

Planners discuss housing growth plan approach

By Rocco Valluzzo

Focusing on the implications of Connecticut House Bill 8002 (H.B. 8002), the Planning Commission discussed the law’s impact on municipal planning at its Tuesday, June 9 meeting.

H.B. 8002 is a comprehensive housing omnibus bill signed into law last November to address Connecticut’s housing shortage. One of its requirements is for municipalities to draft housing growth plans – either on their own or through a regional council of government – that are updated every five years to set specific goals for building units.

The Planning Commission discussed the timeline for developing such a plan, the role of the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) in providing regional analytics, and the process for opting into a regional plan

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Photo by Gary Trust

An abundance of clover at Couch Hill Preserve. If you have a photo you’d like to see featured here, e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org.

State champions once again

Barlow boys volleyball dominates after conference loss

By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Ever since it lost a close 2-3 decision to Pomperaug in the South-West Conference finals on May 29, the Joel Barlow High boys volleyball team’s focus has remained on one thing – capturing the State Championship.

Such was evident as the Falcons advanced in the State Class S

tournament, which brought them some redemption when they defeated Pomperaug 3-0 in the semifinals. By the time they reached the finals on Friday, June 12, they were firing on all cylinders.

Between strong serving, defense, and constant pressure, the second-seeded Falcons set the tone

early before winning a 3-0 (25-17, 25-21, 25-21) sweep over top-seeded Woodstock Academy. It marked their second straight state title and fourth in the past six seasons.

“Since that loss, they’ve been nothing but locked-in in practice,” said Barlow Head Coach Kevin Marino, whose team won the State Class M tournament last year before a third division was added. “I am just so proud of them for achieving this after a moment like that.”

The Falcons took control in the first set with the help of kills by Alex Stinson and Miles Prusa, forcing the Centaurs to call timeout as they trailed 10-4. Ben Barnett continued Barlow’s strong play at the net as the lead only grew from there, reaching as many as 13

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REDDING’S BIG OUTDOORS

Hidden in plain sight

Mountain laurel of the Saugatuck Falls and Gallows Hill Natural Areas

By Mary Flieger



Photo by Mary Flieger

As our spring ephemerals, lilacs, and viburnums faded in May, stands of our native mountain laurel all over town were in various stages of bloom. Highstead hosted wonderful walks on Open Trails Day on June 6, while their collection of native *Kalmia Latifolia* was on abundant display. I laced up and

headed out afterwards on my own search for the flowers throughout Redding’s open spaces. The stands I located on my recent walks were flourishing in the deep woods or at the edges of power line breaks.

At the Saugatuck Falls Natural Area, your destination for a fairytale like display of mountain laurel is the combination of Oak, Knapp and Power Line trails. Here I must acknowledge the outstanding performance of the Hiking Project app (hikingproject.com) where my location in the form of a blinking blue dot could be seen precisely on the map – saving me from future wrong turns. The trails are wide and piney in the beginning, becoming rockier and narrower with the gradual ascent. Once on the Oak trail, the mountain laurel formed an arbor as I passed through.

Daylight ahead indicated I was approaching the Power Line trail, where a truly spectacular display of pink mountain laurel lined both

sides of the break. There were several options to return, but I would steer clear of the Falls trail unless you are prepared for a true rock scramble on the banks of the river, with a steep and rocky drop-off.

Another beautiful stand of mountain laurel was found in the Gallows Hill Natural Area. The long and windy Fifth Connecticut trail is banked on both sides with mountain laurel, which was just on the cusp of blooming in early June. Follow this all the way to the top and return by way of the Moose trail, crossing a small creek. I wonder: Why do the deer eat the mountain laurel in my yard, yet leave an entire banquet on these rocky hills? I’m still pondering. ■

Do you like to hit the trails? The Sentinel is looking for additional volunteer contributors for Redding’s Big Outdoors. E-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org for more information

Packed special town meeting ends with mixed results

By Rocco Valluzzo

With an overflow crowd present at Town Hall, voters at a special town meeting approved three items and denied another on Tuesday, June 16, after a lengthy and spirited discussion.

By unanimous decision, voters approved two 2026 Connecticut Neighborhood Assistance Act (NAA) program proposals. The NAA is a program that allows non-profits and municipal agencies to raise funds from corporations for certain projects, and the corporations in turn receive a State tax credit. Under the program, the Georgetown Volunteer Fire Company hopes to raise \$72,000 for the third phase of its solar panel installation project, and New Pond Farm Education Center is aiming for \$100,000 for energy-efficient doors and windows for its farmhouse.

Voters denied proposed changes to the Town’s Zoning and Inland Wetlands citation ordinances, which would have allowed the Town to implement fines for violations and continued non-conformances.

According to First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton, the current enforcement process often requires expensive superior court litigation (approximately \$400 per hour). The proposed ordinances are intended as an “additional tool in the toolkit” for the Town to resolve violations, such as unregistered vehicles or unpermitted structures, more efficiently. Pemberton added that there have been 24 complaints in the last three years, with a current success rate of only 33% for the enforcement officer under existing constraints.

While there was consensus that regulations should ensure compliance without immediate resort to expensive litigation, concerns were raised regarding the clarity of current regulations and the potential for legal redundancy and procedural confusion under the new system. There was also concern regarding the compounding nature of daily fines and the potential for residents to be penalized for historical enforcement failures by the Town.

Residents highlighted that current Zoning regulation language is sometimes unclear, making it difficult for well-intentioned homeowners to comply. There were also concerns regarding the overlapping appeal timelines between the proposed hearing officer (10 days) and existing commissions (15 to 30 days), which could lead to conflicting “guilty” rulings while an appeal is still active.

Rob Dean, a former Vice Chairman of the Planning Commission, argued that Redding’s aesthetic and environmental health are direct results of Zoning and Wetlands enforcement. He emphasized the need for a “middle ground” sanction system to avoid the high costs of municipal litigation.

Anthony Siciliano of Sanfordtown Road agreed that regulations must have “teeth” to prevent developers from ignoring rules and forcing the Town into court. He suggested exploring a “loser pays” legal model to deter frivolous

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor,

Given our town’s appreciation for animals and the natural world, it’s time to stop the fireworks, or at the very least, make them the quiet type. Pets become distressed and wild animals become panicked and disoriented. Birds are especially vulnerable. With so many bird populations shrinking, we should be doing everything we can to protect them.

Even a cursory look at the research confirms that the impacts are much larger than we can see from our lawn chairs. If we care about animals and nature, we need to speak up about the harms of fireworks. ■

Ken Swensen, Cross Highway

Selectmen approve rebuild of Town Hall steps | By Rocco Valluzzo

Citing the urgent need for repairs due to safety hazards and non-compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Board of Selectmen approved on Monday, June 15 the allocation of \$90,457 for rebuilding the front steps and ramp at Town Hall and replacing the building’s Bilco doors.

The project will be funded through State of Connecticut Local Capital Improvement Program (LoCIP) entitlements.

“The Town Hall steps is actually something that we have been talking about doing for many years,” said First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton, noting the Town previously tried to do the project but was unable to get a contractor to bid on it. “The steps are in a constant state of repair. The concrete is crumbling in places, so it’s been a constant patch.”

Finance Director Jim Sanders said that the Town has approximately

\$485,000 in LoCIP funding available, with \$180,000 currently held by the State as a receivable. There is an incentive to use these funds now to prevent them from potentially lapsing, as the State has expressed a desire for municipalities to spend down older allocations.

BNP Construction, which Redding has used for projects in the past, will do the work. Pemberton noted it oversaw the resurfacing of the tennis courts at the Community Center as well as the pickle ball court project.

The Town will next submit an application for the project, which will go to a Special Town Meeting to authorize the use of the funds. Because pricing was not received in time for the recent June Special Town Meeting, the vote must occur in a separate session in July or August. Work is projected to begin in September or October. ■

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Georgetown Revitalization plan reviewed | By Rocco Valluzzo

After an initial review of the Revitalize Georgetown plan developed by Pirie Associates, the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee discussed a few slight adjustments and the plan’s integration into the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) at its Thursday, June 11 meeting.

Key discussions centered on the necessity of providing for a “walkable community” infrastructure, and the coordination of transit links between Georgetown and the Branchville Metro-North train station.

The Committee is currently awaiting an updated market study from Pirie Associates and formal feedback on the plan from the Board of Selectmen.

The draft plan provides a detailed parcel division map for the former Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill site, moving beyond the generalized areas previously presented. It includes specific guidance for Highland Avenue, alongside short, medium, and long-term goals and potential grant opportunities.

Commission Chair Amy Atamian questioned the current draft’s focus on the creation of a walking trail. She suggested a need for multi-use paths similar to the Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT) in linking the area to Branchville.

“So, it’d be a multi-use type of a thing, not with cars, but with other modes of transportation,” she said.

“We really would need to coordinate with Wilton in order to do that, because it would need to be something probably along the Route 7 corridor possibly.”

Citing future transportation, Committee member Rob Dean emphasized that the project must aim to create a “walkable community” that accommodates diverse transportation modes such as shuttle buses, bikes, and robo-taxis, rather than just automobile traffic.

“That’s the future, you know,” he said. “We’re, we’re moving out of the automobile era. We need to have that transportation hub.”

First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton noted that any future grant funding for road improvements (like a re-created North Main Street) would mandate accommodations for bicycles and multi-modal transit.

Committee members agreed to review the draft plan and submit comments or edits by the end of the following week. The Board of Selectmen will acknowledge receipt of the plan by its June meeting, with a full review scheduled for its first meeting in July.

The Planning Commission will review the draft simultaneously with the Board of Selectmen to prevent a 30-day delay in the project timeline. Portions of the plan will be incorporated directly into the Georgetown chapter of the POCD. ■

LEGAL NOTICES

NOTICE TO TAXPAYERS

TOWN OF REDDING AND GEORGETOWN SEWER DISTRICT

Notice is hereby given that the first installment of Real Estate, Personal Property, Motor Vehicle, and Georgetown Sewer District taxes on the October 1, 2025 Grand List is due and payable July 1, 2026.

