

# REDDING SENTINEL



JANUARY 8, 2026

REDDING, CONNECTICUT

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## New state laws taking effect January 1

### Housing, solar panels, minimum wage

By Gabby DeBenedictis

Connecticut has kicked off 2026 with nearly two dozen new laws that were slated to wholly or partially take effect on January 1.

The laws touch a range of areas in the state, from farming to pharmaceuticals to housing to the justice system.

Connecticut laws are passed by the General Assembly during the legislative session each year — this year's ran from January 8 to June 4 — or in a special session. They typically take effect on January 1, July 1, or October 1. Here's a look at some of the laws that were implemented on day one of the new year.

*Continued on page 5*



*Photo by Richard Wald*

Sunlight illuminates the treetops along Redding Road in the final days of 2025. If you have a photo you'd like to see featured here, e-mail [editor@reddingsentinel.org](mailto:editor@reddingsentinel.org).

## Selectmen authorize Weaving Building roof repairs

By Rocco Valluzzo



*Photo courtesy of Revitalize Georgetown project*  
**Weaving Building**

Hoping to prevent further damage to the Weaving Building on the former Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill property, the Board of Selectmen has authorized First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton to expend an amount not to exceed \$55,000 from the Wire Mill Maintenance account to pay for roof repairs.

There are areas of the roof where rainwater is coming directly into the building unimpeded. Although

the wooden floor is starting to rot, it is reinforced by steel beams, so the structure remains sound.

"It's really starting to deteriorate more and more," said Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Chair Amy Atamian. "In the past year, it has changed a lot."

The Wire Mill Maintenance account, which currently contains \$612,709, can be used to pay for the repairs. Pemberton will follow the normal procurement process with Town Treasurer Wes Higgins.

"We've had one contractor look at the roof," said Pemberton at the Board of Selectmen's December 15 meeting. "We have a few others who will take a look and provide estimates for us. We're not going to do more than we have to. That's the goal at this point."

Pemberton added that repairs should have been done a year ago, but the Town wanted to go for grant

funding before spending taxpayer money. She did not want the roof to go through another winter without being repaired.

She also said the goal is to perform the minimum amount of repair necessary to stop or significantly reduce water penetration while mitigating safety and avoiding unnecessary work. This will involve installing or fabricating a hatch in two locations and closing all visible openings, gaps, and deteriorating areas using asphalt shingles where appropriate. In places where shingles cannot be installed, wet and dry roof cement and specialty roofing fabric will be applied to create a stronger, more durable patch.

"It sounds like this was the plan anyway," said Selectwoman Diana Carlino. "The goal is to do it in the least obtrusive way, I'm sure." ■

## REDDING'S BIG OUTDOORS

### Stepping into the new year

#### Col. Alfred McCormack Preserve

By Jessie Wright



*Photo by Cole Tucker-Walton*

Nearly two dozen hikers gathered at the snowy trailhead to Col. Alfred McCormack Preserve on Thursday, January 1 for Redding Land Trust's annual New Year's Day Hike, offered as part of the Community Hiking Club put together in partnership with Mark Twain Library and Redding Neighbors & Newcomers.

Redding Land Trust Co-President Gordon Loery led the hike, joined by fellow Trustees Cole Tucker-Walton, Marjorie

Derven, and Tom Hamilton, along with Stuart Green, leader of the Trail Tenders and member of the Conservation Commission.

Starting the new year hiking this loop has only recently become possible. This is the second year that the Col. Alfred McCormack Preserve has been open year-round to the public, as one of the provisions of the gift of 238 acres to the Redding Land Trust was that the Stamford Fish and Game Sportsmen's Association would

have access to the property for hunting during the winter until 2024.

On the white-blazed loop, Green and Loery pointed out the connector to the Furlough Trail, which they recently re-routed to make for easier hiking between McCormack and the Henry and Lotte Fields Preserve. According to Tucker-Walton, several of the hikers commented that they hoped to return to the mostly unimpeded trails with snowshoes or cross-country skis.

"With a brilliant blue sky and sparkling snow, (we) braved the cold to enjoy a brisk hike at McCormack Preserve," said Derven. "If you missed the New Year's Day Hike and want to explore Redding's many beautiful trails, check out the monthly hikes offered by the Redding Community Hiking Club, a collaborative program from the Land Trust, Mark Twain Library, and Redding Neighbors & Newcomers — register at [marktwainlibrary.org](http://marktwainlibrary.org)." ■

## What does CT's new housing law mean for Redding?

By Jessie Wright

There has been talk (some hopeful, some fearful) for years about the potential for new state legislation to address Connecticut's constrained housing market. This November, H.B. 8002 was passed during special session and signed into law after an earlier version of the bill (H.B. 5002) was passed in regular session but vetoed by Governor Ned Lamont. Many aspects of the bill went into effect on January 1, 2026, with some deadlines for towns coming in July 2026.

The *Sentinel* has covered the state housing debate and this latest legislation's development for several months through its syndication agreement with *CT Mirror*. Now, with H.B. 8002 officially "the law of the land," our work turns to better understanding the implications of this legislation for Redding specifically.

We spoke with and heard from several elected officials, regional leaders, and land use advocates for their insights about what the new law presents for our town — both opportunities and consequences. At this point, our local and regional leaders' priority is to study the bill more closely to get a clearer picture for themselves. The omnibus bill is long — more than 100 pages — and it takes time to parse through legal requirements and current zoning language to analyze the requirements and make a plan.

In the meantime, though, here are some of the answers to the questions we asked.

### How involved were Redding's representatives in shaping or providing feedback during the bill's development?

First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton played a role in the bill's evolution by successfully advocating against the previous version, H.B. 5002, in particular the numbers of new housing units assigned to each municipality. She sent a letter to Governor Lamont requesting he veto H.B. 5002, which he ultimately did. Pemberton told the *Sentinel* she did not communicate further with the Governor ahead of the special session but was aware of ongoing negotiations through the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) to remove "objectionable pieces" like fair share mandates. "It's a much better bill than it was," she said.

Francis Pickering, Executive Director for WestCOG (of which Redding is a part), was heavily involved in the technical feedback process during the regular legislative session. He submitted written testimony on approximately 86 different housing bills over the year and engaged in conversations with the Governor's office, the Council of Small Towns (COST), and the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) over the summer to address defects in the vetoed bill. "Many of those concepts did end up in 5002 and now 8002," he said. "Some of them we opposed, some we supported. Most of them, we offered what we thought was a constructive critique."

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## EDITORIAL

### New year, new budget

The new year seems to come more quickly with each trip around the sun. At the *Sentinel*, nowhere is that more evident than the return of "budget season." Though it feels like only yesterday we were publishing referendum results, municipal and school leaders now are planning in earnest for the upcoming 2026-27 fiscal year.

A quick review for those unfamiliar with the Town's budget. The "combined budget" has three major components: The Selectmen's budget, which includes municipal departments; Redding Board of Education's budget, which includes Redding Elementary School and John Read Middle School; and Redding's portion of the Region 9 Board of Education Budget, which includes Joel Barlow High School. The combined budget also includes any debt service on bond issues previously approved by Town Meeting.

On Friday, January 9, the Board of Selectmen will hold its annual budget workshop from 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at Town Hall, during which each Town department will present its initial numbers. Members of the Board of Finance also will be present to ask questions. While nothing discussed is final, the workshop provides a useful primer on the major themes of the upcoming year and what factors might be drivers for cost increases or opportunities to bring in additional revenue.

The Redding Board of Education will host its first budget presentation on Wednesday, January 14 at 7:00 p.m. at John Read Middle School. There also will be a Redding Board of Education budget workshop on Tuesday, February 3 at 6:00 p.m.. The district typically creates a live budget spreadsheet as it works through the process that the public can peruse. Those budget materials are hosted at [https://www.er9.org/33103\\_3](https://www.er9.org/33103_3).

While the Region 9 Board of Education does not yet have any budget meetings scheduled, they likely will begin discussing similar considerations at their Board and Committee meetings in January and February. It is important to note that, because Redding and Easton share the cost of the Region 9 budget, this budget is not overseen by Redding's Board of Finance – the Region 9 Board of Education approves its numbers and notifies the Town of the total.

Public hearings on the proposed budgets are typically held in mid- to late March, with numbers finalized in April, and the referendum vote in early May. Keep your eye out for coverage and notices in the *Sentinel* and at [reddingct.gov/events](http://reddingct.gov/events) for updates. ■

## LEGAL NOTICES

### NOTICE TO TAXPAYERS, GEORGETOWN AND REDDING

**THE SECOND INSTALLMENT OF REAL ESTATE, PERSONAL PROPERTY, AND SUPPLEMENTAL MOTOR VEHICLE TAXES ON THE GRAND LIST OF OCTOBER 1, 2024, IS DUE AND PAYABLE JANUARY 1, 2026.**

**TAXES DUE JANUARY 1, 2026, MUST BE POSTMARKED OR PAID, NO LATER THAN FEBRUARY 2, 2026, TO AVOID PENALTY. TAXES ARE DELINQUENT FEBRUARY 3, 2026**

Payments postmarked, Paid in Person or Paid online, on or after February 3, 2026 are delinquent and will carry an interest penalty charged at the rate of Eighteen (18%) percent annually or one and one-half (1.5%) percent monthly, from the January 1, 2026 due date.

Supplemental Motor Vehicle Taxes are due in full January 1, 2026. Failure to make payment in accordance with the above will result in suspension of registration privileges in addition to the interest charges.

Delinquent Motor Vehicle Taxes must be paid in cash, certified check, money order or by credit card, to obtain a registration clearance

**FAILURE TO RECEIVE A TAX BILL DOES NOT EXEMPT YOU FROM PAYMENT OF TAX OR PENALTY.**

Oldest outstanding taxes must be paid prior to paying current taxes.

Taxes can be paid or viewed at [www.reddingct.gov](http://www.reddingct.gov)  
You may call (866) 923-8245 to make a credit/debit card payment.

Town Hall hours may vary due to weather conditions. However, due dates do not. Verify the Town Hall is open and the department you need is open before coming in person. The Town Hall is closed on Fridays. We are located at 100 Hill Rd, Redding, CT; Telephone: (203) 938-2706. ■

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

At its meeting on 12/09/2025, the Redding Planning Commission approved that Subdivision App'l #418, 11 Mark Twain Lane, Lee Umphred, owner, be amended to permit the use of pervious material in place of the originally approved impervious material due to the change of the house position and thus the gradient of the driveway to a more level driveway.

The above-referenced file is available for inspection at the Land Use Office. ■

Laurie L. Heiss, Chairman  
Redding Planning Commission

### TOWN OF REDDING NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

A public meeting will be held on Monday, January 12, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. at Redding Town Hall, 100 Hill Road, Redding, CT seeking public comment on the draft FY26 application to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Brownfields Cleanup Grant. The Town is applying for an EPA grant to request funding for remedial activities for the Gilbert and Bennett Wire Mill site located at 30 North Main Street.

