



# REDDING SENTINEL

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## State hears final comments on proposed Hoyt cell tower

By Rob Sample

On Tuesday, January 23, the Connecticut Siting Council held its final public comments session regarding the proposed cellular tower on Marchant Road.

This session was an evidentiary hearing, meaning that participants would pose questions to Verizon and the other firms involved in the tower proposal regarding testimony and evidence entered into the record at previous meetings. The proposed tower would be operated by MCM Holdings, based in Hartford, and Verizon Wireless, based in New York City. It would be 150 feet tall and occupy a fenced compound at the Hoyt Boy Scout Reservation at 1 Marchant Road.

The meeting participants on January 23 chiefly posed questions regarding technical aspects of the project and how it will deliver the enhanced coverage it promises. Simpaug Turnpike resident Joanne Villamizar, a patent attorney, was the spokesperson for Redding's group of residential intervenors.

Siting Council member Robert Mercier asked the Verizon panel about the thresholds for reliability for cellular service. He also wanted to know whether coverage was nonexistent in unshaded areas of the coverage maps in evidence.

"We at Verizon make 85 RSRP the minimum level of building penetration [for signal reliability]," said Shiva Gadasu, a radio-frequency engineer for Verizon Wireless. "And it [an unshaded area] doesn't mean you don't have service at all – it's just not at 85 RSRP, the level we set for maintaining a call and receiving data." Reference Signal Received Power (RSRP) is a measure of the received power level in an LTE cellular network.

### Impact of ground conditions

Gadasu explained that in addition to buildings, the topography of an area significantly affects the workability of cellular signals. In addition to ridges and valleys, this includes forest and leaf cover. "A signal can pass through, but it gets attenuated," he said. "Anytime we look for a cell tower site, we try for a high elevation, so we get a clean line of sight into a neighborhood."

Siting Council member Robert Silvestri asked about the three 500-gallon propane tanks included in the tower compound, which would work with generators to keep the tower running if it lost power. While 500-gallon tanks are the industry norm, Verizon's standards require 1,000 gallons for the 50-kilowatt generator proposed here. Two tanks would be dedicated to Verizon, while the third

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Photo by Marjorie Derven

A sunset captured over a backyard on Cross Highway. If you have a photo you'd like to see featured here, with credit of course, e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org

## Early voting begins in CT this year, but it hasn't been fully funded

By Mark Pazniokas

A new era of ballot access begins at 10:00 a.m. on March 26, the first minute of early voting in Connecticut, one of the last four states that had resisted the trend toward in-person voting ahead of Election Day.

Secretary of State Stephanie Thomas warned newly elected municipal officials Tuesday, January 9 that early voting will require two rounds of all-day training for poll workers — and the state so far has allocated funding only for one.

Registrars and poll workers need to be trained on how to use the state's online Centralized Voter Registration System that will track in real time who has voted, a check against voting more than once, Thomas said.

One wrinkle is that the state committed two years ago to updating the system, and the change-over will come in June — after the April 2 presidential primary and before state office primaries in August and the November general election.

"So yes, that's as complicated as it sounds," Thomas told

officials attending a workshop at the state Capitol organized by the Council of Small Towns.

There is sufficient funding in the first year of the biennial budget to provide \$10,500 to each municipality for training and other expenses arising from early voting, Thomas said. But Governor Ned Lamont and the General Assembly included no funding for early voting in the fiscal year that begins July 1, an oversight that Thomas said she will be asking lawmakers to address as they make second-year budget revisions in the annual session that opens on February 7.

"Right now, there's zero allocated from the state for the next fiscal year, which would cover the presidential election and any August primaries," Thomas said.

Set in statute, the parameters of early voting are clear, but some of the processes are a work in progress. While Thomas is considered the state's chief elections officer, the conduct of elections is a municipal responsibility.

"I think election workers have just the right amount of nervousness, which is good, because it means everyone is thinking through. We put together a draft handbook, for example, and sent it to the registrars," Thomas said.

It has generated more than 60 comments and questions, mostly of the what-if nature, she said.

"Everyone knows they have to do it. So now they're just like churning through it all. It's constant scenario planning," she said.

State law requires each of the state's cities and towns to have at least one early-voting place. Communities with more than 20,000 residents have the option of multiple voting places.

There are four days of early voting for the presidential primary and special elections, seven for other primaries and 14 for general elections. The early voting generally will end on the Sunday before the election.

An exception will be made

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## REDDING'S BIG OUTDOORS

### Marchant Farm – Blackman's Brook Trail

By Jessie Wright



Photo by Jessie Wright

The recent unrelenting heavy rains have swollen all of Redding's waterways and turned trickling rivulets into gushing almost-rivers.

We found out the hard way a few weeks ago about the impacts of this weather when we discovered our well house — which sits on an adjacent lot at the bottom of a hill where water looks to find its way to the Little River — had flooded. The water rose so high that it made contact with the electric panel that powers our well pump, ultimately

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## Town alarmed at transmission line tree cutting

### Eversource gives update to Selectmen

By Rocco Valluzzo

Recent cutting and extensive trimming of trees along Eversource's transmission lines in town have alarmed property owners, municipal officials, and environmental advocates.

"We have multiple transmission lines in Redding, and we have seen them come through now with what they have the legal right to do — which is clear the trees within their easements. We have not been able to stop them; private citizens have engaged their own attorneys, had meetings on-site with high level Eversource executives, and then tree-munchers come through, and there's no relief," explained First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton at a Community Coffee and Conversation on January 21 with State Senator Ceci Maher and State Representative Anne Hughes.

"Right now, they are just doing trimming that they have never done before, not ever, because they didn't need to. Now in the name of reliability they are clearing the entire easement, whereas they used to only trim within a certain number of feet within the transmission line."

Representatives from Eversource presented on the tree work project at a Board of Selectmen Special Meeting on Monday, January 22.

According to the utility, Eversource has made specification changes to its vegetation management project in town in response to more frequent and severe weather events affecting trees coming down outside of the cleared areas and causing disturbances for transmission lines.

Eversource began the program last year to increase the maintained edge of its rights-of-way. It is also clearing its easements of what it deems "incompatible species" and fostering sustainable low-growth communities beneficial to different types of pollinators and wildlife.

Eversource's right of way corridor in Redding starts on Peaceable Street. It then goes northeast through town up Indian Hill Road, Seventy Acre Road, Diamond Hill Road and proceeds northeast into Bethel.

"These transmission lines are the backbone of our system," said Kathy Ferrier, Supervisor for Vegetation Management and Transmission for Eversource at the January 22 meeting. "They feed the substations in town. It

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## EDITORIAL

At the recent January 21 Community Coffee and Conversation, I asked Senator Ceci Maher and Representative Anne Hughes if there were any items in the upcoming legislative session aiming to address childcare shortages and expenses affecting families across the state.

While Connecticut was able to activate millions of dollars in emergency funds during the pandemic to shore up its childcare system, those programs have expired, revealing deep issues and disparities in care options for families with young children. The change to the kindergarten age cut-off (moved from January 1 to September 1, effective next school year) also leaves a cohort of children needing care outside of the school system for an unexpected additional year.

Senator Maher responded that while she had not yet heard of any specific legislation in the works, the Office of Early Childhood did just release their Blue Ribbon Panel report in December 2023. This report is a result of months of research, community and stakeholder engagement, and funding studies to identify a five-year plan for addressing early state childhood education programs and the childcare workforce.

The report is a relatively easy – and extremely compelling – read (you can access it at [ctoecc.org/blue-ribbon-panel](http://ctoecc.org/blue-ribbon-panel)). The case for investing in quality child care for our youngest residents is not only an emotionally strong one, but also a fiscally smart one.

As the plan argues, “Child care access is an investment with payoffs that reverberate.” Childcare provides essential workforce infrastructure – local businesses cite a lack of affordable childcare as a factor in recruitment, retention, and productivity. There is also a persistent 27 percent gender gap in employment for parents with young children in Connecticut, as childcare is still overwhelmingly shouldered by women, and a 90,000- person worker shortage. Investing in quality childcare means cost savings in government social service programs as families are given more economic mobility and children are provided with the resources to optimize their brain development and long-term emotional health.

The plan is a starting point, but the commitment to enact it has not yet come. “The governor asked for this plan, put together the Blue Ribbon Panel, but we have not yet heard from him where he hopes to go with it,” said Senator Maher.

For a strong future for everyone in our state, let’s hope where he plans to go is forward. ■

## Local lawmakers meet in Redding as legislative session nears

By Jessie Wright



Photo by Jessie Wright

**First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton, State Senator Ceci Maher, and State Representative Anne Hughes met with residents on Sunday, January 21 ahead of the legislative short session beginning February 7.**

As the Connecticut General Assembly gears up for this year’s short session, which will kick off on February 7 and run through May 8, local legislators have been meeting with residents to learn about the issues that matter most to them. While individual legislators are unable to propose bills during a short session (any bills or changes to existing legislation must be put forth by the committees under which an issue falls), feedback from voters can help inform a committee’s priorities for the coming three months.

State Senator Ceci Maher and State Representative Anne Hughes held an informal “Community Coffee and Conversation” with First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton at Town Hall on Sunday, January 21 for this purpose. The Hearing Room was almost entirely full of residents, raising issues from environmental regulation to childcare costs.

Senator Maher and Representative Hughes began the conversation by highlighting a few of the priorities that they and their committees plan to focus on this session. Maher, as Chair of the Children Committee, said legislation focusing on mental and behavioral health for children and families would be front and center. Representative Hughes spoke out against the crisis of homelessness in the state, and the need to leverage resources as the state did during the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure every resident has a safe place to sleep, particularly during the cold winter months.

Both residents and Pemberton then raised a host of concerns, starting with the logistical and financial requirements for towns to implement early voting for the first time this year. While there are \$10,500 state grants available for each municipality to roll out early voting for the presidential primary in April, there is not yet any state funding allocated for the fiscal year beginning in July, which

includes the state office primaries and the general election this fall.

Pemberton raised the current tree clearing and trimming being done by Eversource along the two transmission lines in Redding. The utility has been clearing trees within their easements along the lines, the scope of which the town has never seen before. Pemberton hopes to do further research into the case for undergrounding some of the lines to preserve energy reliability while also preserving natural resources and Redding’s neighborhoods.

The discussion then expanded to several additional environmental concerns, including the need for the Town to fully understand potential vulnerabilities to its dam infrastructure and flooding in light of more frequent heavy rainstorms; the desire to enact state regulations on the use of neonicotinoid pesticides, particularly neonicotinoid-treated seeds; a possible ban or limitation on the use of gas-powered leaf blowers; the need for more infrastructure and grid capacity to support electric vehicle charging and use; and the exploration of both residents and the Town utilizing more alternative energy sources.

There was also discussion surrounding the cost of childcare in the state and reductions in staffing in that industry. While those issues fall under the Office of Early Childhood (and not a committee on which Senator Maher or Representative Hughes serve), both Maher and Hughes agreed more needed to be done to support families and children. Hughes pointed out that a priority would be to push for the reinstatement of free lunches in schools, a program that was rolled out during the Covid-19 pandemic but ended in September 2022 (though some municipalities were able to briefly extend the program through American Rescue Plan Act funds). ■

## LETTERS 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,**

“I wouldn’t want this in my neighborhood.” Not an unusual statement if coming from one of the homeowners on Fox Run Road. However, the statement was made by Steven Mandel, the CEO and President of Aspire One Communications. And directed at the Zoning Commission members at the December 13 hearing determining if 4 Fox Run Road could operate as a “museum” for a month this year. The real head-scratcher is why, after a second hearing on January 10, the Zoning members ignored the opposition voices of the majority of Fox Run Road residents who’d been notified of this hearing, the Planning Commission’s “No” vote, and even the words of the sponsor himself, and voted 3-2 to approve a special permit for a “temporary museum” on a residential road in a town that supposedly protects its rural character.

