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Milford-Orange Times

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October 1, 2026

Orange Country Fair Gets Rolling



The Orange Country Fair returned to the High Plains Community Center fairgrounds on Sept. 19 and 20, featuring a variety of farm-themed activities for patrons. Additional photos on page 18. Photo by Lexi Crocco.

Milford Marks 25 Years Since 9/11



Milford marked the 25th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center Memorial Garden at Live Oaks Elementary School on Sept. 11. Additional photos on page 20. Photo by Robert Creigh.

Orange Forms Housing Growth Working Group

By Brandon T. Bisceglia

The Orange Board of Selectmen at their Sept. 9 meeting voted to form a Housing Growth Working Group to formulate a strategy to pursue increased housing that will meet the requirements of a new state law.

The working group will consist of Selectwoman Judy Smith, Town Plan & Zoning Commission Chair Oscar Parente, TPZC member Paul Kaplan, Constable Santo Galatioto Jr. and resident

Sean Hartshorn.

The Connecticut General Assembly in late 2025 passed sweeping housing legislation meant to tackle a major housing shortage. Among other things, the law requires all towns to work with their regional councils of government to create housing growth plans.

The state's Office of Policy and Management is required to provide housing

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Voters To Decide Funding For Woodbridge School

By Brandon T. Bisceglia

Woodbridge voters will have the final say on whether the town moves forward with a \$118.5 million replacement of the aging Beecher Road School.

The Woodbridge Board of Selectmen voted 4-2 at a special meeting on Sept. 23 to move the proposed building project to referendum.

A special town meeting will be held Tuesday, Oct. 6 at 7 p.m. at The Center Gymnasium at 4 Meetinghouse Ln.

According to town officials, residents will have another opportunity to receive information about the project, hear from the Board of Finance, Board of Selectmen, the Beecher Building Committee and their consultants.

The town will then hold a referendum on Tuesday, Oct. 13, with voting from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. at The Center Gymnasium. Absentee ballots will be available

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Surveillance Tech Continues To Roil Milford

By Brandon T. Bisceglia

The controversy swirling around surveillance technology in Milford showed no signs of ebbing in recent weeks.

The city in late August suspended the operational use of automated traffic cameras, such as red light and speed cameras, and restricted the use of all automated license plate readers with the exception of those at Milford's entry points.

Those moves came at the behest of Mayor Rich Smith, who called for a comprehensive review of the city's program.

The Board of Aldermen at their Sept. 14 meeting took the next step toward that review by establishing a Public Safety Technology Review Committee.

The committee will have 90 days to review the city's use of surveillance tech-

nology and make recommendations that could include termination of some or all the programs.

The committee will consist of four community members: Republican Scott Marlow, Democrat James Wovciesies, Republican John Maaer and Democrat Sara Wood. Also on the committee from the Board of Aldermen will be the Democratic majority leader or a designee and the Republican minority leader or a designee. Police Chief Keith Mello or a designee will serve as a non-voting member.

Traffic cameras – especially automated license plate readers sold by Flock Safety – have come under increasing criticism over recent months in Connecticut

Continued on page 14

Amity Chamber Celebrates Orange, Woodbridge Honorees



Firefighters, police and business owners were honored at the Amity Chamber of Commerce Community Awards at the Courtyard by Marriott in Orange on Sept. 17. Included in the photo are Denny Peterson, Orange Police Officer of the Year; Michael Blume, Woodbridge Police Officer of the Year; Don Foyer, Orange Firefighter of the Year; Paul Konwerski, Woodbridge Firefighter of the Year; SBM Hospitality Regional Director of Sales Jacqueline Coope, Business of the Year; and Arrowhead Leadership Consulting founder and CEO Eric Lopez, Veteran-Owned Business of the Year. Photo by Steve Cooper.



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Hulley Arts Foundation Celebrates In 60s Style



The Orange-based Jamie Hulley Arts Foundation held its 24th annual Evening for the Arts at Fairfield University's Quick Center on Sept. 19, where it featured Jay Stollman's Groovin' On Tour: A Woodstock Generation Rock Experience. The yearly gala is the foundation's largest fundraising event. Photos by Lexi Crocco.

Milford Auction House Recovers Stolen Paintings



Shannon's Fine Art Auctioneers in Milford recovered two paintings by artist Eastman Johnson (1824-1906) that were stolen from prominent New York Galleries in 1978. The two paintings, Mary and Her Lamb and The Young Mother, were stolen from Kenneth Lux Gallery and Hirschl & Adler Galleries in New York in 1978. A keen eyed Long Island antiques dealer, Brandon Levine, called Shannon's when he recognized two paintings in an estate collection as potentially painted by Johnson. Shannon's owner Sandra Germain arranged for the paintings to be brought to Shannon's and then returned to their rightful owners. Photo courtesy of Shannon's.

Folks On Spokes Gearing Up In Milford

The 35th Annual Folks on Spokes & Step Forward Ride + Walk event is planned for Sunday, Oct. 4 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Fowler Field in downtown Milford.

As one of Connecticut's longest running charitable events, cyclists and walkers come together to raise funds and awareness for mental health and addiction recovery in support of Bridges Healthcare's services.

"We're very proud and excited to celebrate 35 years of the community coming together to raise awareness and critical funds for mental health and recovery," said Jennifer Fiorillo, Bridges CEO and president. "Participants at Folks on Spokes & Step Forward ride and walk demonstrates the commitment to ending the silence and stigma that often surrounds mental illness, suicide and addiction. Together we can create a community where no one has to face these challenges alone."

Participants of all ages can enjoy the scenic

Milford coastline by riding 5-, 10-, 20- or 40-mile routes or walking a 5K. This family-friendly event includes activities for kids, music, lunch, event t-shirts and a remembrance ceremony to honor lives lost to suicide and overdose.

In addition to the ride and walk, the event also features a remembrance ceremony honoring lives lost to suicide, addiction and overdose while supporting those continuing their journeys of recovery. It also features fully supported rest stops along the routes; commemorative t-shirts for all registered participants; music, food, kids' activities and family-friendly entertainment; and opportunities to connect with local mental health advocates.

Advanced registration fees until Oct. 1 are \$50 per cyclist, \$35 per walker and \$15 for kids under 18. Children 6 and under are free.

For more information or to register, visit <https://bit.ly/BridgesRideWalk2026>.

Pantochino's 'The Real Housewives Of Sleepy Hollow' To Debut In Milford

Milford-based theater company Pantochino Productions will debut its new musical, The Real Housewives of Sleepy Hollow, on Friday, Oct. 9 at the Milford Arts Council in downtown Milford. The spoof plays through Oct. 30.

The show, featuring book and lyrics by Bert Bernardi and music by Justin Rugg, is a musical mashup of the popular television reality show and the classic American tale by Washington Irving featuring iconic characters like Ichobod Crane, Brom Bones and Katrina Van Tassel.

The cast includes company members Mary Mannix, Shelley Marsh Poggio, Rachelle Ianniello, Maria Berte, Valerie Loomis, Killian Meehan, Justin Rugg and

Jimmy Johansmeyer. Making her Pantochino debut is Chelsea Dacey.

The musical features setting by Von Del Mar, costumes by Johansmeyer, lighting by Jakob Kelsey, sound by Tyler Kittleman, musical direction by Rugg and stage management by Jennifer Johnson

Performances of The Real Housewives of Sleepy Hollow are Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. Seating is cabaret-style and audiences are invited to bring their own food and drink to enjoy during the show. The MAC is located at 40 Railroad Ave. in Milford. Parking is free at showtime in all train station lots. Tickets are available online only at pantochino.com.

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Halloween Spooktacular Coming To Woodbridge

Woodbridge Names New Public Works Director

The 7th and 8th grade Halloween Spooktacular will take place on Friday, Oct. 30 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. for residents of Woodbridge and Bethany at the Woodbridge Community and Cultural Center. The event will feature a mummy wrap, costume contests, music DJ and more. Parent volunteers are needed. The center is located at 4 Newtown Rd. Email youthone@woodbridgect.gov or call 203-389-3428 for more information. RSVP by Oct. 23.

Suzuki School Hosting Cookie Concert In Orange

The Suzuki Music School of Orange will host its first Cookie Concert of the 2026-2027 season on Saturday, Oct. 17, bringing acclaimed artists to an intimate, informal concert setting for ages 4 and up. Pianist Seiji Nakanishi will open the series. A masterclass featuring Suzuki Schools students will follow the concert. The concert takes place from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. at St. Barbara Greek Orthodox Church at 480 Racebrook Rd. Tickets are free but must be reserved in advance. For more information and tickets, visit suzukischools.org/events/childrens-cookie-concert-series-seiji-nakanishi-fa26/.

MAC Hosting Day Of Jazz With Nods To Icons

The Milford Arts Council will host its inaugural Jazz'n Downtown at the Parsons Veterans Memorial Auditorium in Milford on Oct. 3. Jazz powerhouse Wycliffe Gordon will join acclaimed vocalist and actress Tina Fabrique for a tribute to two legendary voices of jazz. An award-winning trombonist, composer, arranger and bandleader, Gordon brings his signature energy and musicianship to the stage. Fabrique, celebrated for her acclaimed portrayal of Ella Fitzgerald in ELLA, brings the legendary singer's spirit and artistry to life. Together, they'll close out Jazz'n Downtown with a celebration of jazz icons Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald. The show begins at 7:30 p.m.; doors open at 6:30 p.m. The auditorium is located at 53 W. Main St. The show with Gordon and Fabrique is one among many that will take place throughout the day around Milford on Oct. 3. Three other stages at the Parsons plaza patio, the Stonebridge Restaurant patio and Lisman Landing will feature numerous jazz artists. The lineup includes Grammy Award winner Zaccai Curtis, saxophonist Jimmy Greene, female-led brass band the Bass Queens and emerging jazz artist Anton Kot, among others. For information and tickets, go to jazzndowntown.org.



Siciliano.