The Town of Redding will discuss the draft application and respond to public comments. A copy of the draft application and a draft of the Analysis of Brownfields Cleanup Alternatives (ABC) will be available for review at the Town Clerk's office and on the town website. Public comments can also be e-mailed to [gfiore@reddingct.gov](mailto:gfiore@reddingct.gov) by Monday, January 12, 2026, by 1:00 p.m. ■

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

*We welcome Letters to the Editor. Please be clear, civil, and concise. E-mail [editor@reddingsentinel.org](mailto:editor@reddingsentinel.org) with submissions.*

### To the Editor,

The Redding Preservation Society urges the public to attend two hearings dealing with an application for a proposed building (Accessory Dwelling Unit and two-car garage) on the site of the Daffodil Field at 70 Cross Highway. One on Tuesday, January 13, a Planning Commission meeting. The other, on Wednesday January 14, a Zoning Commission meeting. ■

Raymond D'Angelo  
President, Redding Preservation Society  
Cross Highway resident

### Un-deck the halls

#### *Town to offer Christmas tree drop-off or pick-up this month*

By Jessie Wright



The Town of Redding is providing two ways to dispose of your Christmas tree this year.

The Department of Public Works will be picking up trees left curbside at Redding addresses during the week of January 19, 2026, weather permitting. All decorations, lights, and stands must be removed. Wreaths and artificial trees will not be collected.

Residents can also drop their trees at the Transfer Station at 84 Hopewell Woods Road from 7:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. on Mondays,

Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. Real trees can be dropped free of charge. Artificial trees will be charged 25 cents per pound, and a Transfer Center permit is required.

Retired Christmas trees also make excellent habitats for birds and other creatures during the winter. Residents can leave trees on their properties to serve wildlife, if convenient. ■

## POLICE BLOTER

### Wild weather generates double-digit hazard calls Police activity December 15 – 31

By Donna Christopher

#### Public Hazards

There were 34 reports of public or road hazards over the two-week period, with the majority (20 reports) occurring on December 19. According to Chief Robert Kalamaras, many of the road hazards were a result of the wind and rain that day which caused downed trees and power lines, and took out traffic signals in Georgetown for several hours.

#### Traffic

Police conducted 69 motor vehicle stops, issuing one summons, 31 tickets, 12 written warnings, and 25 verbal warnings. The infraction rate was 46%.

A Norwalk driver was arrested on December 23 for operating under the influence after colliding

with a utility pole on Picketts Ridge Road. He was processed and released without incident after posting 7% of a \$500 bond. He was due to appear in Danbury Superior Court on January 6, 2026.

Seven two-vehicle accidents were reported in the two-week period, with no injuries resulting. Cars traveled off the roadway in two instances on December 26 – one striking a guardrail on Newtown Turnpike and another on Sunset Hill Road. A tree struck a car on North Park Avenue on Christmas Eve, but no injuries were reported.

#### Fraud/Larceny

Someone on Cricklewood Road reported a credit card was being used fraudulently on Long Island on December 16.

A package was reported stolen on December 21 from a front porch on Sanfordtown Road.

A resident on Portland Avenue reported on December 30 that someone had opened a credit card account using her information.

#### Suspicious Incidents

There were three calls for suspicious incidents in the two-week period. A suspicious vehicle on Newtown Turnpike checked out as someone talking on the phone. A house cleaner arrived at a house on Guardhouse Drive unexpectedly. A caller reported 10 packages on the side of Windy Hill Road; but when the officers arrived, the packages were gone. ■

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## Redding couple's grandson now a major player in drone business

By Rob Sample



Yann (left) and Olaf (right) Hichwa pose with their grandparents, Redding's Marion and John Hichwa. With them for the portrait is Sammy, the couple's five-year-old poodle.

It's no surprise when grandparents talk highly about their grandchildren. But for a variety of reasons, 24-year-old Olaf Hichwa has given grandparents John and Marion Hichwa some remarkable bragging rights.

One of those occasions might be

when one's grandchild is the subject of a multi-page profile in *The New York Times*. In 2023, at just 22 years of age, Olaf co-founded Neros Technologies along with longtime friend and fellow drone racer Soren Monroe-Anderson. Their El Segundo, California-based company produces, on a large scale, first-person-view drones for America's defense forces. In just a few years, Neros has received backing from major venture capitalists and contracts to produce thousands of drones for the U.S. Army, the Marines, and Ukraine.

Although Olaf grew up in Bethesda, Maryland, he spent plenty of time at his grandparents' home in Redding. "When I was a kid, I visited my grandparents for three to five weeks each summer," he recalled during a surprisingly clear cell phone call from an unnamed

part of Ukraine. "During these visits, my grandmother would take me to the Mark Twain Library. She wanted me to have an appreciation for reading. I wouldn't say I always 'got it' at the time – but as I grew older, I appreciated what she did and the time she spent with me."

All five of the Hichwas' grandchildren went to the summer camp at New Pond Farm. "So, he has fond memories from there," noted John. "About a year and a half ago, Olaf visited us with a girlfriend – and while he was here, he brought her to New Pond Farm."

John and Marion still live in the house on Old Stagecoach Road where Olaf's father grew up. Several decades ago, John installed a court on his large parcel and began giving adults and kids tennis lessons and hosting informal tournaments. Olaf became one of his students.

The property also featured several gardens, where young Olaf helped his grandmother with planting and weeding. In the garage were both a wood-splitter and tractor, two things not common to suburban Maryland.

"I loved that machine," Olaf



Olaf Hichwa, co-founder of Neros Technologies, poses with a stack of drone aircraft designed and manufactured by his firm. The company aims to ramp up large-scale production of military drones to be used in actual battlefield situations.

recalled. "It was my first experience with a vehicle."

Those early experiences imbued Olaf with a love for technology. Around age 11, he began building and piloting remote-controlled helicopters; a few years later, he became a drone aficionado. Olaf competed in drone races throughout the region and nationwide. He met his future business partner, Monroe-Anderson, during these events.

While attending Walt Whitman High School in Bethesda, Olaf began building small, lightweight circuit boards for drones using components often sourced from China. By graduation, the fledgling enterprise had sold 2,000 of these units – at \$30 each. No small feat for a high school student.

Olaf attended Rochester Institute of Technology for two years, leaving to work at a Silicon Valley start-up begun by Stanford PhDs. By chance, Monroe-Anderson worked nearby. "He showed up at my workplace one day and tried to convince me to quit to go in

*Continued on page 9*

## Town to enter a voluntary remediation program

By Rocco Valluzzo

To ensure that Redding is eligible for grants from the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Board of Selectmen authorized First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton to apply for entry into a voluntary remediation program at its December 15 meeting.

Such programs encourage cleaning up contaminated properties (like the former Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill site) voluntarily, reducing liability concerns and promoting redevelopment through processes managed by licensed professionals.

Connecticut also has an abandoned Brownfield program. However, Redding is not eligible to participate for the Wire Mill site, since it would have had to enter the program before it took ownership of the property.

According to Pemberton, when Redding applied for its current EPA grant, one of the conditions of the application was that the Town enter a voluntary remediation program with the State of Connecticut and its Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). Redding already participates in a municipal liability protection program.

"One of the things I wanted to establish was that by entering into this program, it did not create any liability to the Town for clean-up beyond what we have committed to do," said Pemberton. "We don't have to do any remediation other than what we have committed to under the EPA grant we applied for, which is excavation of hot spots in two areas and hazardous building materials remediation at the Blue Building and the Main Office."

She added that the voluntary remediation is an elective process,

not mandatory, with no specific statutory or regulatory timelines for completion of the remediation. Entering the program does not make an existing property owner responsible for what occurred prior to the owner's acquisition of the property.

"If we decided to do nothing with the property, we would have to do nothing," explained Pemberton. "Because we are cleaning it up to the extent that we said we would, under the EPA grant, the EPA is requiring us to be in a voluntary program."

Redding's current EPA grant is \$2 million and involves a four-year timeline. Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee Chair Amy Atamian said the Town intends to complete the program during that time frame.

Her committee has done some testing on the peeling paint on the Machine Shop building and is looking into methods needed to remove it. There is also an update from Architectural Preservation Studio (APS) on what has to be done to renovate the exterior of the Main Office building.

"We just need to separate what's abatement from what's a repair, because the EPA grant is only going to apply to abatement type activities," said Atamian. "The focus is going to be on the first round of work of the building abatement and then once that is done, work on soil remediation in the West Pond and OMS areas."

Within a week or two, Atamian expected the committee will have an evaluation from APS of all the buildings as well as an idea of what needs to be done to stabilize them and how to prioritize that work. ■

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## SPORTS

### Personal bests come in opener

#### Girls and boys indoor track and field

By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Joel Barlow High's Max Mehner cleared seven feet, six inches in the pole vault at the first South-West Conference developmental indoor track meet on Saturday, January 3.

Top-three finishes as well as personal-best times and distances highlighted the strong performances of the Joel Barlow High indoor track teams at the first South-West Conference developmental meet of the season last week.

#### Girls indoor track and field

The Falcons were off and running at the Bethel High Track and Field Training Center on Saturday, January 3, snagging a few victories along the way. One came in the 800 meters for the Barlow girls, who were led by Kate Duggan's time of 2:29.29 seconds. Sixth went to Sadie Troy with a 2:54.54. Both were personal records.

Barlow followed with a win in

the 55-meter hurdles, with Phoebe Cora Smith running an 8.66. In the 55 meters, Olivia Taylor was just 0.12 seconds off the win, taking second in 7.53 seconds behind Brookfield's Mackenzie Bray.

Going the distance in the 1,000 meters, Clara Mehner finished in 3:29.50, good for third. Victory in the 600 just escaped Duggan, as she was runner up in 1:45.81 (personal record) behind Weston's Abigail Winslow.

Three top-seven finishes went to the Falcons in the 1,600. Stephanie Bardani led the way in third with a 5:51.04, a personal record, and Mehner was two places later in 6:31.31. Troy took seventh in 6:51.9, also a personal record.

Two of the top three places in the 300 meters went to the Falcons, starting with Taylor's win in 42.71. Smith claimed third with a 44.08.

Moving onto the field events, the Falcons took third in the pole vault with Viv D'Amico clearing seven feet, six inches in the pole vault, also a personal record. Getting her second win of the day, Taylor was first in the long jump with a leap of 15' 6" to lead a one-two finish for Barlow, followed by Jessica Russo in second with 14' 9.5", a personal record.

#### Boys indoor track and field

Several high finishes also went to the Barlow boys team. One came in the 55 meters, featuring Ethan Peters running a 6.89, behind only Bethel's Marcus Graham, and a personal record. Seventh went to Lucas Jandura in 7.10, also a personal record.

A 2:24.01 by William Miller was good for seventh and a personal record in the 800. Max Mehner ran the 1,000 in 3:03.04, taking seventh, and tied with Brookfield's Connor Sanford for sixth in the 1,600 in 5:19.82, both personal records.

Peters's second runner-up finish was in the 300, coming in 38.33 for a personal record. Victory did not elude him in the long jump, as he went 18' 6", a personal record and three inches more than Bethel's Andrew Hodge.

One of three athletes to clear 10' 6" in the pole vault, Bauer Heres took seventh based on number of attempts. ■

### Late lead does not hold up for Barlow

#### Boys basketball

By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Joel Barlow High's Ryan Kelly goes for a lay-up shot during a boys varsity basketball game against Bethel on Friday, January 2.

add to their lead before halftime, but their shooting went cold in the second quarter, going only 22% from the floor with a couple of baskets by center Ben Noome. In the meantime, the Wildcats benefitted in part by three-point shots from Victor Oloke and Elliot Hellman, cutting Barlow's lead to four (22-18) at the break.

Barlow picked up the pace offensively when the second half got underway, led in part by Chase Bonanno's five-point effort. Although the Falcons held the Wildcats to just six points from the field, the latter hit five of six free throws to stay within striking distance (34-29) heading into the final frame.

