

**ETHICS COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
October 23, 2024
7:00 P.M.
Van Beynum Room, Public Library
20 Freestone Avenue
Portland, Connecticut 06480**

- 1. Call to order**
- 2. Public Comment**
- 3. Request for Ethics Advisory Opinion: AO 2024-1**
- 4. Approval of 2025 calendar dates: January 22, April 23, July 23, October 22**
- 5. Adjournment**



Ethics Commission

Send completed form to:
Chairperson
Town of Portland
Ethics Commission
P. O. Box 12
Portland, CT 06480

Request for Ethics Commission to Issue an Ethics Advisory Opinion

Name of requesting party: Michael Pelton Date: 9/9/24
(requesting party must be a public official or employee of the Town of Portland)

Department, Board, Commission or Agency of requesting party: B.O.S.

Your specific request for an advisory opinion should be set forth below.

Note: Be specific. Cite the specific sections of the Ethics Ordinance that might be implicated by your request. For example: "Is there a violation of the general prohibition against gifts or favors Ethics Ordinance by virtue of the following facts?"

see attached letter

Facts to be assumed should the Ethics Commission grant your request for an ethics advisory opinion.

Note: Be specific in setting forth the facts that you wish the Ethics Commission to assume. The Ethics Commission will rely SOLELY upon the facts that you present. Your fact statement should contain no names of individuals. Instead use references to positions within the Town of Portland.

FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

The Ethics Commission has taken the following action:

No Opinion Rendered Due To: No Jurisdiction
 Discretion of Commission

Opinion Rendered: _____

Signature of Chairperson or his/her designee: _____
Date _____

September 9, 2024

To: Jim Motes
Chairman – Ethics Commission
Town of Portland

From: Michael Pelton
Re: Request for Ethics Commission to Issue an Ethics Advisory Opinion

Position(s) of requesting party: Member Board of Selectmen
Middle School track coach

Dear Mr. Motes and members of the Ethics Commission

In the last few months I have been publicly accused of a variety of unethical behaviors as a member of the Board of Selectmen as well as a middle school track coach. These accusations include:

- Voting in favor of the most recent budget as a member of the BOS without recusing myself since I get paid a stipend for coach on middle school track team. Note the letter dated Feb 16, 2024

This accusation was made in the Rivereast newspaper in a letter to the editor and implied I was unfairly benefiting by somehow directly voting on how my coaching stipend is determined. This is obviously not true since the BOE controls the entire budget for the schools and the BOS simply votes YES or NO to the entire budget before it can go to referendum to the town. I have no control or influence on the stipend amount paid and simply receive the contractual amount set by the teachers contracts.

- Misappropriated funds during a recent 24 Run-a-thon I organized in support of the Middle and High School track and cross country teams.

This was a wonderful event fully supported by the BOE, the HS and MS principals, the AD, the other track coaches and entire school system. We ended up raising at approximately \$2,555 which will be exclusively used by the track and cross country teams per Frank Cardona the AD. That money is being turned over to Frank and he will control how it is spend. I partnered with the Portland Sideliners and all funds were funneled through their venom account and/or general account. For instance, we did a midnight 5K and those entry fees went directly to the Sideliners venom account. Any checks were also to the "Portland sideliners" and the little cash we received was given to them as well soon after the event. I donated a significant amount of my own time and money organizing this event and couldn't be happier with the turnout. It'll be done next year in the same way.

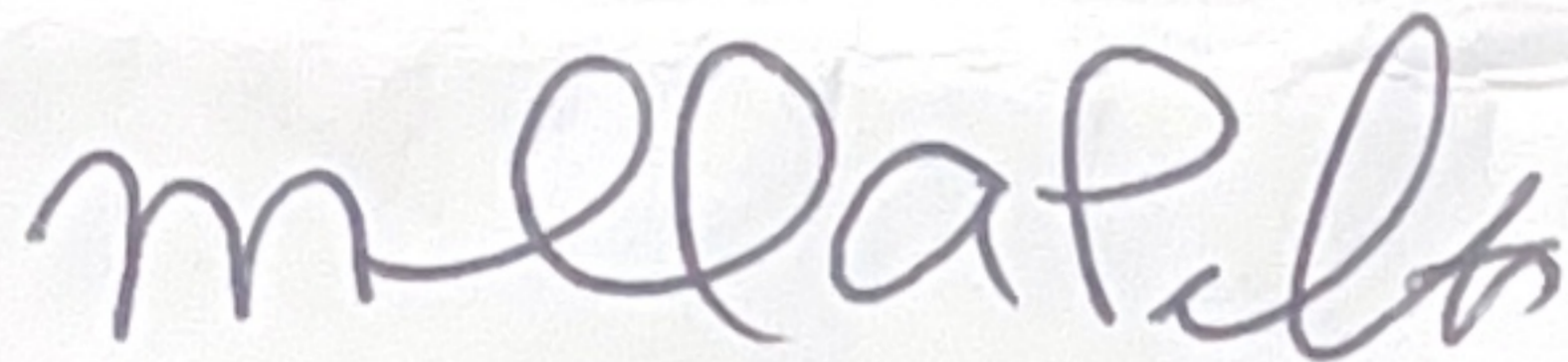
- Speaking publicly in support of various projects as either a member of the BOS or individually
- Last year I was subject to a SEEC investigation into whether I could legally run for re-election given the "questionable status" of my residency in town. The SEEC fully investigated this matter and I was fully exonerated.

This was especially troublesome since it created in the impression I wasn't a Portland resident. I provided a great deal of evidence to the SEEC including bank records, tax records – car, personal and business, voter status and location, mail, car insurance, driver's license, etc – that all proved I was a legal resident and eligible to run for office.

I am asking for an advisory opinion on these matters and would be happy to provide any additional information/documentation you may need to render a decision. I take these potentially slanderous accusations very seriously as they may very well be having a deleterious effect on my business in town.

Thank you in advance to your time and consideration and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Respectfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "m. pelton". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and contact information.

Michael Pelton
124 Isinglass Hill Road
Portland CT 06480
Cell 860-833-8045
Email: mikepelton62@gmail.com

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

By Josh Howard

Happy Friday!
If you are looking for something unique and fun to do this weekend, look no further than *The Highlander Hustle*, a 24-hour relay extravaganza that will help celebrate and christen the newly minted track at Portland High School.

The "high-energy and community-driven fundraising" event will take place over a 24-hour period from noon on Saturday, June 1 until noon on Sunday, June 2. Mike Pelton, the track coach at the middle school, had the idea for the epic event to help raise money for the local track and field teams.