Taxes must be paid in person, online, or postmarked no later than August 3, 2026. Taxes unpaid on August 4, 2026, are delinquent and subject to interest at the rate of 18% per annum (1.5% per month), retroactive to July 1, 2026, in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes.

The mil rate for the October 1, 2025 Grand List is 30.47.

Failure to receive a tax bill does not excuse payment of taxes or interest charges.

Payments may be made online beginning July 1, 2026, through the Town website or by calling 866-923-8245. Do not include Fire District taxes with Town payments.

Mail payments to: Tax Collector, P.O. Box 1061, Redding, CT 06896-1061. Town Hall hours are Monday – Wednesday, 8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.; Thursday, 8:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m ; and closed Fridays. ■

Patricia J. Moisia, C.C.M.C., C.C.M.O. / Tax Collector, Town of Redding

NOTICE TO TAXPAYERS

REDDING FIRE DISTRICT ONE / WEST REDDING FIRE DISTRICT TWO / GEORGETOWN FIRE DISTRICT

Notice is hereby given that Fire District Taxes on the October 1, 2025 Grand List are due and payable July 1, 2026.

Payments must be postmarked no later than August 3, 2026. Taxes unpaid on August 4, 2026, are delinquent and subject to interest at the rate of 1.5% per month (18% annually), retroactive to the July 1, 2026 due date, in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes.

Failure to receive a tax bill does not exempt taxpayers from payment of tax or penalty. If your taxes are escrowed and you receive a bill, it is your responsibility to notify your mortgage holder promptly.

Tax bills may be viewed online at reddingct.gov. Taxpayers are encouraged to mail payments to the appropriate Fire District: ■

Redding Fire District One P.O. Box 1130 Redding, CT 06875-1130	West Redding Fire District Two P.O. Box 266 West Redding, CT 06896-0266	Georgetown Fire District P.O. Box 518 Georgetown, CT 06829-0518
<i>Patricia J. Moisia, C.C.M.C.</i>	<i>Christine J. Quigley, C.C.M.C.</i>	<i>Wanda Cardozo, C.C.M.C.</i>

At a Special Town Meeting held on Tuesday, June 16, 2026, the following actions were taken:

Approved the 2026 CT Neighborhood Assistance Act (NAA) Program Proposals from Pond Farm Education Center and Georgetown Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 and FY26 Line-item Transfers within the Budget for Highway Snow Removal.

The Zoning and Inland Wetlands Citation Ordinance was not approved by the town meeting.

Also approved was An Ordinance Establishing the Redding Historic District #1 (Georgetown Neighborhood), Creating the Redding Historic District Commission and Providing for Design Review, Procedures, Enforcement and Penalties.

The purposes of this ordinance are to: (a) preserve and protect the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places associated with the architectural, cultural, economic, industrial, and social history of the Georgetown area of Redding; (b) safeguard the town’s historic heritage as a rural industrial village closely associated with the Gilbert & Bennett manufacturing complex and associated residential and institutional development; (c) maintain and improve property values by conserving historic neighborhoods; and (d) promote the use of best practices in historic preservation consistent with State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) guidance and the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, as locally adopted herein.

{Summary Disclaimer: “This document is prepared for the benefit of the public, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation. This document does not represent the intent of the Town of Redding for any purpose.”} The new ordinance is available for public inspection at the Town Clerk’s Office and on the town website – reddingct.org ■

Michele R. Grande, Town Clerk / June 17, 2026

At a meeting of the Redding Conservation Commission on June 16, 2026, the following actions were voted:

App'l #26-05, Freddy Enriques, 17 Old Stagecoach Rd. Approved with conditions an application for lawn improvements/landscaping within the regulated area.

App'l #26-06, Jennifer & Jake Ryan (owners), Michael Mazzucco, P.E. (agent), 653 Redding Rd. Approved with conditions an application for development of a single-family residence, well, septic, driveway, and drainage.

The above-referenced files are available for inspection at the Redding Land Use Office. ■

S. Aimee Pardee, Chairman / Redding Conservation Commission

Position available on the *Sentinel* Team

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Carol Keil retires from Land Use

By Pamela Brown



Photo by Jessie Wright

Carol Keil will be retiring at the end of this month after nearly four decades serving the Land Use Departments.

Carol Keil fondly recalls July 26, 1988. It was the first day of what would become a rewarding 38-year career as Administrative Assistant for Redding’s Land Use Department and Conservation and Planning Commissions.

“I feel very fortunate and thankful that I had the opportunity to work in the town where I live and a town that I love,” said Keil, a Redding resident for almost 50 years who is retiring at the end of the month. “I never had a moment of not liking my job. I’m sure I’ll feel a little sad and it will be an adjustment as I drive by the Old Town House – my ‘home’ for so many years – but I know I’ll make the adjustment quite nicely.”

Although the moment is bittersweet, Keil knew it was time to move on. “This is the next progression in life. I’m very much ready. The timing was right. I lined up my retirement with my work anniversary, plus it’s summertime, a season I love. I want to enjoy time with my family,” she said.

Keil maintained a good camaraderie with her colleagues, working closely with Dave Pattee, Chairman of the Conservation Commission, and Laurie Heiss, Chairman of the Planning Commission. “I love

them all. We’re friendly and had a cohesive relationship. I liked learning from them and picking up information here and there,” said Keil, who has trained her successor in hopes of a smooth transition. When Keil took the position herself, she was a novice. “I remember my first day of work – I was apprehensive. I didn’t know anything about Land Use or Town government. I had never been involved in Town government before. It was a learning experience,” said Keil, a graduate of the Berkeley School of Business who previously worked in other secretarial-type positions.

Keil dove in to learn the ins-and-outs of the job and modestly admits she’s now ‘fairly knowledgeable’ about conservation. “I put my feet to the fire. I gained a little knowledge every day, and the more I learned the more comfortable I became,” she said. “You need to have an open mind to learning. It was interesting and challenging to learn the Town regulations and all the paperwork for the State.”

According to First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton, Keil is leaving big shoes to fill.

“She is one of a very small group of people still in town who know the history of Redding’s growth, and Carol has been there as land use policy and regulations have evolved over time,” said Pemberton. “She can tell you the smallest detail of a subdivision application and approval from decades ago. While these things may seem like ancient history, that knowledge is relevant today, as properties change hands and new owners have questions about what they can do with their properties. Carol is endlessly helpful, always willing go the extra mile, and cares deeply about the work and the people who are looking to her for help.”

A self-described people-person, Keil will miss the daily interaction with the community, from homeowners to builders. “The best part of the job was working with people,” she said. “I like to help people and facilitate the process. I like learning and sharing that information with others. I want to see a job done and see people get their permits. I think

people walked out the door with direction knowing what to do in regard to the regulations.”

Over the years, Keil has seen some changes in the town. “We don’t have nearly as many subdivisions as we used to have. When I first started, we used to have multiples at the same time. Wetlands have had ebbs and flows,” she noted. “Right now, with a whole Georgetown development coming in, it will be time-consuming for the Town and the commissions. There will be a lot of activity.”

Back in 1988, the position fit perfectly into her life, as she and her husband, Bill, who passed away in 2019, raised their three children. “My job and my family worked in tandem. I was always content being in the office knowing I was there for my kids,” said Keil. “I was home when my kids left for school, and I was home when they came home, and I never missed any activity my kids participated in.”

Looking ahead, Keil is wistful, but excited, looking forward to more time with friends, hiking at Huntington State Park, dining out, spending time with family, and following all eight of her grandchildren throughout their sports. “I work outside a lot. I have a woodburning stove and I’m always stacking wood. I like mindless activities!” she said. “And I’ll also travel to Florida to spend time with my sister and maybe become a semi-snowbird. I’ll travel to Vermont to see my daughter and also go to Block Island with my friends.” It’s time well-deserved.

As she says goodbye to the Old Town House after nearly four decades, Keil said the one special piece of the office she will be taking with her is her bulletin board filled with family photos. “I’ll have the memories and will drive by this building when I feel melancholy,” she admitted. “Life is short. You figure out what works for you. I think it’s important to think positively and find your happiness. It’s all good – it’s always been good.”

Young Selectman opens public hearing



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Alexander Faulkner, a second grade student at Redding Elementary School, was honorary First Selectman for a day on Tuesday, June 16, and got to bang the gavel to open a public hearing at Town Hall that evening ahead of a special town meeting. Also pictured are First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton (left) and Selectwoman Diana Carlino (right).



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Verizon cellular antenna now operational on new West Redding tower

By Rob Sample

The end of May marked a milestone for the newly constructed cell tower at the Hoyt Scout Reservation in West Redding: the installation and activation of the tower’s first cellular transmission antenna.

Hans Fiedler, Chief Operating Officer for MCM Holdings, noted that the first antenna is one owned and operated by Verizon Wireless, but that AT&T and T-Mobile are also expected to install and operate at the site. The goal of Hartford-based MCM is “100 percent coverage for all of Redding and other nearby areas,” he added.

“We’re all about community balance: we understand what’s needed from a technology standpoint, but we also understand what the community needs and wants,” said Fiedler, who noted that the tower is considerably less obtrusive than had been anticipated when the tower proposal was first discussed in 2023.

The tower and its new antenna sparked a recent lively exchange on the Facebook page Redding 411. Some residents were pleased with the improved service while others said they saw no change.

However, some of the negative reviews came from AT&T customers – and, as Fiedler pointed out, AT&T hasn’t yet installed an antenna on the tower. Fielder said the addition of more carriers likely would not happen until 2027, though there is some possibility it might happen sooner than that.

The negative comments could also be a matter of timing, Fiedler added. With the tower construction complete, some may have been disappointed not to experience better coverage without knowing the Verizon antenna wasn’t on the pole until late in May.

“Typically, it takes several days [after installation] to optimize for traffic,” he said. “Antennas tilt electrically, based on user demand.” Another factor could be the full summer leaf coverage in the heavily forested Hoyt Scout Reservation – studies have shown that foliage can

interfere with cellular signals. In this location, trees fully surround the tower and make it difficult for passers-by to see even during the winter.

