

Canvass of registered voters now underway

By Jessie Wright

The Registrars of Voters’ Office has begun its annual canvass of registered voters to ensure that the Town’s voting records are up to date. According to Connecticut statute, this canvass must take place each year sometime between January 1 and April 30.

“In order to maintain current records, letters are sent out to voters that the registrars believe may have moved out of town,” explained Andrea Theodore, one of Redding’s Deputy Registrars. “One of the methods of canvass that we use is based on data we receive from the National Change of Address list (NCOA), which is produced by the United States Postal Service.” Canvass letters are sent to other households who might have moved but may not have registered their change of address with the Post Office.

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Photo by Andy Bajorinas

A healthy coyote on the hunt in the snow adjacent to Samuel E. Little River Preserve. If you have a photo you’d like to see featured here, e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org.

Town will apply for a second EPA clean-up grant

By Rocco Valluzzo

To fund remediation activities at the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill site in Georgetown, Redding will apply for an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfield clean-up grant of up to \$4 million.

Funding from the grant would be used to complete site remediation at the Weaving Building Parcel at 30 North Main Street and bring it into compliance with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) remediation standard regulations. A previous EPA grant of close to \$3 million was awarded in 2023 covering remediation of the West Pond, OMS, and Gateway development areas.

“We have to provide an update on our progress on the 2023 application, because there’s a point at which in the (new) grant application it asks if you have received funding,” explained First Select-woman Julia Pemberton at a public hearing on Monday, January 12. “If you answer ‘yes’ you have to give a progress report on the status of your own project.”

As part of the application process, the Town is required to submit an analysis of Brownfield clean-up alternatives for the site. This has been prepared by the engineering

firm Tighe & Bond to support proposed remediation activities.

The property was the subject of a Phase 1 environmental site assessment that was funded by a 2021 Connecticut Department of Community and Economic Development (DECD) Brownfield grant program. Phase 2 and Phase 3 environmental site assessments followed with a second DECD grant. As part of that grant, documents that were produced included a conceptual remedial action plan and a clean-up plan and cost estimate.

“We’ve done a thorough investigation of the site, collecting soil and groundwater samples,” said Jim Olsen, a licensed environmental professional with Tighe & Bond. “You’re talking 150+ years of history and a lot of activity. There was a lot of different types of contamination in contaminated areas, which is typical for a Brownfield site like this.”

Among the contaminants Tighe & Bond found were volatile organic compounds (VOCs). They also found petroleum hydrocarbons and former fuel oil underground storage tanks, which are typical on these sites. Semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs), also from fuel oils and fill, were present, as were

certain metals like arsenic and lead.

“These sites contain a lot of fill across the whole site because historically, the land was filled in with certain types of waste that the mill produced, like industrial waste,” said Olsen. “Back then, it was legal and they basically filled in wetlands to create new land. There was really nowhere to bring this stuff back in the day.”

In addition to being in disrepair, the Weaving Building itself contains hazardous materials, such as asbestos. It likely has polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in some of the caulking and window glazing, as well as lead-based paint, which was common for that era.

“Some of these materials are fairly damaged because they’ve been there for a long time,” said Olsen. “The building is not totally secure and weatherproof. The roof is leaking. Water is getting in there and is causing deterioration.

Tighe & Bond’s analysis is divided into two sections, each with several clean-up options: soil remediation and the removal of hazardous building materials.

Soil remediation can be as simple as taking no action and costs

Continued on page 3

Board of Ed hears budget presentation with 4.54% increase

By Rocco Valluzzo

With increased costs in special education and salaries in particular, the Redding Board of Education heard a presentation last week on a proposed budget of \$27,725,232 for the 2026-27 fiscal year – an increase of \$1,203,909 (4.54%) over the current year’s budget.

This is below the average proposed increase of 5.15% of 16 neighboring districts and District Economic Reference Group A (DERG A) towns. Trumbull was highest with 6.68% and Darien was lowest with 3.88%.

“A school district’s budget is one of the clearest reflections of our community’s priorities and values,” said Superintendent Jason McKinnon at a Redding Board of Education meeting on January 14. “It signals how we invest in our children and educational opportunity and in the future of Redding.”

According to McKinnon, 27% of this increase is associated with special education, totaling \$6,996,667 (up \$325,655). In addition to higher costs for special education outplacements and transportation, the district is hoping to add GoalBook to its special education instructional software, which is a toolkit that helps educators develop and implement higher-quality IEPs (individualized education programs) for students who need them. That software shows a budgeted cost of \$8,429 for both Redding Elementary School and John Read Middle School (\$16,858 total).

The most significant driver continues to be faculty and staff compensation, which is increasing by \$916,000. This increase reflects contractual salary obligations, staffing needs, and retirement costs.

Transportation costs have increased by approximately \$184,324 and utilities are up approximately \$80,000 (10%) with electricity being the primary driver.

Redding will receive \$54,423 in title grants for 2026-27. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, it will receive \$225,013 in grants.

“Every year we use title grants to offset certain areas in our budget,” said McKinnon. “This is really important because any time we can use grants to fund operations or a staff member or supplies, that means it’s a reduction to taxpayers.”

The budget is divided into eight cost centers:

- Redding Elementary School: \$6,020,526, an increase of \$232,019 (4.01%)
- John Read Middle School: \$5,371,966, an increase of \$185,189 (3.57%)
- Special education and student services: \$6,996,585, an increase of \$325,655 (4.88%)
- Facilities: \$751,909, an increase of \$89,081 (13.44%)

Continued on page 3

REDDING’S BIG OUTDOORS

Angling for a good year *Fishing in Connecticut*

By Anne Young Albanese



Photo by Olimpia Photography/Shutterstock

While lakes and ponds are frozen over, anglers are thinking of warmer days – or contemplating trying their luck at ice fishing – and obtaining their Connecticut fishing licenses for the 2026 season. Fishing is allowed year-round in certain areas of the state, with most of the year requiring catch and release. Fishing licenses are currently available, and there are several types of licenses for residents and non-residents.

Licenses depend on the type of fishing planned. There is an all-purpose license that allows fishing in both fresh and salt water (inland and marine). There is an inland-only license that allows fishing in freshwater exclusively. This license is free for Connecticut residents

who are 65 and older. There is a marine-only license, which is for fishermen who fish only in salt water. This license is also free for Connecticut residents who are 65 and older. There are also short-duration licenses for non-residents who are visiting for up to three days.

Some other common licenses include combination licenses for hunting and fishing. Connecticut residents who are 16 or 17 years old are eligible for half-price licenses. In addition, there are three days when fishing is free. May 9 is family fishing day, when no fishing license is required. On June 21 and

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School community mourns loss of JRMS student

By Anne Young Albanese

Families in the Redding school community were notified this week of the accidental death of Luke Sorce, a seventh grader at John Read Middle School. Communications came from Jason McKinnon, Superintendent for Easton-Redding-Region 9.

Sorce arrived as a student at John Read Middle School last year. He participated in a variety of activities, including the debate team and the Science Olympiad team.

“Anyone who had the privilege of knowing Luke experienced his remarkably kind heart,” said McKinnon. “He looked out for those he cared about with unwavering loyalty. Whether he was helping a student with special needs with math homework or asking for advice to help someone who was getting picked on, Luke consistently sought opportunities to make other people’s days better.”

The school district has activated its Crisis Intervention Team, which is composed of professionals who are trained to support students, parents, and school personnel during

difficult situations such as this. The district also has arranged for a Crisis Team from Western Connecticut State University, which specializes in trauma management and support services.

John Read Middle School was open for a few hours on Monday, despite the holiday. Counselors were available to speak with students by appointment. On Tuesday, counselors and support staff were available for students, and comfort dogs were present in the school library.

In Monday’s e-mail, McKinnon said, “As we return to school tomorrow, our focus will be on providing a calm and supportive environment.”

The Regional Crisis Team has been available, as have school counselors, psychologists, and social workers. The district also has shared several resources for families helping children through grief. Students, teachers, and parents can contact the school office for additional support or resources. ■

Ownership question and request for continuance keep “Daffodil Field” ADU application pending

By Jessie Wright

A special use permit application to build a detached garage and accessory apartment at 70 Cross Highway – known by many as the “Daffodil Field” – is still pending, after Zoning Commission members voted on January 14 to keep the public hearing open while a question of ownership is resolved.

