

Redding and Region 9 test scores show improvement

By Anne Young Albanese

An overall trend of improvement has emerged in Redding and Region 9 standardized test scores after the Connecticut Department of Education released the 2025-26 results on August 31, 2026. Average scores were higher than the previous year across all subjects, with Redding School District and Region 9 School District both surpassing their pre-pandemic scores in two of three areas.

Local students' progress follows a statewide trend upwards in test scores, with students in almost every grade and demographic in Connecticut performing slightly better on their state assessments in 2025-26 than the year before.

Standardized testing begins in third grade at Redding Elementary School and continues through eighth grade at John Read Middle School in the Redding School District. After, students move to Joel Barlow High School in ninth

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Photo by Cooper Mars

Stars and satellites over Lonetown Farm in the early hours of a new day. If you have a photo you'd like to see featured here, e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org.

Lamont, Fazio offer preview on coming debate over electric rates

By Mark Pazniokas

Governor Ned Lamont and his Republican challenger, State Senator Ryan Fazio of Greenwich, practiced campaign talking points on electric costs last week while seated together at a meeting of the State Bond Commission and then in back-to-back press conferences in the atrium of the Legislative Office Building.

The candidates are not scheduled to debate until next month, but Lamont chairs the Bond Commission and Fazio is one of two Republican lawmakers on the panel, which voted Tuesday to authorize \$125 million in bonding to offset portions of what's known as the Public Benefits Charge on electric bills.

Lamont, a Democrat seeking a third term, was happy to share credit for the item that will contribute to lower electric costs, noting later that it arises from legislation passed

in 2025 with the support of Fazio and nearly every member of the General Assembly.

Fazio, the ranking Senate Republican on the legislature's Energy and Technology Committee, mildly noted during the commission meeting that electricity remains expensive in Connecticut.

"So, I'd like to take the occasion just to say, while [this] will shift some of the costs in people's electric bills temporarily, it's a good time to remind ourselves that permanently we need to reduce many of these costs, both in the Public Benefits Charge and the supply portion of our bill, as well," Fazio said.

"Thanks, Ryan," Lamont replied.

The Public Benefits Charge covers various State-mandated policy programs such as clean energy procurements and benefits for low-income customers, as well as

long-term contracts to purchase carbon-free electricity, such as the State's deal with Millstone Nuclear Power Station. Those contracts cost consumers extra when natural gas used to generate electricity is cheap, but benefit them when prices are high, as they are now.

The gubernatorial candidates were less polite after the meeting in discussing Connecticut's new status as a state with falling electric rates — they fell by 15% in May, a consequence of the largely disappearing Public Benefits Charge from monthly bills and savings from the long-term contracts for electricity generated by nuclear power.

Lamont responded sharply when asked about Fazio blaming him for the cost of electricity.

"Then I'm the guy responsible for turning the Public Benefits

Continued on page 5

REDDING'S BIG OUTDOORS

Early-morning escape *Huckleberry Swamp (The Steichen Preserve) and Pond Trail*

By Tony Gale

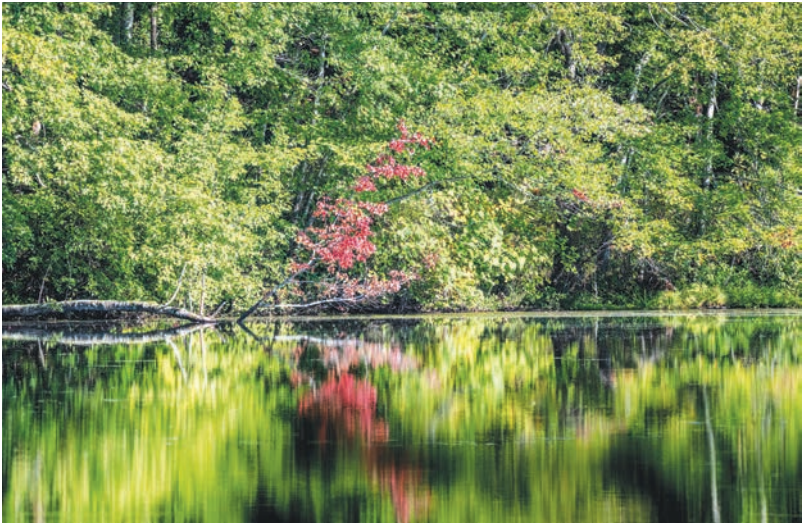


Photo by Tony Gale

Living in Redding, with so many choices of trails and hiking locations, it sometimes can be difficult to choose. When I want to try a new trail, I will flip through the *Book of Trails* or poke around on the Redding Land Trust website. This time, the Steichen Preserve caught my eye.

Edward Steichen was one of the first photographers I learned about years ago; he made one of the most iconic photographs of the Flatiron building in New York City and was the Director of the Photography Department at MoMA for many years. Exploring more of what was once his property piqued my interest.

With my decision made, I headed out for an early-morning hike. I parked just outside the still-locked gate at Topstone Park and started out on the Saddleback Trail. The trail began steeply, with exposed roots and rocks, mixed with soft sand underfoot. After a short while, it leveled off and headed south. The sounds of my footsteps along the trail and occasional birdsong were my only accompaniment. The trail turned steep again, then leveled off. Green moss added a pop of color alongside the trail. Maple and oak saplings peeked up on both sides of the trail.

The dappled light of the morning sun created a magical feeling as I walked. I noticed insect sounds coming in waves, silence then a gradual crescendo, followed by silence again. Ahead of me, a hawk flew low across the trail and then up with something clutched in its

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Information session to be held on State-mandated zoning changes

By Rocco Valluzzo

The Zoning Commission has scheduled a public information session on Wednesday, September 23 on the update of Redding's Zoning Regulations to comply with new State requirements established under Special Session Public Act 25-1 (SSPA 25-1).

Strictly educational, the information session will ensure transparency and provide an opportunity for informal discussion. A public hearing set for October 28 will be the venue for formal public comment and potential adoption of the changes.

Going into effect on July 1, 2026, the changes required under SSPA 25-1 aim to adjust local zoning regulations to encourage "missing middle housing" (developments of 2-9 units) and mixed-use developments within specific commercial zones. The impact of the changes in Redding will be limited to less than two percent of the Town's land. The proposed changes address the new State requirements in existing commercial zones (Georgetown, Route 7, and near the West Redding train station) and will not affect single-family residential areas.

New middle housing developments in these areas will be subject to site plan review. The Town cannot require special permits or discretionary public hearings for these specific types, although proposals must still adhere to standard zoning requirements like setbacks.

Consultant Frank Fish, Principal at BFJ Planning, clarified at a Zoning Commission meeting last week that these changes are mandatory under SSPA 25-1. Failure to comply could affect the Town's eligibility for State grants.

Redding also cannot enforce parking standards for developments under 16 units unless it establishes "conservation and traffic mitigation districts" under SSPA 25-1. The Town is limited to the creation of two such districts, each no larger than four percent of the Town's total area. The Zoning Commission confirmed Georgetown and the Route 7 zone fit these criteria and will be used to retain parking oversight.

"Those zones, which allow you to have parking standards, you want to do those, that's discretionary," explained Fish. "But everything else is pretty much mandated."

Fish emphasized the importance of the September 23 meeting to walk the public through the changes before the formal public hearing in October to ensure a smoother legal process. A decision is pending on whether to vote on changes to the regulations immediately following the October 28 public hearing or to defer the vote to the Zoning Commission's November meeting to demonstrate a period of deliberation.

The information session will be held on Wednesday, September 23 at 7:00 p.m. at Town Hall, 100 Hill Road. ■

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Darrell Harris to face Anne Hughes for State Rep seat

By Jessie Wright



Photo courtesy Easton RTC
Darrell Harris

After winning the Republican nomination uncontested in June and officially registering as a candidate at the end of July, Darrell Harris has begun his campaign in earnest for State Representative in Connecticut’s 135th House District, representing Redding, Easton, and Weston.

Harris serves as the Chair of the Easton Republican Town

Committee and previously served as Chair of its Voter Engagement Committee. He serves as Co-Chair of Easton’s Diversity and Inclusion Task Force and was a member of Easton’s Affordable Housing Subcommittee. He has lived in Easton since 2019 with his wife and son and has held leadership positions at St. Paul Westport and Troop 62 in Monroe.

He says his campaign will focus on affordability, local control, and the growing cost of unfunded State mandates imposed on municipalities.

“Zoning, schools, property taxes – those are decisions residents have traditionally made themselves, at town meetings and Boards of Finance,” said Harris in a campaign statement. “They shouldn’t get made for us in Hartford. One-size-fits-all doesn’t work when you’ve got three towns this different from each other, much less other towns in the state.”

Harris will face incumbent Democrat Anne Hughes, also from Easton, on the ballot in the November 3, 2026 election. ■

LEGAL NOTICES

Redding to Hold Public Information Session on State-Mandated Zoning Changes

The Town of Redding Zoning Commission will hold a public information session on **September 23, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. at Town Hall** to discuss upcoming updates to the Town’s Zoning Regulations. The proposed changes are required to bring Redding’s regulations into compliance with Connecticut Public Act 25-1, a State law that took effect on July 1, 2026.

