBenedetto. "I know stories about their families."

She smiled as she remembered watching children grow up right before her eyes. "I couldn't see them over the counter," she remembered, "and now they're huge!"

Those growth spurts might have something to do with all the free cookies DiBenedetto has given to kids over the years. That's something she said she always likes to do.

The sense of family extends beyond customers to DiBenedetto's staff as well. "I have a great staff, and I treat them all like family," she said.

Her sister Teresa even helps out when needed, despite living an hour away. "She's a big help to me."

Of course, running a bakery comes with



Angelo's Bakery in Colchester is truly a family affair. Manager Domenica DiBenedetto, center, works at the bakery alongside her grandson Andrew, left, and son Giovanni, right.

challenges. When asked about the hardest part, DiBenedetto laughed. "Not having any time off?" she said.

Baking is demanding work, especially during busy seasons like holidays.

For Mother's Day, for example, the bakery has created special treats like strawberry and cream cupcakes. "It's a strawberry cupcake with fresh strawberries. ... filled with a vanilla mousse with a strawberry buttercream and a white chocolate drizzle," she described.

DiBenedetto also spends long hours decorating cakes. "On the weekend, I stand here for hours and hours and hours, just decorating cakes," she said.

Despite the hard work, DiBenedetto said she has found it all worth it.

"It's really rewarding," she said. "When you make something for somebody, and they enjoy it ... that's just so rewarding to you."

For her, the mission is obvious: "Making everybody happy and smiling. That's what this is all about."

Angelo's Bakery has received recognition over

the years, including being named "Best Bakery" in the *Norwich Bulletin*. But for DiBenedetto, awards are not what matters most.

"That's just like a plaque or something," she said. "The reward for us is making the customer happy."

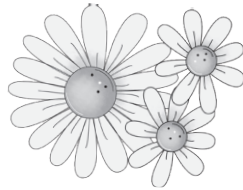
Looking ahead, the future of Angelo's Bakery is in good hands. With her son and grandson stepping into larger roles, the business will continue as a family tradition.

Still, DiBenedetto has no plans to disappear anytime soon. "Even if it gets passed down to them, we're still going to be here," she said. "We'll be back."

In the end, the bakery's success comes down to one thing. As her sister Teresa put it, "The customers have made it successful."

DiBenedetto agreed wholeheartedly. "If it wasn't for the customers, we would not be here," she said.

And that is what makes Angelo's Bakery so special. It's not just about the pastries or the bread. It's about the people, the memories and the love baked into everything they create.



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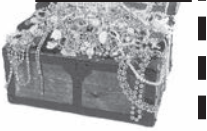
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National Day of Prayer

Colchester will hold a local celebration of the National Day of Prayer on Thursday, May 7, at 6 p.m., on the Town Green.

"Tell of His Glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all people," summarizes the 2026 theme for the nation's 250th birthday. All are invited to lift up prayers and thanksgiving for our town, state, and nation.

The National Day of Prayer tradition actually predates the founding of our country when the Continental Congress proclaimed a day of prayer in 1775. To honor the founding fathers, John Koopman, local reenactor of George Washington, will attend as a special guest.

Congress established an annual day of prayer

Spring in Bloom Vendor Fair

Colchester Federated Church will hold its annual Spring in Bloom Vendor Fair Saturday, May 2, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

All are invited to come support local artisans, crafters and farmers. Also, take a chance at the Raffle Table, enjoy a homemade treat, and wander through the tag sale.

There are a few tables left to rent; if you would like a table to sell your goods, reach out to Renee Misbach at rouillette01@snet.net as soon as possible.

Mother's Day Flower Sale

Boy Scout Troop 72 will hold its 26th annual Mother's Day flower sale adjacent to the Colchester Haywood Volunteer Fire Department Headquarters on Old Hartford Road on Friday, May 8, from 5-8 p.m. and on Saturday, May 9, from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. or when sold out.

The scouts will have an extremely large and beautiful variety of hanging baskets and individual potted plants available on site. The colors and types of flowers for sale are too many to list. All plants are supplied by a local grower.

All proceeds will go to support scout camping and youth training activities.

in 1952 and in 1988, the law was amended, designating the first Thursday of May as the National Day of Prayer. Colchester and most other Connecticut towns have been honoring this day for the over 20 years with town gatherings. Community participants pray for local churches, families, schools, businesses, military and safety personnel, media, and government. Several area pastors and volunteers will guide people in prayer for the town, state, and country.

For more information, contact Colleen Bjorbeck, New London County coordinator, at bjorbeckcol@comcast.net or 860-710-2110. And for more information on the National Day of Prayer in general, visit www.nationaldayofprayer.org.

Spring Bark for the Park

The 12th annual Spring Bark for the Park is Sunday, May 17, from 10 a.m.-noon, on the Town Green; rain date is Sunday, May 31.

Featured will be a Lucky Duck grab bag for the dogs, May Baskets, and a blessing of the dogs. There will also be many pet-related vendors and food.

The event is presented by the Colchester Dog Park. Email tagnobark@gmail.com for more information.

Mother's Day Flower Sale

Boy Scout Troop 72 will have its 26th annual Mother's Day flower sale adjacent to the Colchester Haywood Volunteer Fire Department Headquarters on Old Hartford Road Friday, May 8, from 5-8 p.m., and Saturday, May 9, from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. or when sold out.

The scouts will have a variety of hanging baskets and individual potted plants available on site. The colors and types of flowers for sale are too many to list. Prices are terrific and the quality will be outstanding. All plants are supplied by a local grower Kristen's Nursery.

All proceeds will go to support scout camping and youth training activities.

Local Potter in 'Clay Crawl'

The Connecticut Clay Guild will host the first-ever Connecticut Clay Crawl from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. on Saturday, May 2, and Sunday, May 3 – and a Colchester pottery studio is among the participants.

Purring Pottery, located at 167 Lebanon Ave., will be among 14 pottery studios taking part in the 'Clay Crawl'. The Crawl connects

visitors with Connecticut's ceramics community through open studios, demonstrations, and hands-on experiences. Participating studios will offer insight into the creative process and information about classes and workshops available throughout the year.

Learn more, view locations, and plan your visit at www.ctclayguild.com/clay-crawl.

Book-Signings with Local Author

Colchester resident Elaine M. Alexander, an award-winning author known for bringing ocean science to life for young audiences, has released her newest book, *Giant Cuttlefish: Chameleon of the Sea*.

To celebrate, she will be hosting several events across the region, including book-signings and interactive storytimes designed to engage curious, ocean-loving kids.

Upcoming events include: Saturday, May 30,

11 a.m. – Storytime and signing at Bank Square Books in Mystic; Saturday, June 27, 11 a.m. – Storytime at Salem Public Library.

These programs introduce children to marine animals like the giant cuttlefish and anglerfish through storytelling and hands-on activities.

Alexander is a lifelong Connecticut resident currently residing in Colchester. She is the author of *Anglerfish: The Seadevil of the Deep*.

Community Bike Rodeo

Families with children in grades K-5 are invited to participate in a Bike Rodeo Saturday, May 2, at 10 a.m., in the rear parking lot of the Guardian Angel Parish (St. Andrew) at 128 Norwich Ave.

This free community event, hosted by Colchester Parks and Recreation, Colchester Planning and Zoning and the Colchester Police Department, is designed to teach children essential bicycle safety skills in a fun and interactive environment.

Participants will have the opportunity to navigate a skills course, learn proper helmet use, and receive bicycle safety checks. There will also be free giveaways and raffles.

Preregistration is appreciated at colchesterctrec.recdesk.com/Community/Home. Call Parks and Recreation at 860-537-7297 with questions.

Senior Center News & Notes

Colchester Senior Center, 15 Louis Lane, has announced the following. **Unless noted, registration is required for all programs.** Credit cards are currently not accepted. For full descriptions of programs and to register, call 860-537-3911, email csc@colchesterct.gov, or for a full list of activities, visit www.colchesterct.gov/colchester-senior-center.

Monday, May 4: 9 a.m., Making Memories, Exercise w/ Anne; 10 a.m., Sittercize, Movie Time; 11 a.m., Learn to Sign; 11 a.m.-noon, Fitness Orientation by appointment; 12:30 p.m., Mah Jongg, Bridge, Set Back.

