

News Bulletin

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

Volume 47, Number 12

Published by The Glastonbury Citizen

May 8, 2026



Raptors Visit the Capitol... The RHAM Raptors girls volleyball team recently visited the State Capitol, where the team was recognized in the Chamber of the House of Representatives by state Rep. Steve Weir (R-55) for winning the state championship four out of the last five years. Pictured is the 2025 team, head coach Tim Guernsey and assistant coach Jen Holcomb. Under Guernsey's leadership, the team has won 11 state championships since 2007.

Superintendent Leaves with Extended Pay

By Toriana Williams

Colchester's now-former superintendent of schools, Daniel Sullivan, will continue to receive his full salary and insurance benefits until Oct. 1, 2027, according to details of a separation agreement between him and the Board of Education.

According to the terms of the agreement, which was supplied to the *Rivereast* this week by the Board of Education, Sullivan will technically be on paid leave until that date. Sullivan's salary for the 2026-27 fiscal year was set to be \$230,000, according to Colchester budget figures.

However, if Sullivan takes another teaching or administrative job in Connecticut before the Oct. 1, 2027, date, his paid leave would immediately cease and the Colchester Board of Education would be relieved of future payments.

Sullivan signed the separation agreement April 27, and Board of Education Chair Stefanie Tracey-Calash signed it April 28. The resignation was effective immediately.

Separation Agreement Details

The separation agreement, signed between Sullivan and the BOE, formally stated that Sullivan resigned "for personal reasons." His resignation is effective October 1, 2027.

Although that date is more than a year after the agreement was signed, the document made clear that Sullivan's active role in running Colchester Public Schools ended immediately; he no longer had "responsibility for or authority over the operation of the Colchester Public Schools," the agreement stated.

Under the terms of the agreement, Sullivan will cease receiving his base salary and health insurance benefits if he accepts a "qualifying position" before Oct. 1, 2027.

A qualifying position is defined in the agreement as employment in the education field that requires Connecticut teaching, administrator or superintendent certification. If Sullivan accepted such a position, he must notify that board within three business days, and his salary and benefits from Colchester would end on the first day of his new employment.

Interestingly, Sullivan's LinkedIn profile indicates he received his school superintendent/administrator certification with the Rhode Island Department of Education in March.

In addition to continued salary and insurance benefits, the agreement stated that on or about July 1, 2026, Sullivan is scheduled to receive a lump-sum payment of \$26,335. This payment is seen as compensation equal to 23 vacation days, which were calculated according to the terms of

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RHAM Budget Fails at Referendum

By Toriana Williams

Support in Andover and Marlborough wasn't enough to overcome overwhelming rejection in Hebron, and as a result the RHAM Board of Education's \$33.16 million proposed 2026-27 operating budget failed at referendum Tuesday.

The operations budget, a 3.45% increase over current year spending of \$32.05 million, failed by a combined vote of 2,723 to 1,258.

The proposed \$500,000 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget - which would have been a 11.58% decrease from the current year's \$565,587 - also failed district-wide, with voters rejecting it 2,400 to 1,385.

In Andover, the operating budget narrowly passed, at 390 votes to 379. However, the capital budget failed, 395 to 377.

In Marlborough, both RHAM questions passed. Voters approved the operating budget 320 to 289 and the capital budget 326 to 283.

But Hebron was a much, much different story. There, the operating budget failed spectacularly, by a 1,855 to 548 tally, while the capital budget was also soundly rejected, 1,722 to 682.

Advisory questions in Hebron showed strong dissatisfaction with the district's costs. A total of 1,803 voters said Hebron's share of the RHAM operating budget was "too high," while just 63 said it was "too low," whereas 436 called it "just right."

The capital budget drew similar opposition,

with 1,718 voters saying Hebron's share was "too high."

Hebron's share of the proposed RHAM budget was set at \$18.02 million, a 6.33% increase, over last year's \$16.95 million portion.

By comparison, Andover's share would have increased by just over \$20,000, while Marlborough's portion would have dropped by roughly \$52,000.

District officials have said those differences are tied directly to enrollment, with Hebron accounting for a larger share of students attending RHAM schools.

In an email Tuesday night after the vote, RHAM Board of Education Chair Heather Summerer, a Democrat, said the board must now regroup.

"The Board of Education has worked hard to put forth a budget that we believe effectively supports the needs of the RHAM community," she said. "The voters from the three member towns get to decide if they agree with our proposal. If not, we go back and decide on where we can make cuts."

Summerer said she hopes residents stay involved beyond referendum season.

"Ultimately, I hope the residents decide to stay engaged with the process throughout the year, not just during the budget season," she said. "There are opportunities to attend meet-

ings, understand drivers of the budget, activities that are happening in the school and how it affects students."

When asked what programs, staffing or services could now be affected, Summerer said it is too early to identify specifics.

"The Board of Education will regroup and evaluate areas that can be reduced," she said. "It is premature to speculate on specifics without the full board's input."

Superintendent of Schools Colin McNamara said he was disappointed by Tuesday's results, especially after months of reductions. McNamara had initially presented a \$34.18 million budget proposal in February, which would have been a 4.77% increase over the current year.

"The administration and the board are aware of the financial challenges being faced by our member towns [and] worked hard over the past several months to put forth a budget that demonstrates this," he added.

Combined, the operations and capital budgets were a 3.19% overall increase from the current year, an increase that McNamara noted "was one of the lowest in our area as well as across the state," and reflected more than \$1 million worth of reductions from what was originally requested - "including the reductions of four full-time certified positions and three

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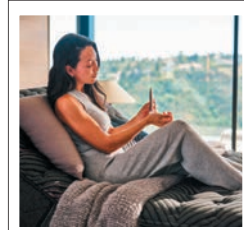
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From the Editor's Desk Observations & Ruminations

By Mike Thompson

When you check out the letters this week, don't come away thinking that you need to make an appointment to see your optometrist. Your eyes aren't playing tricks on you.

We've made the typeface smaller on the letters to the editor this week, just so that we can fit them all in and still have plenty of space for all the news you rely on. Veteran *Rivereast* readers know that this is a trick we usually employ at election season, but we needed to unleash it a little early this year.

Lots of things are converging at once. There are budget referendums coming up, an important school project referendum in Portland, and of course another scandal in Colchester, with the superintendent of schools skipping town amid the health insurance mess. And given the crashing and burning of the Hebron and RHAM budgets at referendum Tuesday, it looks like the letters won't be decreasing in volume anytime soon.

Which is a good thing!! We of course welcome community engagement (provided it's on local or state issues, of course.) So keep those letters coming! Just prepare yourself for the possibility of a smaller typeface for the next couple of weeks.

Like I said, one of the referendums coming up is on the proposed schools consolidation and renovation project in Portland.

As reporter Anne Lilburn previews this week, the project, if approved, would renovate Valley View and Gildersleeve elementary schools, decommission Brownstone Intermediate School from its use as a school, and make needed repairs to the Portland middle

and high schools. The plan has a price tag of \$109 million – though roughly 60% of that would be reimbursed by the state of Connecticut.

It's an important project, no doubt – and it's also important that people vote. The town charter requires a 20% turnout on any referendum item involving the issuance of debt. Town officials have attached this referendum to the town budget referendum, so that should help with the turnout – but will it help enough? History says: not really.

Last year's budget vote had a pathetic turnout of 9%. In 2024, the turnout for that year's budget vote wasn't much better, at 10% – and it was also 10% in 2023.

In other words, don't count on the budget providing a boost. If you live in Portland and you want to see this school project pass – and for the record I think it's a very good plan – then it's absolutely imperative that you get out and vote.

Referendum Day in Portland is next Monday, May 11. Voting will take place at Portland Middle School, 93 High St., from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Anyone for tennis? The East Hampton Recreation tennis program for adults is held every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9-11 a.m., at the Sears Park courts. Players from all *Rivereast* towns are welcome to join in.

This mixed-doubles program is free, requires no partners and is open to all levels of adult play, except beginner. Pre-registration is

Editor's Desk continued on page 9



Library Wins Awards... East Hampton Public Library received two Connecticut Library Association Awards at the recent CLA Annual Conference, including the Young Adult Services Award for Keri Lancelot and the Publicity Award for the library's Summer Reading Trailer and social media efforts. Pictured from left are Kel Kozikowski (Public Service Associate), Samuel Bolton (Head of Circulation and Technical Services), Keri Lancelot (Adult and Young Adult Librarian), and Christine Cachuela (Library Director).

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Corrections

In the story in last week's issue previewing the Hebron budget referendum, an incorrect figure was given for the current fiscal year's mill rate. The correct mill rate for the 2025-26 fiscal year is 36.85.

Also, in a story in last week's *Rivereast* previewing the Andover budget referendum, Board of Education Chair Caitlin Greenhouse was identified as a Democrat. This is incorrect. While she ran for election on the Democratic ticket, she is actually unaffiliated.

The *Rivereast* regrets the errors.

Thank You, Boards

To the Editor:

I would like to thank the Colchester's three town boards – Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and Board of Education – for their diligent work to prepare, review and modify this year's town and BOE (school) budgets. The town budget keeps in place, in a fiscally responsible way, the funding necessary to maintain our town's roads, buildings, parks and grounds. It also addresses fire and police needs and uses a grant to enhance police funding. In addition, the budget includes a competitive wage for senior van drivers and adequately funds the stipends for the Democratic and Republican registrars. The first selectman's salary is a return to previously approved levels and unanimously approved by the BOS.

I would also like to urge voters to support the Board of Education budget. During these very challenging financial times, the BOE spent weeks reducing the budget by \$2 million from the origi-

nal budget proposal. The school administration and Central Office staff agreed to pay freezes for this fiscal year. In addition, 14 positions have been cut by not refilling vacancies and restructuring. This year's BOE budget requests a 7.5% increase. It is my understanding that 6.8% (of the 7.5%) is due to the necessary obligation to the health (insurance) reserve fund. The increase in cost of \$3.22 million to the health reserve fund will also include funding to rebuild (a necessity per the agent working with the school system) the depleted reserve. The remaining portion of the BOE increase (\$354,922) mostly covers contractual obligations and utilities/maintenance. I have been following this budget process. This is as close as we are going to get without cutting more teacher positions and programs.

I hope to see you all at the town meeting to approve the two budgets on Wednesday, May 13.

Thank you,

Joanne Rose – Colchester

Note: Rose is a member of the Colchester Democratic Town Committee.

Rubber-Stamp Approach

To the Editor:

Despite the reevaluation adversely impacting residents, the BOF made no overall budget reductions. No questions raised about regionalization initiatives or efforts to develop shared services. I do not even recall one question regarding the declining enrollment.

Seems like a rubber-stamp approach and taxpayers need to just pay up.

Laurel Ranson – East Hampton

Note: Ranson is a member of the East Hampton Republican Town Committee.

Bulletin Board

"I just saw a mouse," my wife announced the other day. "He ran across the floor toward the dining room."

As we live in a 250-year-old house, the appearance of an occasional mouse, is not unusual. But this particular specimen was apparently out of the norm.

"He was huge," she said, spreading her hands apart to indicate a creature roughly the size of a newborn rhinoceros. "A big grayish brown one. It was disgusting."

"That's quite a sizeable mouse," I observed skeptically.

"I'm sure I've heard him at night scratching around in the bathroom while trying to sing Willie Nelson songs," she said. "It's terrifying."

"Actually," I confessed, "that would be me."

"Are you sure? It didn't sound quite human. The rendition of 'Someone to Watch Over Me' was particularly painful."

"There's no need to be insulting," I said stiffly. "I'll set out a trap."

I have learned over the years that there are various ways to off a mouse. I once bagged a particularly slow-footed specimen with a well-aimed LL Bean boot, but unless your wife allows you to discharge shotguns in the house, traps are usually your best bet.

In the old days, these were pretty much limited to the wire-type, spring-powered Victor traps. They're still available and they work well but have a tendency to snap shut on your finger when you're trying to set them. You might think this would evoke some sympathy for your intended victim, but in my case it only makes me want them dead.

Also available is some kind of sticky pad thing that traps the mouse by the feet, allowing you to engage in a face-to-face chat with your victim before carrying out the execution of your choice. This strikes me as a bit creepy and more than a little sadistic, so I have never tried out the sticky pads. Also, if I want to communicate with vermin, all I need to do is answer one of those telemarketing calls I get during dinner. (Would that Victor could come up with a snap trap for them.)

Poison tends to be a popular option for the less mechanically minded among us. Science has actually come up with a poison that makes the victim thirsty, which encourages it to seek out water before it expires. While a bit diabolical, this prevents the poisoner from dying somewhere in your walls, which is a good thing. You would be amazed at how much of an aroma a decaying mouse can emit and how many holes you can punch in the wall before you locate the corpse. The ratio of stink to body mass is really quite remarkable. On the other hand, there's nothing quite like starting a new day by finding a dead mouse floating in your toilet when you get up in the morning.

At the other end of the spectrum are products for individuals who are concerned about karma and the potential impact on their journey to enlightenment if they slip up and get reborn as a cockroach. These traps, which are also quite popular among sissies, are designed to catch the mouse alive without harming a hair on its pointy little head. This allows you to feel really good about yourself as you compassionately release the little fellow into the wild for some hawk to eat. In any case, your karma remains unblemished.

Having already resigned myself to rebirth as a lower life form, my preference is for a plastic box-like guillotine trap that has more spikes than a shark has teeth. It's easily set by just squeezing it open from the back, well away from the teeth, and it's quite lethal. The mouse sticks his head in to help himself to a little smear of peanut butter, he trips the trigger and the next thing he knows he's cavorting around in whatever passes for mouse paradise. (Probably some place where cheese grows on trees and mice chase cats.)

So far this week I've sent two off to paradise, neither of which approached the size of a newborn rhinoceros. I will admit I was beginning to question my wife's sense of scale. Then she informed me that she'd found an empty beer bottle under the couch and inquired as to where I thought it might possibly have come from.

I looked her right in the eye and said I didn't want to alarm her, but it looked like I was going to have to set a bigger trap.

Jim Hallas

Rivereast Hours of Operation

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

RIVEREAST

News Bulletin

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

Published Every Friday by The Glastonbury Citizen

87 Nutmeg Lane • Glastonbury, CT 06033

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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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Vote Monday, May 11

To the Editor:
Portland has reached an important moment. After years of discussion, planning, community engagement, working and reworking, we have a responsible, well-developed plan to modernize our school facilities and ensure our students learn in safe, healthy, and high-quality environments. That is something worth recognizing and celebrating. This proposal reflects careful work to balance educational needs with affordability for taxpayers, and it represents a meaningful investment in the future of our community.

I encourage all Portland voters to take part in this decision and to show up at the polls on Monday, May 11 to help move this plan across the finish line. Voting will take place at the Portland Middle School from 6am-8pm, and curbside voting is available for those who need it.

Sincerely,
Laurel Steinhauser – Portland
Note: Steinhauser is chairperson of the Portland Board of Education but said she is writing as an individual.

School Renovation Project

To the Editor:
On this coming Monday, May 11, the future of this important school project will be decided – but only if enough of us participate.

In order for this referendum to pass, at least 20% of registered voters must turn out. That means this decision won't be made by a small group – it will require broad participation from across our community.

No matter where you stand, I am asking you to show up and vote. Have your voice heard.

This project is about more than buildings. It's about the kind of town we want to be. It's about supporting our students and teachers, strengthening our community, and continuing to make Portland a place where people want to live, work, and raise a family.

As many of you know, I am fully in favor of this project for many reasons: It right-sizes our schools by reducing from three to two elementary schools and moving 6th grade up to the middle school. It provides two brand-new schools – Valley View and Gildersleeve – coupled with vital capital improvements to our MS/HS complex. And it's affordable based on a growing grand list, new businesses in town and a significant reimbursement from the state. The cost of doing nothing would cost taxpayers much more in the years ahead.

Voting is one of the simplest and most powerful ways we can contribute to that future. It only takes a few minutes – but the impact lasts for generations.

Please make a plan to vote on May 11. Encourage your neighbors, friends, and family to do the same.

Let's show what Portland is capable of when we come together and do the right thing.

Sincerely,
Michael Pelton – Portland
Note: Pelton is Portland first selectman, but said he is writing as an individual.

Supports Town, School Budgets

To the Editor:
I am writing in support of Colchester's town and Board of Education budgets. The town budget maintains vital public works funding, addresses fire and police safety, while using grant funds for the police, supports senior van drivers, provides funding for legally mandated election requirements, and restores the previously, unanimously approved by the Board of Selectmen salary for the first selectman. It should be noted that the first selectman recused himself from this vote.

In regards to the Board of Education budget, over \$2 million has already been cut. Pay freezes apply to administration and the central office. Over 14 positions have been cut. More cuts will eliminate programs and increase class sizes. Three point two million dollars cover health insurance and rebuilds the reserve. Two hundred thousand dollars cover contractual obligations and utilities.

It should also be noted that a previous report in Rivereast misrepresented the mil rate increase by over one mil.

Please vote in support of Colchester's reasonable and rational budgets.

Mary Dean – Colchester

Supports School Project

To the Editor:
Like many parents in Portland, I find myself thinking about the future more often these days. I have a young child who will be heading into kindergarten in 2027, and when I picture that moment; dropping them off on the first day of school, I want to know they're walking into a building that's safe, welcoming, and designed to help them learn and grow.

That's why the school building plan on the May 11 ballot matters so much to me.

Even for those without young children, I hope people will take a moment to think about what strong schools mean for our town. Good schools help hold communities together. They attract families, support property values, and strengthen Portland for the long term.

Our elementary school buildings haven't had major capital improvements in more than 30 years, and it shows. We've done our best to keep things running with quick fixes and repairs, but that approach is disruptive for students and teachers and it ends up costing more in the long run.

I have a lot of confidence in this plan. After more than five years of study and community input, it lays out a clear, practical path forward: renovating and expanding Valley View into a PreK-2 school, renovating Gildersleeve for grades 3-5, moving sixth grade to the Middle School to better use available space, and addressing critical HVAC and roof needs at our secondary schools.

Just as important to me as a parent, the plan provides the kinds of spaces young children truly need; like a proper gym and learning environments designed for how kids actually learn, move, and grow.

The plan has been carefully reviewed and has earned unanimous support from the Board of Education, Board of Selectmen, and both local

political parties. That kind of bi-partisan agreement doesn't happen often, and it speaks to both the quality of the plan and the urgency of the need.

Approving the project now allows Portland to receive approximately \$66.5 million in state reimbursement; funding that may not be available in the future. Strong schools build strong communities, and this is our chance to move forward together.

Let's not miss this chance to do right by our kids. I hope my neighbors will join me in voting 'yes' on May 11.

Katie Bordonaro – Portland

Hebron's Crabapple Festival

To the Editor:
In these challenging times of budget debates and political conflicts, Hebron offers a unique opportunity for celebration. There is a Crabapple Festival happening right now, it is free and all are welcome. This remarkable event is not sponsored by any organization or charity, but created by Mother Nature herself. The Crabapple trees of Kinney Road are all coming into bloom at once, offering scenic beauty and a spectacular immersive experience. Walking along this historic country roadway and through the paths of the Raymond Brook Preserve, located at 52 Kinney Road, the air is filled with the pungent yet delicate scent of thousands, perhaps even millions, of tiny flower blossoms.

One part of the path, leading south from the stone wall laneway at the heart of the preserve, offers an opportunity to walk through a tunnel of flowering trees. The tunnel is not completely filled in yet but will over the next week, transforming before your eyes. One of my favorite experiences comes towards the end of the bloom, when each gust of winds sends showers of tiny light pink petals into the air and carpet the ground. It has been said by many people in many different ways, the power of nature can transport and heal.

The Hebron community is truly fortunate to have the Raymond Brook Preserve and the Crabapple Festival. There are few opportunities like this anywhere. However, this is not the only celebration Mother Nature offers at this same venue. The Fox Grape Festival happens here in early September and should not be missed.

Now imagine expanding these exciting, healing and joyful celebrations right into Hebron center. The property at 17 Kinney Rd., a.k.a. the Horton Property, extends to the north and abuts St. Peter's Park, which connects directly to the Hebron Historic District. The old town center now includes Hebron's most vibrant and unique commercial district, as well as the Douglas Library and the Old Town Hall. With the numerous historic features, official notable trees, and natural beauty of 17 Kinney Rd., a walk from the Preserve to the town

center can offer a unique and thrilling experience. I urge everyone, whether you are from Hebron or any surrounding town, take some time, walk through the Raymond Brook Preserve and glance across the street to 17 Kinney Rd. Together we can realize an exciting new future. For more information please visit Save Hebron Center on Facebook.

Sincerely,
Kevin J. Tulimieri – Amston

Republican Annual Conference

To the Editor:
Please join the Hebron Republican Town Committee on Wednesday, May 27, from 6-8 p.m., at Blackledge River Tavern in Hebron. Your November Republican candidates will be in attendance to share their thoughts, experience, and mission. This all-star lineup includes Ryan Fazio, Jason Guidone, George Austin, Matt Corey, John Bolton and Peter Lumaj, with Michael Meadows as the master of ceremonies.

We welcome conversations, new viewpoints, and solution mindedness. Join us to be civically engaged in the community you live in and love. Democracy thrives on dialogue and the exchange of ideas strengthens democracy.

Delicious hors d'oeuvres will be served and a cash bar is available. Advance individual tickets are \$30 individual and couples are \$50. Or purchase at the door for individuals at \$40 and couples for \$60. Students are free, but should RSVP at hebron-republicans@gmail.com. Use the link to make a donation for tickets at www.hebronrepublicans.org. We look forward to conversations with you.

This fundraiser is approved and paid for by the Hebron Republicans.

Kim Hills, Vice Chair
Hebron Republican Town Committee

Supports School Referendum

My Fellow Portland Residents:
On Monday, voters will decide whether or not to make critical investments to Portland's schools. As a member of the Strategic Capital Improvements Committee (SCIC), I witnessed the knowledge and no-stone-left-unturned approach present at every meeting as we discussed our aging schools. I also gained enormous respect for the previous committees whose similar dedication provided a wealth of vital data.

When the SCIC concluded its work in the summer of 2025, it presented the Portland Boards of Selectmen and Education with a strong, evidence-based proposal. Shortly thereafter, the Connecticut Legislature approved unprecedented additional reimbursement for school projects that further strengthened that recommendation.

The proposal recommends the renovation of

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★ Letters, cont. from page 5

Valley View and Gildersleeve Schools. Both buildings offer reconfiguration flexibility that best meets current educational requirements, and a renovate-to-new approach that leverages significant State reimbursement (73.93% for Valley View; 58.93% for Gildersleeve). In addition, a Valley View renovation secures the surrounding town-owned property for the future, while the Gildersleeve renovation salvages surplus school square footage for repurposing.

The proposal recommends decommissioning Brownstone Intermediate School (BIS). Decommissioning BIS consolidates three elementary schools to two with estimated annual savings of \$900,000. Leveraging BIS as “swing space” during the project also generates significant savings by eliminating the need to lease temporary classrooms. The proposal further recognizes BIS as an important historic and architectural landmark to be preserved and repurposed for future generations of Portland residents.

The proposal also recommends funding for critical roof and HVAC repairs at the secondary schools with 50% state reimbursement.

It should be noted that this vote is somewhat unique. Section 412 of the Town Charter requires that this referendum be approved by no fewer than 20% of registered voters to ensure that a vote on any question of this magnitude, when taking place on a date other than election day, be well represented by Portland voters. Therefore, whether affirmative or negative, the referendum will not count

unless the 20% voter threshold is met.

While there is no easy answer to this difficult issue, I truly believe that this proposal is the right plan at the right time for Portland, and encourage all registered voters to come out on Monday and make your voices heard.

Sincerely,
John H. Dillon – Portland

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

It’s OK to Vote No

To the Editor:

As the consolidated schools vote draws near, I have concerns about this proposed vote.