“We want there to be a recognition that there is improved coverage in Redding – if not, we want to know about it,” said Fiedler, who noted that Verizon can adjust the angle of the antenna’s “tilt” to ensure optimal customer coverage.

Both the West Redding Fire Department – which sits right in the new tower’s coverage zone – and Redding’s Fire and EMS Company #1 expressed support for the new tower during the approval process.

Erika Vibbert, the former President of the West Redding Fire Department, noted in a 2024 letter of support for the tower that the sparse cell coverage hindered emergency response. The current President, Zach Devine, raved about the better service the tower and the Verizon antenna provide.

“From my experience so far, the calling range is much better,” Devine said. “Calls used to drop as you left the firehouse driveway, but now they don’t.”

MCM also operates the tower at 186 Black Rock Turnpike, adjacent to the Redding Ridge Firehouse, which houses equipment operated by AT&T and Verizon. Fire District #1 Commissioner Ben Pardee noted that he doesn’t live in West Redding so he could not comment on service there. However, he had positive things to say about MCM.

“I am happy to report that MCM remains a responsible and trustworthy business partner,” Pardee said. “Our cell tower is being maintained in good order.”

“I have Verizon cell service, and I have two bars right now,” said Gina Marcus, Director of Development for New Pond Farm Education Center, which is next door to the Hoyt Reservation and the tower’s closest neighbor. One of her co-workers, also a Verizon user, said she hasn’t experienced any dropped calls since the antenna

Continued on page 9

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Late-stage grant will fund Barlow retaining wall repairs

By Anne Young Albanese



Photo by Anne Young Albanese

The damaged area of the wall is blocked off with caution tape to ensure that no students get close enough to be injured by falling stones.

The Region 9 school district recently received roughly \$52,000 through the State of Connecticut’s District Repair and Improvement Project (DRIP), a program that provides reimbursement grants to

school districts for minor capital repairs, maintenance, and infrastructure upgrades. Though the funds were only recently allocated, the district is required to use the money by June 30, 2026.

As luck would have it, Region 9 had a project perfectly suited for the fund – repairs on a crumbling stone retaining wall at the entrance to Joel Barlow High School.

The wall was damaged by cold and bitter conditions this winter. It began with a bulge, and then the stone facing fell off the back side of the wall. Mike D’Agostino, ER9’s Director of Facilities and Operations, contacted the district’s insurance company but was informed that the damage was not covered.

The cost to repair the wall is \$52,000. D’Agostino expected to request the money from the capital fund, but the DRIP grant will almost completely cover the project, with a nominal difference of roughly \$200 coming from the district’s 2025-26 operating budget.

DRIP grant funds are processed through an annual certification process. Funds will be disbursed by June 30, 2026, and an annual expense report will be due to the State by September 1, 2026. ■

Region 9 sends bell-to-bell cell phone ban back to committee but closes out Nest project

By Anne Young Albanese

Bell-to-bell cell phone ban gets sent back for revisions

At the June 15 Region 9 Board of Education meeting, several proposed policies were accepted for their second reading, except the updated personal technology policy, which did not receive a motion to approve. The Board reached a consensus that the policy needs more work before it is ready for a vote. The personal technology policy, which introduces a K-12 bell-to-bell cell phone ban for Easton, Redding, and Region 9 school districts, has been the topic of long discussions at recent joint Boards of Education meetings and at a student debate and panel discussion earlier this month. Much of the controversy centers around the introduction of a cell phone ban at Joel Barlow High School.

Most of the language in the proposed personal technology policy came directly from the bill that the Connecticut House of Representatives passed in the recent legislative session, which would have instituted a State-wide bell-to-bell personal technology ban for students. The bill did not get called in the Senate before the end of the legislative session, though lawmakers expect the bill to be considered again soon, given its passage in the House and Governor Lamont’s support for it.

The Region 9 Board of Education indicated that it would like a more nuanced approach than the one modeled on the State bill. One approach incorporates what the

Board is calling a “safety valve,” the chance for students to check messages in the cafeteria during lunch. This would allow the administration to work with the teachers to see if the lunch break is working and reassess at the end of the first semester. The policy was sent back to the Policy Committee for revisions.

The Nest

The Region 9 Board of Education also addressed the completion of the Nest project at Joel Barlow High School’s lower athletic fields, which added team rooms, ADA-compliant restrooms, and an updated concessions stand. While some components will not be installed until summer break, the full budget for the Nest now has been allocated.

ER9 Director of Facilities & Operations Mike D’Agostino identified additional project elements that would improve the Nest once the major building components were completed earlier this spring. The Board has approved these additions, which include two cantilever square umbrellas (\$8,696), a Samsung monitor for teams to watch replays (\$1,450), a retractable awning for the concessions stand (\$7,500), and two rolling whiteboards for the team rooms (\$400).

Approximately \$5,000 is left in the Nest budget and will be used to pay down the bond that was issued to fund the project. ■

State champions once again / continued from page 1

points (23-10). A few hitting errors on Barlow’s part helped the Centaurs reel off five straight service points by Gavin Hecker, but Sky Fiuczynski responded with back-to-back kills to finish the set.

Things were closer in the second set, which featured seven ties and eight lead changes. Service points by Prusa and Sam Stinson helped put the Falcons ahead by four (21-17) but the Centaurs were not done yet, using kills by Brayden Bottone and Christian Hart to cut the lead to 22-20 as Barlow called timeout.

Fiuczynski’s kill won back the serve, and the Falcons finished the set to go 2-0.

Like the previous set, the third also featured several ties and lead changes as the Centaurs fought to stay alive. Dean Melnyk’s four straight service points for Barlow near the half-way mark put the Falcons on top 14-10.

The closest Woodstock Academy came to catching Barlow was one point (21-20) before Alex Stinson’s kill won back the serve. He added another not long after to get his

team to match point, which his brother Sam served up for the win.

“Our service pressure, our defense, and just being able to keep pressure on them consistently did it for us,” said Marino, already looking forward to next season, as his team graduates only three players. “These guys did great, and now we’re champs.”

Barlow finished the season at 19-4 overall. ■

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Barlow student harnesses community generosity for animals in need

By Pamela Brown



Photo courtesy of Ackerson Family
Anthony Ackerson collected pet food and supplies for animals in need as part of his service hours requirement for graduation.

Growing up in a family that loves animals inspired Anthony Ackerson to nurture a sense of compassion and empathy for living creatures, big and small.

“I feel like I will always want to help animals in need. It’s always been present in my life. My grandfather was always rescuing wildlife, and my mom is always saving animals or offering help to others. It’s always around me,” said Anthony, 17, a graduate of Joel Barlow High School’s Class of 2026. When it came time for him to fulfill his graduation requirement of 10 community service hours, it was only fitting that Ackerson’s project would be related to animals.

“I wanted to do something that made a difference, so I called the local animal shelter, but they told me I had to be 18 in order to volunteer. But they told me I could run a pet food drive, and it would still count,” said Anthony, who lives with six cats, a dog, and a bearded dragon. He discussed the project

with his mother, Nancy, who helped instill his passion for animals.

“I’m a big animal lover, and he always sees me bringing home strays and rescuing all kinds of animals. Anthony is a big animal person and has that need to help animals, too,” she said. “So many places are in need and now they will get a little extra help.”

Anthony enlisted his mother’s help in reaching out on Redding’s social media groups to solicit interest. “I was quite surprised by all the people in the community who wanted to help me and even more surprised with how much everyone donated – I wasn’t expecting that,” said Anthony, whose idea also spread throughout the school and by word of mouth. Before long, he amassed a list of 60 people who wanted to contribute. “It’s good to know so many people are willing to contribute to a great cause, especially since they don’t even know me.”

Anthony organized the logistics of the pick-up schedule and researched places to donate the items. “It took me three Saturdays and over 10 hours between organizing the addresses and picking up the donations and delivering,” he said. “[My mom] sent out all the text and e-mail reminders, and I also asked my grandma to help me during the pick-ups since I’m somewhat of a new driver. I usually don’t work on Saturdays, so I thought it was a good day to dedicate to the volunteer hours.”

According to Nancy, the community showed their generosity in a big way. “Every pick-up was a massive amount. It was more than just dry food. People donated beds, treats, toys, cat litter, wipes, blankets, towels, and cases of canned food and dozens of bagged dry food for both cats and dogs. They also gave him cash and gift cards,” she said. “I was proud because he

did this on his own on the weekends. He works at CVS and he even picked up donations the day after Prom. He was excited about all that he got. People really stepped up.”

The items were delivered to Wildlife in Crisis (wildlifeincrisis.org); Danbury Animal Welfare Society (daws.org); and H.E.L.P. for Pets (helpforpetsinc.org), a non-profit that offers low-cost trap-neuter-release services.

“All these organizations can help with wildlife, dogs, and cats,” said Anthony. “It felt really good dropping the food off to these non-profits. I felt accomplished and glad I chose to do the drive.”

Nicola Improta, a Redding native and lead volunteer at H.E.L.P. who works at a local veterinary clinic and has been helping homeless cats in Redding since 2022, is grateful for Ackerson’s donation. “He’s awesome. It was a huge help for the rescue kitties. They are all fed and happy this month, and it’s a huge burden off of me to take a little break from hustling donations,” she said.

Nancy was amazed at the response. “A few of the moms who donated said it was a great idea and mentioned they’d love to do this with their children once they are seniors, but it doesn’t have to be for pets. They can do a canned food or clothing drive.”

It was a meaningful experience for Anthony who sent thank you letters to all who contributed. “I learned not to be nervous to reach out to others for help or to bring an idea to life, especially now with me graduating and eventually being on my own and taking my own risks,” he said. “I’m glad I was able to do a project like this, because I went out with a bang and I’m hoping the next set of seniors will do something similar, and maybe there will be a new tradition in town that I’ve created.” ■



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Why Redding?

Carol Morgan’s art of connection

How a lifelong New Yorker reimagined retirement in Redding

By Donna Christopher



Photo by Donna Christopher
Carol Morgan at Meadow Ridge

The atrium at Meadow Ridge evokes the feeling of a tropical retreat, the setting for a lively conversation with Carol Morgan, a lifelong Manhattan resident who relocated here five years ago. The experience gives one the impression that her adaptation from city life to the country has been remarkably easy.