Tuesday, May 5: 9 a.m., Making Memories; no Tai Chi today; 10 a.m., Mixed Media Art Class; 12:30 p.m., Pinochle; 1 p.m., Cornhole, AARP Meeting; 1:15 p.m., Bingo.

Wednesday, May 6: 9 a.m., Making Memories, Walking Group; 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Reflexology; 10 a.m., Adult Coloring, Hand and Foot Card Game, Sit & Be Fit Video; 10:30 a.m., Life Review, Caregiver Series; 1 p.m., Sew-cial Time; 1:30 p.m., Cardio; 2:30 p.m., Cardio Drumming.

Thursday, May 7: 7:45 a.m., Pickety Place trip departs; 9 a.m., Exercise w/ Anne; 10 a.m., Sittercize, Wii Bowling; 11 a.m., Yoga; no Senior Benefits Counseling today; 12:05 p.m., Chair Massage; 12:30 p.m., Dominoes; 1 p.m., Knit & Crochet; 6 p.m., Journey with Joni.

Friday, May 8: 9 a.m., Social Service Hours, Open Art Studio; 10 a.m., Sit & Be Fit, Senior Senenaders; 10:30 a.m., Choral Group; 11 a.m., Yoga; noon, Tech Time with Harry; 1:15 p.m., Bingo.

Mothers & Memories – Mother's Day Brunch: Wednesday, May 13, 9:30 a.m. All senior center members are welcome. Attendees are encouraged to share photos of the important women in your life as we will put together a slide show to share. Brunch will consist of cheddar and bacon or artichoke and spinach quiche,

breakfast sausages, pastries, juice and coffee. Cost is \$8 per person.

Benefits of Puzzles: Monday, May 18, 10:30 a.m. Senior center member Norm Dupuis will share his tips and tricks of puzzle-making in this presentation. This is a free program.

Town Hall Meeting with Senator Needleman: Tuesday, May 19, 6 p.m. State Sen. Norm Needleman (D-33) will hold a post-session Town Hall meeting at the senior center. He will discuss issues impacting the state, and bills that were under consideration and/or passed this session, and how they will affect you as a resident of Connecticut. This meeting is open to the public.

Memorial Day Picnic: Tuesday, May 26, 11:30 a.m. Celebrate the beginning of the summer season, with your choice of a hamburger, cheeseburger or hot dog with fries and onion rings from Harry's Place restaurant, a can of soda or bottle of water, and a slice of double chocolate cake for dessert. After lunch, partake in a friendly competition of picnic games including corn hole, giant Jenga and more. Tickets are \$10, and available until May 18 or until sold out. The regular TVCCA café lunch will not be served on this day.

Healthy Food Series: Protein-Forward Recipes: Wednesday, May 27, 10:30 a.m. Take a look at easy ways to add more protein into each meal and look at protein-rich snacks. Several recipes and food samples will be shared. This is a free program.

Your Voice Matters: Thursday, May 28, 10:30 a.m. The Southeastern Regional Action Council will host this conversation about loneliness, social isolation, and mental well-being. Share your experiences as part of a community research project. Your voice can help improve services and support programs for older adults in the region. This is a free program.

Mother's Day Sale

Cottage Gardens, a non-profit business located at 460 New London Rd., is having its annual Mother's Day Sale Thursday, May 7, through Saturday, May 9.

Browse plants and flowers and enjoy our fresh baked goods while you visit.

Special Saturday hours: The Cottage will be open 9 a.m.-1 p.m. on May 9.

Vendors Sought for Tag Sale

The Colchester Business Association is looking for vendors for its annual Colchester Tag Sale event. The event will be held on Town Green on Sunday, June 14, from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. A rain date will be scheduled for June 28.

The CBA plans to have over 100 vendors selling products and tag sale items. There will also be food vendors. Spaces for tag sale and non-business are \$35.

For applications, visit ColchesterCBA.com or email info@colchesterctbusiness.com.

Cover Story • Cover Story • Cover Story • Cover Story • Cover Story • Cover

★ Students Shine, cont. from page 1

Former Principal Chuck Hershon, who launched the PIP program at the middle school five years ago and now serves as the district's Director of Teaching and Learning, said that the experiences that students had in this program were an excellent example of project-based learning.

He said he remembered a project from a past year where a student worked on building a bow for shooting an arrow. On the day of the project fair, he said, the student was demoing it for him when it snapped.

"This was the moment that told me this project needed to live on forever," Hershon said, "because he then immediately said, 'This happened a ton of times as I was putting these together.' 'I probably didn't do this,' or 'I needed to change the thickness of that.' And he showed exactly the point of the project, which is, what is the learning process? Failure is okay as long as we are taking that as an opportunity to build off of it."

Social studies teacher and PIP lead teacher Alan Stekloff has been involved since the first year. He said that he was impressed by what he saw last week.

"Every year we've done this, the grade that does it sets a pretty good bar, and last year's group set a really high bar," he said. "I was unbelievably impressed with the level of detail and these 8th graders took it to another level and really raised the game and came out with much bigger projects than we'd ever had before: more detailed and from a different variety of talents and skills."

Stekloff pointed out that many of the students were undertaking the longest, most independent project that they had ever done before. He said that the planning process started in his social studies classes, and then progresses from there each year.

Advisors encouraged students to challenge themselves, he said, adding that that meant different things for different students. Some took on large projects, while others surprised him with their artistic or technical skills, he said.

Collaboration was encouraged, all of the faculty members emphasized, and many of the students worked collaboratively on these projects with their parents or other family members. Aaryn Cole, the student who made a motorized walker, worked with his father to learn CAD (computer-aided design) software and welding to build the metal frame (and later added rugged wheels so his grandmother could use it at the beach).

Mace Kendricks, who made an e-bike, worked

with his father, who has a mechanic shop, to upgrade a standard bike into an e-bike. He said he learned from failure when the motor he had put on his bike ended up being too strong for the controller and the controller started smoking.

"I looked down, seen the smoke. I just started squeezing on the brakes, jumped off and let it go into the snow," he said. "It was still great, it was still fun. I don't have an e-bike but something I did learn is to do all your research ahead of time."

Kyrinn Stone painted a large mural outside of the school's United Arts hallway, featuring an artist's palette, musical notes and computer code. She said it was the largest painting she had ever done. She projected her design on the wall and traced it, then painted it over the course of ten days and 31 hours, she said. The school band director, Jonathan Hilgendorf, she said, stayed after school to supervise her during afterschool hours and when she had to use a ladder.

Technology education teacher and Unified Arts Team Leader Corey Toussaint was one of the teachers evaluating projects, and said he was thrilled to have the mural. He said he had discussed it last year with Stone, but was thrilled to see her actually decide on this as her project. While Stone wasn't sure how long the mural would stay up, her teacher said that, in his mind, it was permanent.

"I hope [the mural stays up] forever," he said. "If they ever threaten it to go away, they're going to have to go through me, 'cause I don't want this to go anywhere."

For photos from the April 24 event, check out the Rivereast's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/RivereastNewsBulletin.

TOWN OF COLCHESTER PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION LEGAL NOTICE OF DECISION

At its Special Meeting of April 22, 2026, the Colchester Planning & Zoning Commission made the following decision (s):
PZC2026-001 Frank Adams – Site Plan Application to modify existing commercial site at 111 Loomis Road. **30-day extension granted.**
PZC2026-003 Town of Colchester – Site Plan Application for Bacon Academy High School Athletic Field Reconstruction Project at 611 Norwich Avenue. (MBL 05-04-06A). Zoning District: Rural Use (RU). **Approved, with conditions.**
PZC2026-005 Town of Colchester – Special Permit Application for Lighting of Recreational Facilities in excess of 35 ft per Section 12.10 of the Land Development (Zoning) Regulations at Bacon Academy High School, 611 Norwich Avenue (MBL 05-04-06A). Zoning District: Rural Use (RU). **Approved.**
Planning & Zoning Commission
Joseph Mathieu, Chair

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★ *Letters, cont. from page 12*

long-term costs, not just short-term needs.