A vote ‘yes’ will end the Brownstone School as a prime educational facility. I grew up in Portland attending Gildersleeve, the Brownstone (Junior High) and the high school, as did my three kids. I loved going to those schools, the Brownstone my favorite. The schools have always been in a state of flux. The Brownstone never changed despite other schools being shut down (Central) or opened (the bland Middle School).

The Brownstone captivates many attributes, its beauty, architecture, large open-air classrooms, potential for reopening classrooms for lifetime industrial arts skills, direct access tennis courts/playground, sport field (soccer, baseball, football, and past track) and ample parking. Major recent updates include two new efficient boilers in the process of being installed, according to the maintenance director, as well as many somewhat re-

cently installed windows.

Why build more classroom space when we have a perfectly suitable class room space? There has been an argument the school(s) are not safe. They may not meet new state codes but it is not true that school is unsafe. It’s unfortunate all the schools need some major maintenance all at once but to justify that for decommissioning the Brownstone is wrong.

Vote ‘no’ and save our iconic school.

Dick Lawton - Portland

A Collaborative Success

To the Editor:

I would like to extend a sincere thank you to the many Hebron residents who lent their voices to the recent discussion regarding our town’s public safety budget. Over the last several weeks, the community engaged in a robust dialogue concerning the Fire Department’s per-diem funding and the critical need for 24/7 emergency coverage.

Following this significant public outreach, it is very encouraging to see the Town Council respond so thoughtfully. By publicly announcing their commitment to restore the per-diem funding and addressing the potential coverage gap, the council has shown a willingness to listen and adjust course in the interest of resident safety. While the budget process is complex and often involves difficult trade-offs, prioritizing the baseline security of a staffed ambulance is a victory for every household in Hebron.

This resolution demonstrates the power of a

community working together with its leadership to refine our town’s priorities. I am grateful to the council for their commitment to making this right and for ensuring that “hope” is replaced by a guarantee of service. When we work collaboratively to address oversights and strengthen our essential services, our entire town benefits.

Thank you to my neighbors for staying informed, and thank you to the Town Council for putting our safety first.

Matthew Barrett – Hebron

East Hampton WPCA

To My East Hampton Neighbors and the WPCA:

WPCA: Your job is to restore the public’s trust --- The steps:

- Stop backdoor sewer expansion
- Make sure the public gets a vote
- Set up a committee to make public a 2-year review of WPCA actions

Pass the moratorium on sewer expansion to give yourself-time to untangle this mess

To my East Hampton neighbors: Get involved. Attend meetings, Become aware, Protect our rural town

Douglas Mackeown – East Hampton

Support Both Budgets!

Colchester Neighbors:

I’m writing to ask for your support for both the Town and Board of Education (BOE) budgets at the upcoming town meeting on May 13 and the referendum on May 20. Our town leaders are facing the same economic reality as the rest of us: costs are up across the board – for goods, fuel, and healthcare – and the budgets reflect these necessary increases, not some secret agenda.

The BOE has already taken significant steps to manage costs. They cut over \$2 million from the original proposal, eliminated 14 positions through attrition, and got administration and central office to agree to pay freezes. The major portion of the BOE increase, \$3.22 million, is needed to fund health insurance and rebuild the depleted reserve. The remaining operational increase of just \$354,922 covers contractual obligations and utilities. Forcing more cuts will mean eliminating programs and increasing class sizes.

On the town side, the budget is focused on stability. It ensures adequate funding to maintain progress with road maintenance, buildings, parks, and grounds. It also supports public safety needs by addressing fire and police staffing, and ensures our senior van drivers get a fair wage. Regarding the First Selectman’s salary, it was a return to previously approved levels, unanimously reinstated by the BOS, and was not a self-granted raise as some recent letters have suggested.

These are responsible budgets. Please show your support for our elected officials who are working hard in challenging times. Attend the town meeting at Town Hall on May 13, and vote to support both budgets!

Susie Milner – Colchester

Incredibly Meaningful

To the Editor:

On April 23rd my husband and I attended the third annual Glastonbury Holocaust Remembrance Evening. We have attended all three of these presentations and each one exceeds the year before. This year’s was certainly no exception. The event is masterfully created by members of Congregation Kol Haverim and the Glastonbury Holocaust Remembrance Project (GHRP) in partnership with Reverend Kate Vanderzee-Glidden and members First Church of Christ. Carol Fishman is chairperson of GHRP, with Elizabeth Berman and Debra Glass serving as vice chairs.

The theme of the evening was Righteous Among Nations, which is “an honor bestowed by Yad Vashem in the State of Israel to non-Jewish individuals who stood up for humanity in a time of total moral collapse and risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust.” Musical student participation included a student band playing tasteful ballads at the building’s entrance which set the tone for the evening’s emotionally powerful message. The GHS Madrigals, directed by Dr Ethan Nash, performed twice during the presentation singing Haskiveinu and Eili Eili. Six talented actors performed first-person narratives of actual heroes who saved thousands of Jewish lives by their self-less creative acts of courage in the face of great personal danger.

The keynote event included Rebecca Stewart interviewing Manny Korman who told his heart-wrenching story of leaving Poland with only his brother at the age of seven as a Kindertransport child bound for England. The evening concluded with a powerful candle lighting ceremony in memory of all who perished in the Holocaust and in honor of the 28,707 Righteous Among Nations heroes. This was followed by a unity prayer led by an interfaith group of clergy and leaders.

The size of the audience was impressive and hopefully portrayed an increased awareness and concern for our Jewish friends and neighbors during an alarming increase in acts of violence and hate toward members of the Jewish faith.

GHRP provided an incredibly meaningful portrayal of a horrific historical event that targeted individuals for murder simply because of who they were. I pray that we all learn from past events and use our hearts to embrace our differences instead of viewing them a reason for division and fear.

Cindie Friedman – Colchester

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Two Important Votes

To the Editor:
There are two important votes coming up on May 11 in Portland. We have the opportunity to vote on the referendum to approve the town budget for the year 2026-2027. The second referendum is seeking approval for the multifaceted school upgrades. The voting will take place at the Portland Middle School 93 High St. from 6 a.m. until 8 p.m.

I am writing in support of the school improvement project called Question 2 on the ballot. The committee headed by Carl Johnson did extensive and exhaustive work developing the plan that is before us. Both Valley View and Gildersleeve Schools are 60 plus years old and in need of upgrades. The inclusion of the capitol work needed at the High School/Middle School will bring all our schools into good shape for the coming years. We are in a unique position with the high amount of state grant money available to offset much of the cost to the town. These funds may not be as generous if we delay these necessary upgrades/repairs.

There is a great amount of information regarding these projects available for your review on the town and Board of Education websites. In addition if you have more questions you can reach out to the First Selectman Mike Pelton or School Superintendent Dr. Britton for answers.

Perhaps most importantly, I urge everyone to vote. Our charter requires 20% of eligible voters to vote. If we don't make that number the question will fail regardless of the percentage for or against. Our voices matter. Please join me on May 11th in support of this pivotal project.

Thank you,
Kim Hanna - Portland

Petition to Open Charter

To the Editor:
Beginning on May 9, a group of Portland citizens will begin collecting signatures to petition the BOS to appoint a Charter commission to revise/update and modernize the Portland town charter. The last charter revision was completed 22 years ago. Since, the BOS has "kicked the can down the road" as surrounding towns have consistently formed charter commissions that has resulted in positive improvements.

Under state and charter rules the BOS would appoint a charter commission consisting of 5-15 members from the public that would have up to 16 months to complete revisions. The commission should not be restricted to guidelines set by the BOS and should operate independently with input from the public. Once the commission has fulfilled their duties a vote from the BOS would advance revisions to a town referendum.

Over the next 90 days if you see us collecting signatures, we ask that you consider supporting a charter commission by signing the petition to implement changes to move Portland in a positive direction beginning in 2026.

Portland over politics.
Rose Aletta - Portland

Inaccuracies vs. Realities

To the Editor:
Let's talk about budget realities versus inaccuracies regarding the BOE budget. The initial proposed BOE budget was not the number moved to the BOS from the BOF. Through administration and central office pay freezes, 14+ position cuts due to not filling vacancies and restructuring, as well as other reductions in places like technology, the BOE budget has already been cut by over \$2 million from what the superintendent had originally asked for.

The final BOE budget contains only a \$354,922 increase to run the schools; this mostly covers increases in contractual obligations and utilities. The remaining \$3.22M of the proposed increase is to fund health insurance and start to rebuild the insurance reserve. As a BOF member, I can assure the citizens we reviewed every school's budget and every proposed cost with the principals during the budget workshops. We strove to find a way to maintain existing services without negatively affecting Colchester's children.

The BOE then collaborated with school administration to find probable reductions and bring us the hypothetical impacts of even deeper cuts. They presented this information at the April 29th public hearing and the presentation is on the town webpage. If the BOE budget fails, we will be at the point at which existing staff and programs will be affected.

My vote to send the BOE budget forward comes from a clear understanding that deeper cuts will reduce teachers, programs and increase class size. I believe that further reducing the budget should be a decision of the taxpayers at referendum.

I am asking you to attend the Annual Budget Meeting at Town Hall on May 13 at 7 p.m. in person to move this budget to referendum as is and have your voice heard. The referendum is scheduled for Wednesday, May 20. Please make a plan to vote now. Much more information, including an in-depth explanation of the town budget, can be found in the May 1st First Selectman's Report on the town website.

Krista Kardys
Board of Finance Member
Town of Colchester

Fourteen Positions. That's the Cut

To the Editor:
Every school district in Connecticut is dealing with the same thing right now. Costs are climbing fast. Special education, transportation, salaries, utilities, all of it. Test scores are slipping while kids are still catching up from COVID learning loss. None of this is unique to Colchester. It is happening everywhere.

But Colchester has an extra problem on top of all that. The joint health insurance reserve fund shortfall has blown a hole in the budget before we even start talking about classrooms. What looks on paper like a modest increase is actually a serious cut once you back out the insurance hit.

Fourteen positions are already leaving. Fourteen.

That is not a budget that is growing. That is a budget that is shrinking while costs go up around it.

Now some folks want to cut even more. I understand nobody likes paying more in taxes. I do not either. But you cannot cut your way through rising costs and a recovering student body without doing

real damage to our kids.

We are already cutting. Vote 'yes.' Do not let this get worse.

John Farrell - Colchester

Note: Farrell is a member of the Colchester Democratic Town Committee but is speaking as an individual.

Selectman vs Superintendent

To the Editor:
Andover's first selectman sent a flyer suggesting that the preschool might be costing us money.

The superintendent responded with a video saying that it's break-even.

Who's right? I've put together a detailed analysis of the preschool program's finances using public sources - the town audit, BOE monthly reports, the published collective bargaining agreements, and Connecticut Department of Education data. Full report: andoverct.info/reports/aes/preschool-funding.

Short version: The program costs the town roughly \$92,000 per year on the operating ledger, once employee benefits are loaded in. But federal

and state law require the district to provide special education to children ages 3-6 with disabilities whether the preschool exists or not - and meeting that mandate without an in-house program would cost roughly \$200,000 per year. Given that, the preschool actually saves Andover taxpayers around \$108,000 per year, or about \$77 per household.

On the out-of-town question: Andover residents have priority at every step of enrollment. Out-of-town families pay full tuition and effectively subsidize the program rather than the other way around.

Another viewpoint: To be Superintendent of Schools, one needs to:

Hold a master's degree from an accredited institution; Complete at least 30 graduate credits beyond the master's, in a state-prescribed list of subjects spanning curriculum, school finance, school law, personnel evaluation, special education, and the psychological foundations of learning; Accumulate 80 school months - roughly nine years - of successful teaching or service; Of those, complete at least 30 school months as a full-time administrator or supervisor;

Earn an institutional recommendation from a state-approved school district leadership program; Pass the Connecticut Administrator Test; Hold the resulting #093 Superintendent of Schools endorsement

See Letters, page 8

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★ **Letters, cont. from page 7**

ment from the Connecticut State Department of Education (or, in narrow cases, qualify for a waiver from the Commissioner); Survive a competitive screening process against other credentialed candidates, with résumés filtered, references vetted, and writing samples scrutinized; Make it through multiple rounds of interviews with a search committee, often including community members, teachers, and board representatives; Win the confidence of a majority of the full Board of Education in a public vote; Negotiate and sign a written employment contract for a term not exceeding three years

To be First Selectman, one needs to:
Have a pulse; Be a registered voter in Andover; Receive more votes than the other person.

The pulse is recommended but not strictly required.

Sincerely,
Scott Sauyet – Andover

Note: Sauyet is co-chair of the Andover Democratic Town Committee and a member of the RHAM Board of Education, but said he is writing as an individual.

It's Your Tax Dollars

To the Editor:

Apathy...the death-knell for lower taxes. According to VoterRecords.com, 10,041 are registered voters in East Hampton, yet only about 3,100 showed up at the last budget vote. Of the estimated 100-plus people that attended the 4/28 East Hampton Town Council meeting, only 6 people spoke against the budget. To those who complain about the recent massive property revaluation and increasing taxes, if you don't speak up, vote 'no,' then you have no right to complain.

Our town has deteriorating roads, lake health issues, limited water supplies, contaminated lands, crumbling buildings, escalating housing costs, underfunded police, over-building the watershed, trash litters our streets, seniors struggling to pay bills, yet the proposed budget once again will take our scarce dollars and struggle to make discernible improvements. Does this seem right? The BOE has grandly reduced their demand for a 4.8% budget increase to 4.1%, on top of 4-5% per year over the last 5 years. I'm not getting a 4.1% increase; are any

of you readers? One speaker correctly observed the school system should do more with less, just like the rest of the town residents are forced to do. The real world has reduction-in-force, job elimination, program downsizing, cutting expenses, and making do with less, but the BOE marches on, oblivious to the financial strains suffered by the rest of EH residents. This is not a vote against students or teachers; it is a vote against a leadership culture of wanton disregard for the overall financial health of the entire town. As a reminder, an estimated 64% of the residents of EH do not have children in the school system, so the additional tax burden will continue to fall on these residents.

Between the Democratic Town Council, the Democratic majority on the BOE and the BOF, residents of EH can expect to pay higher taxes. Historically, BOE school funding takes priority and the rest of the town can do without. The heck with fixing roads, funding our under-staffed police department, getting potable water, cleaning Brownfield sites, reining in uncontrolled developers, keeping the lake clean, don't worry about ef-

orts to update the Plan of Conservation and Development that would help the entire town. Attend the EH budget meetings and speak out. Vote for control of the town finances. If enough of the voters will speak out, perhaps real change is possible. Otherwise, it will be same-old, same-old and everyone loses.

Bob Yenker – East Hampton

Colchester Priorities

Dear Colchester Residents:

Last week, the Board of Finance unanimously voted to move forward the town budget and send it to town meeting and referendum. Despite the many challenges facing us today, it is the second year in a row that the town budget has received bipartisan support on the BOF.

The town budget takes into account the financial pressure on all of us due to the higher-than-normal Board of Education budget proposal. That is why the Town budget includes no unplanned major initiatives or new requests for capital projects. All capital expenses have been flat-funded for FY27. Contributions to reserves have also been reduced. We will dedicate the year to focusing on completing already-funded projects, including grant funded projects like the Youth Center renovation, Norton Park, drinking water infrastructure improvements, and streetscape projects.

The town budget proposal also completes plans to keep Colchester safe and address resident concerns about public safety. Starting Jan. 1, 2027, all fire/EMS shifts will have equalized staffing, to make sure we are ready to respond no matter the day or time. The budget proposal also leverages new grant funding and upcoming retirements to expand police coverage without a budgetary impact. The goal is to dedicate a full-time traffic officer to address speeding and other traffic violations.



MOTHER
I NEED YOU! WE NEED YOU!

Because the House needs to be a HOME
Because our Mother needs to be OUR MOTHER

Today, we are being pressured to disregard the erosion of **historic marriage** and family principles and practice. ENCOURAGEMENT to be a **normal, healthy** family is noted by its absence in the media, government, etc. which presents even that which is contrary. Determination to try to rightly steer straight faces many and varied opponents. These opponents are **determined to eliminate** mother, father, husband, wife—anything and everything that opposes the pursuit of their agenda **no matter the consequences**. Even today's social violence and unrest has at its root the **absence of a father and mother**. We are finding the **wrong road signs** and the **wrong roads**, calling wrong right and right wrong, calling evil good and good evil (Isaiah 5:20). We face the **ABSENCE of MORAL and MENTAL STANDARDS**, to be caught up along with the crowd, **trying** to belong, to become, to find oneself, to find peace, to find love, to find worth, to find values which inspire and overcome a society that has abandoned such. There is little to no recovery of the normal and natural God-created family setting. The **FAMILY** needs the **MOTHER**; the **NATION** needs the **FAMILY**.

God's Pattern is Set:

"HONOR thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee" (Deut. 5:16; Eph. 6:2). "Whoever CURSES his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure [utter] darkness" (Prov. 20:20). "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and FORSAKE NOT the law of thy mother" (Prov. 1:8). "A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man DESPISETH his mother" (Prov. 15:20).

God's Provision is Needed:

"This know also, that in the last days perilous [difficult] times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves...DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS, unthankful, unholy" (2 Tim. 3:1-2). "There is a generation that CURSETH their father, and doth not bless their mother. There is a generation that are pure IN THEIR OWN EYES" (Prov. 30:11-12). This is promoted by the age old "every man did that which was RIGHT IN HIS OWN EYES" (Judges 21:25). And "let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die" (Isaiah 22:13). Take heart and know.

God's Person is Found:

"I will LIFT UP MINE EYES unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. MY HELP COMETH FROM THE LORD, who made heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:1-2). "And YE SHALL SEEK ME, AND FIND ME, when ye shall search for Me with ALL YOUR HEART, and I WILL BE FOUND BY you, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 29:13-14). "COME UNTO ME, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). The Nation, the Family and YOU need God and His sure and certain Word, the BIBLE.

The Lord Jesus Christ is waiting to provide for you the right and real relationship that God's RIGHTEOUSNESS requires and in which God's LIFE is found. This makes for life that is worth the living. You can find God's HELP and HOPE and ENCOURAGEMENT today. Why not begin RIGHT NOW and receive Him as your personal Saviour and Lord (John 1:10-13)! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Act 16:31).

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The major drivers of the budget are contractual employee wages, health insurance premiums, and inflation on utilities and other contracts. The budget represents what it would cost to maintain our current level of services for public works and other services such as senior services, library services, parks and recreation, and youth and social services. The economic reality is that just like goods or services we buy at home, the cost of running these for our town increases each year. In the past, we have seen budgets that try to conceal these costs by playing games with fixed costs. That always ends the same – with a hole for us to dig out of.

As a past Board of Finance member, I try to make sure the budgets I put forward are an honest accounting of our expected costs and don't set up surprise fiscal cliffs for the future.

Only you can decide if our town services are worth it for you as a taxpayer, but I hope you will consider these factors when you cast your vote on Wednesday, May 20.

Sincerely,
Bernie Dennler
Colchester First Selectman

District 55 Deserved Better

To the Editor:

At a time when families across Connecticut are struggling with rising costs, it is disappointing that state Rep. Steve Weir voted against roughly \$630,000 in new funding for his hometown Hebron and communities across District 55, including Andover, Marlborough, and parts of Glastonbury, and Bolton.

What kind of representative puts partisan politics ahead of direct relief for the people he was elected to serve? Residents are feeling pressure from higher grocery bills, gas prices, housing costs, utilities, and taxes. Yet when an opportunity came to bring funding back to our communities, Rep. Weir voted no.

Thankfully, SB 1 funding passed despite his opposition. That means real support will still reach local towns and residents who need it.

Voters should remember this on Nov. 3. District 55 deserves a representative who will fight for our communities and our tax dollars – not vote against them.

Sincerely,
Karen Wilkinson – Marlborough

Note: Wilkinson is a member of the Marlborough Democratic Town Committee but is speaking as an individual.

The Bill Comes Due

To the Editor:

Last year, Colchester Democrats ran as the adults in the room. They told voters they were restoring fiscal stability, protecting taxpayers, and responsibly managing town finances.

Now we know what was happening behind the curtain.

According to Superintendent of Schools Dan Sullivan's own public statement, he knew last year that the health insurance reserve was not being funded according to professional recommendations. He said he disclosed that information to Democratic officials.

Not to the public. Not to taxpayers. Not to voters.

Then those same officials went through an election cycle telling residents they had restored fiscal stability. They asked voters to trust them while a financial time bomb sat inside the town and school health insurance reserve.

Now that time bomb has gone off.

The reserve is failing. It needs millions in taxpayer money. The superintendent has resigned. And instead of accountability, the Board of Education handed him a golden parachute worth nearly half a million dollars.

Half a million dollars for the man at the center of a financial failure taxpayers are now being asked to fix.

That is not accountability. That is hush money with a purchase order.

The people kept in the dark last year are being handed the bill this year.

Colchester residents should not forget: the problem did not suddenly appear after Election Day. The warning signs were known. Professional recommendations were not followed. Key Democrat officials were told. The public was not.

That is the scandal. Not just that the reserve was mismanaged. Not just that the superintendent walked away with a taxpayer-funded payout. Not just that taxpayers now have to pour millions into a fund they were told was being handled responsibly.

The scandal is that voters were deprived of the truth before they voted. They were sold "fiscal stability" while the foundation was cracking underneath them.

Now Democrats want residents to believe there is no room to cut, question, or challenge the budget. They frame every objection as an attack on teachers or students.

No. This is about whether taxpayers should be forced to pay for failures they were never told about, by officials who stayed quiet when the truth mattered most.

Last year, voters were duped. This year, taxpayers are being charged for it. And the same people who kept quiet are asking us to trust them again.

Michael Dubreuil – Colchester

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

Time for the Voters

To My Colchester Friends and Neighbors:

The Board of Finance (BOF) has motioned the budget numbers to go to Town Meeting on Wednesday, May 13th, and then to referendum (planned for Wednesday, May 20th), where voters will make the final choice. Prior to those actions, board members and residents spent over 30 hours asking questions and working to understand the Town and Board of Education (BOE) budgets.

Four years ago, I sat through this process as a resident and felt frustrated. That BOF was Republican-led and often chose a path that did not match what many residents asked for without letting voters have a say. It felt like decisions were being made without clear explanations of the numbers or what the cuts would really do.

I am proud that the public now has clearer, readily accessible information about these budgets so residents can make informed decisions.

Please look at the facts for yourself. There is too much misinformation online and in letters to the editor. Two good sources: (1) latest first selectman's newsletter, with slides and budget details for the town and BOE, and (2) April 29 recording of BOF Public Hearing #2 on the town website (BOF page, Meeting Audio Files section).

Together we worked hard to find millions of dollars of cuts and ways to augment revenue where we can. Though we tried to stop short of cutting town services, hurting student programs, or reducing teacher staffing.

Public Hearing No. 2 illustrated tax impacts of the proposed budgets and we jointly walked through what further cuts to the town or BOE budgets would mean. We displayed facts, such as the expected tax impacts of the proposed budgets, standing at about a \$500 increase for an average home. We looked at what further reductions to the BOE or town budgets would mean balanced against what those cuts would equate to on citizens' tax bills. For instance, cutting would mean K-2 and world language teacher cuts and completely changing the middle school team model. That trade-off would save taxpayers \$100.

Now the BOF will listen to the voters. No one wants higher taxes. But voters get to decide whether the cost is worth the impact on schools or town services. It is time for the community to be heard, and the BOF will make further reductions if that is what voters want.

Sincerely,
Karen Belding, Chair
Colchester Board of Finance

A Massive Payout

To the Editor:

Two weeks ago, the Board of Education announced it was parting ways with Superintendent Dan Sullivan. They paired that decision with a glowing sendoff, the kind you reserve for someone who leaves an organization better than they found it.

Except what they did not say matters far more than what they did.

This was not simply a separation. It was a payout. A massive one. The agreement allows Sullivan to collect, among other payments, his contractual salary through October 2027, with the only condition being that he does not take a teaching or administrative job in Connecticut. Tellingly, Sullivan had already secured his licenses in Rhode Island earlier this year, while still employed by Colchester.