The session will focus on new State requirements related to “Middle Housing,” which the State defines as residential buildings containing between 2 and 9 dwelling units. Under the new requirements, Redding must allow middle housing and mixed-use developments that combine residential and commercial uses in areas that are currently zoned for commercial or mixed-use development.

Key points for residents to note include:

- **Changes Are Limited to Specific Areas:** The proposed zoning changes would affect approximately 2% of the Town, primarily within existing commercial areas such as Georgetown.
- **Single-Family Residential Neighborhoods Are Not Affected:** Areas currently zoned for single-family residential development will remain unchanged by these provisions.
- **Updated Parking Requirements:** The proposed regulations will also address new State mandates limiting minimum off-street parking requirements for certain multifamily residential developments.

The Zoning Commission and the Town’s consultant, BFJ Planning, will provide an overview of the State requirements, explain how the proposed changes will be incorporated into Redding’s existing Zoning Regulations, and answer questions from residents.

The information session is intended to provide residents with an informal discussion to learn about the new State requirements prior to a Public Hearing planned to take place on October 28, 2026. ■

The Redding Zoning Commission has scheduled a Public Hearing for September 23, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. in person at the Town Hall Hearing Room, 100 Hill Road, Redding, CT. The purpose of the hearing is to consider the following application.

Application #26-03Z - 82 Laurel Lane (Assessor Map and Lot #11-149) Owner: William Barrett – In accordance with Redding Zoning Regulations Section 5.12 request for A Special Use Permit for a detached 3 car garage apartment above. ■

Matt Lecher, Chairman / Redding Zoning Commission

At a Special Town Meeting held on Tuesday, September 8, 2026 at Redding Community Center, it was voted to approve the Project to Rebuild Town Hall Front Steps and Ramp Funded from State of Connecticut Local Capital Improvement Program Entitlements. ■

Michele R. Grande, Town Clerk
September 9, 2026

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

We welcome Letters to the Editor. Please be clear, civil, and concise. E-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org

To the Editor,

To all the Book Fair donors, sponsors, volunteers, and patrons: Thank you, thank you, thank you for making the 65th Mark Twain Library Book Fair such a wonderful success. Not only did we raise a significant amount of operational funding for the Library, and provide great reading material for all ages, but the sense of community – of friendships forged and strengthened – is one of the highlights of the year for us. It’s another reason we love being a part of the Redding community.

See you next year!

P.S. Donation sheds at the side of the Library will open September 15 for donations to the 2027 Book Fair. ■

Midge Loery and Catherine Riordan, Book Fair Co-Chairs

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Town hall front steps, ramp rebuild project approved

By Rocco Valluzzo

By an overwhelming majority, residents at a Special Town Meeting on Tuesday, September 8 approved the rebuilding of the front steps, access ramp, railing, and Bilco doors at Town Hall.

The project, estimated at \$90,450, aims to address safety concerns, metal tread issues, and non-compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The project will be fully funded by grant funds from the State’s Local Capital Improvement Program (LOCIP).

“These steps have actually been on the [capital] plan for several years,” said First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton. “We put it out to bid, I want to say in about 2018, and nobody bid on it because the contractors didn’t want to pay what the State requires, which is prevailing wage when you use grant funds. But the roof for prevailing wage was increased, so we can now do this project under the prevailing wage.”

The Town’s current LOCIP balance is 484,533 and will be approximately \$394,076 upon completion of the project. Pemberton added that school capital construction projects do not qualify for LOCIP funding. Other funds for school construction projects, which include reimbursement from the State, are available.

The project involves the demolition and reconstruction of Town Hall’s front steps on the parking lot side and two sets of steps facing the Town Green. Materials will include cast-in-place concrete, with efforts to reclaim and repair existing bluestone where possible.

The existing access ramp is not ADA-compliant due to its steepness and will be regraded with the foundation extended to meet standards. In addition, all non-ADA compliant railings will be replaced, along with the Bilco door cases, and the foundation rebuilt.

Work on the project will be done by BMP Construction.

“They’re the folks who do almost every school project at this point,” said Pemberton. “And they’ve done our pickleball courts, so they’re used quite frequently.”

A public tour of the site was held on September 5 and an explanation of the project’s bidding process and cost estimate was included at the Special Town Meeting after some residents raised concerns online about the price tag.

The Town confirmed that they used the ezIQC bidding process for this project, rather than a traditional request for proposal (RFP) process to meet time constraints and utilize pre-negotiated unit pricing.

The ezIQC process is managed by the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) in partnership with technology company Gordian and is a fast-track construction procurement system. It allows municipalities to bypass the long, traditional individual bidding process for repairs and use pre-bid, competitively-awarded regional contracts.

Pemberton added that for projects over \$25,000, the Town can use State-approved purchasing consortiums like ezIQC.

Finance Director Jim Sanders said that Gordian does all the competitive bidding and provides this to various organizations across 30 states. One of them is CRCOG. The project management fee is estimated at 10-12 percent, which Town officials say is an industry standard.

“Through that, they are the ones that collect individual pricing on every element, as well as the number of hours,” Sanders explained. “And so, it goes through a very specific ‘P times Q’ (price times quantity) calculation to come up to that bottom line price.” ■

Redding Sentinel Ltd

News and Views of Redding, Connecticut

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Printed by The Republican, Springfield, MA

Telecommunications by CCi Voice

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Single copy price \$4.00 / Annual subscription \$95.00

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Comparing the costs to Town of commercial and residential development

By Susan Clark and Willow Bradford

The town-wide conversation around Georgetown re-development, continued in a formal process led earlier this year by the Board of Selectmen and Pirie Associates, puts the tradeoffs between commercial and residential development front and center for Redding’s residents and leaders.

In an article in the April 23, 2026 issue of the *Sentinel*, “Real estate tax revenue from residential and commercial about equal, analysis shows,” we reviewed the revenue impact of commercial and residential development. The reveal is in the article title: Tax revenue should not be a significant consideration in deciding whether to favor commercial or residential development. In this follow-up article, we examine the cost side of the equation.

Schooling Redding’s children is the largest part of our Town budget, a cost that is directly correlated to housing. Therefore, residential development – housing – draws attention to the cost of education. The Board of Education budget for the 2026-27 fiscal year is \$27,570,525 (which includes the elementary and middle school) plus an additional \$13,449,692 for Redding’s share of the Region 9 Board of Education budget (which includes the high school). The number of enrolled Redding students is 2,176. The current average cost-per-student is \$18,851.

Pirie Associates’ review of the Revitalize Georgetown project estimated an incremental annual educational cost to the Town of \$410,000 based on 410 residential units to be constructed, using a marginal cost of \$5,000 per student. Marginal cost is used because school classrooms can absorb a certain number of new students before a new class and an additional teacher are required. At \$410,000, the Revitalize Georgetown project now under consideration would not represent a large-scale increase to the education costs in our Town budget.

In another example, we can estimate educational costs for a plot of land in Georgetown if it is developed into multi-family housing. Assume there is a parcel of land with 1.5 acres, zoned as Business Center and having received a Special Permit from the Zoning Commission to build 15 units of multi-family housing. Using the same Pirie Associates estimates as above, a factor of 0.2 school-age children per household unit, with 15 units, would give Redding three additional school-age children. With just three children added to the school system, the children’s education is absorbed within the existing capacity.

It is unlikely that residential development will have a significant long-term cost to the Town of Redding.

Commercial development doesn’t have the visible costs we associate with housing and is therefore more difficult to analyze. Rather, commercial costs are scattered throughout Town budgets. Perhaps the most significant are those incurred by our Fire Districts and,

more specifically when looking at Georgetown re-development, by Georgetown Fire District.

Businesses make different demands on municipal services than do households. Georgetown Volunteer Fire Company Assistant Chief Steve Santa gave the *Sentinel* some examples.

The District Fire Marshal routinely inspects commercial properties in the Georgetown Fire District, which incurs time-costs. The Fire Marshal’s office also is tasked with reviewing all plans for construction to ensure the systems are properly designed to fire code, including requirements for sprinkler and alarm systems.

Commercial properties bring different types of risk to the community, and they cause a shift in activity timing. Most residential incidents requiring Fire Department intervention occur on nights and weekends, but with commercial properties, there is an increase in activity during the weekdays when many volunteers are at work outside of town. Santa noted this was a challenge when Meadow Ridge opened and was at first served by an entirely volunteer ambulance staff through the Georgetown Fire Department. Now, Georgetown Fire has moved to paid staffing for EMS response at considerable expense to the Fire District. With increased commercial development, paid Fire Department staffing may also be required to manage the daytime workload.

There are other costs specific to serving businesses. Complex fire sprinkler and alarm systems are required by code in business structures and less so in residential properties. While alarm systems do protect lives, they can also generate numerous nuisance or false alarms which require time and attention to confirm and reset. Santa said that Georgetown Fire personnel have had to respond multiple times for fire sprinkler system alarm malfunctions for businesses on Route 7 in recent years.

When the new Connecticut Humane Society facility was built on Route 7 (in Wilton, but within the Georgetown Fire District), the organization worked with Georgetown Fire and installed a fire hydrant on their site at their expense to support the Fire District’s efforts to protect their building.