I can’t speak for all who reside on Fox Run Road, but I know a few of us would have welcomed a one-day or even a weekend Show House event – that may have been closer in keeping with current rules such as those imposed on Redding’s Garden Club tours and other town events that benefit non-profit organizations. But that’s not what happened. And we’d love to know why. ■

*Sandi Martin  
Fox Run Road*

**To the Editor,**

Regarding Tate Sullivan’s letter to the editor on January 25, 2024, I thank him for expressing his very valid concerns about dangerous driving practices in Redding. The number of motor vehicle accidents (MVA’s) recorded in Redding from January 1-16, 2024 (11), outnumbered the combined total of MVA’s in Weston and Easton, four and six, respectively. ■

*Sandi Martin  
Fox Run Road*

**To the Editor,**

I completely agree with Tate Sullivan’s letter to the editor published on January 25 regarding tailgaters. I’m a 82 years Redding resident, and my friend and I were coming back from the restaurant Lombardi’s in Georgetown one night last week. A big SUV was following me so close that I was blinded by his high beams, which he flickered on and off telling me I was not going fast enough. I have to tell you, I’m not a slow driver, but there’s no excuse to drive fast at night on Redding roads. At one point he just passed me on a curve with a solid middle yellow line! This is very frightening.. ■

*Michele Levin  
Newtown Turnpike*

**Early voting begins in CT this year, but it hasn’t been fully funded / continued from page 1**

for the presidential primary this year, when Easter is the last Sunday before the election. Early voting for that contest will be the Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday before the election, but not on Good Friday.

Hours of early voting in the presidential primary and special elections will be 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. For other primaries and the general election, the hours will be extended, running 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on the Tuesday and Thursday before election day.

Early voting does not mean early counting. The ballots will be handled much like absentee ballots – sealed in a signed envelope and secured until Election Day.

Connecticut also is in the process of replacing the outdated tabulators now used to count the paper ballots used in every community. Thomas said the state

is currently evaluating bidders and is expected to select two potential replacements this month, then seek an evaluation from registrars.

“Right now, it does not look like we’ll have them in 2024,” Thomas told the officials. “But just be aware, if that happens, that will also require additional training.”

Thomas said the variables, once a product is selected, include finalizing a contract and production schedules. Some bidders say they could equip a portion of the cities and towns in 2024, some promised full delivery, and others said they could not deliver until 2025.

“So, it’ll depend on who’s selected,” she said.

Thomas said she currently is weighing what legislative changes she will seek in 2024, other than second-year funding for early voting. She hedged on whether

she will seek new laws in response to the absentee voting scandal in Bridgeport, where security video appeared to capture individuals casting numerous ballots in violation of state law. Connecticut already has strict rules for who can handle absentee ballots.

One possibility that has been floated is requiring every municipality to have video surveillance of its drop boxes.

“It’s tricky. I’m trying to balance, obviously, between security and not disenfranchising voters, but also minimizing unfunded mandates, especially in the year where right now we have early voting to roll out, which is currently an unfunded mandate,” Thomas said. ■

*This story originally  
appeared in CT Mirror*

## LEGAL NOTICES

At the regularly scheduled meeting of the Zoning Commission held on January 24, 2024 at 7:30 p.m. in person, the commission reached the following decisions:

**1. Application #23-16Z - 455 Rock House Road (Assessor’s**

**Map and Lot #33-17) Owner: Joshua O. Ray & Liset Ray** – In accordance with Redding Zoning Regulations Section 5.12 request for a Special Use Permit for accessory residential apartment. **Approved with conditions.**

**2. Application #23-17Z** – In

accordance with PA-142, ZEO initiated request to amend the Redding Zoning Regulations to allow for Group Childcare Homes by right: **Approved** ■

*Matt Lecher, Chairman  
Redding Zoning Commission*

The Redding Board of Assessment Appeals will be meeting Wednesday, February 21, 2024 at 4:30 p.m. in the Conference Room of the Town Hall to set hearing dates and review appeals applications from the tax assessments on the grand list as of October 1, 2023. Anyone wishing to make

an appeal must obtain an application from the Tax Assessors office or Town website, fill out the required information and return it to the Tax Assessors office by Tuesday, February 20, 2024. Once the application is received, a hearing date will be scheduled for all eligible applicants. Only applica-

tions completed and returned by February 20, 2024 may be considered for a hearing. ■

*Greg Stackpole, Chairman  
Redding Board of  
Assessment Appeals*

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## New vehicle at Highway Department keeps drains and catch basins clear

By Rob Sample

Though the weather news in recent weeks has been about precipitation of the frozen variety, much of the last six months has been characterized by rain. Lots of it, in fact. Fortunately, Redding's Highway Department has a new tool in its arsenal for dealing with clogged drains and catch basins: a newly refurbished vac/jet truck.

The Town purchased the vac/jet truck from nearby Brookfield for a fraction of what that municipality spent on a brand-new truck. While new models might cost upwards of \$500,000, Redding's purchase was closer to \$30,000.

"This is a truck that is not in use every day, so for us it wasn't worthwhile to spend that large sum for a new truck," said Jamie Gracy, Redding's Director of Public Works. "Our old vac/jet truck failed before I came here in 2022 and did not have a jet rod. This is the feature that enables us to clear pipes that go under roads, making it extremely useful."

The Town was aware that the newly-purchased used truck required some repairs. Nonetheless, it has already proved its mettle where it counts: on the streets and backroads of Redding in a season characterized by unusually heavy rains.

"A member of our Highway Department once worked for the town that was buying the new truck and selling its old one," Gracy noted. "He knew just what it needed, and we determined that the vac/jet truck would be a great buy. So, we kept our eye on it and eventually we purchased it at auction."

The vac/jet truck joined the Town's fleet in late November. One key area needing repair was a corroded spot on the vacuum system itself. With that fixed, the

truck could go into operation. Several other less-critical repairs were pended for future action.

"We had a whole summer's worth of work to do, but fortunately, we had a lot of warmer days to do it," said Gracy. "With the jet rod we can clean pipes and drains out much better."

The new vac/jet truck proved especially beneficial during several recent heavy rainstorms, when heavy downpours caused water over roads in several parts of town. Clearing the drains and underground pipes with the new vehicle enabled the Highway Department to clear the roads much more quickly than waiting for the waters to recede – which is what they had to do before it was purchased.

The vac/jet truck is also useful in perhaps a less obvious way. It helps keep catch basins and waterways compliant with the state's MS-4 regulation. This rule regulates stormwater from roads with drainage systems, catch basins, and other municipal systems.

"Under this rule, we have to clear our catch basins twice per year," Gracy noted. "Not doing so can result in EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] fines."

Gracy noted that towns in more interior parts of the state have less stringent requirements because they have fewer waterways that lead to Long Island Sound. "Our waters go straight into the Sound, as well as into the reservoirs that provide the drinking water for Redding and other towns," he said. "Non-profit groups such as Save the Sound are constantly watching towns for compliance, so this is something we have to do."

In the past, some localities grumbled about such rules as

unfunded mandates. "But in recent years, compliance has become vital," Gracy added. "This is a situation where you need to spend money, or it's going to cost you money."

The cost savings of purchasing the used vac/jet truck purchase have been offset somewhat by the recent addition of a new brush tractor. Its price tag was higher than originally budgeted. Gracy said this is typical in the current vehicle environment, which has been subject to significant price inflation.

"Going back 28 years, when I first started my career, a six-wheel plow truck cost in the range of \$90,000," he noted. "Now, that same truck will cost \$290,000. It's been crazy."

On other fronts, Gracy is awaiting the final report from the Town's StreetScan project "any day now." StreetScan uses vehicle-mounted sensing technology to assess road conditions such as potholes, bumps, and cracks. The data are then processed and uploaded into a database and asset-management program called Streetlogix.

The StreetScan vehicle made its survey of Redding roads in November, and the process took a day-and-a-half. Based in Wakefield, MA, StreetScan is a software company that conducts similar roadway scans for numerous other Connecticut municipalities. Gracy noted that the data-gathering process would otherwise take a year to gather.

"When it comes to budget time, it will be much easier and clearer to identify our road-repair priorities and to budget for them," Gracy said. ■

## Sidewalk project takes next steps in Branchville

By Donna Christopher



Photo from the February 2017

Transit Oriented Development Plan - Branchville

The Depot Road Bridge is narrow, currently lacks sidewalks, and is insufficiently wide to carry traffic in both directions at the same time.

Work that began last year continues in Branchville to create a pedestrian-friendly experience for visitors and residents in this transportation hub of Ridgefield.

An ongoing sidewalk project aims to reconfigure the intersection of Route 102 (Branchville Road) and Route 7, narrow it, and put in a four-way crosswalk to Ancona Plaza. A sidewalk will continue up Florida Road, south to Keough's Plaza. A re-opened bridge at Depot Road with a connecting sidewalk that will enable pedestrians to cross Route 7 safely is part of the next phase. There will be decorative lighting and landscaping at the crosswalk and a push-to-cross button on the new traffic signals for pedestrians to use.

The work has progressed from a Transit-Oriented Development Plan done in 2017, which found, "As a whole, the most significant transportation infrastructure deficiency in the study area is the lack of pedestrian facilities. With a few exceptions, there are almost no sidewalks in the study area. Additionally, marked crosswalks across Route 7 and Route 102 are limited and lack basic infrastructure such as curb ramps, pedestrian phases, and pedestrian signal heads."

The sidewalk project currently wrapping up cost approximately \$2 million, with 20 percent funding participation by the Town of Ridgefield, said Ridgefield's First Selectman Rudy Marconi.

The Depot Road bridge project is funded by a Federal Local Bridge Program that provides state grants to municipalities for the removal, replacement, reconstruction, or rehabilitation of local bridges. "That bridge was found to be unsafe, and we had to close it," Marconi said. Funding had a one-percent match, 10 percent for the construction part only.

Next year, construction of a new bridge at Portland Avenue is planned, and a new rail crossing for trucks so they can make the left turn back to a self-storage facility at 70 Branchville Road.

"If a moving truck is coming in and wants to go to the storage area,

it cannot go to Portland Avenue to make a left turn. We cannot get a firetruck to do a (three-point turn). Metro-North widening will take place and part of the Portland Avenue bridge project will be a new traffic light heading south. There will be a new left turn lane into Portland Avenue and a through lane," said Marconi.

He said Ridgefield is also in talks with Redding about the impacts and possibilities of expanding a plan to build higher-density housing near the Branchville train station area. A Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) program under state guidelines covers a mile radius around the train station. TOD is working to use transit centers to enhance economic development, job-accessible housing, retail amenities, and quality of life in many of Connecticut's walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods.

The potential housing development at this location is Ridgefield's way of addressing the future. "If you look at the census, we continue to grow," Marconi said, noting that when he grew up in Ridgefield the population was 5,000 and today it is 25,000. "We need to be planning."

Essential to the future growth of the town will be adequate housing for both young generations and seniors. Marconi envisions housing at this location could mean more use of public transportation. Metro-North ridership from Branchville is at an all-time low. "We always oversell permits," Marconi said.

"We'll have train service, bus service up and down Route 7... if a senior wants to retire there or Gen Z want to take a train from Norwalk to Danbury to go to WestConn for college. I've spoken to Metro-North. During the day, if we can run a train north and south from Danbury to Norwalk every hour, you can take the train," explained Marconi.