“I like Connecticut and I like nature,” she began. A week later, she described our hour-long exchange as an “enjoyable, meandering, free-association chat.”

The impetus for moving to the area came through friends in Connecticut whom she had visited for many years.

Now retired from a vibrant and varied career in arts publishing and communications, Morgan – who cites Ansel Adams, Chuck Close, and Rauschenberg as examples of major artists she worked with – has an innate knack for engaging with people. “This is a community of stimulating people,” she said.

After relaxing in the atrium, we got up and took a walk around the residential community, with Morgan stopping frequently to say hello or catch up quickly with other residents and staff members at the senior living community, employees whom she praised throughout the visit, saying they deserve accolades for their upbeat personalities and excellent work ethic.

It is a seemingly innate sensitivity you would expect from someone who had a longstanding career in the New York art world.

Her career intersected with the craft movement, which she described as part of “the whole evolution, the changing evolution of culture in New York and in America,” reflecting how handmade work became integrated into broader cultural and artistic life.

Morgan framed it as something you “have to travel around the country to see,” emphasizing its spread through galleries, fairs, and everyday spaces where craft became recognized as part of American cultural life.

Throughout her career, she helped bring American craftspeople into mainstream commercial and

cultural spaces by linking them with major department stores such as Bloomingdale’s, Bergdorf Goodman, and Neiman Marcus, as well as museums like the Renwick Gallery. This helped elevate crafts from being showcased at local markets to national and institutional recognition.

Morgan grew up in New York City and attended Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts, which she described as a quiet New England college where she enjoyed nature and bike riding. Her first job was at Harry N. Abrams, a New York City-based art book publisher.

Eventually as an art book publishing executive and communications specialist, she worked with museums, corporations, and cultural organizations internationally, including Abrams Publishers, Little, Brown’s NY Graphic Society, The Museum of Modern Art, Tate, Victoria & Albert Museum, LACMA, the Whitney Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Hermitage Museum, the Iraq Museum in Baghdad, Sotheby’s, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences, American Express, Tiffany & Co., and *Vanity Fair*, among others.

Among the history-oriented projects she worked on was *Hidden Treasures Revealed*, a 1995 art-history publication by Harry N. Abrams created in association with the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation and the State Hermitage Museum. The project explored major artworks hidden and saved during World War II. Harry N. Abrams was one of the major art book publishers after World War II and is now Abrams Books.

Another project included the first book published after 9/11 by Abrams in association with the Associated Press as a charitable edition, which sold out immediately in its first printing. Morgan recalled being on 14th Street herself on September 11, 2001 when a crowd initially gathered, pointing skyward. “Looks like they must be filming a horror movie; it can’t be real,” she remembered thinking.

At Meadow Ridge, Morgan is a former member of the Resident Board and currently serves as staff photographer for the *Ridge Record*, the community’s literary and news publication. She also is Co-Chair of the Resident Marketing Committee, a member of the Meadow Ridge Scholarship Committee, and former Spruce Captain of the Welcoming Committee and member of the Ad Hoc Solar Committee.

Her ease and vibrant outlook remained constant throughout the visit. She emphasized the supportive community at Meadow Ridge and the importance she places on creative collaboration.

To hear Morgan describe her various roles, it is clear that the art of connection is as central to her life now in Redding as it ever has been. ■

Packed special town meeting ends with mixed results / continued from page 1

lawsuits and protect innocent residents from depleting their savings on legal fees.

Kimberly Yash of Pine Mountain Road shared her experience with what she called “clear as mud” regulations during a home improvement project. She argued that the Town is “putting the cart before the horse” by implementing fines before fixing the underlying lack of clear, accessible guidance for residents and contractors.

Voters approved the creation of Redding Historic District No. 1, the boundaries of which run along Church Street, Smith Street, and North Main Street in Georgetown, and the establishment of an Historic District Commission.

Pemberton said that interest in a State-designated historic district in that neighborhood has been ongoing for years. The process followed State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) statutory requirements, including a study committee report and a vote by district property owners. Property owners voted 14-3 in February in favor of the district’s formation.

Historic District Study Committee Secretary Heidi Holzer emphasized that the district will preserve the unique architectural history of the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill-era and increase property values. The district is contiguous and excludes properties that have been significantly altered.

“These are homes that were built from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century, and they reflect a wide style of architectural design that reflects our history, not only here in Redding, but in the United

States,” said Holzer. “It’s a very small area. We’re looking to preserve a little piece of Redding that we feel is important... for us and the history of the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill area.”

The Historic District Commission will oversee the new district, as well as any other future State-designated historic districts.

With the Highway Department exceeding its snow removal budget by approximately \$89,000 this winter – mostly in overtime expenses – voters also approved a line-item transfer in the 2025-26 operating budget. The transfer comes from a \$90,800 surplus in the debt service line, which is a result of deferred lease payments on Public Works vehicles that were not delivered in the current fiscal year. ■





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Student wins new conservation scholarship

Barlow’s Priti Katherine Kiefer has been named the first recipient of the Redding Land Trust and New Pond Farm Education Center Conservation and Education Scholarship.

This newly established scholarship honors the legacies of Mary Anne Guitar, one of the founders of Redding Land Trust, and Sally Trippe, longtime educator and environmental advocate at New Pond Farm. Both women dedicated their lives to protecting open space, inspiring environmental stewardship, and helping generations of people develop a deeper connection to the natural world.

Kiefer has participated in the SoundWaters Research Intensive, where she conducted hands-on marine science research, analyzed environmental data, and completed an independent project exploring oyster genetics and climate resilience. She also has pursued advanced independent study coursework and laboratory experience in genetics and CRISPR technology.

Beyond academics, Priti demonstrates a deep commitment to serving others. She has been an active leader in Barlow’s Eco Club and has served as a student representative on the school’s climate committee. She also mentors younger students and volunteers at a local senior center. ■

Emma Scheckner is Immaculate valedictorian

Redding’s Emma Scheckner was named Immaculate High School’s 2026 valedictorian. She will be attending Johns Hopkins University next year, where she plans to study biology and pursue a pre-med track.

Scheckner received a first prize \$50,000 STEM scholarship from The Angeles T. Arredondo Foundation. She is a National Merit Scholarship Commended Student, recipient of the Harvard Book Award, and a member of the National Honor Society, English National Honor Society, Math National Honor Society, Science National Honor Society, Rho Kappa National Honors Society, Mu Alpha Theta National Honors Society, and Social Studies National Honor Society.

She played field hockey all four years at Immaculate, serving as the team’s captain and leading her team to the Class S State Championship this year. Scheckner also played on the Varsity Golf Team and received a SWC Leadership Award, recognizing her dedication and character.

She has been active in community service, volunteering over 100 hours per year, and founding Immaculate’s Healing Hearts and Hands Club. In her spare time, she works at Uncle Leo’s & Rosny Café in Georgetown. ■

High schoolers take home awards as school year draws to a close

By Anne Young Albanese



Photo by Willow Bradford
Dr. Mario Almeida at the annual Barlow Awards ceremony on May 28.

Over 100 students were honored at the annual Joel Barlow High School Awards Night on Thursday, May 28, for their accomplishments in academics, athletics, the arts, volunteerism, entrepreneurship, environmental stewardship, and civic engagement. Stand-out Redding high schoolers have also taken home several awards from statewide and national organizations in recent weeks.

Western Connecticut Superintendent’s Award

Every year, the Western Connecticut chapter of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents has each member identify two students from their district at the middle and high school levels. The awards are based on community service and service to others, academic prowess (relative to ability), and leadership services to the school community. Two Barlow students were celebrated in May.

Kenji Perretz: According to Perretz’s counselor, he is one of the most motivated, well-rounded, confident, and kind students at Barlow. He is recognized for being respectful, positive, and recognizing the best in others. Perretz participates

in a variety of activities, including theater crew, math team, and indoor track. He has also revived “The Nest,” a school news show that is produced and filmed by students.

Hannah Emerito: Emerito’s counselor recognizes her for her kindness, deep compassion, uncompromising integrity, and selfless nature. She has participated in the Unified Wellness class and the Unified Sports team programs throughout her high school career. A meaningful memory for Emerito was her time working with a special education student who is often non-verbal. The student’s mother told Emerito that she was her son’s best friend.

National Council of Teachers of English

Every year, the National Council of Teachers of English recognizes sophomores and juniors based on writing samples that are judged on content, tone, word choice, and voice. The competition is nationwide. Six Connecticut students were recognized with First Class Distinction, including Joel Barlow’s Carolyn Hopstaken. Students from East Haven High School, Wilton High School, Cheshire Academy, Greenwich High School,

and Westover School were also recognized.

The Semina DeLaurentis Halo Awards

The Halo Awards honor high school student theater programs throughout Connecticut and are awarded by Seven Angels Theatre. There are four nights of award ceremonies at the Palace Theater in Waterbury. Barlow earned 14 nominations with three wins at the Tuesday, May 26 awards ceremony.

Best Performance in a Leading Female Role in a Classical Musical – Sassy Wood

This award recognizes a female lead in a classical musical. Classical musicals are older than contemporary musicals and are traditionally structured. Junior Sassy Wood won for her role as Leading Player in *Pippin*.

Best Standout Performance in a Female Role in an Ensemble Production – Lucia Ferrari

This category is considered very prestigious at the Halo Awards. Junior Lucia Ferrari won for her performances as Shelly and Rhonda in Barlow’s fall play, *Almost Maine*.

Last Minute Hero – Anna Page Pilato

The Last-Minute Hero award recognizes a performer who had to step into the show when another actor is out sick. Sophomore Anna Page Pilato jumped in at the last minute as Player 2 in the spring musical *Pippin*.

Barlow is not the only school that has Redding-based Halo winners. Maximillian August, a junior at Immaculate High School in Danbury, was recognized with a Halo Award for student directors for *The Importance of Being Earnest*. ■

John Read students recognized for their academic work and leadership

By Anne Young Albanese

Several students from John Read Middle School have been honored for their work throughout the year, including accomplishments in academics, leadership, and community service.