Applicants Edward and Stacey Steinmetz, who own the property and live across the street at 67 Cross Highway, said they intend for their son and daughter-in-law to live in the new accessory apartment once it is built, setting them up on the same property as Stacey’s mother, who currently lives in the main residence.

Redding’s Zoning Regulations, however, require that an owner of the property – which neither Stacey’s mother nor son are – reside in either the main residence or accessory dwelling unit during the duration of its use.

After that question was raised the previous evening at the Planning Commission meeting, Zoning Enforcement Officer Michael Moran said he confirmed with the Town’s attorney that “owner” simply meant someone listed on the deed of the property, allowing the Steinmetzes to deed only a small portion, even as low as 1%, of the property to their son to comply with the regulation.

The Zoning Commission debated whether to close the public hearing and deny the application without prejudice while that transfer is completed, or to extend the hearing and confirm the property transfer at the next meeting before rendering their decision. Ultimately, they opted to extend the public hearing to Wednesday, January 28.

The Commission also considered that the Planning Commission had not yet issued a referral on the application. The night before, the Planning Commission voted unanimously to continue their discussion, both because of the property ownership question and because of a request by abutting property owner Susan Lockwood for a continuance. Lockwood outlined in a statement that after receiving official notice of the application

on December 24, 2025, she was unable to review architectural plans at Town Hall before the deadline to submit feedback, first because the plans were not included in the file that the Zoning office provided her, and second due to the holidays and municipal employee vacation schedules. The Planning Commission’s next meeting will be Tuesday, January 27.

The property is a treasured one in town – every spring, over 40,000 daffodils bloom in the field, planted and divided by the property’s former owner, Bud McQuade, as a tribute to his beloved wife. The Steinmetzes purchased the property in 2019 after McQuade’s death and have welcomed the public for a few weeks each April when the flowers are in bloom to walk through the field and take pictures. Stacey told the Zoning Commission they have no intention of ending that tradition.

The application and plans describe a two-story structure, comprised of a detached garage and accessory apartment above it. Tim Draper, agent for the Steinmetzes, noted that the new driveway and structure would not interfere with a single daffodil on the field, positioning it in the southwest corner of the lot. The owners plan to install a split-rail fence with flowering trees along it to delineate the property and to provide a backdrop for visitors to the field in spring.

Several residents attended the Planning Commission and Zoning Commission meetings to make public comment, sharing stories and memories of the Daffodil Field, arguing for the preservation of scenic vistas on Cross Highway, and expressing dismay over any change to the field. Some, however, pointed out that, being private property, the owners could build a garage directly in the middle of the field or “till over the daffodils and plant tomatoes” without any need for a special permit. ■

Visit reddingct.gov/events for up-to-date meeting details and agendas

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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

To the Editor,

Friends of Peter Bonfanti, who contributed so much to our town, can help memorialize his achievements and civic dedication by contributing to ideas and memories in a project we have just started. ‘We’ are the Current Events Discussion Group, meeting for almost two decades at the Community Center under Peter’s superb guidance. Others may remember projects connected with the schools, town planning and, for me, bearding the power company to drive the lines underground.

Feel free to send memories and thoughts for honoring Peter to me, Richard Stein, cooke@snet.net or best in person, every Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. at the Community Center. ■

Richard Stein, Whortleberry Road



Redding Land Trust remembers

John McLeran
with deepest gratitude

August 7, 1940 - January 15, 2026

Town & Land Trust Open Space Manager, friend & guide

LEGAL NOTICE

At the regularly scheduled meeting of the Zoning Commission held on January 14, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. in person the Commission reached the following decision:

1. Application #25-13Z – ZEO initiated request for a text amendment of sections 5.4.2 (e) and 5.4.3 (c) of The Town of Redding Zoning Regulations to update referenced manuals to their most recent versions. **Approved** ■

Matt Lecher, Chairman, Redding Zoning Commission

Corrections to the January 15, 2026 issue:

In “Police look to increase training, modernize technology with proposed budgets” on page 3, the article incorrectly stated that Redding is one of 158 municipalities in Connecticut that uses software from Nexgen Public Safety Solutions. It is in fact one of the few towns in the state that does not currently use software from that provider.

The incorrect caption for the third photo illustrating the "If trees could talk" column on page 8 was inadvertently published. The correct caption is: Hickory pet sculpture. We regret these errors. ■

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From bathrooms to bridges, capital items discussed in budget workshop

By Rocco Valluzzo and Jessie Wright

While the focus of the January 9 Board of Selectmen’s budget workshop was on the 2026-27 operating budget, several capital requests that voters could see at referendum this May were discussed as well.

The Building and Facilities Department is proposing a \$200,000 renovation of the kitchen and the addition of a women’s restroom and locker/shower room at the Public Works building.

“The kitchen probably dates back to the 1960s,” said Chief Building Official Shaun Donnelly. “The plan is to reconfigure the living space and incorporate the new elements.”

Donnelly also noted the emergency generator at the Public Works building, which dates to 1997, needs replacing (\$70,000). Vinyl perimeter fencing at the Transfer Station (\$25,000), is proposed as well, more for screening than security.

A request for \$90,000 would go to removing and rebuilding the deteriorating front steps and accessible ramp at Town Hall. Some of the exterior shingles at the Community Center gym, which are 25 years old and have exceeded their lifespan, need replacing as well (\$120,000).

The Department is also requesting \$100,000 for replacing the 25-year-old HVAC system at the Park and Recreation offices, which is prone to frequent failures and freeze-ups. A request of \$27,000 would improve the water system at the Community Center (where water testing in recent years has turned up potability issues) including the installation of a chlorination system analyzer.

Structural issues at Lonetown

Farm, such as replacing the fire-place hearths with masonry bearing walls on new concrete footings, would be addressed under a capital request for \$75,000. Improving the ventilation and addressing the humidity at the Umpawaug School-house is expected to cost \$10,000.

Park and Recreation included one capital item request in its proposed budget – the installation of an electronic gate at Topstone Park that can be opened and closed remotely. For years, the gate has been opened and locked manually by volunteers or staff. With the Park’s seasonal hours for vehicular traffic and its varied events schedule, the task is often burdensome, according to Park and Recreation Director Rob Blick.

Members of the Board of Finance inquired about the reason behind having a gate at all, as the park is open to people walking or hiking year-round.

“The purpose of the gate is to control access in and out from vehicular traffic as much as possible to discourage things like vandalism and tailgating and kids taking cases of booze into the woods and drinking,” explained First Select-woman Julia Pemberton. “So, it’s really just trying to prevent access to an attractive nuisance.” The road behind the gate that leads to the beach also is not plowed or salted in winter.

The manual gate, however, has become “a nuisance in and of itself,” said Pemberton.

“A lot of people do use the park, even in the off-season,” she continued. “And most folks who do are generally dog walkers and people who exercise.” Blick noted

the new playground – which is located near the beach and is a long walk if the gate is closed – also has increased off-season traffic to the park.

The electronic gate project would cost roughly \$34,000, with roughly half in electrical wiring work and half for the gate itself.

The Highway Department included several capital requests for 2026-27, including \$350,000 to replace a 2013 International six-wheel dump truck with two medium duty ones and \$250,000 for a 2012 Volvo backhoe/excavator. A compactor at the Transfer Station (\$60,000) is also requested.

The capital plan for bridges and roads includes \$1,033,750 for the demolition of the bridge on Sport Hill Road and \$1,281,875 for the one on Long Wall Road which are scheduled for the fall. Both were destroyed in the August 2024 storm. The demolition of bridges on Brookside Road and Greenbush Road is scheduled for the fall of 2027.

Sanders said work on the first two is the priority and will straddle fiscal years 2026-27 and 2027-28. The Town will make use of reimbursement programs available from the State Local Bridge Program and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Also related to the storm are capital requests for repairs on Newtown Turnpike and Poverty Hollow Road (\$220,000) and Cross Highway, Diamond Hill Road, and Old Stagecoach Road (\$278,000).

“They happen after the fact,” he said. “We outlay the cash, and we get a portion of the cash back.” ■

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School districts select teachers of the year

By Anne Young Albanese



Randall Smith



Jennifer D'Addario

Redding and Region 9 school districts have selected their “Teachers of the Year,” honoring two educators who exemplify and uphold the ideals of each district. This year, Randall Smith was selected as the Joel Barlow High School (Region 9) Teacher of the Year, while Jennifer D’Addario from Redding Elementary School was selected as the Redding Teacher of the Year.