Woodbridge has announced the appointment of Michael Siciliano as its new director of public works. Siciliano arrives in Woodbridge after most recently serving as director of public works & parks for New Haven, where he oversaw citywide operations including roads, bridges, fleet management, refuse and recycling, forestry, drainage and emergency storm response for a workforce of more than 170 employees. Before that, he spent over 25 years with Hamden's Public Works Department, rising from truck driver and mason-carpenter to superintendent of streets and, ultimately, assistant director. Hamden Town Engineer Stephen White called Siciliano "the voice of reason" in high-pressure situations, while former

Hamden Public Works Director Craig Cesare praised him as "a self-starting, no-nonsense, never-quit professional" known for finding efficient solutions to complex problems. Siciliano holds a CDL Class B license, is a certified emergency medical technician and studied at Gateway Community College. His career began in construction and masonry. "I am very pleased to accept this appointment and grateful for the opportunity to serve the Town of Woodbridge," Siciliano said. "I look forward to bringing my experience to this role and working alongside the town's dedicated staff to help move Woodbridge into the future." First Selectman Mica Cardozo welcomed the appointment, calling Siciliano a tremendous asset to the town. "Mike brings a level of experience that's hard to find – he's done the work himself, and he's led large departments through it," Cardozo said. "He's going to be a fantastic addition to our already talented DPW staff, and I know our residents will be well served under his leadership." Town officials say Siciliano's deep operational expertise, budget oversight experience and record of steady leadership make him an excellent fit for Woodbridge as the town continues to invest in its roads, parks and public infrastructure. Siciliano officially began his new role on Aug. 17.

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Or Shalom Men’s Club Builds Sukkah



Members of the Congregation Or Shalom Men’s Club once again built a sukkah outside the synagogue in Orange. A hut or “sukkah” is built for the eight day festival of Sukkot from Sept. 25 to Oct. 2 to commemorate the 40-year period during which the Jews wandered in the desert after leaving slavery in Egypt and could only live in temporary shelters. The Men’s Club held a barbecue in the sukkah, in which all were invited to celebrate the festival. Jeff Wilson of Treat Farm in Orange provided the corn stalks. *Photo courtesy of Mitch Goldblatt.*

Artisan Market Coming Up In Milford

The 10th Annual Milford Artisan Market will return to the Milford Green on Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 17-18.

One of the largest artisan events in the area, the market attracts thousands of shoppers and hosts 170 local crafters and makers including those offering pottery, paintings, jewelry, woodworking and gourmet foods. In celebration of its 10th year, on each day the first 100 attendees will receive a free phone wallet/stand.

The market is a seasonal family event with two areas featuring live music from Seth Adam, Elana Zabari, Sean O’Reilly and Adelaide Punkin. The event will also feature a

free hour of yoga at 10 a.m. on both days, kids’ craft activities, food vendors and a dance exhibition.

“Celebrating our tenth year in Milford, the Milford Artisan Market continues to offer shoppers the opportunity to browse so many unique, handmade products that can be given as holiday gifts,” said event organizer Alison Kosakowski, owner of Artisan Events by Ally.

The market runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 168-176 Broad St. in downtown Milford. Admission is free.

The event is organized by Artisan Events by Ally. Learn more at facebook.com/milfordartisanmarket.

Orange Lions To Serve Thanksgiving Dinner

The Lions Club of Orange will provide their 40th annual Thanksgiving at High Plains Community Center in Orange on Sunday, Nov. 29.

The dinner is open to everyone free of charge, but their target guests are the town’s elders, shut-ins and all those in need of good food and fellowship.

The menu will include salad, rolls, turkey, stuffing, sweet potatoes, green beans and pumpkin pie. Soft drinks, tea and coffee will be available.

The dinner begins at 12:30 p.m.; doors open at noon.

If you plan to attend, call Orange Community Services at 203-891-4788 to get your name on the list by Friday, Nov. 20. This will let the Lions know how many guests to expect so they will have enough food for everyone.

Transportation can be provided by the Orange Community Services transportation program. Call the transportation coordinator at 203-891-4788 to arrange a ride.

Woodbridge Library Celebrating 100 Years

The Woodbridge Town Library is celebrating its centennial with a roaring twenties-themed gala on Saturday, Oct. 17 from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. at the library.

Appetizers will include charcuterie provided by Chaplin in Shelton. Beer, wine and a signature cocktail will also be on offer in addition to nonalcoholic options. Each ticket entitles patrons to one free drink. The library will offer a selection of chocolates and cupcakes for dessert.

The library will be hosting live performers throughout the evening, including the jazz trio Sequel. There will be an open-air photo booth with props and a backdrop. The backdrop is large enough to accommodate an entire group in one shot. The booth is run by a professional attendant and will provide physical photo strips.

Elm City Swing and Blues, a non-competitive swing, blues and fusion dancing

community based in New Haven, will be offering optional swing dancing lessons during the gala. In exchange for a small donation to help them preserve and promote the diverse history of swing, guests will have the opportunity to learn all the right moves from a group of passionate dancers.

All proceeds from ticket sales will support the library. Tickets are \$75 apiece; the event is for adults 21 and older. Tickets are on sale in person at the library and at woodbridgetownlibrary.org. The library is located at 10 Newton Rd.

NEW Luncheon To Feature Strategic Consultant

The Network of Executive Women’s October luncheon will feature Orange resident Cathy Bradley, whose topic will be “‘No’ Is Not a Barrier to Growth.”

The luncheon will take place at Stonebridge restaurant at 50 Daniel St. in Milford from noon to 1:30 p.m. on Oct. 6.

Bradley has led Cathy Bradley Enterprises for over a decade as a specialized consultancy focusing on strategic transformation and operational excellence. She is also a Milford-Orange Times columnist.

Registration for the luncheon is \$35 and ends Oct. 2. Register at formbuilder.com/6648825/event-registration-form-with-meal-choices-2.

Woodbridge Library Showing Outdoor Spooky Movie

The Woodbridge Town Library in conjunction with the Community and Cultural Center will show an outdoor movie on Thursday, Oct. 29 at 6 p.m.

The event will feature the 1993 film *Hocus Pocus*, rated PG. The movie will be set up on the lawn between the library and community center. Refreshments will be provided; viewers should bring something to sit on.

Registration is encouraged. Learn more and sign up at woodbridgetownlibrary.org.

Milford-Orange Times

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Cathy Bradley, Running	Michael Moses, Milford Chamber
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Carmela DeVito, Book Reviews	Jennifer Paradis, Homelessness
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Bonnie Feuer, Wit and Wisdom	Karen Quinn Panzer, Travel
Ben Gettinger, Probate	Kimberly Rihel, Woodbridge Seniors
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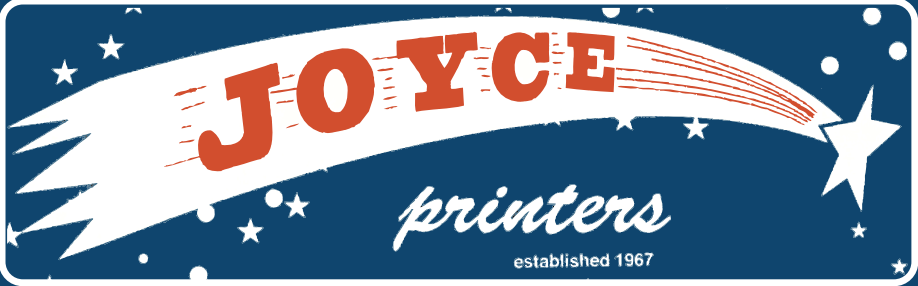
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Opinion & Editorial

Woodbridge First Selectman

Growth Is Part Of Woodbridge’s Future

Many of our conversations about Woodbridge’s future have for years involved some degree of speculation. What will our infrastructure need in 10 or 20 years? How will changing costs affect the town budget? How can we maintain the services and facilities residents rely on without placing an increasing burden on the same tax base?

Those questions are becoming less theoretical.

Woodbridge has significant capital needs ahead. Our buildings, equipment and infrastructure require long-term planning and investment. At the same time, residents are dealing with their own affordability pressures. That makes it increasingly important for the town to look beyond a single budget year and consider both sides of the equation: what our community will need and how we will generate the revenue to pay for it.

Beecher Road School is one current example of a major capital decision.

Woodbridge voters will consider a referendum on Oct. 13 concerning the proposed construction of a new Beecher Road School building. Over more than three years, town committees, consultants and other professionals have evaluated the existing building and alternatives for addressing its needs.

The existing school consists largely of spaces constructed in the 1960s and 1970s. The planning process identified insufficient classrooms and instructional spaces, accessibility deficiencies and aging building systems. Enrollment projections presented during the process anticipate a growing student enrollment over the next

several years.

Experts in school design, construction and repair also estimated that approximately \$45 million to \$60 million could be required over the next 10 to 20 years to keep the existing building functioning effectively. Alternatives studied included a repair-only approach, extensive renovation, combinations of renovation and new construction, and construction of a new school.

The Beecher building committee recommended construction of a new school building. The estimated project cost presented for the proposal is \$118.5 million. The anticipated state reimbursement rate is over 50 percent. Based on the financial information presented to date, the town’s share would require approximately \$55.5 million in bonding.

Those are among the facts residents can consider as they review the referendum question and project materials. The decision on the Beecher proposal belongs to Woodbridge voters. To me, this is as it should be.

But the larger financial questions facing the town will remain regardless of the outcome of that referendum.

Beecher is not our only capital need. Woodbridge also has needs involving the police station, roofs and mechanical systems in town buildings, equipment and other municipal infrastructure. These projects are in addition to the school project and have their own timelines, processes and decisions. But collectively they underscore the importance of looking at our

room shapes and oversized enclosed rooms that were originally designed as open plan but proved ineffective for instruction. These spaces cannot be economically or effectively corrected. The exterior walls – uninsulated painted concrete block – are also inferior to the durable stone masonry of the original building.

Sustainability considerations further support a targeted approach. Continuing to use and improve existing structures is the most environmentally responsible option when those structures have strong “bones,” as the original building and later additions do. Although new construction offers improved energy performance, it carries a high environmental cost due to the materials required.

A smaller, focused project would reduce overall costs and lessen the tax burden. Upgrades such as improved toilet rooms, transit lighting, classroom technology and energy efficient lighting can be achieved without demolishing the entire school.

David H. Barkin
Woodbridge

The Best Investment for Woodbridge

To the Editor:

We are writing to express our support for the Oct. 13 Beecher Road School building referendum. We moved to Woodbridge almost 30 years ago primarily for its schools. Although our sons attended Beecher between 1997-2007, we understand the value of, and need for, a good school system is shared by all town residents, always.

We have seen the condition of the school and know there are terrible issues with space, structure, safety and accessibility today. These will only get worse with time.

As fiscal conservatives, we believe in financially prudent town planning and management. As retirees, we understand the impact of higher taxes. We know the best investment



MICA
CARDOZO

finances over the long term rather than one budget at a time.