Invention Convention

The Invention Convention brands itself as “Shark Tank meets Science Fair.” John Read Middle School students are tasked with developing a product that will solve a problem in their own lives. There are a variety of awards that are sponsored by businesses and non-profits, and that is where John Read students excelled.

Seventh grader Danilo Cardoza created the “Sip and Sprout” and won the Linde Award, which recognizes the use of technology to create a more sustainable future. His invention helps plants and their roots grow better by adding oxygen and preventing overwatering.

Seventh grader Lucas Dragotta created the “Glow Path.” He earned the CASE award, which is presented by the Connecticut Academy of Science & Engineering. His invention is a tool for golfers to practice their swing, with lights on either

end of the golf club to allow players to see the direction of their swing.

Seventh grader Lucas Seamon invented the “S’more Please” invention and was awarded the Connecticut Science Center honor. He created a device that makes making a s’more easier. He will have his invention display board displayed at the Connecticut Science Center for a full month.

Fifth grader Gray Kilbourn earned the Hubbell Light Bulb Moment award and the Travelers Safe Stop award with his invention, “Flash Stop.” It is a road device that lights up each side of the ground as another way to inform cars of a crosswalk or red light.

Connecticut Association of Schools

This award honors two students from each middle school in the state who are members of the Connecticut Association of Schools. Principal Jennifer Desmairis nominated eighth-graders Amelie Gerbracht and Liam Lambrech for their contributions to the school’s community, scholarship, and leadership. The students each received a plaque and were treated to

the annual dinner hosted for the winners.

Western Connecticut Superintendent’s Award

As with Joel Barlow High School, the Western Connecticut chapter of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents recognized two John Read Middle School students for their service to others, academics, and leadership.

Aubrey Bedard: Bedard was recognized for being a role model. Her nominators said that whenever she sees something that needs to be, she acts. She is a competitive swimmer. and successfully balances many responsibilities and obligations. She takes pride in her work and is a natural leader.

Ana Sakai: Sakai works behind the scenes, never seeking glory. She has a variety of interests, ranging from academics to jazz. She plays basketball and represents the students as Vice President of the John Read Student Council. She is a problem solver, and her peers know that she is always looking out for them. ■

RTC awards the Matthew L. Berry Scholarship

Finn Bermingham has been awarded the Redding Republicans’ Matthew L. Berry Memorial Scholarship, an honor given to a graduating Joel Barlow High School student who demonstrates a commitment to using his/her higher education for the purpose of becoming an enlightened citizen who will make a difference in the world. The scholarship is funded by the Berry family in memory of Matthew L. Berry, a 2009 Barlow graduate and a 2013 Tulane University graduate.

Bermingham, a high honors student the last four years, received a Diploma with Distinction. He is a member of the French Honor Society, the Tri-M Music Honors Society, and was the 2025 winner of the Redding Republicans’ Ronald Reagan Book Award for excellence in history and social sciences. He received the 2025 National Council of Teachers of English Achievement Award with Superior Distinction and was the 2024 high-scorer on the Junior Writing Portfolio.

Outside the classroom, Bermingham has been active in Barlow theater, the Barlow *a cappella* group, the Nest school news, the Math Club, Chamber Choir, and has been published in Barlow’s literary magazine, the *Wayfarer*.

This fall, he will be enrolled in the Honors Program at the University of Connecticut, where he plans to study Civil Engineering. ■

DTC honors four students with awards

The Redding Democratic Town Committee has recognized four Barlow students for their leadership, academics, and civic engagement.

James Jandura was awarded the Alvin Ruml Environmental Studies Prize, which is given to a student who best demonstrates an interest in, and awareness of, the importance of our natural environment.

Ripley Robinson received the Dr. Hugh Claremont Service Award, given to a student who, through excellence in the subject area, demonstrates an interest in science.

Austin Bradford was honored with the John G. Atwood Good Government Prize, recognizing his understanding of, and appreciation for, America’s form of government, its unique contribution to history, and its status as an inspiration to peoples of the world.

Carolyn Hopstaken was the recipient of the Mary Anne Guitar Award, given to a junior female student who is a leader among her peers and a strong community activist. ■



ons Graduates

Class of 2026

Class of 2026 makes plans for next year

College, gap years, and more, see where some of our seniors plan to go
 | Compiled by Willow Bradford

Gabriel Areklett Matthew Arnold Abigail Avidon Stephanie Bardani Benjamin Barnett Nelsea Bassette Victoria Becker Braylon Bennett Justin Bente Finn Bermingham Luke Bishop Chase Bonanno Abby Bonoff Frank Branca Teagan Candee Michelle Carneiro Yu-Min Cho Vince Covino Megan Cunningham Brady Decker Jack Dellorusso Greyson DiBlasi Aoife Dolan Guilia Dos Santos Tom Dunsby Alexander Dyar Hannah Emerito Alisson Espejo Ginna Espejo Emily Forbes Madeleine Furrer Sean Gabriel Chris Gagliardi Skylar Giblin Ava Gillon Ethan Goldstein Drew Gutowski Jack Hall Berkeley Hanson Matthew Harr Natasha Heslin Kaden Holub	<i>SUNY Maritime</i> <i>SUNY Binghamton</i> <i>Brandeis University</i> <i>Pennsylvania State University</i> <i>Loyola University (MD)</i> <i>Morgan State University</i> <i>Fordham University</i> <i>University of Oregon</i> <i>College of Charleston</i> <i>University of Connecticut - Storrs Honors Engineering</i> <i>Miami University Ohio</i> <i>Western Connecticut State University</i> <i>Loyola University (MD)</i> <i>Drew University</i> <i>University of Kentucky</i> <i>Sacred Heart University</i> <i>Carnegie Mellon University</i> <i>University of Miami</i> <i>Roger Williams University</i> <i>American University</i> <i>University of Connecticut</i> <i>Villanova University</i> <i>Roger Williams University</i> <i>Northern Michigan University</i> <i>Fairfield University</i> <i>High Point University</i> <i>Southern Connecticut State University</i> <i>University of Hartford-The Hart School</i> <i>University of New Haven</i> <i>Arizona State University</i> <i>University of Tampa</i> <i>Colorado University-Boulder</i> <i>Roger Williams University</i> <i>Performers College</i> <i>Auburn University</i> <i>Colorado University-Boulder</i> <i>Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute</i> <i>Virginia Tech</i> <i>University of North Carolina Wilmington</i> <i>University of Wisconsin-Madison</i> <i>High Point University</i> <i>University of Tampa</i>	Grace Hugo Talia Itah Lucas Jandura Luke Janny Mateo Jara Charlotte Jaramillo Nate Johnston Ava Jones Josey June Bella Kaufman Sophia Kelly Jimmy Kennedy Priti Kiefer Erik Kiernan Adrian Kloc Andrew Kopec Olivia Kotula Lilly Krausche Milly Krausche Kaelen Kunar Hanna Kurtz Holly Landa Milo Lee Hannah Longo Matthew Luca Gavin Maryott Olivia Masone Camila Mendez Zachary Mikhael Julia Miranda Emily Mitac Kimberly Moughty Cecilia Mulhern Kosta Nani Khadija Naqvi Ezra Nemore Conrad Newell Nick Niles Ben Noome Zoriana Olexy	<i>University of Kentucky</i> <i>Colorado University-Boulder</i> <i>Massachusetts Maritime Academy</i> <i>Clemson University</i> <i>Worcester Polytechnic Institute</i> <i>University of Tennessee</i> <i>Syracuse University</i> <i>University of Connecticut</i> <i>Colorado University-Boulder</i> <i>Florida Southern College</i> <i>University of New Hampshire</i> <i>University of Connecticut</i> <i>Pennsylvania State University</i> <i>Miami University Ohio</i> <i>Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health 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Claire Rodrigue Brian Rosa Ethan Rose Morgan Ross Lidia Santangeli Matt Santangeli Emma Scheckner** Michael Sherman Olivia Sickinger Terry (Trip) Slater Ryan Snyder CheyrI Southlea Alexander Stewart Malin Stichter Chloe Suarez Mia Tartaglia Luke Taylor Olivia Taylor Maya Tedawes** William Thrasher Maansi Tibrewal Alexander Tucker*** Charles Villani Dasha Vitikov Colin Wantke Hailey Watson Brian Weiss Dylan Winegar Amelia Winter Avery Young Tyler Young Connor Zhu Benjamin Zirulnik	<i>Ohio State University</i> <i>Yale University</i> <i>Syracuse University</i> <i>Northeastern University</i> <i>Old Dominion University</i> <i>Fordham University</i> <i>Pace University</i> <i>Vassar College</i> <i>Pace University</i> <i>Quinnipiac University</i> <i>Roger Williams University</i> <i>Rochester Institute of Technology</i> <i>Spring Hill College</i> <i>University of Saint Joseph</i> <i>University of South Florida</i> <i>Simmons University</i> <i>University of South Carolina</i> <i>University of Tampa</i> <i>Johns Hopkins University</i> <i>Brown University</i> <i>Furman University</i> <i>Lenoir Rhyne University</i> <i>Lynn University</i> <i>Southern Connecticut State University</i> <i>Lynn University</i> <i>Wheaton College (MA)</i> <i>San Diego State University</i> <i>St Lawrence University</i> <i>Central Connecticut State University</i> <i>Babson College</i> <i>Northeastern Univesity</i> <i>Vermont State University at Killington</i> <i>University of Maryland</i> <i>Curry College</i> <i>University of Massachussets Amherst</i> <i>Sacred Heart University</i> <i>University of Connecticut</i> <i>Quinnipiac University</i> <i>University of Wisconsin-Madison</i> <i>Fordham University</i> <i>West Point</i> <i>Pennsylvania State University</i> <i>Indiana University</i> <i>Lehigh University</i> <i>Indiana University</i>
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All students are graduates of Joel Barlow High School, unless otherwise noted: *Graduate of home school / **Graduate of Immaculate High School / *** Graduate of The Pinnacle School

Responses submitted by students with permission to publish. If you or your student did not submit your information in time for inclusion, please send an e-mail to editor@reddingsentinel.org to be included in a later issue.