Smith has taught at Barlow for nearly 25 years. He is a social studies teacher who has taught a variety of history classes and is the advisor for the Debate team. Smith refers to his teaching style as eclectic. “I put the students’ needs and their learning first, using choice, primary sources, simulations, irony, and songs. In all contexts, I seek to make the student responsible for finding contemporary relevance and solve problems of the content we cover. Our task is simply to create conditions for kids to find and create meaning.” Smith said he was honored to be chosen as teacher of the year. This was his first nomination, so the award was a complete surprise.

This is D’Addario’s fifth year teaching fourth grade at Redding Elementary School. She also serves as the advisor for the Fourth Grade Math Club and the Fourth Grade Student Council. Her teaching philosophy is rooted in teamwork and community.

“Everyone plays a unique role and brings something valuable to the classroom,” she said. “I also strive to create an environment where students feel safe to take risks and make mistakes.” When asked about being named Teacher of the Year, D’Addario responded,

“I am beyond honored to be named Redding Teacher of the Year. I’m so grateful to work alongside such dedicated and supportive colleagues at RES and throughout the district. Having such a strong team makes this recognition especially meaningful, and I’m proud to represent Redding. It inspires me to continue growing, learning, and bringing joy to the classroom in a community that I feel so lucky to be part of.”

The Teacher of the Year program is run by the Connecticut Department of Education. Superintendents select one educator from each school district for the honor. While every district may determine its own nomination process, the goal is to represent the important role that teachers play in the state. According to a letter sent to superintendents of school districts, directors of public charter schools, executive directors of regional educational service centers, and heads of schools for endowed and incorporated academies, there are certain characteristics that Connecticut recognizes for the program.

“Among the qualities to consider are: a teacher who is an expert in their field who guides students of all backgrounds and abilities to achieve excellence; a teacher who collaborates with colleagues, students, and families to create a school culture of respect and success; a teacher who connects the classroom and key stakeholders to foster a strong community; a teacher who demonstrates leadership and innovation in and outside the classroom; and a teacher who communicates in an engaging and clear way.” ■

Canvass of registered voters now underway / continued from page 1

Confirmation of Voting Residence
ED-642 (PART A) (2/99)

From: Registrar of Voters
Town of Redding
100 Hill Road
PO Box 1028
CT, 06875-1028

District
001

LAST DATE to return this form:
February 12, 2026

We believe you no longer live at address below.
If you did not change your residence, OR:
changed your address to a new address within this town.

* Fill out Part B & mail in enclosed envelope, or deliver to us by date above.

If Part B is not returned:

1. Affirmation or Confirmation of your address may be required before you can vote,
AND

2. In four years, your name will be removed from the voters list if you do not vote in the election or primary, or do not restore your voting rights

If you have changed your residence to a different town, you must register to vote in your new town.

* If you need a Mail-In Voter Registration Card, let us know.

* Please fill out Part B, Mail in enclosed envelope or deliver it to us by the date above.

Birth Date :

Name and Address on last list of Registered Voters

Regina Registrar
1 Eagles Nest Lane
Redding, CT

Don't Risk your Right to VOTE!
Fill out and Return Part B

Registrars of Voters

Any Questions? Please call Registrars at the number below:
Redding Registrars
203-938-5012

Date Notice Sent:
January 13, 2026

(cut here)

Confirmation of Voting Residence RETURN FORM (PART B)

From: Registrar of Voters
Town of Redding
100 Hill Road
PO Box 1028
CT, 06875-1028

District
001

LAST DATE to return this form:
February 12, 2026
DO NOT RISK YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE
005644551

Please check all appropriate boxes and enter information requested.

1. ☐ I still live at the address shown on this form

5. ☐ I am temporarily absent from the town, but I intend to return.
(Reason for your absence)

2. ☐ I have moved to a different address within this town

3. ☐ I have moved out of town

4. ☐ Send me a Mail-In Card to register in my new town

NEW ADDRESS IS(No., street, town, state)

DATE MOVED

Birth Date : July 4, 1776

Name and Address on last list of Registered Voters

Regina Registrar
1 Eagles Nest Lane
Redding, CT

Don't Risk your Right to VOTE!
Fill out and Return to the Registrars!!!
SIGNATURE OF VOTER
DATE SIGNED

Anyone who receives a canvass letter should complete the form, sign, and return the letter to the Registrars of Voters’ Office as soon as possible. If a response is not received within 30 days, the person’s voting status may be changed from “Active” to “Inactive”.

“We ask anyone receiving a canvass letter addressed to someone in their household who no longer lives at that address to, if possible, please forward the envelope to the addressee at his/her current address,” added Theodore.

The letters have been mailed – the envelopes feature red ink, and the form is printed on pink paper. A sample of both the envelope and letter appear here as well. Residents can contact the Registrars of Voters’ Office at registrar@reddingct.gov or (203) 938-5012 with any questions. ■

Board of Ed hears budget presentation with 4.54% increase / continued from page 1

- Technology and digital resources: \$756,354, an increase of \$20,650 (2.81%)
- Curriculum and instruction: \$192,147, a decrease of \$47,315 (-19.76%)
- District-wide operations: \$6,813,657, an increase of \$367,011 (5.69%)
- Central office: \$822,06, an increase of \$31,619 (4.00%)

The notable increase in the Facilities cost center is due, in part, to a proposed \$7,500 in elevator repairs based on inspection. Annual monitoring contracts for the alarm system and fire system at the two schools are also shown to be increasing significantly – from \$2,600 to \$7,800 and from \$2,000 to \$7,800. Contracted services and maintenance fees are increasing nearly across the board as well.

The reduction in Curriculum & instruction comes from a number of small decreases in outside

consulting and professional development costs as well as from the elimination of \$9,000 for conferences and a nearly \$27,000 reduction in the budget for outside consultants and experts to support district initiatives.

The Board of Education will continue reviewing the budget in-person during workshop meetings. The public is encouraged to submit questions which will become workshop topics. The contact form and a copy of the proposed budget can be found online at sites. google.com/er9.org/redding-budget/home

“We’ve worked to contain costs where possible, reallocate resources strategically, and collaborate with the Town of Redding,” said McKinnon. “The result is a proposed budget that is largely driven by non-discretionary factors, including healthcare, contractual staffing obligations, and responsibility to the growing complex need of some of our special education students and populations.” ■

Town will apply for a second EPA clean-up grant / continued from page 1

nothing. However, development is not possible because contaminants exceed clean-up criteria.

Hot spot excavation and groundwater monitoring involves targeting the most contaminated areas, which can be very large, and has an estimated cost of \$1,900,000 which could increase as work continues. The third option involves hot-spot excavation and capping contaminated areas with parking lots and buildings with a \$650,000 estimated cost, which is recom-

mended by Tighe & Bond.

“The most effective way to do these is to remove hot spots where the contamination is greatest,” said Olsen. “Basically, you just cap the rest.”

Full excavation of contaminants would be difficult to do because of the sheer volume and cost (\$2.9 million).

A combination of abatement, stabilization and encapsulation for the Weaving Building, which is the most cost-effective and practical

option as well as recommended by Tighe & Bond, would cost about \$4.5 million. Full abatement would be cost prohibitive at \$7.7 million.

“The goal is to stabilize the Weaving Building, weatherproof it as much as we can within the constraints of the grant, and then repair the site for reuse,” said Olsen. “It’s been a long road to bring this building to reuse.”

The Town must submit the application by January 28 in order to qualify for the grant. ■

SPORTS

Offense sets tone early in win

Girls basketball | By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo
Gwen Miller, right, scored 13 points for the Joel Barlow high girls varsity basketball team against Weston on Thursday, January 15.

A balanced scoring effort on the part of the Joel Barlow High girls varsity basketball team kept the competition guessing last week. The Falcons had three players score in double digits when they visited Weston on Thursday, January 15. Some effective three-point shooting also played a big part in a 51-33 win. “It doesn’t feel like an 18-point win,” said Barlow Head Coach Joe Carollo, whose team hit eight shots from beyond the arc. “They (Weston) are well-coached and they have talent there.”

Season marks an upswing for Barlow

Boys basketball | By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo
Sean Gabriel, left, is one of four senior captains providing leadership on the Joel Barlow High boys varsity basketball team this season.