By then, the Wildcats began to rely heavily on their perimeter shooting, with treys from Oloke getting them within two points (37-35) of the hosts. Hellman was later fouled while hitting a lay-up to put the Wildcats on top 37-38 with 5:22 left.

"They're hard to keep track of," said Stevens. "We lost track of a few assignments here and there."

Barlow's last lead came at 5:05 when Sean Gabriel hit two free throws to make it 39-38, but Bethel managed to sink two more three-pointers and hit five of six shots from the foul line to keep a step ahead of the Falcons.

Bethel's Oloke (six three-pointers) and Hellman led the scoring with 18 points apiece. Noome led Barlow with 13 and Bonanno had 11. Stark (one three-pointer) scored seven, while Gabriel and Kelly had four and five respectively.

"We're off to a good start," said Stevens, whose team is now 3-2. "I'm really proud of the work they put in. Now we have to bounce back."

Barlow hosts Newtown on Friday, January 9 and is at Brookfield on Monday, January 12. Both games are at 7:00 p.m. ■

**NEW POND FARM'S**  
**OPEN DAY**  
**11am - 2pm**

Discover New Pond Farm Education Center during our Open Day! Explore our beautiful landscape, visit barnyard animals, enjoy hands-on activities, and meet our staff and Board.

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Stop by and spend the afternoon with us!

**JANUARY 10TH**  
101 Marchant Rd, Redding, CT 06896  
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**Free and open to all – no registration required.**

## Joel Barlow sports results and schedules



#### Boys basketball

##### Results:

December 29:  
Abbott Tech 53 / Joel Barlow 47  
January 2: Bethel 51 / Joel Barlow 44  
**Record:**  
Joel Barlow 3-2  
**Next games:**  
January 9: home versus Newtown at 7:00 p.m.  
January 12: away at Brookfield at 7:00 p.m.

#### Girls basketball

##### Results:

December 29:  
Ansonia 54 / Joel Barlow 45  
**Record:**  
Joel Barlow 2-2  
**Next games:**  
January 8: away at Newtown at 6:00 p.m.  
January 10: away at Waterbury Career Academy at 7:00 p.m.  
January 12: home versus Brookfield at 6:00 p.m.

#### Hockey

##### Results:

January 3: Tri-Town 1 / Joel Barlow 1  
**Record:**  
Joel Barlow 0-1-1  
**Next games:**  
January 10: home versus Northeastern Shamrocks at 12:00 p.m.  
January 14: home versus Newtown-New Fairfield at 5:30 p.m.

#### Boys swimming

##### Record:

Joel Barlow 0-1  
**Next meets:**  
January 13: away at Brookfield at 4:00 p.m.

#### Indoor track and field

##### Next meets:

January 10: away at Brookfield at 9:00 a.m.

#### Boys soccer

##### Results:

#### Wrestling

##### Results:

December 30: Joel Barlow 58 / Notre Dame Prep 18  
**Record:**  
Joel Barlow 1-1  
**Next matches:**  
January 10: away at Canton at 9:30 a.m.  
January 14: away at Pomperaug at 6:00 p.m.

**See up-to-date practice and game schedules at [joelbarlowps.org/athletics/home](http://joelbarlowps.org/athletics/home)**

### Knights salvage tie with late goal

#### Hockey

By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Joel Barlow High/Weston/Abbott Tech's Christopher Nesto tries to get around Tri-Town's Ryan Guerin during a hockey game on Saturday, January 3.

The break the Joel Barlow High/Weston/Abbott Tech (JBWA) hockey team needed would come in time when it faced Tri-Town (East Windsor/Ellington/Somers).

Despite having their fair share of shots throughout the game, the Knights were down by a goal in the third period. A scramble in front of the Tri-Town goal resulted in the equalizer in what eventually ended in a 1-1 tie at the Danbury Arena on Saturday, January 3.

"We were a little flat for most of the game," said JBWA Head Coach Bob Stearns. "We woke up in the second half of the third period, and we played really well in the overtime as well."

With play evenly matched for the most part, the first period featured both teams testing each other's defense. While the Knights had eight shots, a number of them were

*Continued on page 5*

# Barlow announces four new classes for next school year

By Anne Young Albanese

Joel Barlow High School has announced its Program of Studies for the 2026-27 school year, with registration beginning on January 6 and running through February. Students register for courses during individual counselor meetings, according to Director of School Counseling Catherine Hilser. Incoming freshmen will meet with their high school guidance counselors when the counselors visit John Read Middle School.

Four new classes are being introduced next school year which will provide students with the opportunity to develop or deepen their education in specific areas.

## Honors American Government

Barlow has offered a class on American Government in the past but now has added Honors American Government for next year. This is a one-semester class worth one credit. It is offered in both the fall and spring semesters. It is for students in grades 10 through 12, but students should obtain a teacher's recommendation to register for it. This course meets the civics requirement for graduation.

This course will address the framework of the Federal government and the governing of the American people in greater depth than the general American Government class. There will be more in-depth academic vocabulary, and the teacher will expect students to demonstrate their knowledge through a deeper analysis of course topics. The course begins with the development of American philosophy, examining the Constitution with a focus on the functions and interactions of the three branches of government, and concludes with an intensive study of the Bill of Rights. Students engage in an exchange of ideas to inspire intellectual curiosity and civic responsibility. Independent research, thinking, reading, and writing are key parts of the course. Students will use relevant information from a variety of sources to construct thoughtful position statements and persuasive essays. The political process, the complexity of public policy, and current government issues are also

explored.

## Advanced Placement (AP) Business with Personal Finance

This is a two-semester course with one credit per semester open to students in grades 10 through 12. The prerequisite for this class is the completion of two business courses, which could include Accounting, Entrepreneurship, Introduction to Business, Marketing, Economics, and Personal Finance. This course requires some summer work. If a student obtains department or administrative approval, only one of the prerequisite classes is required. It is recommended that the student have a recommendation from a teacher of one of the prerequisite courses and high achievement (grade of B or higher) in that course.

AP Business with Personal Finance is a college-level course that combines advanced business concepts with nationally recognized personal finance standards. Students learn about management, marketing, entrepreneurship, accounting, and business finance, while also mastering budgeting, saving, borrowing, taxes, insurance, and long-term investing. The course is based on AP's case study methodology, requiring students to analyze real business scenarios and apply strategic decision-making. It strengthens preparation for college business majors, provides students with another option for satisfying the Financial Literacy requirement, and offers students a nationally recognized credential endorsed by employers.

In addition to the opportunity to earn credits toward their college degrees, students may earn an employer-endorsed credential in the business field. These will depend on the student achieving a qualifying score on the end-of-year AP exam and on the full-year Business Canvas Project.

## ESL (English as a Second Language) Foundations

This entry-level course is for multilingual learners to develop their English skills. It is a two-semester course, worth one credit for each semester. It is open to students in all grades at Barlow. There are no prerequisites for this class, and it is appropriate for students who are starting to learn English. This class

qualifies for an elective credit.

This class is focused on establishing a working knowledge of the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – in English. Every lesson will also include elements of American culture. This course is for students who score in the beginning ranges of the LAS Links placement exam. Students expand basic communication skills and academic language while improving English grammatical structures. This course satisfies an elective credit.

## ESL English

This class is for multilingual learners in all grades at Barlow. It is a full-year class with one credit for each semester. There is no prerequisite for this class, but students should have a basic foundation in English. This course satisfies an entry-level English course requirement.

This course helps students reinforce their foundation in English, improve literacy skills, and expand academic vocabulary. Each lesson focuses on enhancing students' precision and variation in word choice and language patterns. Students practice using familiar language in new ways while expanding their repertoire of phrases and grammatical complexity. Students will continue to build on the four language skills using accessible, written and audio texts in English.

## Other offerings

In addition to the four new classes, the counseling team is working to develop a partnership with the University of Connecticut to offer dual-enrollment courses. This program invites any Connecticut high school to apply. Hilser is currently completing the application to participate, so any credit opportunities will be announced later this spring. Students will have the opportunity to discuss these or any other classes during their individual meetings with their guidance counselors. ■

New state laws taking effect January 1 / *continued from page 1*

## Wide-ranging housing bill

Most of H.B. 8002, a sweeping, contentious housing bill, took effect on January 1. The bill's major goal is to make it easier to build more housing in Connecticut. It requires towns to create housing growth plans with goals on how many units they'll plan and zone for, changes minimum off-street parking requirements, and incentivizes towns to take steps to allow more housing, among other measures.

It also expands the number of fair rent commissions — a government body that can hear complaints about rent increases and make decisions on whether to change that rental increase number — and bans "hostile architecture," or the use of things like armrests in the middle of benches or spikes to make it harder for people experiencing homelessness to lie down.

The bill was a modified version of H.B. 5002, which Governor Ned Lamont vetoed during the 2025 legislative session, saying he wanted to get local leaders on board with the measure. Behind the scenes, he and advisors fretted over the political implications of signing the measure as they received thousands of calls from opponents and Lamont considered a third-term run next year.

Lawmakers passed H.B. 8002 during a two-day special session from November 13–14, and Lamont signed it into law on November 26.

## Solar panels on condo units

Condominium complexes can no longer enforce provisions in their

bylaws that "prohibit or unreasonably restrict" owners of single-family detached units from putting solar panels on their roofs under a new bill that also creates a solar panel approval process for condo unit owners and their associations to follow.

Existing condo associations can opt out of these requirements if at least 75% of their board of directors votes to do so. However, that vote would need to occur by January 1, 2028.

Connecticut already restricts planned community associations from prohibiting solar panels. The new law is essentially an expansion to include condos as well.

## Driver's license applications

Learner's permit holders must take an eight-hour course prior to getting their driver's license under existing law, and Connecticut currently allows students to take it both in-person and through distance learning. Beginning January 1, anyone taking the class remotely must keep their camera on, and driving schools can now charge up to \$200 for it (the previous limit was \$150).

Under that same law, as of January 1 many applicants for a driver's license or learner's permit — as well as drivers convicted of violating highway worker safety laws — must complete a program administered by the Department of Motor Vehicles on highway work zone and roadside vehicle safety awareness.

All 16- and 17-year-old driver's license applicants who get a learner's permit beginning January 1, 2026 must take the program, as well as

adult driver's license applicants who meet certain requirements (like having not previously held a Connecticut license or not currently holding a valid license issued by another state, territory or country).

## Minimum wage increase

On January 1, Connecticut's minimum wage will increase by \$0.59, from \$16.35 per hour to \$16.94 per hour. That increase comes from a law signed by Governor Ned Lamont in 2019 that, as of 2023, pegs Connecticut's minimum wage to the Federal employment cost index.

Connecticut has the fourth-highest state minimum wage, behind \$17.95 in District of Columbia, \$17.13 in Washington, and \$17 in much of New York. California raised its minimum wage as of January 1, 2026 to \$16.90.

## The Borinqueneers

The Connecticut DMV will begin issuing commemorative license plates that recognize "The Borinqueneers," the U.S. Army's 65th Infantry Regiment made up largely of Puerto Rican service-members who served with distinction in the Korean War.