The total payout is worth nearly \$500,000 in taxpayer money.

To be clear, this is the same superintendent whose decisions lead to their health reserve fund being driven into the ground, to the point where a forensic audit is now needed to understand the damage. Millions in taxpayer dollars misapplied. A teacher health insurance fund pushed into the negative, putting their coverage at risk. The same superintendent who attempted to bully teachers into a forced pay freeze to cover for the financial disaster he created.

And instead of accountability, he walks away with an obscene taxpayer funded reward.

Before Bernie's team tries to tell you this was unavoidable, it wasn't. Sullivan's contract gave the Board of Education broad authority to terminate his employment for nearly any reason they wanted. They did not have to pay him; they chose to. This was their explicit choice, and in making it they allowed him to shape the glowing announcement of his departure. All while insisting there's nowhere to give, that their budget has no wiggle room at all.

Now contrast that with how they treat the rest of this town. Question their budget and you are met with threats to cut teachers and programs. Residents who cannot afford these increases are dismissed or mocked. We are told disagreement means we do not care about our teachers, while their jobs are used as pawns to protect an unnecessary and egregious payout for the very person responsible for this financial mess.

So yes, this is a choice. A clear one.

And it shows their accusations for what they really are, an admission that they'd rather accuse you instead of looking in a mirror.

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

Vote 'Yes'

To the Editor:

In Portland, we take pride in being a community that shows up—for our neighbors, for our town, and, most importantly, for our children. The upcoming bond referendum asks us to do exactly that again, but with a level of clarity and commitment that has been deferred for far too long.

For years, we – all of us in Portland – have managed our school facilities through a cycle of temporary fixes – patching roofs, updating systems in fragments, stretching the life of buildings well beyond what they were designed to support. These (at times heroic) efforts were necessary, but they were never sufficient. They kept things running, but they did not move us forward. Maintenance is not investment.

This referendum represents a decisive shift. It is an opportunity to step out of a pattern of reactive maintenance and into one of thoughtful, long-term investment. It is about creating learning environments that are safe, functional, and worthy of the students and educators who use them every day.

Our schools are not just buildings. They are the places where curiosity takes root, where skills are formed, where young people begin to understand their place in the world and their capacity to shape it. When we invest in schools, we are not simply funding infrastructure—we are investing in possibility, stability, and the future character of our town.

Equally important, this is about accountability to ourselves as a community. We recognize that postponing necessary investment only increases costs and compounds challenges. Choosing to act now is not just fiscally responsible – it is a statement that we are ready to address longstanding needs with honesty and resolve.

Supporting this bond is a vote to move forward. It is a vote to replace uncertainty with intention, to replace piecemeal repairs with comprehensive solutions, and to ensure that the next generation inherits a community that cared enough to act when it mattered.

I urge my fellow residents to vote yes.

Sincerely,
Chris Chenier – Portland

Note: Chenier is a member of the Portland Democratic Town Committee, and is also an appointee to the Portland conservation and inlands/wetlands commissions, but is writing as an individual.

Annual Budget Meeting

To the Editor:

Colchester's Annual Budget Meeting is the most important meeting for people who support our town and schools to attend. This year, it will be held this coming Wednesday, May 13, at 7 p.m., in Town Hall. At that meeting, the proposed budgets can be reduced before heading to referendum if a motion is made and passed by a majority of people there in person. Given the misinformation out in the public realm this year, it is highly likely that such a motion will be made. Budget supporters need to be there to prevent further reductions from happening.

On the BOE side, over \$2M in cuts have already been made, including a reduction of 14+ positions and salary freezes for admin and central office, to the initially proposed budget to bring it down to where it is. The BOE's increase is primarily (over 90%) due to a shortfall caused by underfunding the health insurance account for the last few years. While the problem is an expensive one to fix, I am confident that our elected officials have done the best they can to bring the budget down and I am not willing to sacrifice our school children or teachers because of it. The BOE presented a list of probable cuts that would occur if the budget does not pass and they include a K-2 teacher, world language, maintenance, and an academic team at WJJMS. This isn't worth the little I'd save in taxes were these valuable programs to disappear.

The town budget has no new initiatives or projects. It places a heavy focus on maintaining our roads, fields and buildings. Public safety, particularly staffing our fire, EMS, and police units is also a top priority. The town's side of the capital reserve account is healthy; however, increasing insurance costs are a primary driver in the increase in contractual obligations.

The first selectman's report on the town website includes all of this information and more – including the full presentations made at the most recent

Editor's Desk continued from page 4

not required; just show up. For more information, call or text Natalie Hurt at 860-227-8538.

Lastly, a special concert is coming up this weekend at Wesleyan University in Middletown. "American Musical Traditions 1865-1915: A Cultural Tapestry" will take place at Crowell Concert Hall on Saturday, May 9, 2026 from 2-4 p.m.

The concert will bring together talented performers like the West End String Quartet, Baritone, Kenneth Overton and the Connecticut Vintage Dance Society for a spring afternoon of music, song and dance.

public hearing. Check it out and spread the word to your friends and family members looking to make an informed decision.

Please try to attend the Annual Budget Meeting in-person (there's no online option) on Wednesday and mark your calendars to join me in voting 'yes' the following week on Referendum Day, Wednesday, May 20.

Thank you so much,
Monica C. Swyden, Chair
Colchester Democratic Town Committee

We Have Worked Diligently

Dear Colchester Residents:

As Board of Education members, we have worked diligently to bring a budget to the town that provides good education to our students, protects our current teachers and is fair to taxpayers. We know that economic times are tough.

The board reduced the superintendent's original budget proposal by over \$2 million before bringing it to the Board of Finance. It is a budget that maintains our school system with no new initiatives or improvements. You can see from the presentation at the public hearing on April 29th (available on the town website) that the schools have cut many expenditures including supplies, technology upgrades and instructional coaches, in an effort not to impact student programming. Administration and central office have agreed to pay freezes. Over 14 positions have been eliminated including in world language and safety by not filling vacancies and restructuring. No personnel has been laid off at this time, but that is a probability if more reductions need to be made. The health reserve issue and the rising cost of insurance has had the most impact on the budget, over 90% of the increase. The remaining portion of the budget increase covers higher operational costs like contractual obligations and utilities.

The BOF voted to bring this budget to BOS, who moved it to the Annual Budget Meeting on May 13th. I urge you to attend the town meeting on May 13th in person and voice your opinions. At the meeting the budget can not be increased, but it can be decreased if a motion to do so is passed by the people in attendance. You can see from the BOE presentation on Wednesday April 29th what a reduction could mean to our students. There are 3 levels of possible reductions outlined which impact students and class size and programming.

Please join the Town Meeting on May 13th to voice your opinion and be sure to vote in the budget referendum scheduled for Wednesday, May 20th.

Thank you,
Gussie Gilberti and Nancy Nelson
Colchester

Note: Gilberti and Nelson are members of the Colchester Board of Education, but said they are speaking as individuals.

Weir Voted 'No'

To the Editor,

Steve Weir voted 'no.' \$630,000 in education funding for our local towns. Steve voted against it. Of course he did. This was a bill that would help his constituents. His loyalties were clearly not with the towns he represents. Last week, the Connecticut House passed a budget adjustment, 127 to 21. It sends roughly \$270 million in new aid to Connecticut towns: \$183 million to supplement K-12 school funding and \$100 million in general municipal grants. For the five towns of the 55th District -- Andover, Bolton, Glastonbury, Hebron, and Marlborough -- that works out to roughly \$630,000 in new state aid for fiscal year 2027. Hebron alone gets \$270,000. Andover gets nearly \$98,000. Marlborough, \$149,000.

This was not a party-line vote. Of the 47 Republicans on the floor, 26 voted 'yes.' Weir's neighbor in the 8th District, Tim Ackert, voted yes. So did Aniskovich, Bolinsky, and 23 more. A clear majority of House Republicans saw the same bill Weir saw, weighed the same fiscal concerns, and voted to send the money home. Weir was in the minority of his own caucus.

This is also not the first time. In 2024, Weir sent a flyer touting his "legislative accomplishments." It turned out that his proudest achievements were losing committee votes on bills that never reached the floor and then voting with everyone else on bills that passed unanimously. Two years later, when an actually contested bill comes along that

See Letters, page 14

The planners of the concert – Wesleyan faculty member Neely Bruce and Wesleyan Visiting Scholar and cultural historian Richard Friswell – promise "the program will highlight the excitement of truly American forms of musical inspiration appearing on the scene following the Civil War and leading into the new century."

Tickets can be purchased through the Wesleyan University box office at wesleyan.universitytickets.com.

See you next week – and don't forget to vote!

Marlborough • Marlborough • Marlborough • Marlborough • Marlborough • Marlborough • Marlborough • Marlborough • Marlborough • Marlborough • Marlborough

Voters Narrowly Approve Town Budget

By Toriana Williams

According to unofficial tallies, voters narrowly approved the town's proposed 2026-2027 budget Tuesday and backed both the operating and capital budgets for Regional School District 8 in a referendum marked by higher turnout and close vote totals.

Marlborough's proposed \$28.95 million town budget, a 1.74% increase over the current year's \$28.6 million, passed by a 316 to 293 vote.

Voters also voted to approve RHAM's proposed \$33.16 million operating budget by a 320 to 289 vote. The regional middle and high schools' spending plan also passed in Andover, but lost by a wide enough margin in Hebron to send the budget to failure. (See related story on page 1.)

The district's proposed \$500,000 capital improvement budget also passed in a 326 to 283 vote.

According to Marlborough's Democratic Registrar of Voters, Sandy Cameron-Adams, about 600 residents cast ballots on Tuesday. This is up from roughly 440 voters during last year's budget referendum.

In an interview with the *Rivereast* on Tuesday night, Board of Finance Chair Michael Nastri, a Republican, said he was "very pleased" by the outcome after months of budget discussions.

"I think we did the best we could," he said. "We did bring it down considerably from the

initial proposals, and having a 1.99% increase year over year, ... on the tax levy is ... pretty good," he said.

Nastri said RHAM's reimbursement to the town also helped shape the final numbers. "... the reimbursement from RHAM ... played a little piece of the puzzle there," he said.

When asked about the increase in turnout, Nastri said he wasn't surprised. "Last year it was a pretty straightforward process, and this year, with the revaluation that occurred in Marlborough, and you know, the questions on RHAM, ... it doesn't surprise me that more people came out."

Nastri then said the finance board's next step will be to finalize the mill rate. "We will set the mill rate at our next Board of Finance meeting," he explained. If adopted as proposed, the town's mill rate would be set at 27.71, based on the figure Town Manager David Porter relayed at a previous town meeting. However, these numbers are subject to change.

The Board of Finance is expected to meet in the coming days to officially set the mill rate and finalize the town's spending plan for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

Board of Selectmen member Louise Concodello, a Republican, said town officials were relieved to see the budgets pass, even with the narrow margins. "Marlborough is very pleased,"

Concodello said.

"We're very close in our numbers. ... It was a close call. But we're happy Marlborough passed, because we had a lot of Board of Finance meetings and Board of Selectmen meetings," she said.

When asked about turnout, Concodello said she initially expected higher numbers earlier in the day. "When I went to vote, I was just a little bit over 100, and that was 11 a.m. I was not too pleased," she chuckled.

"But ... 600's not bad. Last year, we had 400, I think." However, she noted that Marlborough has about 4,100 registered voters. "So, it's not a good turnout. ... It'd be nice if we got 2,000, but they usually don't come out for the referendum," she said.

Concodello also thanked residents who participated. "Thank you to all that voted. ... We needed the people to come out," she said.

Board of Selectmen Chair Susan McFarland, a Democrat, said in an email, "I'm pleased that Marlborough voters approved our town operations budget. While I share residents' concerns about the significant real estate tax increases many of us are facing, I'm proud of the work the Board of Selectmen did reviewing and questioning every line item in the budget to ensure we were being prudent in our spending plans."

Board of Finance member Ken Hjulstrom, a Republican, said the results reflected concerns many residents have voiced about taxes following the town-wide property revaluation. "I'm not surprised that the vote was so tight," Hjulstrom said.

"There have been a lot of people voicing concerns over the increase on their home's property tax. While it varies from household to household, many folks got hit pretty hard due to the reevaluation."

Hjulstrom added that the BOF will now move forward with setting the mill rate. He also noted that late-arriving state aid could help reduce the final tax burden. "Keep in mind that we did get the additional state funds at the 11th hour. We would likely incorporate those funds, which could reduce the final mil rate slightly," Hjulstrom said.

Before Tuesday's vote, officials said the biggest cost drivers in the proposed town budget included a 3% cost of living adjustment for town employees, a 21% jump in health insurance costs, energy, software and service contracts, staffing and employee benefits, payments on a new fire truck and expanded senior services.

The proposed BOE budget totaled \$9.33 million, or a 4.49% increase over the current year's \$8.93 million budget.

Meanwhile, Marlborough's share of the RHAM operating budget is projected at \$11.38 million, a \$52,283 decrease from last year's \$11.44 million.

School officials said the proposed budget was driven by the hiring of a new sixth-grade teacher, the addition of a full-time school psychologist, the loss of grant funding, rising special education costs, transportation increases and higher insurance costs.

From the Desk of the Town Manager

The State of Connecticut is convening a Citizens' Assembly on Property Taxes. The intent is to bring together a representative group of citizens from across the state to design a series of specific and actionable recommendations around how to fund local public services that will be presented to the Connecticut Legislature by State Comptroller Sean Scanlon. This is a nonpartisan initiative led by Comptroller Scanlon and the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, in partnership with the University of Connecticut and Yale University.

A randomly selected group of households will receive a mailed invitation. Only households that receive a letter are being asked to consider participating, and those who respond will be entered into a pool for randomized selection. These letters are legitimate and part of this carefully designed nonpartisan initiative.

If selected to serve among the 100 members of the Citizens' Assembly, you'll receive \$1,200 for full participation. The Assembly will meet for six sessions across eight days from July through August. They will hear from experts, deliberate in small groups, and build consensus around funding priorities and mechanisms. For more information, please visit www.ct-citizens-assembly.org.



Porter

David Porter, Marlborough Town Manager

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. **Holiday Closing: The center will be closed Monday, May 25, in observance of Memorial Day.**

Events: Timeless Beauty: Monday, May 11, 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Make-up tips from make-up artist and teacher Joby Rogers. Fee is \$10/residents, \$12/non-residents.

Memorial Day Parade: The senior center has been invited to march (or drive) in this year's Memorial Day parade. Pass out trinkets to kids, wave American flags, or help hold the senior center banner! Call to register.

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. Low-income discount available for those who qualify.

FABBS Exercise: Flexibility, Agility, Better Balance and Strength workout class. Movement and exercises are drawn from body building, yoga, ballet and more. Watch for June session dates. Fee: \$40/residents, \$48/non-residents.

Aging Vocab: Tuesday, June 2, 5-6 p.m. Come learn the aging medical lingo with Marlborough Health and Rehab and Addison Place. Light refreshments provided.

MES Band Practice: Wednesday, June 10, 10 a.m. Students from the fifth grade band will perform a practice show. Coffee will be served.

Transportation: Rides to medical appoint-

ments, employment, essential services, the Senior Center and recreation activities are available to seniors and people with disabilities. Transportation is available Mondays and Tuesdays only. Rides must be reserved two business days in advance. Call 860-295-6209 for more information. Visit www.marlboroughct.gov for the complete transportation policy.

Social Services: Food Bank: Located at 3 Wilhenger Drive, and can be reached at 860-295-6008. There is an open house Tuesdays from 10 a.m.-noon and 4-6 p.m. The food bank is open to qualified residents in need.

Homeowners Elderly/Disabled Tax Relief Program: Property tax credits are available to qualified households 65+ or disabled. For more information, call the assessor's office at 860-295-6201; for application assistance, call the senior center. Deadline to apply: May 15.

Energy Assistance and Eversource Discounts: Income-based. Contact the center for an appointment. For energy assistance, the application deadline is May 29.

Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program: Electronic benefit card, preloaded with \$40. For use at participating farmers markets to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables, eggs, honey, and fresh cut herbs. Use at the Marlborough Farmers Market starting June 3 and running every Wednesday after. For Marlborough residents only. Income limit: Household 1 - \$2,461/month, Household 2 - \$3,337

Arts Center Spring Show

Marlborough Arts Center (MAC) will hold its Members' Spring Art Show Saturdays and Sundays through May 31, from 1-4 p.m. each day. The public is also invited to attend a reception with awards on Sunday, May 3, from 2-4 p.m.

This exhibition showcases works by MAC member artists, featuring paintings, collages, photography, sculpture, ceramics, written works, and more. Marlborough Arts Center is located at 231 North Main St.

For more information, visit www.marlborougharts.org, email info@marlborougharts.org or call 860-467-6353.

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Parks and Rec. Programs

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

Youth Programs: 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.

Horseback Riding Lessons: Ages 5 and up, English or Western style instruction. The lessons are private and are an hour in length. The lessons days and times are flexible. The instructor will contact you upon registration to set up lesson day and time. Fee is four lessons for \$175/residents, \$180/non-residents.

Adult Programs: Beginner and Intermediate Tai Chi: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1-2 p.m., at Marlborough Senior Center. Fee is \$40/resident, \$45/non-resident.

Beginner Tai Chi: Tuesdays, noon-12:45 p.m., at Marlborough Senior Center. Fee is \$40/resident, \$45/non-resident.

Zumba: Thursdays, 6:30-7:30 p.m., at Marlborough Senior Center. Fee is \$50/resident, \$55/non-resident, or a \$10 drop-in fee. Class

Dean's List

Penny Curran of Marlborough made the fall 2025 Dean's List at Montclair State University in Montclair, N.J.

Curran's major is undeclared.

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.

instruction provided by Anna Boose.

Adult Drop-In Volleyball: Thursdays, 8-10 p.m., at Marlborough Elementary School. Fee is \$5 per week. Session runs until June.

Pickleball: Mondays, 5:30-7:30 p.m., and Tues/Thurs, 9-11 a.m., at Blish Park. Open to all levels of play. Registration is free.

Trip: Boston Red Sox vs. New York Mets: Saturday, July 11, 4:10 p.m. game at Citi Field in New York. Trip includes: a charter bus, ticket to the game, cookout at the stadium: hamburgers, hot dogs, sweet & sour meatballs, sausage & peppers, assorted salads, chips, water and soda, games and prizes on the bus. Registration fee is \$185 (400-level seating), or \$255 (lower-level seating). Bus picks up/drops off at Putnam park and ride in Glastonbury.



The early stages of communication disorders are easier to spot when you know the signs.

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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: 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.

Commodities and CPAP machines are not needed at this time.

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.



MARLBOROUGH COMMUNITY

SATURDAY, MAY 16TH
TOWN HALL PARKING LOT
8:00AM TO 12:00PM



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Marlborough's Plans to Celebrate America's 250

By Toriana Williams

The Town of Marlborough is preparing for a major milestone in American history – the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Local leaders are working hard to make sure the celebration is one to remember for the entire town.

The Marlborough America 250 Committee, led by co-chairs Mark Paul and Deb Bourbeau, have spent months organizing events that will stretch from late spring through the end of the year. Ultimately, their goal is to bring people together, teach local history and celebrate the nation's founding in a way that everyone can enjoy.

Bourbeau explained that the idea began a few years ago when towns across Connecticut were encouraged to participate in the nationwide celebration. "Two and a half years ago," she began, "I received this envelope from the State of Connecticut about celebrating America 250 and asking every town and city to come up with activities."

At first, there was concern about how quickly time was passing. "July 4, 2026, is right around the corner," she recalled thinking.

From there, the effort began to take shape. The committee had formed and started meeting regularly by early fall. One of their first challenges was funding.

"The first thing was ... how do we approach this? We have no budget," Bourbeau said. She explained that while the state had encouraged towns to celebrate America 250, it offered no monetary means to help in that goal.

"One of the things we have to think about is fundraising," Bourbeau continued. "Because we want to give as many activities for families to enjoy without having to worry about money."

Despite that challenge, the group has already built an impressive lineup of events.

The celebration begins with the committee's participation in the Marlborough Memorial Day parade. The parade will take place on May 25, and residents are encouraged to show their patriotism with America's favorite colors: red, white and blue.

Just a few days later on May 30, the town will host one of its most educational events: Reenactment Day. This experience will take residents on a journey through Marlborough's past, where actors will portray important figures from the 1700s to the present day.

Bourbeau described it as "really exciting," and said that, "we've got eight different reenactments taking place that day."

Attendees will visit several locations around town, including the Congregational Church, the library and the cemetery. They will also learn about influential figures like the Buell family and Mary Hall, the state's first female lawyer.

The tours will be interactive, with attendees able to collect stamps or stickers in special "passports" as they go.

"Each one that you go to, you get some sort of recognition for your passport," Bourbeau explained. She added that completed passports can later be entered into a raffle for an 1803 penny. That year is significant as it is the year Marlborough was officially incorporated.

June brings even more family-friendly activities, including a Top Dog competition on June 7. The event will feature three fun categories, including a "best in show" style award called Founder's Best Friend.

Bourbeau said the competition is meant to

be lighthearted and welcoming. "I don't think people can complain about dogs," she joked.

Later, from June 26 to 28, residents can personally take part in a patriotic display contest on the Town Green. Individuals and teams will have two days to create their designs before judging takes place. Bourbeau hopes the event will showcase the town's creativity.

"There's a lot of artistic and creative people in town," she said. "It would be kind of fun to see."

The centerpiece of the celebration will take place on July 4 at Blish Park and Lake Terramuggs. The day will include two water parades. There will be one for paddlers and another for motorized boats. Participants are highly encouraged to decorate their vessels and dress in patriotic colors.

Bourbeau described the atmosphere they're seeking to be energetic and playful. "We're looking for them to ... dress the part and decorate their paddleboard, their canoe, whatever," she said.

She recalled that she even once witnessed a family trying to paddle a picnic table around the lake. "Just for fun," Bourbeau added. The event is designed to be entertaining for both participants and spectators alike.

The festivities will also include music, games and a large fire pit for cooking s'mores and gathering. "I'm just hoping that people have a really good time," Bourbeau said.

Other events include: "Money in the U.S. Colonial and Confederation Period" on Sunday, July 19, at 1 p.m., at the Marlborough Arts Center; "Framing American Democracy – Radical Roots" on Saturday, Aug. 1, at 2 p.m., at the

Marlborough Senior Center; and "250th Anniversary of American Beer" on Thursday, Sept. 24, at 6:30 p.m., at Richmond Memorial Library.

Fundraising has played an important and necessary role in making these events possible. Local businesses have stepped up to support the effort, including Marlborough Bakery Cafe and New China Sea.

At the end of the season, Bourbeau shared that "what we don't spend, we're giving to the food bank." This clearly emphasized the community-focused nature of the effort.

The celebration will continue into late summer with Marlborough Day on August 23, which is a long-standing town tradition that will include special America 250 activities this year. In September, the Marlborough Junior Ancient Fife and Drum Corps will host a parade and muster, bringing historic music to the streets once again.

The final event of the year will take place in December with the town's annual holiday gathering, which will also serve as the closing celebration for the anniversary.

For committee co-chair Paul, the events are about more than just marking a date in history. "The idea is we want people to have, from a community standpoint, to have fun and get together," he said.

Bourbeau agreed, and she also hopes people will walk away with a deeper understanding of the country's history.

"I want to make sure that children understand the importance," she said. "Too many of us take our independence for granted."

Jr. Ancient Fife & Drum Corps Looking for Members

For over 60 years, the Marlborough Jr. Ancient Fife & Drum Corps has been a professional performing entity representing the town and keeping the "ancient traditions" of fifing and drumming alive. Comprised of marchers and musicians ages 8 to 18, this award-winning unit is currently recruiting new members from Marlborough and surrounding towns to join, particularly now with the nation approaching its semiquincentennial (250th anniversary).