"In the legislature, they've been talking about mandating communities to have a minimum number of affordable units. I think it's better to be planning now." ■

## Selectmen approve additional member for Wire Mill committee

By Rocco Valluzzo

By unanimous approval, the Board of Selectmen agreed to amend the charge of the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee to include a member from Georgetown Village Restoration, Inc. as a committee member at a special meeting on Monday, January 22.

Georgetown Village Restoration, Inc. is an independent 501 (c) (3) non-profit with a mission to "celebrate the past, support and promote the community's businesses and residents, and facilitate the continued revitalization of the Historic Village of Georgetown, Connecticut."

The Advisory Committee was formed over a year ago to help Redding successfully navigate the redevelopment process of the 44 acres of Town-owned land in Georgetown. Members are appointed by the Board of Selectmen and include the Town Land Use officer, chairpersons of the Planning Commission, Zoning Commission, Conservation Com-

mission, Water Pollution Control Commission, Board of Finance or their designee, and the First Selectwoman ex-officio.

The Committee has managed the spending of the first \$200,000 Brownfield assessment grant from the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, which is nearly spent, and has received a second \$200,000 Brownfield assessment grant for the start of the Phase III assessment. It is now working on applying for a \$200,000 Brownfield area revitalization (BAR) grant that would include funding for potential planning and require a 10% match from the Town. The grant would apply to the whole area, encompassing Main Street in Georgetown as well as the Wire Mill site.

In the presentation of its annual report in October, the Committee recommended expanding its scope as it pertained to planning for the site. First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton felt that granting that

authority should come from the Planning Commission.

"As the Board of Selectmen, we don't have the authority to initiate planning," she said. "Our job is to evaluate the need and support the funding request if we believe that the need is justified."

Wire Mill Advisory Committee Chair Amy Atamian noted that planning for just the Wire Mill in and of itself could potentially leave out the connections to the rest of Georgetown. Any planning that is undertaken really needs to consider the full aspects of Georgetown, the site, and the surrounding commercial areas.

"The village of Georgetown is well undercooked from a development point of view," said committee member Rob Dean. "In planning the future of Georgetown, and in particular in planning it as a factor in the Town's tax base, you need the synergy between the big site and the rest of the village. To think that the Wire Mill is somehow something separate – it's not." ■

the Y

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## Zoners delay decision on Redding Road greenhouse

By Jessie Wright

The first item on the agenda for the January 24 public hearing of the Zoning Commission – an application for a special permit to build a greenhouse at 132 Redding Road – generated nearly an hour-and-a-half discussion between the applicant, the Commission, and dissenting public comment from adjacent property owner, Meadow Ridge, through counsel. The public hearing was a continuation of the public hearing held on January 10, 2024.

The applicant, Gene Nazzaro, is applying for a special use permit for a hoop-house style greenhouse to be constructed by the professional firm Connecticut Greenhouses. If approved, the 33 foot x 150-foot greenhouse would take approximately three days to construct.

Accompanying Nazzaro at the hearing was Rob Kaye, owner of local business Homefront Farmers, an organic farming operation that helps establish organic gardens at residences throughout the area. The proposed greenhouse would be used by Homefront Farmers to

cultivate seedlings to plant off site at clients' properties.

"We are a certified organic company," said Kaye. "We are the only certified organic company in the state that does what we do. And what we basically do is we work with homeowners to plant gardens on their property – we build them, and we maintain them throughout the year... everything that we do, except for our greenhouse, is all off-site." Kaye noted that Homefront Farmers' website currently contains outdated information from the former owner about other activities that were previously conducted and on-site programs.

The site for the proposed greenhouse sits on a lot of just-over seven acres which is owned by Nazzaro. The lot was previously expanded to its current size by adding a portion of the acreage from adjacent 138 Redding Road, which Nazzaro also previously owned but later sold. Approximately six acres of

Continued on page 5

## SPORTS

## Barlow keeps Housatonic under wraps

Hockey | By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Joel Barlow High/Weston/Abbott Tech's (JBWA) Henry Hoeffner, right, battles Housatonic Co-op's Joey Wootton for the puck during a hockey game on Wednesday, Jan. 24. JBWA won 5-1.

A week's worth of good practices put the Joel Barlow High/Weston/Abbott Tech (JBWA) hockey team in the right mindset for its game against Housatonic Co-op last week.

Right from the first face-off, the Knights were ready to play. They controlled the puck for the majority of the time for a 5-1 win on Wednesday, January 24, at the Danbury Ice arena.

"It was definitely a feel-good night for us," said JBWA Head Coach Bob Stearns. "The kids were in a good mindset coming into this game."

The Knights created a number of scoring chances early, and it did not take long for them to capitalize. Just 4:24 into the action, Wes Arees

took the rebound off the board and redirected it past Mountaineer goalie Neaco DiNicola for the unassisted goal.

Although Housatonic did not have as many scoring chances, it did make good on one later in the period. Sean Mercogliano's initial shot was blocked, but the rebound found the stick of Joey Wootton, whose shot got past Connor Thomas to tie it at 1-1 with 5:44 left.

There was still plenty of time left for the Knights to get the upper hand again, and they would not waste it. DiNicola managed to slow down a shot by Dylan Hilario, but the momentum was still enough for the puck to cross the goal line. Arees got the assist,

and the Knights were ahead to stay with 3:27 to go.

A roughing call put the Knights down a skater in the last minute, but they killed off the penalty as the first period ended.

When play resumed, Housatonic held off the hosts for most of the second frame despite the Knights taking a number of shots. But with 5:26 left, Arees scored his second goal, taking a pass from Theo Spitzer to make it 3-1.

It was the first of two quick JBWA goals in less than half-a-minute. With 5:02 to go, Spitzer scored a goal of his own, this time with Connor Sencen assisting. After killing off a two-minute penalty for tripping, the Mountaineers went into the second break trailing 4-1.

Despite being up by three goals, the Knights did not let up offensively as the final period got underway, taking repeated shots. DiNicola turned most of them away until 3:02 remained, when Arees found the net once again to complete his hat trick. His brother Emmet got the assist to seal the victory for the Knights.

JBWA dominated in shots on goal with a 45-17 advantage.

"Everyone was feeling good," said Stearns. "Everyone was happy, and it transferred to the ice tonight."

JBWA, now 5-6 overall, visits Watertown/Pomperaug on Saturday, February 3 at the Taft School at 7:30 p.m., and hosts Shepaug Valley on Wednesday, February 7 at 5:30 p.m. ■

## Mustangs put Falcons in hole early

Boys basketball | By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Joel Barlow High's Grayson Vanderburg scored 14 points in a boys varsity basketball game against Immaculate on Thursday, January 25. Barlow lost 40-57.

Between some accurate long-range shooting by its opponent and some scoring troubles of its own, the Joel Barlow High boys varsity basketball team was at a disadvantage early in its game against Immaculate on Thursday, January 25.

The host Falcons struggled to sink shots early in the evening. Immaculate would also make effective use of the three-point shot in getting the upper hand in a 57-40 win.

With a 7-3 lead early, the taller Mustangs then embarked on a 10-0 scoring run in the first period. Following baskets by Abel Morales and Tyler Fahey, the visitors hit back-to-back threes by Justin Bartley. Ben Noome stopped the run with his first points of the night, but Bartley followed with another three, his fourth of the period, for a 22-5 lead.

"That was big problem," said Barlow Head Coach Pat Yerina. "We thought we were contesting him. It turned out he knocked it down."

Barlow's Jack Lippoth, who had hit one three-pointer earlier in the frame, added another in the time remaining as his team trailed 24-8.

"We missed a lot of shots," said Yerina. "We had a lot of turnovers too. We need a lot of possessions if we're not shooting great."

The Falcons picked up their game both offensively and defensively in the second quarter, holding the Mustangs to single digits. Despite trailing 29-10 early, they outscored the competition 13-2 for the rest of the frame, which featured Lippoth, Grayson Vanderburg, and Sean Gabriel leading the charge. Lippoth's three-pointer with 1:11 to go got the Falcons to within 10 points (31-21) of catching the visitors going into halftime.

"Our defense was better," said Yerina. "We rebounded well against their size. They're big."

Barlow's defense came up with 10 steals in the second half, which helped it to close the gap a bit. It held Bartley scoreless, but the Mustangs had center Abdul Akewushola step up, scoring all but two of his team's points in the third quarter.

Vanderburg in turn stepped up for Barlow. His 10-point effort in the third quarter allowed the Falcons to come within seven points (41-34) of the Mustangs heading into the last quarter.

Lippoth's layup early in the period got the Falcons to within five of catching the Mustangs. In the last six minutes, however, Immaculate went on a 10-0 scoring run, capped off by Fahey's three-pointer to stay out of reach.

"We just couldn't get over the hump," said Yerina. "Every time we cut it down to five or six, they got a couple of three-point baskets."

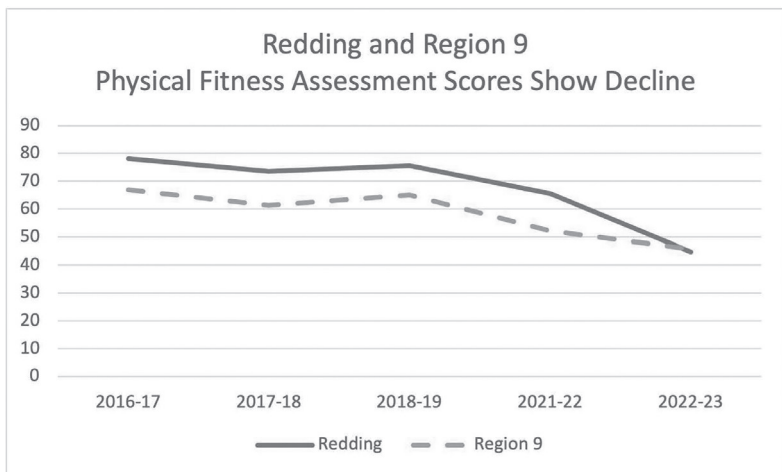
Lippoth led Barlow with 15 points, include three three-pointers. Vanderburg was next with 14, including two threes.

Noome finished with five points, and Gabriel sank three. Will Gregor hit two free throws.

Barlow, now 3-11, is at New Fairfield on Thursday, February 1 and Bunnell on Monday, February 5. Both games are at 7:00 p.m. ■

## Student fitness scores decline across the state

Both Redding and Region 9 hit 5-year low | By Jessie Wright



The latest results of the state's physical fitness assessment show the lowest scores in nearly a decade, with only 45.5% of students in Connecticut passing the Connecticut Physical Fitness Assessment last year.

Only 44.8% of students in Redding schools passed the most recent assessment (with 91% participating), and only 45.8% of students in Region 9 passed (with 75.9% participating). This represents a nearly 20-percentage

point decrease for Redding and a 6.3-percentage point decrease for Region 9 from their respective 2021-22 assessment scores. The percentage of Redding students passing the assessment was as high as 78.1% in 2016-17, and Region 9 registered a 67% pass rate that same year.

The Connecticut Physical Fitness Assessment is administered every year to students in grades 4, 6, 8 and 9-12. It measures four elements of physical

fitness (abdominal strength and endurance, upper body strength and endurance, flexibility, and aerobic endurance) through a curl up, push up, sit-and-reach, and mile run test. There is a "Fitness Zone Standard" range for each test associated with good health. The pass rate percentages for each district refer to the percentage of students scoring within or above the Fitness Zone Standard for all four tests.