While there have not been emergency calls to date at their property, it is expected that as systems age, there will be nuisance alarms in the future. With added daytime activity, there will be additional fire and EMS calls from that location overtime as well. A busy animal shelter will require added attention from the Georgetown Fire Department compared to the few residential units on open land that it replaced.

Though difficult to predict the precise long-term costs of any one type of development, we hope this analysis provides both planners and voters additional context when considering the future of development in Redding’s higher density corridors. ■



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Revitalize Georgetown effort moves to advocacy mode | By Rocco Valluzzo

Transitioning from a passive information-sharing role to one of active advocacy, the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee will focus on a multi-channel communication strategy to build public enthusiasm for the Revitalize Georgetown project. They also will focus on securing funding for urgent building stabilization within the Town’s long-term capital plan.

The Committee aims to share the Revitalize Georgetown plan prepared by Pirie Associates with as many stakeholders as possible, utilizing a combination of social media and online platforms with print communication channels.

“There’s a lot going on, and so how do we let the public know about that so there’s a whole dialogue,” said Committee member Rich Wenning. “I think that’s a combination of events on social media, of newsletters, and maybe even a quarterly newsletter or a monthly about the Georgetown report or Revitalize Georgetown.

In the end, this is going to come down to votes, and that means an engaged citizenry.”

Wenning proposed a strategy that “scaffolds” information from Pirie Associates’ 40-page report into consumable, visual content.

“The key is people don’t read the 40-page report,” he said. “They love something they can consume in a few seconds that conveys something... There’s tons of content, it just needs to be made smaller and more engaging.”

The discussion also touched on finding student interns guided by professional media managers to ensure a sequenced campaign.

To qualify for specific State and Federal grants, in addition to Town capital funding, the Committee agreed that Georgetown projects must be formally listed on the Town’s long-term capital plan. It will target the upcoming long-term capital planning cycle this fall to request specific funding for stabilization and marketing.

Committee member Tina Miller noted that the Town must balance many competing infrastructure needs, such as bridges. Therefore, the Committee’s role must shift toward advocacy to ensure Georgetown is not “squeezed out” of the budget.

Committee member Dan Conlon emphasized that building stabilization – specifically the Weaving Building and roof repairs – is a top priority. There is a significant risk that these structures will deteriorate beyond repair if stabilization is not addressed in the immediate capital cycle. An appetite for visible work at the Wire Mill site was noted after years of planning and study.

“Any tangible forward progress would be just so welcomed by anybody,” he said. “We should rent some scaffolding and put it up in front of a building and get people talking like, ‘Whoa, they’re *doing* something.’” ■

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SPORTS

Barlow routs Bethel in opener

Girls field hockey | By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Joel Barlow High's Paula Tevsic, center, scored a goal in the varsity field hockey season opener at Bethel on Wednesday, September 9.

A small lapse early in the action would serve to inspire the Joel Barlow High varsity field hockey team in its opening game of the season last week.

Finding themselves trailing host Bethel 0-1 in the first quarter, the Falcons proceeded to step things up defensively and offensively. Not only would they keep their opponent from scoring again, they put six straight goals on the board for a 6-1 win on Wednesday, September 9.

The game began with a challenge, as Bethel capitalized on a breakaway in the first minute of play caused by defensive spacing issues, according to Barlow Head Coach Nora Curley. Despite the

initial hiccup, the Falcons quickly responded with dominant possession and effective set-piece execution.

Sawyer Cutler got the visitors on the board with 6:40 to go in the opening frame, coming on a penalty corner. Less than two minutes remained when the Falcons took the lead courtesy of Mila Baker, who capitalized on a clear shot in front of the cage to put her team up 2-1.

"We kind of got caught on our heels, and they had a good couple of passes to get a breakaway, and they finished," said Curley. "So, the good thing is that the girls were able to rebound in that quarter and score two quick goals to get us back on track."

While the Falcons did not score in the second frame, they still dominated the action with superior passing and consistent pressure, keeping the action primarily in Bethel's half of the field. When play resumed, the Wildcats seemed to control the play early in the half but could not keep up the pace, allowing the Falcons to regroup in time for a couple of more goals.

One came on a corner, courtesy of Cutler again. Two minutes remained in the third quarter when a shot by Paula Tevsic found its way into the cage, putting Barlow up 4-1.

Maintaining the pace going into the fourth quarter, the Falcons struck again, this time when Liv Crawford's shot was behind the reach of diving Bethel goalie Allison Hill. Barlow's last tally came with 2:41 left to play on yet another corner with Valentina Benitez redirecting the final score.

"We had a ton of corners," said Curley. "We would have liked to score a few more with the number we had, but we're still working on finishing and getting the ball in the back of the cage."

Cutler led Barlow with two goals. Baker, Benitez, Crawford, and Tevsic each had one. Lila Fellows had one assist.

Following Bethel's only score, Barlow goalie Mikayla Wanat faced almost no pressure, reflecting a total lockdown by her team's back line.

The Falcons host Fairfield Ludlowe on Saturday, September 19 at 11:00 a.m., are at Fairfield Warde on Tuesday, September 22 at 6:30 p.m., and visit Newtown on Wednesday, September 23 at 5:30 p.m. ■

Falcons cruise to victory

Girls soccer | By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Kelly Amaya-Marquez, right, scored a goal for the Joel Barlow High girls varsity soccer team in its season-opening game against Harding-Bassick of Bridgeport on Tuesday, September 8.

The opening game of the season eventually turned into an exercise in skill drills for the Joel Barlow High girls varsity soccer team last week.

Hosting Harding-Bassick of Bridgeport, a newcomer to the South-West Conference this season, the Falcons dominated action from the start. Jumping out to a sizeable lead early, they later focused on working on their passing and dribbling as opposed to putting the ball in the net for a 6-0 win on Tuesday, September 8.

"They're just kind of getting into the world of trying to grow the program and do the right thing," said Barlow Head Coach Ben Weiss, noting Harding-Bassick is a developing program. "So obviously we wanted to be empathetic towards that."

Barlow showed its dominance with four goals in the first half, including two by Olivia Diblasi. Emma Ogden and Mia Ceccarelli also found the net as the Falcons were well on the road to victory.

As the second half got underway, the Falcons created other scoring chances but opted to work skills other than scoring. Weiss also used the opportunity to give the entire team some playing time.

They did make good on a couple of opportunities, however. With 21:09 left to go, Kelly Amaya-Marquez's shot to the far post resulted in another goal. Less than four minutes later, Cori Hartley also scored to make it 6-0.

Barlow goalie Sophia Bianco had a quiet day in goal, not having to make any saves.

It was a similar situation for the Falcons when they hosted Kolbe Cathedral, another Bridgeport team, two days later. Scoring all their goals in the first half, they posted another shutout win (5-0).

Manuela Mejia led the scoring this time with a pair of goals. She also had an assist. Hartley, Mia Muscarelle, and Amelie Gerbracht each netted one. Brooke Cameron had an assist.

Bianco was in goal for the Falcons in the first half while Abigail Kassner took over in the second to combine for the shutout, each making one save.

Barlow, now 2-0, hosts New Milford on Thursday, September 17 at 5:00 p.m. and visits Masuk on Tuesday, September 22 at 7:00 p.m. ■



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Barlow launches Science Olympiad program

By Anne Young Albanese

Joel Barlow High School has launched its first Science Olympiad program this fall. John Lo, coach of the John Read Middle School Science Olympiad teams, also will coach the Barlow program, with Katherine Nuzzo, PhD, as faculty advisor.

Lo and Nuzzo are looking for students in grades 9-12 who are interested in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and want to challenge themselves. Science Olympiad competitions include 23 different areas, offering a wide range of STEM subjects.

“There are opportunities for students with all kinds of interests and strengths,” said Lo. “We are encouraging anyone who is curious about science, engineering, technology, or hands-on problem-solving to consider joining. There’s a place for many different types of STEM interests on this team.” Teams are composed of up to 15 students, and schools can field more than one team.

The team will participate in local competitions against other Connecticut schools as well as invitational tournaments at locations such as Yale. The Connecticut State Tournament will be held at the University of Connecticut in April, after which high scorers will move on to the national

tournament, taking place May 14-15 at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio.

“One of the biggest benefits [of participating] is confidence-building,” Lo explained. “Science Olympiad gives students the opportunity to develop both technical and soft skills as they go through the competition season. Along the way, students may discover an interest in fields such as medicine, ecology, engineering, biochemistry, forensic science, or aerospace. They get a chance to try things before they even go for higher-level education. Just as importantly, they learn how to work with teammates, solve complex problems, manage projects, communicate ideas, and apply what they learn in the classroom to real-world challenges.”

Nuzzo also is looking forward to working with the team. She already coaches two other Barlow STEM teams: the Science Bowl and the USA Biology Olympiad, and she teaches chemistry, honors chemistry, and science research. She feels Science Olympiad is a natural fit given all these areas of expertise and activity.

“It’s been great connecting with the kids I already know from other STEM teams while welcoming new students looking for a group to join,” she said. “In a

smaller school like ours, crossover like this helps everyone out!”