That includes a more concerted – and supported – effort to increase revenue.

Woodbridge relies heavily on property taxes from single-family homeowners. As the cost of maintaining infrastructure and providing municipal services changes, the town also needs to continue examining opportunities to strengthen and diversify its tax base.

Commercial growth is one part of that conversation. The state-funded business district improvement project is intended to improve traffic conditions and pedestrian access. It’s intended to support an environment in which existing and future businesses are attracted can operate. Because the town does not own most developable property in the business district, continued economic development also depends on the decisions of private property owners and businesses, along with the work of the Economic Development Commission. We are also actively searching for a part-time economic development manager to focus on increasing our commercial tax base.

Town-owned property presents a different set of questions. The Board of Selectmen has an implementation roadmap for the former Country Club of Woodbridge property that can bring in substantial tax revenue while leaving a large portion of the 154-acre site for conservation and recreation. The town is moving forward with a request for expressions of interest to identify a

partner and determine what possibilities will best meet our goals; it does not itself define or approve a particular development proposal, but it is an essential part of the process.

Housing is also part of the broader discussion about Woodbridge’s future. A greater diversity of housing options can be considered alongside questions about infrastructure, community needs, state requirements, land use and municipal finances. Individual proposals and land-use decisions must be considered through their applicable public processes and on their own merits.

Growth, in this context, does not mean that every proposal is appropriate or that every available parcel should be developed. It means being willing to examine how commercial activity, town-owned assets, housing options and other sources of economic activity fit into a long-term plan for the community.

We have real infrastructure needs. We have real affordability concerns. And we have a tax structure that depends heavily on residential property owners. These realities make long-term planning about revenue and growth a conversation Woodbridge needs to continue.

The decisions will not all be made at once, and they will not all be made by the same board, commission or group of voters. But taken together, they will shape how Woodbridge meets its obligations, maintains its infrastructure and plans for the years ahead.

Mica Cardozo is the first selectman of Woodbridge.

Letters to the Editor:
Send us your letters to the editor with no more than 350 words to editor@theorangetimes.com. Include your name and full address; only your name and town will be published. Letters may be edited for space and clarity.

Beecher School Project Could Be More Targeted

To the Editor:

The Beecher Road School Building Committee plans to recommend a \$118 million new replacement school, a proposal Woodbridge residents will vote on in October. While the school does require significant improvements, a more focused and substantially smaller project would meet educational and community needs for the long term. Replacing the 1970s rotunda and related additions with a new wing or wings would address the major code, accessibility and functional issues identified, at a fraction of the cost of a full replacement. This work could also be phased over time, reducing financial impact.

Over the past several decades, the town has invested heavily in Beecher Road School. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Woodbridge added the pre-K wing, cafeteria and media center/library – modern, well-constructed and fully code compliant spaces that remain in excellent condition. The original 1960s building also continues to serve the community well. Its academic wings, organized around a central administrative hub, were thoughtfully designed and remain structurally sound. In 2014, the town upgraded the original windows and heating systems with insulated windows and fan coil units that provide integrated heating, cooling and ventilation. The community is still paying for these improvements. Additional STEAP funded work improved the bus loop, enhancing safety for students and families.

The 1970s expansion, however, contains long recognized deficiencies. These include inaccessible ramped corridors, irregular class-

room shapes and oversized enclosed rooms that were originally designed as open plan but proved ineffective for instruction. These spaces cannot be economically or effectively corrected. The exterior walls – uninsulated painted concrete block – are also inferior to the durable stone masonry of the original building.

Sustainability considerations further support a targeted approach. Continuing to use and improve existing structures is the most environmentally responsible option when those structures have strong “bones,” as the original building and later additions do. Although new construction offers improved energy performance, it carries a high environmental cost due to the materials required.

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We have seen the condition of the school and know there are terrible issues with space, structure, safety and accessibility today. These will only get worse with time.

As fiscal conservatives, we believe in financially prudent town planning and management. As retirees, we understand the impact of higher taxes. We know the best investment

in Beecher is the one that will last the longest. Instead of trying to patch a failing building, let’s use the same money wisely. Let’s not miss out on this rare opportunity to get \$63 million from the state to build the school we need right now; one that will last for decades.

Our kids went to Beecher, a school paid for by folks who faced these same, difficult decisions back in the 50s and 60s; a school with improvements paid for by a generation before we moved here. Our family enjoyed the benefits of a school paid for by others, not by us. But they made the investment for the future – they knew it was the right thing to do.

Now, it’s our turn to “return the favor” and pay it forward by investing in the future. We feel that we owe it to this town and to generations of kids to come.

Our adult sons feel the same way about this issue. Asked if we should be spending some of our savings this way, “Absolutely! Please, you have to!” one said. “It’s the social contract! It’s not about your money, it’s what we owe to each other.” We trust him; he’s a lot smarter than we are – he went to Beecher.

We want to invest in our town’s future.

Judith and Roger Hess
Woodbridge

Woodbridge Should Do More for Seniors

To the Editor:

My wife and I are seniors and have lived in Woodbridge for over 20 years. We are struggling to try to pay already outrageous high home taxes imposed on us like the rest of the senior population that want to continue living in our town. The house we bought was a 1974 fixer upper house that needed a lot of repairs which we have slowly been doing through the years. There’s a lot of homes in Woodbridge built around 1920 that the homeowners aren’t having demolished and replaced with a new home just because they need repairs or updating.

We are opposed to building a new school. I know the Woodbridge school system prizes itself for being a blue ribbon school and puts a lot of effort in maintaining this status with our taxes. I’ve seen a lot of people in our town that come here just to use our school and then move out when they no longer need the school anymore.

I think it’s about time the town of Woodbridge actually did something more for us seniors who have been here for over 20 years that have helping the town’s schools with our taxes and no longer use them and actually give us seniors a well deserve tax break like no taxes on seniors for the school or its system.

Joseph Neumann
Woodbridge

If No New School Now, When?

To the Editor:

I am writing this letter in full support of the Beecher Road School building project and I will be voting yes on Oct. 13. As a public school educator for the past 20 years, it is evident from the building tours and also from being a parent at Beecher Road School for the past nine years that, despite years of maintenance and significant investment, the original building and its additions no longer adequately support today’s educational needs.

First, I want to express my deep appreciation to the members of the Building Committee who were presented with countless options for this project and who devoted years of their lives to developing a plan that meets the needs of our community. They have provided many opportunities to listen to public input over the years. They recognize that this project is a huge ask for Woodbridge residents, but the members of the committee are also members of our community who will be affected by the tax increases required for this project.

Continued on page 8

Opinion & Editorial

Families Deserve Real Relief



STATE REP. (R-119)
KATHY KENNEDY

If you sit down at the kitchen table with a family in Milford or Orange and ask what is making life harder these days, you probably won't hear much about political talking points.

You'll hear about the electric or gas bill. The price of filling up the car. Groceries, property taxes, insurance and the cost of keeping a roof over your head.

And you'll hear people saying the same thing: Everything costs more.

I hear it and think it too.

Whether I'm talking with a neighbor, visiting with seniors, meeting with a small business owner on the Post Road or New Haven Avenue or attending a community event, affordability comes up again and again.

People are working hard and doing their part, but it's an uphill battle. They just want a little breathing room.

That is why Connecticut needs to take a serious look at policies that put money back in the pockets of the people who earned it.

I, along with my Republican colleagues, are calling for meaningful relief, including income tax reductions, eliminating the highway use tax, removing sales taxes on meals sold at grocery stores, a one-year gas tax holiday, association health plans aimed at lowering insurance premiums and eliminating the public benefits charge on electric bills.

For a working family in Milford, saving money at the gas pump can mean more money for groceries or a child's activities. For a senior in Orange living on a fixed income, every dollar matters when the electric bill arrives. For a small business owner, lower costs can mean keeping prices reasonable or keeping the doors open.

We also need to keep working on property taxes. For many homeowners, that bill is one of their largest annual expenses. We should give municipalities the tools to provide relief while continuing to deliver the services residents depend on.

Affordability isn't about one tax or one bill. It's the total cost of living in Connecticut – the electric bill, mortgage or rent, insurance, groceries, gas and property taxes, all added together.

I don't pretend there is a magic wand that will make every bill disappear. Every proposal deserves a serious discussion about costs and how we responsibly pay for them. But we can make different choices.

We can prioritize affordability. We can look for savings before looking for new revenue. And we can give taxpayers more of their own money back. What has frustrated me is hearing the majority party repeatedly say that Connecticut doesn't have the money for meaningful tax relief, while at the same time continuing to fund new state programs that create additional costs and obligations for future years. If we can find the money for new programs, we should also be able to find ways to give Connecticut families some much-needed tax relief.

I will continue fighting for lower costs, responsible spending and real relief for our communities.

You shouldn't have to move out of Connecticut to afford Connecticut. We can – and must – do better.

Working And Learning



STATE REP. (D-114)
MARY WELANDER

A question I often get is about what happens in the "off time" when we aren't in session, so I thought that I would share some of the other work I do as a legislator.

In my last column I provided information about the Early Childhood Education Endowment and the incredible investment the state is making to help reduce the costs of childcare for families. Another side of that initiative is my work as the chair of the Early Childhood Caucus, where I work to ensure that the voices of providers and small business owners are heard and incorporated into those plans so that this initiative can be successful for all parties involved. These are conversations and meetings that continue throughout the year, and I am always looking for more feedback.

As vice chair of the Children's Committee, I'm currently co-chair of a working group implementing an online dashboard for the Department of Children and Families that was part of house priority bill 5004 this year (PA 26-26). The goal of this dashboard is to provide clear access to information (such as caseloads, case worker vacancies and reunification rates), ultimately creating greater transparency for policy makers, families and employees of DCF by identifying where additional support or changes are needed to provide better outcomes for the vulnerable children we are charged with protecting. I want to include as many different perspectives as possible, such as foster parent experiences; if there are data points that you would like to see included, please reach out to me as soon as possible as our preliminary report will be submitted in October.

I also currently co-chairing a subcommittee examining special education programs within our schools and by approved providers across the state, as well as the supports intended to help families with children who need specialized services. Too often the state provides resources to help, but the process is difficult and convoluted, which is a waste of time and money for everyone. This is one step in improving that.

In addition to serving on the Children's and Education committees, I am also the House Democratic Leader for the Regulation Review Committee (or "Regs"), which meets regularly year-round, rather than just during session. Regs is unique in its calendar, scope and structure. A wonky committee that is split 50/50 in membership and leadership, it looks at the statutory details of how each policy that is passed is implemented in practice. It's complicated in process and subject matter but incredibly important.