Experts say a combination of factors is at play in this downward trend across the state, including a spike in inactivity during the Covid-19 pandemic, poor diet, physical education and recreational activity funding cuts, and outdoor play being replaced by media-based activities.

For more information and to view the database of Connecticut Physical Fitness Assessment scores, visit [public-edsight.ct.gov/Performance/Physical-Fitness-Assessment](http://public-edsight.ct.gov/Performance/Physical-Fitness-Assessment)

## Barlow's Romano wins 100th wrestling match

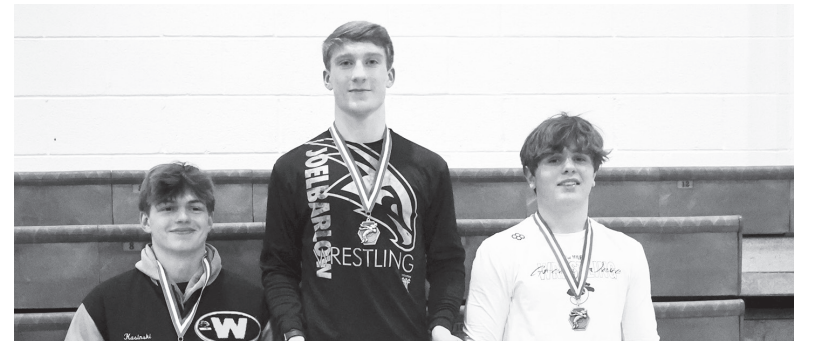


Photo by Suzanne Romano

Junior Scott Romano, a captain of the Joel Barlow High wrestling team, won his 100th varsity match on Saturday, January 20, at the New Milford Tournament, where he won all three of his contests in the 150-pound weight class. The seventh wrestler in Barlow history to reach 110 wins, Romano currently has a 26-1 record and is a two-time defending champ in Class M, winning 132 pounds his freshman year at 132 pounds and at 138 pounds his sophomore year.

## State hears final comments on proposed Hoyt cell tower / continued from page 1

would be available for use by any subsequent carrier that decides to mount a transmitter on the tower.

Another query concerned an earlier proposal, since rejected, to move the tower compound about 50 feet to the east, thus isolating it from a wetland area to the west. This would, however, require more tree clearing and terrain grading – and would move the compound closer to a vernal pool to the east.

## Other locations rejected

Several other locations were considered before Verizon picked the Hoyt site. One, on Sugar Hollow Road in Danbury, was too far to the west to create beneficial cell coverage for the Route 53 area of Redding, while another, on Dittmar Road in Bethel, was too far north. A third, near the West Redding Fire Station, was at a lower elevation and thus would not achieve the same level of coverage while also being too visible to homes in the surrounding area.

Villamizar asked why coverage maps weren't provided for the two alternate tower sites – which were rejected by Verizon. Gadasu explained that the two sites were considered too far from the area designated for improved cell service, but that such maps could be quickly generated for anyone who wished to see them.

More critically, Villamizar typed in 25 addresses in the area that flagged as "no coverage" under the tower proposal. She used a coverage map provided online by Verizon's marketing department. Her results contradicted the Verizon tower team's data, with all showing 4G LTE coverage.

"How is it that you're telling the public that you have coverage when you're telling the Siting Council that you need coverage because there is substantively no coverage?" asked Villamizar.

Kenneth Baldwin, an attorney for Verizon, objected to the question, noting that Gadasu had previously noted the two units of

Verizon used different software to determine the "coverage/no coverage" question. Moreover, session moderator John Morrisette noted that the marketing websites were never part of the official record regarding the application for the tower site.

"Well, the exhibit from my testimony shows the area in question," noted Villamizar, "so it is now on the record."

The Connecticut Siting Council will make its judgement in the next few months on the Verizon site application. In addition, any briefs or findings of fact can be filed with the Siting Council through February 22. Additionally, any individual or intervenor who wishes to express a viewpoint on the proposed tower can do so as well by that deadline. ■

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REDDING SENTINEL

## Barlow students form Red Cross Club

*Blood Drive scheduled for February 6* | By Anne Young Albanese



*Photo courtesy of Valerie Itah*

The leaders of the Joel Barlow High School Red Cross Club (First row, left to right: Valerie Itah, Nikita Vitikov, Maya Acosta, Juliana Qiu, and Fariza Kudia. Second row, left to right: Daniel and Michael Murcia, Christian Jhilal, Ava Racette, and Fariha Kudia.)

Joel Barlow High School (JBHS) students have formed a Red Cross Club to be of service to others throughout Redding and Easton. The Club hopes to educate students about health issues, disaster preparedness, and veteran outreach. In addition, it provides students with volunteer opportunities within their own communities.

The Club's first event will be a Red Cross Blood Drive on Tuesday, February 6 from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., held in the lower gym at JBHS. This is the first of several events in the works. The Club will also bring awareness about cardiovascular health, as February is American Heart Month.

The Red Cross requires its affiliated clubs to run three service projects per year. February's blood drive will be the first. The members of the Club are exploring additional programs for the future. They are looking into the

possibility of a care-package drive for homeless veterans and are researching events involved with disaster preparedness or general fundraising for March or April.

The National Honor Society (NHS) has traditionally managed one blood drive per year. This year, the Red Cross Club will join the NHS on its May blood drive. In future school years, the Red Cross Club expects to run two blood drives per year.

The Club was started by junior Maya Acosta and a small group of her friends. Acosta has a passion for helping others and wanted to develop a relationship with the Red Cross. She was able to start this relationship in November and the blood drive planning started from there. While launching the Club, Acosta said, "one of the first things I learned in our club orientation for the blood drive is that there is a huge national shortage of all blood types." She added, "We hope the Redding and Easton communities

will help us contribute to solving this national issue."

Acosta and her friends enlisted Valerie Itah, a nurse at JBHS, as the Club's advisor. The group has since expanded to 22 students. Acosta and the rest of her clubmates intend to continue recruitment through social media, flyers, and face-to-face recruitment.

As a nurse at JBHS, Itah is always trying to bring attention to public health issues at the school. Working with a group of students will help to fill that need. When Acosta reached out to Itah, she immediately recognized the potential synergy. The Red Cross core values, including the promotion of community health and service and solidarity, are the goals she wants to accomplish as a school nurse at JBHS. When asked why she wanted to become an advisor to the Club, she responded, "I am seeing on average 30 students daily, and I have built strong relationships with many of them. So, becoming an advisor made a lot of sense, as I can help them thrive and grow even further."

The February 6 blood drive is open to the public. Those interested in donating blood should register in advance at [redcrossblood.org/give.html/drive-results?zipSponsor=Barlow](http://redcrossblood.org/give.html/drive-results?zipSponsor=Barlow). Participants 17 years and older can independently donate blood. Those who are 16 will need parental consent. The consent forms are available from Itah, in her office or by e-mail. Not registering in advance may cause your desired time slot to be unavailable. Students, parents, or residents can get additional information by calling JBHS at (203) 938-2508. ■

## Region 9 addresses open campus policy, NEST project, and committee streamlining

By Rob Sample

At its January 23 meeting, two Joel Barlow High School students called on the Region 9 Board of Education to reinstitute an open campus policy for the remainder of the school year. This meeting also marked the first led by the Board's new Chairman, Todd Johnston, who was elected during a special meeting on January 12.

The open campus policy would permit Barlow seniors to go off campus during free periods in their school day, such as lunch breaks, study halls, and non-critical lab periods. Of note, the two students who spoke – Zachary Colangelo and Owen Fellows – are both juniors and would not benefit from such a policy until the 2024-25 school year.

The open campus policy was tested in the latter parts of the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years, beginning in April after spring break. This year, students are seeking to implement the policy during the second half of February, following February break. They are also seeking to make the policy permanent and, ultimately, span an entire school year rather than a quarter-year or semester.

"In the past, we've had successful quarter-long programs," noted Fellows. "We've run it twice without any major problems." Fellows also pointed out that the program enjoys virtually universal support among Barlow students and class councils.

Colangelo pointed out that most nearby high schools already have adopted an open campus policy for their senior classes. "This teaches us to be self-sufficient and better prepared for college," said Colangelo. "Trust in students is important, and this policy will help cultivate that."

Participation would require parental permission and a sign-out/sign-in process, and students would need to be in good academic standing to participate. Colangelo and Fellows also presented data on local road safety and that open campus policies do not correlate with area crash rates.

"This gives them an opportunity to be responsible and to make decisions without sneaking out and getting into trouble," said Dr. Mario Almeida, Barlow's Principal, who also noted that the school already has a late sign-in and early dismissal policy for seniors. "I support it."

No vote was held on the open-campus policy, but the Board took a variety of other administrative moves. Its Building, Facilities and Fields Committee met immediately prior to the full Board meeting, and ER9's Facilities & Operations Manager, Mike D'Agostino, provided the Board with an update on the NEST project at Barlow High School.

The NEST project aims to equip the school's sports fields with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant restrooms, team rooms, a trainers' area for injury treatment, a concession area, and an automatic external defibrillator (AED) station.

Accordingly, the Region 9 Board unanimously approved a progress payment of \$174,341.25 for the facilities and field improvement project. It also approved the payment of \$335,376.25 from FieldTurf USA for the field improvement project, which is substantially complete. In a related matter, the Board unanimously okayed hiring Silver, Petrucci & Associates to provide conceptual drawings and cost projections for the NEST building.

"This will be useful for us to kickstart the project and will give the community a little added information on what the eventual project will look like," said D'Agostino.

In one of his roles as Chairman, Johnston presented the Board with a snapshot of what its current committee structure looks like, and a conceptual plan for narrowing that down. There were 13 board committees, not including those committees that function in conjunction with either the Easton or Redding Boards of Education.

The Board passed motions abolishing the following committees:

- Budget and Transportation
- Policy
- Superintendent Evaluation
- Negotiations

The Board also moved to form a Region 9 Finance and Operations Committee and to abolish the following additional committees, which would take effect on the date the Board approves a charge for the new Finance and Operations Committee:

- Audit
- Facilities & Fields
- Pension
- Technology

The Board also moved to abolish any committees that have not met within the last 18 months.

Finally, it voted to clarify that its CES-RESC function is not a committee, but instead acts as a liaison between ER9 and the regional Cooperative Educational Services organization, which operates various interdistrict magnet schools. ■

Zoners delay decision on Redding Road greenhouse / continued from page 3

the property at 132 Redding Road is already designated as farmland through the state and assessor's office, as Nazzaro uses it to graze a herd of Wagyu beef cattle.

Attorney Andrew Morin of Hinckley & Allen (H&A), representing Meadow Ridge,

expressed several concerns about the application, and requested the Commission extend the public hearing again to have adequate time to review the information presented on January 24.

"Tonight, for the first time, we are just seeing the two surveys

other than what's on the record... this is also the first time, I think, that the applicant has fully addressed what specific uses are going to be at the property... There are some issues that I would have liked to have time to look at and respond to," said Morin.

## Mary Clinton Scholarship

sponsored by the

Redding Garden Club

Applications for \$2,000 grant due

April 12 | By Ann Crocker



To be considered, please submit the following:

- Completed application form
- Essay that explains how you, your interests, your activities, and your goals relate to your future field of study. (See details on application form)
- Letter of recommendation from a guidance counselor or employer

The Redding Garden Club is very proud to continue its tradition of awarding the Mary Clinton Scholarship dedicated to Mary Clinton's years of service and devotion to Redding.

The scholarship program awards up to \$2,000 to one or more applicants who are legal residents of the Town of Redding and who are high school seniors and beginning their studies in the field of agriculture, environmental studies, landscape or floral design, conservation, or related areas.