Events will include a 24-hour Relay Race, in which teams of runners will participate in a non-stop relay race, and a Midnight Glow Stick 5k, where runners will decorate in fluorescent markers to illuminate the track.

There will also be music, food, games, and other activities for people of all ages and ability levels. So, whether you are a runner, walker, or anything in between you can join in the festivities.

Every lap completed will raise funds for new track equipment, uniforms, and travel expenses for the local track and field teams.

In other local athletic news, here is what has happened in your neck of the woods over the last couple of weeks.

East Hampton High School...the girls track and field team in Belltown won the Shoreline Conference (SLC) Championship, scoring 136 team points to pull away from runner-up Coghinchaug (122.5) and the ten other conference teams on May 22 at Portland High School.

Lyndsey Gravel secured a pair of individual conference championships, winning both the shot put and the javelin. Gravel, a senior, also placed second in the discus. Danielle Riley (300-meter hurdles and high jump), Maya Korczak (100-meter hurdles), Olivia DeMartino (javelin) each placed second in their respective events. Earning a spot on the podium with third place finishes were Korczak (long jump), Amber Murphy (pole vault), and Alyssa Snyder (shot put).

On the boys' side, the 4x100 relay team of Matthew Dickinson, Aidan Malorino, Alex Rivard-Lentz, and Declan Russell captured a conference title for a Bellrangers program that placed third overall as a team.

Portland High School...the host Highlanders also shined at the SLC track & field finals, posting a record-setting day.

Junior Jack Larson broke the boy's program record in the pole vault, clearing 12'00" to win the event. Sam LaMalfa won a pair of conference titles, winning the 200 and 400 meters. Kylon Martinez also became a conference champion after winning the triple jump with a personal record distance of 41'09".

On the girls' side, the Highlanders 4x800 relay team of Lily Tabellione, Cristina Austin, Ariana Hettrick-Rivera, and Meghan McPhee won a conference championship. The 4x400 team of Tabellione, McPhee, Austin and Annabelle Maruschock broke a program-record with a time of 4:18.89 to finish third overall in the event.

RHAM High School...Raptors' boys lacrosse won the Central Connecticut (CCC) - North Championship, defeating Farmington

Editor's Desk continued on page 11



RHAM High School boys lacrosse players celebrate with the trophy after the Raptors defeated Farmington to win the Central Connecticut (CCC) North Championship on May 23.

Reader Forum • Reader Forum • Reader Forum • Reader Forum • Reader Forum

Thank You

To the Editor:

The East Hampton Volunteer Food and Fuel Bank would like to thank the citizens of East Hampton for their unbelievable response during the postal workers food drive on Mother's Day weekend. We received more than 300 pounds of food. There are no words to describe your kindness. Thank you again.

Sandy Fries - East Hampton

That way, one, both or neither could pass or fail on their own merit.

Over the last several years we have seen the Board of Selectmen battling with the Board of Education over the budget and other various issues including the School Resource Officer, facility maintenance for the school building and other matters. Lately, with certain BOF members throwing stones at the BOE, this rift has become even more evident.

The last Charter revision left us with a document that is confusing and which actually increased the potential for "politics" interfering with smooth and fair operation of our Town government. We need to bring forward yet another effort to correct problems with the Town Charter. At the same time, we could consider whether or not it is time for bifurcation. Doing so might reduce the bickering between Boards, while handing more control over the taxpayers when it comes time to vote on budgets.

Ken Hjulstrom - Marlborough

Time for Bifurcation?

To the Editor:

Marlborough's taxpayers went to the polls last week to vote for a second time on the budget. Once again, the budget failed. But this time, there was an exit poll. The results of that poll demonstrated that more people had issues with the Town Hall Operations and Capital budgets than with the Board of Education budget.

A few years ago, when Marlborough was evaluating changes to our Town Charter, I suggested to the Marlborough Charter Revision Committee (CRC) that they consider implementing "bifurcation." At that time, the CRC members looked at me like I had two heads, not knowing what I was talking about, so I had to explain it to them.

Bifurcation, if included in a Charter change, would allow the taxpayers to vote on the Town Hall and Board of Education budgets separately.

Town Budget Support

To the Editor:

Colchester citizens must decide what kind of community they wish to inhabit: one with appropriate and adequate services or one with low taxes. The latter would superficially benefit every citizen, while the former affects different groups unequally. Keep in mind that a commu-

Bulletin Board

As more and more of my peers become excited grandparents, I (while still waiting and in no particular hurry to be referred to as gramps or pee-pa or old coot or any other supposedly endearing titles) have been giving some thought to parenting in general. To put it bluntly, now that my two boys are adults and have apparently abandoned their homicidal pugilist to see which will become an only child, I find myself wondering what in the world ever made me think I was equipped to be a parent.

I mean, think about it. There you are in the hospital and a nurse hands you this baby and then won't take it back. It's yours. Deal with it. They make you jump through hoops to get your first driver's license, but let you take this baby home without even checking to see if you've lined your baseball cap with aluminum foil so aliens can't read your thoughts.

Having observed my own parents in action, it seemed to me that raising children would be a fairly simple matter. It never occurred to me until middle age that my parents had the advantage of dealing with the ideal child—a son who (aside from being an inveterate liar) instantly responded to their every command; a lad who mowed the lawn, raked the leaves, shoveled the driveway, did his homework without being told, trotted dutifully off to church every Sunday morning and was, in almost every respect, an almost saintlike figure, an object of admiration and emulation to all he encountered.

That, at least, is my recollection of my formative years, though I do recall an occasion or two when my father, who was kind of frothing at the mouth at the time, informed me that he couldn't wait until I had children of my own. The police officer taking my fingerprints seemed to think this might be a bad idea, but perhaps I'm being unfair.

So naturally, when my boys were born—Son #1 in 1987 and Son #2 in 1990—I expected devoted cooperation, at least as soon as they had passed that horrible period known as "the baby stage."

I realize there is a common delusion that babies are "cute," even "beautiful," but I would suggest that any cuteness is more than offset by their insistence on crying all night for no apparent reason, creating smells that would make a buzzard's eyes water, and developing mysterious rashes which your wife insists on having treated by a real doctor even though they'd probably go away by themselves after a few months if you were just patient.

In return, we are supposed to view every involuntary belch as a loving effort to utter the word "Dad." My own Son #2 was able to say "McDonald's" before he could say "Dad," which is either a tribute to the power of American marketing or a commentary on my parenting skills, or quite probably both.

In my ignorance, I supposed that once the little guys got to be mobile, they would become considerably less boring and a lot more useful, possibly to the point where they could take out the trash or maybe wax my car or paint the house. To my dismay, I found they were just harder to catch. It also seemed they were much more comfortable sitting around watching cartoons and TV shows featuring wrogenous tap-dancing puppets than they were in helping me to extract a toasted cheese sandwich from the VCR (shoved in there by parties unknown).