“Ultimately, taking on Science Olympiad creates a comprehensive club where theoretical knowledge, rapid recall, and physical engineering meet,” Nuzzo continued. “This crossover opens more doors for students, building their confidence, helping them discover their true passion for science, being a part of a team, inspiring them to pursue STEM deeper into their academic careers, and it is just fun.”

Lo’s background is in cybersecurity. He said he has most enjoyed bringing his technical background and experience to help students develop both their STEM knowledge and problem-solving skills.

The program currently is looking for advisors, who are community members specializing in a particular topic. Advisors will work directly with the students, sharing their knowledge and expertise.

The Science Olympiad team will meet on Thursdays from 2:15 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Students also can meet in small study groups during Barlow’s Activity Period. For more information, students or potential advisors should contact Nuzzo by e-mail at knuzzo@er9.org or contact Lo by e-mail at bigfootonfire@gmail.com. ■

Beasts and blessings



Photo by J.C. Martin

Icelandic horses from Redding’s Farm Jibe-iT were blessed by the monks at DNKL Tibetan Buddhist Center with Lobsang Tendrol and Lobsang Nyima on Saturday, September 12 at the 16th Annual Blessing of the Animals. Over 100 people attended with nearly 50 visitors bringing creatures of all kinds; others brought printed or digital photos of their animals to be blessed.



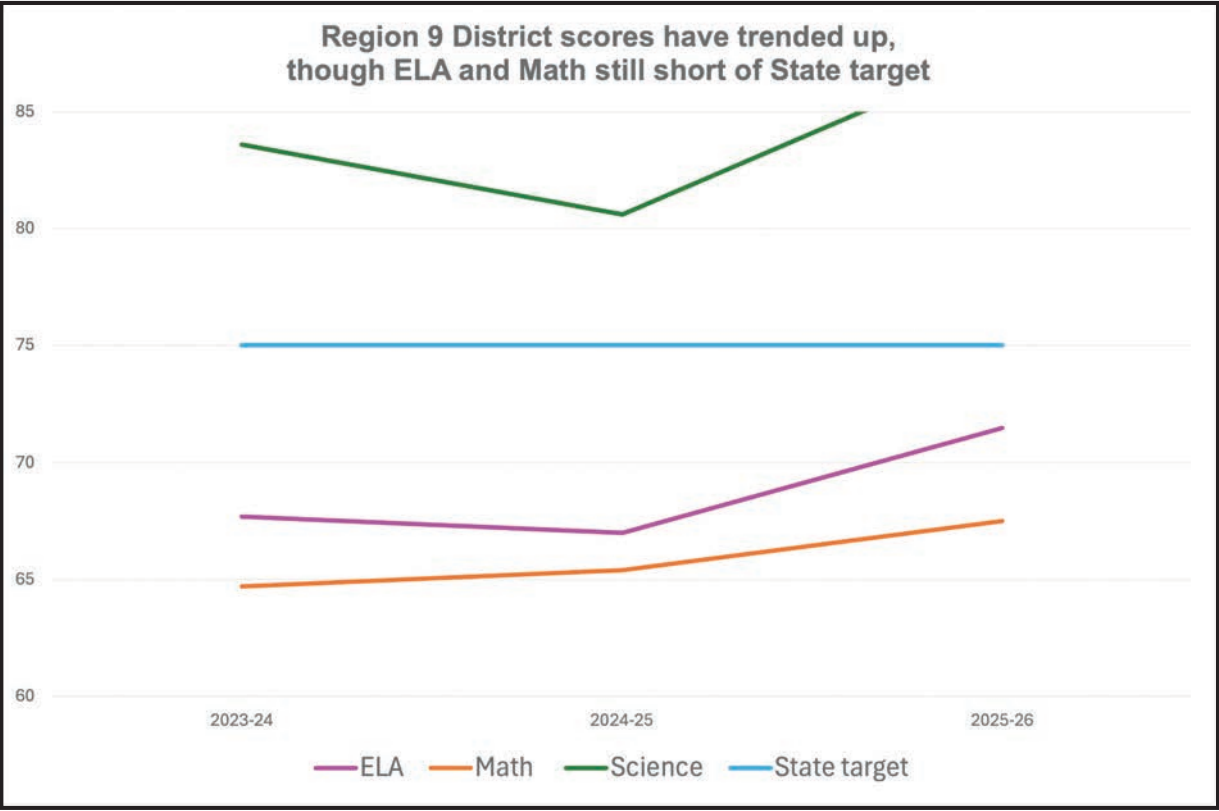
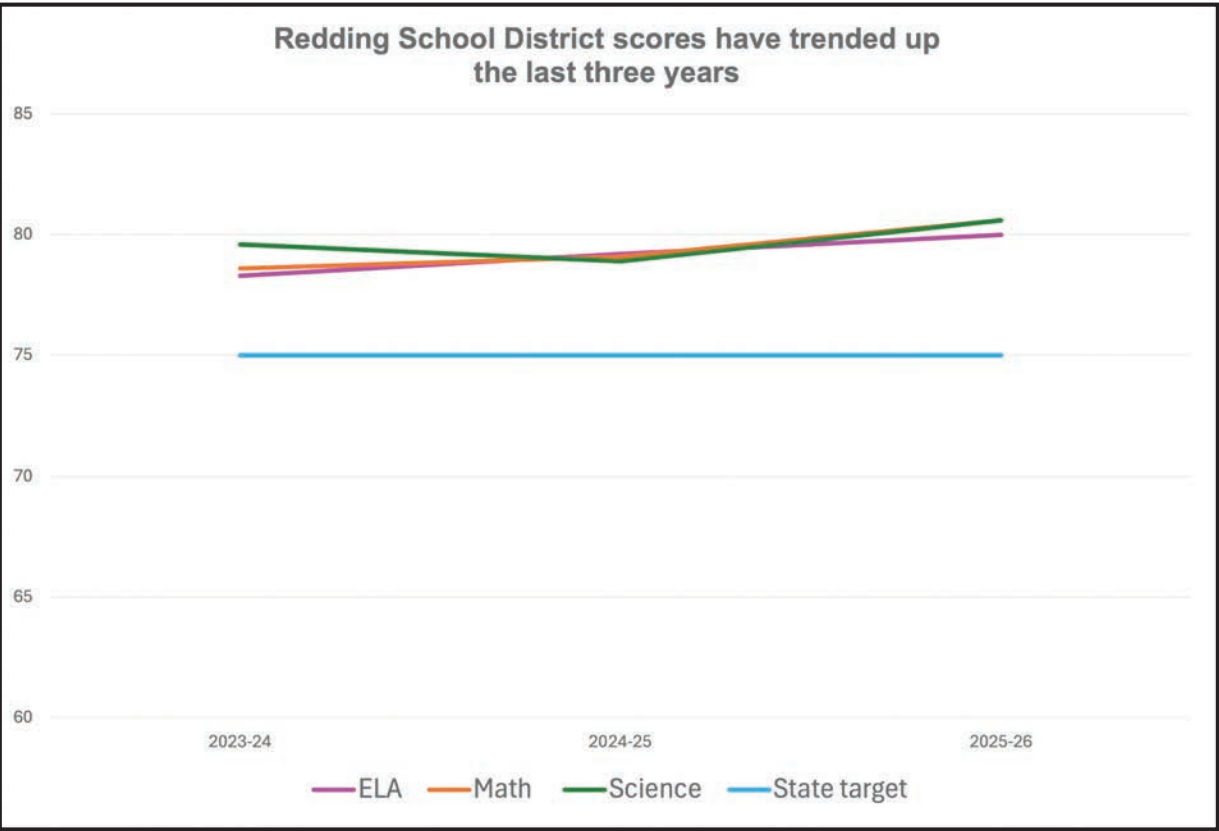
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Redding and Region 9 test scores show improvement / continued from page 1

grade; their scores are then recorded as part of the Region 9 School District.

A Performance Index, scored from 0-100, measures the average performance in English Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science. The State target for all its performance indexes is 75.

Redding School District

Students in the Redding School District scored an 80 on the ELA Performance Index, an improvement from the previous year’s score of 79.2. Student Math scores were 80.6, an improvement from the previous year’s score of 79.1. The Science score (measured at John Read Middle School, not Redding Elementary School) was 80.6, an improvement from the previous year’s 78.9.

“I am happy to see overall improvement in Redding’s state testing results across the district,” said Laura Worosz, Chair of the Redding Board of Education. “I look forward to reviewing the results with the full Board in much greater detail at our October Board meeting. The Board will use that review as an opportunity to identify areas for improvement, as well as to congratulate our educators and students on all their hard work.”

Districtwide, ELA is the only area where students have not yet achieved pre-pandemic scoring levels. The District’s 2018-19 score on the ELA Performance Index was 81.7; the gap comes mostly from scores at John Read Middle School, where the 2025-26 ELA score of 78.7 still trails the 2018-19 score of 81.4.

Region 9 School District

Students at Joel Barlow High School in Region 9 take their standardized testing in the spring of

11th grade. The ELA and Math scores are calculated using SAT scores. The Science scores are calculated using Next Generation Science Standards.