Alongside this work is constituent support, meeting with advocates, community leaders and members of industry. There are also opportunities like I had this past week during which I was a fellow at the Council of State Governments Eastern Leadership Academy. A week with 30 other public servants from the eastern states, Canadian provinces and Puerto Rico for an intensive leadership training with world-renowned instructors.

This work both in and out of session is invaluable in my efforts to better serve you and everyone in the district, but I can always learn more. Reach out at mary.welander@cga.ct.gov to share your thoughts.

New Laws Take Effect Oct. 1



STATE REP. (D-117)
MJ SHANNON

One of my favorite parts of serving in the General Assembly is seeing the work we do in Hartford turn into something real for people back home. Several new laws that I was proud to vote for began making a difference across Connecticut starting Oct. 1.

I wanted to highlight a few because, while they may sound like complicated pieces of legislation, they are really about some pretty simple things: making sure workers are treated fairly, helping kids stay in school and making sure families have the support they need.

One important change is stronger protection for workers from wage theft. Beginning Oct. 1, the state has additional tools to hold contractors accountable when workers on public projects are not paid the wages they are legally owed.

If a project is being funded with taxpayer dollars, workers should get the pay they earned. I think that is a pretty straightforward idea. No one should work hard, do their job and then have to fight to get the paycheck they are owed. These protections help make sure that contractors who receive public dollars are held accountable for treating their workers fairly.

Another law I was proud to support protects the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. Kids should not have to put their education on hold because their family is going through a housing crisis.

For a child, having to move or experiencing housing instability can already mean losing a sense of stability. Their school should be one place where they can continue to learn, see familiar faces and stay connected to their community. Every student deserves that opportunity, regardless of their family's housing situation.

These are the kinds of laws that remind me why I ran for the General Assembly in the first place. State government can sometimes feel distant from our everyday lives, but the decisions we make in Hartford have real consequences for people in our communities.

Whether it is making sure a worker gets the paycheck they earned or making sure a child experiencing homelessness can continue their education, these laws are about making Connecticut work a little better for the people who call it home.

I am proud of the work we accomplished this session and proud that I was able to cast my vote for these protections. I will continue listening to the people of Milford, Orange and West Haven and bringing their voices with me to Hartford.

As always, I encourage you to reach out if you have questions, concerns or ideas about issues impacting our community. My office is here to help. You can contact me anytime by email at mj.shannon@cga.ct.gov or by phone at 860-240-8585.

AI Literacy For All



STATE SEN. (D-14)
JAMES MARONEY

It seems hardly a day goes by without mention of some new artificial intelligence tool being created or contributing to a potential breakthrough or innovation. It also seems like barely a day goes by without hearing of some potential new risk created by AI, such as the significant loss of jobs or even the potential extinction of the human race.

While there is so much uncertainty, one thing is certain: artificial intelligence is here to stay.

According to the 2024 Work Trend Index from Microsoft and LinkedIn, 66 percent of business leaders said they would not hire someone without AI skills, and 71 percent said they would rather hire a less experienced candidate with AI skills than a more experienced candidate without them. Generative AI skills are increasingly important to finding employment. In fact, in some circles you will hear them say that it isn't artificial intelligence that will take your job, it is someone who knows how to use artificial intelligence that will take your job.

While no one knows what exactly the future holds, we want to make sure that all of our residents are ready. That is why we launched the Connecticut Online AI Academy, a free partnership between the state, Charter Oak State College and Google that gives every resident, regardless of income or background, the chance to build the skills employers are now demanding.

The academy offers two free courses. Google AI Essentials is an introductory course for beginners; no technical background required. It teaches the fundamentals of generative AI and how to apply it to everyday work. There is also a more advanced AI fluency course. Both are fully online, both can be completed in five to six weeks, and both award a Google certificate that graduates can put directly on their resume or LinkedIn profile.

The CT AI Academy was one of the key pieces of Senate Bill 5 that I championed and helped pass. These two courses are only the beginning, as by the end of the year the CT Teen AI Academy and AI for Small Business courses will launch.

All of the past technological revolutions have created more jobs than they destroyed, but it isn't always a one to one skills correlation between the new jobs that are created and those that are lost. It is critical for us as a state to make sure that all of our residents are prepared.

If you want to learn more about the free programs that are being offered, more information can be found online at charteroak.edu/ai-academy. Our goal is to make sure no resident is left behind when it comes to AI and to ensure that Connecticut has the most AI-literate workforce in the country.

Opinion & Editorial

Orange First Selectman

Reminders For The Fall Season

The fall season is upon us, and I remind everybody that the days will be darker as we head to work and come home. Please watch out for students waiting or walking home from bus stops. Always stop for those yellow-to-red flashing lights on school buses.

The selectmen will be considering the fate of Flock in the upcoming months. The confusion is Flock-type cameras are constantly clicking traffic, which has some positives for crime, but the question is how needed is this? The selectmen have heard testimony and value your input.

The budget requests have been delivered

to all departments and the long process of developing a budget which includes the town, Orange Board of Education, and Amity Board of Education is in motion. I have heard from people that lower taxes would help. I ask for your suggestions as to what services you would like to see limited or cut to achieve this goal. I would appreciate your thoughts on this; you can email me at jzeoli@orange-ct.gov.

The Orange Volunteer Fire De-



JAMES
ZEOLI

partment is anxiously awaiting the delivery of a new fire truck to serve our community and protect our properties. This is a major milestone for the OVFD.

The fall season can be the most colorful to enjoy. Please do not blow your leaves into the street; they become slippery and dangerous to vehicles, bicycles and runners. Be considerate. The beauty of fall also brings Halloween fun and shenanigans. If you are welcoming visitors, please

have your outside well lighted for everyone's safety.

My final reminder is to the users of e-bikes, boards and scooters. You must practice safe rules of the road and obey the same laws that cars do. Be careful of the person who may not see you.

Thank you to the Orange Country Fair Committee and volunteers for the 51st fair that brought so much enjoyment to many.

James Zeoli is the first selectman of Orange.

Letters

(Continued From 6)

I keep hearing people say that this is the wrong plan and the wrong time and I agree that it would be a much more comfortable situation if we had more town revenue before going ahead with this project. But I trust that the Building Committee has done their due diligence in recommending a plan that is best for our community and that our state funding opportunity makes right now the best time.

And if not now, then when? Every temporary fix we make to the current aging Beecher Road School building brings us one step closer to taking an unnecessary risk with its infrastructure and the safety of our children inside it. Are we just going to keep kicking the can down the road with this project until it becomes an actual crisis for a future generation?

As a community, we have to remember that whether we vote no or we vote yes, there is no zero cost solution. We should not be asking how long we can keep adapting education

to fit this building; we should be asking what kind of learning environment our children deserve.

Kristen Turkosz
Woodbridge

Selectmen Should Communicate

To the Editor:

I'm writing about the Ad-Hoc Communications Committee appointed by the first selectman to develop a policy on how Board of Selectmen members respond to inquiries from residents. I appreciate that Selectmen Carangelo, Goldblatt and Kraut are working through details with the town attorney, and that their meetings are open to the public.

This presents an opportunity to strengthen the connection between residents and town leaders. When a resident emails one or more

board members with a question, update or suggestion, even a brief acknowledgment can build trust, encourage collaboration and be a step toward getting things done. It demonstrates respect and lets residents know their voices matter.

However, sometimes there's no response, therefore the resident doesn't know if their email was received or is being addressed. This can erode confidence and leave residents unaware of actions being taken.

I encourage everyone to view email as a way to build a stronger community and achieve more productive outcomes. A clear policy can set expectations for responding to residents and provide guidance for addressing more complex issues. The policy should enable individual selectmen to respond as they see fit and, when a resident emails multiple selectmen, allow each to offer their perspective, giving residents a fuller understanding of an issue. Ultimately, the policy should encourage open communication, not restrict it.

An additional benefit is that when people feel

heard, they're more likely to become partners in improving our community. Many Orange residents have constructive ideas, expertise and a strong desire to help. Let's tap into that.

As we see at our wonderful community events, Orange residents work well together by approaching each other with openness and respect. I hope our Board of Selectmen will embrace that same spirit and view the new policy as an opportunity to strengthen relationships, build trust, and help Orange flourish.

Ilene Moyher
Orange

Enough Rentals in Milford

To the Editor:

I am deeply concerned about the growing number of rental properties being built in Mil-

Continued on page 9

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Opinion & Editorial

Letters

(Continued From 8)

ford, with many more under construction.

While housing is essential, we must consider whether development is serving our community’s long-term needs. Young couples and first-time homebuyers are losing opportunities to purchase homes and build their futures here.

With rents averaging approximately \$3,000 monthly, saving for a down payment becomes increasingly difficult. Additionally, the concentration of rental properties under common management raises concerns about competition and pricing.

I urge Milford’s leaders to review future developments, encourage affordable homeownership and promote a balanced housing market.

Milford should be a community where the next generation can own a home, not rent indefinitely.

Juan Sebastian Greene Dominguez
Milford

We Deserve an Update on Race Brook Country Club

To the Editor:

As another golf season winds down, it’s a natural time to ask a basic question: how is the Race Brook Country Club deal going?

Five years ago, Orange voters approved buying the 287-acre Race Brook Country Club property for \$8.6 million and leasing it back to the club for 40 years. That decision made all of us, the residents of Orange, the country club’s landlord.

Here are two things any landlord would want to know.

The rent is being paid. The town’s budget records it on a line called “Racebrook Country Club Lease” – \$125,000 for the partial first year, then \$250,000 every year since, through the most recent completed fiscal year. The deal reportedly called for rent increases every five years.

The tenant is in stable financial shape. Its public tax filings show that proceeds from the sale have reduced the club’s longstanding debt. Their net income has fallen every year since, putting the club back in its typical pattern of hovering near breakeven.

It’s all pretty good news. So why did I have to review pages of town budgets and IRS filings to figure it out?

Five years into a deal that put the town \$8.6 million into debt, residents have never been given a straightforward update on how it’s working out.

We voted for this deal. We’re the landlord. We deserve an annual update from Town Hall.