With the 2025-26 season now at the midway point, the Joel Barlow High boys varsity basketball team looks forward to its remaining games – and with good reason. The Falcons are in the midst of their best season in at least six years. With a 6-4 record overall so far, they are currently tied for second in the South-West Conference (SWC) standings along with New Milford and Notre Dame Prep at 3-1 league records. “This is not super surprising to us, with how much work they’ve put in and to see that it’s paid off,” said second-year Head Coach

Barlow, which never trailed, made use of the three-pointer early, with Mia Tartaglia hitting a pair and Paige Jarvis sinking a field goal to put the visitors up 8-0 in the first quarter. Despite a relatively strong start, Barlow’s offense turned cold after that, coming up short on a number of shots. In the meantime, the Trojans began to claw their way back with two baskets by Maya Stoltz and a pair of free throws from Finley Blair to cut things to 8-6 at the end of the opening frame. While Weston’s Sandra Grissia tied it at 10-10 early in the next quarter, Sara Fenzel and Jarvis followed with back-to-back threes and the Falcons were ahead for good. Missed shots in the remaining time stopped Barlow from putting things out of reach at that point, but it did get another three from Jarvis with less than a minute-and-a-half left, to go up by seven (22-15) at the break. Barlow’s man-to-man defense kept the Trojans under control for much of the second half, holding them to single-digit scoring in both the third and fourth quarters. Following a pair of free throws from Stoltz, the Falcons began to pull ahead in the last six minutes of

the third quarter by outscoring the competition 10-4 in the remainder of the frame, highlighted by Gwen Miller’s three-pointer to make it 32-20. Tartaglia also added a field goal and hit two shots from the line with 10.5 seconds left to keep the spread at 12 points (36-24). Maintaining at least a 10-point lead the rest of the way, Barlow kept up the pace offensively in the last quarter and again held Weston to less than 10 points. It did struggle a bit from the foul line, hitting only one of four throws and went just five for 10 for the night. “We have to do better there,” said Carollo. “That could come back to haunt us.” Tartaglia led in scoring with 18 points, including two three-pointers. Miller (two three-pointers) also scored in double digits with 13, as did Jarvis (two three-pointers) with 10. Fenzel scored eight with a pair of three-pointers. Emma Ogden also scored for Barlow with two points. “We’ve been hitting eight threes often,” said Carollo. “That is part of our offense.” Barlow, now 7-3 overall, next visits Notre Dame Prep on Thursday, January 29 at 6:00 p.m. ■

Kick-off marks build-up to spring Robotics season

By Rob Sample



Photo courtesy of Caroline Hunter

Barlow students are working fast and furious on their entry into this year’s FIRST Robotics competition, after the official game kick-off took place on Saturday, January 10 at the Joel Barlow High School cafeteria. There, the students gathered to watch this year’s FIRST Robotics kick-off video, which provided an animated view of what this year’s competition will entail, as well as to study the FIRST Robotics Competition Game Manual. This book describes what each team’s robot needs to achieve, challenging all competing teams to determine how best to accomplish that. “The kick-off went great, and most of the team members were able to make it,” said Jon Stinson, a content/curriculum director at Morgan Stanley who serves as one of the Barlow Robotics team’s mentors. “In addition to increasing our numbers, we have an excellent mix of talent in Barlow Robotics this year.”

The cafeteria also provided the students with a better setting for simulating game performance than in years past, when the event has taken place in classrooms. This year’s game has been dubbed “Rebuilt,” encouraging the use of engineering skills and developments from prior competitions to develop something totally new. One key difference this year: While last year’s game focused on precise ‘pick-and-place’ manipulation of game pieces, this year’s emphasizes securing and rapidly shooting large numbers of balls into a central hub while racing against the clock. The balls are meant to simulate fuel. “One of this year’s design challenges is most definitely being able to hold as many balls – ‘fuel’ – as we can at once,” noted Randy Rivera, the team’s Captain and Head of Mechanical Design. “Due to this year’s lower-than-normal maximum height restrictions for the robot, we need to figure out a very efficient way of storing the fuel.” Robotic entries will get scored according to the number of successful ball insertions during that leg of each competition, among other factors. “At the end of the game, each robot in the competition will climb a ladder,” Stinson noted. “They’ll also be scored for successfully mounting the ladder steps, earning points for how many rungs and how high they ascend. Last year’s competition involved being able to maneuver the robot onto a hoist and then lift it vertically – also earning points.”

“Every year is different, though you’ll also note some similarities between this year and past competitions,” noted Serene Zegarelli, a New York Life executive and another Barlow Robotics mentor. “So, you never know quite what to expect. Whereas last year’s event was a pick-and-place maneuver, this one’s will be a ‘shooter’ game: 2017 and 2022 had some similarities.” Though members of Barlow Robotics have been involved in

building up skills since last summer, the kick-off signals the beginning of a very busy period as the team readies for the tournament phase. Much like a product-development team in a corporation, the Barlow Robotics team is divided into disciplines such as design, manufacturing, electric/electronics, and software. Zegarelli’s son Luke, a Barlow freshman, is now the team’s head of the electrical department after he joined the team last year as an eighth grader. Besides a larger number of members, mentor Zegarelli said this year’s team has a strong complement of talented students. “And the team’s early start has been a great opportunity for our older students to mentor the younger ones,” she said. “These learning opportunities will enable all the team’s members to provide back-up to the team leaders, preventing bottlenecks both during development and in competition.” In addition, robot kits are available to competing teams during the kick-off phase – both as a turnkey unit and in individual parts and subsystems. The Barlow team has always built its own, though it has at times selectively purchased parts, such as part of last year’s climbing mechanism. One recent high point was the team’s receipt of a \$5,300 grant from the Easton Learning Foundation. The funds enabled the team to begin conceptualizing and designing plans for a constructing a “vision bot” last summer – a development that will be incorporated into Barlow’s 2026 robot. The vision-bot technology enables its student-controllers to view the game floor from the robot’s perspective. It also incorporates elements of artificial intelligence to aid in game execution. Tournaments take place at the area, regional, and state level, with the first taking place March 20-22 at Wilby High School in Waterbury, followed by another in Boston the following weekend. That gives students just over two months to build and test this year’s robot. These events also involve the formation of red and blue alliances, in which all teams are randomly assigned to alliances of three robots each. In qualification rounds, every team plays several matches with different partners and against different opponents. Each qualifying match earns teams ranking points based on performance. This includes whether the alliance wins or loses and the achievement of certain objectives. At the end of qualifying matches, teams get ranked based on total points, and the highest-ranking teams get to pick their alliance partners for elimination matches. “How well we do at those tournaments determines whether we will go to the district championship,” said Zegarelli. This is held every year in April at the Eastern States Exhibition center (the “Big E”) in West Springfield, Massachusetts. ■

Redding’s Big Outdoors: Angling for a good year / continued from page 1

August 8, a one-day fishing license is free. These can be obtained online starting three weeks before each date. Fishermen can also add a trout and salmon stamp to their licenses. These are for anglers who will keep their trout or salmon and/or fish in specific designated areas. Redding has many open spaces perfectly suited for fishing. Both Putnam Memorial State Park and Collis P. Huntington State Park allow the activity, with Putnam Park Pond boasting largemouth bass, chain pickerel, bluegill, black crappie, and black bullhead and Huntington including five ponds, a lagoon, and 15-acre Lake Hopewell. Topstone Park provides certain designated areas for fishing but does not allow it from the beach unless previously approved by the Park and Recreation Department. The Saugatuck Reservoir also allows fishing during its open

season (April – December), but that requires both a state license and an Aquarion Water Company permit, which can be purchased at aquarionwater.com/environment/recreation/fishing. The Norwalk and Saugatuck Rivers are regularly stocked with trout and are popular with anglers. (Note: Fishing is not permitted on lands owned by Redding Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, or Connecticut Audubon Society.) There also are a few spots that are not too far from town. Wolfe Park in Monroe has been designated as a trout park. Kettletown Brook in Southbury is just up Interstate 84. Kent Falls State Park and Macedonia Brook are in Kent, up Route 7. For those looking for a more challenging experience, Connecticut offers trout management areas. There are trout management areas on the Housatonic

River and the Tenmile River in Sherman and Kent. There is also the Mill River in Fairfield. Candlewood Lake – which can be accessed in Danbury, New Fairfield, Sherman, New Milford, and Brookfield – provides year-round lake fishing. Squantz Pond in New Fairfield does as well. Fishing licenses are available for purchase through the Redding Town Clerk’s office in Town Hall at 100 Hill Road. They can also be purchased online at <https://ct.aspirafocus.com/internetsales>, at DEEP field offices, and at many retail shops where fishing equipment is sold. License fees range from \$10 to \$32 for Connecticut residents. Additional information is available online at <https://portal.ct.gov/deep/fishing/ct-fishing>. In addition, a full information booklet is available from the Town Clerk’s office. ■

MUSIC NOTE

Pause your winter hibernation for an evening of camaraderie
Winter Warmer at The Granite on January 24

By Pamela Brown



January is the coldest month of the year in Connecticut, so if you're looking to warm up and enjoy a night out, The Granite is the place to be. Kira McSpice is co-headlining a Winter Warmer concert with Charlotte Roth and the Big Drama on Saturday, January 24 from 6:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

"Winter Warmer" takes its name from an English ale and festive drinks that warm you up on chilly days. "It's a real-world, face-to-face gathering of neighbors and music lovers," said Richard Wenning, The Granite's Executive Director. "Music gathers us together in a beautiful space amidst friendly faces of multiple generations – the perfect antidote for any feelings of loneliness in the cold of winter. We love the original music performed by these fabulous local bands and their amazing leaders and songwriters."