A year after graduation, a Barlow alum reflects

By Willow Bradford



Willow Bradford at Joel Barlow graduation last year.

I’ve always felt as though I was too big for a small town. Often, I would visit my older sister at college in New York City and picture myself in her shoes – taking on the world by living in a place that offered opportunity on every street corner. What I didn’t realize at the time was that Redding and Region 9 schools were giving me the opportunity to reach for a school like Columbia University. While the pandemic gave me time to dedicate to figuring out who I wanted to be and create my own music brand, WillowTree Music, it was not



Photos by Cindy Bradford
 Willow and her father during her freshman year at Columbia.

until high school that I really began preparing for life beyond Redding. I learned three skills at Joel Barlow High School that I have continuously used inside and outside of the classroom in college: studying, writing, and speaking. The pandemic hit towards the end of middle school for me, and when I entered high school in-person, the classroom felt wholly unfamiliar. Gone was the simplicity of online homework, replaced by actual grades, and I struggled.

Continued on page 10

Joel Barlow Graduation on June 17



Photos by Rocco Valluzzo
 The Class of 2026 celebrated their graduation from Joel Barlow High School on Wednesday, June 17. (From top left, clockwise): Students cheer as the graduation ceremony came to a close; Greyson DiBlasi gives a speech to attendees; Amelia Winter receives her diploma from Head of School Dr. Mario Almeida; members of the Class of 2026 file into the graduation ceremony held at the Barlow athletic fields; senior members of the Chamber Singers perform; (Center): ER9 Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Alisha DiCorpo and Superintendent Jason McKinnon.

LIBRARY CORNER

By Erin Shea Dummeyer

Summer is the perfect time to slow down, explore new stories, and make lasting memories at Mark Twain Library. Our 2026 Summer Reading Program invites readers of all ages to join in the fun by reading, listening to audiobooks, tracking reading progress, and earning prizes along the way. This year, we are using a new app called Reader Zone to help participants log their reading progress. It takes only a few minutes to sign up, and it's easy to toggle between kids if you are an adult helping multiple children log their reading.

Our Summer Reading page

located at marktwainlibrary.org/ summer is packed with curated reading lists, school reading and math resources, exciting programs, and activities happening throughout the season. There will be a cardboard puppet show here on June 29, "Rockin' and Reading with Al deCant!" on July 13, and exciting programs like "M&M" taste testing, ice cream parties, and take-and-make craft kits.

Research consistently shows that reading during the summer helps children maintain and strengthen literacy skills while school is out, but the benefits extend to everyone.

Reading sparks curiosity, reduces stress, and brings communities together through shared stories and experiences. And Mark Twain Library is a great place to run into and reconnect with classmates (and their parents!) during the school break. Adults can participate in summer reading as well by logging their books in the Reader Zone app to win prizes. So stop by the library, sign up for Summer Reading, and make this a season filled with discovery. ■

Erin Shea Dummeyer is
Director, Mark Twain Library



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Good books for good readers | By Margi Esten

Elizabeth Strout, another Pulitzer Prize-winning favorite author of mine, has just published a new novel: *The Things We Never Say*. This is the 11th book by Strout and, as a stand-alone novel, it is a departure from her previous Olive Kitteridge/Lucy Barton series. *The Things We Never Say* takes place in 2024 and is set on the coast of

Massachusetts as we follow Artie Dam, a high school history teacher who, despite his successful personal and professional life, struggles with loneliness. (And a sudden, very dark secret.)

Elizabeth Strout was born and raised in Portland, Maine and many of her childhood experiences there serve as the inspiration for most of

her novels. She is widely known for her literary fiction and descriptive characterization. Among her extensive roster of novels, she is probably best known for her third book, *Olive Kitteridge*, published in 2008, which is a collection of connected short stories about a woman and her immediate family and friends on the coast of Maine. ■

SPARK: Arts & culture in and around Redding Ten years, two shows | By Julie Durkin Marty



Jimmy Grashow's "Philadelphia Freedom" at G-Town Arts

The Aldrich Decennial: I am what is around me
The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, 258 Main Street, Ridgefield
June 7, 2026 – January 10, 2027
thealdrich.org

The Aldrich has never done this before. On June 6 was the opening of *The Aldrich Decennial: I am what is around me* – the first ever 10-year survey of artists living and working in Connecticut – and the galleries were packed, the energy high, the summer air still warm outside. It felt like an acknowledgment of something that has been quietly building for years – artists leaving New York for bigger studios, more light, more space, and staying. The

art scene in Connecticut is alive, and it is serious, and The Aldrich is celebrating that.

The show spans two floors and a newly renovated three-acre sculpture garden, and the curators made distinct decisions room by room. Some galleries pull you deep into narrative and figuration. Danica Lundy's enormous painting keeps pulling you back – a car interior fractured across multiple impossible viewpoints simultaneously, figures folded into dashboards and seats, a rearview mirror with a single eye staring back, a moon visible through the windshield. Every return to the surface reveals something new to see and decode. Lizzie Gill's large nocturnal still life – red

ceramic vessels spilling fantastical botanical forms across a striped table under a full moon – operates in a completely different register, lush and slightly unhinged, a work that has decided the rules no longer apply.

Other rooms shift entirely – away from story and toward experience and process. Anoka Faruqee and David Driscoll's small concentric circle work, red dissolving into deep violet, does something to your eye that takes a moment to understand. You stand in front of it longer than you expect to. Beck Lowry's large painted wood wall work sits somewhere between painting and sculpture, biomorphic forms in rich color that refuse to resolve into either category cleanly.

Step outside and Kristy Hughes is waiting. "Portal: Hope as Practice" – two multicolored rings rising over 10 feet tall on Main Street, her first public sculpture – forms a threshold you want to walk through. Hughes, who is also represented inside in the Decennial, works handmade paper pulp into sculptural forms and seals within them poems, found objects, notes, and letters – acts of gratitude and memory made permanent inside the surface. Outside in the summer air, it reads as pure invitation.

Summer Love
G-Town Arts, 5 Main Street, Georgetown
June 20, 2026 – July 25, 2026

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BOOK REVIEW

The Left and the Lucky

By Willy Vlautin / 256 pages / HarperCollins

Willy Vlautin won the Joyce Carol Oates Prize, awarded to mid-career writers of fiction, in 2025. The award feels apt for the author of *The Left and the Lucky*, for this book honors a middle-aged man who is only beginning to see the rewards of his hard-lived life.

Eddie is a house painter in and around Portland, Oregon. His wife, Marlene, has left him. His neighbor Connie has two sons, one a troubled teen-aged bully named Curtis; the other, Russell, is a lonely, timid, and very smart eight-year-old.

Eddie has one employee, Houston, a drunk who can paint a wall well in any state of inebriation if Eddie can get him to the jobsite. Connie works at a strip club and entertains its clients beyond the stage. Curtis's girlfriend gets pregnant. Russell wets his bed.

Curtis takes out his anger on everyone, especially Russell, and lands in jail.

Eddie is there to pick up the pieces for everyone in the novel, over and over again. He and his dog befriend Russell. He looks after the

boy and builds his confidence by giving him small jobs to do – washing paint brushes, for example. Over time, Connie lets Eddie take on more of the care the boy needs.

Russell uses all his wits to figure out how to leave before his brother is released from jail to resume abusing him. The ideas become more fanciful as Curtis's release date nears – a motorcycle, a hot air balloon, a boat across the Pacific. Eddie's kindness is on display in his logical take-down of each scheme.

Vlautin was the lead singer and songwriter for the Portland rock band Richmond Fontaine, and he writes like a musician. There is a comforting rhythm in his sentences, and he is a master of simile. He builds tension in small episodes throughout the book, never quite letting the reader relax – despite that comforting cadence.

Eventually, Curtis is released from jail, the tension builds, and the situation explodes – and then resolves, like a fine piece of music. ■

Review by Susan Clark

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BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

From cookie fountains to sculptural confections, Sugar Monster redefines dessert | By Justin Reynolds



Photo by Tony Gale for Redding Sentinel

Ashley Holt’s workshop in Georgetown is the birthplace of imaginative, award-winning dessert showstoppers.

When most people think about dessert, they think about bowls of ice cream and slices of cake. Ashley Holt takes things deliciously further — creating full-scale “dessert rooms” filled with artisanal confections, such as giant cookie fountains flowing with chocolate and artistically inspired, life-size cake sculptures. “Dessert is an experience to be shared,” said Holt, founder of Sugar Monster, a luxury cake studio known for creating everything from highly detailed sculpted cakes and edible works of art to “immersive edible installations” and large-scale brand activations. Holt, who moved to Redding in 2020, began baking two decades ago while working as a model. “I needed an escape,” she said. “The fashion industry is so draining. I needed an outlet for peace and creativity, and I found baking to be a peaceful, meditative practice I could share with others.” She went on to attend culinary school for a bit but left after her financial aid wasn’t reinstated. “I figured I’d just teach myself,” she said. “It worked out — and I saved \$50K.” Holt refined her craft by watching YouTube videos until she fell asleep and gaining hands-on experience wherever she could. “I’m always upping my own game — it’s my own challenge to myself,” Holt explained. The hard work and commitment paid off, leading to a television career that spans multiple competition shows, production roles, and culinary styling work. After capturing the grand prize in the TLC series *Cake Boss: Next Great Baker*, Holt went on to win the Food Network’s *Chopped* and