Though students at Joel Barlow High School fell short of State targets in both ELA and Math, the 2025-26 scores showed marked improvement from the previous year. Students at Barlow increased their average score on the ELA Performance Index from 67 to 71.5. Math scores rose from 65.4 to 67.5. Science scores – a strong area for students at Joel Barlow High School – rose from 80.6 to 87.6.

Math is the only area in which students at Joel Barlow High School are still scoring below pre-pandemic levels. Barlow students in 2018-19 scored a 70.6 on the Math Performance Index.

The graphs to the left show the average scores and state targets for both Redding School District and Region 9 School District over the last three years. Data was used from public-edsight.ct.gov. ■

The October Redding Board of Education meeting is open to the public and scheduled for Tuesday, October 6, at 7:00 p.m. in the JRMS Community Room at 486 Redding Road.

The October Region 9 Board of Education meeting is open to the public and scheduled for Tuesday, October 20 at 7:00 p.m. in the JBHS Library Learning Commons at 100 Black Rock Turnpike.

Lamont, Fazio offer preview on coming debate over electric rates / continued from page 1

Charge into a credit, saving you about 15% on your bill as of, say, compared to a year ago,” Lamont said. “We’ve got a long way to go there. We’ve had the highest electric prices in the country going back 50 years.”

Lamont blamed President Donald Trump for destabilizing the economy with an erratic approach to tariffs and orders that briefly halted the completion of an offshore wind project, Revolution Wind. Lamont said Trump’s trade

war with Canada eventually could affect the cost and availability of power.

“It’s no help when President Trump is talking about tariffs on hydro coming down from Quebec. It’s no help when he says he wants to pull the plug on Revolution Wind,” Lamont said. “Millstone, that contract is saving us money, with the incredibly high price of natural gas right now. Thank God we have that hedge because it’s saving our ratepayers hundreds of millions.”

Fazio said blaming the Governor for the cost of electricity was justified by the Lamont administration continuing to pursue measures lowering greenhouse gases, including requiring a certain amount of power be purchased from renewable sources that typically are more expensive.

The current savings from the Public Benefits Charge is temporary, Fazio said.

“I heard the Governor take credit –I’ve eliminated the Public

Benefits Charge’ – even though he just signed a bill into law that’ll increase Public Benefits Charges for the next 20 years,” Fazio said. “We all know that the Public Benefits Charge is very volatile. Sometimes it’s as low as zero. Sometimes it’s as high as 30%. But it averages 15% to 20% and will continue to in the future.”

The bill Fazio referenced was House Bill 5340, a measure that extended Connecticut’s solar incentive programs over the objections

of Republicans who argued that the proliferation of rooftop solar has become a costly burden on the rest of the State’s electric customers. ■

This article was originally published in CT Mirror

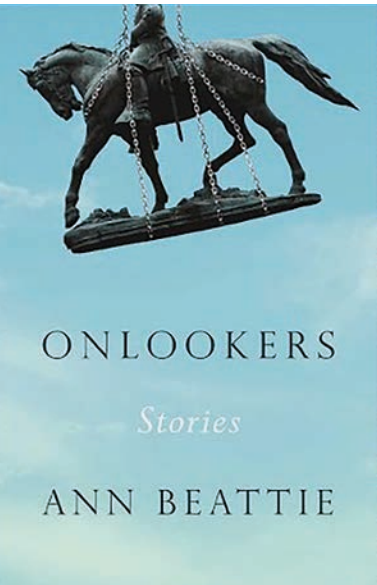
CT Mirror reporter John Moritz contributed to this story.

BOOK REVIEW

Onlookers *Stories*

By Ann Beattie

288 pages / Scribner



Onlookers, by Ann Beattie (2023), retains her signature concerns. The stories collected in this volume keep Beattie’s quiet inquiring tone. But time has passed. Her fiction now appears to make seasoned gender distinctions. Beattie is a retired professor of Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Virginia, and writes about Charlottesville, Virginia. The people she knew there were intelligent and highly educated. And, for the most part, her characters are intelligent and highly educated, if a tad cranky. She writes characters who say things like, “Your father pretends all meaning exists on the surface. I, on the other hand, believe in subtext.” This is from the story, “Alice Ott.” Men in these stories are, for the most part, tangential.

At 79 years old, Beattie’s stylistic ticks are by now well known: she creates smart characters, slightly or very self-conscious and timid, but astute and perceptive of motive in the moment. Though her writing is psychologically astute, Beattie seems yet stuck in something like writerly undergraduate angst. While attempting to grasp a situation from a disadvantaged perspective in a context of privilege, her characters reflexively look to others for some signal to know their existential worth. But, they rarely grow from direct experience. For example, one story about a dying mother finishes with one word italicized to underscore meaning: *unfathomable*. The author’s passivity in this story is a choice that works to further define a character whose limitations the reader knows. Authorially, whether this a plus or a minus depends on reader perspective.

Beattie makes lists of commercial products to show how a character lives, and to show how well-situated or empty their lives might

be. In “Monica, Headed Home,” the reader is given a list that Monica’s friend made of objects found at his father’s death. “...an air plant settled into a miniature teacup; two pill bottles (Tylenol and an empty bottle of Allegra); small mahogany turtle with a spine inset, mother-of-pearl, carved in Taiwan; a paperback called *How to Sell Your House without a Real Estate Agent*. There was also a black plastic comb.” Okay – I am my stuff – but is that enough? It depends on further description, which might or might not be forthcoming. Also, the author’s discomfort with age is revealed in various guises. For example, the death of parents is a dominant or secondary theme in some of these stories.

“Who ever thought matches would disappear when restaurants didn’t give them away anymore? What did it mean that toothpicks endured but matches were gone?” This is a typical character’s rhetorical question. It seems sometimes gratuitous to include a question like that to insubstantial purpose, assigned a place too far distant from the narrative. Irrelevance defeats authorial intention. And that sometimes happens to narration in *Onlookers*. Beattie has also been criticized for wordplay too clever by half. We see some of that. Her passivity in these stories works to further define a character whose limitations the reader perceives. Beattie writes of her character, Monica, “Was she that desperate to think of herself as young again, a girl who’d be shocked by what was about to be revealed about human nature?”

Winston Churchill famously wrote, “History will be kind to me, for I shall write it.” And he did, and history was kind to him. Ann Beattie writes: “The problem was that she saw through men. Which made them less desirable.” This is undeniably true for a Beattie character, but is it a universal truth, or part of a vast fabric? This question is less important for a person living through an epoch, but more important for a writer expressing that epoch. The older Ann Beattie still retains the misgivings of her youth: Life is not what you thought, and people will surprise you. And time will surprise you. And change. ■

Review by Tom Casey,
author of *Human Error*,
Strangers’ Gate, and
Unsettled States

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LIBRARY CORNER

A little preparation could save a life

By Erin Shea Dummeyer

I saw recently on the news that a librarian in Stamford saved the life of his coworker when she went into sudden cardiac arrest at the library. After she collapsed and someone called for help, her coworker sprang into action using his CPR training. He also made use of the library’s automated external defibrillator, or AED device, until firefighters arrived. His quick actions and the availability of the AED are the reasons she is alive.

It was wonderful to hear such a positive story on the news, and I was chatting about it with some

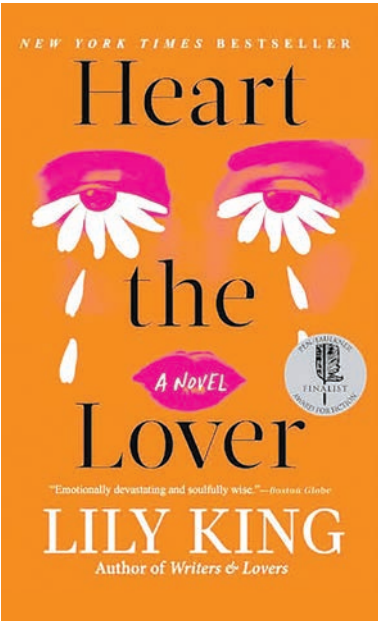
of our staff here at Mark Twain Library. We have had an AED device since 2011, but because of our conversation, we decided to look more closely at it. Turns out, the battery and pads on the device will need to be replaced soon, so I have ordered new ones.

I encourage everyone to get trained in CPR, as you never know when you will need it. I also encourage any stewards of public places to make sure there is an AED available. You can watch YouTube videos on how to use one, but they are specifically designed

for anyone to be able to use them easily without prior training. You just have to press two buttons. If you work in a public building, it is helpful to know where the AED is located so you don’t have to go looking for it during an emergency. I hope you never have to use your CPR training or your AED, but you never know when it could save a life. ■

Erin Shea Dummeyer is
Director, Mark Twain Library

Good books for good readers | By Margi Esten



I finally managed to get through a few books that have been sitting on my nightstand just waiting to be read! I wasn't expecting much from *Heart the Lover* by Lily King, and I do love when a book is so much more than I thought it was going to be.