The plates will cost \$60. They will be designed in consultation with the Hispanic-American Veterans of Connecticut Inc., and that group will receive \$45 from the sale of each plate for bilingual services and assistance to the state's veterans and current servicemembers. ■

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## Region 9 hears case for solar project at Barlow



Photo by Carol Morgan

Alexandra Humphrey, a sophomore at Joel Barlow High School and the student representative to the Region 9 Board of Education, gave a presentation to that board on December 16 proposing the installation of solar panels above the senior parking lot at Barlow. Humphrey shared information on Connecticut Green Bank's Solar MAP+ program alongside other financing and tax credit options to minimize costs to the district. In attendance at the presentation were First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton; 40-year residents Chris Tse and Susanne Krivet; and Jim Lang, Susan Auslander, and Carol Morgan, members of Meadow Ridge's Solar Committee. Auslander, who helped spearhead with management Meadow Ridge's solar installation and who has been mentoring Humphrey, spoke in support of the proposal, noting to the potential significant cost savings. (Left to right): Alexandra Humphrey, ER9 Superintendent Jason McKinnon, and Susan Auslander.

## Boards of Ed elect officers

At the December meetings of the Redding Board of Education and Region 9 Board of Education, board members elected new officers. ■

### Redding Board of Education

Laura Worosz	Chair
Katie Risk	Vice Chair
Amanda Guarniere	Secretary

### Region 9 Board of Education

Christopher Parkin (Redding)	Chair
Jon Stinson (Easton)	Vice Chair
Todd Johnston (Easton)	Secretary
Meghan Bendish (Redding)	Treasurer

**Knight salvage tie with late goal / *continued from page 4***

turned away by Tri-Town goalie Dylan Sklenar. At the other end of the ice, JBWA's Max Durrwachter kept the competition at bay in what was a scoreless tie after one frame.

"Max is playing very, very well right now and to be honest, the defense that sits in front of him is playing very well as well," said Stearns.

Due to a number of penalties, the Knights found themselves at a disadvantage in the second period as they were occasionally down a player. Such was the situation with 9:42 left, as Tri-Town's Kade O'Connor managed to slip the puck past Durrwachter on the power play to get his team on the board.

"Anytime you take penalties against pretty much any team, you're putting yourself at an obvious disadvantage," said Stearns. "It can be trouble and sure enough it bit us." ■

The Knights had a good opportunity to tie it with a couple of breakaways by Christopher Nesto with 6:30 and 2:27 left, only to be thwarted each time as the hosts trailed 0-1 after two frames.

Each side successfully killed off penalties in the third period until the Knights got the break they finally needed. Another offensive push resulted in a battle in front of the Tri-Town goal, and amidst the action Dylan Hilario managed to push the puck over the goal line with 3:32 left to go.

Despite each side getting off shots, the tie held after the eight-minute overtime period that followed.

JBWA, now 0-1-1, hosts the Northeastern Shamrocks on Saturday, January 10 at 12:00 p.m. and is home to Newtown-New Fairfield on Tuesday, January 13 at 5:30 p.m. ■

# “The past was good, and the future can be even better”

## Meadow Ridge honors Dick Farrell with Heart of the Community Award

By Pamela Brown



Photo by Carol Morgan

Dick Farrell (left) receives the third annual Heart of the Community award from Meadow Ridge Executive Director Chris Barstein.

Richard “Dick” Farrell has always had a heart of gold, finding ways to give back to others to help make his community and the world a better place. This tireless volunteer, who has resided at Meadow Ridge since 2017, was recognized with the third-annual Meadow Ridge Heart of the Community Award.

“Getting the Heart of the Community award was a pleasant and unexpected surprise. Lots of Meadow Ridge residents stopped by the dinner table to offer kind words,” said Farrell, who was presented with a plaque and a letter from Benchmark Senior Living CEO Tom Gape in a community-wide gathering last month. “One

person asked why I do what I do. Nothing complicated: I do what I do because I like what I do, whether it’s scholarship fundraising, marketing, or giving parties.”

According to Gape, Farrell inspires both his neighbors and friends. “His leadership on the Meadow Ridge Scholarship Fund, especially, has made a meaningful impact on scores of young people and their education. When I think of Benchmark’s core values – Called to Care, Better Together, and Be the Benchmark – Mr. Farrell certainly lives them all,” he said.

At the age of 93, Farrell is active at Meadow Ridge. “I always found the key to success is not looking back, but ahead, to expand the strengths of clients and self. That’s what most of us at Meadow Ridge strongly believe: The past was good and the future can be even better,” said Farrell. “My main, overriding interest is raising funds for the Scholarship Fund. I spend time every day, 12 months, employing and developing new ideas to raise money. I don’t do it alone.”

Farrell works alongside a team of about 15 people who produce posters, videos, table tent cards, and presentations to residents. He named Bill Hodgkinson, David Dolan, Carol Russell, Valerie Luther, Marlene Hewit, and Carol Morgan as key team leaders. “It’s a huge, cooperative effort that raised about \$250,000 this year with every dollar used to award

college and trade school scholarships to (Meadow Ridge) employees and children of employees. I drive people nuts around here with my hounding, but these residents enthusiastically sign up for even more donations every year.”

Farrell is a retired advertising executive and former U.S. Air Force navigator. While living in Bedford, NY, he volunteered at Bedford Presbyterian Church, worked to establish the Bedford Historical Preservation Commission, served as President of the Bedford Free Library Board of Trustees, and volunteered in many other capacities. At Meadow Ridge, in addition to the Scholarship Fund, he served on the Resident Board and the Marketing Committee, and offers support to anyone working through illness or grief. “He recognizes the aptitude in individuals and helps them find a way to use it, for their benefit and that of Meadow Ridge,” said one of his nomination letters.

Meadow Ridge, managed by Benchmark Senior Living, created the Heart of the Community Award to recognize the important role philanthropy plays in enriching lives and to showcase the impact one person can have, especially in their retirement. The nomination process starts in September with residents invited to nominate their neighbors for the award.

“A selection committee made up of community and Benchmark leaders reviews the nominations

and meets to select the winner. We review a resident’s philanthropy and volunteerism both as a member of the Meadow Ridge community and before moving here,” explained Chris Barstein, Meadow Ridge’s Executive Director. “We look for a spirit of giving – primarily in gifts of time and talent – that runs consistently through a person’s life. The quality of nominations at Meadow Ridge is superb, as so many residents have been involved in numerous ways in their hometowns and continue to be active on Meadow Ridge committees and in supporting local causes. Dick is the heart of Meadow Ridge. He cares deeply about the well-being of others and is generous with that compassion. We’re all better for being able to call Dick our neighbor and friend.”

Farrell acknowledged the Heart of the Community isn’t just one person. “Consider Ginny Green and Judy Sewell and their loyal assistants in the Country Store. It’s kind of the Village Square of Meadow Ridge. The store contributes about \$10,000 each year, divided between the Scholarship and Employee Appreciation funds,” he said. “All said, Meadow Ridge is a vibrant community of active, interesting, well educated, opinionated persons who, together, are the true Heart of the Community.” ■

## OBITUARIES

### Florence (Hanlon) Hayes

November 21, 1929 – January 3, 2026



Florence (Hanlon) Hayes was born in Falls Village, Connecticut on November 21, 1929 to Ruth (Cleaveland) and Joseph D. Hanlon. She grew up on their family dairy farm with four siblings and earned her earliest education at the local one-room schoolhouse, which was within walking distance.

Her fondest childhood memories included summer visits to the local swimming hole and exploration of the nearby woodlands and fields, which instilled in her a love of the natural landscape and the poetry and quiet beauty of the world around her.

Florence earned a Bachelor’s Degree in 1951 from St Joseph College in West Hartford, following which she taught home economics at the junior high level in the Wethersfield school system for several years. In 1956, she earned her Master’s degree in Education from the University of Connecticut, after which she took a position as a field demonstration agent for the Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service, until her marriage to John Hayes, of Redding, in 1964. In the early 1980s, she took a position with the retired senior program at the American Red Cross in Danbury, followed by a position with the Town of Brookfield as coordinator of the senior program for the region. In 1985, she accepted a teaching position with Stamford public school system, teaching home economics until her retirement in 1990.

Florence was a longtime parishioner at St Patrick Church in Redding, where she played an active role in ministries for the community, including volunteer work for the Dorothy Day Hospitality House in Danbury and delivering local meals for the Meals on Wheels program. In 2009, she received the Saint Augustine Medal of Service, along with her husband, John, from the Reverend William Lori, Bishop of Bridgeport, for her

tireless work on behalf of others without desire for recognition.

Those who knew and loved her cherished the beautiful twinkle in her eye, her optimism, and her readiness for an adventure on very short, if any, notice. Among the places that she loved most, aside from her home on Redding Ridge, were the Nauset Light and Coast Guard beaches on the Cape Cod National Seashore and the Green Mountains of Vermont, particularly if it included a pair of skis.

Florence was preceded in death by her husband, John, and her son, Brian. She is survived by her daughters Mary Kate Hayes of Redding and Falls Village, Connecticut and Sheila (Hayes) Goffe of Smithfield, North Carolina; her grandson, Patrick Hayes of Dania Beach, Florida; her brother John F. Hanlon of North Canaan, Connecticut; and many nieces and nephews. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at St. Patrick Church, Redding on Friday January 9 at 11:00 a.m. Burial will follow at St Mary Cemetery, Bethel. The family will receive friends at the Bouton Funeral Home, 31 West Church Street, Wilton, on Thursday, January 8 from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Contributions may be made, in lieu of flowers, to St. Patrick Church, Redding or to the Dorothy Day Hospitality House. ■

### Joy Hunt Luke

November 13, 1929 – December 27, 2025



Joy Hunt Luke, age 96 and a long-time resident of New Canaan, died peacefully with her family by her side on December 27 at her home in Redding. She was born on November 13, 1929, in Shanghai, China, to George Penn Hunt and Mabel (Mavis) Wilson Hunt. She was predeceased by her parents and her husband of 65 years, Donald K. “Pete” Luke.

Joy spent her youth living in China, the Philippines, California, and Arizona before her parents settled in Wilmington, DE. After graduating from P.S. Dupont High School, she earned her associate degree from Green Mountain Junior College. Following graduation she worked in the legal department at DuPont.

Joy and Pete were married in 1953 and three years later settled in New Canaan, which they called home for 58 years until moving to Meadow Ridge in Redding in 2014.

Pete and Joy were active members of St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in New Canaan for 69 years, where Joy served as a member of

the Altar Guild and on many other committees. Joy was very active in the town of New Canaan, serving as a member of the New Canaan Garden Club, New Canaan Sewing Group, and South School and Center School parent groups. She loved to play tennis and golf at the Country Club of New Canaan, particularly enjoying time with her

“Nine-Hole” group. Among her many other passions were gardening and cooking, but her greatest pleasure was being surrounded by her loving family.

Joy is survived by her daughter Judy Luke of Falmouth, MA and her sons Keith Wilson Luke (Gaynor) of New Canaan, CT, and Andrew Hunt Luke (Calle) of Midlothian, VA and formerly Ridgefield, CT; five grandchildren, Thomas Gaynor Luke (Jenny) of New York City, Mary Catherine Luke of Bronxville, NY, Sarah Wilson Luke of San Francisco, Kristen Luke Glasstetter (Hayden) of Austin, TX, and Michael Hunt Luke of Richmond, VA; great grandson Harold Frost (“Hal”) Glasstetter; her brother Colin Penn Hunt of Wilmington, DE, and his children and their families.

A memorial service will be held at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in New Canaan, CT at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday January 24, 2026, with a reception immediately following.