The New York Cake Show. She then landed a spot on Netflix’s *Bake Squad*, a reality baking competition series that ran for two seasons. “That’s the magic of the industry: one opportunity always leads to the next,” she said. In addition to running Sugar Monster and being on-camera talent for television, Holt also works behind the scenes as a culinary producer and food stylist, including two years at the *Today* show and seven for Joanna Gaines’s cooking show, *Magnolia Table* (where she met her fiancé, Aric.) On top of all that, she develops recipes for client cookbooks — work that fills in the gaps between everything else. “It keeps me busy — plus, it’s free food for my family,” she laughed. “One of my favorite parts of recipe development is the process of testing, tweaking, and refining until a recipe feels just right. That’s what really keeps me coming back to this work.” One of the cookbook projects she worked on went on to become a *New York Times* bestseller. “It’s a true team effort,” she said. “Working alongside an incredibly talented photographer and prop stylists, we make sure every element in the frame serves a purpose. Every grain of salt, every crumb, and every piece of food is intentionally placed to create an image that feels beautiful, appetizing, and tells a story.” When Holt originally opened Sugar Monster, it was a full-service bakery. With so much on her plate these days, she’s had to take a step back, focusing now on private orders. While Sugar Monster serves clients across the country, Holt

especially enjoys creating beautiful cakes for local families and businesses when her schedule allows. “A lot of orders come from kids who are fans of the show, and I’ll personally deliver their cakes just so I can meet them,” she said. “It’s so cool.” Holt is inspired by all sorts of things — trends she wants to put her own twist on, random thoughts sparked while perusing art galleries, or ideas that spring to life from walks in nature — “the beauty and simplicity of flowers.” It can take months to bring her creations to life; typically, Holt works with clients to develop concepts before ironing out the creative details and tackling sourcing, planning, and delivery. “I travel with multiple temperature-controlled suitcases,” she said. “It’s a whole system with insulated bags and ice packs. I showed up with cakes in Hawaii once, and they were still frozen solid.” Originally from Georgia, Holt moved to New York City with a stopover in Westport before settling down in Redding. “I love living here so much,” she said. “I love that it’s a small-town feel and you still have access to the city. It’s so great that all the small businesses are thriving in Georgetown. I’m raising my family here and building a life here, and I’m very lucky to be a part of the community here.” Looking ahead, Holt is exploring opening her Georgetown workshop to the public as a “shared creative space for the neighborhood.” ■

For more information, visit sugarmonstersweets.com

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Zoners approve site plan amendment for Route 7 golf simulator facility

By Rocco Valluzzo

The Zoning Commission approved a request for a site plan amendment for a new use and classification for the tenants at 241 Ethan Allen Highway at its Wednesday, June 9 meeting. The approval will accommodate Whipstick Golf Club, a private golf simulator facility, in Suite 118, while also formalizing the existing uses for Ultimate Gloss and Vibrant Building Technologies. The Commission reviewed operational details, parking requirements, and safety classifications, ultimately voting to approve the amended site plan. According to property owner Nick Fletcher, Whipstick Golf Club will feature three TrackMan driving booths and a putting and chipping area. The maximum occupancy is estimated at 12 players at a time (three foursomes), though typical usage is expected to be lower. “The idea is you want to try and maintain a rather sort of cordial and peaceful environment for hitting balls and not having it too overrun or too full,” said Fletcher. “We’re here today because this is a new use for the space.” The installation is purely electronic, using projectors and lasers, with no mechanical or HVAC modifications required. Construction is

limited to interior partition walls, safety netting, and a chipping and putting green. Fletcher noted that the property historically operated as a racquetball club in the 1990s, establishing a precedent for recreational use. The application has been reviewed and cleared by the Health Department and the Building Department, with no outstanding comments or requirements for exterior work. Parking analysis indicates no additional parking is required with four dedicated spaces reserved for the golf club members. An existing 6,000 square foot area at the site houses two enclosed bays for Ultimate Gloss, which specializes in paint protection film and paint correction for high-end vehicles, primarily serving dealerships like Porsche of Danbury. Vibrant Technologies, started three years ago by Fletcher’s brother Ryan and located at the site, is a technology-enabled heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) company that builds special air filtration and purification systems. Key operations include light assembly and a meeting facility for the company’s remote work force and investors. The commission approved the site plan amendment unanimously. ■

Verizon cellular antenna now operational on new West Redding tower / continued from page 3

went into service. Beforehand, dropped calls were frequent. Dottie DeLuca, owner of West Redding-based Fleur De Lis Antiques and Design, was a spokesperson for a group of area residents opposed to the project in public hearings before the Connecticut Siting Council. She remains unhappy that the tower was approved and built — and said it has not led to any improvement for her customers. “I have AT&T, not Verizon,” said DeLuca. “However, I have not seen any improvement for any of my customers. A lot of them still have SOS signals on their phones.”

One Redding parent, a Verizon customer, said she has experienced improved service at the West Redding Metro-North train station across the street from DeLuca’s shop. “I drop off my husband every week at the train, and the station has always been an utter dead zone,” she said. “Then, about two weeks ago, I noticed I had two bars of cell service. I’m now able to send text messages, check e-mails — and perhaps most importantly, load up Spotify to play music for my impatient kids in the backseat as they wait to watch the train arrive.” ■

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THE NATURAL WORLD

Mountain laurel is a treasure – in the wild and at home | By Terry Karpen



Photo by Stacey Clark

Connecticut’s state flower, the mountain laurel, blooms from late May into June. If you hike in the woods or watch from the roadside, you will see dense stands of mountain laurel, one of the most beautiful native flowering shrubs. (See this week’s page 1 “Redding’s Big Outdoors” column for some tips on where to see mountain laurel in bloom around town.)

Mountain laurel is in the heath or heather family Ericaceae, which includes rhododendrons, azaleas, pieris, blueberries and cranberries. Mountain laurel is native to North America; its range extends throughout the East, as far south as Florida’s panhandle, as far north as southern Quebec, and as far west as Indiana and Louisiana. Within this range, the plant is ubiquitous throughout the Appalachian Mountains.

Mountain laurel is a woody shrub with gnarled branches, glossy, dark green leaves, and clusters of flowers in shades of pink and

white. It is a broadleaf evergreen, meaning it keeps its leaves year-round rather than dropping them in the fall. The mature size is four to 15 feet tall with a similar spread. The flower clusters bloom late May to early June, and the flowers last two weeks or more.

The Brooklyn Botanic Garden describes what makes the plant so special: “It produces exquisite clusters of delicate, fused-petal blossoms that resemble tiny origami rice bowls. When the buds burst open in May or June, the branches are virtually obscured by blooms. They can range from white to pink to deep rose and are distinctively tattooed with symmetrical maroon or purple dots or streaks. The bell-like flowers have a very unusual way of dispensing pollen. Their stamens are arched, with the tips held under the rim of the bell. When a bee or other pollinator lands on the flower, the weight of the insect releases the stamen, which flings up the pollen like a catapult.”

The scientific name of mountain laurel is *Kalmia latifolia*. According to the Meigs Point Nature Center at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison, Connecticut, “The mountain laurel, *Kalmia latifolia*, was first recorded growing in America in 1624, but it was not named until 1750 when Pehr Kalm, a Swedish-Finnish explorer and botanist, sent a specimen to his friend and teacher Carl Linnaeus, ‘the father of modern taxonomy,’ who formalized binomial nomenclature, the modern system of naming organisms. Linnaeus gave it the name *Kalmia*, in honor of his fellow-botanist, and latifolia, describing the “wide-leaflet” characteristic of the plant.”

Kalmia is called “mountain laurel” because it thrives in the rocky, upland slopes of mountainous

regions. It shares the name “laurel” because its glossy, leathery evergreen leaves resemble those of the true Mediterranean laurel (*Laurus nobilis*), even though the two plants are biologically unrelated.

In addition to growing wild, cultivated mountain laurel can be planted in the home landscape. Mountain laurels are an excellent choice for foundation plantings and incorporated in a bed or border with other shrubs and perennials. They are also ideal for woodland gardens, rock gardens, and mass plantings.

Many mountain laurel cultivars originated from the plant breeding of Dr. Richard Jaynes, botanist, horticulturist, researcher, and owner of Broken Arrow Nursery in Hamden. Approximately half of the cultivars available commercially today were introduced by Dr. Jaynes, including highly colored blooms and dwarf varieties. The native species mountain laurel has flowers of white or pink. Cultivars in the nursery trade have been selected for darker flowers of red or maroon. Dr. Jaynes is considered an authority on mountain laurel and his book, *Kalmia: Mountain Laurel and Related Species*, details the history, breeding, and care of these shrubs.

Cultural practices for growing mountain laurel in the home landscape

Light requirements – Mountain laurel tolerates a wide range of light conditions, from full sun to full shade, but grows best when placed where it gets a half-day of sun, or a bright shady area. Too much intense, direct sunlight sun can cause scorching of the leaves. In deep shade, it won’t produce as many flowers.

Soil and Moisture – Mountain laurel requires soil that is moist, well-drained, acidic, and rich in organic matter. Since they are shallow-rooted plants, it is easy for them to dry out due to lack of water, or rot if over-watered. Sandy, silty, or clay soils should be amended before planting by adding peat moss or compost.

Fertilizer – Mountain laurel requires little supplemental feeding, especially when the soil is rich in organic matter. Use a fertilizer designed for acid-loving plants, such as Holly-Tone, and apply in late winter or early spring. Do not over-fertilize. Excessive fertilization can result in damaged roots and leaves, and lead to a weakened or dead plant.

Mulching – Mountain laurel has shallow, fibrous roots and benefits from a thin layer of mulch to protect the roots.

Pruning – Mountain laurel rarely requires pruning, especially when planted in the proper location. Dead branches can be pruned at any time of year, and if growth becomes spindly or excessive, the size can be reduced with light pruning; best done soon after flowering.

Deer – Deer usually avoid mountain laurel. It is considered a highly deer-resistant shrub, largely because its leaves contain toxic compounds that cause a burning sensation in a deer’s mouth. All parts of the mountain laurel (leaves, twigs, and flowers) are poisonous to deer and most other animals. However, hungry deer will browse young plants or new growth during harsh winters or in areas with high deer density.

Insects – Mountain laurel is not highly susceptible to insect pests. Black vine weevils and lace bug insects are the most common. The

weevils are nocturnal and chew holes in the leaves; the larval form eats the roots, which can cause the leaves to turn yellow first, and ultimately the leaves and branches to die. Lace bugs suck the sap from the leaves, weakening the plant. White or yellow stippling damage on the upper leaf surface is a sign of lace bug. Lace bugs are most active and damaging on plants in full sunlight. These problems are easily controlled with insecticides, although chemical control should be used only as a last resort.