Daniel Fitzmaurice
Orange

Maroney Has Tech Expertise

To the Editor:

The hottest topic right now is technology. Are we safe from our own technology? Cameras are everywhere and not going away. We all walk around with a camera on our phone. Many have cameras on their homes that have wide reach in their recordings. Public cameras are controversial, but really have been around for a long time. How are our rights to privacy protected while using technology for the common good?

And, of course, there is AI. I was watching Michael Smerconish recently and his show was on this very topic. Most viewers felt (based on his weekly poll) that humans weaponizing AI is a bigger threat to us than AI itself.

So what is being done? Ask state Sen. James Maroney, who has been working on this very topic for the last few years. He proposed legislation to regulate AI here in Connecticut. Fi-

nally, this past session, Connecticut has comprehensive artificial intelligence legislation. Thanks to Maroney, Gov. Ned Lamont signed the landmark Connecticut Artificial Intelligence Responsibility and Transparency Act (Senate Bill 5/Public Act 26-15) into law, making it one of the most comprehensive state-level AI frameworks in the country.

Maroney was named to the inaugural leadership council of the Future of Privacy Forum Center for Artificial Intelligence. Maroney’s work on tech legislation has been recognized nationally. He understands what needs to be done to protect us and balance that with the inevitable growth of current and future technologies.

We need that expertise in these technology driven times. I urge you to support state Sen. James Maroney and vote for him Nov. 3 (or during early voting which begins Oct. 19).

Jody Dietch
Orange

Supporting Maroney for State Senate

To the Editor:

I am writing to express my support for state Sen. James Maroney in his reelection for State Senate.

Maroney has been a leader in protecting data privacy in Connecticut and is recognized as a leader across the country. In the 2026 legislative session, he led the charge to pass Senate Bill 4 and expand the Connecticut Data Privacy Act, as well as Senate Bill 5 that creates AI protections.

Senate Bill 4 reigned in the power of data brokers to access your personal information. For one, it secured consumers’ right to request and have their data deleted from brokers’ databases. It required data brokers to register with the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection, allowing the entire industry to be properly regulated.

Data brokers collect, aggregate and sell personal information without individuals’ consent or knowledge. For domestic violence survivors, the personal information market poses risks as data brokers compile extensive profiles from public records. This includes property records, court testimonies and consumer data. Therefore, data brokers inadvertently provide abusers with tools to locate and track their victims.

In the past, companies have been able to use your personal data to inflate prices on items bought online. Senate Bill 4 prohibits “surveillance pricing,” continuing Maroney’s commitment to bringing down costs for Connecticut residents by stopping price gouging. A consumer report found that grocery retailers like Instacart participate in AI-enabled experiments that price identical products differently from one customer to the next. This can be as much as 23 percent. This technology is used by several of the nation’s biggest grocery retailers. Senate Bill 4 strengthens consumer protections for Connecticut residents.

By getting Senate Bill 4 passed, Maroney showed his resolve to protect the Connecticut consumer and enact commonsense data privacy legislation. For Connecticut to continue its path towards expansive and strong consumer protection, we must reelect James Maroney to spearhead the charge with his strong leadership.

Debra Kidder
Orange

Democracy Continues to Die in Darkness

To the Editor:

As an Orange resident, I am responding to the recent letter from Lauren Gray, who did not disclose her role as press secretary for Gov.

Ned Lamont’s reelection campaign (Ned for CT). In my view, the legislators she praises advance broader Democratic priorities and statewide agendas more than they deliver targeted, substantial support tailored to Orange’s specific needs.

State Sen. James Maroney has focused on statewide privacy measures involving surveillance technologies and consumer protections. These are general policy efforts applying across Connecticut, not initiatives delivering dedicated resources, infrastructure or funding uniquely tailored to Orange’s public safety or municipal priorities. Occasional small grants, such as modest equipment funding for the volunteer fire department, are routine state allocations rather than substantial, ongoing investment in the town.

State Rep. Mary Welander has been involved in the statewide Early Childhood Education Endowment. This broad program serves families across Connecticut, with benefits beginning in future years; it is not structured as Orange-specific funding, facilities or expanded local capacity, and offers no dedicated support beyond what is available statewide.

State Rep. MJ Shannon’s district includes Orange, yet the \$350,000 special education grant came through a competitive statewide program open to dozens of districts. It was awarded based on the district’s application under established criteria, not as a legislator-driven earmark unique to Orange. Broader claims of support for schools, working families or the environment have not produced major local projects, infrastructure improvements or sustained funding specific to the town.

Overall, measurable, Orange-focused contributions remain limited to routine or competitive statewide mechanisms rather than substantial, legislator-secured investments addressing the town’s particular infrastructure, education, public safety or economic needs.

To help restore balance and end one-party rule in Connecticut, I urge fellow Orange residents to support Owen T. Weaver for the 14th State Senate District, Ray Collins for the 117th District, Brooke Hopkins for the 114th District and reelect Kathy Kennedy for the 119th District. These candidates offer stronger local representation and more competitive governance that better prioritizes our town’s specific needs.

Craig Stahl
Orange

Why I’m Running for State Representative

To the Editor:

I’m running for state representative because I believe public service should be about people, not politics.

There is something I want to acknowledge about this campaign that may seem unusual: I share many of the same friends as my opponent. We live in the same community. We know many of the same people. We rely on many of the same community resources and connections. And I think that is a good thing. Politics should never require us to turn neighbors into enemies.

But sharing a community does not mean we will always make the same choices. And that is why elections matter.

I am running because I believe I can bring a different perspective to Hartford, one grounded in listening, compassion, experience and a willingness to ask whether there is a better way to serve the people who sent me there.

My career in social work has taught me to listen before speaking, to understand without judging, and to advocate for people who sometimes struggle to have their voices heard. As a UCO-NN educator, I have the privilege of teaching future social workers the importance of those same values.

My municipal service, including my work as deputy registrar and assistant town clerk in

Woodbridge, has given me firsthand experience with how local government works and, more importantly, how it serves its residents. I have learned that a good government is not just about policies and procedures. It is about being accessible, responsive and accountable to the people who depend on it. It is about answering questions, helping residents navigate government and making sure people feel heard when they come through the door. That experience has shaped the kind of representative I want to be: someone who shows up, listens and treats every person who reaches out with respect.

Those experiences are why I am running.

I want to bring people together, listen to our communities and make decisions based on what I believe will best serve the people of the 114th District, not what is easiest, most convenient or simply what has always been done.

I’m not running because I think I have all the answers. I’m running because I’m willing to listen, willing to work and willing to stand up for the people I represent.

Our community deserves a representative that will show up, listen and care.

I’m ready to do that work. And I’m asking for your support to help me do it.

Brooke Hopkins
Candidate for State Representative, 114th District

Housing Can’t Come at the Cost of Local Control

To the Editor:

State Rep. MJ Shannon voted to strip local control of zoning from the people of Milford, Orange and West Haven. In one vote, he sided with his party and large developers over the residents who actually live here. His decision didn’t just change a policy, it weakened the ability of our towns to decide what belongs in our own neighborhoods.

Housing costs are too high. Young families struggle to stay. Seniors worry about the future of the communities they’ve built their lives in. We need more housing options, but not by silencing the voices of the people who know our communities the best.

Shannon’s support of the sweeping housing legislation forces changes on our towns and expands the power of developers to bypass local rules. Combined with the longstanding 8-30g law, this approach gives large developers leverage to ignore local zoning and push 100-unit complexes into single-family neighborhoods.

That is not a solution. It is a takeover. We can do better. Real solutions start by eliminating or rolling back 8-30g and H.B. 8002 in a way that restores flexibility to our towns and cities. Large developers should not be able to override our local zoning.

If 8-30g remains, we must allow more forms of naturally occurring affordable housing, transit-oriented and mixed-use development, and senior housing to count toward the requirements. We should reform the percentage-based incentive into a fixed number that actually aligns with real incentives. We need height and size limits, just as Massachusetts has done. And towns that adopt reasonable housing growth zones should earn an indefinite reprieve from these mandates.

As your next state representative, I will fight in Hartford to restore and defend local control of zoning. I will work to roll back the laws that let developers ignore the wishes of our towns. And I will push practical reforms that increase housing supply while keeping decision-making right here in the 117th District.

Enough is enough. Let’s make housing more affordable without giving away the power of our local voices. Our communities deserve both.

Ray Collins
Candidate for State Representative, 117th District

Orange Democratic Town Committee

Why You Can't Sit This One Out

Listen, I get it. There is a lot of noise around everyone right now. Between the news, social media, political arguing, the constant amplification of every issue and the never-ending unpredictability at the national level, it can be exhausting. It can make you feel numb or disconnected. I know I feel that way sometimes.

You might be tempted to just not show up and sit this election out.

But this is exactly when I suggest you step back from the noise, the hype and the small groups of people who make the most fuss, and focus on what is actually in front of us. Elections are about real people, real decisions and real issues that affect our everyday lives here in Orange.

That means taking the time to learn about the candidates, know where they stand and think about what matters most to you and your family. Look beyond the headlines and the continual back and forth. Decide what you believe is important.

There are also some important things to recognize here in Connecticut. Our state is in a stronger financial position than it has been in the past, but that does not mean everyone is feeling that progress in their own

household.

For many families, affordability is a very real concern. Housing, groceries, health care, and just about everything else continue to put pressure on household budgets. We cannot dismiss those kitchen table concerns, no matter how strong our balance sheet is in Hartford.

Two things can be true at the same time. We can acknowledge the fiscal progress Connecticut has made while recognizing there is still more work to do. We can be proud of where our state is today while understanding that too many families are still struggling. And we can expect our elected leaders to address those challenges.

The question isn't whether everything is perfect. It isn't. The question is how we continue moving Orange and Connecticut forward while addressing the challenges families are facing.

Our local Democratic state legislative candidates are asking for your support to continue the work they have been doing on issues that impact us. They have been out talking



MELISSA JOHNSTON

with residents, listening to concerns and sharing their priorities. As voters, we have an opportunity to learn, ask questions and decide who we want representing us and our principles.

I'll tell you right now, state Sen. James Maroney, state Reps. Mary Welander and MJ Shannon, and state representative candidate Alex Armstrong have each put their time and energy into issues that matter to our communities. They show up, they listen and they are willing to do the work.

They are doing their part. Now we have to show up for them.

There is more to do. There always is. But these are people willing to put in the time, energy and sweat equity it takes to turn ideas into tangible results. That's what I want from the people representing me. Not campaign year promises, but a willingness to roll up their sleeves, listen to their constituents and get to work.