As for my grandiose plans to nurture and guide Sons #1 and #2 through the perils of youth and set them firmly on the path to responsible adulthood (i.e. keep them out of prison so they could cater to me in my declining years), I found my efforts complicated by at least three seemingly insurmountable obstacles: that terrorist cell known as "the kids on the school bus," Health Class, and a TV show called "Jackass." The latter, which I understand is no longer airing, featured people who demonstrated their intellectual stature by activities such as lighting themselves on fire, eating things that live under damp rocks, sticking drumsticks in various bodily orifices, and so on and so forth. Unfortunately for society, these daredevils, while they frequently required hospitalization, never seemed to die, which would have provided a more useful service to western civilization in general and to American youth in particular if you want my opinion.

And yet my father's predictions notwithstanding, neither of my boys created a fraction of the havoc I did growing up. He completely forgot about the other half of the equation.

Their mother.

Jim Hallas

Riverast Hours of Operation

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

RIVEREAST

News Bulletin

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

Published Friday by The Glastonbury Citizen

87 Nutmeg Lane • Glastonbury, CT 06033

Telephone (860) 633-4691

Email: bulletin@glcitizen.com

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 373 • Glastonbury, CT 06033

Email classified line ads to admin@glcitizen.com.

Email Legal Notices to legals@glcitizen.com

and call 860-633-4691 to pay with MC or VISA.

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PUBLISHER RESERVES THE RIGHT TO CANCEL ANY ADVERTISEMENT AT ANY TIME

Standard Mail - Postage Permit #1092 at Hartford, CT • Glastonbury Citizen (USPS-219-360)

News copy deadline for *The Riverast News Bulletin* is Tuesday at noon. Please address all letters & news articles to: *Riverast News Bulletin*, P.O. Box 373, Glastonbury, CT 06033

Letter Writers: Letters must be 300 words or less, and must be submitted by Tuesdays to local issues, news, or events. Letters regarding national issues or national public figures will not be published. All letters must be signed, and include the writer's town of residence and daytime contact phone number. Writers are limited to one letter per week. 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 form of harassment or personal attack (such as bullying or name-calling) will be tolerated. There is no guarantee that all letters will be published.

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PORTLAND HIGH SCHOOL TRACK AND FIELD FUNDRAISER



THE HIGHLANDER
HUSTLE
24-HOUR RELAY EXTRAVAGANZA

JUNE 1-2 | NOON TO NOON

The Highlander Hustle is a high-energy, community-driven fundraising event that combines athleticism, music, and delicious food. This is a 24-hour relay race where runners, fueled by passion and determination, sprint around the track to raise funds for the track team. Runners over the age 18 will be allowed to camp out overnight on the field (kids under 17 with parent's supervision).

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>24-HOUR RELAY RACE Teams of runners (students, teachers, parents, and community members) participate in a non-stop relay race. Each runner completes a lap, passing the baton to the next teammate. The goal? Keep the track alive for a full day!</p> | <p>SPONSORSHIP PLEDGE Runners sign up sponsors who pledge donations based on the number of hours they run. For example: \$5 per hour: If a runner completes 6 hours, their sponsor donates \$30. \$10 per hour: A 12-hour runner raises \$120 for the team.</p> | <p>MUSIC MARATHON Don't worry if you leave your ear buds at home. DJs will be pumping out fresh tunes throughout the event. From sunrise to sunset, the track will resonate with beats, melodies, and cheers.</p> |
| <p>FOOD STAND FIESTA The Portland Sideliners will have hot food, snacks and drinks available for purchase during all 24 hours. Runners and spectators can support the team and enjoy tasty treats and beverages during the relay.</p> | <p>LAP CHALLENGES Spice up the race! Set mini challenges for our runners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backward Lap • Highlander Leap • Dance Lap • Most Individual & Team Laps • More.... | <p>GLOW-IN-THE-DARK NIGHT RUN As the sun sets, the track transforms into a neon wonderland. Runners wear glow sticks, and the track lights up with fluorescent markers. It's like a rave-meets-athletics party!</p> |

WHY ATTEND?

- **Support Our Highlanders:** Every lap completed raises funds for new track equipment, uniforms, and travel expenses.
- **Community Unity:** Bring together students, families, and local businesses.
- **Fun for All Ages:** Whether you're a sprinter or a cheerleader, there's something for everyone.

QUESTIONS?
Contact Mike Pelton at 860-833-8045 or email at mikepelton62@gmail.com

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP AND SUPPORT!
The PHS Track and Field Athletes and Coaching Staff



HIGHLANDER HUSTLE DONATIONS

6/7/2024

VENMO

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Notes</u> |
|-------------------------|---------------|---|
| Brian Walsh | \$ 100.00 | 24-hr runathon |
| Jean Mumley | \$ 20.00 | 1 mile race |
| Katherine Hunter | \$ 150.00 | 24-hr runathon |
| Debbie DeMaio | \$ 20.00 | for Matt DeMaio |
| Courtney Jinjika | \$ 40.00 | runathon donation |
| Mark Lapidus | \$ 500.00 | Runathon |
| Lauren DeVore | \$ 20.00 | 1-Mile |
| Riley Tewksbury | \$ 20.00 | Midnight Mile |
| Melissa Kelley | \$ 15.00 | Highlander Hustle |
| Lauren DeCaprio | \$ 200.00 | Donation |
| Babara Lynn Frazier | \$ 20.00 | Race |
| Jessica Veneziano-Lemos | \$ 20.00 | 1 mile -Run 169 Society |
| Sheli Maillet | \$ 40.00 | Sheli & Paul Maillet |
| Debra Robinson | \$ 20.00 | Run |
| Matthew Dietrichsen | \$ 40.00 | Midnight 5K |
| Diana Dick | \$ 20.00 | Run |
| Jonah Piascik | \$ 40.00 | Highlander Hustle 5K |
| Ross Bielak | \$ 40.00 | HH24 Becky Burke Fan Club |
| Stephen Kirsche | \$ 100.00 | Partial Payment of funds raised by Luke Kirsche for Highlander Hustle |
| Sharon Kirsche | \$ 20.00 | Luke Kirsche Hustle 5K |
| Kat Tansey | \$ 50.00 | Highlander Hustle |
| Ginny Quinn | \$ 60.00 | Highlander Hustle |
| Kerry Rossi | \$ 25.00 | Highlander Hustle |
| Ryan Curley | \$ 30.00 | |
| Jonah Piascik | \$ 45.00 | Highlander Hustle Run |
| Bryan Johnson | \$ 25.00 | Highlander Hustle Laps |
| Chris Graham | \$ 50.00 | Highlander Hustle 24 Relay from the Graham family, AKA the running banana |
| Reagan Gitzgibbons | \$ 100.00 | From MS T&F team to thank Coaches |
| Open Doors Outdoors | \$ 120.00 | John Zvonek Laps |
| Chrissy Almeida Barton | \$ 120.00 | Donation |
| Total Venmo | \$ 2,070.00 | |