In lieu of flowers, contributions in Joy’s memory can be made to St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in New Canaan or to the Meadow Ridge Scholarship Fund in Redding. ■

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E-mail us at [editor@reddingsentinel.org](mailto:editor@reddingsentinel.org) to share your updates and schedule publication.

# REAL ESTATE

## December 2025 real estate report

A look at trends in the local housing market

By Bill Whitehead and John Tally

Redding real estate ended 2025 with seven properties sold in December and a total of 113 sold for the year. (114 properties sold in 2024). The average price of houses sold in 2025 increased by nine percent to \$1,106,875. The average price-per-square-foot rose by one percent to \$358. The average days-on-market remains steady at 98, the same as one year ago.

There are currently 10 properties in Redding under contract. The inventory of available houses continues to be very low, but we expect inventories will begin to tick upward as the spring market gets going in the coming months. ■

Bill Whitehead and John Tally are realtors with Berkshire Hathaway Home Services

Town	December 2025												
	Current Inventory		Homes Sold		Average Days on Market		Average List Price		Average Sale Price		Percent Sale Price >/< List Price		
	As of Jan 5	December	2025	December	2025	December	2025	December	2025	December	2025	December	2025
Redding	11	7	113	98	98	\$1,100,271	\$1,110,454	\$1,086,143	\$1,106,875	-1%	0%	\$360	\$358
Ridgefield	24	12	215	103	80	\$1,295,442	\$1,216,082	\$1,277,258	\$1,272,472	-1%	5%	\$469	\$445
Weston	15	17	145	110	97	\$1,424,706	\$1,502,907	\$1,447,882	\$1,531,804	2%	2%	\$403	\$417
Wilton	16	8	205	71	80	\$1,338,175	\$1,379,619	\$1,418,250	\$1,452,260	6%	5%	\$426	\$440
Easton	8	8	93	119	90	\$1,112,500	\$1,071,821	\$1,093,375	\$1,080,379	-2%	1%	\$380	\$340
Bethel	11	15	151	82	77	\$634,607	\$587,044	\$656,727	\$593,688	3%	1%	\$287	\$292
Newtown	43	27	314	88	81	\$629,952	\$715,153	\$622,602	\$716,999	-1%	0%	\$285	\$344
Average	18	13	177	96	86	\$1,076,522	\$1,083,297	\$1,086,034	\$1,107,782	1%	2%	\$373	\$377

REDDING SOLD - December	Sale Price	List Price	%/ List Price	Price/Sqft*	Days on Market
27 W. Woodland Dr	\$675,000	\$699,000	-3%	\$326	91
4 Orchard Dr	\$725,000	\$679,900	7%	\$432	27
194 Lonetown Rd	\$1,020,000	\$1,045,000	-2%	\$468	68
7 Guardhouse Dr	\$1,028,000	\$940,000	9%	\$332	67
16 Black Rock Tpke	\$1,080,000	\$1,200,000	-10%	\$261	210
61 Marchant Rd	\$1,525,000	\$1,539,000	-1%	\$368	118
33 Peaceable St	\$1,550,000	\$1,599,000	-3%	\$335	106
Average	\$1,086,143	\$1,100,271	-1%	\$360	98

REDDING CURRENTLY FOR SALE	List Price	Price/Sqft*	Days on Market	REDDING CURRENTLY FOR SALE	List Price	Price/Sqft*	Days on Market
219 Redding Rd	\$554,000	\$449	208	41 Deer Hill Rd	\$1,199,000	306	68
22 Lonetown Rd	\$769,000	\$313	196	34 Fox Run Rd	\$1,550,000	198	402
41 Sullivan Dr	\$875,900	\$261	45	32 Beeholm Rd	\$1,799,000	734	229
299 Redding Rd	\$979,000	\$374	0	229 Umpawaug Rd	\$7,495,000	1116	238
22 Ledgewood Rd	\$979,000	\$274	74	63 Turney Rd	\$8,600,000	913	22
90 Old Stagecoach Rd	\$985,000	\$320	88	Average	\$2,344,082	478	143

*Listings continue on right side of table*

\* Calculated using livable square footage

What does CT's new housing law mean for Redding? / continued from page 1



Photo by Katy Golvala / CT Mirror

Governor Ned Lamont speaks at a press conference on H.B. 8002 in East Hartford in November before signing it into law.

Redding's State Representative Anne Hughes indicated that she was not involved in the negotiations for H.B. 8002 that took place following the Governor's veto of H.B. 5002. She explained that such negotiations are typically handled by committee leaders and lead advocates rather than the entire legislature. She noted that several of the bill's components had already undergone extensive public hearings during the regular session, which informed the final language.

State Senator Ceci Maher described herself as "one of many voices" in the process but said she did not have a big hand in the final negotiations. She did cite a few areas under debate during the development of H.B. 5002 – like removing parking requirements for new buildings with 24 units and under – that she spoke to the Governor directly about, communicating her opposition.

### Are there mandates in the new law that Redding must enact?

Yes. Though some provisions are framed as "opt-in," they are tied to financial incentives (like an

additional five percent on school construction project reimbursement) or penalties like becoming ineligible for an 8-30j moratorium.

### Mandatory Zoning Regulation Updates

Redding is required to update its zoning regulations to comply with new state standards by July 1, 2026. These updates include as-of-right commercial conversions, in which the Town must allow the conversion of commercial or mixed-use buildings into residential "transit community middle housing" (up to nine units) or mixed-use developments as-of-right. This means such projects are subject only to a summary review (checking if they meet basic setbacks and safety standards) and cannot be blocked by discretionary zoning actions like special permits or public hearings. The Town can decide to require that the first floor remains commercial, however.

"We don't have that much commercial property. I don't expect the impact could be as large as people might be afraid that it will be," noted Pemberton, who then handed

me a print-out of all the commercial properties in town she had requested as part of her effort to understand the new requirements (it was not a thick stack of paper). "There's work ongoing to understand what the impact will be."

For residential developments, for new projects with fewer than 16 units, the Town generally cannot mandate parking. For projects with more than 16 units, the Town can require parking, but it is capped at one space for studios/one-bedroom units and two spaces for units with two or more bedrooms. There is, however, the ability to designate certain congestion zones (no greater than eight percent of the Town's area) as exempt from these new rules. (Note: One of the people interviewed pointed out that the law as written specifies requirements for developments "under 16 units" and "over 16 units" but does not give guidance on developments of exactly 16 units.)

### Development of Housing Growth Plans

The Town is mandated to establish a formal strategy for housing

development, either adopting its own municipal housing growth plan or complying with a regional housing growth plan developed by WestCOG. The plan is due by June 2029.

Several people we spoke with noted that a regional approach to a plan makes sense, as housing availability impacts neighboring towns as people work, live, and play in surrounding communities. WestCOG's Pickering also noted that Redding is already part of a regional housing plan that was developed for 8-30j, legislation passed in 2017, so the process is not entirely foreign.

"We had a conversation at that point (after 8-30j was enacted) and said, 'Does it make sense for every town to do its own plan given that housing markets, job markets, commute sheds are inherently regional?' And the answer that we heard from many people was no. It doesn't make sense for every town to do its own plan," he explained.

He highlighted other benefits to taking a regional approach. "A town can do their own (plan), but it will cost them money. Letting the COG do it means zero expense.

And the other benefit of a COG doing it is – now this is my personal take – but if we have 18 municipalities in a region unanimously support something, I believe that sends a very strong message to the plan reviewers."

### How might the new law affect Revitalize Georgetown efforts and the redevelopment of the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill?

Pemberton, Hughes, and Maher all saw certain provisions in the new law as having the potential to expand options for the complex needs of redeveloping the Wire Mill site. While the site is already zoned for high density, Pemberton said that the bill includes "low-interest loans, grants that would assist in the development of (certain) kinds of housing" and provide

"opportunities for towns and developers to receive State assistance" for desired projects.

Maher highlighted that the bill contains sewer and water components that are crucial for the Wire Mill site. She also noted that by adopting the required housing growth plans, the Town could unlock an additional five percent in school construction funding, which might be necessary if the development increases student enrollment.

The Wire Mill's proximity to Metro-North Danbury line also makes it a prime candidate for some of the bill's transit-oriented provisions.

"It is a potentially enormous transit-oriented development site," said Maher.

### Are there any immediate impacts to be aware of for Redding?

Ultimately, the largest impact it seems right now is on municipal leaders' time and resources to understand the law's complexities and go through the process of amending zoning regulations before the July 2026 deadline.

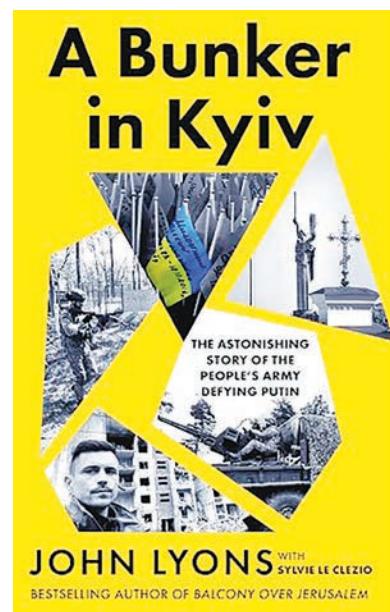
"There's certainly a cost to updating our zoning regulations," said Pemberton. "Our zoning regulations were adopted in the 1950s, and there have been amendments along the way, but we need to look at the zoning regulations. We're required to be in compliance. So right there, there's a mandate for us to do something that will cost us money."

"We need local leaders to study up and try to protect and insulate their towns against bad consequences of this law and maybe take advantage of good aspects of this law," said State Senator Ryan Fazio at a Fairfield panel held on the new housing law on December 20. "There are aspects to this law that are tolerable and even good. It's so complicated, unfortunately. I know how overburdened a lot of our local municipal leaders are already. Many of them are volunteers." ■

## BOOK REVIEW

### A Bunker in Kyiv | *By John Lyons*

ABC Books Australia / 320 pages / \$19.99



after-hours work supporting the war. Previous professions are shelved – a musician turns to making drones. A brand manager signs up to fight. A university lecturer inspires his students to spend their evenings turning agricultural drones into killing weapons.

Beyond the killing skills, Ukrainians do their best to maintain normalcy while the assault continues. An academic uses her iPad to deliver classes from a trench on the front line. Children are given disposable cameras so they can document their personal experiences of the war.

Ukrainians who are professionals in the defense of their country make it clear that, from their perspective, the war has been going on since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. The time between that action and the 2024 invasion gave Ukraine time to build their defensive capability. Now, while Russia is fighting the war with its military, including conscripts, Ukraine's citizens are working together to defend their country.

As an Australian journalist, Lyons provides a different perspective than we're used to. Australia, while staunchly pro-Ukraine, has no dog in this hunt. They're important, but outside the inner ring of players. Not a global super-power, not a European neighbor, yet keenly interested. Lyons is as close to an independent observer as we're likely to get. He brings fresh insights about the war to readers with his strong storytelling. ■

*Review by Susan Clark*

The fourth anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine is coming up on February 24, and flip-flopping peace talks are top of the global news cycle. So, it seems a good time to bring John Lyons's latest book to the attention of *Sentinel* readers.

Lyons is an Australian journalist and foreign correspondent who has covered global affairs for more than 30 years for various media outlets in his home country, including *The Australian* and Australian Broadcasting Company (ABC). His previous book, *A Balcony over Jerusalem*, a memoir co-written with his wife Sylvie Le Clezio, was based on their seven years in Jerusalem when he covered the Middle East for *The Australian*.