There is even more on the ballot this November, including races for US House of Representatives, governor, lieutenant gover-

nor, secretary of the state, treasurer, comptroller and attorney general. So yes, there is a lot coming at us all at once. There will be plenty of mail, phone calls, advertisements and opinions over the next few weeks.

Take a breath. Do your homework. Ask questions. Pay attention to the people who are actually doing the work. Then make your voice heard.

It was so nice to meet and engage with so many of you at the Orange Country Fair. I appreciated the conversations, ideas shared and the different perspectives.

The Orange Democrats are working to make sure our values are represented in this election. If you feel compelled to lend a hand or simply want to stay in the know, visit OrangeCTDems.org or sign up for our monthly email newsletter.

Connecticut's general election is Tuesday, Nov. 3, and early voting runs from Oct. 19 through Nov. 1. Whether you vote early or on Election Day, make a plan to participate.

There is too much at stake. Don't sit this one out.

Melissa Johnston is the chair of the Orange Democratic Town Committee.

Two Orange Lacrosse Players Share World Cup Experience In Poland

By Catherine Ferraro

Two Amity Regional High School lacrosse players who graduated almost a decade apart found themselves sharing the field this summer – not in Orange, but thousands of miles away in Wroclaw, Poland.

Haley Mario, an Amity graduate from 2025, and Isabella “Bella” Ferraro, who graduated from Amity in 2016, both represented the Italian Women’s National Team at the 2026 D2 Women’s Lacrosse World Cup. For the two Orange natives, the opportunity to compete together on an international stage created a unique connection between their shared hometown and high school roots.

Mario and Ferraro quickly found themselves developing chemistry on the field. Both played a variety of positions throughout the tournament, but they had the opportunity to get significant reps together in the midfield.

They even joked that they had developed a special “Orange/Amity connection.”

Whenever the two were on the draw circle together, things seemed to click. Ferraro would take the draw, and Mario would often come away with possession, seemingly as if the ball had gone straight into her stick.

“It was almost like we knew exactly what the other person was going to do,” Ferraro said. “It was really fun to have that connec-

tion with someone who came from the same place and played for the same program.”

The tournament itself provided plenty of memorable moments. Italy faced Mexico in pool play and suffered a 9-6 loss, but the team had the opportunity to meet Mexico again in the gold medal game.

This time, Italy responded with an outstanding team defensive effort, holding a Mexican attack that had averaged 10.8 goals per game throughout the tournament to just four. Mexico battled back to make the score 5-4 late in the third quarter, but Italy took control in the fourth, scoring six goals to pull away for an 11-4 victory and the gold medal.

For Mario and Ferraro, the championship was the culmination of an experience that extended far beyond the lacrosse field. They had the chance to compete alongside players from different countries, represent Italy on a world stage and, perhaps most uniquely, share the experience with someone who came from the same hometown and high school program.

Ferraro, who has spent the last five years as a collegiate women’s lacrosse coach, was excited to get back on the field as a player nearly a decade after graduating from Amity, and after a four-year playing career at NCAA D3 Smith College.

For Mario, a 2025 graduate beginning



Haley Mario (left) and Bella Ferraro (right), both of Orange, competed together on the Italian Women's National Team at the 2026 D2 Women's Lacrosse World Cup in Poland in August. Teammate Fran Gionfriddo is also pictured in the center. Photo courtesy of Catherine Ferraro.

her NCAA Division 1 collegiate career at the University of Cincinnati, the experience offered an early opportunity to compete at the highest level of international lacrosse.

For both players, one of the most memorable parts of the summer was having some-

one from Orange beside them.

From the fields of Amity to a World Cup in Poland, Mario and Ferraro discovered that their shared lacrosse roots were able to bring them together – even halfway around the world.



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Orange Republican Town Committee

Rebalance The State This Fall

September has come to an end. As I write these thoughts on the month ahead, our Country Fair is also wrapping up for 2026. While Sunday was a washout, Saturday was outstanding. The crowds, the music, neighbors coming and going. It was a perfect day.

There's something special about walking through the fairgrounds, talking with our neighbors, our police officers and the volunteers who keep these events running every year. The food was excellent once again, with something special and interesting in every stand. It's a special weekend for an exceptional town. We are truly blessed in Orange.

I look forward to the cooler days and the simple joys the coming season brings. With those days, however, also comes our elections. We are approaching one of the most important elections of our time. Some may call that hyperbolic, but we are at a crossroads as a state.

This November our task is clear: vote for the change Connecticut needs. We have lived under a one-party supermajority for years. Ger-

rymandering has helped lock in that imbalance. While some are content with how the state is run, one-party control means there is no meaningful check or balance.

Look at what was passed in 2025 and 2026. On too many issues our state representatives and senator seemed to stop listening to large parts of the communities they were elected to serve. Votes on housing, immigration enforcement limits, AI and privacy rules and other measures often broke along party lines.

HB 8002, signed by Gov. Ned Lamont in November 2025 after an earlier version failed, requires municipalities to create housing growth plans, eliminates most minimum off-street parking requirements for smaller developments and incentivizes certain multi-family zoning. These changes raise real questions about local control and the character of our towns. Please review the bill yourself, ask questions, and

do your own fact-checking before Election Day.

The homeschool notification rules generated significant controversy during public hearings this year, though the actual requirements phase in around 2028.

The new automated license plate reader restrictions in Public Act 26-14 (from SB 397, the "Democracy and Government Accountability" bill) take effect Oct. 1. They sharply limit how long data can be kept, restrict sharing mainly to neighboring states under strict conditions and prohibit using the technology for immigration enforcement, investigations related to reproductive or gender-affirming care, First Amendment activity or monitoring people based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, citizenship, nationality, income and similar categories.

Supporters see these as privacy protections. Critics, myself included, see them as one more

example of rules that constrain law enforcement and apply unevenly, treating some groups differently than the rest of us who simply want clear, consistent enforcement of the law.

Each of these measures affects our towns, our police departments' ability to do their jobs, and the principle that the law should apply equally. If we are all citizens of Connecticut, our elected officials should represent all of us, not only selected priorities.

As we move into October, I ask you to consider the effects of prolonged one-party control: the steady expansion of state mandates and the loss of local decision-making. Help restore balance so Connecticut can again be the strong, well-governed state it had been.

Anyone wishing to join the Orange Republican Town Committee or simply help out can contact the secretary at ortc.secretary@gmail.com or chairman at ortc.chairman@gmail.com.

Jude Toohey is the vice chair of the Orange Republican Town Committee.

Rotary Club of Orange

A Night Of Bingo, Community And Giving Back

There are some community events that become traditions almost before you realize it. For me, Rotary bingo has become one of those events.

Last year, I had the idea to bring a bingo fundraiser to Orange through the Rotary Club, and I was not quite sure what kind of response we would receive. What started as a new fundraiser quickly became something much more meaningful. People came, had fun, brought their families and, most importantly, kept coming back.

As we prepare for our next Halloween bingo night on Tuesday, Oct. 27, I am especially excited to see the familiar faces who have made this event such a wonderful part of our community.

We have had people return time and time again for each bingo night, and that is something that means a great deal to me. It has become more than a fundraiser. It is a chance

for neighbors to get together, have a little fun and enjoy a good old-fashioned community evening.

The best part is knowing that the money raised stays right here in our community. Through these bingo events, Rotary has been able to support youth-focused activities and services in Orange, including Amity youth football and Orange Youth Services projects. Every bingo card, every game and every evening spent together helps us give back to the children and families who make our town such a special place.

The event is designed to be simple, affordable and fun for everyone. Admission is just \$5 per person, with cards costing \$1 each. We will play approximately 10 to 15 games

throughout the evening, with a prize awarded for every game. Whether you are a longtime bingo player or have never played before, you are welcome to join us. Bring your family, bring a friend or come meet some of your neighbors.

This year we are adding a little extra fun before bingo night even begins.

During the week leading up to the event, I will be hosting a painted pumpkin scavenger hunt throughout Orange. Ten painted pumpkins will be hidden in different locations around town. The challenge is to find all 10. Anyone who successfully finds all the pumpkins will be eligible for a special prize at bingo night.

The scavenger hunt is meant to be another way to get people out, exploring our town and having fun together. It is also a great opportunity for families to participate, and I am

already looking forward to seeing who manages to track down all 10 pumpkins.

At the heart of this event is something that can sometimes be easy to overlook: the value of simply bringing people together. In a small town, those connections matter. A night of bingo might seem like a trivial thing, but when neighbors gather around tables, laugh together, cheer for a winning number and know that their participation is helping local youth, it becomes something much bigger.

I hope you will join us for another Rotary bingo night. Remember to wear your costumes. Come for the bingo, stay for the community and help us continue giving back to Orange.

Michael Lanza is youth services chair for the Rotary Club of Orange. Follow him on Instagram at [@lanzatrystateinsurance](https://www.instagram.com/lanzatrystateinsurance).

Family Escapes House Fire In Orange

By Doug Fenichel

A working smoke detector enabled an Orange family to escape injury after a late-night fire broke out at their Mapledale Road home on Sept. 25.

The Orange Volunteer Fire Department was dispatched at 11:07 p.m. to 828 Mapledale Rd. for a reported building fire. While responding, dispatch received multiple calls from the occupant and neighbors reporting visible flames

coming from the structure.

First-arriving firefighters reported visible flames coming from the rear of the home. Firefighters immediately entered the residence to extinguish the fire and search for a family dog. Unfortunately, the dog succumbed to injuries sustained in the fire.

Interior crews encountered heavy fire conditions in the attic space and within the vaulted ceilings. Firefighters advanced into the attic area and worked to extinguish the remaining fire. The fire was reported under control at approximately 12:02 a.m.

Members of the Derby Fire Department responded to assist with additional manpower and staffed the Rapid Intervention Team, which is assigned to respond in the event a firefighter requires rescue.

AMR ambulance personnel were on scene to evaluate firefighters and occupants for any injuries. The Orange Police Department also assisted at the scene. The Woodbridge Fire Department was requested to provide coverage for Orange while Orange firefighters operated at the scene.



A family escaped a house fire on Mapledale Road in Orange on Sept. 25 thanks to working smoke detectors, although the family dog was lost. Photo by Doug Fenichel.

"With the storm bearing down on us, there was no moon or other light, and, unfortunately, the high winds had an impact on the intensity of the fire," said Orange Fire Chief Vaughan Dumas.