This helps ensure that programs can be maintained consistently and that decisions are made thoughtfully. It also supports the broader community.

A financially stable town is better positioned to support its schools over time. This is not about reducing support for students. It is about strengthening the foundation that supports them. Because a strong future is built on stability, sustainability, and clear, responsible planning...

Andover is being asked to approve an 11% increase in spending for Andover Elementary School. Included in this 11% (to name a few) is another 6th grade teacher for 25 children and an 11% increase to the superintendent's salary. I do wonder: 1. Why a teacher who currently handles between 27 and 29 6th graders this year isn't able to handle 25 next year; and 2. how the Superintendent justifies such an increase for herself while the remaining staff only gets their standard 3 - 4% increase? I personally feel this budget is not sustainable and does not reflect clear, responsible planning.

Between AES, the town and RHAM, Andover's budget for 2026-2027 reflects a total increase in taxation of 6.7%. An increase like this is not responsible or sustainable for struggling families or senior citizens on fixed incomes, nor does it "strengthen the support foundation" for our students. Every vote in this small town really does matter! Please make your voice heard and join me in voting 'no' this Tuesday, May 5th.

Edward Lokiec
Andover Taxpayer

Support Our Children

To the Editor:

Andover is a small rural town with enormous potential. Families continue choosing to move here because of our safety, natural environment, and strong sense of community. As more households with young children settle in town, we have a responsibility to ensure our investments keep pace. Supporting our school budget is one of the most fiscally responsible ways to provide strong starts for children, protect property values, and preserve the character of the town we all love.

Dr. Valerie Bruneau, AES Superintendent, shared significant data points: Andover Elementary School now ranks 17th out of 17 towns in District Reference Group C – last place – in per-pupil spending. This is not due to declining enrollment. AES enrollment has increased, while state and federal requirements have expanded. Yet our per-pupil spending has remained flat or decreased.

Since 2020, AES has absorbed more than \$400,000 in cumulative reductions. Community members have noted that this ranking reflects years of holding the school budget unusually low. During the same period, surrounding DRG C towns increased their budgets between 3% and 7% annually to maintain essential capacity and avoid higher longterm costs. Andover's increases have averaged 0% to 1%, placing us far below regional trends.

Tuesday, residents received a mailing from the BOS chair regarding the PreK program. The framing of that letter raised concerns by questioning the value of our children and the homes we've built here, at a time when our community needs clarity and collaboration. These programs, as shared by the BOE, the Connecticut State Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Education, are clearly defined and supported at both the state and federal levels. Questions about their structure or purpose should be directed to the policymakers and agencies responsible for them. Our selectmen are charged with inquiring and communicating with those policymakers as part of their elected duty, and we should support that work when it follows the appropriate channels of governance.

At the same time, this past year residents were asked to accept the justification for the salary expenses of two senior center director positions and attorney fees, even as the town continues to face unresolved accessibility and structural needs at the senior center, parking areas and staffing. These decisions call for careful stewardship and should never come at the expense of a child's right to an appropriate public education. These are important conversations for our town, but the data show that our children's needs are immediate.

Will you protect our children and the future of our town?

Vote 'yes' to support our children and home values at the town budget referendum May 5th.

Sincerely,

Doris A. Maldonado Méndez – Andover

Misinformation in Colchester

Dear Colchester Residents:

We are newly elected BOE members who are tired of reading the misinformation and disparaging remarks about the health fund reserves and our First Selectman Bernie Dennler. The *Rivereast* Readers Forum is flooded with incorrect information that conflates matters to create controversy and unwarranted conspiracy theories.

The health reserves issue is a BOE issue – not a town one. To be clear, it was the BOE, not the town side, that did not adequately fund the account. No money was stolen. There is a forensic audit in process which will explain exactly how this happened. We have a new health insurance agent and new oversight procedures to ensure this will not happen again. But we must pay our employees' health claims. The BOF has come up with a plan to make sure that we can pay our claims and build the reserve back to healthy levels. On the issue of moving funds from the BOE assigned fund balance to cover the employees medical bills in the health insurance reserve, this complies with policy according to both our auditors and the town attorney. If the money was managed correctly, it would have been in the health insurance reserve and not in the fund.

The first selectman's "pay raise" was really a reinstatement of the salary according to the town's compensation policy. In 2021-22 the former first selectman cut the salary by \$10,000, ignoring the town's policy and the increases that policy dictates. He also cost the town a lot of money in legal fees. So we guess the saying "you get what you pay for" was true in that instance. Art Shilosky, a Republican Board of Selectman member, proposed returning the compensation to where it would have been had it not been reduced. Bernie Dennler recused himself from the vote. The BOS unanimously agreed to bring the salary back to a fair wage. Bernie Dennler works tirelessly for the town of Colchester. I would say Colchester gets much more than we pay for in his employment.

There is much discussion on the health reserve issue and the steps to remedy the situation in the BOE and BOF meetings archived on the town website. We encourage you to review them and ask questions. The BOF and BOE are working hard to bring a fair budget to the residents that addresses the shortfall responsibly without devastating our schools. We are taxpayers too!

Gussie Gilberti and Nancy Nelson
Colchester

Note: Nelson and Gilberti are members of the Colchester Board of Education, but said they are speaking as citizens.

False Accusation

To the Editor:

Every year, like clockwork, Republicans in Colchester recycle the same accusation: that the first selectman is "giving himself a raise." At this point, it is not just misleading – it is knowingly false.

The facts are simple: Colchester applies a standard cost-of-living adjustment to all elected officials. It is automatic and consistent. No one is giving themselves anything. That has not changed – only the talking points have.

In 2021, Republicans targeted First Selectman Mary Bylone with this claim. Her opponent, Andreas Bisbikos, turned cutting the salary into a campaign slogan.

Then reality hit.

In 2023, Bernie Dennler took office at the reduced salary Republicans demanded. Suddenly, the outrage flipped. Now the salary was too low. Republicans openly admitted they could not recruit candidates because of the very cut they pushed.

So, which is it? First it was too high. Then it was too low to attract anyone. Same people. Same issue. Opposite arguments.

And here is the part they hope you forget.

Dennler never proposed a raise. Republicans did. In fall 2025, a Republican member of the Board of Selectmen moved to restore the salary. Dennler recused himself. The board approved it for the next term.

So let's be clear: Republicans cut the salary, complained about the consequences, and then voted to fix it.

Now they are back, pretending none of that happened, and accusing Dennler of "giving himself a raise."

That is not confusion – it is a deliberate rewrite of their own record, counting on voters not paying attention.

You cannot create a problem, admit it is a problem, fix it, and then blame someone else for it. That is not leadership – it is political opportunism, plain and simple.

At this point, the claim is not just wrong – it

is insulting. The real question is not the salary; it is why anyone would take this job knowing they will be attacked for decisions they did not even make, often in the very same publication you're reading right now.

Note: I'm a proud member of the Colchester Democratic Town Committee, and I'm fed up with the same tired political voices in town pushing disingenuous narratives and blatant falsehoods, treating folks in Colchester as people who won't see through it.

Scott Chapman – Colchester

The State of the Budget

To the Residents of Colchester:

As chair of the Board of Education, I'm writing to provide clarity on the current state of the BOE budget and what is at stake for our schools and community.

To date, the proposed budget has been reduced by more than \$2 million through multiple stages of review and collaboration with the Board of Finance. During this challenging year – fueled by our health insurance funding crisis – the board made the deliberate decision to prioritize reductions in administrative expenses (including a freeze to administrators and Central Office staff's salaries for fiscal year 2026-27) before considering impacts to classrooms.

It is important to understand what is driving the remaining increase. The vast majority is due to insurance, which accounts for over \$3.2 mil-

lion in increases. By comparison, operational increases total approximately \$344,000 (representative of a less than 1% increase year-over-year). Across our schools, most budgets are flat or reduced, reflecting the Board's effort to manage costs responsibly.