"I'm happy to be providing an opportunity for gathering and listening to music during a season when most everyone is hibernating. It's important to go out and feel the love and warmth of your

community and friends," said McSpice, who is based in South Salem, NY but spends most of her time in Connecticut, practicing and playing at The Granite. Her husband and father-in-law own Quartertone Coffee Roasters based across the street on Main Street, and she runs a gardening business in New Canaan. "The Granite is stunningly beautiful. The care and intention put into the curation of events as well as how artists are taken care of cannot be beat. There's support from the community, constant encouragement, and openness to new ideas and events to curate even more closeness with those who love music and art," she said. "I hope I can provide a safe space for the audience to feel emotional and vulnerable – as I try to be as vulnerable and open as I can on stage."

A classically-trained cellist, McSpice performs as a guitarist and vocalist, weaving dense, layered loops that evoke a soundscape both ethereal and deeply visceral. "In my music I explore themes of spirituality, growth, existentialism, cycles, mental illness, and the natural world usually through the lens of some sort of concept or story," she said.

Charlotte Roth, of Shelton, grew up in Weston on Georgetown Road, minutes from The Granite. "The fact that it's now a beautiful performance space, art gallery, community center, etc., and I get to do something I dreamed of doing when

I was a kid feels full circle. I love performing at The Granite – the acoustics are incredible and there's a great team of people keeping The Granite running and building it into a community," said Roth. Her band, Big Drama, includes Will Earley (electric guitar); Mike Tepper (upright bass); Brian Slattery (violin, banjo); Conor Andrews (drums); and Eliza Kingsbury (harmonies). Roth sings lead vocals, plays acoustic guitar, ukulele, and keys, and writes the songs.

"The name, the Big Drama, came up organically in a rehearsal. It feels very in line with the theatricality of the songs," she said, describing their music as theatrical pop that mixes pathos and humor together. "Our music draws from folk, jazz, and a little country."

Roth is especially looking forward to performing Long Time Coming with a re-arranged three-part harmony. They also will be playing two covers for the first time (the band normally only plays originals) that are theatrical in nature. "I'm excited to see how the audience responds to those," she said. Roth hopes the audience leaves with their hearts a little warmer and lighter. "I hope they feel moved by the music, and grateful to have experienced it in community with other music lovers." ■

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit thegranitechurch.org/events

How do you address Paul McCartney?
Studio Confidential to reveal stories behind the hits with Elliot Scheiner and friends

By Justin Reynolds

Anyone who has listened to popular music made over the last six decades has heard sounds shaped by Elliot Scheiner's sonic fingerprints.

If you are curious about what it was like for Scheiner to record some of the most iconic albums in the world – think Steely Dan's *Aja*, Van Morrison's *Moondance*, and the Eagles' *Hell Freezes Over* – you're in luck. On Tuesday, January 27, Scheiner is returning to the Ridgefield Playhouse alongside six colleagues for "Studio Confidential," a live show featuring behind-the-scenes stories that capture the experience of recording artists such as the Rolling Stones, Neil Young, Elton John, Johnny Cash, and Jay-Z.

"We brought this show to the Playhouse two years ago and it sold out," Scheiner told me in his home studio, which is filled with all sorts of memorabilia – Grammys, Emmys, and platinum record certifications – almost like a museum. "Last time, we shared stories for two hours and were planning to do a Q&A afterward. But the audience wanted more stories."

This time around, the group plans to share stories before opening the floor to questions. But in show business, improvisation comes with the territory, so you never know what might happen.

A Redding resident for more than 40 years, Scheiner is an eight-time Grammy-winning producer, mixer, and sound engineer who has worked with some of the world's

best-known artists, including Paul McCartney, Fleetwood Mac, Phish, Foo Fighters, Jimmy Buffett, Bruce Hornsby, the Eagles, the Flaming Lips, and Bob Weir. His work also can be heard in films you might have seen: *The Godfather* and *The Godfather Part II*. (He's got a great story about working on those classics, but you'll have to see the show to hear it.)

In the roughly 90 minutes we spent together, Scheiner shared several gems — like this one: How do you address Paul McCartney? Sir Paul? Sir? Mr. McCartney? Scheiner wasn't sure, so he inquired. "Paul is fine," McCartney said with a laugh. Scheiner, whose two sons are massive Beatles fans, asked McCartney for autographs. He obliged — adding "your dad's friend" in parentheses. "It was great," Scheiner said, still smiling at the memory.

Scheiner will be joined by Jimmy Douglass, Chuck Ainlay, Sylvia Massy, Niko Bolas, Frank Filipetti, and George Massenburg. Altogether, the septet has 31 Grammy wins and credits on more than 7,000 albums.

If you can't make it to Ridgefield next week, you can still catch the show: Studio Confidential has a 28-performance residency at The Sheen Center in New York City from February 3 through March 1.

For more information or to buy tickets, visit ridgefieldplayhouse.org and sheencenter.org



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BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Familiar favorites and fresh touches at Rancho Alegre

By Justin Reynolds



Photo by Justin Reynolds

Unless you are new to town, you already know Rancho Alegre has been serving up sizzling fajitas, overstuffed burritos, and, of course, delicious margaritas for decades.

But what you might not know is the restaurant is under new ownership, putting a new stamp on the Georgetown mainstay.

In 2023, restaurateur Arturo Hernandez purchased the business from longtime owner Flori, a friend of Hernandez’s uncle.

“I grew up in the town next to Flori in Mexico and have known him for a long time,” Hernandez said. “He started talking about selling the business in 2022, but then told me he wasn’t ready. A year later, he was.”

Hernandez has been in the restaurant business for more than 20 years. In addition to Rancho Alegre, he owns Señor Pancho’s in Middlebury and is opening another location with the same name in Plainville this month. He also owned El Mexicano in Brookfield, which he sold last year.

While much of Rancho Alegre remains the same – including familiar faces behind the bar and on the floor – Hernandez has added some new touches, including many new food and drink items. Recent additions include street tacos, empanadas, blackened chicken fajitas (my go-to when I swing by for lunch), and several craft cocktails that Hernandez created himself.

“I love experimenting,” he said. “It’s so fun.”

Hernandez is particularly proud of the Tropical Heat Margarita, a mix of house-infused jalapeno tequila, coconut and mango puree, Triple Sec, and fresh lime. After tasting it, it was easy to see why.

Stepping into the restaurant feels the same as it has for as long as I can remember. Usually, I hang a left and head to the dining room, but this time, Hernandez brought me to the bar, newly remodeled and lined with comfortable booths, where we sat down to chat.

Rancho Alegre is open seven days a week and hosts a happy hour

Monday through Friday from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Alongside traditional Mexican dishes, the restaurant also has gluten-free, vegetarian, and vegan options, along with a long list of beers, wines, cocktails, and mocktails.

Hernandez is always open to suggestions from customers.

“We brought back a mariachi band on Thursdays because people were asking about it, and we always want to accommodate,” he pointed out.

Fans of street tacos might consider swinging by on Taco Tuesday, when tacos are available á la carte (usually, you have to buy them in groups of three). Options include chicken al pastor (guajillo chile, marinated chicken, fresh pineapple, onion, and cilantro), carne asada (grilled steak, chimichurri, and queso fresco), baja (beer-battered cod, cabbage, pico de gallo, and chipotle ranch), and blackened salmon (Cajun-spiced salmon filet, cabbage, mango salsa, and chipotle aioli), among others.