It’s a difficult book to describe without giving away too much, but our unnamed narrator (her friends have nicknamed her Jordan after Jordan Baker, Daisy Buchanan’s best friend in *The Great Gatsby*) is a senior in college and becomes both physically and emotionally involved with two best friends, Sam and Yash, who also happen to be brilliant 17th-century literature students. We find an overly charged

romantic triangle mixed in with intellectual ambition, secrets, and the confrontation of difficult choices.

I loved the quick academic banter and classic literary references. The king of hearts is “heart the lover” in a special card game the characters play, and it actually serves as a metaphor for the entire book, as players in the game are constantly trying to fill their hand with the perfect arrangement of people.

Heart the Lover can certainly be read as a standalone novel, but it is also a sequel to King’s previous novel, *Writers & Lovers*.

Lily King is an award-winning author of six novels and a collection of short stories. ■

Notes from a neighbor *Playing favorites*

By Carter Wiseman

Our daughter and son-in-law visit often, and I know that one item must be ready before they arrive: a coffee mug Josh brought back from a trip to Houston. It is emblazoned with the NASA logo. Josh is not a rocket scientist – he is a theater artist – but he did conduct a seminar with a group of astrophysicists to help them communicate with the rest of us. The good ole boys loved it. Thus, the NASA mug. Josh will drink coffee from no other beaker.

I, too, am attached to many objects for odd reasons. And why is that? Certainly quality is an issue, but comfort plays a role. I have a shelf of coffee mugs, but only one has the slim rim that works for my own mug. Beer glasses come in many forms, but one that I brought back from a wedding in Idaho allows me to pour just the level of foam that makes a Budweiser taste almost like a Spatenbräu.

Then there are chairs. As a writer, I spend a fair amount of time with a computer on my lap, but my butt is happiest in one red leather armchair. What it cost is not an issue. A neighbor’s vintage Eames lounge sells on Ebay for \$9,000;

my red leather was bought for \$30 in a thrift shop. They are equally beloved. Mine is like a well-worn baseball glove.

Habit also plays a role. When I am not pecking away in my first-baseman’s mitt, I like to find similar refuges in the libraries I frequent. Recently, my regular roost at one in New York was retired with a wobbly caster. Ever since, I have been unable to read with the same concentration I had before the switch.

Along with habit goes associations. I suspect that every time my son-in-law sips from his NASA mug he savors the pleasure of having converted planetary specialists to another way of seeing the world. Similarly, when I slip into my red leather, I am reminded of my favorite uncle, who had a chair just like the one I now treasure.

I gave up smoking pipes when my wife and I had our first child and worried about circulating toxic fumes in the house. But I have not been able to part with the pipes themselves, each of which brings back a memory: the meerschau from Istanbul, the Savinelli bought

with a birthday gift in Munich, both “seasoned” over years of tamping and stroking.

While I have given up smoking pipes, I have not abandoned drinking wine, and what I drink it in matters no less than the briars I stoked with Latakia and Burly. Despite the trend to jelly glasses, I stick to a stemmed balloon that reminds me of arguing politics in a bistro on the Left Bank.

These habits start early. I had a favorite stuffed bear as a child, and I am fascinated to see that my 18-month-old grandchild has passed up a host of pricey Teddys for a shaggy puppet that clearly makes him happier.

Speaking of animals: Our dog has a box full of chew toys I bought from Petco, but when this mild-mannered 23-pounder is having one of his fits of nuttiness – speeding about the house in a display of his inner Doberman – he skips the dinosaur and always shakes the daylight out of his favorite victim, the Darth Vader doll. NASA would approve. ■

Redding’s Big Outdoors: Early-morning escape / continued from page 1

talons. Another bird started calling – what I can only assume was – a warning. The route skirted the edge of what I imagine must be Huckleberry Swamp. A tree along the side had a Carl Sagan quote.

“Preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we have ever known”

I started noticing the many colors of mushrooms dotting the landscape: white, black, red, orange, and more. The *Sentinel* recently published a piece on the mushrooms in our woods, it’s worth a read if you haven’t seen it. (*Editor’s Note: See page 10 of the September 3, 2026 issue.*) A small Alleghany blackberry bush peeked in from the side of the path. I came upon

a junction with the Boulder Top Trail and, because I always prefer a loop to an out-and-back, I headed right along that trail. Both trails had white blazes. As I made my way downhill, I was greeted by a friendly dog on a walk with its owner. The wind rustled the leaves in the tree, causing drops of a recent rain to fall.

The trail widened as it approached the larger of Steichen’s ponds. This trail met another at the pond with a choice of left or right on the Pond Trail, I chose left to go the long way around the pond. Another lively dog stopped to say hello. The still-empty swimming beach at Topstone was visible across the pond through the trees and brush.

I continued my clockwise route, passing the very occasional hiker, and one couple walking a cat on a harness and leash. The trees opened up occasionally to offer a wonderful view of the pond. I walked between a small exercise area on the left with Magee’s Swimmin’ Hole for dogs on the right, then across the dam and up over the hill to the road, into the park, and back to the car. ■

Do you like to hit the trails?
The *Sentinel* is looking
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BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Organic produce, freshly baked goods, and deep connections

Great Meadow Farm grows into beloved community hub

By Justin Reynolds



Photos by Tony Gale for Redding Sentinel

Margie and James Lipton have grown Great Meadow Farm’s farmstand into a weekend haven of organic fresh produce and baked goods.

During the pandemic, James and Margie Lipton grew so many zucchinis on their organic farm that they set up a card table at the end of their driveway. As curious neighbors started trickling in, the idea for Great Meadow Farm began to take shape.

The Liptons moved to Redding from Easton in 2020, and this year marks the fourth season of running the full-fledged farm on their historic 1768 property at 2 Old Hattertown Road. Since the driveway days, Great Meadow Farm has grown into a vibrant operation, selling everything from organic and fresh-picked Asian vegetables, zucchinis, tomatoes, lettuces, purple broccoli, and sage to pesto, honey, heirloom apples, freshly baked galettes, cookies, scones, pumpkin muffins, and a variety of sourdough breads.

“Everything we sell is fresh-picked and fresh-baked every morning,” James said. “Margie is a very creative baker, an artist really.”

The farmstand — which is located on an aesthetically magnificent 24-acre alluvial plane, the flattest land you can imagine — is open on Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. or 5:00 p.m. and Sundays from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. or 4:00 p.m., depending on when they sell out.

The Liptons don’t use any chemicals on their farm, and they also make their own soil year-round.

“With everything we grow and make here, we’re always aiming for the highest quality,” James explained. (After chowing down on two fresh-off-the-vine tomatoes Margie offered me, that North Star is quite evident.) “I’m sometimes

disappointed when we sell out, because then I have nothing to eat,” he added with a smile.

The Liptons walk around their farm with purpose and excitement. James explains the work they’ve done to shape the property into its current form: clearing land, planting nine gardens, installing an assortment of plants, flowers, and shrubs, and using reclaimed wood and stones from his previous property to build fences, doors, and scattered sitting areas. He also talks about the future, detailing plans of peach and pear trees that will grow beside strawberry plants in a small orchard-like space he affectionately calls Strawberry Alley.

While Great Meadow Farm is a source of healthy organic fruits, vegetables, and herbs, baked goods, and all sorts of flowers, including zinnias, dahlias, lilacs, and sunflowers, it also doubles as a community hangout.

“Every weekend, the vibe here is just hanging out and talking,” James said. “When people come here, they get a break. We thought we were opening a farmstand, but it turned out to be a combination of a dog park and a pub, minus the alcohol.”

The Liptons encourage neighbors to stop by to sample food, browse the farmstand, and relax on the property. Visitors are welcome to stroll through the fields, which is exactly what one young girl did last summer.

Continued on page 8

OBITUARY

Francis Anthony Riess
March 27, 1937 – September 6, 2026

Francis (Frank) Anthony Riess passed away peacefully in his sleep on September 6, 2026. He was 89.

Frank began his family life in Smithtown, Long Island, where he and his beloved wife, Norma E. Riess, raised their three girls. Later, Frank and Norma found their dream home in Redding, where they shared many happy years together until Norma’s death on November 16, 2020.

Frank enjoyed a long and distinguished career in the financial world, working for many decades on Wall Street as an investment banker. He worked for prestigious firms such as Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette (DLJ), First Boston, and most recently Oppenheimer in Southbury, before retiring at the ripe old age of 83.

Frank was an imposing personality — intellectually curious and never afraid to express an opinion. He was an avid debater of politics and relished a good discussion. He was also known for his sharp wit and biting sense of humor, qualities that made conversations with him memorable and often entertaining.

He was a voracious reader, with wide-ranging interests in philosophy, politics, and economics. Away from his books and the world of finance, Frank loved walking in nature and took great pleasure in caring for his garden. He was proud of his German heritage and shared Norma’s love of German food and culture, a connection that remained an important part of their life together.

Frank is survived by his sister, Barbara Riess Stewart; his three children, Constance Lynn Riess, Valerie Ann Riess Huntley, and Erica Jean Riess Craft; five grandchildren, Andrew Riess Huntley, Stephanie Huntley Manzi, Alexandra Craft, Francis Craft, and Laura Craft; and five great-grandchildren.