Download the application form from the Redding Garden Club website at [reddinggardenclub.org/scholarship](http://reddinggardenclub.org/scholarship)

E-mail the completed application, essay, and letter to Ann Crocker at [annsam@yahoo.com](mailto:annsam@yahoo.com) no later than April 12, 2024. Questions? E-mail [annsam@yahoo.com](mailto:annsam@yahoo.com) ■

## Family and group child care homes now "by right" in residential zones

By Jessie Wright

At the Wednesday, January 24 meeting of the Zoning Commission, commissioners voted unanimously to amend Redding's Zoning Regulations to allow for family and group child care homes by right in residential zones.

This action was taken to bring Redding into compliance with Public Act 23-142, which came into statewide effect October 1, 2023. The act states, "No zoning regulation shall treat any family child care home or group child care home, located in a residence, and licensed by the Office of Early Childhood, pursuant to Chapter 368a, in a manner different from single or multifamily dwellings."

Furthermore, zoning regulations may not "prohibit the operation in a residential zone of any family child care home or group child care home [in a residential zone] located in a residence, or require any special zoning permit or special zoning exception for such operation."

"It says we can't treat them any differently from single family dwellings... so we can't, for instance, require hours of operation, numbers of parking spaces... things like that," explained Land Use Director Aimee Pardee.

Family child care and group child care homes are defined in state statutes and must be licensed by the Office of Early Childhood.

Family child care homes are private homes that meet the following criteria:

- Provide care for up to six children, including the provider's

children, who are not in school full-time

- During the school year, providers may take up to three additional children who are in school full-time

- If the provider has more than three children in school full-time, all of them are permitted

- Care is provided for no less than three and no more than twelve hours within a 24-hour period on a regular basis

- More than twelve hours of care is allowed on an intermittent basis, but may not exceed 72 consecutive hours.

Group child care homes fall under one of the following definitions:

- Provides regular care for not less than seven or more than twelve related or unrelated children, OR

- Meets the definition of a family child care home but operates in a facility other than a private home.

"Are they talking about homes that are lived in and also used as a (daycare)... not just a stand-alone daycare?" clarified Zoning Commission member Nicole Bricker. "Correct," Pardee confirmed.

Currently, there is only one licensed family child care home in Redding – Redding Country Daycare located at 188 Lonetown Road. Residents can search all licensed child care programs and centers at [search.211childcare.org](http://search.211childcare.org) ■

Morin also raised concerns over the definition of farm use and whether the proposed greenhouse falls under that definition.

"I heard someone say that this is a farm use – a use by right. And this is not what is happening here. The regulations define farming as, 'the cultivation of open land for growing of crops, hay, fodder, pasturage...' What we have here is a greenhouse, which is a special zoning use."

Other concerns Morin raised included requirements within the Zoning Regulations for special use permit approval that he felt the application had not fully addressed, such as stormwater plans, traffic and parking, and storage of chemicals.

The public hearing was closed after Nazzaro declined to grant permission to extend it again, a requirement for such an action.

During the following discussion

amongst the commissioners, some of the concerns raised were discussed, but the Commission decided they wanted additional time before voting to consult Town counsel on what conditions they have the authority to place on an approval.

"We have precedent of approving applications with conditions to address any deficiencies, we've done that in the past," said Zoning Commission Secretary Amy Atamian. "Maybe we should defer a decision and go through and draft up what some of those might be."

"I would say there is probably enough here for some digestion," said Land Use Director Aimee Pardee.

The next meeting of the Zoning Commission is scheduled for Wednesday, February 14 at 7:30 p.m. at Town Hall. ■

## BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

# Ridgefield Chamber celebrates vibrant food scene *Restaurant week runs February 5-11*

By Pamela Brown



If you're looking to step away from the stove and enjoy some delicious food, Ridgefield's Restaurant Week 2024 returns to celebrate the wide-ranging food scene available all around the town. From February 5 through 11, a variety of eating establishments including restaurants, bakeries, cafes, diners, breweries, and more will be featuring special fixed-price lunch and dinner multi-course menus. Due to its popularity, reservations are highly recommended.

"Spearheaded by Dan O'Brien, the Chamber's Restaurant Committee is dedicated to showcasing Ridgefield's diverse culinary scene," said Diana Spence, Executive Director of the Ridgefield Chamber of Commerce. "Their goal extends beyond a mere gastronomic experience; they aim to attract individuals who may not have previously dined in Ridgefield. By offering specials that make eating out more affordable, the Committee seeks to introduce people to new eateries."

According to Spence, the week-

long event is an exciting initiative, and the Ridgefield Chamber is enthusiastic about establishing it as an ongoing annual event. "The event is made possible through the collaboration of The Chefs' Warehouse and Fairfield County Bank, demonstrating the community spirit that underlies this undertaking," she said. The former is a specialty wholesale food distributor which services restaurants, hotels, country clubs, and fine food stores, and the latter is a community financial institution delivering a full range of financial services with locations throughout Fairfield County.

Building, promoting, and supporting the Ridgefield Business Community since 1966, the Chamber is proud of the inclusive approach to Restaurant Week which ensures a broad representation of Ridgefield's vast culinary landscape. According to the Chamber, Ridgefield is home to many highly-rated restaurants of every style of cuisine and price point, ranging from romantic date nights to fine dining to family-friendly meals. Participating locations in this year's gastronomic showcase include Bailey's Backyard, Barn Door Restaurant, Bartolo, The Benjamin, Botanika, Brasserie Saint Germain, Deborah Anne's Sweet Shoppe, Dimitri's Diner, Gallo Ristorante, Hunan Noodle Bar, John's Best Pizzeria, The Lantern, Nod Hill Brewery, Posa, Queen B Coffee Company,

Ridgefield Bagels & Bakes, Ross's Artisanal Bakery and Cafe, Southwest Cafe, Stacey's Totally Baked, Tablao Wine Bar & Restaurant, Tequila Escape, TerraSole Ristorante, and Wooster Hollow Cafe.

"As we embrace Restaurant Week in our charming town, we celebrate not just the delicious cuisine but also the heart and soul of our local businesses. Together, let's support our restaurants and showcase the culinary gems that define our small-town charm," said First Selectman Rudy Marconi.

Spence points out that hosting Restaurant Week in February addresses the challenge of slower business this time of year for eateries. The timing of the event also follows the highly successful Taste of Ridgefield hosted by the Rotary Club. "This scheduling decision aligns with the belief that patrons exposed to restaurant offerings during the Taste of Ridgefield may be inclined to explore more establishments during Restaurant Week. The overarching message remains one of community support – encouraging residents to shop, dine, and play locally, thereby contributing to the longevity of this quaint town's economy," she said. ■

*For more information and a list of participating locations and their special menus, visit [ridgefieldchamber.org](http://ridgefieldchamber.org)*

### Redding's Big Outdoors: Marchant Farm – Blackman's Brook Trail / *continued from page 1*



Photo by Jessie Wright

sending electricity through our water supply and into our cottage as it looked for a grounding – a superheated wire and terrifying sparks from the cottage electrical panel tipped us off that something was very, very wrong. But this is supposed to be a column about "Redding's Big Outdoors", so I'll save the rest of that story for another day.

Our recent homeowner battle with the elements, however, did prompt a desire to seek out the more beautiful side of our current state of saturation. So, last weekend I opened the *Book of Trails*, specifically looking for an open space that I hadn't yet explored that primarily featured water. I figured now is the perfect time to marvel at the newly formed

waterfalls dotting the landscape while the snow and ice have temporarily receded.

I landed upon Marchant Farm – just under ten acres of Redding Land Trust land and easements between Marchant Road and Topstone Road – that features a pond, a dam, and Blackman's Pond Brook running from top to bottom. Just what I was seeking.

Seeing that Blackman's Brook Trail, which hugs the waterway and crosses it several times, is under a mile long and without significant hills, I enlisted my entire unwieldy crew – toddler, dogs, and husband – to join me. Parking at the trailhead on Charlie Hill Road just south of Marchant Road on Saturday morning, we were immediately greeted by a group of joggers in neon. "It's going to be muddy!" they warned. "Don't worry, we brought our boots!" we assured them.

Luckily, the thick leaf cover blanketing the trail provided a relatively springy surface to walk on, and there were only a few spots where we sunk and squelched through the muck. The first of these came right at the beginning of the trail, where a precarious, split wooden board provided the only passage over the brook.

Upon crossing, we came upon the dam for Blackman's Pond and accompanying rushing waterfall – an auditory feast. A thin skin of ice

remained at the edges of the pond above, like a callous almost healed.

It was slow going as we picked our way over mossy rocks and craggy stones hidden by leaf litter – but mostly it was slow going because my son insisted on crouching down every two feet and demanding "What's that??" as he pointed to various wet objects – rocks, sticks, lichen – on the ground.

The trail borders the brook and Charlie Hill Road closely for the first third-of-a-mile. With the bare trees allowing plenty of sightlines, the walk was more exposed to daily life than our usual hikes. It was positively suburban at points – in a lovely way – as more groups of joggers made the loop down Charlie Hill Road and a father and young son toddled out their front door to check the mail.

As we came to the second brook crossing, we realized this would be a relatively short outing. The rains had risen the brook to new levels, and a missing boulder in the crossing was going to prove too dicey for our motley crew to navigate. We turned back, the Saturday morning pancakes in our bellies powering our slow progress back to the car.

If we had continued on, however, I'm sure we would have enjoyed more sounds of rushing water, and a town slowly waking up to the lazy weekend ahead. ■

## Black History comes alive at Greenwood Features

*One woman show comes to Bethel*

February 4 | By Pamela Brown



Kimberly Wilson in her one-woman live show *A Journey*.

A captivating one-woman show is coming to Bethel this weekend to help celebrate Black History Month. *A Journey*, written and performed by award-winning playwright and actress Kimberly Wilson, is the first live performance to be featured at Greenwood Features, a movie theater at 269 Greenwood Avenue in Bethel. The show will be presented on Sunday, February 4 at 4:00 p.m. After the performance, audience members will have the opportunity to ask questions and share stories. The event is sponsored by Bethel Arts whose mission is to build, promote, and support the town's arts and creative community.

Wilson, recipient of Best Playwright in 2016 at the Atlanta Black Theatre Festival, honors African American history and culture with a focus on the experiences of numerous Black women in history across generations, including special presentations of Harriet Tubman and Rosa Parks. "It's very important to learn the truths of our past, that helped shape our presents, and will develop and grow and empower our future," she said, adding, "We don't live in a perfect world, but we can work together, share our truths, respect and understand our differences. If we lead with love, it will truly be a 'perfect world.'" Some of the concepts she hopes to honestly bring forth include equality, faith, family, forgiveness, hope, humanity, justice, love, and togetherness.

The engaging one-hour show is interactive and comprises stories, music, monologue, and movement. "This isn't a play where you attend, sit in your seats, and clap at the end. The interaction may be emotional, may be verbal, and may be singing," said Wilson. "It's important to create a safe place to just be oneself, in the audience, in the talkback, in one's daily life. While in character, I always find ways to include, engage, and invite the audience to be an active participant."

Diana Gubbay, Bethel Arts Board Member who saw Wilson's performance in Ridgefield, was so affected by it, she knew she had to bring it to Bethel. "Kimberly is a charismatic performer, and this is an original work of storytelling and performance. Expect to be deeply affected and uplifted at the same time," said Gubbay. "There's

so much to learn. New stories are being told and old stories are being heard. Having a month when the collective intention is to learn, hear, see, and express aspects of Black History enriches us all."