*A Bunker in Kyiv* explains how ordinary Ukrainians are going about their lives in a country at war. Through cameos of individuals, Lyons shares their often dual lives. "Day jobs" are followed by

### Notes from a neighbor You can look it up

By Carter Wiseman

Some years back, a friend gave me a little leather-covered diary for Christmas. I liked it so much that I started ordering replacements every year, even after my friend had died, partly in tribute to her. Now that phones can store virtually all our information in the palm of a hand, I am feeling increasingly sheepish about continuing the tradition, but it has advantages.

I realized this not long ago when I claimed to a colleague that I had once had a lunch date with someone who later became a celebrity. He said that was impossible, so I sorted through my collection of little date books, and there it was: documentary proof, but also a trigger for some happy memories.

I suspect we will be able to search our phones for such information into the distant future, but I wonder if some things will be missing, like the swirl or squiggle of the author's handwriting, endearing misspellings, or the coffee stain that might have "spoiled" the page. The logbook that recorded the sinking of the *Titanic* has never been found, but others have survived to tell the tales of drama on the high seas. *The Wager*, the bestseller about shipwreck and mutiny, never could have been written without access to the ships' daily records.

Such documents tell the bare facts: position, weather, condition of the sea. But they are also the bare bones of what biographers depend on. Some years ago, Yale's Beinecke Rare Book Library mounted an exhibition that included manuscripts and galley proofs of works by such authors as F. Scott

Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway, showing how a subtle word change or a revised sentence elevated the text from writing to literature. Would we know how Anne Frank felt about her captivity, or how Harry Truman felt about dropping the atomic bomb, if they had not kept diaries?

Although digital technology is here to stay, there are signs that older modes may yet rebound. My musical friends tell me that vinyl records still produce a better sound than the electronic versions. Indeed, there is a surge in sales of records that not long ago were destined for the dump. Alert to this retro trend, several tech companies have made it easy to create paper photo albums for the family pictures on your phone that you don't want lost forever in the cloud.

At another level, schools and colleges have found that one way to make sure students have read the assignment is to rely not on their ChatGPT-generated essays, but to make them write out the answer to a question in blue books, those slim paper pamphlets that went out of fashion with the arrival of laptops. As a result, blue book sales at UC Berkeley alone jumped last year by 80% over the previous year.

But this also may have created an unanticipated problem: Many elementary schools are no longer teaching students to write by hand. Since AI is not likely to solve this one, schools may have to retool. I am thinking of investing in ballpoint pens. Those blue books – and diaries their authors may write – might be the stuff of future best-sellers. ■

## LIBRARY CORNER

### Day in the life | *By Erin Shea Dummeyer*

I was recently giving a library tour to a visitor who asked at the end, "So, what does a Library Director do all day?" This is a tough question for me to answer, because even on the days when I'm too busy to look out the window, my husband still gets "It was good" when he asks how my day was. But here is a pretty good try at "A Day in the Life of a Library Director."

I arrive at the library around 9:00 a.m. This is the best time of day to get through e-mail, because I am often the only one in the building. Most of the other staff arrive around 9:30 a.m., and we see how everybody is doing. Today, our Morning Manager is out, so I empty the book drops and turn all the lights and computers on to help out. "Waking up" the Library is a gift! I check the rug in the story time room, because it was recently cleaned. Next, I work on the Library's budget presentation for the Selectman's budget workshop scheduled for January. I'm trying to get as much done as possible,

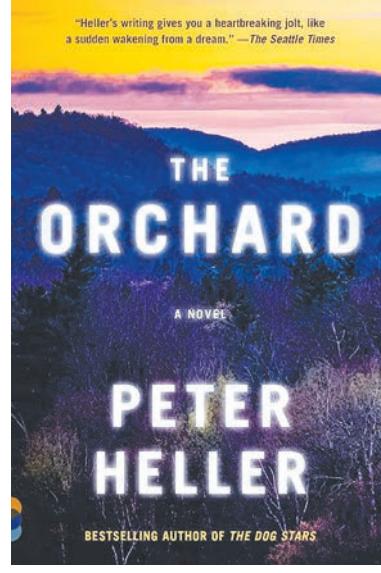
because I am trying to take some time off between Christmas and New Year's and the workshop is on January 9. We are also planning an end-of-year e-mail to go out to our subscribers, thanking everyone for their support and community this year. So, I workshop that a bit.

I am currently President of the CT Library Association, and we are expecting a year-end donation that will need an acknowledgement letter, so I write that and sign it, because I don't have a printer at my home and don't want to try to find one over the holidays. A community member has reached out to me who is interested in donating her book collection after recently selling her house, so I try to find out a little more information. We received a grant this year through the CT Education Network to upgrade some of our WiFi equipment, so I talk with a few of my colleagues about the budget for this project. It is funded by the American Rescue Plan Act, so we have to spend the money first and then get reimbursed.

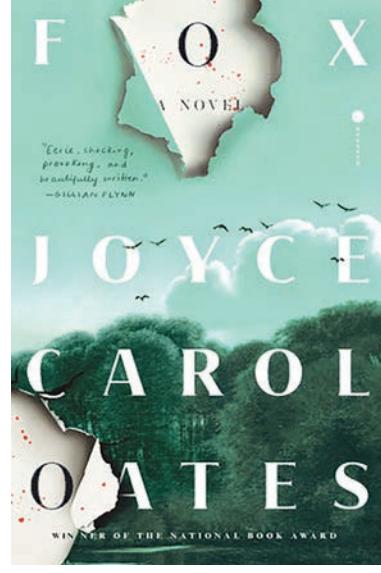
Finally, I put a few things into our shed outside. I like to take breaks to do some physical activity, because otherwise I am sitting at a desk or in meetings most of the day. A patron I really like brings me some chutney, and we talk about the Art Show for a little bit. Someone has left their small stuffed cow on a chair by the circulation desk, so I muse with a colleague about whether to put it in the Lost & Found or leave it out in case the owner returns. I discuss the Gingerbread Man contest currently taking place on our circulation desk and ponder how we can solicit more votes. I deal with a personnel matter and think about my goals for the Library in 2026. Believe it or not, this was a pretty slow and quiet day because I didn't have any meetings! There is simply never a dull moment in this line of work, which is probably why I enjoy it so much. ■

*Erin Shea Dummeyer is Director, Mark Twain Library*

### Good books for good readers | *By Margi Esten*

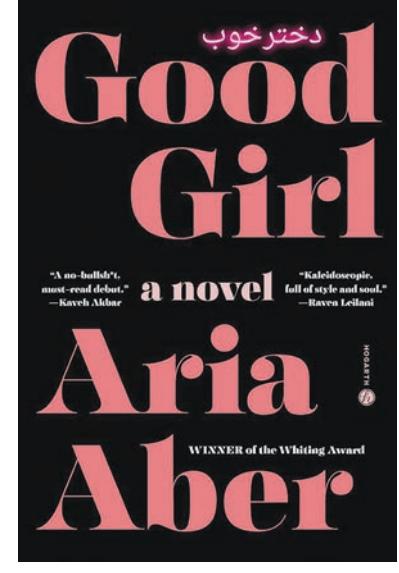


*The Orchard: A Novel* by Peter Heller was just published in paperback on December 2, 2025. It is a masterful coming-of-age story of a mother and daughter living on a Vermont apple orchard and escaping the ghosts of the past. Peter Heller is a best-selling author (and one of my favorites), known for his brilliant and beautifully written



novels including *The Guide*, *The River* and *The Dog Stars*. He is an author not to be missed.

*Fox* by Joyce Carol Oates is a spellbinding novel of literary and psychological suspense about dark secrets that emerge after the disappearance of a charismatic teacher at an elite boarding school. *The New York Times Magazine* said of



this legendary author: "...surely on any shortlist of America's greatest living writers."

*Good Girl* by Aria Aber is the debut novel about the daughter of Afghan refugees and her year of self-discovery and a story of love and family. This celebrated young poet is now a new major voice in fiction. ■



### Celebrate America's 250th Birthday

with a concert of patriotic music featuring the Greater Bridgeport Symphony performing the music of Redding's own Charles Ives. The Symphony will also play popular American music with the students of Joel Barlow High School.

**HELP MAKE THIS CELEBRATION HAPPEN**  
Become a sponsor and bring the Greater Bridgeport Symphony to Redding

Visit [Redding250.com](http://Redding250.com) to learn more!



# A chapter closes – with another poised to begin – for the Sycamore Drive-In

By Bruce Nelson



The Sycamore Drive-In in Bethel in the 1950s.



Joe Keller began his career as a restauranteur in Illinois before moving to Bethel after World War II and opening The Sycamore in 1948.

Joseph Paul Keller began his long career as a restauranteur in Decatur, Illinois in 1936. It was at his Tick-Tock Sandwich Shop where Keller introduced the world to his thinly pounded steak hamburger, a signature entrée that he would continue to serve wherever he went.

On August 3, 1940, Keller opened a new restaurant that he named the Park Inn. Ahead of its time, his new venture offered in-car dining and curb service. His steak hamburger had already gained a good deal of notoriety in central Illinois, and it would be that first day at his new drive-in that he would first introduce the world to his fabulous home-made root beer.

It was shortly after WWII when Keller, along with his wife Helen and daughter Eleana, moved to Bethel. After Rocco Grosso had purchased and torn down the old Orrin Benedict mansion on Greenwood Avenue, he built a new drive-in restaurant that he then leased to Keller. Keller would name his newest establishment in honor of the large tree at the corner of the property.

It was 6:30 a.m. on a Saturday morning in late July of 1948 that the Sycamore Drive-In was born, and Keller's signature steakburger and root beer were first introduced to the residents of Bethel. The Keller family would toil for 60-plus hours a week for the next 25 years as their small venture grew in popularity to become an iconic fixture within the community.

Throughout the mid to late 1950s and into the 1960s, the western side of the parking lot was often three deep with an assortment of MGs, Austin Healeys, and large American cars with big fins. Trays were hung on the driver-side window as the drive-in's carhops brought out steakburgers, dagwood sandwiches, fries, and the best damn home-made root beer anyone could ever remember tasting. Those of us who drove convertibles always left the top down so that we could converse with the occupants of the cars around us. We often ended up

with other kids sitting on our trunk lids with their legs draped over the backrests of our rear seats.

You never pulled into the Sycamore without seeing at least one or two other cars loaded with Redding teens. It was THE place to go!

Most of us first experienced dining at the Sycamore with our parents. As a seven-year-old, I remember many a Sunday evening being crammed into the tiny rear seat of my dad's Jaguar XK-140 coupe while slurping on a root beer float.

In the early '60s, I took my first date there after seeing a movie. Most of our senior class at Barlow met there for breakfast on the morning we decided to surrender to Principal Roy Briggs after he threatened to ban us from our own graduation ceremony if we skipped school for a day at the beach as we had originally planned. We entered the driveway from Route 58, driving slowly as if in a funeral procession with our headlights on and white flags attached to our radio antennas just as first period had begun.

In the early '60s, I took my first date there after seeing a movie.

Most of our senior class at Barlow met there for breakfast on the morning we decided to surrender to Principal Roy Briggs after he threatened to ban us from our own graduation ceremony if we skipped school for a day at the beach as we had originally planned. We entered the driveway from Route 58, driving slowly as if in a funeral procession with our headlights on and white flags attached to our radio antennas just as first period had begun.