He will be laid to rest beside his beloved wife of 63 years in New North Cemetery, 87 Washington Ave, Woodbury, Connecticut.

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.” — Psalm 23:6 ■

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We publish local birth announcements, engagement and wedding announcements, death notices, and obituaries free of charge.

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There’s a real sense of community at Meadow Ridge. The amenities are amazing, and the food is fantastic. There’s quality care here; should my mom need it, that gives us great peace of mind.

— Greg Z., son of resident Ingrid Z.

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The Natural World

Protecting our winged nighttime neighbors

By Ilona Struzik



Photo by Ilona Struzik
A luna moth resting on a cedar tree.

One of my favorite things about Redding is the nighttime. The sounds of wildlife and bright stars speckling the dark sky bring me immense joy, especially as late summer fades into autumn.

There is nothing more serene than a warm night that welcomes a cool breeze under the backdrop of a cricket symphony. Add the squeaks of a little brown bat munching mosquitoes and a distant barred owl, and I feel like Artemis in her domain. Nights like these, I get nostalgic thinking of my childhood summers spent at my grandparents’ farm in the Polish countryside. Under the blanket of the Milky Way, my grandmother would point out the Big Dipper as we would go on late evening strolls together.

I feel a sense of ancestral kinship when I go outside and experience similar nighttime sights and sounds

that our early hominid predecessors also experienced. Lucky for me, I won’t be running into a hungry saber-tooth Smilodon in 21st-century Redding. I might, however, run into a blinding artificial garage light shining from hundreds of feet away off Redding Road. Ahhh!

Global initiatives like DarkSky aim to reduce light pollution, which saves energy and protects human health. Recent studies link artificial light to increased breast cancer risk and skyrocketing circadian rhythm sleep disruptions. Light pollution wreaks havoc on our nighttime fauna too. Birds like the red-eyed bright green vireos migrate at night. They oftentimes collide with windows due to bright indoor lights that attract them. Turning off indoor lights or drawing shades helps prevent nighttime bird collisions. Using reflective decals on windows helps reduce bird collisions during the day.

Lesser-known nocturnal pollinators like moths – or as I call them, goth butterflies, are disrupted by lights. Artificial light is the leading cause of their decline, disrupting feeding, mating, and navigation. When distracted by light, moth visits to flowers drop by 62%. This threatens night-blooming plants like jimsonweed, wild petunia, and evening primrose that are dependent on nighttime pollination.

Not all moths are pollinators, however. The remarkable and

nocturnal luna and great emperor moths lack functional mouthparts entirely, living as adults only to mate for a few days to a couple of weeks. Drawn to artificial lights, they fly erratically until they die of exhaustion, accelerating the decline of these fabulous insects.

There are simple ways to make outdoor lights moth-safe, which benefits both your health and wallet:

- **Use timers:** Program outdoor lights to turn off by 10:00 p.m. or midnight.
- **Install motion sensors:** Set them to low sensitivity so they are triggered by people or cars, not moths or flying squirrels (yes, we have flying squirrels in Redding!). Reduce the active time to one minute instead of three or five.
- **Choose warmer bulbs:** Warm yellow and amber-colored lights attract far fewer insects than white or blue bulbs.
- **Shield and aim lights downward:** This reduces light spread while keeping paths safely lit. Unshielded lamps create harsh shadows that can hide hazards like unwanted visitors. Shielding also prevents migrating bird flocks from becoming disoriented. ■

Ilona Struzik is a Redding Land Trust Trustee and has a degree in biology and environmental science.



HAYFIELD HUSTLE & FAMILY OKTOBERFEST

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

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NEW POND FARM EDUCATION CENTER

Register: runsignup.com/hayfieldhustle

Business Spotlight: Organic produce, freshly baked goods, and deep connections / continued from page 7



Great Meadow Farm also offers a beautiful assortment of flowers, and guests are encouraged to walk through the fields when they visit.

“She walked over there near the big lawn, put her hands up in the air, and several times shouted out, ‘I love nature!’” James said. “It was great.”

For Margie, Great Meadow Farm is as much about selling high-quality food as it is about meeting new people.

“We end up in great conversations – it’s kind of like being in college with people just stopping by,” she said. “We’re building a sense of community here, exchanging ideas and sharing resources.”

The farmstand will remain open weekends until cold weather rolls around, at which time things will move into a vintage store on the property. To keep the sense of community going all year long, the Liptons are planning to have the farmstand in their barn along with art talks, exhibitions, and other events.

While the Liptons stay plenty busy building and maintaining Great Meadow Farm, they also share a day job as long time appraisers of everything of value, including art, antiques, jewelry, coins, decorative or historic objects – “basically everything but real estate” – while Margie digs into the origins of items through detailed research.

“I’ve been a longtime appraiser; my parents were collectors,” James said. “I work with everyone – not only on high value items, but helping people find the best process to sell. I have made a number of important discoveries and hold records on some, such as the Norman Rockwell masterpiece, ‘Saying Grace,’ bought by George Lucas for his new museum in Los Angeles.”

If there’s a thread that connects the Liptons’ worlds of appraisal and organic farming, it’s a deep commitment to quality. That quality was also evident in a ridiculously tasty pumpkin whoopie pie Margie graciously served, the kind of confection that actually makes you want to leave summer behind and jump headfirst into fall.

“Redding is one of the best small towns,” James said. “It has beautiful streetscapes and is very charming, full of wonderful people. We’re very happy to be here.” ■

To learn more, search Great Meadow Farm on Facebook and Instagram, or swing by the farmstand on the weekend.

Note: The Redding Community Hiking Club will visit Great Meadow Farm on Saturday, October 3 at 11:00 a.m. Learn about their organic gardens and, after the hike, enjoy complimentary iced tea and samples of their baked goods. Register at marktwainlibrary.org.

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Ask the Redding Gardener

Fig puzzle

By Sean McNamara



Hi Sean,

I read your “privet hedge” answer in the Sentinel, and I decided to write with my query about my two fig trees/shrubs. One fig tree was in a huge pot and, 20 years ago, yielded 23 figs! Since then – not ONE fig! The figs live through our nasty winters, looking stalk-like and barren...and now sprout healthy green leaves! But have no figs or blossoms happening at all.

Might fertilizer of an organic type help? Maybe with climate warming, could I encourage fruits to appear this year?

– Margo

Well Margo, thanks for writing in – and for the great fig story. I especially enjoyed hearing about that magical year when the potted tree produced 23 figs. That’s the kind of gardening moment that keeps us all going.

The short version of what’s happening is this: your fig plants themselves are actually doing quite well. The fact that they come back every spring with healthy green leaves after our Connecticut winters is a very good sign. The root systems are surviving, and the plants have enough vigor to regenerate. The problem is what happens to the above-ground wood over the winter.

Most of the common figs we grow here produce their main crop on wood that grew the previous year. Our winters often kill that fruiting wood back to the ground (or nearly so), even when the roots stay alive. The result is exactly what you’re seeing: a plant that looks like a healthy shrub by summer but is essentially starting over from the base every spring. By the time the new growth gets big enough, there just isn’t enough season left to make and ripen a real crop.

That one big year in the pot was probably a perfect storm of milder weather and better winter protection. Once the plants went into the ground and got larger, it became much harder to keep last year’s branches alive through the cold.

Adding a second tree was a logical experiment, but most of the edible figs we grow here are self-fruitful, so they don’t need a partner for pollination.

As for fertilizer – I wouldn’t recommend it, especially anything high in nitrogen. Too much nitrogen can push exactly the kind of vigorous leafy growth you’re already getting, often at the expense of fruit. Since you’ve been growing them successfully without fertilizer for years, I’d leave that part alone.

The real key is winter protection. Wrapping them in burlap and leaves is a solid idea. The challenge, of course, is that the plants eventually get so big that the job becomes a major production. One practical approach is to grow them more as multi-stemmed shrubs rather than letting them become large trees. You can prune them to a manageable size in late fall, tie the stems together, and wrap the whole bundle once the plants are dormant. That makes it much easier to protect some of the previous year’s wood.

At this point in the summer, there’s not a lot that can be done to suddenly create a crop if the fruiting wood didn’t survive last winter. Climate warming may help in the long run, but one cold stretch can still knock the branches back. The best focus right now is planning how to get some of that wood through the coming winter.

Don’t give up on them, Margo. The fact that both plants keep bouncing back so strongly tells me they’ve got a good constitution. If we can preserve some fruiting wood next winter, you may finally see figs again.

Happy (and hopeful) gardening,
Sean, The Redding Gardener

P.S. Got more questions about figs, winter protection, or anything else that refuses to cooperate in the garden? Feel free to drop me an e-mail anytime at sean@redding-nursery.com or stop by Redding Nursery at 73 Hill Road.