CHECKS AND CASH

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Notes</u> | <u>Address</u> |
|---------------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Rebecca Burke | \$ 200.00 | 24 hour run | 54 Jobs Pond Rd, Portland |
| Sarah Redford | \$ 40.00 | 2x | 1040 Clintonville Rd, Wallingford |
| Darlene Rice | \$ 100.00 | Highlander Hustle | PO Box 226, Portland |
| Maria Gladue | \$ 20.00 | Portland Track | 61 Bushnell Hollow Rd, Baltic |
| CASH | \$ 125.00 | | |
| Total Checks & Cash | \$ 485.00 | | |
| GRAND TOTAL | | | \$ 2,555.00 |

the answers to the Frequently Asked Questions published in last week's *Rivereast* offer some clarity but also elements of concern. It is encouraging that the answer to Question 4, regarding the use of the "Horton Property adjacent to Kinney Road" as a DPW site, is firmly, "No. The committee is focused on options at the current DPW site on Old Colchester Road." Keeping the Public Works at its current location is the only environmentally, historically and economically responsible course of action.

The confusing and concerning part of the DPW Action Committee answers comes in response to Question 5, "Why is Old Colchester Road the sole focus?" Unfortunately, the answer does not include any mention of the impact a DPW facility would pose to the GA quality groundwater, local drinking wells, the unique historic features or the economic opportunity for outdoor recreation and education. It does include a mention of the 69% of respondents to the Public Works Survey who said "Keep Public Works at Old Colchester Road"; however, it also includes the conflicted statement that the DPW Action Committee received a "clear charge" followed by the qualifier, "if feasible." Why is feasibility an issue? In fact, we already know the use of Old Colchester Road is feasible. On May 10, 2016, then-Town Planner Michael O'Leary reported that plans were underway to update the DPW at Old Colchester Road. This included cost estimates for construction and site work, a clear indication that the plan is certainly feasible.

I continue to urge the DPW Action Committee to maintain their focus on Old Colchester Road and act as responsible agents of the people.

Sincerely,

Kevin J. Tulumieri - Amston

Where's the Money?

To the Editor:

On June 1, the Portland Sideliners held a fundraiser to purchase track equipment for the new \$1.2 million track. The fundraiser was promoted on Selectman Mike Pelton's personal Facebook page using the Highlander logo with donations accepted by Venmo or cash. Although unannounced, the school had already purchased the equipment prior to the event.

At the July 9 Board of Education meeting a question was asked about the total amount collected at the fundraiser. The BOE chair stated she would check with "Mike" while the financing director remained silent, and no report was provided by the principal officer of the Sideliners. According to state records, Pelton is not the principal officer responsible for reporting all tax-deductible contributions collected to maintain the nonprofit status. So why ask "Mike"?

The fundraiser was attended by several members of the BOE and BOS, yet there has been no mention at either board meeting of how much was collected or where the money is being allocated.

If school funds were used to purchase the equipment prior to the fundraiser when will the

school be reimbursed from collected donations? If someone collected cash other than the principal officer or treasurer of the Sideliners, how was all cash accounted for?

A July 12 *Rivereast* article reported on the reason for the schools' \$375k deficit. It is ironic that a simple question arises on accountability of funds collected at a small school fundraiser.

Two months have passed since the fundraiser and still no answers have been given to the BOE or the public. Not to mention a thank you to the public that donated.

No transparency means no accountability in Portland.

One of many waiting for answers,

Rose Aletta - Portland

A Memorable Experience

To the Editor:

Attending the opening ceremony for Andover's new Community and Senior Center on Saturday was such a memorable experience, I couldn't help but write and offer thanks to all those whose efforts and energies went into making this come to fruition. Thanks especially to our town administrator Eric Anderson for envisioning and forging the path that brought us to this day.

I was so struck by the strong feeling of community on Saturday, as we listened to speakers, toured the new building and later shared food and music. There was such a happy feeling of celebration and such community pride in the air.

I hope that this place of community will draw us together for many years to come - and thanks again, the many hands in both town government and community volunteers that created this place and this day to celebrate it.

Kathleen Barrett - Andover

Acceptance

To the Editor:

I just realized that I never formally commended Mike Thompson and the management of the *Bulletin* for instituting a long-overdue policy for the Reader Forum. Limiting letters to content on local, pertinent, and more family-valued issues better serves the community and the core spirit of a town newspaper. While debate and opposing views are still welcome (and are healthy in a normal environment), the *Bulletin* should not, and never should have been, used as a bullhorn for self-serving fantasy. Although late, the decision to curtail the weekly parasitic intolerance and intemperance was a good one. The Reader Forum is hardly boring. To think so is an insult to the readership and to the *Bulletin* staff. And, there are always other publications to which pugnacious letters can be sent.

On a lighter note, a good friend from college, an avid outdoorsman/hunter/hiker, just completed an 8-week hiking trip through the Smokey Mountains in North Carolina. While camping at multiple sites, he encountered a multitude of different individuals: Black, deaf,

• Reader Forum • Reader Forum • Reader Forum • Reader Forum • Reader Forum

have the courage to speak up about them. And to bring news of both our challenges and successes back to you, the people we ask to represent, clearly, honestly and often.

I hope to meet many of you in the two months remaining until Election Day. See you soon.

**Rich Knotek – East Hampton
Democratic Candidate for State Rep
in the 34th District**

Where's the Money? Part II

To the Editor:

A letter to the editor, "Where's the Money?" asked about a question that was raised during a BOE meeting regarding money collected during a school fundraiser event on June 3. A rebuttal letter was published one week later, on Aug. 23.

The original letter asked that when a question was raised on the total amount collected from the fundraiser why would the BOE chair respond, I'll ask Mike? Assuming to refer to selectman Mike Pelton who had promoted the fundraiser to purchase track equipment using his personal Facebook page with the Highlander logo and donations accepted by Venmo or cash. Selectman Pelton is neither the principal nor treasurer of the Sideliners. Prior to the event the track equipment had been purchased and the public was unclear about what the money raised would be used for if no longer needed for the original advertised purpose of track equipment.