A resident of Fairfield County for over 30 years, Wilson has performed at various schools, libraries, churches, historical societies, organizations, and associations throughout the country. She first cultivated an interest in the industry as a high schooler. "My theater training and history began between my freshman and sophomore year at Minneapolis Lutheran High," said Wilson, who as a youth studied at the Minneapolis Children's Theatre - Summer School Institute. Her acting training continued at Breck School under the tutelage of Michael Kassin, a drama teacher and playwright. "His play, *Brother Champ*, was having its world premiere at a new theater and the theater was also looking for talent to become the founding company members. Mr. Kassin urged me to audition," she said. Performing at the newly-established professional theater set a strong foundation for Wilson's acting career and upon graduation, she pursued acting at Howard University in Washington, DC.

Wilson encourages audiences to study and celebrate America's history and their own history. "I'm hopeful an audience member will come, be informed, entertained, inspired, and so moved that he/she/they will want to celebrate their lives, tell their personal stories, and actively listen and respect the lives of others who may or may not look like, believe like, or love like them," she said. "I always have hope that we can all help create a safe place for people to be who they are, free and true. I have hope because I believe if we lead with love, there is always hope." ■



269 Greenwood Avenue  
Bethel, CT 06801  
475-256-1130

## Last chance to register for forum addressing hate incidents

By Anne Young Albanese

As hate incidents in Connecticut and around the country are increasing exponentially, Temple B'nai Chaim and the Riverbrook Regional YMCA are putting together the forum "Confronting Acts of Hate in Our Community".

This is the last chance to register for the event, which will address hate speech and actions, taking place on Sunday, February 4 from 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. at the Riverbrook Regional YMCA at 404 Danbury Road in Wilton. The forum will address antisemitism, religious intolerance (Islamophobia), ethnic exclusion, racism, and LGBTQ+ hate. The event is open to all Redding residents and admission is free. It is offered in cooperation with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), an organization dedicated to "stop

the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all," according to its website.

The forum will allow attendees to share information on hate incidents and provide leaders and attendees with a more personal understanding of these issues. It will create a network of support to prevent hate speech and actions. Attendees and speakers will brainstorm steps to prevent hate speech and active hate from taking root in the regional community. The support network will continue to meet periodically to follow up on the events from the forum's discussions and implement ways to prevent hate speech and acts of hate. This ongoing support network will address the development of a coordinated system of responses to

future hate incidents. It will also help to ensure support for those who are victims of these types of acts.

The forum will be moderated by Stephen M. Hudspeth, an adjunct professor in the University of Connecticut's Graduate School of Business, where he has served for the past seven years teaching courses in business law and ethics; securities law and compliance; revolutionary technology law; and data privacy and internet protocol law. He began holding teaching positions in law at academic institutions after his retirement from large firm legal practices at the end of 2004. Hudspeth is the Chair of the Wilton Interfaith Action Committee and is a recipient of a Who's Who Lifetime Achievement Award.

The event will unite a series of faith leaders and government officials. Some of the participants include Cantor Harriet Dunkerley from Temple B'nai Chaim in Georgetown; Father Reggie Norman from Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Wilton; Rachel Simon, Executive Director of the Triangle Community Center in Norwalk; Sohair Omar, the Director of Institutional Research and a lecturer at Connecticut State Community College, Director of the Connecticut Council on American Islamic Relations, and the Cofounder of Afghanistan and Pakistan Women's Economic Empowerment; and Sarvesh Damle, a volunteer with various Hindu organizations focusing on showcasing Hindu values to a broader audience through

meaningful actions. In addition, Jim Himes, United States Representative from the 4th District which covers 17 towns including most of Fairfield County and some of New Haven County will participate. A few of the towns Himes represents include Easton, Fairfield, New Canaan, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Weston, and Wilton.

There are currently over 100 guests registered. All attendees must register in advance and bring a photo ID to enter. Guests should register at [templebnaichaim.wufoo.com/forms/z1mep6ai1v0xgs/](http://templebnaichaim.wufoo.com/forms/z1mep6ai1v0xgs/). Organizers recommend arriving early to secure parking. ■

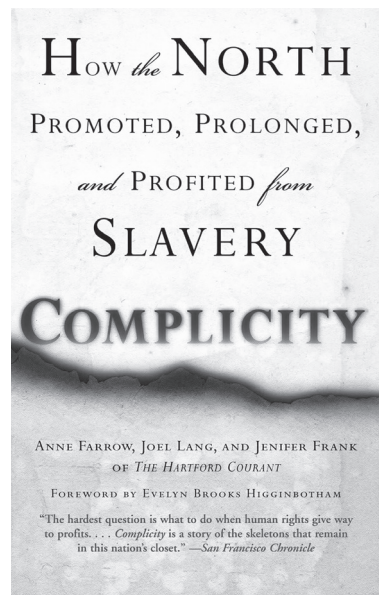
## BOOK REVIEW

# Complicity

## How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery

By Anne Farrow, Joel Lang, and Jenifer Frank

Ballantine Books 2005 / 304 pages



states in the institution of slavery. The authors focus on the economic basis for slavery in New York and Southern New England in particular in the early years of our country.

Great wealth was built in Northern states on the back of slave trading and slave labor. New York was a hub of the trade route that perpetuated slavery. The mayor of New York suggested New York secede along with the Southern slave states in order to protect an important economic engine for the state.

Leading citizens of New London were active slave traders. Thousands upon thousands of slaves worked “farms” in Connecticut and other New England states. Our farms raised the crops that were shipped to the West Indies to feed slaves who grew sugar cane. Our ships transported rum and cotton. And slaves.

Yes, there were abolitionists in the North. But the broad support for and acceptance of the financial benefits of slavery drowned them out.

*Complicity* contains much new information, but equally as important, sets its findings in historical context so that readers can expand their understanding of our region’s history. This is a most fitting book to read during February, Black History Month. ■

Review by Susan Clark

Veteran *Hartford Courant* journalist Anne Farrow, along with two of her colleagues, wrote about Connecticut’s role in slavery in Northeast, the Sunday magazine of that newspaper. That work led to this book, which will change how any Connecticut-educated person (raising my hand!) thinks about slavery in the United States – how it developed and was perpetuated, its economic basis, and the business and political structures that enabled it.

Once past our teens, most of us understood that the history of slavery was more nuanced than “South bad, North good”. *Complicity*, deeply-researched and well-written, shines a light on the not-at-all nuanced role played by Northern

## Take Your Child to the Library Day

### Saturday, February 3 | By Jessie Wright



For the 13th time, libraries around the world will celebrate Take Your Child to the Library Day on the first Saturday of February. An initiative launched in 2011 by local Connecticut librarians, the annual celebration is now one taking place across North America and aims to raise community awareness about the importance of the library in the life of a child and promote library services and programs for children and families.

The fun activities offered by libraries on this day – from story times to ice cream socials to crafts – can help open the door to their programs and resources to new families and encourage children and parents to visit again throughout the year.

The official Take Your Child to the Library Day website found at [takeyourchildtothelibrary.org](http://takeyourchildtothelibrary.org) outlines several of the lifelong

benefits of being engaged with reading and library resources early in life, including learning the skills to become future leaders, building the foundation for school success, providing internet access to all community members, and igniting curiosity.

This year, the Mark Twain Library is participating by offering a lineup of tasty treats and activities for the whole family on Saturday, February 3 between 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.

#### Legos, Toys, Donuts & Coffee 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Meet your neighbors and start the morning off right with donuts, coffee, and playtime for the little ones.

#### Valentine’s Day Cardmaking, Snacks, and Book Browsing 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Children and adults can enjoy making a Valentine’s craft at the big tables near the Library’s rotunda. Snacks and book browsing will cap off a fun morning together.

Want to look ahead for some inspiration? You can browse Redding’s most popular picture books of 2023 at [tinyurl.com/booksmtl](http://tinyurl.com/booksmtl) ■

Register for the festivities at [marktwainlibrary.org/take-your-child-to-the-library-day](http://marktwainlibrary.org/take-your-child-to-the-library-day)

## LIBRARY CORNER

By Erin Shea Dummeyer

Every year near the end of January, the ALA Youth Media Awards take place in a conference center somewhere in the United States. Librarians are already gathered there for their annual LibLearnX conference, which this year happened to be in Baltimore. If you haven’t heard of the Youth Media Awards, they’re sort of like the Academy of Awards of Kid Literature. The awards typically start very early in the morning, around 8:00 a.m. local time. Librarians start lining up to attend the awards even earlier – sometimes as early as 6:00 a.m.

Each award – the Newberry

and Caldecott medals, Coretta Scott King, Printz, and Schneider awards as examples – represent a year’s worth of work for a committee of dedicated librarians charged with selecting winners. While I have never been on an award committee, I have many friends and colleagues who have served, and it’s truly a once-in-a-career opportunity. As a consumer, you will see a winning book in a bookstore or on a library shelf with a sticker on it. Jacqueline Woodson’s *Brown Girl Dreaming* is a good example, with so many medals on the cover they almost don’t fit. But what happens behind the scenes are regular

meetings of passionate librarians who gather to discuss hundreds of books submitted by their publishers for consideration.

The ceremony is truly a sight to behold – hundreds of librarians gathered to scream their heads off in excitement about books! I often watch the livestream with colleagues and chat about which books we think will win. The full video of this year’s Youth Media Awards is available on YouTube, and a list of the winners is available at [ala.org](http://ala.org) ■

Erin Shea Dummeyer is  
Director, Mark Twain Library

## Good books for good readers | By Margi Esten

Another happy 2024 to all my loyal readers, and I must start off with a sincere THANK YOU! for all the wonderful comments I have received throughout the last year! The *Redding Sentinel* has rapidly become a staple for most Reddingites, and I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of it.

So, let’s enter February with a new novel: *Absolution* by Alice McDermott. She is an American writer and University professor at Johns Hopkins and has won an American Book Award and the US National Book Award for Fiction for her 1998 novel, *Charming*

*Billy*. It is difficult to list them all, but many of her previous novels have also been finalists for the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction, the International Dublin Literary Award, the Whiting Award, and the Pulitzer Prize. In 2013, McDermott was inducted into the New York Writers Hall of Fame.

*Absolution* is “the remission of sin, or of the punishment due to sin, granted by the Church”. *Absolution*, the novel, is a brilliant, riveting account of women’s lives on the margins of the beginnings of American involvement in the Vietnam War in 1963. While it

tackles lofty themes such as the white savior complex, religion, and the social politics of the time, Barbie dolls play a surprising and quite unexpected role in this masterful and, frankly, easy to read novel. I highly recommend!

A few notable mentions of her previous works I strongly recommend are the aforementioned *Charming Bill: A Novel, Someone, After This: A Novel and Child of My Heart*. We readers are so fortunate to have writers like Alice McDermott. ■

## Nod to the pod

### Switched on Pop: “Modern Classics: Seal - Kiss From a Rose”

By Amy Maloof

Each week, a one-episode recommendation from a podcast you might love.

*Switched on Pop*, hosted by musicologist Nate Sloan and songwriter Charlie Harding, is about pop music: the backstories, the production mechanics, the mysteries of what makes a hit. It takes modern music seriously, placing it under a scholarly lens and breaking down its elements and lore.

I think most people over 35 remember Seal’s 1994 megahit “Kiss From a Rose.” It was featured in the movie *Batman Forever* and subsequently played on the radio at an absolute manic

frequency. Compounding that, for me, was my brother’s purchase of the CD. He played that track so often and at such a volume that now and forever when I hear it, I am involuntarily thrown into a nightmarish middle school flashback. All that being said – it’s a bop.