By joining the corps, kids will have a chance to visit and perform at significant historical

sites. The Corps operates as a "connected learning" environment where youth pursue work as a team and are supported by older peers to achieve goals together, building important life skills.

The corps meets Tuesdays, 6:30-8 p.m., at Marlborough Elementary School. In the summer, rehearsals will move to Marlborough Congregational Church.

To learn more or to fill out an interest form, visit MarlboroughJrAncients.com, or stop by a rehearsal in May.

Lions 'Round the Lake 5K

The Marlborough Lions will hold their 42nd annual 'Round the Lake 5K Road Race on Sunday, May 24. The race will utilize electronic timing with computerized race results. The race starts promptly at 10:30 a.m., and is now a registered 5K per CT USATF Certification CT 18052JHP.

The entry fee is \$30 and runners must be registered by the day prior to the race. Shirts will be guaranteed for those who pre-register by May 15 with additional shirts provided to runners as available. There is also a \$60 package price for groups of immediate family members participating in the race. Same day registrations need to be signed in by 10 a.m. Runners will start near the entrance to Blish Park on Park Road and will proceed on a course, which circles Lake Terramuggs.

The Lions Club supports programs which address various issues including blindness, drug

abuse prevention and diabetes awareness in addition to supporting local organizations such as the Marlborough Food and Fuel Banks and performing annual vision screening for Marlborough's elementary school students.

The Marlborough Lions also wish to thank the many local businesses, which have provided race sponsorships of \$100, \$250 and \$500 over the years. Their support is greatly appreciated. If any additional businesses wish to provide sponsorships, please contact one of the Lions Club members listed below. The business sponsor's information will be printed on the shirts handed out to runners.

To register or for additional information call Lions Club President Jean Paul Bolduc at 860-798-2054 or Ken Hjulstrom at 860-490-9116. You can register online at RunSignUp.com and search for Marlborough Lions.

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.

Childcare for infants and toddlers is provided downstairs in the nursery but children are always welcome at the worship service. Sunday school is open to all children in the community for children ages 3 through grade 8. Contact Elizabeth Kukich at ekukich@marlconchurch.org for more information.

AA: The church sponsors three weekly meetings: Wednesdays at noon and Thursdays at 5:30 p.m. in the Youth Room and Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. in the Community Fellowship Hall. ACA meets Tuesdays at 7 p.m. in the Youth Room.

May 10: The service will highlight a special Mother's Day theme, featuring a "Mom Panel," with the service led by Seaver. After worship, all are invited to Coffee Hour in the Thienes Lounge.

Outreach: The church collects non-perishable food items year-round for Marlborough Food Bank with a basket located in the narthex for Sunday worshippers to bring donations. The next church-sponsored Drive Thru Café, for Marlborough Food Bank clients and their families with tickets, will be May 31. The "Serve the

Lord" luncheon for residents at Florence Lord Housing will be on Saturday, May 23. Second-quarter mission-giving will go to the AHM Mental Health Fund.

Second Blessings Thrift Shop is located on the lower level with easy access from the parking lot. The shop is open for shopping and donations Fridays from noon to 3 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Follow the shop through Facebook at Second Blessings Thrift Shop, Marlborough CT for updates. The eBay shop is open year-round at bit.ly/MCCebay.

Stretch and Strengthen for seniors, led by certified instructor Barbara LaBlanc, is held Fridays at 9:45 a.m. upstairs in the Thienes Lounge. The community is welcome. The weekly drop-in fee is \$25.

General Information: Marlborough Congregational Church is an Open and Affirming faith community and all are welcome. 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.

Volunteer Opportunity to Run Food Bank

The Marlborough Food Bank is seeking a dedicated volunteer or volunteers to help support and run the Food Bank, which is a local nonprofit organization.

This position entails not only organizing food donations, stocking shelves, and distributing food to clients, but also ordering from Connecticut Food Share, enlisting student volunteers to assist the stable cadre of volun-

teers, and soliciting new volunteers as needed.

The Food Bank is open each Tuesday of the week and set up for clients takes place on Monday mornings. Some lifting of light to moderately heavy boxes may be necessary during the Monday set up.

For more information, contact David Pratt or Dawn Tavolero via email at marlborough-foodbank@comcast.net.

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.

New Trails in Marlborough!

The Nature Trails and Sidewalks Commission has announced the completion of a new network of trails in Marlborough – the Ogden Lord Road Open Space.

After commission member Anna Holden brought the idea of turning a vacant, town-owned piece of land into a new trail system, the commission moved quickly. Commissioners assessed the land, laid out trail locations, cleared, and blazed three trails (with three connections) in just over a year.

Two trails can be accessed from the parking area on Ogden Lord Road, which is on the left side, just after you turn from Flood Road. Signs mark this new area and the gravel lined parking area. A red-blazed loop is a quarter of a mile long – the equivalent of a track in the woods. This short trail was designed with younger and older legs in mind.

For a longer hike lined with the Connecticut state flower, the mountain laurel, opt for the mile-long, blue-blazed loop. This trail crosses a little stream and is a slightly more moderate hike, with some steeper sections. About a quarter mile in along the blue trail, hikers will come upon the orange-blazed trail on their right. The orange trail is a third of a mile long, following small stream beds, which are crossed at three different points along the trail.

Along both the blue and orange trails, commission member Russell Johnston discovered the remains of several different historic charcoal mounds. These were used to create charcoal for the blast furnaces of the iron industry in the 18th and 19th centuries.

For more historical information on the charcoal mounds (as well as information on how to spot them), detailed trail maps, and a guide on how to read trail blazes, visit the town website and navigate to 'Nature Trails and Sidewalk Commission' under 'Boards and Commissions' at the top. For those who use the AllTrails app, search for 'Ogden Lord Trail' to find the blue trail.

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.

American Legion Golf Tournament

American Legion Post 197 will host a Golf Tournament at Blackledge Country Club, 180 West St., Hebron, on Monday, May 18.

For more information, email don1bu@comcast.net.

East Catholic Honor Roll

Four Marlborough residents made the East Catholic High School honor roll for the third quarter of the 2025-26 school year.

Honors with Distinction: Kalli Bevans, Grade 11; Kamden Bevans and Lucy DeCorleto, Grade 12.

First Honors: Alexander O'Brien, Grade 10.

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Garden Club Plant Sale

The Belltown Garden Club is holding its annual Perennial Plant Sale in conjunction with the East Hampton Congregational Church's Open-Air Market, on Saturday, May 23.

There will be a variety of perennial plants – all dug from members' gardens, so they are happy to live in East Hampton soil.

The plant sale will officially be from 9 a.m.-noon, although club members will be there after noon to clean up – and if you want to purchase anything at this time, club members said they'll be happy to sell!

Belltown Garden Club is a community organization whose projects include the gardens at the gazebo from where the annual Old Home Day Parade is announced. Also, the club said it is actively working on a project with the library to upgrade the look of the area at the library around the salt shed.

For more information, text Hollye at 860-986-1240. Unsold plants are donated to East Hampton Public Library, which in turn will sell to help its fundraising efforts.

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: The paintings of Maureen Girard.

Wild Foods Picnic & Ethical Foraging Talk: Monday, May 11, 6 p.m., hosted by Erin Day of Ten Summit Yoga & Earth Based Wellness. Along with sampling dishes, attendees will discuss the art of wild foods foraging. Suggested donation is \$20/person. To register, call Day at 860-262-0248.

Open Mic Night: Friday, May 15, 6-8 p.m. Come to perform or just listen. Performers, call the library to sign up.

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 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.

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. To register, email tensummitst@gmail.com or call 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: 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.

Source Savvy: News Literacy, Public Records, and Research Skills for Everyday Life: Monday, May 18, 6-7:30 p.m. Award-winning journalist David DesRoches, founder of the online site *The Bellringer*, introduces the fundamentals of journalism, basic interview skills, and ways to build trust with local leaders/sources. Learn about citizen rights and access to information, fact-checking, and using tools like FOIA.

Birding By Ear with CT Audubon: Tuesday, May 19, 6:30 p.m. Join the Connecticut Audu-

bon Society for an introduction to birding by ear. Learn tricks to help you recognize common bird songs and some of the tools available to help.

Book Club Al Fresco: Wednesday, May 20, 6:30 p.m. Grab a copy of this month's selection and come to Sears Park for a casual discussion with lakeside views.

Teen Program: Food Fight: A Tween Food 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.

Teen Advisory Board: Grades 8-12: Tuesday, May 19, 6 p.m. Help plan programs, improve the Teen Space, and make an impact at the library.

Children's Programs: 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.

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.

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 encour-

ages 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 csirois@easthamptonct.gov. The submission deadline is Friday, May 8.

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. Communion will be served. Refreshments are served after the service.

Men's Group: Will meet Wednesday, May 13, from 7-8 a.m. to share scripture around what the Bible says about being a man. There will be coffee and pastries.

Women's Fellowship: Will meet Thursday, May 21, from 1-3 p.m., at Mary's house.

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.

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.

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 bobette@khan.com if you are interested in par-

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

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.

Cobalt Lodge Worship Service: Will be held directly after church on May 17.

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

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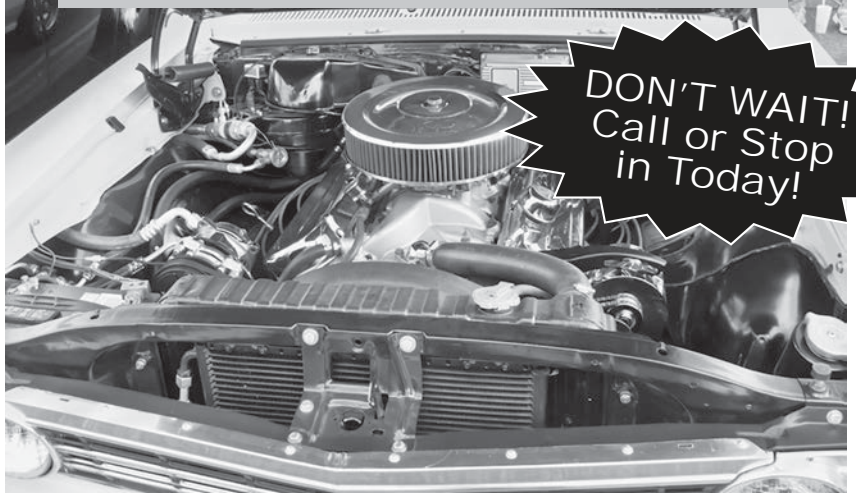
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Lions Donate Blankets... The East Hampton Lions Club adopted the residents of Chatham Acres & Bellwood Court over two years ago, and does various events with them. Recently, the Lions held their annual corned beef and cabbage luncheon, with shamrock shakes. The Lions had previously discussed purchasing an emergency fire blanket for each of the 70 units, and discussed it with Fire Chief Robb Rainville for the fire department's approval. At the dinner, Rainville and Deputy Chief Marty Swan presented the blankets and discussed how to use them. For the residents that were not in attendance, a second presentation will be given by the fire department. Pictured are Rainville, Swan, Lions President Liz Cooper, Lion Donna Marsden, and Housing Authority Director Dave Schumacher.

EHHS Class of 2026 Lawn Signs

East Hampton High School Class of 2026 lawn signs are now available - and orders are due by next Friday, May 15. Signs are \$25 each.

Each 18" x 24" sign includes a lawn stake and delivery to the student's home in East Hampton (one delivery address per student). Venmo your payment between friends to @ Ruth-Lintz and be sure to note your senior's name and their address in the comments. If relatives order a sign, please indicate the student's name and their address as all signs will be delivered to the student.

Orders close May 15.

Chicken Cordon Bleu Dinner

The Missions Committee of the Second Congregational Church of Middle Haddam will sell dinners-to-go on Saturday, May 30, from 4-5 p.m., at the church, 52 Middle Haddam Rd.

The meal will feature chicken cordon bleu with a gravy, baked potato, vegetable, roll, and chocolate cherry cake. Cost is \$14 per dinner. Reserve by calling or texting Geri at 860-682-2067 by May 27.

The committee's last fundraiser provided \$750 to local food banks and shelters, and the church thanks everyone for their support, especially Paul & Sandy's Too for selling the committee's Irish Soda Bread.

Navy Band Coming Next Week

The Navy Band Northeast is coming to East Hampton Tuesday, May 12, at 6 p.m., at East Hampton High School. The East Hampton Lions and the 250th committee are hosting the event and would like to extend an invitation to not only residents of East Hampton but surrounding towns.

Beginning at 5 p.m., the Lions will be serving free hot dogs to all.

The Navy Band Northeast is the band's largest ensemble, comprised of 30 wind and percussion instrumentalists, specializing in musical styles that range from patriotic favorites, traditional wind band literature and Broadway show stoppers.

For further information, call Kevin Reich at 860-754-8137 or Lion Tim Csere at 860-301-4996.

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.

Bring your bike, helmet and water bottle. Call 860-267-4426 for ride information and to register.

Family Tree: Friday, May 15, 10:30 a.m. Kenneth Doney leads this hands-on class on how to research your family history. Bring your table, cell phone or laptop and get ready to climb your family tree.

Drum Circle: Friday, May 15, 12:45 p.m. Mark Zarillo is back with a lively drumming opportunity. This interactive program uses only drums to create energizing beats and build a sense of community. No experience needed. Cost is \$5.

Live Well with Diabetes Health Workshop: Thursdays, May 28 through July 2, from 1-3:30 p.m. This free six-week workshop is on how to better manage your diabetes. Learn what to eat, low and high blood pressure, what to do when feeling sick, dealing with stress, and more. 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.

Clay Day in May: Thursday, May 21, 2:30 p.m. Join the East Hampton High School Art Club for an afternoon of creating with clay in the school's art room. The session is led by the students and their teacher. Drive yourself to the school.

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. Call the center to sign up.

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.

Trailblazers Walking Group: Monday, May 11, 9 a.m. All are invited to join this walk on the Air Line Trail, 69 Smith St.

Get up and Shoot Cell Phone Photo Class: Monday, May 11, 10 a.m. After a brief introduction to basic photography principles and smartphone camera controls, the focus shifts to shooting in the real world. Bring your fully charged smartphone, the smartphone's charger, and any accessories you have.

Older Americans Month Pizza Party Celebration: Wednesday, May 13, 11 a.m.

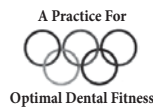
Short Story Discussion Group: Wednesday, May 13, 2:30 p.m. All are invited to this monthly short story discussion with staff member Melissa Pionzio, featuring a different story every second Wednesday at 2:30 p.m. Suggestions welcome.

Bike Rides for Seniors: Friday, May 15, 10 a.m. Ride at Hop River, Center Street, Andover.

HEALTHCARE SERVICES



Better Dental HEALTH



by George M. Mantikas, DMD

PERIODONTAL DENTAL EXAMS

Periodontal disease is advanced gum disease caused by bacterial and fungal infections. It causes infection in the gums and connective tissue due to inflamed pits and pockets in the gums. Periodontal disease can lead to pain, difficulty chewing, infection, and tooth loss. A periodontal dental exam is a full examination of the gums, teeth, and jawbone to check for diseases, including gum disease. It also examines your teeth from different angles to see how well they are aligned and looks for changes in the jawbone structure, which can be signs of poor oral health and gum disease. Your dentist might recommend a periodontal exam if you have a history of gum disease or other dental problems.

One serious threat to dental health is out-of-control gum disease. And the best way to deal with gum disease is to prevent it, with daily brushing, flossing, and visiting the dentist on a regular basis. We are diligent in our approach to making sure periodontal disease doesn't destroy your smile. It is our mission to deliver the highest level of care, using the latest materials and always keeping our patients' comfort and well-being in mind. We can make financial arrangements for extensive treatment plans.

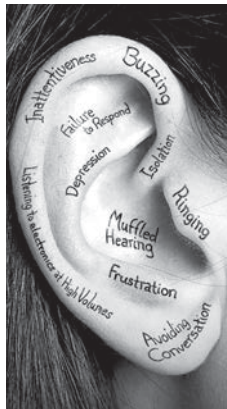
P.S. A periodontal exam includes periodontal pocketing, which uses an instrument to measure periodontal pocket depth to see how far it extends around the root.

George M. Mantikas, DMD, PC

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RE5-8-26



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★ Letters, cont. from page 9

delivers real money to the towns he represents, he votes against it. At some point this stops being a philosophy and starts being a pattern. For this week's vote, Weir's comment was "The process is BROKEN..... twelve hours to thoroughly comb through a 700-page document is just simply not enough."

His opponent, Ellen Paul, has said she would have voted 'yes.' Of course she would have. Born and raised in eastern Connecticut, a former aide to Congressman Joe Courtney, now executive director of the Connecticut Library Consortium, raising two daughters in our public schools - Ellen understands what \$270,000 means to Hebron's school budget. She understands that towns absorbing rising costs need state partners, not lectures about the spending cap.

A 'yes' vote on SB 1 wasn't a partisan vote. It was a vote for your town. Steve Weir voted 'no.' Ellen Paul would have voted 'yes.' That's the choice.

Sincerely,

Gerard Cremé - Andover

Note: Cremé is a member of the Andover Board of Education but said he writing as an individual.

Budget Facts & Next Steps

To the Residents of Colchester:

As our community approaches important budget votes, I want to provide a straightforward update on where the 2026 Board of Education budget stands and what further reductions would mean for our schools.

Since the budget process began, the board has reduced the proposed budget by more than \$2 million. These reductions were made methodically and in partnership with the Board of Finance, with administrative and non-classroom expenses addressed first in order to minimize direct impacts on students.

The remaining increase does not expand programming or include discretionary spending. More than \$3.2 million is tied to insurance-related increases, while operational increases total approximately \$345,000. Across most schools and departments, budgets are flat or reduced.

The board has worked to identify efficiencies while preserving educational quality and maintaining stability for students and staff. One principle has guided this process: protecting classroom instruction wherever possible. For that reason, no teacher concessions are included in the current proposal.

At this stage, additional reductions would move

beyond efficiency measures and into cuts that would directly affect students. These could include larger class sizes, reduced course offerings at the middle and high school levels, potential layoffs of teachers and support staff, and reductions to Special Education services.

The next steps are: The Annual Town Meeting is on Wednesday, May 13 at 7 p.m., and residents have the opportunity to vote on the budget amounts that move forward to referendum. The budget referendum will then take place on Wednesday, May 20. Absentee ballots will be available following Town Meeting for anyone unable to vote in person on referendum day.

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 this budget as much as possible. We also believe it is important for residents to fully understand the tradeoffs before casting their vote.

We encourage all community members to participate in this important process.

Sincerely,

Stefanie Tracey-Calash
Chair, Colchester Board of Education

Serious Budget Concerns

To the Editor:

I have serious concerns about the budget we are being asked to send to the voters.

My biggest concern is affordability. Not in theory, but in the real lives of the people who live here. I have heard from many residents who are barely holding on right now. These are hardworking people who care about this town, and they are telling us they are struggling.

We've heard from a woman who has lived here for 34 years, talking about how this tax increase could force her to leave the town she loves. We heard from another resident on a fixed income, making around \$30,000 a year, trying to explain what this would mean for his family. These are not abstract concerns. This is about whether people can stay in their homes.

What made that harder was the response. There was very little acknowledgment, no real effort to connect their concerns to any kind of support. Instead, it felt like the focus was on continuing to push the budget forward. Whether intended or not, it comes across like the comfort of government is being prioritized over the stability of the people we represent.

See Letters, page 31

Stuart L. Jablon, D.P.M.

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YPPCA Taking Registrations for Summer Theater Camp

The Young People's Center for Creative Arts (YPPCA) 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.

Fee is \$775 per child; additional children in a family are \$725. Scholarships are available for families with demonstrated financial need.

Special Concert Coming Up

On Sunday, May 17, at 4 p.m., there will be a special concert on the historic Appleton Organ 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 including rags, jazz, blues and folk song.

Ebrecht has been lauded on four continents since his first international appearance at Notre Dame de Paris in 1976 for the American bicen-

In Summer Theater Camp, 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 – which this year will be Disney's hit musical *Frozen*.

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

ennial. He was twice presented in recital on the 1830 Appleton organ enshrined at the Metropolitan Museum in New York City and will explore the tonal resources of its older sister in Middle Haddam built in 1827 during the May 17th event.

Second Congregational Church of Middle Haddam is located at 52 Middle Haddam Rd., Middle Haddam, and is handicapped-accessible. Free parking will be available along Highpoint Road across the street from and donations will be gratefully accepted during the concert.

Call 860-993-5311 for more information.

Early Bird Tickets for Haddam Neck Fair

Early Bird tickets for the 2026 Haddam Neck Fair are now on sale.

Celebrating its 114th year, the Haddam Neck Fair will return Sept. 4–7. For a limited time, Early Bird tickets will be available at a discounted rate, giving attendees the opportunity to experience everything the fair has to offer while saving money and avoiding lines at the gate.

"The Haddam Neck Fair is something people look forward to all year long," said Jackie MacK-night, a director at the Haddam Neck Fair Association. "Early Bird tickets are a great way to lock in your plans, save a few dollars, and start building that excitement for Labor Day Week-

end."

The four-day fair features classic fair foods, agricultural exhibits, live entertainment, competitions, family-friendly activities, and more.

Organizers encourage attendees to take advantage of the limited-time presale, as Early Bird tickets are only available for a short window leading up to the event. Tickets can be purchased online at: bit.ly/HNFTickets26

For more information about the Haddam Neck Fair, including event details and updates, visit www.haddamneckfair.com.

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.

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.

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 Streats.

To be a vendor, fill out an application at 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.

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.

Historical Society Walking Tour

The Chatham Historical Society will hold an "Explore East Hampton" walking tour on Sunday, May 17, at 1 p.m., at the CHS Museum, 6 Bevin Blvd.

Step back in time and discover the stories behind East Hampton's historic village center. Join the Chatham Historical Society (CHS) for a guided walking tour led by Town Historian Jay Hanson, who will bring the town's people, places, and past to life.

This will be a leisurely walk from the CHS Museum, 6 Bevin Blvd., toward downtown East Hampton. Bring comfortable walking shoes and your curiosity.

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.

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 15.

EHNS Open House

East Hampton Nursery School will hold an open house for prospective families on Sunday, May 17, from 9 a.m.-noon, for the 2026-27 school year. The school is located at 111 Main St.

Interested families are invited to come see the school, talk to current families, teachers and board members, and learn about the programs EHNS offers. The 3's programs meet Tuesdays and Thursdays from either 8:30-11:30 a.m. or 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m. The 4's programs meet either three days a week – Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:30 a.m.- 1 p.m. – or five days a week.

Visit www.easthamptonnurseryschool.com for more information or email administration@easthamptonnurseryschool.com.

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.

Road Closure Next Wednesday

The East Hampton Volunteer Fire Department will conduct its annual pressure testing of all fire hoses on Wednesday, May 13 (weather permitting). This mandatory certification requirement will be conducted in the area of the fire department's Pump House at the western end of Walnut Avenue.

As a result, Walnut Avenue will be closed to through traffic between Main and Watrous streets between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. Residents are advised to utilize alternate routes.

The EHVFD apologizes for any inconvenience this one-day road closure may cause to residents and business owners in the area.

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American Legion to Meet

The next meeting of the Treadway Cavanaugh American Legion Post 64 will be held Tuesday, May 12, at 7 p.m., at the VFW, 20 North Maple St. All members are encouraged to attend. Any veterans interested in joining the Post are also welcome.

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.

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 easthamptonctartsassociation.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.

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.

Early Memorial Day Service

The Haddam Neck Cemetery Association will hold its annual early Memorial Day service Sunday, May 17, at 2 p.m., in the Rock Landing Cemetery in Haddam Neck.

The celebration will feature the Moodus Drum & Fife Corps and remarks by a Marine veteran. New flags and donated flowers will be placed on veterans' graves. Children are encouraged to bring decorated bicycles or wagons, and awards will be given.