The writer of the rebuttal acknowledged that the fundraiser committee knew about the prior purchase of the equipment in advance, yet continued with the fundraiser event without clear purpose on how the funds would be used or if refunded back to the school. Where's the money and what was it intended to be used for?

You would think those were simple reasonable questions entitled to answers.

However, the rebuttal letter did not clarify what the funds would be used for, or how the donations were accounted for or thank the individuals who gave donation or participated at the event. Instead, the rebuttal was used to deflect blame onto the writer of the original letter and set requirements on who's entitled to ask questions, along with pushing back on questions in-

volving elected board members.

The "nothing to see here, move along," shoot the messenger technique only raises more questions.

Transparency and accountability appear to be conditional in Portland as issues raised go ignored by elected public servants.

Rose Aletta, Portland

Democrats and Electric Rates

To the Editor:

Bob Yenkner's thorough explanation of the high electric rates (in last week's *Rivereast*) is absolutely correct because in Connecticut we have continued to perpetuate a legislature that has little regard for those who elect them. The Democratic government results in high electrical service bills and enacts unfunded mandates which every town must obey (and raise taxes or be denied something essential).

Irene Haines is running to be reelected as our representative in the legislature and in her opening campaign salvo, joined by her Republican colleagues, is that the majority Democrats should call a special session to deal with the high cost of utilities. Irene has a strong record of working to eliminate high consumer costs and unfunded mandates, which only Republicans seem to dislike. A Democrat might campaign on a promise to join in, but if elected, you know would not be allowed to.

In the Connecticut House and Senate, Republicans have been very active this year and last to correct policies implemented by the liberal legislature to squeeze money from us. Democrats write at length to justify their actions – but their actions do not help Connecticut taxpayers; they only reflect liberals' opinion that they know best and big government or state regulations will make us all happy. Example: in misguided pursuit of clean air, 100% of us are being taxed for EV charging stations, but only 2.68% of Connecticut residents own electric vehicles. (Do liberals have even the slightest idea of how the free market succeeds? They don't).

If you want action to reduce regulation and unfunded mandates, look to our Republican candidates who care to serve us and not in large

sale of Cesar Peters' family.

Connecticut's America 250 celebration/com-memoration is designed to focus on inclusive stories like Cesar Peters', the power of places like 17 Kinney Rd. and promotion of civics like RHAM's Witness Stones Project

America 250 is an opportunity for Hebron to connect with its past. Town owned places should be prominently featured. The Hebron Historical Society QR Code tours of Hebron Center will address Connecticut's 250 themes. However, the land across from Hebron Elementary offers a rare opportunity for preservation and education incorporating geology, natural history and Hebron's past. It is Governor. Peters' farm, the last intact farm in Hebron Center, shaped by hired middling income African-American day-labor. Interestingly, it is one of the earliest land preservation initiatives in the United States. If the invasive vegetation were removed, it would appear as it did when the French troops from Lebanon marched by it to the last battle of the American Revolution.

Town Historian Mary Ann Foote stated in November 2021 Hebron Views that town owned open spaces "should remain as they are" If the Horton Property were treated as historical resource rather than as developable land, it would be a fitting memorial to America's 250 Celebration.

John Baron - Hebron

Misguided Letter

To the Editor:

As a parent and 14-year resident of our wonderful town, I was disheartened by the misguided and seemingly mean-spirited letter last week attacking one of our finest - Mike Pelton.

Mike has been a fixture in Portland as a coach, youth mentor, and civic leader for as long as I've been here, and is a treasure to our community. I embraced the opportunity to brainstorm the Highlander Hustle fundraiser with Mike as far back as the summer of 2023, when we knew that we would have a new track at PHS but no funding for a timing system. Shortly before the planned date of the Highlander Hustle, June 1st, we learned the wonderful news that the town was awarded a grant to fund the timing system- news that freed up the proceeds of the fundraiser, \$2,555, to go directly to the Portland

Sideliners where it is now held.

Those details address the questions posed by Rose Aletta, but the bigger question to me is why such cynicism towards a fantastic, heart-warming, community-based effort? If you are concerned enough to write a letter, where were you when we were running laps at midnight on June 1st? It's easy to lob criticism from your keyboard, but why?

As we look ahead to a November ballot about as appealing as a menu at a vegan restaurant, it's incumbent upon us to not take for granted the selfless, passionate, energetic, caring, authentic volunteer leaders among us who serve as role models for our children and move our town forward. Mike Pelton is the best of us.

Steve Kirsche - Portland

Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

Super Bowl was one of the As I wrote two weeks ago, for the Chiefs, so I was happy to see the game itself was a nail-biter, which featured just one touchdown in Super Bowl history. It was a rather low-scoring affair as defenses exhibited some of that they'd shown during the regular season. The crisp football game was postponed to the crisp football game of the postseason.

l to flip a switch in the second half. The 10 unanswered points to lead the 49ers. From there, the game was a couple more times, tied in a dead heat: a 19-19 tie.

San Francisco score a field goal. Patrick Mahomes and the KC Chiefs won the field on a great play. A championship-winning game with a thrilling end to what was a fantastic Super Bowl.

The Nielsen ratings for the game wound up being the highest ever, with more viewers turning in. That's 7% more than that tuned in last year. The advertising factor had an impact whatever the reason, it's

level, congratulations to Attorney Kenneth Slater Jr., Attorney Michael Rose, and the 27 attorneys recently elected by the Connecticut Bar Association's James W. Cooper Fellows

ated by their peers based on service to the profession and are elected by the members.

recognize our new Fellow for distinguished service to the legal profession and their commitment to justice and the rule of law. The Foundation of the Connecticut Bar Association's press release its mission is to bring about change that advances the legal profession regardless of power or reputation just and equitable

society." The Fellows consist of lawyers in private practice, U.S. Court of Appeals judges, U.S. District Court judges, Connecticut Supreme, Appellate and Superior Court judges, corporate counsel, attorneys in nonprofit associations and legal services agencies, and government lawyers.

Slater is managing partner at Halloran & Sage LLP in Hartford, and Rose is managing partner at Rose Kallor LLP, also in Hartford. Congratulations, gentlemen!

Are you suffering from a chronic health condition? Well, Norwich-based nonprofit Senior Resources – an agency that provides services to assist older individuals and individuals with disabilities, as well as their families and their caregivers – may be able to help.

Starting next week, Senior Resources is offering "Live Well with Chronic Conditions," a free six-week workshop, offered over Zoom.

In the workshop, folks will learn how to better manage their ongoing health condition. Topics include: healthy eating, physical activity and exercise, dealing with difficult emotions, decision-making and communications skills, working with healthcare providers, action planning, and more.