Hernandez, who lives in Southbury and raised a 19-year-old son and an 18-year-old daughter on his own, said he was grateful for the warm reception he’s received since taking over the restaurant from Flori.

“I’m so happy to be here,” Hernandez said. “People are very nice and so welcoming. We get a lot of support from the community, and we also love to support the community.”

For more information, visit ranchoalegrect.com or stop by 6 Main Street

Marking a milestone for a Meadow Ridge resident
Judy Bralver celebrates her 105th birthday



Photo by Carol Morgan

Meadow Ridge resident Judy Bralver celebrated her 105th birthday this month with festivities taking place on January 11, 2026. Family and friends, including six grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren, traveled across the country to attend and mark the occasion. Bralver has been part of the Meadow Ridge community for over a decade.

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Easton zoning uncertainty stalls potential Apple Barn transition

By Jess Deutsch



Photo by Jessie Wright

Apple Barn Wellness LLC is hoping to launch operations in the Aquarion-owned “Apple Barn” on Route 58 in Easton as a fitness studio, photo studio, and a country store featuring local produce and goods.

The Apple Barn was originally a retail location for the adjacent Aspetuck Valley Orchards, on land owned by the Bridgeport Hydraulic Company. The barn building also served as a processing plant for the orchard’s apple production and a cider mill. According to Redding Town Co-Historian Bruce Nelson, after the Bridgeport Hydraulic Company was sold, the new owner had no desire to continue to run the orchards or retail store. It was subsequently leased to others, and by 2015 or 2016 was a retail operation that sold locally-produced items as well as specialty goods such as cheeses, jams, pies, and more. The property has been vacant and without a tenant since late 2024.

Kristen McGovern and Gary Smith, co-owners of Strong on Center, a fitness studio in Easton, joined forces with business partners Sarah King and Spencer Heyfron to add the country store and photo studio and form Apple Barn Wellness. While the photo studio and country store are new additions to

the collective, the fitness studio has been a fixture in Easton since 2019, initially opening on Center Street in Smith and McGovern’s home and providing a variety of classes to locals of all ages, even working with Joel Barlow High School athletes.

Strong on Center isn’t just for a good sweat session, it also has provided community for many. When Catherine Lanieri moved to Easton to be closer to her daughter and granddaughter, she knew it was going to be a challenge to make friends. “Joining Strong on Center allowed me to meet local people, which is not easy to do. I’m retired, my kids aren’t in the school system or playing sports. Kristen and Gary are wonderful, and the people who go to classes are so great, it was such a blessing.”

As Strong on Center expanded after the pandemic, the business was found in non-compliance of zoning and wetlands regulations; the owners focused on rectifying the issues and applying for a major home-based business permit – one of the few exceptions in Easton’s zoning code. The ensuing June 2025 Planning & Zoning Commission (PZC) meetings were hotly contested, with plenty of public comment from those opposed to and those in support of the fitness

center. Some neighbors felt that early morning classes and the clearing of trees for a parking lot wasn’t fair to their quality of life. “We didn’t buy a home in Easton to be woken up in the morning to classes and seeing cars pulling in and out of our neighbor’s home in a residential area all day long. There is a loss of enjoyment of our home,” said neighbor Shelli Mealha.

While the special permit process continued last summer, the Apple Barn was floated as a possible better location. According to McGovern, “Almost simultaneously, one of the women that I train (King) said, ‘Did you see the Apple Barn was up for lease?’ That started our pursuit of understanding what it would take to lease the Apple Barn and at the same time we were talking about ways we could collaborate.”

Many Easton residents agreed that the Apple Barn felt like a good relocation, and it seemed like Smith and McGovern were aligned; on July 23, 2025, Apple Barn Wellness LLC was filed, and Strong on Center pulled their special permit request with the Town of Easton at the end of August.

Up against three other proposed businesses, Apple Barn Wellness won the bid to lease the Apple Barn from Aquarion, and their first public hearing for operation occurred at the December 16, 2025 PZC meeting. Their lawyer, a representative of Willinger Willinger & Bucci, requested a text amendment and zone change overlay, specific to the Apple Barn titled the “Preservation Overlay Zone.” The text amendment states that its purpose is to “preserve and maintain the town’s large parcels of land containing 100 or more acres within the Public Drinking Water Source Protection Areas.” The text amendment is specific to 100+ acre parcels on

the three main routes in Easton (58, 59, or 136) with buildings that were built prior to 1941. McGovern said she and her business partners worked with the prior Town administration and their lawyers to ensure there were no other properties or buildings like the Apple Barn so the amendment couldn’t be exploited and used elsewhere.

The PZC permitting process has been the biggest challenge for their business, said McGovern. “In our experience, over the years there have been different people coming through with different ideas of what’s possible and what’s not possible, so that’s kind of thrown us for a loop. One person will tell us one thing, and then they’ll leave, and the next person coming in will say you can’t do that at all.” McGovern and Smith initially spent thousands of dollars on land surveys when they thought they were going the avenue of the special permit for major home-based business but pivoted to the Apple Barn when they realized the permit wasn’t looking likely.

Despite the tension among Easton residents regarding development, most share a common goal. “We wanted our lawyers to represent Apple Barn Wellness but also represent the Town of Easton in these changes as well, because we don’t want it to be like a Monroe or a Fairfield,” said McGovern. “We want people to feel comfortable that this isn’t a door to open up a bunch of random businesses in random locations all over town.”

This isn’t the first time the need for clearly defined zoning had surfaced in PZC discussions. Easton’s former Land Use Consultant, Justin Giorlando, proposed a ‘Local Historic Structures Zoning Incentive Regulation’ concept in a PZC meeting on August 19, 2025. In subsequent meeting minutes, the

topic was noted as “no discussion or action, tabled to the next meeting,” until it fell off the meeting minutes entirely. Giorlando confirmed via phone that he drafted this regulation at the direction of the Commission and that it fell off the agenda because it was supposed to be more formally discussed this coming March. He also stated that he had met with McGovern and Smith “a couple of times” and had “given them some pointers and things to consider,” but that his prior draft was “very distinct” from their Preservation Overlay Zone.

Easton has a history of impassioned PZC meetings, with many residents sharing concern over new development affecting the watershed and wildlife. With no commercial zoning, a regulation that many enjoy about Easton, there have been various exceptions and special permits granted to the few businesses that operate in town. According to Giorlando, however, a judge previously noted that it is not appropriate for Easton to be zoning through non-conformity, creating a need for stronger regulations that allow for historic businesses like The Olde Bluebird Inn and Greiser’s to operate.

The December 16, 2025 public hearing on the proposed changes was extended to January 6, 2026 due to the complexity of the three businesses and the Preservation Overlay Zone proposal. During the January 6 meeting, concerns about the text amendment were raised. In public comment, Elizabeth Boyce, a member of the Historic Preservation Review Commission, speaking as a private citizen, pointed out that the structure where the photo studio would be housed was not present in 1941. She also pointed out that the

Continued on page 8

THE NATURAL WORLD

The Outside Story: Life beneath the ice and snow

By Loren Merrill



Illustration by Adelaide Murphy Tyrol

For hundreds of years, people believed that, come autumn, barn swallows would dive under the surface of ponds and lakes, swim to the bottom, and bury themselves in the mud for the winter. We now know better – swallows, along with thousands of other avian species across the globe, undergo seasonal migrations – and the idea of birds spending the winter buried in mud at the bottom of a pond seems laughable. But there are other vertebrate organisms that do exactly this: Some water turtles, such as painted turtles and common snapping turtles, search out the soft substrate at the bottom of ponds, rivers, and lakes, and burrow down into the mud. They survive by dramatically reducing their metabolic rates – in some cases as much as 99 percent – which allows them to survive for months in low oxygen (hypoxic) and no oxygen (anoxic) conditions. This form of reduced metabolic activity in winter is known as “brumation” in reptiles and amphibians.

Other water turtles, however, are unable to survive anoxic conditions and thus cannot bury themselves in the mud. Northern map turtles, for example, winter below the ice but do not shut down metabolic activity entirely. Recent research has shown they will congregate at shallow locations (1 to 2 meters depth) near the bottom, where they spend months alternating between low levels of activity and standby mode. Northern map turtles, like most other northern water turtles, perform all necessary gas exchange through highly vascularized regions of their skin during the winter. However, if they are wintering in non-moving water, they can deplete the oxygen from the water surrounding their bodies, necessitating some movement. Smooth softshell turtles, for example, do “push-ups” when overwintering under the ice, and scientists speculate that this action breaks up the oxygen-depleted layer around the turtles. Similarly, northern map turtles occasionally move around, presumably to disturb the hypoxic water layer. Researchers also theorize the turtles may be congregating in areas with relatively higher dissolved oxygen levels, which helps them meet their oxygen needs.