Ice cream and cookies will be donated and served by the Haddam Neck Fair. All are invited.

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Town to Vote on ‘Once-in-a-Generation’ Project

By Anne Lilburn

Portland residents will take to the polls on Monday, May 11 to vote on not just the proposed town budget but also an ambitious school consolidation and renovation plan.

The project would renovate Valley View and Gildersleeve elementary Schools, decommission Brownstone School from its use as a school, and make needed repairs to the secondary schools. The schools plan would cost a total of \$109 million, with roughly 60% of that reimbursed by the state of Connecticut, and would be financed with a bond issuance.

The referendum will be held at Portland Middle School, 93 High St., with voting taking place from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Portland’s proposed 2026-27 fiscal year budget, which the Board of Selectmen voted six to one to adopt on April 8, sets the total expenditures at \$43,492,207, according to the town’s website, a 4.12% increase over the previous year, with the mill rate increasing by a proposed 1.5 mills to 36.8 mills. The motor vehicle mill rate would be capped at 32.46 mills.

The town, like others throughout the state, struggled with large increases to its health insurance costs, on both the town government and Board of Education sides. That, many se-

lectmen and Superintendent of Schools Charles Britton all noted, was reflective of a national trend where municipalities have been burdened with a large rise in healthcare premiums.

At a previous meeting, Britton had described the negotiations that the school district undertook with its insurer, Anthem, and its exploration of other insurance plans. He noted that, even after those negotiations, the cost of health insurance on the education side rose by 15.68%. The town government side faced similar challenges, with a large percentage of the budget made up of contractual “people costs,” and little room to make cuts.

In addition to the approval of the town budget, the referendum also will ask voters to approve funding for the town’s school consolidation plan, which has the support of the Board of Selectmen, Board of Education, Republican Town Committee and Democratic Town Committee.

The referendum question will ask voters to appropriate \$109 million for the plan, which includes the “renovation and expansion of Valley View Elementary School into a Pre-K-Grade 2 school, the renovation of Gildersleeve Elementary School into a Grade 3-5 school and various capital improvements at Portland Middle

School and Portland High School,” but the end cost to the town, after \$66.5 million in state reimbursements, will only be \$41.9 million.

That may be confusing to some voters, because the referendum question will ask voters to authorize bonds in the amount “not to exceed \$58 million.” This larger number is due to the state’s reimbursement schedule, which delivers much of the promised reimbursements early on, but withholds the final amount pending verification of the project’s completion to agreed-upon standards. The larger bond issuance amount therefore includes some short-term bonds which will allow the town to fund the full project during construction while waiting for the state’s final payments. Despite the \$58 million bond issuance approval, the total final cost to the town is still projected to be \$41.9 million.

The vote on the school plan, which comes just a year and a half after a previous school renovation plan failed at referendum, has gained widespread support among town leaders, including First Selectman Mike Pelton, a Republican, who has argued that new, higher state reimbursement rates for new school construction projects make this a “once-in-a-generation” opportunity for the town to “right-size” its schools to meet district needs. Board of Education members, teachers and Superintendent Britton have also

all argued that the schools are badly in need of repairs or renovations.

At recent meetings, selectmen from both parties acknowledged the failure of the prior 2024 referendum, which had asked residents to vote on a single “mega-school” project that would have consolidated all the elementary grades into one school. This new plan, they have argued, would maintain the smaller feel of two elementary schools, and also allow time to properly consider the future use of Brownstone School, a historic building which would be used as a teaching space while the schools were under construction. Members of both parties have spoken about the importance of figuring out the best way to use the building in the future.

Critically, the passage of the school plan is dependent not only on how many residents vote yes or no, but also on how many turn out at the polls. The town charter requires a 20% turnout on any referendum item involving the issuance of debt.

At a meeting in April, Pelton encouraged voters to show up regardless of how they planned to vote.

“Whether it’s a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ – [and] I hope we’ve earned your ‘yes’ vote – but either way, have your voice heard out there,” he said at the meeting.

Portland Library News & Notes

Portland Library, 20 Freestone Ave., has announced the following events. **Registration is required for all programs unless noted.** To register and for full program descriptions, visit the calendar of events at www.portlandlibraryct.org, or call 860-342-6770. The library is also on Facebook and Instagram.

Hours: Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. - 8 p.m., - Friday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., - Saturday 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. **Holiday Closings:** The library will be closed on Saturday, May 23, and Monday, May 25, for Memorial Day. **Special Closing:** The library will be closed Friday, May 29, and Saturday, May 30, for staff training.

Children’s Programs: Storytime Mini Sessions: Space is limited, and registration is now open. Schedule: Mother Goose on the Loose for Toddlers and Tots (ages 0-2): Wednesdays at 10:15 or 11:15 a.m. May 13, 20, and 27; Preschool Storytimes (ages 3-5): Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m. May 19, 26, and June 2.

Drop-In Crafting: Thursdays at 3:30 p.m., May 14, 21 and 28. Kids in grades K-5 are invited for some no-rules creative crafting in the Wagner Room. There will be plenty of supplies. This is a drop-in program and no registration is required.

Teen Programs: Pop Tart Plushie Party! Monday, May 18, 3:30 p.m. Create your own stuffed Pop Tart mini pillow and snack on some

Pop Tarts. No sewing skills required.

Adult Programs: Book Clubs: Mystery Lovers Book Club: Tuesday May 19, 1 p.m. *One for the Money* by Janet Evanovich will be discussed. **Talk About Books:** Tuesday, June 2, 1 p.m. *Three Days in June* by Anne Tyler will be discussed. **1st Thursday Night Book Club:** Thursday, June 4, 6:30 p.m. *The Traitor’s Wife* by Allison Pataki will be discussed.

Movie: Wednesday May 13, 1 p.m. *Song Sung Blue* (2025; rated PG-13) will be shown. Run time is 133 minutes.

Adult Craft: Committee on Solidarity - Pride March Meet-Up & Tie-Dye Event: Thursday, May 14, 5:30 p.m. The town’s Committee on Solidarity is marching at Middletown Pride in June, and will host a crafting session on the town green with the library to tie-dye your pride outfits. You are welcome to bring your own white clothing to tie-dye; the library will have some socks on hand to dye if you need them. Registration is encouraged, but not required.

Tories, Spies, and Traitors: Divided Loyalty in Revolutionary Connecticut: Tuesday, May 19, 6:30 p.m. Presented by the Connecticut Museum of Culture and History. This presentation reveals stories of Nutmeggers who risked and sacrificed to support their chosen side during the Revolutionary War.

Senior Center News & Notes

The Waverly Senior Center, 7 Waverly Avenue, announces the following. **Registration is required for all programs unless noted;** for more information or to register, call 860-342-6761. Senior center hours are Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Friday, 9 a.m. to noon. Visit www.portlandct.org/senior-services for more information.

Mobile Food Pantry: The Food Share Mobile Pantry comes to the Food Bank every other Monday. The next date is May 18.

Holiday Closing: Monday, May 25. The center will be closed for Memorial Day.

Weekly Programs: Unless noted, all programs are free. **Monday, 5/11: Light Aerobics,** 9:30-10:30 a.m.

Tuesday, 5/12: Bears on a Journey, 9:30-11 a.m. – to donate light fleece for making teddy bears for cancer patients, call 860-342-0809; **Watercolor Class,** 9:30 a.m., for more information contact Bivenne at bivenne@yahoo.com; **Congregate Meal,** noon. Cost is \$3 suggested donation (must fill out form). Menu: meatloaf, mashed potatoes/gravy, steamed carrots, peach cup, string cheese; **Coupons for Troops,** 1-4 p.m.; **Setback,** 1 p.m.; **SyncoCize II,** 5-6 p.m., fee is donation to instructor.

Wednesday, 5/13: Light Aerobics, 9:30-10:30 a.m.; **Chair Yoga with Gia,** 10:30-11:15 a.m., fee is a \$5 donation to instructor; **Bridge,** 12:30-4 p.m.

Thursday, 5/14: Stretch & Tone, 9:30 am.; **Knit & Stitch,** 10 a.m.; **Congregate Meal,** noon. Cost is \$3 suggested donation (must fill out form). Menu: turkey meatballs, ziti with marinara, mixed veggies, roll & butter, string cheese; **Mahjong (FULL),** 12:30 p.m.; **Scrabble,** 1 p.m.

Friday, 5/15: Light Aerobics, 9:30-10:30 a.m.; **Chair Yoga with Gia,** 10:30-11:15 a.m., \$5 donation to instructor.

Special Events: Unless noted, registration is

required for all programs. Also, unless noted, all programs are free. **Monday, May 11:** Bloom Therapeutic Plant and Nature Program: Pollinator Garden Workshop, 10:30 a.m. Fee is \$20.

Monday, May 11: The senior center will offer rides to the polls for members who do not have transportation. Rides begin at 1 p.m.; call the center for details. Limited spots available. There is no ride fee.

Wednesday, May 13: Walking Club, 9 a.m. Meet at the intersection of Breezy Corners and the Air Line Trail.

Wednesday, May 13: Shopping Trip to Berlin Turnpike: Walmart, Ocean State Job Lot, and lunch at Joey Garlic’s. Leave the center at 10:30. There is a \$5 ride fee.

Wednesday, May 13: Bingo with Sean from Ageless Insurance, 1:30 p.m.; note the change in date.

Thursday, May 14: Trip to the Bushnell for “Oh What a Night” Travelers Chorale. Free event, but bring a non-perishable food item for donation at the door. Bus leaves the senior center at 6:30 p.m.

Friday, May 15: Mohegan Sun Casino Trip. Leave center at 11 a.m. There is a \$5 ride fee.

Monday, May 18: Bureau of Aging Workshop: Navigating the Caregiving Maze, noon. Learn how to understand informal caregiving and what services are available in Connecticut. Refreshments will be served.

Monday, May 18: Veteran Benefits Workshop, 10 a.m.-noon. Learn about programs and services offered to veterans and surviving spouses.

Flag Collage Coming Soon

John Bula’s “Flag Collage” will be displayed in July and August at Portland Library.

The American flag collage will celebrate the 250th birthday of the country.

Budget, School Referendum Voting

The budget referendum and school referendum will be held Monday, May 11, from 6 a.m.-8 p.m., at the Portland Middle School, 93 High St. Curbside voting assistance is available.

For curbside voting, pull into the school circle with your hazard lights on. There will be a phone number to call when you arrive for curbside voting assistance. Voters needing curbside assistance can also call the town clerk at 860-342-6743 during normal business hours to let them know you are on your way.

If you obtained an absentee ballot from the town clerk’s office, your completed absentee ballot should be 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. Absentee ballots must be received by the Town Clerk no later than 8 p.m. on Monday, May 11, in order to be counted.

For more information, call the town clerk’s office at 860-342-6743. Aside from emergency absentee ballots for specific reasons, no regular absentee ballots can be issued on the day of the referendum.

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Applications for property tax abatements are available for Hebron residents. There is a town ordinance that defers property taxes when those taxes exceed 8% of total household income from any source.

For example, if the total household income from any source totals \$30,000, the property tax liability would be capped at \$2,400. The abate-

ment would be for any property taxes that exceeded \$2,400. The abatement would apply to the upcoming tax year beginning July 1.

Those interested in the program can request an application by calling the town manager's office at 860-228-5971. Applications will be mailed upon request. The application deadline is May 31.



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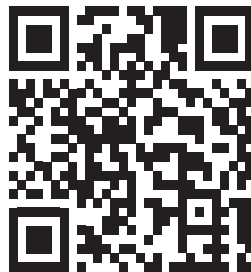


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'Too High': Hebron Votes No on All Budgets

By Toriana Williams

According to unofficial tallies, voters overwhelmingly rejected all four proposed spending plans Tuesday night for the 2026-2027 fiscal year. Town and school officials will now have to go back to the drawing board after one of the highest-turnout budget referendums in recent memory.

Hebron's proposed \$44.96 million total town budget, a 5.77% increase over the current year's \$42.51 million, failed by a 1,817 to 589 vote.

The proposed \$791,689 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget also failed, with voters rejecting it 1,552 to 851.

Residents also voted down both proposed budgets for Regional School District 8. The district's \$33.16 million operating budget failed in Hebron by a 1,855 to 548 vote, while the \$500,000 capital budget failed 1,722 to 682.

According to Hebron's Republican Registrar of Voters, Michele May, 2,413 residents cast ballots Tuesday. This is a sharp increase from the 1,515 voters who participated in last year's referendum.

The vote totals, along with responses to five advisory questions, showed broad dissatisfaction with the proposed spending plans.

For the town government portion of the budget, 1,692 voters said it was "too high," while 519 said it was "just right" with 88 saying it was "too low."

For the Hebron Board of Education portion, 1,751 voters said it was "too high," compared with 447 who said it was "just right" and 116 who said it was "too low."

The CIP budget drew similar results, with 1,439 voters calling it "too high," 126 calling it "too low" and 724 calling it "just right."

Hebron's share of the RHAM operating budget also faced strong opposition, with 1,803 voters labeling it "too high," while 1,718 voters said the same about Hebron's share of the RHAM capital budget.

In an interview with the *Rivereast* on Tuesday night, Town Council Chair Tiffany Thiele – a Democrat – said she was encouraged by the turnout, even if all four budgets failed.

"I was honestly very excited to see the high turnout. I think it's probably one of the highest vote counts we've seen for a budget referendum vote in quite some time," she said. "I'm grateful for the people who took time out of their day to come and vote on the town budget."

Thiele continued. "I think the town budget is a critical part of what makes our town move forward." At the same time, she said the message from voters was clear. "I think the townspeople have told us loud and clear that they're concerned. They're concerned about the economy. They're concerned about taxes. They're concerned about costs rising in their own homes and in their community," she said.

Thiele said the next move now rested with the Board of Finance. "The Board of Finance has to meet, and they have to evaluate the information they've received from the advisory questions," she said. "Ultimately, it's up to the Board of Finance to decide what to do with that information."

She added that based on Tuesday's results, "people think all the budgets are too high."

When asked whether certain parts of the town budget could be targeted for cuts, Thiele

said every item may now be reviewed. "I think when a large majority of people say the town budget is too high, I think everything has to be on the table," she said.

"We did an exhaustive line item review the first time we prepped this budget, and ... I'm sure we're happy to dive in and do it again, if that's what it takes to get this budget passed."

Thiele also noted that Hebron is expected to receive an additional \$267,000 in state aid, which could be factored into the next proposal.

Reaction also came from Rob Poudrier, chair of Hebron VOICE, who said Tuesday's results sent a strong message about how residents view the town's budgeting process.

"Hebron's voice was heard tonight!" Poudrier said in a written statement. Poudrier said the higher turnout and overwhelming "no" votes showed residents expect major changes, and he added that "anything short of a complete overhaul of the current process would fall short of the standards our community expects."

Poudrier said the results called for "a full reset" that rebuilds trust and reflects strong governance. "Now is not the time for celebration or victory laps. It is time to get to work."

In a joint written statement, BOE Chair Heather Petit – a Democrat – and Superintendent Thomas Baird said they were disappointed by the outcome but remain hopeful. "It is un-

fortunate that the budget did not pass. This is a challenging budget year for the community," the statement read.

"We are happy to share that Hebron will be getting an additional \$240,000 from the state to offset education expenses. The Board of Finance will be able to factor this into the next budget proposal. We are confident we can work with the community to find the appropriate path forward for our schools."

Before Tuesday's vote, officials said the biggest cost drivers in the proposed town budget included employee pay and benefits, a 21% increase in health insurance premiums, fire department administrative costs, street services and infrastructure improvements and new or expanded staffing, including an assistant assessor and engineering services.

The proposed BOE budget totaled \$15.6 million, or a 8.98% increase over the current year's \$14.34 million budget.

School officials said rising special education costs and health insurance increases were major factors in that proposal.

The BOF is expected to meet in the coming days to review the referendum results, advisory responses and newly announced state aid before deciding what changes will be made ahead of a second referendum.

Gilead Congregational Church News

Gilead Congregational Church, an Open and Affirming Congregation located at 672 Gilead St., has announced the following. For more info, visit gileadchurch.ucc.org, church, email gcc@gileadchurch.net, or call the Parish House at 860-228-3077. The church office is open at the GCC Parish House Monday-Thursday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Worship: Sunday worship is at 10 a.m., followed by coffee hour at 11 a.m. Services can also be viewed online at YouTube at www.bit.ly/GileadChurchUCC and on Facebook at tinyurl.com/GileadChurchUCC.

This Week's Scheduled Events and Meetings: Saturday, 5/9 and Wednesday, 5/13: Wise Warrior Yoga, 9:30 a.m., Fellowship Hall; Sunday, 5/10: Board of Missions meeting, 11:30 a.m., Parish House; Monday, 5/11: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m., online via Zoom; Tuesday, 5/12: AA meeting, 7:30 p.m., Fellowship Hall; Wednesday, 5/13: Book Group, 10:45 a.m. (Fellowship Hall); Wednesday, 5/13: Choir Practice, 7 p.m., Sanctuary; Thursday, 5/14: Trustees, 7 p.m., Parish House.

Upcoming Events and General Announcements:

St. Peter's News & Notes

St. Peter's Episcopal Church, located at 30 Church St., welcomes all to worship. Priest is the Rev. Ron Kolanowski. For more information, visit stpetershebron.com or search for St. Peter's Hebron on Facebook.

Sunday Worship: Services are at 8 a.m. (Traditional Rite 1) and 10 a.m. (Rite 2 with music and choir). A coffee hour is held following each service. Sunday School is offered at the 10 a.m. service.

Weekly Virtual Coffee Hour: Wednesdays at 10 a.m. Connects parishioners and friends via Zoom for an online social gathering.

Tag Sale: June 5 and 6 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. St. Peter's giant, annual tag sale of household items will be held. Information regarding donations including acceptable items will be available shortly. If you wish to donate items, contact the office at 860-228-3244. A portion of the proceeds from the tag sale will benefit the Coalition on Diversity and Equity (CoDE).

Outreach: Food donations support the local food pantries. A collection basket is in the church and outside the parish hall. St. Peter's

ments: Sunday Services: Please join Sunday's services in-person or online through YouTube or Facebook: YouTube: www.bit.ly/GileadChurchUCC; Facebook: tinyurl.com/GileadChurchUCC.

Springtime Collection for HIHS: This spring, all are invited to give back by donating needed household cleaning items to Hebron Interfaith Human Services. Drop off your donations in the church's main hallway. For more information, call the church office at 860-228-3077.

Favorite Ladies' Tea and Accessories Swap: Saturday, May 9, from 2-4 p.m., in the Fellowship Hall; time to be determined. Come to the church along with your favorite lady, a sweet or savory treat to share, and an accessory to swap. Tea and refreshments will be provided. For more information, call the church at 860-228-3077.

Card-Making with Gayle: Create one-of-a-kind seasonal cards for \$15 with a portion of proceeds benefitting the CT Food Bank. The next class is Sunday, May 17, at 11:30 a.m.

maintains a nature preserve in the center of Hebron for use by local nonprofits. The church is also a supporter of Project Hope homeless shelter in Willimantic.

Recurring Meetings: Contact the church for more information on the following: Balance Class: Mondays, 10:30-11 a.m., \$5; Connect: Mondays at 2 p.m.; Virtual Zoom Coffee Hour: Wednesdays at 10 a.m. – contact office for access information; Choir: Wednesdays at 6 p.m.; Weekly Weeders/Garden Group: Mondays at 4 p.m.; St. Peter's 200th Anniversary Celebration: Meets 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month from 6-7:30 p.m. All are welcome to join.

Monthly Meetings: Building and Grounds, Community Events planning, Finance, Liturgy, Pastoral Care and Vestry. The Women's Club typically meets the 3rd or 4th Sunday each month for crafting and fellowship.

Scouting for Food

The Hebron scouts are hosting their annual Scouting for Food event, to benefit the Hebron Interfaith Human Services (HIHS) food pantry, on Saturday, May 9, from 9 a.m.-1 p.m., at the Ted's IGA parking lot.

Most-needed items: hearty soups, canned meats, pasta, canned tomatoes, pasta sauce, rice sides, jelly, laundry detergent, dish soap, shampoo and body wash.

Town-Wide Tag Sale is Saturday

On Saturday, May 9, rain or shine, all are invited to shop The Town Center Project's Town-Wide Tag Sale.

With locations throughout Hebron, you will find antiques, toys, furniture, and more. Shop those sales that are on the map at thetowncenterproject.org.

Follow TTCP on Facebook for up-to-date locations and item listings.

Christ Lutheran Church News and Notes

Christ Lutheran Church and Early Childhood Center (daycare) is located at 330 Church St.

Worship Service with Pastor Matthew Hardaway: 9-10 a.m. Sundays. All are welcome. People unable to attend services in person can participate online at www.facebook.com/clch-hebron/live.

Bible Studies: Sundays at 10:30 a.m., following service and fellowship time. All are welcome. Also, there is a once-a-month **Men's Bible Study**, with two day/time options to attend: the first Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m., or the second Saturday of the month at 8 a.m.

Early Childhood Center (Daycare): Offers

childcare, preschool, and before/after school care, and is open to all faiths. **Registration for summer camp (ages 5-12) is open now.** For more information, call director Jennifer Johnson at 860-228-5134. Application forms are at www.clecchebron.org.

Caring Shepherds Social Ministry Group: Open food pantry days held to distribute food staples, household and hygiene items as well as Bibles and prayers. All are welcome. For more information about donating or participating in food pantry days, call the church at 860-228-1152.

5, Big Y.

Recurring Daily/Weekly Happenings: Some programs have a fee, and some are no-cost, and most require pre-registration. More information in the monthly newsletter or at the senior center.

Monday through Friday: Exercise Equipment Room, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., or 9 a.m.-noon on Fridays.

Mondays: Enhance Fitness via Zoom with Paul Smith, 9-10 a.m.

Tuesdays: Knitting/Crocheting Group, 10:15-11:45 a.m.; Hand and Foot Canasta (cards), 12:45-3:15 p.m.; Card-Making, 1-2:15 p.m. (pre-registration required).

Wednesdays: Enhance Fitness via Zoom with Paul Smith, 9-10 a.m.; FABBS, 10:45-11:45 a.m.

Thursdays: Massage, 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m.; Yoga, 9-10 a.m.; Sunshine Singers, 10:15-11:45 a.m.; Tai Chi, 10:15-11:15 a.m.; Mahjongg, 12:45-3:15 p.m.; Bingo, 1-3 p.m.

Fridays: Enhance Fitness via Zoom with Paul Smith, 9-10 a.m.; FABBS, 10:45-11:45 a.m.; Caregiver Support Group (3rd Friday), 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.; Golden Oldies Men's Social Group (4th Friday), 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Senior Center News & Notes

Russell Mercier Senior Center has announced the following programs. For more information, full program descriptions, and a list of recurring weekly activities, see the online senior newsletter at hebronct.com/town-departments/senior-center, or call the center at 860-228-1700. **Registration is required for all programs, unless noted, by calling the center.**

Cardio Drumming: Monday, May 11, 1 p.m. This is a free class but registration is required as space is limited. This program is designed for all levels.

AARP Safe Driving Class: Tuesday, May 12, 8:50 a.m.-1 p.m. AARP members cost \$20, and non-members cost \$25, and fee payable to the instructor day of class. You must pre-register by 10 a.m. Monday, May 11.

Chatham Health Monthly Educational Series: Tuesday, May 19, 12:15 p.m. The topic will be the importance of sleep. The presentation is by Chatham Health's Stephanie Reyes, who has a master's in public health. Call the center to register.

Weekly Shopping Trips: Fridays at 11 a.m. Pre-registration is required by noon the day before. Call 860-228-1700. Schedule: May 15, Big Y; May 22, Walmart; May 29, Stop & Shop; June

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Budgets Head to Town Meeting, Referendum

By Toriana Williams

The town's Annual Budget Meeting is set for next week, with the annual referendum the following week, as town officials eye a possible end to this year's tumultuous budget season.