The workshop will meet Wednesdays from 1-3 p.m., from Feb. 21-March 27. To register, call 860-887-3561 ext. 127 or email Lori at lrygielski@seniorresourcesec.org.

Last week in this space I mentioned the Science Bowl. Well, in keeping with the theme, this week I'm plugging the upcoming Connecticut Spelling Bee!

The seventh annual Connecticut Spelling Bee will take place Sunday, March 3, at the Hoffman Auditorium at the University of Saint Joseph. Participants will compete for the chance to represent the state at the 2024 Scripps National Spelling Bee, which will take place in May in Maryland. The winner of the Connecticut bee will also receive a \$1,000 scholarship to the University of Saint Joseph.

Students who have made it to The Connecticut Spelling Bee have already won their school- or town-wide spelling bees. Over 10,000 Connecticut students in grades 2-8 participated in the spelling bee program this

Editor's Desk continued on page 5

Board

channels this past weekend, I stumbled across a disconcerting (at least commercial. The ad depicted a bright-eyed, bushy-tailed young man "just in time for Valentine's Day."

lighters will presumably not be surprised that salacious, cloven-hoofed as polite, fresh-faced American boys, but I thought the Valentine's the top—particularly when the ad proceeded to list all the erotic which made the competition look about as attractive as a second-hand g. Apparently, technology has made tremendous strides since I was a a years-old condom wearing a hole in my wallet.

on to market condoms as a Valentine's Day purchase got me to considerable rumination, I came to two main conclusions:

the divisiveness and turmoil in our country these days, American younger and more energetic than myself is far from dead. age, the more they stay the same: i.e., beneath all the lip service to all basically swine.

st you take me for an old lecher instead of a mere curmudgeon (necessarily incompatible), that in my reckless channel surfing last eyed somewhat afield from my normal (and more comfortable) TV the latter typically attracts advertising for products that promise to stipitation to toe fungus, accompanied by minor side effects such as and uncontrollable seizures followed by death.

shortage of guaranteed miracles. One commercial geared to my age powdered plant matter that's apparently supposed to be the equivalent vegetable garden. Now, I'm no mathematical wizard, but it's pretty and up a thimbleful of broccoli and cram it into a pill capsule, you've of broccoli.

ds targeting my decrepit demographic have the decency to stop hopes by trying to sell me condoms for Valentine's Day. Most would keep me mobile enough to get out to the mailbox and back without

r young bucks heading out this week with a bouquet of roses, a box full of condoms find that a little sad, let me offer a reality check. e when you'll be content to sit around with your few surviving bud-ary medications you have to take to keep breathing. you get hit by a bus.

Jim Hallas

Hours of Operation

rest News Bulletin and Glastonbury Citizen, located at 87 Glastonbury, are open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. can be reached any time via email at bulletin@glcitizen.com.



Humanitarian Honored... The Portland Lions Club's choice for the 2023 Lions Club District Annual Humanitarian Award was Rosario Rizzo from Portland. Rizzo, as he is known by so many in town, has dedicated much of himself to many activities that affect those in the town of Portland. Pictured are Portland Lions Susan Bransfield, Jim Bransfield, Patty Rizzo (wife of recipient), Lions District Governor Teri Schlosser, Rosario Rizzo (recipient) Liz Tripp, Guy Lardozone, Janet Nocek and Jim Tripp.

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Your Input Matters!

Colchester Residents: On Feb. 21 at 6:30 p.m., the Board of Finance will conduct its first budget forum. All dates and times for the rest of the upcoming budget season are on the town's calendar at www.colchesterct.gov. These forums are a chance to make your voice heard regarding the town and school budgets and the use of your tax dollars. Your input matters!

Please make every effort to attend in person or via Zoom and participate in this vital process for the community.

Sincerely,
Scott Chapman, Chair
Colchester Board of Finance

Spending vs Ethics

To the Editor: Recently, a *Rivereast* article reported that the Portland BOS approved the purchase of a \$525K firetruck chassis at a public hearing on January 17th. No surprise that most participants in attendance were members of the Portland Fire Department. No Zoom link was available, and no meeting minutes have been posted.

It appears First Selectman Curly's second term will mirror his first term, with Selectman Manning as the puppeteer. Over the past two

years, Manning, 1st Lieutenant of the Company 3 firehouse, has publicly advocated and voted on BOS supplemental appropriations that benefited the fire department, totaling \$1.5M. Manning chose not to recuse himself on fire department issues, although there is an appearance of a conflict of interest, which is a violation of Ethics rules. Manning is now advocating for the fire truck that the BOS voted to replace to be "gifted" back to the fire department for personal use. However, he is not the only member of the BOS who has benefited personally while a member of the board.

Selectman Pelton, the Portland High School track coach, spoke publicly at town meetings in favor of the \$1.2M school track renovations. Funding for the track came from a \$500K state grant and \$700K in allocation from town funds. Pelton has also voted on town budgets that include pay raises for himself and revenue increases for the track department. Pelton's list of personal benefits extends beyond BOS meetings.

As the BOS wades into the deep end of the "swamp," how can we trust them to develop fiscally responsible budgets and make sound decisions that will impact the town for years?

When Ethics go unchecked taxpayers lose.
Rose Aletta - Portland

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Mailing Address: P.O. Box 373 • Glastonbury, CT 06033

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Kevin and Pat Rarey, Publishers

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Staff Reporters:

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Michael Sinkewicz—Colchester, Hebron, Marlborough & Andover

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and Julie Misuraca

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News copy deadline for *The Rivereast News Bulletin* is Tuesday at noon. Please address all letters & news articles to: *Rivereast News Bulletin*, P.O. Box 373, Glastonbury, CT 06033

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tion and the Board of Finance and are automatically defended by some in the community. Marlborough's school has been well funded and has been rated excellent for a long time. But recently additional staff have been added here and there and no one asks how we got along without these positions until now, or how this is going to improve the performance of the students. Reluctance to question the school budget will not encourage fiscal responsibility, and spending more will not automatically result in a better education for the children.

George O'Brien - Marlborough

Only Certain Victims Matter

To the Editor:

From the annals of "A Liberal Democrat's Struggle with Morality: Boneheads and Hypocrites", volume #1.

Recently, ABC mercenary George Stephanopoulos (\$15M/year) "interviewed" Rep. Nancy Mace. The opening to this alleged interview was a Stephanopoulos query regarding how Mace, a rape victim, could support a presidential candidate who was "liable of rape." It appeared that George had no intention of interviewing Mace, instead using her as a prop to fulfill his management's directive to torch Donald Trump. TV journalism. What a sacred calling...