Further reductions beyond this point would have deeply harmful consequences on our students, staff, and schools. If required to reduce our budget below the \$50,868,807 proposed amount, we seriously risk breaching contractually agreed upon class size limits, reducing courses and programming, potential layoffs of teachers and support staff, and cuts to special education services. While some short-term measures could be adjusted in future years, they would still have an immediate impact on students and families.

The board remains committed to balancing fiscal responsibility with our obligation to provide a high-quality education. We recognize the pressures facing taxpayers and have worked diligently to reduce the budget as much as possible. At the same time, it is important to be transparent about the tradeoffs. Additional cuts will directly affect classrooms and student opportunities.

We appreciate the community's continued engagement and support for our schools.

Sincerely,

Stefanie Tracey-Calash
Chair, Colchester Board of Education

Cover Story • Cover Story • Cover Story • Cover Story • Cover Story • Cover Story • Cover Story • Cover Story • Cover Story • Cover Story

★ *Schools Chief Resigns, cont. from page 1*

Officials said the reserve ideally covers three to four months of claims, or about \$2.1 to \$2.8 million, but that it had fallen well below that level at the time. As of March 21, Director of Finance and Operations Rachel Linkkila reported that the balance was less than \$450,000.

In response to the shortfall, the BOE initiated a forensic audit, a detailed investigation by a third-party organization. As Tracey-Calash explained, it is meant to "do a comprehensive review of the fund ... to understand what this impact would mean for our community." The forensic audit report is expected later this month.

After the discovery of the health reserve fund issue, and the authorization of a forensic audit, local political leaders weighed in. In a written statement, the Colchester Republican Town Committee said they criticized the mistake as years of inadequate oversight and opposing efforts to shift financial responsibility onto teachers. Residents questioned the BOE's and Sullivan's transparency of the situation, and some even called for Sullivan's resignation.

Against this backdrop, the board's decision

seems to signal both a leadership reset and an attempt to stabilize the district during a period of financial strain. In their written statement, the board acknowledged the challenges that await ahead.

They emphasized the need for "resilience, collaboration and a shared commitment to progress," as the district works to rebuild trust, address budget pressures and maintain educational quality.

LEGAL NOTICE OF ACTIONS PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION HEBRON, CONNECTICUT

The Hebron Planning and Zoning Commission took the following action at their Regular Meeting, which was held on Wednesday, April 22, 2026 at 7:00pm on the following:

Petition 2026-02 – Petition of Megan Armes to operate a dog training and grooming facility in existing space at 522 Church Street in accordance with Section 3.E.2.1.7 of the Hebron Zoning Regulations, Amston Village District. **Approved, with conditions.**

The video recording of the Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting can be seen using the following link:
<https://transcripts.gotomeeting.com/#/s/c0915bb226f-1da54c3860ec227f78e5d4677a685e744b74dccc309e42c19b6>

1TB 5/1

TOWN OF EAST HAMPTON ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS NOTICE OF HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a Public Hearing at their Meeting on Monday, May 11, 2026 at 6:30pm at the East Hampton Town Hall - 1 Community Drive, Room 117 and via Zoom to consider the following application:

ZBA-26-004: PegArch Architecture, Requesting the following variance to section 4.1.E Area & Dimensional Standards to allow a reduction in the currently non-conforming Maximum Lot Coverage of 45% to 39.4% on 12 West Point Road, Map 05A/ Block 83/ Lot 15
Applications are on file in the Land Use Office and Town Clerk Office 860-267-7450

2TB 5/1, 5/8

TOWN OF COLCHESTER CONSERVATION COMMISSION LEGAL NOTICE OF AGENT DECISION

Notice is hereby given that on April 22, 2026, the Duly Authorized Agent for the Colchester Conservation Commission made the following decision:

W2026-3137 - 111 Old Hartford Rd; Center Village LLC - Applicant/ Owner; Assessor's ID 15-00-61-000, Proposed walking path, grading, and stormwater detention basin within 75' Upland Review Area to serve a proposed multi-family development. - **APPROVED WITH STANDARD CONDITIONS**
Dated April 22, 2026

Conservation Commission
Falk von Plachecki, Chair

1TB 5/1

LEGAL NOTICE Annual Town Budget Meeting and Budget Referendum Town of Portland, Connecticut

The Annual Town Budget Meeting
will be held in person at the Portland Middle School-Cafeteria, 93 High Street
Monday, May 4, 2026 at 7:00 PM, EDT

The Budget Referendum
will be held at the Portland Middle School-Band Room, 93 High Street
Monday, May 11, 2026 from 6:00 AM to 8:00 PM, EDT
Contact Town Clerk's Office for Absentee Ballots

Pursuant to Section 1201.4 of the Town of Portland Charter, the Annual Town Budget Meeting and the Budget Referendum shall be held at the above noted dates, places and times to consider and act upon the 2026-2027 General Fund Operating Budget as adopted by the Board of Selectmen at its meeting of April 8, 2026. The recommended budget for FY 2026-2027 is \$43,492,207. The recommended amounts for the major budget functions are highlighted in the following table.

General Government	\$1,879,621
Public Safety	\$2,856,922
Public Works	\$2,860,978
Planning and Development	\$235,697
Health and Human Services	\$454,345
Portland Library	\$902,400
Employee Fringe Benefits	\$4,030,975
Risk Management	\$246,000
TOTAL GENERAL GOVERNMENT:	\$13,478,938
EDUCATION:	\$27,168,420
Debt Service	\$1,051,125
Sundry	\$1,793,724
TOTAL OTHER EXPENDITURES:	\$2,844,849
TOTAL GENERAL FUND OPERATING BUDGET	\$43,492,207

The estimated mill rate would be 36.80, an increase of 1.5 mills over the FY 2025-2026 mill rate of 35.30. The estimated mill rate is subject to adjustment based on approved State of Connecticut Budget revenues to the Town.

The budget is available for public inspection in the Town Clerk's Office located at 33 East Main Street, the Portland Public Library located at 20 Freestone Avenue, and on the Town's website www.portlandct.org
Dated at Portland, Connecticut this 20th day of April 2026

Attest: Michael A. Pelton, First Selectman

2TB 4/24, 5/1

Obituaries

Colchester

Paul William Steinmiller

Paul William Steinmiller, 72, of Colchester, passed away peacefully Tuesday, March 10, surrounded by his friends and family. Born on May 14, 1953, at the Naval Hospital in Rhode Island, Paul lived a life filled with passion, dedication, and love for his family and friends.

A proud graduate of RHAM High School's Class of 1972, Paul was an accomplished athlete who held the school's mile record for over a decade. His love for sports extended throughout his life as he avidly supported the St. Louis Cardinals, New York Giants, and all UConn sports teams. Paul also enjoyed playing softball and darts, excelling in both. He was a Connecticut State Darts Champion in the 1990s and won the Moose International Dart Tournament. His competitive spirit took him to Las Vegas to compete in the Dart Open Championship, where he advanced three rounds. Beyond darts, Paul participated in beard competitions and embraced every opportunity to showcase his talents.

Paul worked as a machinist throughout his career, demonstrating a strong work ethic and dedication to his craft. In retirement, he found immense joy in spending time with his beloved grandchildren. Whether cheering them on at their activities or simply sharing moments together, they were the light of his life.

Paul had a passion for food and was known for his grilling and smoking skills. He loved hosting dinners and sharing meals with those close to him. Before illness limited his travels, Paul and his wife Deborah journeyed across the country for dart tournaments, creating cherished memories along the way.

Paul's vibrant personality made him unforgettable to all who knew him. With a heart of gold and an infectious sense of humor, he brought joy to every gathering as the life of the party. His excellent sportsmanship and caring nature left a lasting impression on everyone he met.

Paul is survived by his devoted wife Deborah Steinmiller; daughters Ashley Tabor; Roseanna Adams and her husband Carl; Melissa Tabor and her partner Travis Therrien; grandchildren Vanessa, Nikolai, Jeremiah, Evan, Trinity, Gabriel, Eleanor, Travis Jr., and Douglas; bonus grandkids Brantley Jayden Angelic; brothers Ward Steinmiller (and partner Wendy) of Starksboro, Vt.; Mark Steinmiller (and wife Sherry) of Lebanon; Gary Steinmiller (and wife Kelly) of Port St. Lucie, Fla.; Karl Steinmiller (and wife Deborah) of Port St. Lucie, Fla.; sisters Marie Bajger (and husband Donald) of Mansfield Center; Tracy Stimson (and husband Tedd) of East Hampton; Linda Putnam (and husband Elliot) of Shelburne, Vermont; as well as 34 nieces and nephews who will fondly remember their Uncle Paul.