On April 29, the Board of Finance unanimously agreed to forward to the Board of Selectmen a proposed \$19,521,660 town budget for 2026-27. The board also sent to the selectmen a proposed \$50,868,807 Board of Education budget; finance board member John Thomas, a Republican, was the lone dissenting vote.

The town budget would be a \$1.4 million increase, or 7.9%, over current-year spending, while the Board of Education budget would be an increase of \$3.56 million, or 7.5%, from the current year.

During the April 30 BOS special meeting, the annual budget meeting was set for May 13 at 7 p.m., with the budget referendum planned for May 20, with BOS member Tim Vaillancourt, a Republican, as the lone dissenting vote.

If approved by voters, the budgets would result in a mill rate of 32.38, up from the current year's 29.92. Officials also proposed to use \$750,000 from the town's unassigned fund balance to soften the tax impact.

Board of Education Budget

At the center of the debate was the BOE budget, which had become the most heavily debated part of the spending plan. After months of revisions, the education budget now reflects a 7.55% increase, \$3.56 million from the current year. This is down significantly from nearly 12% when first introduced in November.

Despite the size of the increase, school officials emphasized that the rise is not driven by program expansions. BOE Chair Stefanie Tracey-Calash, a Democrat, explained that the actual operational increase is minimal.

"We wanted to make it really clear that our operational costs for next fiscal year are only \$345,000, just under \$346,000. That equates to about a .7% year-over-year increase," she said. "So it is less than a percentage increase just on operational costs."

"Our insurance increase ... is representative of about a 6.8% increase," she added. Tracey-Calash stressed that the spike is almost entirely tied to health insurance. She described it as a correction after years of underfunding.

"We also want to make it clear that there's no money missing from this account," Tracey-Calash said. "This isn't money that got moved or taken elsewhere. This money is money that we are ... adequately budgeting for due to that previous underfunding."

To reach the current proposal, the BOE made approximately \$2.1 million in reductions, according to Tracey-Calash. These cuts included eliminating or not filling vacancies, reducing staffing across schools, cutting programs and stipends and delaying technology upgrades.

At Bacon Academy, 14.1 positions were reduced while other schools also saw staffing

decreases and larger class sizes, said Assistant Superintendent of Schools Jessica Kuckel. Even with those reductions, administrators warned that further cuts would significantly damage educational programming.

At a previous BOF meeting, finance members requested the BOE prepare what reductions would look like in three different scenarios. Cutting another \$368,807 would eliminate a K-2 teaching position and likely end middle school world language programs.

A deeper cut of \$618,807 could dismantle the middle school team structure entirely. Kuckel described that possibility in stark terms. She said it would "fundamentally shift what we know our middle school to be," and that "it's also somewhat of a logistical and scheduling tragedy."

At the highest reduction scenario, \$868,807, cuts would extend into special education services and athletics.

Public Comment Divided

The tension surrounding those choices was reflected in passionate public comment, where residents voiced sharply divided opinions.

Many speakers opposed the budget and focused on affordability. Resident Jason LaChapelle warned of the real-life consequences of rising taxes. "I'm appalled by the amount of money the people of Colchester are being asked to approve," he began.

The increase, he said, would equal out to "roughly \$1,000 a year extra in taxes for the average household in Colchester. ... that's groceries for a lot of families, or heating oil or medical bills." He called it "the difference between a family staying afloat and a family finally falling underwater."

Resident Sharon Gillette-Greene expressed fear about her ability to stay in Colchester.

"You're squeezing the middle-class people out of this town," she said and added that she was "afraid" this was "going to probably be the end of my residence in Colchester."

Others questioned transparency in town leadership. Republican Town Committee president Olivia Duksa, who said she speaking as an individual, referenced the ongoing forensic audit and resignation of Superintendent of Schools Daniel Sullivan. She questioned why the town did not select an accounting firm that was "fully independent of any prior connection to the town," as the town's legal representatives were "involved in recommending the accounting firm selected."

She then recalled events leading to the former superintendent's resignation. "When the superintendent became absent from budget meetings and then suddenly resigned, it created even more concern among residents about a lack of openness in leadership and communication," she said. "Transparency should not only exist; it should be unmistakable."

Mother's Day Sale

Cottage Gardens, a non-profit business located at 460 New London Rd., is having its annual Mother's Day Sale Friday and Saturday, May 8 and 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.

East Catholic Honor Roll

Colchester residents Alexander DiBenedetto and Ryan Curry made the East Catholic High School honor roll for the third quarter of the 2025-26 school year.

DiBenedetto, a ninth-grader, and Curry, a 12th-grader, each earned Honors with Distinction.

At the same time, a significant number of residents spoke in support of the budgets. They also often acknowledged the financial strain on themselves and other taxpayers. Ultimately, they urged officials to protect schools.

Democratic Town Committee Chair Monica Swyden, who also said she was speaking as an individual, said, "When I look at my taxes increasing, I don't like it any more than anyone else." She described the situation Colchester is in as "unfortunate" and a "perfect storm." However, she said, "when I look at the list that the Board of Education has put up on what could happen to our school system and our kids, it's not okay with me."

Resident Justina McNeely spoke emotionally about her own upbringing.

"I came from a very poor school district," she said. "Children are our future. And we already complain about how these children act today. Just imagine children coming from a poor school district and not being educated and properly educated. I've seen what it does to kids. So yes, I'm voting yes regardless."

Resident Vincent Rose pointed to larger economic forces and stated, "We're looking for the best of a bad situation." He added, "We already have 14 positions cut. ... The number one metric after kids having enough to eat and good quality teachers is class size. We have to give the teachers a chance to give each of the kids individual attention. That is incredibly at risk if we try and move forward with anything less than the funding that we're suggesting."

Others echoed that sentiment and argued that rising insurance costs and reduced state funding are problems far beyond Colchester's control.

Town Budget

While the education budget drew the most attention, the town side also saw significant increase. The proposed \$19.5 million town budget reflected a \$1.4 million rise. The largest drivers are wages, benefits and inflation.

Wages alone increase by \$562,000, according to First Selectman Bernie Dennler, a Demo-

crat. Employee benefits have risen by another \$547,000, largely tied to healthcare costs. Additional increases came from contractual services, debt obligations and supplies like road salt.

Dennler framed the proposal as a balance between maintaining services and managing costs. "This is the cost of being a self-insured entity where our true cost of healthcare for our employees will rise next year," he said.

He emphasized that the budget prioritizes public safety, infrastructure and stability. This included plans to complete firefighter staffing increases and maintain police coverage.

Hard Choices Ahead

Dennler also addressed what might happen if voters reject the budget at referendum. He suggested that cuts would likely begin with non-contractual items, such as new initiatives or proposed wage increases. However, he strongly warned against reducing infrastructure spending.

"You can't just cut the road improvement budget and call it a day," he said. He cautioned that deferring maintenance would only lead to higher costs later on.

Ultimately, a failed referendum could force broader operational reductions, including fewer services or reduced hours.

BOF members acknowledged the difficulty of the decisions before them. Member Sean Gillespie, a Democrat, said, "If you do your job right, absolutely nobody's going to be happy with you."

Others echoed that there is no easy solution, with rising insurance costs leaving officials with limited options. Still, some expressed concern about moving forward without more answers, particularly regarding the town's expected audit findings.

As the meetings concluded, the budgets were advanced to the next stage, setting up a referendum that will ultimately decide their fate. With tax impacts, school programs and town services all on the line, the final decision now rests with Colchester voters.

CYSS Postal Food Drive

The 34th Annual National Association of Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive is happening on Saturday, May 9 - and once again, Colchester Youth and Social Services is participating.

As the nation's largest single-day food drive, this effort helps stock up local food banks and support neighbors in need. To participate, just leave non-perishable food donations by your mailbox, and your letter carrier will pick them up and deliver them to our local food pantry.



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New Era for Bobcats Softball

By Josh Howard

After winning a conference title in 2025, Bacon Academy softball is under new leadership as Lindsey Kinel took over a program that has picked up where they left off a season ago.

Kinel is a former standout player at East Catholic High School before playing Division I softball at Marist University in New York.

Coming into her first season, Kinel said the goal was to “raise the bar” as she hopes to instill “confidence and positivity” within a talented, yet young group.

Through the team’s first 13 games, this spring has yielded winning results as the team has won 10 games and already qualified for the state tournament. The impressive start was spurred on by a six-game winning streak in April in which the Bobcats outscored the half dozen opponents by a combined 70 runs (84-14).

On April 28, the streak was snapped as the team suffered a setback in a 6-4 loss to Waterford at Bacon Academy.

The Bobcats held a 4-2 advantage heading into the seventh inning before a pair of two-run home runs from the visiting Lancers ultimately changed the outcome.

“I told them in the last huddle that we hadn’t faced real adversity like this,” Kinel said following only the team’s second loss in the first 10 games. “It’s really about how we were going to recover and how we’re going to show up for each other going forward.”

The first-year head coach inherited an experienced lineup that featured three returning all-conference players in Riley Stolzman, Reina Hill, and Gabby Russo. Stolzman and Hill are juniors, while Russo is a sophomore.

Stolzman is coming off a sophomore campaign in which she was named the Eastern Connecticut Conference (ECC) Division II Most Valuable Player after helping the Bobcats capture an ECC championship banner last spring.

As she did a season ago, Stolzman is again serving as the Bobcats ace from the mound in 2026, registering a pair of shutouts that bookended the team’s six-game winning streak.

In a 2-0 victory over Fitch on April 11, Stolz-



Following an all-conference season as a sophomore, Riley Stolzman is back serving as the ace for a Bacon Academy softball team that had won 10 of their first 13 games.

man struck out 16 and allowed only two hits over eight innings and also delivered from the plate, driving in what turned out to be the decisive runs on a double that scored Hill and Gabrielle D’Atri.

Stolzman then went the entire way, fanning 14 and allowing only three hits in 7-0 victory over Woodstock Academy on April 24. She also helped her own cause with three hits, driving in two runs and scoring another.

Kinel said that the returning players welcomed her with open arms, noting that her two seniors, Reagan Reid and Zoey Smith, have helped “shape the program and provided good leadership” from day one.

Following the loss to Waterford, Kinel’s squad rebounded with a wild 9-8 victory over Ledyard on May 1 as Russo – the team’s catcher – went 4-4 from the dish, racking up two RBIs and scoring a pair of runs. Alexa Smith added three hits, while D’Atri scored three runs.



Reina Hill, a junior, is an all-conference shortstop and a leadoff hitter for a Bobcats team that is under the guidance of first-year head coach Lindsey Kinel.

D’Atri is one of three freshmen making a big impact this spring, joining fellow newcomers Ava Galante and Briana Hawes, who have also cracked the lineup.

Kinel noted that the returning players have taken the first-year players “under their wing” as they look to win now and build for the future.

On Tuesday, the team earned win No. 10 with a 16-1 road win over Plainfield. It was the sixth time the team scored double-digit runs this season.

Hawes scored three runs on three hits and Alexa Smith tallied three RBIs on three hits. Stolzman and Talia Ramos also scored three runs,

while D’Atri smashed a home run that cleared the centerfield fences in the second inning.

With the bat’s humming, Kinel said she likes how the team is executing and now it’s just about shoring up some of the little things on the defensive end.

“I said to them that defense is going to win us games and hopefully some championships in the future,” noted Kinel.

The Bobcats next travel to Griswold High School on Saturday, May 9 to take on the Wolverines at 11 a.m. They are slated to return to Bacon Academy on Monday, May 11 to host St. Bernard at 4 p.m.

Selectmen Approve Contracts, Discuss Sinkhole

By Toriana Williams

The Colchester Board of Selectmen held a meeting on April 16 wherein the board members heard public concerns, discussed infrastructure spending, public safety agreements and updates on ongoing town issues.

Several important motions were approved unanimously. The board awarded a \$19,725.82 contract for water and sewer easement clearing, approved a \$41,103 grant application for the Senior Center’s Making Memories program and formalized a facilities agreement with the Colchester Hayward Volunteer Fire Company.

Other approvals included a paramedic services agreement, a \$3,660 tank inspection proposal and two equipment purchases totaling \$22,650, pending Board of Finance approval. Additionally, the Board of Education health reserve fund forensic audit report is expected in May.

Sinkhole at R4 Field Prompts Closures

A significant discussion centered on a recently discovered sinkhole at the R4 “T-ball” field. Public Works Director Joe Leone described the situation as serious, and said the hole was “about 10 feet wide.”

The field was immediately closed. Leone proposed a repair method using a vacuum trailer and controlled low-strength material, and estimated costs between \$25,000 and \$30,000. However, he acknowledged uncertainty and said, “This is really my first time ... dealing with sinkholes,” Leone said.

The board requested further analysis and cost estimates before making a decision.

Board members also raised concerns about whether similar issues could affect other fields. Officials plan to conduct additional ground-

Mother’s Day Flower Sale

Boy Scout Troop 72 will have its 26th annual Mother’s Day flower sale adjacent to the Colchester Hayward 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.

penetrating radar scans.

Selectman Tim Vaillancourt, a Republican, cautioned against moving forward with the recently approved Bacon Academy athletic fields project until the issue is better understood.

“I would suggest to you, until we have some kind of idea of what we’re dealing with there, that we shouldn’t be making any kind of permanent decisions on that,” said Vaillancourt.

Infrastructure, Equipment Upgrades

Much of the meeting focused on infrastructure and operation improvements. The board approved a contract with VVV Industries Corp. for \$19,725.82 to clear water and sewer easements. An easement is an area of land, most often on private property, where the town has the legal right to access and maintain things like water and sewer lines.

Leone explained that overgrown easements limit access to infrastructure and can ultimately lead to costly issues. “Unless you maintain them and mow them and keep up with them ... some pretty big shrubs and trees start growing up in there.”

According to Leone, many easements in Colchester have not been maintained, and he said “it’s important for us to maintain these so we can get access to our manholes and we can start taking a look in there and seeing what we have for inflow infiltration. ... it will save us money if we identify those leaks and, you know, plug them up.”

The board also approved a \$3,660 proposal for tank inspections. This is part of ongoing water system maintenance and grant requirements. Leone explained that inspections are necessary for compliance and planning, especially for projects eligible for a 25% discount through state funding programs.

Two equipment purchases were also discussed and approved pending further financial

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.

review. The first was a HotBlox 100 heater/mini asphalt plant for \$8,999. Leone said the machine would allow the town to reuse leftover asphalt and perform more durable winter repairs.

The second purchase was a Draggtex drag box for \$13,651. Leone described it as a tool that would improve road repairs and reduce reliance on outside contractors. He noted that current contracting costs are about \$4,000 per day and said the drag box “would pay for itself” within a week.

Fire and Ambulance Agreements

The selectmen approved a facilities licensing agreement with the Colchester Hayward Volunteer Fire Company. This formalized the use and management of a training facility built in 2011. Fire Chief Steve Hoffmann said the agreement clarified responsibility and liability. “This just basically puts it on paper the relationship, the expectations, who’s going to be doing what,” he said.

A second agreement with American Ambulance Services updated paramedic intercept services. Hoffmann explained that the arrangement ensured residents are not discouraged from calling 911 due to cost concerns. “There’s no balance billing,” he said, emphasizing that

patients would not be charged beyond what insurance covers.

Senior Center Program Expansion

The board also approved the submission for a \$41,103 grant application for the Senior Center’s Making Memories program. Director Patty Watts said the program supports residents with early-stage Alzheimer’s and those at risk of isolation. It will expand from three to five days per week. “There is no additional cost to the town,” she said.

In Other News

In regard to the Colchester Farmers Market, First Selectman Bernie Dennler, a Democrat, said no changes would be made this year. However, the town is exploring options for future oversight, including a municipal model or a bid-based system to similar concession operations.

In his report, Dennler shared updates on several town initiatives. He said the forensic audit report related to the BOE health reserve fund is expected in May. He also requested legal opinion on capital reserve policies. He then announced that the cleanup at the Norton Paper Mill site is “essentially done,” with contaminated soil removed and replaced.

Trustees to Honor Ron Goldstein

The Trustees of Historic Bacon Academy will host Founder’s Day on Wednesday, May 20, 11 a.m., at Federated Church in Colchester.

This event honors Bacon Academy founder Pierpont Bacon by celebrating a Bacon Academy graduate who has gone on to become accomplished in their field. This year’s honoree is Ron Goldstein, Class of 1986. This event

is free and open to the public. The ceremony will be held in the church, followed by a march to Pierpont and Abigail Bacon’s tombstone, where the Bacon Academy Choir will sing “Baconia.” There will be refreshments in the church hall following.

For more information, email info@bacon-academytrustees.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 pastor.

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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CES Principal Appointed Acting Superintendent

By Toriana Williams



Judy O'Meara

With just about a month left in the school year, Judy O'Meara is wearing two hats. She said there simply isn't time to do it any other way.

O'Meara, longtime principal of Colchester Elementary School, was recently appointed acting superintendent of Colchester Public Schools following the sudden resignation of Daniel Sullivan. Despite stepping into one of the district's top leadership roles, O'Meara hasn't stepped away from the elementary school she has led for 17 years.

"At this moment, I'm doing both," O'Meara said when asked if she was now the former principal of CES. With a small laugh, she explained why.

"We only have about 32 more days of school left," she said. "So, I'm working closely with my assistant principal there ... we are still working together to finish off the school year. There's just not enough time to make any adjustments."

For O'Meara, education wasn't always the plan. Long before classrooms, lesson plans and school budgets, she was working in a completely different field. "I actually started my journey as an accountant," she began, "and then I had my children." That life change opened up to new opportunities.

"I was volunteering in their preschool classroom and helping there," she said. "Working with them and working in the school really gave me an interest in that area." That interest then blossomed into a career.

"I went back and got my master's in education," she said, "and have been very passionate about education ever since."

Today, that passion comes backed by years of experience. "I was working as a principal for 17 years, and I taught for seven," she said. In total, that makes 24 years she has spent serving the community's children.

O'Meara said she currently holds both teach-

ing and administrative certifications. She is also actively completing the coursework needed for her superintendent certification at Central Connecticut State University.

She has also already filed paperwork with the state for what she described as an accelerated certification pathway. "The state can go ahead and give you that certification early if you meet the requirements," she explained.

Although she has already been appointed by the Board of Education, O'Meara said some legal steps still need to happen before her official contract is finalized. "The way it goes, just because of legal and contractual things, there has to be a seven-day period," she explained, and the week between signing of agreements is to allow either party to rescind said agreement.

That also means she doesn't yet know exactly how long she'll serve in the acting role. "So, I don't have an official term length yet," she shared.

Even so, she isn't wasting any time. At the time of the interview with the *Rivereast* on Monday, O'Meara said it was her fifth day in the position. In those first few days, O'Meara said the district's budget immediately became her top priority. "A huge priority is definitely the budget," she said. "And we've done a lot of work on that already."

Along with budget concerns, staffing quickly became another immediate focus. "We are working to hire for different positions, such as the finance manager position," she said. "So staffing has been another priority."

But O'Meara said leadership isn't just about spreadsheets and meetings. It's also about people. "I'm making sure that I'm supporting the building," she said. That means visiting schools, checking in with administrators and, ultimately, listening. "I'm getting in and talking with each of the administrators ... and getting to know each building and department."

She added that support included everyone from classroom teachers to special education staff. "Making sure I get to know ... what their budgets look like, what their needs are, what help they might need with and just making sure that I'm supporting as much as I can," said

O'Meara.

This leadership transition came during a challenging time for the district, especially after concerns surrounding the district's health insurance reserve fund and its impact. O'Meara acknowledged that rebuilding trust with families and taxpayers will take work.

"I do think the trust was lost," O'Meara said clearly. She pointed specifically to "the money miscalculation that happened with the insurance fund." That financial issue, she said, created frustration across the community.

However, she has a plan for moving forward.

"I do think we need to build that trust back," O'Meara said. "That will mean making sure that we are transparent, making sure that we are letting the public know what's going on or sharing information." She added, "Just making sure that I'm reachable so that people can ask questions if they have them."

O'Meara has already started communicating more directly. After a recent public meeting, some staff members told her they were confused about what decisions had been made.

"They asked if I could put something together that kind of explained everything that was decided at the meeting," she said. So, she did.

"I put together something for the staff that really just covered, you know, 'Here's what happened at the meeting and what was decided.'" She said communication, especially during uncertain times, matters most. Another way she's trying to boost morale is just by showing up.

During staff appreciation week, O'Meara and other administrators arranged for a sweet treat.

"We're providing an ice cream truck from the local Mel's ice cream shop," she said. She then plans to visit every school. "I'm going to go to each of the schools and take part in talking with people and being able to just say thank you to staff for all that they do while they're getting

their ice cream."

So far, she said the response from teachers, staff and families has been overwhelmingly positive. "Mostly a lot of well-wishing," she described. "I've had a lot of parents or other teachers from other buildings reaching out to say, 'Congratulations.'"

Some of her elementary school staff have even joked with her. "They were saying, 'We hope you come back. We hope you don't stay there forever,'" she laughed.

O'Meara has also received support and words of encouragement from local officials. First Selectman Bernie Dennler, a Democrat, said, "I look forward to collaborating with her to strengthen the partnership between the Town of Colchester and our schools."

Board of Finance Chair Karen Belding, a Democrat, also commented. "I'm really looking forward to working with someone as well-rooted in our community as Judy O'Meara. She already knows our schools and has the relationships and trust of the staff, and I'm looking forward to working closely with her as we continue figuring out the budget and insurance matters."

Looking ahead, O'Meara said one of her biggest goals is district-wide accreditation through New England Association of Schools and Colleges. She believes the process could help push the district to an even higher standard. "It really takes a deep dive into what we do, what we offer," she explained, "and kind of puts us to the next level."

When asked where she wants the district to be by the end of her time as acting superintendent, her answer came quickly. "I would love to see us hold that certification," she said.

And while she may only be on day five, O'Meara's message to Colchester is clear: she's here, she's listening and she's ready to work.

Bacon Academy Lawn Signs Fundraiser

All are invited to celebrate their 2026 Bacon Academy graduate with a graduation lawn sign. The signs are \$20 with personalization available for only \$5 more.

Signs can be ordered at www.baconacademyprojectgrad.org through Monday, May 11. Drive-thru pickup will be at Bacon Academy on Friday, May 15, from 5-7 p.m. and Satur-

day, May 16, from 9-11 a.m.

All proceeds will benefit Bacon Academy Project Graduation whose mission is to enhance drug and alcohol-free awareness by providing safe and healthy graduation events for all graduating seniors of Bacon Academy. Direct donations are always welcome.

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Color House Expands to Train Station

The Color House, a creative arts and pottery studio, has announced the grand opening of its new location at the historic Colchester Train Station, located at 187 Lebanon Ave. The community is invited to celebrate on Saturday, May 16, from noon-6 p.m., with an afternoon of art, exploration, and creative connection.

The Color House offers a space for artists of all ages and experience levels. Guests can enjoy a wide range of walk-in creative activities, including pottery painting, glass painting, and canvas painting. The studio also features a fully equipped pottery workspace with wheels for those interested in hands-on clay creation.

In addition to its walk-in offerings, The Color House hosts a rotating schedule of classes and

workshops in various arts and crafts, with new experiences introduced each month.

At the new location, visitors can create in the studio or enjoy the surrounding gardens, where outdoor seating invites guests to make art in a natural setting.

The grand opening celebration will include studio tours, drawings, giveaways, light snacks, coupons for upcoming workshops, opportunities to participate in walk-in art activities, and an Interactive community mural.

"This new space is about more than just making art, it's about building a creative community," said the studio's owner, Tina Parsadanov.

More information can be found at www.colchesterct.gov.

Colchester Honors 250 Years of Heroes

On Sunday, May 24, Colchester will hold its annual Memorial Day Parade. The theme of this year's parade will be "Colchester Honors 250 Years of Heroes." All local groups are encouraged to participate to make this event a success. Parade applications are now available online at www.colchesterct.gov; select 'First Selectman's Office' under 'Town Services.' These are required of all marching units.