First off, regardless of political proclivity, George should have done a little research. Trump was not found liable of rape. He was found liable of sexual abuse by a jury in a civil trial based on a preponderance of evidence that included no physical evidence and no eye witnesses to the allegedly 30 year-old crime in a city that overwhelmingly leans Democrat (including Judge Kaplan). Judge Kaplan stated Trump was guilty of rape in post-trial commentary. Like Trump, hate Trump. These are journalistic facts.

But, do you remember for whom George Stephanopoulos used to work, and what his main functions for his employer involved? Wait for it. There you go! Now you remember! White House Communications Director and Senior Advisor to...wait for it...Bill Clinton! Hmmm. George was also the director of the elite task force known as the Binbo Eruption Unit, a fast-acting political spin and hit squad assembled to hunt down and crucify the multiple women that accused ole' Bill of being lax with his marriage vows. So, to the average eye (and ear), it would appear hypocritical (a.k.a., liberal) to question someone's political support for an alleged sexual abuser when you were the consigliere of one of the most notorious flesh-mongers in American politics. It was also rude, inappropriate, and purposeful.

Only certain rape victims matter.

Just Sayin', Ed Kozlowski - Colchester

Thank You, Saint Joseph's

To the Editor:

The members of Colchester Veterans Honor Guard wish to express their thanks and appreciation for the generous donation of more than \$2,300.00 to the Colchester Honor Guard, through the proceeds of the Martinis and Jewelry fund raiser at the Saint Joseph's Polish Club in January. As a result of the funds raised by the St. Joseph's Club, the Honor Guard will be able to continue to honor the dedicated service of deceased members of the Armed Forces of the United States.

The Saint Joseph's Polish Club, its members and the organizations that worked to the to make the recent fund raiser a success, are dedicated to both community service and the local veterans organizations. Please offer our thanks to the outstanding efforts of your wonderful members who helped in numerous ways.

The Polish Club and the members that provided raffish prize donors are the people that help make Colchester a wonderful and vibrant community. The officers of the Honor Guard and its members believe that the Saint Joseph's Polish Club should be commended for its commitment to community service. You serve as an example to which all community organizations should strive.

Alphonse Letendre, Deputy Commander Thomas O'Meara, Executive Officer Colchester Veterans Honor Guard

Refresher Course

To the Editor:

"Land conservancies preserve land for future generations, protecting our food and water supply, purifying our air, providing wildlife habitat, and strengthening our communities." -- headwatersconservancy.org

"Open space acquisitions provide Connecticut's residents with options for outdoor activities, preservation of scenic beauty, habitat protection and increased biodiversity, water protection and flood control." -- portal.ct.gov. See Preserved Land.

"Municipalities and local officials play an important role in protecting farmland and creating a supportive environment for local (farms). Understanding the many positive roles that farms play in a town-from the economy to natural resource protection to local food to community character-can help a community appreciate its responsibility to be supportive of farmland pro-

tection and farm viability. Additionally, communities that devote resources to farmland preservation are more likely to attract state and federal funds for conservation projects." -- Role of Municipalities and Communities (ctfarmland.org)

"Those assets that make Hebron a special place to live must be preserved and enhanced. Hebron's special assets include: its extensive open space, forest and farmlands, rivers and streams (among the purest in Connecticut), major recreational facilities such as Amston Lake and two public golf courses, extensive hiking trails, the Hemlocks, and significant reminders of its historical heritage in the Hebron Green, Gilead Hill, Hope Valley and Amston Village Districts." -- POCD (hebronct.com).

"We are clearly not doing enough as a species to keep our planet healthy, hospitable, and thriving for all living creatures. The flora and fauna in our communities do not have a say in what is happening to them. We can do so by legally recognizing that Nature has the right to exist, flourish, and naturally evolve. When we protect Nature, we also protect future generations of humans because we are Nature too." -- Alexis Eynon, New Hampshire Gazette, 3/8/24 #save17

Jean Tulimieri - Amston

Portland's Problem with Ethics

To the Editor:

At the March 20 Board of Selectmen meeting more ethics violation concerns were expressed by a former BOS member. The concern expressed was regarding the present BOS of "walking the line" of an ethics violation regarding influencing the Planning & Zoning Commission on an application submitted for a change to zoning regulations.

Prior to the March 20 BOS meeting, others have expressed concerns about ethics violations by two BOS members, Selectmen Manning and Pelton, for publicly advocating and voting on budgets and supplemental allocations with an obvious conflict of interest. Under ethics rules, at the appearance of a conflict of interest, a board member must recuse themselves and remove themselves from the room to not influence other voting members on the board.

As First Selectman, Ryan Curley, has the responsibility of monitoring any conflict before a public hearing. Currently Curley has been com-

placit for unknown reasons.

Since the question of influencing the Planning & Zoning Commission has been raised the proper procedure by the first selectmen should be an investigation by the Ethics Commission to determine if any P&Z commissioner has been approached or influenced by appearance at a meeting, by a BOS member regarding any application before the commission.

The other ethics violations for a conflict of interest regarding Manning and Pelton should be addressed in a separate question to the Ethics Commission for interpretation under state and local rules. A formal Ethics complaint should not be the responsibility of a member of the public while elected officials sit idle.

Without leadership acting without bias and transparency they will continue to fail in their responsibility to the residents of Portland

Rose Aletta - Portland

The BLT Team

To the Editor:

"The American people have been lied to, by Donald Trump, Rudy Giuliani, and various individuals in government and media positions, all of whom worked to create a web of falsehood. At Trump's behest, in early 2019, Giuliani convened a group of political and media professionals for regular strategy meetings at BLT Steak in Washington, D.C. Among others, this group included John Solomon, an investigative reporter for The Hill who had many contacts at FOX News. Then- Congressman Devin Nunes, who had been leading his own investigation into the Bidens, also decided to work with the BLT Team... I have never wavered from saying that there was no evidence of the Bidens' corruption in Ukraine - because there truly was none. On the contrary, by setting up a search for false criminality, every individual majorly involved in this plan was disguising their own criminal activity.

That persists to this very day: The impeachment proceedings that bring us here now are predicated on a bunch of false information that is being spread by the Kremlin. I will state again for the record that the story of Joe and Hunter Biden's corruption in Ukraine is false; there is absolutely no evidence to support it. I will repeat that everyone who participated in fabricating these lies knew exactly what they were doing. By giving in to the conspiracy theories,

See Letters page 31

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the answers to the Frequently Asked Questions published in last week's *Rivereast* offer some clarity but also elements of concern. It is encouraging that the answer to Question 4, regarding the use of the "Horton Property adjacent to Kinney Road" as a DPW site, is firmly, "No. The committee is focused on options at the current DPW site on Old Colchester Road." Keeping the Public Works at its current location is the only environmentally, historically and economically responsible course of action.