He was predeceased by his parents, Ward Winfield Steinmiller Sr. and Myrtle Marie Everett Steinmiller.

Paul's legacy is one of love for family and friends, fierce loyalty to his passions, and an enduring zest for life that inspired all who knew him. May his memory bring comfort to those who mourn his passing.

Please join us to honor the remarkable man Paul was at the Celebration of his Life on Saturday, May 16, from 01-6 p.m., at Colchester Fish and Game, 16 Old Town Rd.



Colchester

Carol Carson

Carol Carson, 86, of Arizona (formerly of Colchester and Moriah, N.Y.), passed away at her home on Monday, April 6. She was with her husband, William A. Carson, and daughter, Jill Carson on the day they celebrated their 68th wedding anniversary.

Born in Moriah, N.Y., Carol was the valedictorian of her high school class. While raising four young children, she pursued higher education with determination, earning a bachelor's degree from Eastern Connecticut State University with a major in mathematics and a minor in History. She later completed her master's degree in Education.

Carol dedicated 20 years to teaching mathematics at Bacon Academy in Colchester, where she inspired countless students with her passion for learning and her clear, patient instruction.

An avid reader, Carol especially enjoyed historical novels. She and her husband shared a lifelong love of travel, exploring the world together through adventurous, free-style journeys by train and ferry. She also cherished quiet, joyful times at their beloved Lake Hayward home, where she gathered with family on the water.

Carol is survived by her husband of 68 years, William A. Carson; her four children, Cindy Hodge (Kevin), Jill Carson (Bob), Katrinka Morgan (David), and William T. Carson (Jane); eight grandchildren; and fifteen great-grandchildren.

She will be remembered for her strength, intellect, adventurous spirit, and the deep love she showed for her family. Her presence brought warmth, wisdom, and joy to all who knew her.

A private burial will be held in Moriah, N.Y., where she will be laid to rest with her parents.



Moodus

Loretta Lebeau Doyer

Loretta Lebeau Doyer (Sept. 26, 1937 – April 14, 2026), of Moodus, passed away peacefully Tuesday, April 14, surrounded by the love of her family.

She was predeceased by her beloved husband, Lawrence Doyer; her daughter, Donna Lewis; her son, Dominick Fanelli; and her daughter, Marie Fanelli. Though she endured great loss in her lifetime, Loretta remained a source of strength, love, and warmth to all who knew her.

She is survived by her devoted family, including her daughter and son-in-law, Lillian and Daniel Resto; and her daughter, Rose Hodgdon and her fiancé, George Morrisette. She also leaves behind her cherished grandchildren: Jacob DiStefano, Antolina DiStefano, Kelsey Hodgdon, Kayla Hodgdon, Krystal Resto, Julia Resto, and Angelina Morrisette.

Loretta was also blessed with many beloved great-grandchildren: Dominick Colon, Gabriel Colon, Isaiah Colon, Josiah Colon, Gianna Robinson, Vincenzo Robinson, Samir DiStefano, and Giuseppe Robinson, all of whom brought her immense pride and joy.

Loretta will be deeply remembered for her love of gardening, where she found peace and happiness, her fondness for country music, and most of all, for the time she spent with her family. Her home and heart were always open, and her presence brought comfort, laughter, and love to those around her.

The family extends its heartfelt gratitude to Chestelm Health & Rehabilitation for the compassion and kindness shown to Loretta over the years – you became like family to her – and to Hospice of Middletown for their gentle and dedicated care during her final days.

Loretta's love and legacy will live on in all who knew her, and she will be deeply missed.

A celebration of life will take place Saturday, May 9, at 2 p.m.

Middle Haddam

Ronald McCutcheon

1933-2026

Ronald William McCutcheon of Middle Haddam passed away Saturday, April 4, after a short illness.

He was a devoted husband of 64 years to Lois, a beloved father to Margaret and a proud grandfather to William and Edward.

Ron was a graduate of New York University, where he earned a degree in Psychology, and enjoyed a successful career in real estate, founding Town & Country Realtors in Middle Haddam with Lois in 1964.

He served on several bank boards and YMCA committees in Middletown, and on the vestry at Christ Episcopal Church, Middle Haddam. He was an outspoken advocate for historic preservation and social justice throughout his life.

Ron was an avid marathon runner, completing seven marathons, notably in Boston, New York, London and Vienna. He also completed several runs to the summit of Mount Washington!

He enjoyed many years of tennis with friends, and decades of European and domestic travel with Lois and Margaret.

A celebration of Ron's long and happy life will be held at a later date.



Hebron

John E. Ostrout

John Ostrout, 77, of Hebron, passed away Thursday, April 16. He was born to Elmer and Dorothy Ostrout. He is survived by his wife, Susan Ostrout, and sister, Marnette Fritz, and brother, Larry Ostrout.

John was the proud stepfather of three children, Michael, Kathryn and Thomas Docker. He loved his five grandchildren, Travis, Van, Sam, Shealyn and Chase, and one great-grandchild, Teddy.

John, a respected leader in the arts community and lifelong advocate for public support of the arts, passed away peacefully, leaving a lasting impact across Connecticut and the nation.

John earned his Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Connecticut and a Master of Fine Arts in theatre management from the Yale School of Drama. He began his career managing a range of performing arts organizations, developing a deep and enduring commitment to strengthening the arts.

He spent more than 25 years with the Connecticut Commission on the Arts, where he rose to serve as executive director. Appointed by governors from multiple political parties, he was respected for his steady leadership and collaborative approach. During his tenure, Connecticut achieved national prominence in public support for the arts. He later served at the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., helping to expand support for arts organizations nationwide.

An Eagle Scout, he maintained an extraordinary commitment of more than 50 years to Troop 25 of the Boy Scouts of America. His dedication to mentorship, service, and the development of young people reflected a lifetime of leadership grounded in integrity, patience, and encouragement.

Mr. Ostrout was also deeply devoted to St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Hebron, where he was an active and committed member being a warden and vestry member. His faith was reflected in the way he lived-consistently showing up for others and strengthening the community



around him.

A memorial service in celebration of John's life will be held Saturday, May 9, at 11 a.m., at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Hebron.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to St. Peter's Episcopal Church or to Troop 25, Manchester, an organization that John held close to heart.

For online condolences, or to share a story of John, please visit www.auroramccarthyfuneral-home.com.

Hebron

Daniel Carl Billiel

Daniel Carl Billiel of Hebron sadly passed away Friday, March 27, due to complications of end-stage liver disease and septic shock. Dan was born in Manchester in 1969 to Diane T. Billiel and David J. Billiel. He was raised in Hebron, where he attended Gilead Hill School as well as Hebron Elementary, then RHAM Middle School and RHAM High School.

During his years he formed many lasting friendships and shared countless memorable moments. Daniel was married to Deanna Konrad in Vernon (1992-2017) and in later years married to Sherry L. Lemery in Salem.

Dan is survived by his wife Sherry; his children, Rachel Smith, Megan Billiel and Zachary Billiel; along with a loving granddaughter, AutumnRose; and sister, April Billiel.

Marlborough

Frederica U. Heslin

Frederica Heslin, 82, of Marlborough, passed away peacefully Saturday, April 18, after a courageous battle with cancer. Born in Hartford July 10, 1943, she was the daughter of the late Anthony and Esther (Fargnoli) Uliano.

She graduated from St. Thomas Aquinas High School in New Britain in 1961, where she met the love of her life and future husband, Bill. Frederica went on to earn her teaching degree from Elms College in Chicopee, Mass., in 1965.

Frederica and Bill were married on Thanksgiving Day in 1965, beginning a partnership that would span five decades. They made their home in Hartford before moving to Marlborough in 1970, where they raised their family and built a life centered on love, family, and community.