Joe Keller passed away in 1974, but his restaurant lived on. It was in the 1990s when Gene and Christine Austin decided to purchase the business they remembered frequenting as teenagers. Unlike many new business owners, they weren't looking to make major changes. Their notion of perfection was keeping the Sycamore just as they remembered it. Gene parked his classic 1950s white Ford coupe and pickup out front, kept the menu much as it had been in the 1950s, and kept the tradition alive.

Over the years, as we gathered for class reunions, there would always be at least one day when a group of us would drive to Bethel to grab a thinly pounded steakburger and a root beer and reminisce about our youth. The only thing that ever seemed to change at the Sycamore was the pricing, although increases never seemed unreasonable. But the food and the atmosphere always seemed to remain frozen in time.



A flyer for The Sycamore's grand opening in 1948.

If you remembered your favorites from 1965, chances were that you could still order the same ones 60 years later. The Austins kept Joe Keller's drive-in alive for multiple generations of families to enjoy.

For most of us, the Sycamore has been here for as long as we can remember, and it seemed inconceivable that it might ever close for good.

It was with great sadness last week that we learned of its closing. It was almost like losing a very old and dear friend – plenty of very fond memories and a heavy heart knowing that they are gone.

In a December 24, 2025 notice to their customers about the restaurant's closure, the Austin family noted that the landlord did not renew their lease. The *Sentinel* reached out to both the landlord (Sycamore Holdings LLC) and Patrick Austin for clarity, and we received the following responses:

"The non-renewal of the lease was a mutual agreement between the long-term tenant, the Austin family, and the property owner for 80 years, now operating as Sycamore Holdings, LLC. Given the significance of the restaurant to the community, we have quickly secured a new tenant," said a representative of Sycamore Holdings, LLC. The property owner later confirmed that The Greek, currently located at 12 P.T. Barnum Square in Bethel, will be moving into the space after a brief interior renovation. The Greek announced its plans to relocate to the space on its social media accounts on January 3.

Patrick Austin declined to comment beyond the statement his family had shared on social media, which thanked the restaurant's many loyal customers, staff, classic car enthusiasts, and friends who made the Sycamore "a very special place for our family."

It is with great thanks that we bid the Austin family and their staff farewell. They kept a tradition alive for much longer than most proprietors would have, and for that we will always be grateful. ■

## BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

### From finance to fast cars Entrepreneur launches collector car auction service

By Justin Reynolds

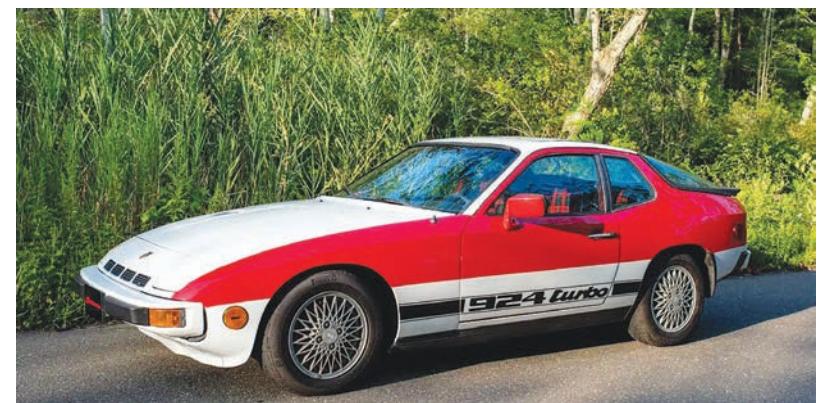


Photo courtesy of Authentic Auctions

Dan Gray has been a car enthusiast since he was a teenager in the '90s.

"I've always loved cars and loved working on them and driving them," Gray said.

After a 17-year career in finance, Gray decided it was time for a career change, beginning his journey as an entrepreneur with the launch of Authentic Auctions, a digital auction consignment business that lists collector cars for people on auction sites like Bringatrailer, PCarMarket, and Cars & Bids.

Founded by Gray and Zack Cohen, a software engineer with a web development background, Authentic Auctions aims to provide classic car owners an easy way to sell their vehicles.

"We noticed what seemed to be an underserved market," said Gray, who moved from Wilton to Redding over four years ago with his family. "There are a lot of people that want to sell their cars, and they want help doing it."

Currently, Authentic Auctions is focused exclusively on helping folks sell cars; recent auctions include a 1992 Audi S4, a 1980 Porsche 924 Turbo, and a 1974 Steyr-Puch Pinzgauer 710.

"We are looking for anybody who has a desirable collector car who wants to sell it but is intimidated by the process," Gray

said. "We have helped people going into retirement or at an age where they aren't driving their cars anymore, all the way down to young people just looking to move on."

Last summer, Authentic Auctions was in the process of listing a 1974 Dodge Power Wagon.

"It's an iconic truck from America," Gray said at the time. "We're very excited about it."

To Gray, selling a special car through an auction process makes a lot of financial sense.

"Auctioning your collector car is the best way to get top market price for it," Gray said. "Digital auction houses are taking away market share from in-person auctions like Mecum and Bonhams. It's also a fun way to say 'goodbye' to a car."

Currently, the company is building out their consignment business. But Gray and Cohen have also discussed the idea of launching their own auction platform somewhere down the road.

"There is a very robust car enthusiast community in Fairfield County, and it's great to start a small business that caters to that aspect of my community," Gray said. "It's been a thrill to turn my hobby into a job." ■

For more information, visit [authenticauctions.com](http://authenticauctions.com)

## AugustWest Chimney, LLC

Making Redding's Chimneys Safer Since 1973

[www.AugustWestChimney.com](http://www.AugustWestChimney.com)

203-226-0416



Redding couple's grandson now a major player in drone business / continued from page 3

together on our own business," he recalled.

He switched to part-time work at the start-up, but after several months, Neros was keeping him too busy for that. So, he quit to devote his full attention to the new company.

Olaf and Monroe-Anderson have lofty ambitions for Neros. Olaf described U.S. drone production as severely lagging its Chinese and Russian competitors. Their own firm and other U.S. competitors aim to close that gap in a directive from high places. In July, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth announced a major strategic thrust to produce drones.

"Just one factory in China can produce 300,000 drones each year, while the U.S. as a whole can build just 100,000," Olaf explained. "Anybody who cares about America should be concerned about that."

What's more, defense drones require yet another thing from their makers: A wholly domestic supply chain. This contrasts with commercial drones, which have long relied on Chinese components. And, where many defense drones have until now been

focused on surveillance and reconnaissance, the U.S. government now wants products designed for actual combat on the battlefield. Neros's drones – dubbed Archer and Archer Strike – are designed for deployment to real-life war zones, particularly Ukraine, which Olaf visited in December.

Olaf's work before and after the Neros launch equipped him with some observations of where America needs to shift focus. "China is a super-advanced country with an industrial capacity like nowhere else in the world," said Olaf, who visited China when he built circuit boards but is no longer permitted to travel there. "There is a sense of purpose to building things that matter – which, unlike Silicon Valley, isn't the country's 10,000th dating app."

Olaf also said many leaders of defense-technology companies lack the knowledge of both their products and meeting their customers' needs. He said his Ukraine visit was an effort at learning what actual warfighters need, at the ground level. "I like to be as close to the users of the product as I can," said Olaf. ■

## THE NATURAL WORLD

### The Outside Story: Cocoon spotting in winter

By Bill Rhodes



CECROPIA MOTH COCOON

Illustration by Adelaide Murphy Tyrol

Late fall and early winter are the best times of year to spot giant silk moth cocoons in New England. Perhaps you've seen these creatures in the summer, fluttering by your porch light in the evening or resting on your garage wall in the early morning after spending the night at its light.

These large, showy moths in the family *Saturniidae* live only briefly as winged adults, are strikingly colored, and, as moths go, are huge. Caterpillars hatch from eggs in the late spring and summer and eat voraciously before spinning silken, papery cocoons. (Species in *Saturniidae* are unrelated to the domestic silk moth, which is bred for silk.) They may spend as many as 10 months pupating, emerging to mate and lay eggs before dying, as they do not have mouthparts equipped for eating.

Four species of giant silk moths are common in the Northeast. A fifth species, the Columbia silk moth (*Hyalophora columbia*) is uncommon but can be found in northern Vermont and New Hampshire.

The largest is the cecropia moth (*Hyalophora cecropia*) with a wingspan that can reach seven inches, making it the largest moth in North America. Its abdomen and thorax appear furry and are bright red with contrasting white bands. Each of its four wings has

a reddish crescent with a white center, rimmed with red, white, and pinkish bands.

Cecropia cocoons are unassuming. They are drab, papery brown, and are meant to blend in with the tree branch or trunk they are firmly adhered to. Caterpillars feed on maples, cherries, and birches, so cocoons can often be found on these trees. It is best to look up into the tree at just above eye level, framed against the sky, and search for a brownish, papery "bag" clinging to a branch. Inside is a large pupa, slowly turning the fat green caterpillar into a winged adult. The nondescript appearance is purposeful – rodents, particularly squirrels, will eat the pupa in the cocoon, so blending in raises the chances of survival.

Another large silk moth, about six inches across, is the Polyphemus moth (*Antheraea polyphemus*). It is tan colored with blue shading, and its hindwings sport prominent blue eyespots, used to trick and deter predators.

Polyphemus caterpillars feed on oak, birch, and elm, among a number of hardwoods, and wrap their cocoons in a leaf or two while they spin for extra camouflage. Unlike the papery brown sack of the cecropia, their cocoons are whitish or cream colored, with the silken threads clearly visible. They may

drop to the ground when the leaves fall, so it is good to look among the fallen leaves below the trees, but I have always found their cocoons a short distance away, clinging to leaves still attached to shrubs or taller grasses.

Perhaps the most striking giant silk moth in our area is the luna moth (*Actias luna*). Though it is smaller – at about four and a half inches across – its pale green color and gracefulness make it stand out. Luna moth cocoons are wrapped in tree leaves, so when they fall to the ground, they become hidden among the leaf litter. It's best to look beneath sweet gum trees – a favorite food tree – and use a stick to move the leaves about, looking for a brown, thin-walled, oval-shaped cocoon wrapped in a brown leaf.

Finally, there is the smaller promethea moth (*Callosamia promethea*) which generally measures about four inches in width. These moths are dimorphic as adults: Males are dark brown on their upper side, and females look similar to the multicolored cecropia moth, with prominent eyespots on their forewings. Caterpillars feed on tulip and sassafras trees, as well as spicebush, and spin their cocoons at the tips of branches, reinforcing a leaf's petiole with silk, allowing them to hang down throughout the winter, wrapped in that leaf. One winter, I came upon a spicebush festooned with promethea cocoons waiting to emerge in late spring.

To add novelty to your winter walks, try cocoon spotting. Be prepared to search for a bit to find their hidden, silken lairs wrapped in fallen leaves, attached to branches, or hanging from bushes – and know that come spring and summer, they will produce majestic giant silk moths. ■

Bill Rhodes is a writer and retired life sciences executive.

The Outside Story is assigned and edited by Northern Woodlands magazine and sponsored by the Wellborn Ecology Fund of New Hampshire Charitable Foundation: nhcf.org

## MUSIC NOTE

### From the Dalai Lama to Dizzy Gillespie

Redding music producer nominated for three Grammys

By Pamela Brown



Paul Avgerinos, a multi-Grammy Award-winning artist, composer, producer and engineer, is again being recognized this year with three Grammy nominations.