"Most importantly, the smoke alarm system worked exactly as it was designed to work," added Dumas. The alarm alerted the homeowner to the fire, and he got out safely. This is a good reminder that working smoke alarms can make the difference between getting out safely and a much more serious outcome. Every home should have properly installed and maintained smoke alarms."

The cause of the fire remains under investigation by the Orange Fire Marshal's Office.

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Orange Recycling Committee

Get Ready For Orange’s Mega Recycling Event

Orange residents once again have a convenient opportunity to responsibly dispose of items that don’t belong in regular recycling or the trash. The Orange Recycling Committee will hold its popular “Paper Shredding & More” event on Saturday, Oct. 24 from 9 a.m. to noon at High Plains Community Center.

This free, rain-or-shine event is for Orange residents and offers several ways to recycle, reuse and properly dispose of household items.

Secure paper shredding is for documents containing personal, financial or medical information, including tax papers, bills, receipts and statements. This service is for residential use and is not intended for businesses or medical offices. Residents should bring papers in boxes or bags, and volunteers will retrieve them from vehicles. To help keep the line moving, remove papers from binders and take out any paper clips, binder clips and wire spines before arriving. There’s no need to remove staples or elastic bands.

Do not bring already-shredded paper,

newspapers or magazines, notebooks, junk mail, or other non-confidential papers. These materials can go into your regular recycling bin. Those wanting to watch their documents get shredded or keep their boxes should let a volunteer know and be prepared to wait a few minutes.

The on-site shredding is provided by Affordable Solutions of Orange and funded by the Orange Rotary Club. Residents may show their appreciation by donating to the Orange Rotary Scholarship Fund.

Mattresses and box springs of any size will be accepted for recycling through the Mattress Recycling Council’s Bye Bye Mattress program. For help getting items to the event, the Orange Lions Club offers home pickup for \$15 per mattress or boxspring (considered a charitable donation). Contact Ken Lenz at 203-795-3906 for details.

Do not bring futons, sofa beds or water-



ILENE MOYHER

bed mattresses, mattresses with bed bugs, wet, damaged or excessively soiled mattresses, mattress pads, toppers or sleeping bags.

Clothing and household items drop-off at the pavilion is where residents can give unwanted items a second life. The Orange Community Women will collect gently used clothing, shoes, accessories, household goods, toys, books and more. Items will be sold to Savers thrift store, with proceeds supporting OCW’s charitable work.

Bring clothes, shoes, accessories, household linens and stuffed animals in bags. Bring dishes, toys, small appliances, sporting goods, home décor, DVDs, CDs, VHS tapes and knick-knacks in boxes. Box books separately.

In addition, the Buy Nothing Orange group will host a free swap meet from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., where residents may bring useful items to give away and perhaps find something to take home. Items remaining at the

end will be donated to the OCW collection. Do not bring very large items to either the OCW dropoff or the swap meet.

Electronics recycling will include collection of old cell phones, tablets, computers, laptops, monitors, cables, wires, routers, televisions, VCRs and CD/DVD players. Residents may bring these items to the front parking lot, near the shredding truck. This service will be handled by Take 2 Electronics, the same company collecting e-waste at the Orange Transfer Station. This will keep hazardous materials found in electronic devices out of the waste stream.

Over the years, this twice-yearly event has kept more than 200,000 pounds of paper, hundreds of mattresses and box springs, many electronic devices and countless household items out of the waste stream. For more information, visit orangerecycles.com or follow the Orange Recycling Committee on Facebook at @ORCinCT.

Ilene Moyher is a member of the Orange Recycling Committee.

College Admissions

Don’t Fear The College Essay

A blank page. 650 words. Your life story. Admission to college at stake. Where to begin?

The personal statement (or more commonly referred to as the college essay) is part of the qualitative piece of a student’s application. Myth: the college essay is what determines admission to college. Truth: the transcript is what determines admission.

The academic profile is how colleges evaluate a student’s ability to be successful in the classroom. This consists of the strength of their schedule, how they performed in their classes, and their standardized test scores. These are the quantitative pieces of the application. If a student is strong academically, then the admissions committee will evaluate the qualitative pieces of the application collectively to determine admission. These pieces include the activities resume, letters of recommendation and the essay.

Never in the history of college admissions has a student’s essay single-handedly decided a student’s admission. For example, if a student has a very strong academic profile and resume with an average essay, they are like-

ly to still be offered admission. Conversely, if a student has an especially compelling essay but a very weak academic profile, they are still likely to be denied admission.

However, if a student falls in the middle of an applicant pool and the admissions committee is torn between “admit” or “waitlist,” it is likely that the essay, along with the resume and recommendation letters, could make a difference in admission.

So how do you navigate writing the college essay? I recommend remembering the three P’s: passion, personality and proofread.

It’s important to treat this essay as a 650-word opportunity to share something about yourself that the admissions committee cannot learn about you elsewhere in your application. What is so central to who you are that it would be a miss if the committee didn’t know this thing about you? What do you want colleges to know about you from your essay? Committees are trying to learn what type of



NICOLE KELMAN

student, roommate and alumnus you will be from reading your essay.

Include your personality in your writing. If you are a funny, witty teenager, that should shine through in your writing. This is a creative writing piece; students can be candid in their writing and showcase imagery and emotion throughout.

Lastly, please proofread. Make sure you do not include the name of a college in your paper and ensure it is free of all spelling and grammatical errors. Grammarly is a great tool to use.

Colleges will easily be able to tell if you used AI to write the paper. Many colleges are now acknowledging that students will likely use AI to write essays, but they are suggesting parameters. Feel free to use AI to help brainstorm topic ideas, organize an outline or check grammar, but do not use it to write the paper itself.

Parents, please also keep in mind that this paper needs to sound like a 17-year-old wrote it and is consistent with their other writing. If you are helping your student edit their essay,

make sure the language used is appropriate for your student and doesn’t sound like an adult was assisting them.

While the college essay may feel like a challenging assignment, it will not be the determining factor in your admission. This should be a fun, creative piece for you to showcase your personality and passion.

Nicole Kelman is a college admissions expert and has been working in the field for almost 20 years. She served as a director of undergraduate admissions for 10 years at four top selective universities in the Northeast. She holds a master of science in higher education administration and is a member of the Independent Educational Consultants Association. Leading college admissions committees has given her much insight into the decision-making process of admissions offices. She is also a native of Orange and an Amity High School graduate. She can be reached at nicole@needucation-consultants.com.

Flooring & Decor

Creating Beautiful Spaces Through Thoughtful Design

A beautiful home is more than a collection of furniture, finishes and decorative objects. It is a reflection of how we live. It shows how we gather, relax, entertain, work and create memories.

The art of living begins with creating spaces that feel intentional. We want it to be personal and beautiful, while also supporting the way we move through everyday life.

The art of interior design gives us the opportunity to transform our surroundings into something more meaningful. The most successful spaces are not simply designed to look beautiful in a photograph; they are designed to feel beautiful when you live in them.

Some of the most impactful design decisions begin from the ground up. Flooring is one of the largest visual elements in a home, yet it is often one of the first things overlooked. The right flooring establishes the foundation for everything that follows: influencing the color palette, furniture selections, architectural details and overall feeling of a room.

Whether your style is warm and traditional, modern and sophisticated, relaxed and organic or somewhere in between, flooring can help

define the character of an entire space.

When beginning a project, we encourage our clients to think beyond simply choosing a color or material. Start by understanding the space itself. What is the primary purpose of the room? Is it a high-traffic area? Will the flooring continue into adjoining rooms? How does the space need to function for your household?

Lifestyle and performance are equally important. Do you have children or pets? How much maintenance are you comfortable with? Is stain resistance a priority? These practical considerations can help narrow the choices and ensure that the finished design works as beautifully as it looks.

Then comes the fun part: the aesthetic. What do you want the space to feel like? Warm and inviting? Refined and luxurious? Clean and contemporary? Relaxed and organic? Flooring can set the tone before a single piece of furniture enters the room.



CAROLINA & ANNAMARIE AMORE

Pattern is another opportunity to make a statement. Classic layouts such as herringbone, chevron and basketweave can add architectural interest and dimension, while wider planks and natural textures can create a more relaxed, contemporary feel.

With today’s incredible variety of materials, colors, patterns and finishes, there are countless ways to create a distinctive space that feels uniquely yours.

Thoughtful design also means thoughtful budgeting. Establishing a budget before beginning a project allows you to make intentional decisions and prioritize the elements that matter most. A beautiful design does not have to mean an extravagant budget. With the right planning and product selections, you can achieve a sophisticated, cohesive look while staying within your budgetary comfort zone.

For most families, the ideal home balances beauty with real life. While a Pinterest inspired living space is beautiful, it is rarely

practical. A busy household may need durable, easy-to-maintain flooring that can stand up to everyday activity. Someone who loves to entertain might gravitate toward a dramatic floor that becomes a conversation piece. Others may want their home to feel like a retreat, choosing soft textures, warm wood tones, calming colors and natural materials.

Ultimately, good design is not about following every trend or recreating a room you’ve seen online. It is about creating a space that feels right for you. Your home should support your lifestyle, reflect your personality and make everyday moments feel a little more special.

The art of living is found in those details: the floors beneath our feet, the colors that surround us, the textures we touch and the spaces where life unfolds. When thoughtful design meets functionality, a house becomes more than a beautiful space. It becomes home.

Carolina and Annamarie Amore run Amore Flooring Design Center in West Haven. The center can be reached at 203-553-9595.

Travel Matters

Canal Barge Cruise In Belgium

This canal cruise is a wonderful combination between old-world Belgium and new-world technology on the Belgium canals.

The canal barge holds 20 people in 10 small cabins with a beautiful lounge and dining room. The chefs traditionally are retired from Michelin-star restaurants, and there's a crew of six including captain, purser, wait-staff and housekeeping. There is a spacious top sundeck plus an open-air deck in the bow of the ship with a hot tub onboard.

We chartered the ship for a group of friends, but you can also join an existing sailing in Belgium or on six different canals in France including the upper Loire, Alsace region or the south of France.

We started out from Halle, about 40 minutes from Brussels, where we enjoyed a beautiful tour of the Grand Palace with the city hall (started in the 1400s) framed by the

Guild Houses of the 17th century.

We enriched our historical tour with cultural stops at The Friet Museum (where we learned that Belgium invented the fries – not France). We enjoyed a chocolate making workshop of Belgian praline chocolates where we got to taste our accomplishments.