SACRED HEART AND SAINT PATRICK PARISH PRESENTS

Oktoberfest

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www.sacredheart-stpat.org

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies
R = registration required

This Week’s Featured Events

Planet Granite Music & Dance Festival Saturday, September 19 – Sunday, September 20 Weekend of eating, drinking, dancing, and grooving to Americana, Bluegrass, and Country acts The Granite 5 North Main Street thegranitchurch.org/events \$	Redding Historical Society Annual Meeting and Lecture Sunday, September 20 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Featuring a presentation by Ellery Thomas Leary on John Read Zalmon Read Barn 43 Lonetown Road reddinghistory.org	Congregational Church Artisan Fair Saturday, September 26 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Shop handcrafted items, antiques, jewelry, and furniture, enjoy food, live music, and community First Church of Christ, Congregational 25 Cross Hwy, free shuttles from RES parking lot 33 Lonetown Road firstchurchredding.org	Sacred Heart and St. Patrick Parish Oktoberfest Saturday, September 26 3:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Authentic German food and beer, games, crafts, and fun St. Patrick Church 169 Black Rock Turnpike sacredheart-stpat.org
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ARTS

Thursday, September 17
The Secret Lives of Artists Part III: An Allen & Helen Hermes Art Series Panel Discussion
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Meet professional artists living and working in Redding, in-person and virtual
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwinlibrary.org
R

Saturday, September 19 – Sunday, September 20
Planet Granite Music & Dance Festival
Weekend of eating, drinking, dancing, and grooving to Americana, Bluegrass, and Country acts
The Granite
5 North Main Street
thegranitchurch.org/events
\$

Friday, September 25
Drinks with the Artist
6:00 p.m.
Browse exhibitions on view and enjoy refreshments with the artist
G-Town Arts
5 Main Street
gtownarts.com

Sunday, September 27
Each Melodious Measure
3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Americana music concert
The Granite
5 North Main Street
thegranitechurch.org/events
\$

Sunday, September 27
An Afternoon of Personal Stories with Michael Tucker & Jill Eikenberry
4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Afternoon with acclaimed actors known for roles on *L.A. Law*
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwinlibrary.org
R

Thursday, October 15
Redding Grange’s “World Famous” Open Mic
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Sign up to play acoustic music at 6:30 p.m.
Redding Grange #15
399 Newtown Turnpike
reddinggrange.org

CHILDREN | TEENS

Monday, September 14 – Monday, September 28
Halloween Costume Drop-Off
Place costumes in bins for a swap on October 3-4
37 Lonetown Road
170 Cross Highway

Friday, October 2
Free Kids Night Out
5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Drop off Boys and Girls Club event for grades 1-4; dinner, games, and activities
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
bgcre.net/special-events
R

FOOD | WINE

Friday, September 18
Refreshments with Friends
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Mid-century swank, classic food, and lively conversation
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road

Sunday, September 27
The 4th Annual Nod Hill Oyster Fest
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Freshly shucked oysters and cold beer.
Nod Hill Brewery
137 Ethan Allen Highway
Ridgefield
nod-hill-brewery.turntable-tickets.com
\$, R

FUNDRAISERS

Saturday, September 26
New Pond Farm’s Hayfield Hustle & Family Oktoberfest
9:30 a.m. Children’s Run
10:00 a.m. 5K and 5 mile races
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Family Oktoberfest
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
\$, R

Wednesday, September 30
JRMS PTA’s 5th Annual Georgetown Sip & Stroll
6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Specials and experiences from local Georgetown businesses
Georgetown
jrmspta.org
\$, R

NATURE

Saturday, September 19
NPF Walking Group: Fall Equinox Hike
6:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.
Early morning hike around New Pond Farm property
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
R

Saturday, September 19
Redding Community Hiking Club – Photo Walk
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Join photographer Tony Gale on an easy hike – registration closes September 17
Poliak Pond
marktwinlibrary.org
R

Tuesday, September 22
So Long Summer on Long Island Sound
Meet for lunch at 11:30 a.m. (optional)
1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
An educational cruise: History, ecology and oysters with the Heritage Center
Maritime Center
99 Calf Pasture Beach Road
Norwalk
E-mail mpilato@reddingct.gov
\$, R

Wednesday, September 23

Fall Migration: Birding with Joe Bear
7:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.
Join expert birder and environmentalist on leisurely morning hike
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
R

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Saturday, September 19
Bark in the Park: In Memory of Tyler
11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Free, family- and pet-friendly festival to raise money for rescue animals with vendors, raffles, activities for pets and children
Bennett Memorial Park
14 Shelter Rock Road
Bethel
happilyforeverafter.org/
barkinthepark2026

Sunday, September 20
Redding Historical Society Annual Meeting and Lecture
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Featuring a presentation by Ellery Thomas Leary on John Read
Zalmon Read Barn
43 Lonetown Road
reddinghistory.org

Wednesday, September 23
Trash Talk – CT’s Waste Crisis & Potential Solutions
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Presentation by HRRA on waste management in Connecticut
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwinlibrary.org
R

Thursday, September 24
From Wire Mills to Microchips: Wilton’s History of Technology
6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Panel discussion from local historians and first-hand experts in exploring the various industries that have come out of Wilton
Wilton Historical Society
224 Danbury Road
Wilton
wiltonhistorical.org/events
\$, R

Saturday, September 26
Congregational Church Artisan Fair
10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Shop handcrafted items, antiques, jewelry, and furniture, enjoy food, live music, and community
First Church of Christ, Congregational
25 Cross Hwy, free shuttles from RES parking lot
33 Lonetown Road
firstchurchredding.org

Saturday, September 26
Sacred Heart and St. Patrick Parish Oktoberfest
3:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Authentic German food and beer, games, crafts, and fun
St. Patrick Church
169 Black Rock Turnpike
sacredheart-stpat.org

Sunday, September 27

GCA’s Community Picnic Potluck
1:00 p.m.
Bring a dish to share and a lawn chair
G&B School Field
49 New Street
Wilton
E-mail gtowncommunityassoc@gmail.com with questions

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Sundays at 10:00 a.m.
44 Portland Avenue
bethlehemlutheranct.org

Calvary Independent Baptist Church
Adult and Child Sunday School at 10:00 a.m. / Worship Sundays at 11:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday prayer meeting at 7:00 p.m.
Nursery provided for all services.
711 Redding Road
cibcredding.org

Christ Church, Episcopal
Sundays at 9:00 a.m.
184 Cross Highway
christchurchredding.org

First Church of Christ, Congregational
Sundays at 10:00 a.m.
25 Cross Highway
firstchurchredding.org

Long Ridge United Methodist
Sundays at 11:30 a.m.
201 Long Ridge Road
Danbury
longridgeumc.com

Sacred Heart / St. Patrick Parish St. Patrick Church:
Saturday Vigil Mass: 5:00 p.m.
Sunday Mass: 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.
Monday-Friday: 8:30 a.m.
Confessions:
Saturdays 4:00 p.m. – 4:45 p.m. and Mondays and Thursdays 7:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. and before/after
Weekday Mass
Eucharistic Adoration:
Mondays and Thursdays 7:00 p.m.
169 Black Rock Turnpike
sacredheart-stpat.org

Georgetown Oratory of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
Saturday Vigil Mass: 4:00 p.m.
Sunday Mass: 9:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., and 12:00 p.m. (Latin)
Tuesday and Thursday: 8:30 a.m.
Wednesday: 6:00 pm. (Latin)
Holy Days: 8:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.
First Fridays and Saturdays: 8:30 a.m.
Confessions:
Saturdays 7:00 a.m. – 8:15 a.m. and Wednesdays 5:15 p.m. – 5:45 p.m.
Eucharistic Adoration: Saturdays 5:00 p.m. following Vigil Mass
30 Church Street

Temple B’nai Chaim
7:00 p.m.
Shabbat Shuvah – A Shabbat of listening with Rabbi Strom
See website for complete High Holy Days schedule
82 Portland Avenue
templebnaichaim.org

MEETINGS

Thursday, September 17
Democratic Town Committee
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Monday, September 21
Special Town Meeting
6:00 p.m.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road

Tuesday, September 22
Planning Commission
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room and Virtual
100 Hill Road and Zoom

Wednesday, September 23
Public Information Session on State-Mandated Zoning Changes
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Wednesday, September 23
Zoning Commission
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Thursday, September 24
Long-Range Financial Planning Committee Special Meeting
4:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Thursday, September 24
Redding Fire District #2
7:00 p.m.
West Redding Firehouse
306 Umpawaug Road

Monday, October 5
Park and Recreation Commission
7:00 p.m.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road

Monday, October 5
Board of Finance
7:30 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Monday, October 5
Republican Town Committee
7:30 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Tuesday, October 6
Redding Board of Education
7:00 p.m.
John Read Middle School / Community Room
486 Redding Road

Tuesday, October 6
Conservation Commission
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Wednesday, October 7
Region 9 BoE Curriculum Committee
8:30 a.m.
Joel Barlow High School
100 Black Rock Turnpike

Wednesday, October 7
Brown Bag Lunch with First Selectwoman
12:00 p.m.
Town Hall
100 Hill Road

Thursday, October 8
Redding Historic Cemetery Committee
2:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Visit reddingct.gov/subscribe to sign up for e-mailed meeting alerts and agendas



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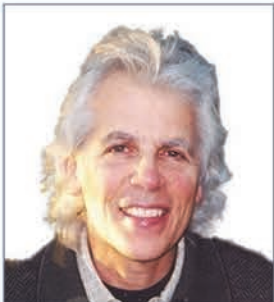
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