She is survived by her three sons, Tony and his wife Shupta; Bill and his wife Susan; and Matt and his partner Kim; nine grandchildren, Mark, Marina, Morgan, Priya, T.J., Ryan, Chloe, Emma, and Jackson; and four great-grandchildren, Julian, Vaida, Carly, and Gigi. She is also survived by many nieces, nephews, and extended family members.

She was predeceased by her beloved husband of 49 years, Bill, and her brother, Anthony.

Frederica devoted 34 years to teaching, including 30 years at Elmer Thienes Elementary School in Marlborough. She touched the lives of thousands of students and formed lasting friendships with colleagues. Her impact extended far beyond the classroom, shaping generations through her care, patience, and dedication. She will be remembered for the deep connections she built with children and their families.

Frederica and her husband were founding members of St. John Fisher Church in Marlborough and remained active in their community throughout their lives. She was a devoted supporter of her children's and grandchildren's activities, rarely missing a game, performance, or event. She and Bill also shared a love of travel, spending cherished time at their Rhode Island vacation home and traveling to destinations including Myrtle Beach, Holland, Italy, Korea, and the Caribbean.

In the final nine months of her life, Frederica was lovingly cared for at home in Marlborough by her son Matt and his partner Kim, along with the unconditional love and comfort provided by Teddy and Scout. Together, they ensured she remained comfortable, supported, and surrounded by love.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated Monday, May 4, at 11 a.m., at St. John Fisher Church, 30 Jones Hollow Rd., Marlborough, followed by burial in Marlboro Cemetery. Calling hours will be held Sunday, May 3, from 2-4 p.m., at Mulryan Funeral Home, 725 Hebron Ave., Glastonbury. Family and friends are invited to gather immediately following the burial at The Blackledge Tavern.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation in Frederica's memory to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital at www.stjude.org.

For online condolences, please visit www.mulryanfh.com.



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Obituaries cont.

Amston

Bonnie Morin

Jan. 24, 1960 – April 24, 2026

It is with great sadness Bonnie Morin (nee Gutowski) has passed peacefully at home after a long and courageous battle with cancer. Bonnie was predeceased by her parents Antoni and Teresa (nee Drzazgowski) Gutowski in 1998 and 2025 respectively and infant brother Antoni Jr. in 1959.



She leaves behind Sylvain her beloved husband and best friend of over 40 years. She also leaves behind the most cherished gifts in her life her children and grandchildren: son Adam Morin, his wife Kathryn; grandchildren, Claire and Michael; and daughter, Michelle Shvonski, her husband Benjamin; and grandson Levon.

In addition, Bonnie leaves her loving brothers and sister: Bogdan Gutowski, his wife Jolanta and daughters Merrill and Loren, Edward Gutowski, his wife Julie and son Christian, Dorothy Brank and daughters Vaille Brank and Hannah Gaughan, her husband John and daughters Casey and Ryleigh. Bonnie also leaves her aunt and uncle Zosia and Donald Zeil and their children, Tracy and Kevin, and her sister and brother-in-law, Joanne and Alain Bisson, and daughter Alaina.

Bonnie has family in Poland that has been supportive during her illness that she also leaves behind.

Bonnie was born in Wasosz, Poland and immigrated to the United States with her family in 1965 where she grew up. She raised her family on Amston Lake in Lebanon, where many fond memories were made.

Bonnie worked at DXC Technology (formerly CSC) with a career spanning almost 30 years as a systems analyst working with colleagues, some of which became lifelong friends.

Bonnie's greatest joy was spending time with her children, grandchildren and extended family participating in activities such as kayaking, bicycling, hiking and camping in numerous locations around New England.

Bonnie also enjoyed beach outings. Among her favorite beach destinations were Hammonasset State Park where she has been going with her family since childhood and Misquamicut State Park for the big waves.

A sincere thank you to all family and friends who have been caring and supportive during her illness.

Friends and relatives said goodbye to Bonnie on Thursday, April 30, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home in Colchester. A Funeral Mass followed that morning at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in Lebanon.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS).

For online condolences, or to share a story of Bonnie, please visit www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Patricia Sylvester

Patricia Sylvester, of Niantic, passed away Monday, April 20, at the age of 77. Born in Norwich March 23, 1949, Patricia was the beloved daughter of the late Michael and Doris Swider.

She carried with her throughout her life a deep pride in her roots, especially her fond memories of growing up on Mill Lane and spending time at Lake Hayward. As a child, Patricia was known for her strong work ethic and simple joys – spending time working alongside her father mowing lawns in the Colchester area and afterward getting treated to a well-earned root beer float at Harry's; this is where she formed many values that shaped who she became. Those early experiences reflected both her sense of responsibility and her appreciation for life's small pleasures.

Patricia's warmth, kindness, and her beautiful blue eyes left a lasting impression on everyone who knew her. She had a deep appreciation for beauty and creativity, enjoying collecting pottery, artwork, and making binders with clipped magazine articles and pictures of home design ideas. She also cherished her trips to Maryland, which brought her happiness and lasting memories. Patricia will be remembered as a storyteller. She had a unique gift for drawing people in, making every story come alive.

Patricia will be sadly missed but always remembered with love by her children and their spouses, Jeremy Sylvester and his wife Roxanna and Jonathyn Sylvester and his wife Nancy; her brother, Peter Swider and his wife Sandra; her sister, Katherine VanFossen and her husband Gerald; and her grandchildren, Sarah and Jillian; and numerous extended family members

and friends.

She was predeceased by a sister, Linda George. A graveside service will be held at St. Joseph's Cemetery in Colchester on Friday, May 8, at 10 a.m.

For online condolences, or to share a story of Patricia, please visit www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Portland

Benjamin Austin Adams

Benjamin Austin Adams, 34, beloved son of Jeffrey R. Adams and Loreen M. (Scanlon) Adams, departed this world unexpectedly on Monday, April 20, at his home in Portland.



Born July 22, 1991, in Middletown, Ben set his roots in Portland, surrounded by family. His nomadic spirit eventually drew him to the lively chaos of the Renaissance Fair circuit. In his younger years, he settled for some time in New Orleans before returning to his stomping grounds in Middletown. Whether he was navigating festival season or frequenting Klekolo World Coffee, he moved through life with a curiosity that couldn't be contained by a traditional 9-to-5. Ben thrived in an eclectic atmosphere, fueled by strong coffee and even stronger counter-culture vibes.

Ben was a graduate of Vinal Technical High School and The Porter & Chester Institute. He turned his lifelong passion for mechanics into a career. As a vehicle enthusiast, he had a particular devotion to Subarus, and his driveway served as a pit stop for any friend or family member's vehicle that had lost its spark. He gave his time freely, driven by a heart that was fueled by his enthusiasm for engines both on land and in the water.

When he wasn't covered in grease, Ben's creativity extended far beyond the garage. From photography to woodworking and glassblowing, he was a craftsman who found beauty in every medium he explored. Much of his life was set to a loud, diverse soundtrack; he shared deep, symbiotic bonds over music with many. He spent countless hours lost in the sprawling improvisations of jam bands, only to pivot seamlessly into the raw, cathartic energy of heavier hardcore breakdowns.

Waiting for him on the other side are his grandfathers, Austin C. Scanlon and Walter C. Adams Jr., and his grandmother, Roberta M. (Hubel) Adams.

Ben's legacy of kindness is carried on by his parents; his sister, Nicole A. Adams; his grandmother, Vivian C. (Smith) Scanlon; and his partner, Kelly Halpin. He also leaves behind a large family of aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends who will both miss him and reminisce in the lively stories of memories shared. His dog, Muddy, will undoubtedly sing the blues waiting for one more car ride with his favorite human.

A Gathering in Remembrance will be held Wednesday, May 6, from 4-8 p.m., at Farrell's Restaurant in Portland. Please come as you are, bring a story, share a laugh, and help us remember a man who was truly one of a kind.

In true Ben fashion – please skip the flowers. Instead, please consider sending a donation to the Portland Food Bank or your local animal shelter. He'd rather a dog get a treat or a neighbor receive a meal.

To share memories or send condolences to the family, please visit www.doolittlefuneralservice.com.