Unlike their water-inhabiting cousins, eastern box turtles spend

the winter on land in shallow burrows. These burrows provide some degree of protection against the cold, but researchers have found that the turtles may still experience subfreezing conditions.

Eastern box turtles have a few tricks tucked up their shells for coping with this challenge; they can supercool their bodies to approximately 30 degrees Fahrenheit for short periods of time, and when temperatures drop sufficiently low, they can withstand having their bodies freeze, like wood frogs. In both species, this feat is accomplished by shunting much of the water in their bodies into extracellular spaces and flooding their cells with glucose. These actions protect the cells from freezing, which would lead to the death of the animal. Wood frogs can freeze solid for an entire winter, all organs going into a state of suspended animation, including the heart. The freeze-tolerance capabilities of wild box turtles are not well known at this point, but a laboratory study published in the *Journal of Experimental Zoology* in 1990 found that they can handle freezing for at least 73 hours, and that up to 58 percent of the water in their bodies can freeze. Come spring, these turtles begin making short trips out of their burrows to look for food, and to catch some rays.

Adult box turtles aren’t the only turtles to overwinter on land: in many northern species, late-hatched young remain in the nest through winter. Freeze-tolerance appears to be rare among turtles, so how do hatchling turtles that overwinter in the nest survive? The data are sparse, but many of these species appear to use one or more of the following strategies: They depend on conditions within the nest chamber to remain above freezing; they can supercool their bodies to temperatures below freezing (but only if there is nothing touching the hatchlings’ skin, which would induce the formation of ice crystals); or they have some ability to tolerate freezing for short periods (baby painted turtles can do this). Not all late-hatching turtles that overwinter in the nest survive – some do succumb to the cold – but it appears to be a strategy many species use at least on occasion.

It is easy to forget about the shelled members of the ecological community when we wander the winter landscape, but they are here, some enduring conditions as extreme as those of the imagined mud-bound aquatic winter swallows.

Loren Merrill is a science writer and photographer with a PhD in ecology. 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

OBITUARIES

Peter Bonfanti August 16, 1938 – January 10, 2026



Peter Anthony Bonfanti, 87, of Laguna Woods, CA, died on January 10, 2026. He brought tremendous energy to his life: in his late seventies, he and Annet, his wife of 57 years, took a 75-day around-the-world trip that they planned entirely by themselves. This was typical of his “retired life,” during which Peter founded the Redding Current Events Discussion Group that meets to this day, one of

his many contributions to the town where he and Annet lived for more than 20 years. His time in Redding also included many years on the Democratic Town Committee and the Joel Barlow High School board; devoted mentorship to several local children; and service as a Justice of the Peace, in which capacity he officiated at dozens of marriages.

Peter was born in New York as a member of a proud Sicilian family, from which he was the first to attend college. After graduating from Villanova with a Chemical Engineering degree in 1960, followed by a stint in the Army Reserves, Peter found his way into consulting and management, eventually retiring from IBM in 2001. His greater achievement, as he would tell anyone who asked (or didn’t), was as father to Peter and Paul, who survive him, as does Annet. He found just as much joy

as grandfather to Paul’s children, Nadia and Sofia, whose mother, Nikky Contractor, distinguished herself as one of the few people whose advice he would consistently heed.

Peter loved both classical music and the American songbook, and both played the piano and sang in choirs from his youth all the way to his final weeks. In addition to his immediate family, Peter is survived by his brother, Paul S. Bonfanti, of Valley Stream, NY, and his sister, Elaine Barone, of Boca Raton, FL. Donations in lieu of flowers can be given to the Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County at <https://feedoc.org/> and the Redding Food Pantry, through the Caraluzzi’s grocery store Gift Card Program at <https://shop.caraluzzis.com/s/1000-1018/i/INV-1000-104008>.

Treva DeBourno August 2, 1944 – January 10, 2026



Treva DeBourno of Redding passed away peacefully on Sunday, January 10, 2026, at the age of 81. She was born at United Hospital in Port Chester, NY, August 2, 1944, to Eugene J. DeBourno, Sr.

and Agnes (Sarles) DeBourno of Mamaroneck, NY.

Treva was a long-time resident in the towns of Greenwich and Redding, where she began her career in nursing at Greenwich Hospital, and continued at private practices for several decades after. She was the loving mother and grandmother, of four sons and two granddaughters, and enjoyed camping and traveling with family and friends.

She is survived by former husband Kenneth J. Moughty, Scottsdale, AZ; sons: Patrick Moughty (Connie), Redding;

Christopher Moughty (Laura) Norwalk; Matthew Moughty, New Haven, VT; Timothy Moughty, Fort Worth, TX; and granddaughters Morgan and Kimberly of Redding.

Treva is also survived by her brother Eugene DeBourno, Jr. (Joanne) of Mamaroneck, NY and numerous nieces and nephews.

Treva was preceded in death by her parents and sister Carol DeBourno.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to Alzheimer’s Association in Treva’s memory. To offer online condolences please visit boutonfuneralhome.com

Harold Healy August 22, 1922 – January 6, 2026



Dr. Harold (Hal) E. Healy, 103, of Redding, longtime resident of Ridgefield and Principal of Ridgefield High School, died peacefully after a brief illness, on Tuesday, January 6, 2026. He was the loving husband of the late Mae C. Healy, to whom he was married for 65 years.

Dr. Healy was born on August 22, 1922 in New Britain; a son of the late Maurice and Hazel (Belden) Healy. Growing up in New Britain, he attended Teachers College of Connecticut (now called Central Connecticut State University). Dr. Healy began his career teaching math and science at a regional high school in the small town of Falls Village, CT. He then taught at Middletown High School and served as assistant principal there prior to becoming principal. During these years, he earned his Master’s

degree at Columbia University and a PhD from the University of Connecticut.

In 1960, Dr. Healy became principal of Ridgefield High School. During his 18 years at Ridgefield High School, he oversaw the expansion of a small school with limited programs develop into a larger suburban school, offering an increasing number of programs. He also oversaw the move of the “old” high school at the East Ridge location to the newly built enlarged high school at the current North Salem Road campus in 1972.

After his retirement in 1978, for over 20 years, Hal had a very successful second career selling residential real estate in Ridgefield.

A resident of Ridgefield for 53 years, in 2013, Hal and his wife, Mae, gave up their beloved home and moved to Meadow Ridge in Redding where he resided until his death. Hal was an active member of the Meadow Ridge community where he loved participating in activities and socializing with friends, as well as playing bridge several times a week. He was a member of The Rotary Club of Ridgefield for 65 years. He was a participant of The Ridgefield Men’s Club and was awarded honorary status in 2015. Hal received the first award for Excellence in Education

from the Ridgefield Old Timers’ Club.

Hal’s favorite pastime was spending summers at his home in Harwichport on Cape Cod. He enjoyed fishing, boating, checking his lobster pots, playing cards, and walking the beach; but most of all enjoyed a house full of family.

Hal is survived by his children: Lauren Healy of Wilmington, MA; Scott Healy and his wife Anne, of Duxbury, MA; and Jane Stafford and her husband Scott, of Wakefield, RI. He is also survived by his grandchildren: Brittany Healy, Ryan Healy and his wife Madelyn, Morgan Stafford, and Tyler Stafford and his wife Kaitlyn. In addition, he is survived by his great granddaughter, Nora Mae Healy. He is also survived by his sister-in-law Norma Healy and many nieces and nephews. In addition to his wife, Mae, Hal was predeceased by his sister Angeline Holler, brothers Maurice “Snow” Healy, and Robert Healy.

In lieu of flowers, donations in memory of Hal Healy can be made to the Ridgefield Rotary Scholarship Fund for Ridgefield High School (RHS) students – <https://ridgefield.rotary7980gives.org/hal-healy>, or by check to: Ridgefield Rotary Foundation, PO Box 41, Ridgefield, CT 06877.

Easton zoning uncertainty stalls potential Apple Barn transition / continued from page 7

Apple Barn is a non-conforming use property and was grandfathered into Easton zoning regulations because it historically functioned as a seasonal fruit stand before Easton adopted its first zoning regulations in 1941. A letter from the law firm Green & Gross P.C. was also entered into the record that argued legally the PZC cannot establish such an overlay zone or amend it in this way because doing so would run afoul of state statute.