Each contingent willing to march or bring a float must obtain an application online or contact the first selectman's office by email aedward@colchesterct.gov and return it to the first selectman's office at Town Hall. The parade committee expects to have several military units represented. They included the Army National Guard 1109th TASM-G, U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Reserve, U.S. Coast Guard and the Air Force

Reserve.

Some of Colchester's residents are veterans of World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam and the Middle East wars. This parade will be a special time to honor their service and the veterans of all the great wars. The grand marshal will be Paul Spedaliere. The parade will also feature state Rep. Mark DeCaprio (R-48) as the guest speaker during the gathering on the Veterans Green. Marching units and floats should arrive at the William J. Johnston Middle School by 11:30 a.m. and the parade will start promptly at 12:30 p.m.

The Colchester Parade Committee will again award cash prizes for the best volunteer marching unit, best float meeting this year's parade theme, and most creative float.

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 11: 9 a.m., Making Memories, Exercise w/ Anne; 10 a.m., Sittercize, Inspired by Art; 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Haircuts; 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 12: 8:30 a.m., Senior Golf League; 9 a.m., Making Memories; no Tai Chi today; 10 a.m., Mixed Media Art Class, LT-COP Meeting; 12:30 p.m., Pinochle, CHOICES Counseling; 1 p.m., Cornhole; 1:15 p.m., Bingo; 6 p.m., Rag Wreath Craft.

Wednesday, May 13: 9 a.m., Making Memories. Walking Group; 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Reflexology; 9:30 a.m., Mother's Day Brunch; 10 a.m., Adult Coloring, Hand and Foot Card Game, Sit & Be Fit Video; 10:30 a.m., Caregiver Series; 1 p.m., Sew-cial Time; 1:30 p.m., Cardio; 2:30 p.m., Cardio Drumming; 2:30 p.m., CSC Staff Meeting.

Thursday, May 14: 9 a.m., Exercise w/ Anne; 10 a.m., Sittercize, Wii Bowling, Shopping Trip; 11 a.m., Yoga; noon, Senior Benefits Counseling; 12:05 p.m., Chair Massage; 12:30 p.m., Dominoes; 1 p.m., Knit & Crochet; 6 p.m., Decades Dinner Dance.

Friday, May 15: 9 a.m., Social Service Hours, Open Art Studio; 10 a.m., Sit & Be Fit; 10:30 a.m., Choral Group; 11 a.m., Yoga; 11:15 a.m., Chatham Health - Importance of Sleep; 1:15 p.m., Bingo.

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.

Ukrainian Catholic Church News

All are invited to worship each week at St. Mary Ukrainian Catholic Church, 178 Linwood Ave. The church offers Eastern Rite Divine services. Church doors are open for Divine Liturgy on Saturdays at 4 p.m. and Sundays at 9 a.m.; the Sunday service is bilingual.

For more information, call the church at 860-537-2069.

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.

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.

New Assistant at Parks & Rec

The Colchester Parks & Recreation Department has announced Sarah Kraszewski is the department's new administrative assistant.

In this role, Kraszewski will support daily operations, assist residents with program registration and inquiries, and help ensure the continued delivery of programs, events and services to the community.

Kraszewski brings a background in office administration, customer service, administration and community engagement.

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



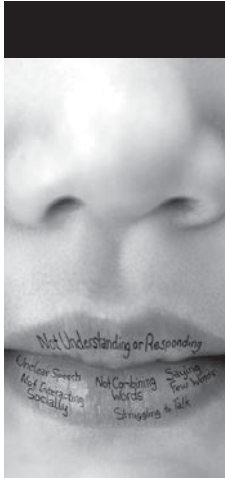
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RE4-24-26



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RE5-8-26

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RE4-24-26

**TOWN OF COLCHESTER
ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING - May 13, 2026
REFERENDUM - May 20, 2026**

The legal voters of the Town of Colchester and those qualified to vote at Town Meetings in said town are hereby warned to meet for the Annual Budget Meeting to be held at Colchester Town Hall, 127 Norwich Avenue, Colchester, CT on Wednesday, May 13, 2026 for the following purposes:

- To consider and act upon the 2026-2027 fiscal year budget of the Board of Selectmen in the amount of \$19,521,660 as recommended by the Board of Finance.
- To consider and act upon the 2026-2027 fiscal year budget of the Board of Education in the amount of \$50,868,807 as recommended by the Board of Finance.
- To adjourn said Annual Budget Meeting, pursuant to Section 7-344 of the Connecticut State Statutes and the Colchester Town Charter Section C-1105a.E, for a Referendum vote on Wednesday, May 20, 2026 between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. to be held at the Colchester Town Hall, 127 Norwich Ave., Colchester, CT.

Dated at Colchester, CT this 4th day of May 2026. Gayle Furman, Town Clerk.
Bernard Denler, 1st Selectman
Rosemary Coyle, Selectman
Arthur Shilosky, Selectman
Tim Vaillancourt, Selectman
Denise Turner, Selectman

	Budget Summary				
	FY 2023-2024 Actual	FY 2024-2025 Actual	FY 2025-2026 Adopted	FY 2025-2026 Projected*	FY 2026-2027 Proposed
Revenues					
Property Taxes	43,820,629	47,824,787	48,542,878	49,327,979	53,123,710
Intergovernmental - Town	875,374	478,934	491,504	486,880	497,247
Intergovernmental - Education	12,554,372	13,118,139	12,490,218	12,499,652	12,540,218
Charges for Services	2,218,097	2,153,717	2,188,920	2,175,611	2,305,292
Revenues from Use of Money	1,381,015	1,334,851	1,100,000	1,100,000	1,100,000
Other Revenues	69,555	147,296	71,000	111,098	74,000
Other Financing Sources	1,171,634	567,000	500,000	410,589	750,000
Total Revenues	62,090,676	65,624,724	65,384,520	66,111,809	70,390,467
Expenditures					
General Government	4,320,274	4,549,863	4,746,006	4,817,699	5,428,231
Public Safety	3,542,115	3,755,898	3,928,006	4,081,224	4,188,034
Public Works	3,159,714	4,307,164	4,632,265	4,611,916	5,004,764
Community & Human Services	1,764,866	1,894,980	2,040,957	1,952,763	2,118,567
Debt Service	1,839,164	2,031,008	2,075,164	2,075,164	2,160,164
Transfers to Other Funds	1,427,386	933,400	664,400	925,901	621,900
Total Town Expenditures	16,053,520	17,472,313	18,086,798	18,464,667	19,521,660
Education Expenditures	44,188,202	45,776,013	47,297,722	47,297,722	50,868,807
Total Expenditures	60,241,722	63,248,326	65,384,520	65,762,389	70,390,467
Mill Rate Calculation					
	Education	Town	Debt Service	Transfers/ Capital	Total
Appropriations	50,868,807	16,739,596	2,160,164	621,900	70,390,467
Estimated Revenue	12,693,090	5,004,202	0	750,000	18,447,292
Amount to be Raised by Taxation	38,175,717	11,735,394	2,160,164	(128,100)	51,943,175
Mills	23.52	7.23	1.33	(0.08)	32.00
				Dollars	Mills
Amount to be Raised by Taxation				51,943,175	32.00
Reserve for Uncollected Revenue (estimated 98.8% collection rate)				623,318	0.38
Total Tax Warrant				52,566,493	32.38
Grand List	1,617,312,300	2026-27 Proposed Mill Rate		32.38	
Estimated Prorates	2,500,000				
M. V. Supplement	22,600,000	2025-26 Mill Rate		29.92	
Less Estimated BAA & adjustments	(4,500,000)				
				Increase in Mill Rate	
				2.46	
List Net	1,637,912,300				
Less Bloom Energy assessment	(14,700,000)				
List Net for Mill Rate calculation	1,623,212,300				

*Includes supplemental appropriations authorized after budget adoption

1TB 5/8

Voters Reject Town Budget

By Toriana Williams

According to unofficial tallies, voters rejected the town's proposed 2026-2027 budget Tuesday while narrowly approving the operating budget for Regional School District 8.

Andover's proposed \$4.36 million town budget, a 3.91% increase over the current year's \$4.2 million, failed by a 451 to 331 vote.

At the same time, voters in Andover approved RHAM's proposed \$33.16 million operating budget by a razor-thin 390 to 379 margin.

However, the district's proposed \$500,000 capital improvement budget failed in Andover by an equally close 395 to 377 vote.

The vote totals, along with responses to advisory questions, showed broad dissatisfaction with the proposed spending plans.

For the town government portion of the budget, 392 voters said it was "too high," while 310 said it was "just right" with 45 saying it was "too low."

For the Andover Board of Education portion, 456 voters said it was "too high," compared with 224 who said it was "just right" and 80 who said it was "too low."

In an interview with the *Rivereast* on Tuesday night, Superintendent of Schools Valerie Bruneau said the outcome reflected more than concerns about education spending alone.

"While I'm disappointed with the outcome, I respect the decision of the voters," Bruneau said. "I will say, however, this was not a simple issue because residents were weighing both the needs of the school and broader concerns about the overall town budget and the lack of information on the funds and failure to use the fund balance. So, there were a lot of different motivations to

'no' votes."

Bruneau said the similar advisory vote totals for the school and town budgets appeared to support that view. "This was apparent with the parallel number of 'too high' with regard to both the school and the town," she said. She added that a failed budget should not be viewed as opposition to local students or schools.

"It's important to recognize that a 'no' vote does not necessarily mean a lack of support for students or the school," Bruneau shared. "In many cases, it reflects a desire to see a different approach to [the] bottom line of the overall budget ask."

Bruneau said the district now has a chance to revisit the proposal while looking at other financial resources before making cuts. "My hope is that, in the next iteration, we are able to take a more balanced approach utilizing financial resources rather than reductions," she said.

She warned that if major cuts are indeed made, students could feel the impact. "If significant reductions are required, they would likely impact staffing, class sizes and student supports, as those make up the majority of the education budget," Bruneau explained.

She added that it is too early to know whether class sizes will change next year, but said "if significant reductions are made without consideration of other available resources, increases in class size are a likely outcome."

Board of Finance Chair Robert England, a Democrat, said he was disappointed but not surprised by the results. He added that turnout was strong. "Turnout was high, which doesn't

free pass per class type. Registration is required. Call the center for more information.

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

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. Students and seniors will work on stories and interviews. Call the center to join or for more information.

AARP Driver's Safety Class: Saturday, 5/30, 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m., at the center. Cost is \$20 for AARP members, \$25 for nonmembers. To register, call the center or 860-647-9196. Completion may save you money on insurance premiums.

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.

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 Saturday, 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.

surprise me, and I think is generally a good thing," he said.

Under the town charter, England said the failed budget will now move into a new phase before the next vote.

"Per our charter, due to the failure of the budget, it now 'bifurcates' (divides) between the town side and school (AES) budget for the next referendum," he explained. England said the BOF is scheduled to meet May 6 to begin revising the proposal before another meeting and a second referendum, currently expected on May 26.

He said officials will review several options as they rework the spending plan. "The \$98k the state just decided to provide us in supplemental aid; possible use of fund balance; possible return of money from the 2024-2025 AES budget, which was under-expended; possible cuts to school and/or town budgets," England listed.

"Not speaking for the whole board here, but I always try to look at the vote totals and the answers to the advisory questions for guidance,"

he said.

Before Tuesday's vote, officials said the biggest cost drivers in the proposed town budget included salary increases, a 21% jump in health insurance costs, higher legal fees tied to easement projects, added funding for administrative and senior services positions and expanded community programming.

The proposed BOE budget totaled \$5.06 million, or a 10.91% increase over the current year's \$4.57 million budget.

School officials said the proposed budget was driven by the hiring of a new sixth-grade teacher, the addition of a full-time school psychologist, the loss of grant funding, rising special education costs, transportation increases and higher insurance costs.

The BOF is expected to meet in the coming days to review the referendum results, advisory responses and newly announced state aid before deciding what changes will be made ahead of a second referendum.

Library Friends Membership Drive

The Library Friends group is holding its annual appeal and membership campaign in support of the Andover Public Library. The group asks all residents – including its already lifetime members – to consider joining, renewing and donating.

The Library Friends group provides ongoing financial support for regular, large print and audio books, DVDs, children and adult programming, a \$1,000 educational scholarship for an Andover high school senior, a free summer concert, subscriptions, equipment, supplies and facility enhancements beyond the library's current budget.

A donation is all that is required to become a member of this 501(c)(3) non-profit organization: \$3 senior or student, \$5 individual, \$10 family, \$25 business, \$150 lifetime, \$500 patron. Donations of any amount are appreciated and can be mailed to: Andover Friends of the Li-

brary, P. O. Box 117, Andover, CT 06232.

Membership forms are emailed to current and former members and are also available by visiting the library at 355 Route 6, by calling 860-742-7428, or visiting tinyurl.com/andover-library.

Included on the form is a section to volunteer, from baking, gardening, book sales and tech support to serving on a committee or sharing a talent or hobby via a program. The Library Friends welcome ideas and suggestions by emailing andoverfol@gmail.com.

Library hours are Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m., and Saturday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. For library news, updates and photos, visit the Andover Public Library Facebook page at facebook.com/AndoverPublicLibrary.CT or the town website at www.andoverconnecticut.org/library.

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.

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

Committee Looks to Fill Vacancies

The Andover Community Fund at the Greater Hartford Gives Foundation (formerly Hartford Foundation for Public Giving) is accepting applications to fill vacancies on its Community Fund committee – and the deadline to apply is June 1.

The Andover Community Fund Committee is responsible for selecting and distributing funds awarded by Greater Hartford Gives to local nonprofits to assist in projects that will help enhance and benefit the residents of Andover.

Greater Hartford Gives established all-volunteer Selection Committees in 2019 which comprised of local residents who would form a nine-member committee of volunteer town residents to administer the grant process and consider applications for grant funding from local nonprofits for projects that serve and benefit each town's residents. The purpose of the community

funds is to support residents in taking ownership around the needs in their towns, encourage broad and inclusive civic engagement and anchor Greater Hartford Gives in each town.

The Andover Community Fund committee meets monthly via Zoom. For more information, email the committee at andover@greaterhartfordgivescf.org. Note: elected officials, individuals campaigning for office, or their immediate family members are not eligible to serve on this committee. Volunteers must be at least 14 years of age to serve.

Interested community members should apply by June 1, 2026 to be considered in the next round of application reviews.

For more information on the Andover Community Fund, go to greaterhartfordgives.org/community-funds/greater-hartford-gives-andover-community-fund.

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.

History Museum Open Saturday

The Andover Historical Society will open its Museum of Andover History this Saturday, May 9, from 4-6 p.m. New items are continuously being added to the display.

The museum is located in the Old Town Hall on Monument Lane.

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.

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★ *RHAM Budget, cont. from page 1*

non-certified positions."

McNamara shared that he was surprised by voter turnouts. "I think the overall voter turnout was low if you look at the total number of registered voters in each town," he said.

At the same time, he noted Hebron's turnout of roughly 2,400 voters. "There was a significantly higher number of voters that turned out in Hebron," he added.

McNamara warned that students will likely feel the impact of a failed budget.

"Anytime there is a failed budget, students are impacted," he said. "How they are impacted will vary from student to student, and a lot will depend on how much we will need to reduce in order to get the support of the community and pass the budget."

McNamara also said class sizes will likely increase. "They will be larger, but my concern is more related to reduced staffing impacting students' schedules at the high school and them not having access to the classes they have identified during the course selection process."

The failed referendum came less than two months after district officials disclosed a financial error that had gone unnoticed for years. In March, RHAM officials acknowledged that the district had incorrectly calculated money that should have been returned to its three member towns since 2020.

At that time, McNamara said the mistake caused the district's assigned fund balance to grow to "just over \$1.7 million." The money was never spent, but it was also not returned when it should have been.

Under the correction plan, Andover is set to receive \$255,234, Hebron will receive \$849,497 and Marlborough will receive \$600,205. This is along with \$23,676 in interest.

School officials said budget drivers included salaries, benefits and a 21% increase in health insurance.

The RHAM BOE is expected to meet in the coming days to revise both proposals before scheduling a second district-wide referendum.

Obituaries

Portland

Karen Storo

Karen (Nichol) Storo of Portland and Newton, Mass., passed away Friday, April 3, at the age of 84.

With a signature sparkle in her eye and a bright outlook for each day, Karen lived with grace, kindness, and quiet strength, creating a life rooted in deep connection and enduring appreciation for the beauty in everyday moments.

Born Nov. 20, 1941, in New Haven, Karen spent her childhood in Momauguin and then Old Lyme, a place that nurtured her lifelong love of the shoreline. She graduated from Old Lyme High School and while at UConn met Sal, her beloved husband of 50 years.

Karen began her career as a fourth-grade teacher in Old Saybrook, a role perfectly suited to her natural warmth and steady encouragement. Later, as copy editor at Newfield Publications, Karen's sharp eye and love of language enlivened the pages of many publications including *McCall's Cooking School*. Grammar was almost a hobby for her, and she loved to share it with family – explaining “fewer” vs. “less” with a knowing smile; fewer cookies, but less restraint when they're fresh from the oven!

Together, Karen and Sal shared a passion for restoring 1700s homes in Durham and Portland, stewarding historic spaces with patience, vision, and love. Some of her happiest moments were the simplest-spring and summer days spent in the flower and herb gardens, hands in the soil, working side by side with Sal. For Karen, nature was an extension of her spirit and appreciation for life's tender gifts, and home was a sanctuary—a place of comfort, style, and belonging—remaining a cherished retreat for her family throughout their lives.

Karen's traditions were a cornerstone of life. A natural host, she gathered family and friends for candlelit dinner parties, Halloween dances in the barn, baby and bridal showers, and even hosted two weddings. Family picnics and gatherings with her friends and “Durham crew” were frequent and beloved, where laughter and stories from their decades-long history abounded. The much-anticipated Christmas weekends at The Griswold Inn in Essex with her siblings and their families were especially dear to her – lively, joy-filled reunions she wholeheartedly embraced.

At home, she continued that spirit of celebration in the smallest of moments. The first snowfall of winter became an excuse to keep her girls home from school for a day of baking Christmas cookies, while strawberry season signaled strawberry shortcake for dinner. Small accomplishments were marked with ice cream – coffee for her, of course – and in later years, she seemed to uncover several such “occasions” in a single day.

As “Nanny” to her three grandchildren, Karen was a constant and joyful presence—painting alongside Vivian, cheering at Jasper's baseball games, and happily talking fashion and style with Garson. She met each of them exactly where they were, forming bonds that were uniquely her own and deeply cherished. They



adored her sassy side – delightfully feisty, quick-witted, and never afraid to speak her mind – and her daring streak, sparked by roller coasters, flying, and fast cars, her head turning instantly at the rumble of a “hot rod” as she called it.

It was easy to talk with Karen – she had a natural way of putting people at ease. A thoughtful listener, she would reflect on, “Why has this person been brought into my life?” She believed each person carried a unique gift, and she was genuinely curious to discover it. Gentle and perceptive, she paid close attention to others in a way that made them feel seen and valued.

In quieter moments, Karen found peace painting in watercolor, sitting on the porch with a good book, and vacationing on Martha's Vineyard and in Old Lyme at the shore. She often said her family had “saltwater in their veins,” a reflection of her deep and abiding connection to the sea and its steady, calming presence.

Karen is lovingly remembered by her devoted family: daughters, Jennifer Storo of Newton, Mass., and Rebecca Emerick of Melrose, Mass.; sons-in-law, Peter Leis and Marc Emerick; grandchildren, Garson Leis, Jasper Leis and Vivian Emerick. She is also survived by her treasured siblings: Patricia Nichol of Framingham, Mass.; Thomas Nichol and his wife Cathy of Barnegat, N.J.; and James Nichol and his wife Sandie of Torrington; as well as her cherished Storo family, beloved nephews and nieces, and dear lifelong friends.

Services will be private.

East Hampton

Rosemary Martha Garofalo

Rosemary Martha (Anderson) Garofalo, 93, of East Hampton, widow of the late Guy Garofalo Jr., passed away peacefully on Wednesday, April 29, at Meriden Health and Rehab in Meriden. Born April 16, 1933, in East Hampton she was the daughter of the late John E. and Ethel A. (Guile) Anderson. Rosemary had worked as a nursing aide before her retirement.

She is survived by her daughter Laurie Taylor of Meriden; son Justin Garofalo (Madelyn) of East Hampton; daughter-in-law Catherine Garofalo; her grandchildren Skye Garofalo and wife Mandy Starbala, Natalie Garofalo, Shawn Beaulieu, Crystal Garofalo and partner Jeremy Bond, Nicole Beaulieu and partner Thomas Cedeno, Brandy and Mathew Gomulinski, Justin and Katie Garofalo, Guy Garofalo; great-grandchildren Christian, Aidan, Isabella and Liam Cedeno, Shawn Ciochini, Mason and Tiffany Donahue, Madison Bond, Rosemary Gomulinski; and several nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by her daughter Gina Garofalo; her sons Guy Garofalo III and Ricky Garofalo; and her siblings Burnic Guile, Warren Anderson, Claire Redding, Harley Anderson and Hartley Anderson.

Friends called at Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., on Wednesday, May 6. A funeral service was held that morning, followed by burial in Lake View Cemetery.

To leave online condolences, please visit www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.



Lebanon

Maryann Bumgarner

Maryann Catherine Bumgarner of Lebanon passed away peacefully Sunday, May 3, with family by her side. She was 84 years old. She was born April 8, 1942, in Torrington, to the late Thomas and Gertrude Kostak.

After high school, she earned a degree in nursing in 1964 from the William W. Backus Hospital in Norwich. She was a dedicated and caring R.N. working as a labor and delivery nurse right after nursing school and eventually working at the former Norwich State Hospital for many years before she retired when the hospital closed its doors for good. Maryann was very proud to have chosen nursing as her profession, even well after retiring. During her career she also proudly trained as an EMT. Maryann recently became a member of the Connecticut Nurses Honor Guard.

In 1965, she married Carroll Lee Bumgarner and continued raising his children, Carolann, Cindy, Randy and Connie as her own. Together they had two daughters, Cheryl and Cathy. They raised their large family in Norwich, as well as spending summers at their cottage on Amston Lake in Lebanon. Carroll sadly predeceased her in 2021.

Maryann led a life rich with curiosity, creativity, and deep love for her family. She was someone always eager to learn, try new things, and share her joy with those around her. A member of Lee Memorial United Methodist Church in Norwich, Maryann found both faith and community there. Her warmth and kindness touched many. Maryann loved unique sports cars, having owned several throughout her life and attending car shows with her husband Carroll. She and her husband also had a love for camping in their motorhome camping in various campgrounds throughout New England.

Maryann had a special love for music, particularly bluegrass. She not only enjoyed listening to Bluegrass, but was also an accomplished musician, proudly playing the upright bass in her family band the Rose City Bluegrass Band during the '80s and '90s. Music was a thread that brought her closer to those she loved, filling her home with rhythm, laughter, and togetherness.

In her quieter moments, Maryann found joy in crocheting, creating pieces that reflected both her patience and creativity. She had a wide range of interests and hobbies and was never one to sit still; she delighted in trying new activities and exploring whatever caught her attention. She was also a devoted fan of the Harry Potter series, finding magic in its stories, films, and collectibles. That sense of wonder and imagination was something she carried throughout her life. Maryann shared a special bond with her beloved dog, Oliver, who was a constant companion and source of comfort and happiness.

Above all else, Maryann cherished her family. She leaves behind memories filled with love, laughter, and the reminder to embrace life fully and wholeheartedly.

She will be deeply missed but always remembered with love by her children, Carolann But-



ler, Cindy Moreash, Randy Bumgarner, Connie (David) Lee, Cheryl (James) Plecan and Catherine (Keegan) Day; her five grandchildren and one greatgrandchild; as well many extended family members and friends.

Maryann donated to many charities. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to a charity of your choice.