The confusing and concerning part of the DPW Action Committee answers comes in response to Question 5, "Why is Old Colchester Road the sole focus?" Unfortunately, the answer does not include any mention of the impact a DPW facility would pose to the GA quality groundwater, local drinking wells, the unique historic features or the economic opportunity for outdoor recreation and education. It does include a mention of the 69% of respondents to the Public Works Survey who said "Keep Public Works at Old Colchester Road"; however, it also includes the conflicted statement that the DPW Action Committee received a "clear charge" followed by the qualifier, "if feasible." Why is feasibility an issue? In fact, we already know the use of Old Colchester Road is feasible. On May 10, 2016, then-Town Planner Michael O'Leary reported that plans were underway to update the DPW at Old Colchester Road. This included cost estimates for construction and site work, a clear indication that the plan is certainly feasible.

I continue to urge the DPW Action Committee to maintain their focus on Old Colchester Road and act as responsible agents of the people.
Sincerely,
Kevin J. Tulimieri - Amston

Where's the Money?

To the Editor:

On June 1, the Portland Sideliners held a fundraiser to purchase track equipment for the new \$1.2 million track. The fundraiser was promoted on Selectman Mike Pelton's personal Facebook page using the Highlander logo with donations accepted by Venmo or cash. Although unannounced, the school had already purchased the equipment prior to the event.

At the July 9 Board of Education meeting a question was asked about the total amount collected at the fundraiser. The BOE chair stated she would check with "Mike" while the financing director remained silent, and no report was provided by the principal officer of the Sideliners. According to state records, Pelton is not the principal officer responsible for reporting all tax-deductible contributions collected to maintain the nonprofit status. So why ask "Mike"?

The fundraiser was attended by several members of the BOE and BOS, yet there has been no mention at either board meeting of how much was collected or where the money is being allocated.

If school funds were used to purchase the equipment prior to the fundraiser when will the

school be reimbursed from collected donations? If someone collected cash other than the principal officer or treasurer of the Sideliners, how was all cash accounted for?

A July 12 *Rivereast* article reported on the reason for the schools' \$375k deficit. It is ironic that a simple question arises on accountability of funds collected at a small school fundraiser.

Two months have passed since the fundraiser and still no answers have been given to the BOE or the public. Not to mention a thank you to the public that donated.

No transparency means no accountability in Portland.

One of many waiting for answers,
Rose Aletta - Portland

A Memorable Experience

To the Editor:

Attending the opening ceremony for Andover's new Community and Senior Center on Saturday was such a memorable experience, I couldn't help but write and offer thanks to all those whose efforts and energies went into making this come to fruition. Thanks especially to our town administrator Eric Anderson for envisioning and forging the path that brought us to this day.

I was so struck by the strong feeling of community on Saturday, as we listened to speakers, toured the new building and later shared food and music. There was such a happy feeling of celebration and such community pride in the air.

I hope that this place of community will draw us together for many years to come - and thanks again, the many hands in both town government and community volunteers that created this place and this day to celebrate it.

Kathleen Barrett - Andover

Acceptance

To the Editor:

I just realized that I never formally commended Mike Thompson and the management of the *Bulletin* for instituting a long-overdue policy for the Reader Forum. Limiting letters to content on local, pertinent, and more family-valued issues better serves the community and the core spirit of a town newspaper. While debate and opposing views are still welcome (and are healthy in a normal environment), the *Bulletin* should not, and never should have been, used as a bullhorn for self-serving fantasy. Although late, the decision to curtail the weekly parasitic intolerance and intemperance was a good one. The Reader Forum is hardly boring. To think so is an insult to the readership and to the *Bulletin* staff. And, there are always other publications to which pugnacious letters can be sent.

On a lighter note, a good friend from college, an avid outdoorsman/hunter/hiker, just completed an 8-week hiking trip through the Smokey Mountains in North Carolina. While camping at multiple sites, he encountered a multitude of different individuals: Black, deaf,

Haitian, legless army vets, women, men, gay, tattooed, Chinese, NASCAR fans, chess players, Down syndrome, bald, pierced, short, Greek, traumatic brain injury, etc. At 60, this was not the only trip like this on which he had been. He mentioned that this is how all of his trips were, and we reminisced how back in college we lived in dorms with all kinds of individuals, male and female, with far fewer problems than one would think. The concepts of acceptance and camaraderie amongst different individuals are not new. They've just been commandeered. Before parting, I suggested that he should relocate to North Carolina if it made him and his family happier. I joked that Connecticut won't miss him. Maybe he'll take my suggestion to heart. Maybe other individuals will too.

Good Day,
Ed Kozlowski - Colchester

Life Lessons in the Garden

To the Editor:

While weeding the Pollinator Pathway Gardens, I encountered two youngsters walking with their dad, John Matthews, carrying a clear lucite box with a full grown Monarch butterfly inside. Ellie is 9 and Zander is 7. I learned that these kids have been raised to respect the earth, and to treat all creatures kindly. Their mother, Nicole, has a green thumb and is very supportive of pollinators. She noticed the monarchs in the area and began planting milkweed in their yard - soon after she started collecting caterpillars and milkweed leaves for food.

The kids got to witness the full life cycle of the Monarch, including a full supply of caterpillars, leading to their beautiful chrysalises, when the butterflies emerge with damp wings, all the way to releasing them a day later. Ellie and Zander also learned of the long journey ahead for our winged friends. Planting milkweed and raising Monarch butterflies has become a yearly family ritual to 'protect, raise, and release' monarchs. It was so encouraging to meet these kids as this will likely be a lifelong passion that continues for generations to come.

Michele Sinkez
Hebron Pollinator Pathway

Lake Hayward Road

To the Editor:

I moved to Colchester about a year ago, I love this town already. There is a housing project that is proposed for Lake Hayward Road that will have a large impact on our town. The 13, three-story housing units will stand on a slope, shoe-horned into a parcel that I feel probably cannot accommodate the stormwater runoff adequately enough for it to safely drain into a drinking water aquifer recharge area. That would be a low lying basin across Lake Hayward Road that the surface and groundwater would flow to in the vicinity of one of the Town of Colchester's drinking water wells.

More studies need to be done with more public input. I have served 6+ years as an inland wetlands commissioner for the town of Hamden. I have an environmental Earth science degree from ECSU. Like most people, my life is very busy with my family in my spare time. I truly felt that this town had my back to keep the public drinking water safe. I looked at the plans, they are extremely large and overwhelming for the general public to take their valuable time to fully comprehend all the impacts. I have questions. I didn't know about the one public hearing.

See Letters, page 6

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