"It truly remains fresh and evergreen," said Avgerinos, a longtime Redding resident who works out of Studio Unicorn, a state-of-the-art recording studio in his home.

Avgerinos is looking forward to attending the 68th Grammy Awards on February 1. "I'll be there a few days before and after to enjoy the parties and to see my friends and colleagues," he said.

One of his nominations this year, in the category of Best Audiobook, Narration, and Storytelling Recording, is for *Meditations: The Reflections of His Holiness – the Dalai Lama* by the Dalai Lama in commemoration of the Dalai Lama's 90th year. "I was deeply honored to engineer, mix, and master this audiobook with the Dalai Lama. I have never worked with him before, so this was a great honor. This album is very auspicious since His Holiness is revered by the 500 million Buddhists in the world," said Avgerinos.

*Meditations: The Reflections of His Holiness – the Dalai Lama* is both an audio book and album that runs about 60 minutes. "This Dalai Lama recognition touches me deeply, because my own spiritual

journey began in 1975 when I first encountered his teachings. His presence, books, stories and guidance shaped me and so many others seeking clarity and compassion. To find myself 50 years later, working on an audiobook featuring His Holiness has been a profound joy," said Avgerinos. The audiobook offers reflections on peace, compassion, and wisdom that is beautifully paired with music that helps deepen the meditative experience.

"Listening to the Dalai Lama's voice inspired me throughout the eight-month process of creating this album," he said. Avgerinos noted the production process focused on keeping the recordings of the Dalai Lama as natural as possible. "Our vision and goal were that the album would function like a meditation and *satsang*, or spiritual talk. We made it soothing and comforting to help people slip into a blissful peaceful state of consciousness. I made subtle adjustments and added a touch of space so nothing distracted from the heart of his message."

In addition, Avgerinos was nominated as a producer on two albums in the Jazz/Latin Jazz category: *The Original Influencers: Dizzy, Chano & Chico and Mundo-agua – Celebrating Carla Bley* by Arturo O'Farrill & The Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra. "I was a behind-the-scenes producer on these two albums, helping everything to go smoothly," he explained.

As a music composer, performer, and producer, Avgerinos works in a variety of genres, including new age, space, world, electronic, and drone. He has worked with Deepak Chopra, President Jimmy Carter, Buddy Rich, Charles Aznavour, Run DMC, Willie Nelson, and more. "Variety is truly the spice of life," he said. "It keeps me fresh and on my toes." ■

## Holiday break revelry: in photos



Though the *Sentinel* went on a publishing break after its December 18 issue, the fun didn't stop around town as residents prepared for the holidays and enjoyed a host of festive events. (From top left, clockwise): Photo by Carol Morgan / Students from Redding Elementary School entertained residents at Meadow Ridge with holiday tunes on December 15; Photo by Susan Clark / Town Hall was decorated for the season once again by Redding Garden Club; Photo by Susan Clark / Shoppers stopped by the Redding Grange's Procrastinators' Market on December 20 to pick up last-minute gifts; Photo by Jessie Wright / Student musicians serenaded the crowd during the 15th annual Community Carol Sing at Joel Barlow High School on December 22; Photo by Irish Flare Photography / Attendees of the Georgetown Holiday Parade and Festival on December 21 enjoyed hayrides near the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill; Photo by Irish Flare Photography / The Georgetown Holiday Parade and Festival offered indoor activities for the first time this year at The Granite; (Center): Photo by Irish Flare Photography / Visitors greeted ponies from Rising Starr Horse Rescue at The Georgetown Holiday Parade and Festival.

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies  
R = registration required

## This Week's Featured Events

### Kids Night Out

**Friday, January 9**

5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.  
Hosted by Boys & Girls Club of Redding-Easton and Mark Twain Library  
Dinner, games, fun  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
R

### Lyrics Coffeehouse – Chris Brown

**Friday, January 9**

7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.  
Acoustic music in a relaxed setting  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
reddingct.gov/parks-and-recreation  
\$

### New Pond Farm Open Day

**Saturday, January 10**

11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.  
Explore the property, programs, and animals  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org

### Want to feature an upcoming event?

E-mail us at  
[advertise@reddingsentinel.org](mailto:advertise@reddingsentinel.org)  
for more information.

## ARTS

**Friday, January 9**

**Lyrics Coffeehouse – Chris Brown**  
7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.  
Acoustic music in a relaxed setting  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
reddingct.gov/parks-and-recreation  
\$

**Saturday, January 10**

**Into the Looking Glass Opening Reception**  
4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Art exhibit opening  
Exhibition runs through February 7  
Gtown Arts  
5 Main Street  
gtownarts.com

**Sunday, January 11**

**Chamber Music Reading**  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
Open chamber music reading for string players – all ages welcome  
The Granite  
5 North Main Street  
thegranitechurch.org

**Thursday, January 15**

**The Royal Ballet: Romeo & Juliet**  
1:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.  
Stream on HD screen, run-time just over two hours  
Heritage Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
RSVP to [mpilato@reddingct.gov](mailto:mpilato@reddingct.gov) or 203-938-9725  
R

**Thursday, January 22**

**Artist Networking Night**  
6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.  
Meet new collaborators and explore resources for artists  
Anonymous Society  
268 Simpaug Turnpike  
[anonymoussocietyart.com](http://anonymoussocietyart.com)  
R

**Saturday, January 24**

**Winter Warmer with Charlotte Roth and the Big Drama and Kira McSpice**  
6:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.  
The Granite  
5 North Main Street  
thegranitechurch.org  
\$, R

## CHILDREN | TEENS

**Friday, January 9**

**Kids Night Out**  
5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.  
Hosted by Boys & Girls Club of Redding-Easton and Mark Twain Library  
Dinner, games, fun  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
R

**Sunday, January 11**

**January Storytime for Children with Adults**  
9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.  
Nature stories and related activities  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

**Friday, January 16 – Saturday, January 17**

**Frozen Jr.**  
7:00 p.m. Friday  
2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Saturday  
Presented by ERA Productions and Bethel Parks and Recreation  
Bethel High School Auditorium  
300 Whittlesey Drive  
Bethel  
[ticketpeak.co/bethelparkandrec](http://ticketpeak.co/bethelparkandrec)  
\$

## HEALTH | WELLNESS

**Friday, January 9**

**Live Well Workshop for Chronic Health Conditions**  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
For adults 60+ with ongoing health conditions or their caregivers  
Virtual, offered through Riverbrook Regional YMCA  
E-mail [aellner@wcaaa.org](mailto:aellner@wcaaa.org) to register  
R

**Saturday, January 10**

**Survivors Row Norwalk – Open House**  
12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.  
Learn about a learn-to-row program for cancer patients and survivors  
Wilton Presbyterian Church  
48 New Canaan Avenue  
Wilton  
[wiltonymca.org/norwalk-hospital-health-wellness-suite](http://wiltonymca.org/norwalk-hospital-health-wellness-suite)

**Sunday, January 11**

**Pilates Fusion with Lauren Chiarello Mika**  
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.  
50-minute session for all levels  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

**Tuesday, January 13**

**Love Letters – A Meditation and Mindfulness Session with Jackie DeLise**  
6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.  
Begin the new year grounded and refreshed  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
R

**Tuesday, January 20**

**Nature, Art, and Service as Medicine**  
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
Virtual discussion with author of *The Connection Cure: The Prescriptive Power of Movement, Nature, Art, Service, and Belonging*  
Mark Twain Library  
marktwainlibrary.org  
R

## NATURE

**Saturday, January 10**

**New Pond Farm Open Day**  
11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.  
Explore the property, programs, and animals  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org

**Sunday, January 11**

**NPF Walking Group: Winter walk with snowshoes**  
1:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
R

**Wednesday, January 14**

**Nature Book Club: Beaver Land**  
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.  
Partnership between Mark Twain Library, Redding Land Trust, and New Pond Farm – books available to borrow at Mark Twain Library  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
R

## SPECIAL PROGRAMS

**Mondays – Fridays**

**The Breakfast Club**  
7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.  
Ongoing meetings, every weekday  
Christ Church Episcopal  
184 Cross Highway

**Thursday, January 8**

**God Save the King! With Ridgefield Historical Society**  
6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.  
Illustrated presentation by Keith Marshall Jones III, author of *God Save the King! Loyalism in Ridgefield Connecticut During the American Revolution 1765 – 1786*  
Saint Stephens Episcopal Church  
353 Main Street  
Ridgefield  
[zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/god-save-the-king](http://zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/god-save-the-king)  
R

**Tuesday, January 13**

**Downsizing with Dignity**  
12:00 p.m.  
Presentation and sandwich lunch  
Heritage Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
RSVP to [mstillman@reddingct.gov](mailto:mstillman@reddingct.gov) or 203-938-9725  
R

**Wednesday, January 14**

**Redding Prevention Council Meeting**  
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.  
Non-profit, volunteer-led organization focused on substance abuse and mental health resources  
The Granite  
5 North Main Street  
thegranitechurch.org

**Thursday, January 15**

**History Submerged: Protecting Connecticut's Irreplaceable Landscapes**  
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
Discussion with James Lomuscio, author of *Village of the Damned*  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
R

**Friday, January 16**

**Refreshments with Friends**  
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
Heritage Center  
37 Lonetown Road

## MEETINGS

**Thursday, January 8**

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

**Thursday, January 8**

**Historic Review Committee Special Meeting**  
5:00 p.m.  
Virtual

**Thursday, January 8**

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

**Friday, January 9**

**Board of Selectmen Budget Workshop**  
8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room  
100 Hill Road

**Monday, January 12**

**League of Women Voters**  
4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Town Hall / Conference Room  
100 Hill Road

**Monday, January 12**

**Public Meeting: EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant**  
7:00 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room  
100 Hill Road

**Tuesday, January 13**

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

**Wednesday, January 14**

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

**Wednesday, January 14**

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

**Wednesday, January 14**

**Redding Board of Education Budget Presentation**  
7:00 p.m.  
John Read Middle School / Community Room  
486 Redding Road

**Thursday, January 15**

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

**Tuesday, January 20**

**Region 9 Finance and Operations Committee**  
5:30 p.m.  
Joel Barlow High School / Library Learning Commons  
100 Black Rock Turnpike

**Tuesday, January 20**

**Board of Selectmen**  
7:00 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room  
100 Hill Road

**Tuesday, January 20**

**Conservation Commission**  
7:00 p.m.  
Town Hall / Conference Room  
100 Hill Road

\*\* Town offices will be closed on Monday, January 19 for Martin Luther King Jr. Day

\*Sign-up to receive meeting agendas and notifications at [reddingct.gov/subscribe](http://reddingct.gov/subscribe)



# #1 WHERE IT MATTERS MOST

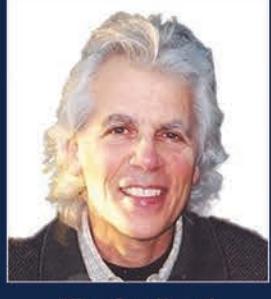
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1. Based on total closed units information from SmartMLS for all price ranges as reported on 01/05/2026 for period of 01/01/2025 - 11/30/2025. 2. Data based on closed and recorded buyer for all price ranges in Redding as reported on 01/05/2026 for period of 01/01/2025 - 11/30/2025. 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.