And yet, it’s different from other ‘90s hits. It’s unusual, multi-layered, and a little bit medieval. Our hosts take us through the reasons why “Kiss From a Rose” sounds so distinct, and why it’s become a modern classic. They get into music history, music theory, and finish with – *nerd gasp* – a very fun interview with Seal himself. You’ll learn a lot and, I

think, appreciate the song on a new level.

I’ve got strong musical opinions (I’ll never like Radiohead! You can’t make me!), but I can’t stand music snobs. If a song makes you feel something, or makes you dance in the kitchen, or makes you remember being 13 – whether it’s by Paul Simon or Bach or Olivia Rodrigo – I love that for you; that song now has meaning. And *Switched on Pop* feels the same. It rejects snobbery, evaluating all types of songs and deeming them all worthy of examination and celebration. Check it out – but first, ask Alexa to play Seal. ■

## Library seeks slight increase in Town funding | By Rocco Valluzzo

The Mark Twain Library is asking the Town to consider a \$700,000 grant as part of its proposed budget for fiscal year 2024-25. This represents an increase of \$50,000, or 7.7% from the current fiscal year.

A grant at this level would cover 59.6% of the Library’s operating expenses. Over the past five years, this figure has ranged from 59.5% to 61.8%.

Fundraising is expected to earn \$353,000 for next year, an increase of 10% from the current year’s budget. A third component of income includes Library operation and grants, which would contribute \$67,000, an increase of 8.8%.

“Our expenses are forecast to increase 8.3% which is roughly \$90,000,” said Library Director Erin Dummeyer at a Board of Selectmen budget workshop on January 12. “The Library reviews all large expenses each year and looks for ways to manage spending responsibly.”

In fiscal 2024-25, however, personnel expenses are expected to increase at an above average rate of 10.8% due to the addition of one full-time employee who would be responsible for the Library’s day-to-day operations and management. This would be the new position, the cost of which would be partially offset by the

semi-retirement of the Library’s current bookkeeper. This 10.8% increase also includes a cost-of-living increase of 2.5%. Currently, the Library has six full-time and two part-time employees plus a student intern.

“Our current bookkeeper has been there for decades,” said Dummeyer. “She is cutting back her hours. Also, with how much we do with our fundraisers, we need a staff person working in close participation with fundraising chairs to manage the fiscal aspects of the Library.”

“Historically, there was a lot of work in the Library that was done by volunteers,” she continued. “Over time, we absorbed some work that really should be done by paid staff members rather than volunteers. The Library Board met with lawyers who advised us that we had volunteers in charge of too much, and the Library had to take back some of that work.”

Dummeyer also noted that the Library is looking to increase its investment in materials and programs by 4.2% to \$150,500 to reflect inflation, book prices, digital offerings, and streaming services. These investments are being driven by strong circulation figures, which are currently up more than 3% in the first half of fiscal year 2023-24 and 16% in the

previous year.

There is also an initiative to introduce the Mark Twain Library to new residents, which will require additional resources to continue building and cultivating relationships with new patrons, new volunteers, and new donors in addition to acknowledging and retaining the supporters the Library has throughout the community.

With all this taken into consideration, the Library’s projected deficit for fiscal year 2024-25 is approximately \$54,500. In recent years, however, fundraising has exceeded budget (fiscal year 2022-23 pulled in \$551,069, and fundraising for the current fiscal year is at 73% of budget as of the first six months) and has helped offset the deficit, which Library leaders anticipate being the case again in fiscal year 2024-25.

“So, what all this means is that we want to continue with your help,” said Library Board President Michael Shinall. “We truly are grateful to the Town for allowing us to serve the community – and its back to our mission statement. We want to continue to offer our community intellectual, educational, social, cultural, enrichment-providing materials, resources, and programs.” ■

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# OBITUARY

## Linda M. Hoyt

April 22, 1949 – January 21, 2024



Linda M. Hoyt, 74, of Redding, wife of Michael W. Hoyt, died on Sunday, January 21, 2024, at Danbury Hospital.

Linda was born in Putnam on April 22, 1949, to Florence (Granskog) and Edgar Carlson and has resided in Redding for the past seventy years and attended Redding schools.

Mrs. Hoyt was a secretary to the Finance Director of the Region 9 School District prior to her retirement and was a member of Christ Church of Redding Ridge.

She enjoyed gardening, cooking, baking, was a fan of the Seattle Seahawks and of NASCAR.

She developed a passion towards animal welfare, most especially canine.

In addition to her husband Michael of forty-six years, she is

survived by a daughter Keri Hoyt, a brother Ralph Carlson, brother-in-law Mark Hoyt, and by two grandchildren, Kristian Hoyt and Karissa Reiske.

A memorial service will take place on Saturday, February 3, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. at Christ Church, 184 Cross Highway, Redding, with Pastor Emilie Finn officiating. There will be no calling hours.

Contributions in Mrs. Hoyt's memory may be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105 or to the North Shore Animal League, 25 Davis Avenue, Port Washington, NY 11050. ■

### Town alarmed at transmission line tree cutting Eversource gives update to Selectmen / continued from page 1



Photos by Laurie Heiss

As part of its vegetation management project, Eversource has expanded tree cutting along its transmission line right-of-way in Redding, including a section of Mountain Road.

could affect tens of thousands of customers, so despite all that we keep these lines clear."

The program is focusing on clearing incompatible species from the easement edge. Trees that grow taller than 15 feet at maturity are to be removed.

In Redding, there are two different types of transmission systems, according to Ferrier. Transmission lines that have more than 200 kilovolts (KV) of electricity are cleared 35 feet from the outside conductor. Lines that are less than 200 KV are cleared 25 feet from the outside conductor.

Outside of those clearances are the border zones. In these areas, Eversource has changed the specification to allowing trees maturing at a maximum height of 30 feet to remain, an increase from 25 feet.

"This is really beneficial, because there are a lot of ornamental trees are in that 30-foot range that we can leave now," said Ferrier. And it aligns with our distribution message of 'the right tree in the right place' of 30 trees under 30 feet tall."

Another specification change concerns what Eversource refers to as "landscape trees."

These trees can remain if they are not tall enough to fall within 10 or 15 feet of the wires.

Examples include a focal point tree in a yard, a specimen tree that

has mulch around it, or a row of trees in a yard that was planted as part of the landscape. Eversource arborists can come out to the property owner's property and assess for these landscape trees; if at their mature height they are not tall enough to fall within 10 or 15 feet of the wires, then those trees can remain.

Ferrier added that the edge of clearing has been marked with orange flagging, although in some cases it falls. If property owners want to get a better idea of where exactly that edge of clearing or edge of easement is, Eversource can put additional flagging so it's more visible.

"We can flag compatible trees and shrubs with a different type of flagging so the homeowner can feel relieved that they won't be removed and that they are identified by our arborist," said Ferrier. "We offer stump grinding in maintained areas if we are removing trees in the lawn, and we will grind those stumps. We also offer a re-planting plan where we have a landscape designer work with properties that have been impacted by the cutting."

Eversource Transmission Arborist Matthew Helman said there is decent flagging between Peaceable Street all the way through Bethel section of the project but noticed it was a little sparse around Umpawaug Road and Granite

Ridge Road. Since then, he has asked the Eversource's survey team to refresh it.

Pemberton indicated during the January 21 event with lawmakers that she suspects there may be a plan to run new distribution lines within Eversource's transmission line easements at a later date, though this has not been confirmed. She said she has directly inquired with Eversource about what is coming following this trimming and has not received an answer except that it has no planned transmission projects in Redding for this year.

She also thinks the case for undergrounding a portion of the transmission lines is strong and is looking to a current case before the Connecticut Siting Council from United Illuminating in Bridgeport as a reference point.

"It's about time for Eversource, who makes hundreds of millions of profit every year... it's time to put neighborhoods first," she said. "Neighborhoods before profits. They aren't losing money; they pass on every cost already. So, they're going to pass off some of the cost of undergrounding – Ok. They're already going to pass everything else on us." ■

# On the menu with... Deb Owen of Deb's Cookie Cupboard

By Pamela Brown



Deb Owen of Deb's Cookie Cupboard

Homemade made with love. That's what Deb Owen promises, whether it's a cookie, a craft, or her own kind-hearted personality. "Everything I do, I do with love," said Owen, owner of Deb's Cookie Cupboard based in Redding. "Whether I'm interacting with people, creating crafts, or baking cookies, I think love is what gives depth to any and every thing. 'Homemade with love' is my tag line for sure."

What better way, then, to celebrate Valentine's Day than with a delightful heart-shaped craft that's also edible. "It's one of my favorites, because it's shaped like a heart and therefore LOOKS like love, is MADE with love, and if love had a taste it would TASTE like love with the delicious chocolate and peppermint," said Owen. "It's a fun Valentine treat, and they make great little gifts packed with feeling without the need for words. Enjoy them as they are or drop them in a cup of hot cocoa! And, the added bonus is that they're easy to create and most fun to make with a loved one!"

For Owen, holidays are made better with sweet treats. In 2020, she established Deb's Cookie Cupboard as a contactless pleasure during Covid, but it's also a representation of all that is meaningful to Owen. "My true motivation was a combination of having a passion for baking, a love for bringing joy to people – and how fun to do it through the palate – and a desire to try a new endeavor

after retiring from my career as a school counselor."

Throughout the year, Deb's Cookie Cupboard offers hearty, comforting cookies. "For holidays and special orders, I make rich roll-out sugar cookies in hearts of all shapes and sizes, because that's just how hearts are," said Owen. For Valentine's Day, Owen will be taking cookie orders through February 9 for pick up on February 13 and 14. A heart-shaped candy cane treat will be included in each Valentine's Day cookie order.

"Valentine's Day is a favorite holiday because it reminds people to bring love into focus," said Owen. "I incorporate the premise of Valentine's Day into everyday in simple ways, like just listening to someone's story, offering a compliment, saying hello or thank you or have a nice day. Something so little can be so big."

### Favorite romantic dessert?

Ice cream sundae with lots of whipped cream.

### If you could write a saying on a Conversation Heart, what would it be?

Fill your heart by giving love.

### How will you spend Valentine's Day?

Delicious dinner at home with my husband and "I love you" texts to my two children who live far away.

### What was the most loving gift anyone has given you?

Handmade treasures my children have created for me over the years.

### What does love mean to you?

Love is knowing my loved ones feel loved. ■

For more information on Deb's Cookie Cupboard, visit [debcookiecupboard.com](http://debcookiecupboard.com). Holiday specials are posted on their Facebook page at [facebook.com/debcookiecupboard](http://facebook.com/debcookiecupboard)

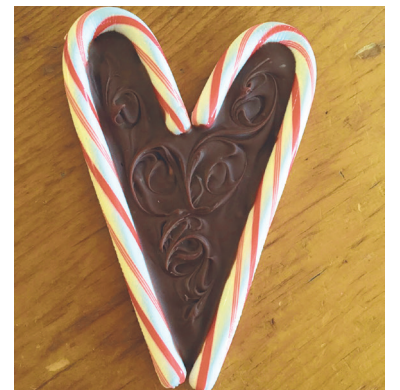
### Edible Candy Cane Hearts

#### Ingredients:

- 1 bag of classic candy canes (you can also use mini canes, depending on your preference) Note: Because they're a seasonal item, you may have to order online through Amazon or another retailer.
- 1 bag of milk chocolate, semi-sweet, or white chocolate chips depending on your preference.
- Vegetable oil

#### Directions:

- In a small saucepan, place about 1/8 teaspoon of vegetable oil. Add the chips in small batches until all are melted, stirring often. The oil enhances the smooth texture. Note: If preferred, you can also melt the chips in a microwave for 1 minute, stirring after 45 seconds.