Other opposing public com-

ments were given; the consensus from these seemed to be concern about introducing this new text amendment for the sake of business operation, with many commenters stating they do not oppose the business itself.

After the three-and-a-half hour meeting, the PZC motioned to adjourn and continue the discussion. When asked why the Commission didn’t come to a decision, Commission member Lou DiPietro responded over e-mail, “By state statute,

we have 65 days from the end of the public hearing to make a decision on an application. Unless it’s something pretty straightforward, we often will take time to deliberate all angles before rendering a decision. We continued discussion to allow more time for commissioners to dissect the information, and a decision will be rendered within the 65 days (which end March 15).”

Some might question why Apple Barn Wellness isn’t just asking for a special permit to operate in

the Apple Barn. McGovern stated that they were advised by the prior Town administration and their lawyers to go this route. “Trust me, if we could just do a special permit, we are all for it,” she said.

According to DiPietro, it’s a package deal. “The special permit is the third step of a three-step process that requires the text amendment and zone change before it is able to be viable. Their solution was to create a text amendment to one of our regulations, creating a

zoning caveat for what is ostensibly commercial use. They then would need the Apple Barn property to get its zoning changed to that caveat, and then the special permit can be approved/denied. We were able to hear all three concurrently because steps one and/or two need to be approved before step three can be.”

As of January 13, 2026, the special permit application was withdrawn and the consideration of the process halted, according to PZC records.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies
R = registration required

This Week’s Featured Events

2026 Reset: Wellness Open House Sunday, January 25 12:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Personalized local retreat experience with group classes, healing services, and giveaways Yoga Station & Wellness 9 Brookside Road yogastationct.com \$, R	Forewarned: AI’s Impact on Jobs and Economy Thursday, January 29 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. In-person and virtual program with PhD Rick Lawrence Mark Twain Library 439 Redding Road marktwainlibrary.org R	Teen Takeover at The Granite Friday, January 30 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Presented by Boys & Girls Club of Redding-Easton: enjoy pizza, live music from JRMS band, and more The Granite 5 North Main Street bgcre.net \$, R	Want to feature an upcoming event? E-mail us at advertise@reddingsentinel.org for more information.
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ARTS

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
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
\$

Wednesday, January 28
Winter Songwriter Circles
7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
The Granite
5 North Main Street
thegranitechurch.org
\$, R

CHILDREN | TEENS

Friday, January 23
Karaoke Night
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Grades K-6
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
reddingct.gov/parks-and-recereation
\$, R

Sunday, January 25
STEM Sundays (Grades K-4)
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
\$, R

Friday, January 30
Teen Takeover at The Granite
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Presented by Boys & Girls Club of Redding-Easton: enjoy pizza, live music from JRMS band, and more
The Granite
5 North Main Street
bgcre.net
\$, R

Saturday, January 31

Kids Day Out!
12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Arctic adventures with pizza, swim, movie, gym, and activities for ages 3-10
Riverbrook Regional YMCA
404 Danbury Road
Wilton
wiltonymca.org
\$, R

HEALTH | WELLNESS

Sunday, January 25
2026 Reset: Wellness Open House
12:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Personalized local retreat experience with group classes, healing services, and giveaways
Yoga Station & Wellness
9 Brookside Road
yogastationct.com
\$, R

Tuesday, January 27
Music & Brain Health
1:00 p.m.
Interactive program with music therapist from RVNAhealth
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road
RSVP to mstillman@reddingct.gov or (203) 938-9725
R

NATURE

Wednesday, January 21
Gardening on the Wild Side
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
In-person and virtual program with Master Gardener
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Saturday, January 24
January Astronomy
6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Dress for the outdoors
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
\$, R

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

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

Thursday, January 22
The Hidden History of Slavery in New York – Documentary Screening
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Includes Q&A with film’s writer
Wilton Historical Society
224 Danbury Road
Wilton
wiltonhistorical.org/events or RSVP to info@wiltonhistorical.org
\$, R

Thursday, January 22
Preparing for a Job Change with Executive Recruiter Laurie Thompson
7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Proactive, hands-on workshop offered in-person and virtual
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Sunday, January 25
Faces From the Past: A History Mystery
2:00 p.m.
Presented by Ridgefield Historical Society
Lounsbury House
316 Main Street
Ridgefield
zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/faces-from-the-past-a-history-mystery-that-connects-a-family-to-ridgefield
\$, R

Tuesday, January 27
Steeped in Purpose: Tea, Justice and Renewal with Grace Farms
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Sip Grace Farms’ tea and learn about the organization and its mission
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Thursday, January 29

Forewarned: AI’s Impact on Jobs and Economy
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
In-person and virtual program with PhD Rick Lawrence
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Temple B’nai Chaim
Friday, January 23
Shabbat at Meadow Ridge
5:00 p.m.
100 Redding Road
templebnaichaim.org

MEETINGS

Monday, January 26
Board of Finance
7:30 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road
Subject to change to hybrid or virtual

Tuesday, January 27
ER9 Joint Board of Education
7:00 p.m.
Joel Barlow High School / Library Learning Commons
100 Black Rock Turnpike

Tuesday, January 27
Planning Commission
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Wednesday, January 28
Zoning Commission
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Thursday, January 29
Region 9 Finance & Operations Pension Committee
5:30 p.m.
Central Office / Conference Room
654 Morehouse Road
Easton

Monday, February 2
Park and Recreation Commission
7:00 p.m.
Community Center
37 Lonetown Road

Monday, February 2
Republican Town Committee
7:30 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Tuesday, February 3
Georgetown Fire District
5:00 p.m.
Georgetown Fire Department
61 Redding Road

Tuesday, February 3
Redding Board of Education Budget Workshop
6:00 p.m.
John Read Middle School / Community Room
486 Redding Road

Tuesday, February 3
Conservation Commission
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Wednesday, February 4
Brown Bag Lunch with First Selectwoman
12:00 p.m.
Town Hall
100 Hill Road

Monday, February 9
League of Women Voters
4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Conference Room
100 Hill Road

Tuesday, February 10
Planning Commission Special Meeting
5:45 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Tuesday, February 10
Planning Commission
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Tuesday, February 10
Redding Fire District 1
7:00 p.m.
186 Black Rock Turnpike

*Sign-up to receive meeting agendas and notifications at reddingct.gov/subscribe



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Listed By Carol Hanlon | 203.240.1233
CarolHanlonHomes.com



Alexis Bennett
203.313.3110



Marilyn Caravetta
203.512.1822



Kim Cuniberti
203.733.6976



Mary Dent
203.715.8584



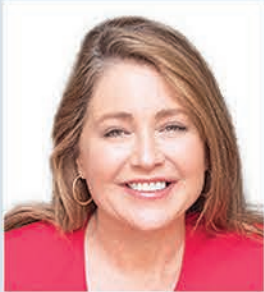
Tim Dent
203.470.5605



Margi Esten
203.241.8453



John Frey
203.240.0624



Debbie Gore
203.417.5692



Jefferson Guthrie
203.788.9400



Carol Hanlon
203.240.1233



Sharon Hoverman
203.733.5073



Charlie Knoche
203.731.7770



Jodi Langford
203.733.8804



Heather Lindgren
646.932.4075



Heather Payne
203.470.7069



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203.770.6240

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¹Based on total number of closed units in Fairfield County, CT in all price ranges as reported by SmartMLS on 1/20/2026 for YTD 2026 ²Based on closed sales volume information from SmartMLS for Redding, CT in all price ranges as reported by SmartMLS on 1/20/2026 for YTD 2026. The property information herein is derived from various sources that may include, but not be limited to, county records and the Multiple Listing Service, and it may include approximations. Although the information is believed to be accurate, it is not warranted and you should not rely upon it without personal verification. Affiliated real estate agents are independent contractor sales associates, not employees. ©2026 Coldwell Banker. All Rights Reserved. Coldwell Banker and the Coldwell Banker logo are trademarks of Coldwell Banker Real Estate LLC. The Coldwell Banker® System is comprised of company owned offices which are owned by a subsidiary of Anywhere Advisors LLC and franchised offices which are independently owned and operated. The Coldwell Banker System fully supports the principles of the Fair Housing Act and the Equal Opportunity Act. 25ET74_CBR_11/25