A visitation will be held at the Aurora McCarthy Funeral Home in Colchester on Monday, May 11, from 5-7 p.m. Burial will be Tuesday, May 12, at 11 a.m., at the Bozrah Rural Johnson Cemetery in Bozrah.

For online condolences, or to share a story of Maryann, please visit www.auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

East Hampton

Jean Lillian Neuberger

Jean Lillian (James) Neuberger, the daughter of the late William and Helene James and the widow of the late Alfred Neuberger, was called home Thursday, April 30. She was preceded by her loving brothers Bill James and Peter James, and she leaves behind her sister Barbara Dolce and many nieces and nephews as well as grand nieces and nephews.

Born Nov. 12, 1932, Jean was raised in Brooklyn, N.Y. She loved living in Brooklyn and enjoyed visiting Coney Island but during the Depression, with little work to support the family, her parents boarded a big steam train and moved up to Haddam Neck for a short while.

After the war, Jean moved back to Brooklyn, where she attended Bay Ridge High School and worked at Empire Trust Co. in New York for many years. She also lived in Florida for a while, where she enjoyed waterskiing at Cypress Gardens. She then moved to Rhode Island, where she lived for a few years and worked as a secretary for Brown and Sharp in North Kingston. She then moved back to Connecticut to live in her family home on Hurd Park Road in East Hampton.

Jean worked as a secretary for East Hampton Bible Church from 1980-1988. She also worked at Fellowship Baptist School as a secretary and after retiring volunteered in many different aspects. She was a companion and caregiver to her good friend Ella Christianson for many years, and she also volunteered at Epoch Arts for their annual tag sale and hosted many Bible studies in her home for friends and neighbors.

Jean loved all kinds of animals, from her beloved cat to even the tiniest ant. Jean also had an incredible sense of humor, always joking and finding something to smile and have fun with. There was never a dull moment in her presence. Jean will be remembered for her joyous spirit; she was always happy, always appreciate of what she had and so thankful for family and her faith and relationship with God. Jean loved to sing hymns and continued to sing them right up until her death.

Jean spent the last years of her life in the comfort and care of Chestelm Health and Rehabilitation Center. We are forever thankful for the nurses, caregivers and the entire staff who took such great care of her and became her “friends.” She was so appreciative for their care and especially thankful for her friend and roommate Peggy, who she enjoyed reading the paper with daily.

A Celebration of Life service will be held Saturday, May 9, at 11 a.m., at Haddam Neck Congregational Church, 408 Quarry Hill Rd. In lieu of flowers, donations to Christian Aid Missions can be made in honor of Jean.



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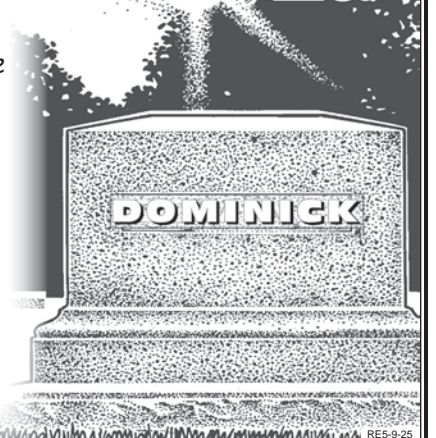
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★ **Letters, cont. from page 14**

At the same time, we are asking residents to approve this budget in the middle of a forensic audit. That is not a small detail. It raises real questions, and we still do not have clear answers.

So how do we reasonably expect people to vote on this, especially with a tax increase of this size, when there are still important financial questions unresolved?

I know there are people who disagree with me, but my focus has always been on the residents of this town and their ability to continue living here. Many have given years, even decades, to this community.

Because when we say it is "only" \$650 a year, we may not realize how that sounds to someone already stretched thin. For many families, that is the difference between staying afloat and falling behind.

We owe it to them to recognize that before we ask them to carry any more.

Tim Vaillancourt
Member, Colchester Board of Selectmen

What a 'Cut' Really Means

To the Editor:

At the recent Town Council meeting, I was publicly criticized for stating a simple fact: our town has never reduced the Board of Education budget. While we have, at times, approved increases smaller than requested, that is fundamentally different from a cut.

This distinction matters.

Mr. Finn attempted to argue otherwise by comparing rising expenses to a reduction in income. That analogy simply doesn't hold. If you earn the same salary this year as last year, you have not taken a pay cut; you just didn't get a raise. In that situation, responsible households don't claim their income was "cut"; they re-prioritize spending, trim less-essential expenses, and make thoughtful decisions about what matters most. The Board of Education should be expected to do the same.

In the same way, holding Board of Education budget funding flat, or approving a smaller increase than requested, is not a reduction in funding. It is a decision to manage growth responsibly.

What is more concerning is the continued use of language suggesting that these decisions "cost" students or represent harmful cuts. When the superintendent or Board of Education frames a reduced increase as a loss, it creates a narrative that is both misleading and unfair to residents trying to understand the facts.

We all want strong schools, but we also need honest budgeting. Suggesting that anything less than a full requested increase will harm students shifts the discussion from responsible planning to fear-based messaging. That rhetoric is not productive, and it does a disservice to taxpayers and families alike.

Words matter, especially in public discourse. A flat budget is not a cut. A smaller increase is not a reduction. It's time we started using language that reflects reality and expect our education leadership to do the same with transparency and accountability.

Ted Hintz, Member
East Hampton Town Council

Dementia Talks No. 58

To the Editor:

To "walker" or not to "walker"?

Mom has had three falls within weeks (minor injury to her wrist, nothing serious). Two were inside and were deemed unseen. One was outside and totally understood as to the cause.

Unseen falls are hard to unravel. Hard to know the why or what initiated the fall.

For example, the call I received for the most recent fall indicated that Mom was "found" in another resident's room on the floor (face down). The events leading up to Mom being on the floor were unknown and there is only speculation on how long Mom was on the floor. The latter is problematic.

Personally, I don't feel a walker will 'solve' the

fall situation; however, I'm open to evaluating if it could help prevent some falls from happening. So, we evaluate by bringing in a physical therapist to assess Mom's gait, leg strength, and balance.

That assessment is today. A friend has let me borrow a walker so that the PT can see how Mom walks with "it"; and if "it" will help prevent some falls in the long run. Wish us luck.

The other 'device' that would assist in unraveling the mysteries of "unseen" falls would be cameras in the common areas (including hallways) so that timings and causes can be determined. Had there been cameras in the hallways of Mom's community we would know when Mom entered the other resident's room to determine how long she might have been on the floor before being found by a staff member. And with a prior fall, as it was in the hallway, a camera could be used to determine why Mom took a tumble and hurt her wrist.

This information is germane, because right now we are "grasping in the dark" for a solution that might not actually be a solution. For example, if there was something on the floor that Mom decided to pick up (she is a neat-freak at heart) - a walker won't make a lick of difference.

Ah, deep breath, time to get ready and meet up with the PT and Mom. I'll share an update next week as this journey continues.

Wishing you blooming flowers on this upcoming Mother's Day and know that you are not alone.

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

Colchester's Budgets

To the Editor:

This year Colchester's budgets face the same challenges as our home budgets do because everything costs so much more than it used to. However, the main driver of the increases in both our Town and Board of Education (BOE) budgets is insurance - the rising costs of insurance, the rising costs of healthcare claims, and on the BOE side, the insurance reserve.

Now, the BOE budget faces an increase of \$3.2 million to cover the cost of insurance, healthcare claims, and the insurance health reserves. This figure is not optional spending and has been determined by the Town's insurance broker to cover claims for the 2026-27 budget year. This insurance increase represents a 6.82% increase to the BOE's budget. The remaining 0.73% increase, or \$345,922 of the BOE budget, covers all operational cost increases like those for contractual obligations, maintenance, and electricity.

The BOE worked with the administration and Board of Finance (BOF) to reduce the budget by over \$2 million to reduce the burden on taxpayers. These reductions include Central Office and Administrators' salary freezes, removing 14.5 unfilled positions, and delayed technology purchases, to name a few. A complete and extensive list can be found in the slides included in the first selectman's May 1st report on the town website. Also shown is the probable impact of further cuts that will affect educational programing, including teaching staff in our schools.

The town's budget proposes no new projects or capital plans. Its increases are driven by health insurance, contractual wage obligations, and contracted services and supplies. The budget completes the BOF plan to equalize shifts for Fire & EMS. Road improvement, the vehicle replacement plan, technology replacement and open space preservation were all flat funded. Contributions to the Facilities and Grounds Reserve and Equipment Reserve were cut by \$25,000 each.

The next steps are the 7 p.m. Annual Budget Meeting on May 13th at Town Hall and the Referendum on May 20th at Town Hall. There is so much misinformation on social media and in letters that I urge you to seek the correct information on the town website to make an informed decision on the budgets.

Sincerely,

Rosemary Coyle - Colchester

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

Please Support Our Schools

Colchester Friends:

I am deeply concerned at the amount of misinformation that is being sent around with respect to this year's budget in Colchester. The BOE and school administrators have worked tirelessly to work through a substantial underfunding of the district's insurance fund, partially due to underinvestment and partially due to the astronomical rise in insurance costs that the district, like everyone in this country, is experiencing.

Many sacrifices have been made (close to \$2 million in reductions from the initial ask to the current proposed budget) to find savings while retaining critical core school services.

Some are using this as a time to score political points and most seriously as an excuse to slash funding to critical programs which would irrevocably damage our students' education and the morale in our high-performing district. Further cuts would mean teachers' jobs and would affect our ability to retain the top teachers and staff.

This is not the time to move backwards. We must act now to support the budget.

Will you stand with our students and teachers and our community and support excellence in our schools?

If you can, please plan to attend the Annual Budget Meeting in person on May 13 at 7 p.m., to vote to move funding the schools forward to referendum and vote against further cuts.

Then please have a plan to vote in the referendum scheduled for Wednesday, May 20, to support our BOE and keep Colchester excellence in education moving forward.

Respectfully,

Vincent Rose - Colchester

Note: Rose is a member of the Colchester Democratic Town Committee.

What Don't You Know?

To the Editor:

Colchester's usual suspects have shifted tactics. Flooding the zone with misinformation was not enough. Now, the goal is to silence anyone who dares to share facts or correct their AI-generated Facebook graphics.

Last week, a Republican Board of Finance member tried to stop the first selectman from presenting his updated budget to a packed room of residents. Since then, the same voices have used public comment and Facebook to shame any and all who simply want to provide accurate information or context about the budget.

So, what do they not want you to know?

They don't want you to know that the town budget contains no new capital projects.

They don't want you to know that the police budget improves public safety with a dedicated traffic officer funded through grants secured under the current first selectman.

They don't want you to know that Fire and EMS

will finally have equalized staffing across all shifts, the result of multi-year planning by the Board of Finance and the first selectman.

They don't want you to know that the town side has been managing its finances responsibly under the current first selectman.

They don't want you to know that the insurance fund shortfall occurred on the Board of Education side, and that state law gives the first selectman no authority over BOE budgets or personnel, including the superintendent.

They don't want you to know that the town portion of the health insurance fund is now positive, even though the first selectman inherited a \$700,000 deficit and ensured it was corrected.

They don't want you to know that the first selectman's budget reduces reserves for building maintenance and equipment replacement to lessen this year's tax impact.

On the Board of Education side, they do not want you to know that more than \$2 million in cuts have already been made.

They don't want you to know that administration pay is frozen. That central office pay is frozen. That 14 positions have already been eliminated.

They don't want you to know any of this because it does not fit the narrative they are trying to sell.

Voters deserve straight facts, not a political campaign for 2027 that is painfully and unnecessarily arriving a year early.

Note: I am a proud member of the Colchester Democratic Town Committee, but I am speaking only for myself. Every voter deserves to walk into the polls with facts, not noise. Come out and vote.

Scott Chapman - Colchester

MASCOTS

See Answers, page 33

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CREATORS NEWS SERVICE

By Neil Manausa

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- 14 ___ colada
- 15 Cartoonist's wavy line?
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- 9 Famed dancing girl
- 10 Kindergarten quartet
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- 12 Caught striking
- 13 ___ Plains: city and river
- 18 Paul Bunyan's cook
- 19 "___ Boot"

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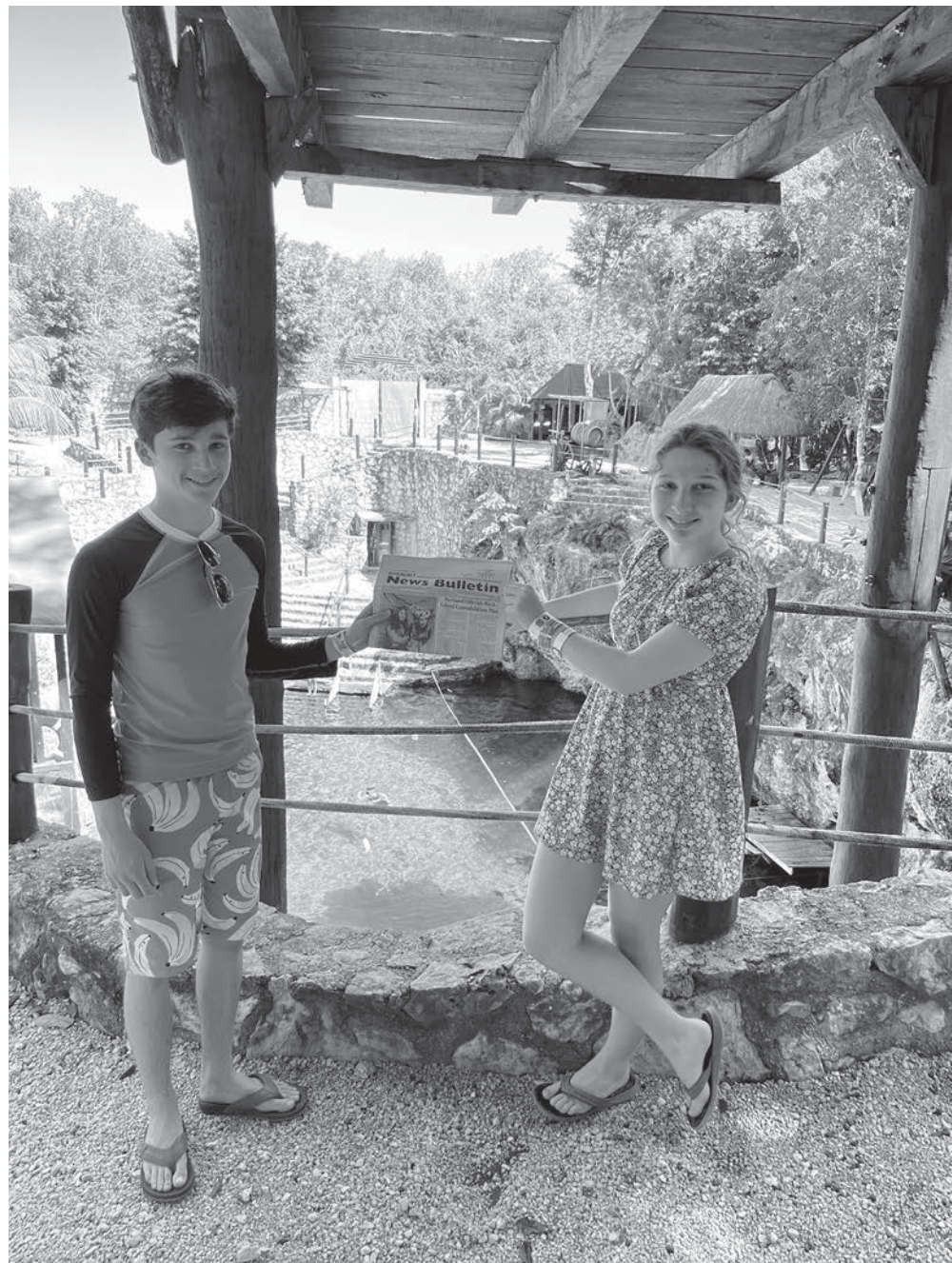
Buds on Spring Break... Best buddies (left to right) Nala Slater, Lainey Lewis, Daxton Slater, Andy Lewis and Evie Lewis brought the *Rivereast* on spring break in Providenciales, Turks and Caicos.

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!



The O'Briens at Olympic... The O'Briens of Marlborough went to Olympic National Park in Washington! From left are Dashi, Maggie, Savannah and Alex.



Down Mexico Way... Marcus and Mir Clements are shown with the *Rivereast* at Zemway Cenote in Tulum, Mexico, over the recent spring break.



Tiptoe Through the Tulips... Melissa Brady, Sandra Crook, Jennifer Gatesman and Andrea Kranc, all of Colchester, visited Wicked Tulips in Preston on a beautiful April afternoon.

Where in the World?

**Going on a trip?
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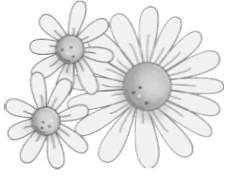
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RES-8-26

Notice of Democratic Caucus

To enrolled members of the Democratic Party of the Town of East Hampton, CT. Pursuant to the Rules of the Democratic Party and State election laws, you are hereby notified that a caucus will be held on May 19, 2026, at the Joseph N. Goff House Museum, 2 Barton Hill Road, East Hampton, CT at 7PM for the purpose of endorsing a candidate for Democratic Registrar of Voters for the Town of East Hampton by the East Hampton Democratic Town Committee for the November 3, 2026 election and to transact other business as may be proper to come before said caucus. Kevin Reich, Chair

1TB 5/8

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT 8 IN-PERSON/VIRTUAL PUBLIC HEARING ANDOVER, HEBRON, MARLBOROUGH TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2026 - 6:30 PM RHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL MEDIA CENTER

Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/nov-fbqu-pwk>
Or dial: (US) +1 904-323-0278 PIN: 547 561 127#
More phone numbers: <https://tel.meet/nov-fbqu-pwk?pin=4821013979648>

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT A PUBLIC HEARING WILL BE HELD BOTH VIRTUALLY AND IN-PERSON (RHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL MEDIA CENTER) ON TUESDAY, May 12, 2026, AT 6:30 P.M. TO DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING: 1. "TO PRESENT AND DISCUSS THE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT 8 PROPOSED OPERATING AND CAPITAL BUDGETS FOR 2026-2027." 2. PUBLIC COMMENT DATED AT HEBRON, CONNECTICUT, May 6, 2026 REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT 8 HEATHER SUMMERER, CHAIRPERSON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT 8 BOARD OF EDUCATION

1TB 5/8

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 PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION LEGAL NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Colchester Planning & Zoning Commission will hold a Public Hearing on May 20, 2026, beginning at 7:00 PM in the Colchester Senior Center at 15 Louis Lane, Colchester, CT to hear and consider the following application(s): **PZC2026-008 Town of Colchester Planning & Zoning Commission** Regulation change application to add new Section 8.13.1.A Nine (9) Month Moratorium on Manufactured Home Parks (MHPs). At this hearing, interested persons may be heard and written communications received. A copy of these applications is located in the Land Use Department and Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, 127 Norwich Avenue, and may be inspected during regular business hours (8:30 AM - 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday). Application materials are also available on the Colchester Planning & Zoning Commission webpage at <https://www.colchesterct.gov/planning-zoning-commission>. Planning & Zoning Commission Joseph Mathieu, Chair

2TB 5/8, 5/15

TOWN OF PORTLAND PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION LEGAL NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the Portland Planning & Zoning Commission will hold a Public Hearing on Thursday, May 21st, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. at the Portland Public Library, 20 Freestone Avenue, to consider the following: **PZC Application #25-16:** 45 Glastonbury Turnpike (driveway access to this landlocked property is through 39 Isinglass Hill Road aka 45 Isinglass Hill Road). Request for a Special Permit Modification to move 4 approved silos to a new location 200 ft to the south. Application of CT Explosives and property of Hale Hill Farm Inc. Map 120, Lot 24. Zone R-25. **PZC Application #25-17:** Courtney Lane. Proposed 2 lot resubdivision. Application and property of T.C.B.S. Properties. Map 15, Lot 36-3. Zone RR. Dated at Portland, CT this 4th day of May 2026 Robert Ellsworth, Chairman Planning & Zoning Commission

2TB 5/8, 5/15

EMPLOYMENT

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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RES-15-24

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RES-8-26

EMPLOYMENT

BOLTON'S RECREATION DEPARTMENT IS HIRING: Our Indian Notch Park is looking for lifeguards and our Summer Camp is looking for counselors! Visit boltonct.gov/employment or contact the Recreation Office today for more information.

LANDSCAPING COMPANY: Looking for individual to assist in our gardening services. Reliable transportation is required. Seeking part time or full time. Call Steven 860-346-0654.

PART-TIME BAKER NEEDED, GLASTONBURY: Will train. Early morning hours. Call for more info. 860-657-4400.

SEEKING DENTAL HYGIENIST: Mondays 8am-5pm. Office in Marlborough. 860-295-8132. Please send resume to mfidental@marlboroughfamilydental.com.

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MARLBOROUGH CONSERVATION COMMISSION NOTICE OF ACTION

The Marlborough Conservation Commission, at their regular meeting on May 4, 2026, took the following action:

MOTION CARRIED:
APPLICATION #03-26 – Marlborough Lakeside Village, LLC (Applicant/Property Owner) 156+ No Main Street, three lot Residential Subdivision
APPLICATION #04-26 – Town of Marlborough – Quinn Road Culvert Replacement – Public Hearing on June 1, 2026
 YVONNE BOLTON, CONSERVATION COMMISSION CHAIR

Public Notice

Town of East Hampton, Connecticut Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Agency
 Wetlands Agent Approval

Pursuant to CGS Section 22a-42a (c) (2) Application URA-IW-26-005: Sean Flynn, install above ground pool and deck Within the upland review area on property located at 15 Peach Farm Road, East Hampton, CT has been approved by the duly authorized agent of the East Hampton CT Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Agency.
 Juliet Hodge
 Duly Authorized Agent
 Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Agency

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MARLBOROUGH CONSERVATION COMMISSION NOTICE OF ACTION

The Marlborough Conservation Commission Wetland Enforcement Officer issued this day, May 5, 2026, took the following actions:

APPLICATION APPROVED:
APPLICATION #05-26 – KES Lawn Care LLC (Applicant) 23 Saner Rd, Chad Hanebrink (Owner) Attaching gutter leads and install drywell for water treatment system
 PETER HUGHES, WETLAND ENFORCEMENT OFFICER

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Legal Notice

Notice is hereby given that there will be a caucus of all enrolled Republicans electors of the Town of Portland on Wednesday May 20, 2026, at 7 Waverly Ave, Portland at 6:00PM. The purpose is to endorse a Republican candidate for the office of Registrar Of Voters to be on the ballot for November 3rd, 2026. All registered Republicans are invited and encouraged to attend. For more information, please contact us at GOPPortlandCT@gmail.com.
 Margaret Keser, Chair
 Karen Renner, Secretary

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LEGAL NOTICE TOWN OF ANDOVER 2026 - 2027

NOTICE OF BIFURCATED BUDGET MEETING TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2026 - 7:00 p.m.

BIFURCATED BUDGET MEETING TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2026 - 7:00 p.m.

The Electors and Citizens qualified to vote in town meetings in the Town of Andover are hereby notified that a Bifurcated Budget Meeting of the Town of Andover will be held at the Andover Elementary School in the Gymnasium – 35 School Road – Andover, Connecticut on Tuesday, May 12, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. For the following purposes:

- To choose a Moderator for said meeting
- For review and discussion only, no action upon the Bifurcated budgets of the Town and the Andover Elementary School for the Fiscal Year July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027, as prepared by the Board of Finance, and voting will be deferred to the Budget Referendum at the Andover Town Community Room.
- Adjourn

Copies of the proposed Bifurcated Budgets of the Town and the Andover Elementary School are available in the Town Clerk's Office. Voting by absentee ballot or any other means is not permitted for this meeting.
 Dated at Andover, Connecticut this 6th day of May, 2026.
 Andover Board of Selectmen

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