Diseases – There are several diseases that mountain laurels are susceptible to, most commonly fungal leaf spot, blight, and root rot. Leaf spots and blight are rarely serious, although root rot is often fatal. Winter burn is a common problem of evergreens, including those with “broad leaves,” like mountain laurel. Leaves do not actually burn, but rather dry up. Leaves turn yellow or brown in response to low soil moisture, freezing temperatures, and blowing wind.

Good cultural practices and proper planting location are the best ways to protect against insect, disease or winter damage, and despite these potential problems, mountain laurel is a reliable shrub. ■

Terry Karpen is proprietor of Queen Of Spades Gardens & Landscapes in Redding



Photo by Stacey Clark



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A year after graduation, a Barlow alum reflects | continued from page 7

What saved me, perhaps, was what I learned in freshman Honors Geometry class. The teacher explained the difference between using two acronyms when reviewing new material: RQT and GTG, the first being “Review/Quiz/Test” and the second being “Good To Go.” Whenever a practice problem was completed, I would either write RQT or GTG based on how confident I felt when completing it.

The second approach my teacher encouraged was writing an entire problem down before attempting to solve it. This forced me to acknowledge the whole question, ensuring I read and understood what it was asking, before solving it; then when finished, I had a clear idea of

whether to write RQT or GTG. This simple method has traveled with me from my freshman year at Joel Barlow High School to my freshman year at Columbia University, as I used it often while studying for Calculus III.

The second skill, writing, I learned much later in AP Language and Composition. While not required for Barlow students, “AP Lang” was structured as a class where writing was constant and imperative. Often with multiple essays due in one week, I was forced to write continuously; however, rather than accept this as a burden, I recognized the importance of its practice. Later, when applying to college, I realized how strong my voice had

become and how necessary a skill it was to be able to communicate clearly. In all the newly required essays, I had to be precise and concise. AP Lang honed my writing skills so that, whether intentionally straightforward and clear or literary and circuitous, I had control over my communication style.

The third skill is one I am still refining today: speaking. Taking a debate class in my junior year at Barlow gave me the opportunity to develop my public speaking skills. By debating philosophical texts and current Supreme Court cases, I not only wrote, but also spoke about topics I was passionate about. However, as I finished my first semester in college and decided to go through

Planners discuss housing growth plan approach | continued from page 1

versus developing an independent municipal plan.

Because Redding is in the West-COG region, its plan is not due until 2028. Redding may opt into the WestCOG regional plan or develop its own. It will have a 30-day window to either adopt the regional plan or develop a custom local plan. Redding will continue to monitor WestCOG’s regional plan development before deciding whether to opt-in or create a standalone plan, leveraging the fact that the filing is not required until 2028.

First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton noted that WestCOG provides a “stress test” for housing numbers, often pushing back against uniform “fair share” allocations to ensure they reflect the unique characteristics of individual towns. A regional approach also can take into account workforce numbers, commercial districts, and commuter considerations that span across municipal borders.

Planning Commission member Elizabeth Jensen questioned if the group’s current work to update the Town’s Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) could be leveraged for the development of a housing growth plan. Pemberton advised that while the two are related, the Town has significant time to decide on its approach for the housing growth plan, as West-COG begins its analytical deep dive.

“Because we’re in the West-COG region, our growth plan does not have to be filed until 2028,” said Pemberton. “WestCOG is just getting started, so engage in that discussion as it moves forward.”

Pemberton added that she will provide a detailed breakdown of the housing growth plan adoption timeline and the 30-day voting window once more information is available. ■

and was admitted to the *Blue and White Magazine*, New York Small Claims Advisory Service, Columbia Pre-Law Society, and more.

As I prepare for my second year at Barnard College of Columbia University, I am grateful for the foundational skills that Joel Barlow High School has given me, as well as the fundamental capabilities that each school during my time in Redding taught me throughout the years. Their relevancy does not diminish as I grow older and begin crafting my career. ■

Willow Bradford is a member of the Joel Barlow High School Class of 2025 and a Redding Sentinel summer intern

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies
R = registration required

This Week’s Featured Events

Politics and Pie Saturday, June 27 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. Hear from Rep. Anne Hughes and Sen. Ceci Maher on latest legislative updates and enjoy pie from Christina Mattinson Weston Public Library Lawn 56 Norfield Road Weston	Concert on the Green Series Sundays, June 28 and July 5 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Violet Engine (June 28) What It Is (July 5) Redding Town Green 100 Hill Road reddingct.gov/ parks-and-recreation	Redding’s Annual Garden Produce Drive Wednesdays, July 1 – October 14 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Drop off surplus garden produce to benefit Social Services and ARC Comida Food Pantry Redding Grange #15 (399 Newtown Turnpike) The Granite (5 North Main Street) Mark Twain Library (439 Redding Road) community@reddinggrange.org	Want to feature an upcoming event? E-mail us at advertise@reddingsentinel.org for more information.
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ARTS

Friday, June 26

Dance The Line
7:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.
Line dancing and lessons throughout the night, onsite childcare available
5 North Main Street
thegranitechurch.org
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Sundays, June 28 and July 5

Concert on the Green Series
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Violet Engine (June 28)
What It Is (July 5)
Redding Town Green
100 Hill Road
reddingct.gov/parks-and-recreation

Tuesday, July 7

Find Your Rhythm: Ballroom Dancing 101
6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Held outdoors as weather permits
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
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CHILDREN | TEENS

Saturday, June 27

Family Field Day
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Lawn and field games, pool and splash pad
Wilton YMCA
404 Danbury Road, Wilton
wiltonymca.org/family-field-day-june-27-2026
R

Tuesdays, June 30, July 7, July 14

Family Checkout Chat & Chew
9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Donuts, bagels, toys, and books
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
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Saturday, July 11

Cub Scouts Summer Splash
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Water activities, crafts, challenges, and fun for whole family
Non-members welcome, grades K-5
Hoyt Scout Reservation
3 Marchant Road
campmatch.ca/camp/hoyt-scout-reservation/cub-scout-summer-splash-family-saturday-day-camp-redding
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HOLIDAYS | SEASONAL

Thursday, July 2

Independence Day Fireworks
9:00 p.m.
Tickets must be purchased at Westport Police Department, 60 Compo Beach Road
Westport
westportct.gov
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Friday, July 3

“3rd of July” Party: Fireworks and Patriotic Tailgating Contest
4:30 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.
Food trucks, music, and fireworks
Weston Middle School Field
135 School Road
Weston
westonct.gov/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/9327/196

Saturday, July 4

60th Annual John Demille Firecracker 8K Road Race
8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.
Municipal Center
1 School Street
Bethel
runsignup.com/Race/CT/BethelJohnDemilleFirecracker-8KRoadRace
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Saturday, July 4

Party in the Park
11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Family-friendly entertainment, Ballard Park
485 Main Street
Ridgefield
ridgefieldct250.org/events/july-4th-festivities-in-ballard-park

Saturday, July 4

Wilton July 4th Parade
11:00 a.m.
Parade from River Road Stop & Shop to Wilton Town Green
Wilton
wiltonct.gov/parks-recreation-department/america-250-celebration-and-events

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Saturday, June 27

Politics and Pie
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Hear from Rep. Anne Hughes and Sen. Ceci Maher on latest legislative updates and enjoy pie from Christina Mattinson
Weston Public Library Lawn
56 Norfield Road
Weston

Tuesday, June 30

A Stone’s Throw – Fairfield University Art Museum Exhibition: “For Which It Stands”
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Join friends from Mark Twain Library on a guided tour of major exhibit of American flags
Fairfield University Art Museum, Bellarmine Hall Galleries
1073 North Benson Road
Fairfield
marktwainlibrary.org/events
R

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

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bethlehemlutheranct.org

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Wednesday prayer meeting at 7:00 p.m.
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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 a.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
Friday, June 26
7:00 p.m.
Shabbat at Home
templebnaichaim.org

MEETINGS

Monday, July 6

Republican Town Committee
7:30 p.m.
97 Cross Highway

Wednesday, July 8

Commission on Aging
9:00 a.m.
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road

Wednesday, July 8

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

Thursday, July 9

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

Thursday, July 9

Gilbert and Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee
6:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Conference Room and Virtual
100 Hill Road and Zoom

Thursday, July 9

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

Monday, July 13

Park and Recreation Commission
7:00 p.m.
Redding Community Center / Multi-Purpose Room
37 Lonetown Road

Tuesday, July 14

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

Tuesday, July 14

Redding Fire District #1
7:00 p.m.
186 Black Rock Turnpike

Wednesday, July 15

Water Pollution Control Commission
7:30 p.m.
Virtual

Thursday, July 16

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

** Subscribe to e-mailed meeting alerts and agendas at
reddingct.gov/subscribe



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CarolHanlonHomes.com



767 Ridgebury Road, Ridgefield | \$1,899,000
Listed By John Frey | 203.240.0624
Jhfrey@aol.com



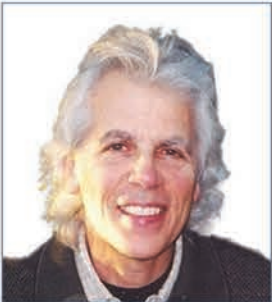
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646.932.4075



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203.770.6240



Terri Tournas
203.561.5893

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1. & 2 Based on information from Greenwich Association of REALTORS, SmartMLS Inc. 4/1/2025-3/31/2026. The property information herein is derived from various sources that may include, but not be limited to, county records and the Multiple Listing Service, and it may include approximations. Although the information is believed to be accurate, it is not warranted and you should not rely upon it without personal verification. Affiliated real estate agents are independent contractor sales associates, not employees. ©2026 Coldwell Banker. All Rights Reserved. Coldwell Banker and the Coldwell Banker logo are trademarks of Coldwell Banker Real Estate LLC. The Coldwell Banker® System is comprised of company owned offices which are owned by a subsidiary of Anywhere Advisors LLC and franchised offices which are independently owned and operated. The Coldwell Banker System fully supports the principles of the Fair Housing Act and the Equal Opportunity Act.