Colchester

John Sawchuk

John Sawchuk, 64, of Colchester, passed away after a long illness on Sunday, April 22, in the loving arms of his mother. He was born June 2, 1961, in Middletown, son of Dolores (Bengston) Sawchuk and Walter Henry Sawchuk.



John grew up in Colchester and graduated from Bacon Academy in 1979. He went on to study at Eastern Connecticut State University for three years and earned his bachelor's degree from Central Connecticut State University.

John loved spending time with his father at Walt's Country Motors listening to him interact with friends and customers. John spent his later years helping his mother, with whom he shared a love for sports, politics and their church.

John spent his Sunday afternoons at the Jewett City Flea Market, wheeling and dealing the things he loved to collect. His love for cook-

ing blossomed and John owned and operated Sudy's American Grill. He managed the kitchen at Thames Yacht Club for many years. John's favorite part of his career was running the Dug Out concession stand at the Colchester recreation complex. John especially liked watching the kids have their first experience at commerce figuring out how to use their money to purchase food, candy and drinks.

John loved sports, He coached men's softball, played in various leagues for many different sponsors throughout the years. He served as a board member for the Colchester Men's Softball League. John sponsored women's softball leagues as well. He had an eye for recruiting new talent. He was loyal and passionate about Walt's Country Motors softball teams and attended every game. His most memorable moment was winning the Lefties Grand Finale Softball Tournament in 1984. He was an avid fan of the Cincinnati Reds baseball team and enjoyed watching every UConn basketball game with his mother.

John served his community as a Justice of the Peace, having the pleasure and honor of joining many friends and neighbors in matrimony, and the majority are still married. John served as a longtime member of the Republican Town Committee. John volunteered his time with

the registrar of voters, serving for elections. He served as head deacon and served on many committees at the Colchester Federated Church. He volunteered at the Holly Fair, known for his Kentucky Hot Browns and for dressing up as Santa Claus for the kids there, as well as for family and friends. He was a member of the Colchester Lions Club and St. Joseph's Polish Society. John's community meant the world to him.

John is predeceased by his father, Walter Henry Sawchuk, and his brother, Walter (Corky) Sawchuk.

John is survived by his mother, Dolores (Bengston) Sawchuk of Colchester; brothers, William Sawchuk of Colchester and Charles Sawchuk and his wife Sherrie of Canterbury; nephews and nieces, Justin, Matthew, Amanda, Madeline, Cameron, and Olivia; and many other extended family members and friends.

Services will be held Friday, May 1, with burial at the Swedish Cemetery in Portland at 9:30 a.m.; services will be at 11 a.m. at Colchester Federated Church

Donations can be made to the Colchester Federated Church or the Bacon Academy Trusteers for building restorations.

To share a memory or leave a condolence for the family, please visit www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

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FOREIGN CAPITALS

See Answers, page 33

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CREATORS NEWS SERVICE

By Neil Manausa

ACROSS

1 Havana is its capital
5 Signs of healing
10 Qatar's capital
14 ___ roof; place for Williams' cat
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16 Arab capital or gulf
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18 Iowa communal society
19 Coke's nut source
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23 Addams cousin
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30 Brit. honour
33 After-dinner party
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35 Where Bamako is capital
36 Hangs out to dry
37 Biblical man of patience
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40 Groove
41 Term of office
42 Legal matter
43 Vodka cocktail
45 Weapon
46 "I'll Be Seeing ___"
47 Belgian youngster?

DOWN

1 Hansom
2 Western Athletic Conf. member
3 Engage in logrolling
4 English governess ___ Leonowens
5 Puget Sound metropolis
6 Regained consciousness
7 On ___ with
8 Late congressman Sonny
9 Scampi, for one
10 Senegal's capital
11 Redolence
12 Port lead-in
13 Literary collections
21 Oliver Twist's foe

22 Greek man-beast fertility god
25 Thermodynamics unit
26 Buenos ___
27 One-time dominant Canadian tribe
28 Campus marine military org.
29 Coming-out girl
30 Afghanistan capital
31 Trumpet tantara
32 Ireland, in Ireland
33 Cicatrix
35 PC display
37 Roast beef au ___
38 Hesitate
40 Family of guitarists
41 Type of harmony
43 Malaprop or Miniver
44 See 9 Down
45 King of India: 3rd C. B.C.
47 Former capital of West Germany
48 Fix over
49 Single
50 Flaccid
51 Hollywood's "Elephant Boy"
52 Norse capital
53 ___ arms: aroused
54 Domesticate
58 ___ es Salaam



Dinner in Puerto Rico... Arnie Bishop and Roy Ivers from Portland recently enjoyed dinner at The New Reef restaurant in Puerto Rico.

Where in the World is the *Rivereast*?

Taking a vacation or a day trip soon? Or simply going out to dinner? Bring the *Rivereast* with you! Whether it's across the globe or across town, we want to see where you've been! Simply snap a photo with the *Rivereast*, send it to bulletin@glcitizen.com and, if printed, you'll receive a gift card to Campagna Restaurant in Portland! Further details are listed below. Happy travels!



When You Wish Upon a Star... East Hampton native and Disney employee Steven Kelley is pictured at Epcot Center with Gary Greenwald and Pam Joslyn of East Hampton.



Fun in the Sun... Pictured are Evelyn, Sofia and Prashant Haley, all of East Hampton, enjoying some sun, fun and relaxation in Ocho Rios, Jamaica.



Pura Vida Costa Rica!... Three friends – Geri Cecilio of East Hampton, Dawn Gingras of Marlborough, and Dot Millen of East Haddam – recently toured Costa Rica. They are seen here with the *Rivereast*, and the Arenal Volcano in the background.

Where in the World?

**Going on a trip?
Bring along the *Bulletin*!**

Submit your travel photo holding the *Rivereast News Bulletin*, and you will win a \$25 Gift Card to Campagna Restaurant if your photo is one the four entries selected!

To enter, email your photo and address to: bulletin@glcitizen.com

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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BUYING COLLECTIONS & ACCUMULATIONS, FREE REVIEW: Comic Books, Vintage Toys, Sports Cards, Adv Signs/Cans (Soda, Beer, Gas Station), Zippos, License Plates, Jewelry, Postcards, Etc. Call/Text 860-817-4350

WANTED TO BUY: your sterling silverware, tea set, or any item made of sterling. Top cash price paid on the spot. I can come to your home or meet you at a place of your choosing. Call/text Dominic at 860-836-5013 or email dmbappraisal@sbcglobal.net.

WANTED JUNK CARS: and unfinished projects. Contact 860-216-8144.

WANTED TO BUY: All antiques; toys, military, watches, advertising, jewelry, coins, clocks, signs, all musical instruments, guitars, saxophones, keyboards, trumpets, amplifiers, accordions, vintage electronics, hi-fi stereo, amplifiers, pro-audio, radios, ham equipment, tube type equipment, plus more. 1 item or entire estate. Call 860-707-9350.

WANTED: Individual firearms, collections & estates including, military & related items. Federally licensed firearms dealer. Appraisal. Richard Pleines. 860-663-2214.

PETS

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Legal Notice

The Princess Pocotopaug Association has revised its ordinances relating to docks, launches, and watercraft. This document is prepared for the benefit of the public, solely for purposes of information, summarization, and explanation. This document does not represent the intent of the legislative body of the district for any purpose.