- On a cookie sheet lined with foil, place two candy canes nose-to-nose (with the curved top part and the bottom touching each other to form a heart). Carefully, with small spoon or butter knife, fill in the open space with chocolate.

- Let the candy canes sit at room temperature or place in refrigerator for faster setting. They will peel off easily!

# Hook rug exhibit at Mark Twain Library

By Lisa Goldstein



Photo by Lisa Goldstein

A beautiful exhibition of hook rugs is on display at the Mark Twain Library throughout the month of February for the public to enjoy during business hours. Entitled "Men with Whom I

Live...but Have Never Met!," the assortment of rugs and pillows are from the personal collection of exhibit coordinator June Myles.

While the practice of hook rug making has waned in recent years, the craft dates back centuries and was introduced in the United States during colonial times. Mark Twain Library has been celebrating the hook rug craft with an exhibit each February for nearly 20 years. ■

For more information and Library hours, visit [marktwainlibrary.org](http://marktwainlibrary.org)





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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies  
R = registration required

## This Week's Featured Events

**Confronting Acts of Hate in Our Community**

**Sunday, February 4**  
2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Registration is required.  
Riverbrook Regional YMCA  
404 Danbury Road  
Wilton  
wiltontymca.org/confronting-hate-feb-2024

**Lyrics Coffeehouse - New Middle Class**

**Friday, February 9**  
7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.  
BYOB and enjoy an evening of local, live music.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
townofreddingct.org/parks-and-recreation/upcoming-events/lyrics-coffee-house

**Art and Jazz in Georgetown!**

**Sunday, February 11**  
3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Enjoy the Jazz Quartet "Steps Behind" at the art gallery.  
Georgetown Arts & Cultural Center  
5 Main Street  
gtownarts.com

**Want to feature an upcoming event?**

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

## ARTS

**Saturday, January 20 – Saturday, February 24**

**Kathy Coe "What We Keep" Art Exhibition**  
12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
Wednesdays-Sundays  
Redding resident Kathy Coe and Helena Kiely's exhibition of oil paintings and sculpture.  
George Billis Gallery  
1700 Post Road, Fairfield  
georgebillis.com

**Saturday, February 3**

**Artist Reception with Martha Talburt**  
4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.  
Paintings and portraits exhibition with local artist Martha Talburt.  
Wooster Hollow Cafe  
659 Danbury Road  
Ridgefield  
facebook.com/woosterhollow

**Friday, February 9**

**Lyrics Coffeehouse – New Middle Class**  
7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.  
BYOB and enjoy an evening of local, live music.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
townofreddingct.org/parks-and-recreation/upcoming-events/lyrics-coffee-house  
\$

**Saturday, February 10**

**Park and Recreation Bus Trip to Spamalot on Broadway**  
9:00 a.m. Bus leaves Community Center, 2:00 p.m. Show  
Redding Community Center (Bus leaves and returns)  
37 Lonetown Road  
townofreddingct.org/parks-and-recreation/upcoming-events/trips  
\$, R

**Sunday, February 11**

**Art and Jazz in Georgetown!**  
3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Enjoy the Jazz Quartet "Steps Behind" at the art gallery.  
Georgetown Arts & Cultural Center  
5 Main Street  
gtownarts.com

## CHILDREN | TEENS

**Friday, February 2**

**Build-Your-Own History Book Program (Grades 5-8)**  
4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
Celebrate Black History Month with an interactive and fun sticker book program.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwinlibrary.org  
R

**Saturday, February 3**

**Take Your Child to the Library Day**  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
Visit the library for toys, donuts, and coffee, then enjoy a Valentine's Day craft and book browsing.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwinlibrary.org  
R

**Thursday, February 8**

**The Wizards School of Magic Workshop – Alakazam Magic**  
3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Students in Grades 1-4 will learn four magic tricks.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
townofreddingct.org/parks-and-recreation  
\$, R

**Friday, February 9**

**Superintendent Movie Night and Coat Drive**  
6:30 p.m.  
Watch *Tangled*, participate in a photo competition, and donate gently used coats.  
Joel Barlow High School  
100 Black Rock Turnpike  
tinyurl.com/er9movie  
R

**Saturday, February 10**

**College Application Timeline Workshop**  
10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.  
Recommended for 9th-10th graders and their parents.  
Zoom – presented by Mark Twain Library  
marktwinlibrary.org  
R

## CRAFTS

**Sunday, February 4**

**Succulent Wreath Workshop – Middle/High School Students and Adults**  
3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
Make a heart-shaped succulent wreath in time for Valentine's Day.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

**Wednesday, February 7**

**Winter Origami: Unfolding Your Creativity**  
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwinlibrary.org  
R

## FOOD | WINE

**Saturday, February 3**

**Junior Chef Saturday**  
12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
Kids in Grades 3-8 can create an entire meal and learn about food safety issues and food displays.  
Not suitable for children with significant food allergies.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
townofreddingct.org/parks-and-recreation  
\$, R

**Wednesday, February 7**

**Sourdough Bread Demonstration**  
12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.  
Heritage Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
E-mail mstillman@townofreddingct.org or call (203) 938-9725.  
R

**Thursday, February 8**

**"Souper Bowls": A Soup Competition**  
12:30 p.m.  
Join as a soup cook, a voter/eater, or both.  
Heritage Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
E-mail mstillman@townofreddingct.org or call (203) 938-9725.  
R

**Saturday, February 10**

**From Prep to Plate - Dairy Delights**  
2:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Hands-on butter making workshop with Registered Dietician Jessica Pelletier.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

**Saturday, February 10**

**In the Kitchen, cooking (Grades 2-5)**  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
Valentine Treats  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

## HEALTH | WELLNESS

**Tuesday, February 6**

**Joel Barlow High School Blood Drive**  
8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
Community members 17 years and older.  
Joel Barlow High School Lower Gym  
100 Black Rock Turnpike  
redcrossblood.org/give.html/drive-results?zipSponsor=Barlow  
R

**Tuesday, February 6, 13 and 27**

**Fireside Yoga**  
6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.  
Bring mat, towel, and water bottle.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

## HOLIDAY

**Sunday, February 4**

**Wilton Chamber of Commerce's Winter Carnival**  
12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Ice sculptures, bonfire, refreshments, carriage rides, and more.  
Wilton Town Green  
101 Old Ridgefield Road  
Wilton  
wiltonchamber.com/events

**Thursday, February 8**

**Lunar New Year Party**  
11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
Snack and storytelling in the Y's lobby.  
Riverbrook Regional YMCA  
404 Danbury Road  
Wilton  
wiltontymca.org  
R

**Saturday, February 10**

**Valentines for Veterans**  
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Make cards with the West Redding Fire Department for military heroes.  
West Redding Firehouse  
306 Umpawaug Road  
Registration recommended at [president@westreddingfiredepartment.org](mailto:president@westreddingfiredepartment.org)  
R

## NATURE

**Saturday, February 10**

**Winter Tracking and Tree Identification Walk**  
10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
Woodcock Nature Center  
56 Deer Run Road  
Wilton  
woodcocknaturecenter.org  
R

**Tuesday, February 13**

**Rewilding Your Yard**  
11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

**Saturday, February 17**

**Pruning 101**  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

## RELIGIOUS SERVICES

**Bethlehem Lutheran Church**  
Sundays at 10:00 a.m. (in person) or 10:15 a.m. (Zoom)  
44 Portland Avenue  
bethlehemplutheranct.org

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

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

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

**Long Ridge United Methodist**  
Sundays at 11:00 a.m.  
201 Long Ridge Road  
Danbury  
longridgeumc.com

**Sacred Heart / St. Patrick Parish**

**Sacred Heart Church:**  
Saturday Vigil Mass: 4:00 p.m.  
Saturday Eucharistic Adoration: 6:00 p.m.  
Sunday Mass:  
9:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.  
12:00 noon LATIN  
Weekday Mass:  
Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8:30 a.m.  
Wednesdays 6:00 p.m. LATIN  
30 Church Street  
**St. Patrick Church:**  
Saturday Vigil Mass: 5:30 p.m.  
Sunday Mass: 8:30 a.m. & 10:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m.  
Weekday Mass:  
Monday – Friday at 8:30 a.m.  
Mondays and Thursdays  
Eucharistic Adoration: 7:00 p.m.  
169 Black Rock Turnpike  
sacredheart-stpat.org

## SPECIAL PROGRAMS

**Thursday, February 1**

**Scrabble Tips: Experts Share Strategies**  
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwinlibrary.org  
R

**Sunday, February 4**

**Confronting Acts of Hate in Our Community**  
2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Presented by Temple B'Nai Chaim in partnership with Riverbrook Regional YMCA and Wilton Library. Registration is required.  
Riverbrook Regional YMCA  
404 Danbury Road  
Wilton  
wiltontymca.org/confronting-hate-feb-2024  
R

**Tuesday, February 6**

**Author Talk: White Wife/Blue Baby**  
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwinlibrary.org  
R

## MEETINGS

**Monday, February 5**

**Park and Recreation Commission**  
7:00 p.m.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
townofreddingct.org

**Monday, February 5**

**Republican Town Committee**  
7:30 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room  
100 Hill Road  
townofreddingct.org

**Tuesday, February 6**

**Georgetown Fire District Meeting**  
5:00 p.m.  
61 Redding Road  
townofreddingct.org

**Tuesday, February 6**

**Redding Board of Education Budget Workshop**  
6:00 p.m.  
John Read Middle School / Community Room  
486 Redding Road  
er9.org

**Tuesday, February 6**

**Redding Board of Education**  
7:00 p.m.  
John Read Middle School / Community Room  
486 Redding Road  
er9.org

**Tuesday, February 6**

**Conservation Commission**  
7:00 p.m.  
Old Town House  
23 Cross Highway  
townofreddingct.org

**Thursday, February 8**

**Gilbert and Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee**  
6:00 p.m.  
Zoom  
townofreddingct.org

**Thursday, February 8**

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

**Tuesday, February 13**

**Redding Fire District #1**  
7:00 p.m.  
Redding Ridge Firehouse  
186 Black Rock Turnpike  
townofreddingct.org

**Tuesday, February 13**

**Planning Commission**  
7:30 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room  
100 Hill Road  
townofreddingct.org

**Wednesday, February 14**

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

**Wednesday, February 14**

**Zoning Commission**  
7:30 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room  
100 Hill Road  
townofreddingct.org

**Thursday, February 15**

**Historic Review Committee**  
7:00 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room  
Subject to virtual or hybrid if needed.  
100 Hill Road  
townofreddingct.org

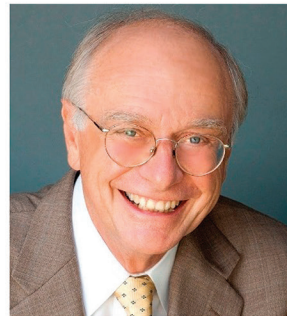
\*Note: Town offices will be closed on Monday, February 19 for Presidents Day.



Coldwell Banker Realty has been in the real estate business for over 117 years. In the Town of Redding, Coldwell Banker Realty is the only real estate brokerage with a brick and mortar office in Redding and is strategically positioned to assist the local community with all their real estate needs and/or questions. We continue to achieve “Number One” Market Share in the Town of Redding, not only in overall units sold, but also in list side transactions. More people who live in Redding trust us with their home sales than any other company! Whether you need advice on preparing your home to be listed, want to find out the value of your home or are looking to purchase a home in Redding, which is also known as “The Vermont of Connecticut”, contact one of our top producing REALTORS® today.



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**Call Tim to discuss your mortgage options.**



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Applicant subject to credit and underwriting approval (20221021-1745808)  
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