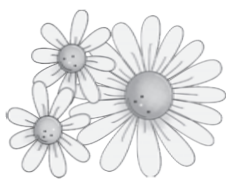
LEGAL NOTICE MARLBOROUGH ZONING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING

The Marlborough Zoning Commission will hold the following Public Hearing Thursday, May 7, 2026, at 7:00 PM at the Town Hall, 26 No Main Street
APPLICATION #Z-02-26 – Zoning Amendment Committee
1. Article Six D.a. lot size and frontage
2. Article Six 2.a Front yard setback
3. Article Six E.5.1.a & 5.1.b O.S.C.A.R lot size and frontage
4. Article Six A.C. 4 Village Center District Density
5. Article Three A.8 Corner Lots
Written testimony will be received at the public hearing and written testimony can be sent to the Building/Land Use Department at the Town Hall ahead of the public hearing.
ERIC COLANTONIO, ZONING COMMISSION CHAIR

Town of Portland Notice of Town Referendum Monday May 11, 2026

Pursuant to Chapter 4, Section 412, of the Charter of the Town of Portland and Chapter 90 and 152, of the General Statutes of the State of Connecticut, as amended, notice is hereby given to the electors and the citizens qualified to vote in Town Meetings of the Town of Portland that a Referendum will be held on May 11, 2026 between the hours of 6:00 A.M. and 8:00 P.M. for the purpose of voting on the adoption of a budget for the Town of Portland.
"SHALL THE TOWN OF PORTLAND APPROPRIATE \$109,000,000 FOR THE RENOVATION AND EXPANSION OF VALLEY VIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL INTO A PRE-K-GRADE 2 SCHOOL, THE RENOVATION OF GILDERSLEEVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL INTO A GRADES 3-5 SCHOOL AND VARIOUS CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AT PORTLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL AND PORTLAND HIGH SCHOOL AND AUTHORIZE THE ISSUANCE OF THE TOWN'S BONDS OR NOTES IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$58,000,000 TO FINANCE THE APPROPRIATION, WITH THE BALANCE TO BE FUNDED BY GRANTS RECEIVED FOR THE PROJECTS?"
YES _____ NO _____
Notice is hereby given that the location of the polling place is:
Portland Middle School
93 High Street
Portland, Connecticut
Absentee ballots are available at the Town Clerk's Office at 33 East Main Street, Portland, Connecticut during business hours. Absentee ballots will be counted at the polls. Optical Scan Voting Tabulators will be used. The polls will be opened at six o'clock in the morning (6:00 A.M.) and will remain open until eight o'clock in the evening. (8:00 P.M.)
ATTEST: Michael V. Tierney
Portland Town Clerk
Dated at Portland, Connecticut this 28th day of April, 2026.

CLEANING



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PART-TIME BAKER NEEDED GLASTONBURY: Will train. Early morning hours. Call for more info. 860-657-4400.

TOWN OF BOLTON-HIGHWAY CREWMAN III (MECHANIC): The Town of Bolton is hiring for a full-time Crewman III (mechanic) in the Highway Department. This is a union position. For info visit: www.boltonct.gov/employment.

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If you are a compassionate and responsible individual who would like to join our super friendly dental team, please forward your resume to thecdg@sbcglobal.net or mail to: Colchester Dental Group, PO Box 193, Colchester, CT 06415

EMPLOYMENT

PART-TIME BAKER NEEDED, GLASTONBURY: Will train. Early morning hours. Call for more info. 860-657-4400.

PERSON NEEDED TO MOW LAWN: in Amston. Must have own mower. Call 860-228-0809.

SEEKING DENTAL HYGIENIST: Mondays 8am-5pm. Office in Marlborough. 860-295-8132. Please send resume to mfdental@marlborough-familydental.com.

TOWN OF HEBRON FINANCE DIRECTOR

The Town of Hebron is seeking qualified candidates for the position of Finance Director. This position plans, organizes and supervises the accounting, payroll and purchasing operations of the town; prepares supporting data for the annual operating and capital improvement budget recommendations; and performs Treasurer duties as specified by statute and the Town Charter. This position oversees the Assessment and Revenue Departments. The position is responsible for coordinating the annual audit with the external auditors. Requires skilled use of Microsoft Office 365 and municipal financial software; the currently installed system is iVisions Tyler School ERP Pro. The position reports to the Town Manager. The successful candidate should have a bachelor's degree and at least seven years of experience and be familiar with the principles and practices of municipal accounting. Salary negotiable and commensurate with experience. Resumes should be sent to Town Manager, Town of Hebron, 15 Gilead Street, Hebron, CT 06248. Applications will be considered as they are received; position remains open until filled. More details and a job description are available at <https://hebronct.com/contact-us/employment/>. The Town of Hebron is an equal opportunity employer.

New Beginnings for Life is a smaller company with a big heart that cares for individuals with intellectual disabilities. We are seeking kind, patient, and passionate candidates to join our team. We have individuals who need care and companionship in Colchester and surrounding towns. We have great benefits, and the rate of pay is \$17.25 per hour. For our day support program, which is from 8am-4pm and 2pm-5pm, the towns are in Salem, Groton, Hebron, Lebanon, Higganum, East Haddam, New London, Norwich, East Hampton, Colchester. For our group home positions we have Monday-Sunday open second and third shift which is 3pm-11pm and 11pm-7am. These positions are in Colchester. If you are interested in becoming a part of our team, please feel free to call us and ask for more information at 860-531-9426



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Town of Portland Notice of Budget Referendum Monday May 11, 2026

Pursuant to Chapter 12, Section 1201, of the Charter of the Town of Portland and Chapter 90 and 152, of the General Statutes of the State of Connecticut, as amended, notice is hereby given to the electors and the citizens qualified to vote in Town Meetings of the Town of Portland that a Referendum will be held on May 11, 2026 between the hours of 6:00 A.M. and 8:00 P.M. for the purpose of voting on the adoption of a budget for the Town of Portland.

"SHALL THE GENERAL FUND OPERATING BUDGET AS ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN AT ITS MEETING OF APRIL 8, 2026, FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027, AMOUNT BEING \$43,492,207 BE ADOPTED?"

YES _____ NO _____

Notice is hereby given that the location of the polling place is:
Portland Middle School
93 High Street
Portland, Connecticut

Absentee ballots are available at the Town Clerk's Office at 33 East Main Street, Portland, Connecticut during business hours. Absentee ballots will be counted at the polls. Optical Scan Voting Tabulators will be used. The polls will be opened at six o'clock in the morning (6:00 A.M.) and will remain open until eight o'clock in the evening. (8:00 P.M.)

ATTEST: Michael V. Tierney
Portland Town Clerk

Dated at Portland, Connecticut this 28th day of April, 2026.

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TOWN OF EAST HAMPTON PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION LEGAL NOTICE Notice of Hearing

Notice is hereby given that the East Hampton Planning and Zoning Commission will hold a Public Hearing at their meeting on Wednesday May 6, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. at the East Hampton Town Hall - 1 Community Drive, Room 107 and via ZOOM to consider PZC-26-003: William House: 200 West High Street, Zone Change from R2 to Commercial Zone, Map 12/ Block 38/ Lot 13 The file is available for viewing in the Land Use Office and Town Clerk's office 860 267-7450.
Ray Zatorski, Chairman



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Notice is hereby given that Global Freestone, LLC, located at 264 Freestone Avenue Ext., Portland, CT 06480, will sell the contents of the following storage unit(s) to satisfy an owner's lien for unpaid rent and other charges according to Connecticut General Statutes Chapter 743.

Unit #: GFCK
Occupant Name: Christopher Komondy
Contents: Miscellaneous items of personal property, including concrete monuments, trophies, rosary beads, religious items, sport plaques, wood decorative columns, empty boxes, furniture etc.
Date of Sale: May 12, 2026
Time of Sale: 10:00 AM
Manner of Sale: Public auction to be held at the facility address listed above

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Country Time Lemonade Mix All Var. 19 oz. \$ 3.99	Pasta Roni Mixes All Var. 4.7-6.8 oz. \$ 1.99	Toasteds Crackers All Var 8 oz. \$ 2.99

Frozen & Dairy

Hood Ice Cream All Var 48 oz. \$ 3.99	On-Cor Entrees All Var 28 oz. \$ 3.99	Tina's Burritos All Var. 4oz. \$.69
Land O Lakes Butter All Var. 16 oz. \$ 3.49	Philadelphia Cream Cheese 8 oz. \$ 2.99	Cabot Cracker Cuts Cheese All Var 7 oz. \$ 2.99

Produce

Tangy Lemons or Limes \$.69ea	Georgia Blueberries Pint \$ 3.49ea	Super Spud Idaho Potatoes 5 Lb Bag \$ 3.49ea
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Gourmet Deli

Boar's Head Low Sodium Classic Chicken \$ 11.99lb.	Boar's Head Picante Provolone \$ 8.99lb.
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