A visit to Brussels would not be complete without a beer workshop by Dr. Beer. We sampled local favorites: lambic (lager infused with sour cherries) and gueuze (a sour beer). Following those two were Saison and Trappist with Roquefort, which has an after-dinner aperitif quality to it. There are over 300 Belgian beers, each with their own special glass.

The six-night barge trip is comprised of



KAREN
QUINN-
PANZER

tours to local towns and cities such as Mons, Bruges and Ghent, as well as scenic sailing on the canals. All meals and beverages are provided onboard.

Back on the canal, we experienced two engineering marvels in one afternoon which replaced many older locks. They saved a lot of time and water and were quite interesting to behold.

The Ronquières inclined plane allowed our barge to slide over a significant difference in elevation over a 1,432-meter slope (about 4,700 feet). It's sort of like an escalator for barges operated by two rail-mounted tanks with a 5,500-ton counterweight.

Just when we thought we had never seen anything as amazing as this, a few hours lat-

er we came to a huge monolith in the middle of the canal known as the Strépy-Thieu boat lift on the Canal du Centre in the province of Hainaut, which took 20 years to finance and build. This was completed in 2002 to replace four boat lifts and two locks, and now accommodates 1,350-ton vessels. The lift is 383 feet high and weighs 220,000 tons to create an "elevator" for barges.

You can combine these barge trips with land stays pre and post-cruise in Brussels and Ghent, or nearby Paris.

Karen Quinn-Panzer is the owner of Dream Vacations Quinn Panzer Travel. She can be reached at kpanzer@dreamvacations.com or 203-647-3107.

Wine Talk

Some Wines From The Iberian Peninsula

With the coming of fall, it is time to try some wines from the Iberian Peninsula. These wines are generally big and hearty and great for drinking on cool fall nights.

Here are some examples of wines from Spain and Portugal. The wine quality may surprise you and the difference in the wine regions will definitely change some of your wine drinking habits. Even the white wines are big wines, and until you experiment you may not know what you are missing.

Spanish Wines

Spain has 3 million acres planted in wine grapes, making Spain the third-largest wine producing nation in the world be-

hind Italy and France. The country is second in wine exports and ninth in worldwide production, with Spaniards drinking 5.7 US gallons per person.

The country produces a wide variety of grapes, but 88 percent of its wine is made from 20 percent of its grapes.

The biggest red wines are Tempranillo, Bobal, Garnacha and Monastrell. Major white wines include Albarino (which is my favorite), Airen, Verdejo, Palomino and Macabeo. There are three major Cava grapes used to make sparkling



RAYMOND
SPAZIANI

wine. They are Parellada, Xarel-lo and Macabeo.

Portuguese Wines

Portugal has a rich wine history, just like Spain. When it comes to red wines, if you like Tempranillo, try Dao. If you like Cabernet Sauvignon try Dauro. The most popular white wine from Portugal is Vinho Verde.

Portugal makes a wide variety of fortified wines. Be sure to try them before buying them.

Port is quite popular, and age is the key. A 40-year-old port can cost you \$150-\$200.

Portugal has many wine regions, so try the same wines from different regions and you may be in for a nice surprise.

Ray Spaziani is the former chapter director for 25 years of the New Haven Chapter of the American Wine Society. He is a certified wine educator who worked for the American Wine Society, Amete de Vino and Winemaker Magazine judging wines and conducting wine judging. He is an award-winning home wine maker and has written wine articles for newspapers and magazines for the past 20 years. Spaziani teaches wine classes for the Milford Board of Education at Citrus Restaurant in Milford. Email Ray with wine questions and anything wine at realestatepro1000@gmail.com.

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Insuring Your Future

What’s Good About Insurance Companies?

I recently saw two billboards with the following message: “Insurance companies are great at...’Keeping your money.’”

Now that premium increases for next year have been announced, along with notice of Medicare Advantage insurers leaving the state, many people are asking why?

To put it in perspective, think about how everything else has increased in price: gasoline, groceries, utilities, housing, etc. Each area of the state also does not have the same cost of living. Housing prices in Fairfield County are generally higher than in New Haven or Hartford counties. A gallon of gas is more expensive on the Merritt Parkway or I-95 than at Costco.

The cost of medical care is no exception. While it is very difficult to sort out the economics of the health industry, there are a few basic issues that contribute to the current changes.

Government support was reduced and financial responsibility for drug costs shifted. In 2026, the income eligibility for tax credits on the health exchange for individual insurance returned to pre-Income Reduction Act levels. As a result, people who previously qualified for an advanced premium tax credit which reduced monthly premiums were now responsible for the entire premium. This is known as falling off the “premium cliff.”

For Medicare Part D retail prescriptions, the biggest reimbursement changes also came from the IRA and part D redesign. While it reduced the total out-of-pocket costs for prescriptions for the Medicare population, those costs were partially absorbed by the insurance companies. Those compa-



TRISH PEARSON

nies in turn are now passing a portion of those expenses back onto the consumer in the form of premium increases for prescription drug and Medicare Advantage plans.

The biggest driver to premium increases is often the underlying cost of medical care. Hospitals, outpatient centers and physician groups are charging more for services. Healthcare labor costs are increasing due to shortages of medical professionals and clinical staff. Insurers pass those higher expected claim costs into premiums.

Drug costs are a growing share of employer health spending. The cost for specialty drugs for cancer or autoimmune diseases can cost tens of thousands of dollars annually per patient. More people also have insurance and are using more healthcare services now that were delayed during the pandemic years. Insurers’ price premiums are based on expected future use.

Medical advances are a double-edged sword. Improved technology used to diagnose and treat illnesses are lifesaving – but at a cost. New drugs that treat serious medical conditions extend and save lives – but at a cost. The medical industry is no different than the auto industry in that the purchase price for a car in 2027 will be higher than in 2026.

Unlike a new automobile, which is usually a discretionary purchase, health insurance is a necessity. We only have one body, so we better take good care of it.

Trish Pearson is a licensed independent insurance agent and certified long term care specialist. Contact her at 203-605-4851 or trishpearson281@gmail.com.

Milford Tech
(Continued From 1)

and around the country. Revelations of police abusing the technology, along with concerns about privacy and Fourth Amendment rights have driven much of the debate.

Flock in particular has been scrutinized because of its networked approach that allows information sharing between cameras, departments and other entities.

Police have generally supported the technology as an invaluable tool to solve crimes and catch traffic violations.

Mello has been a vocal defender of license plate readers. He cited their use in helping to catch a suspect in a June home invasion in which a 69-year-old man was killed and his wife shot in the head.

Yet Mello has acknowledged the sentiment in Milford and around the state. He chairs the Police Officer Standards and Training Council, which in late September released even stricter standards for the use of license plate readers that goes beyond restrictions passed by the state legislature earlier this year.

Mello also faced an instance of Flock misusing images of him in late September when the company repurposed footage of him to promote its 2026 conference.

“I did not agree to its use for that purpose. Appearing in a vendor’s video is not an endorsement. It does not change how this department writes policy, and what products or services we use,” Mello said in a statement.

The Board of Aldermen’s effort to create the Public Safety Technology Review Committee on Sept. 14 took multiple turns, as several board members moved to impose an immediate moratorium on all the surveillance cameras while a review was conducted. Alderman Win Smith III went further, proposing an amendment that would have terminated the programs altogether. That measure failed.

“We don’t need a technology review committee. If we terminate the cameras, the committee is not needed,” Smith said.

Even as the review committee was being formed, the scope of its work expanded to include police use of drone technology. Drones come equipped with cameras that can also be used for surveillance, and Milford already has at least two drones in operation.

“As bad as red light cameras are, mounting cameras onto drones and having them flown around our city should be for all of us wholly disturbing,” Alderman Win Smith Jr. said. “Whatever they can say about having a diminished expectation of privacy in public places like roads, maybe that’s true. But I think we all have a strong expectation that we’re not going to be surveilled by our government. And this is a potential surveillance of citizens from the moment you walk out your door.”

Other cities have also looked askance at drone programs for first responders. Bridgeport in May postponed a decision on whether to allow the devices.



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Greetings from Woodbridge

Tunnel Vision Narrows Beecher Decision

Traveling home from Hartford today to our little town of Woodbridge, Route 15 carries us through Heroes Tunnel – 1,200 feet straight through West Rock. Moments later, we are back in familiar territory.

It seems an especially fitting passage: so many decisions made under the Capitol dome eventually find their way down the parkway to us, affecting everything from our schools and roads to how much of a major local project the state may help us pay for.

Only the old-timers among us may remember what this corner of town looked like when the West Rock Tunnel was being built in 1948 and 1949. I wrote about that chapter of Woodbridge history – alongside the photographs showing what things looked like before, during and after construction – at [TownHistory.org](#) not too long ago.

Tunnels can be an efficient way to get us where we want to go. But they can also narrow our view. Once inside, the walls close in, the road ahead becomes limited as other possible routes disappear from sight. Hence the expression “tunnel vision.”

The subject of tunnels – and what they represent – came to mind again this week while watching the Sept. 23 special meeting of the Board of Selectmen. As the selectmen considered whether to advance a proposal to demolish and rebuild Beecher Road School after several years of study, a particularly

apt question came to mind: Has the town’s planning process developed tunnel vision about Beecher?

After a pleasantly small-town beginning – recognition of our Police Officer of the Year, and talk of Girl Scout cookie and Boy Scout Christmas tree sales – the meeting grew contentious. Soon, a motion was made to call the question and abruptly end discussion. The selectmen voted 4-2 along party lines to set an Oct. 6 special town meeting and a referendum on Oct. 13.

So the question now belongs to the voters. And with the referendum only days away, a fundamental question remains: Do voters have all the information they need to make such a consequential decision?

If approved, the \$118.5 million project would also commit Woodbridge to a significant expansion of pre-K. The proposal adds six classrooms to accommodate 96 children – essentially a universal pre-K offering – qualifying the project for an additional 15 percent state reimbursement. Yet no estimate has been presented of the additional operating costs or their impact on future budgets.

Another piece is missing: an apples-to-apples comparison.



SHIELA MCCREVEN

Voters are now being told quite explicitly that their choice is between spending \$45 million to \$60 million to keep the existing Beecher building operational, or approving the project for a brand-new school at a net cost of \$55.5 million – after anticipated, but not guaranteed, state reimbursement.

But those numbers are not calculated on the same basis. The \$55.5 million is the estimated cost after anticipated state grants; the \$45 million to \$60 million repair estimate is a gross figure, without deducting any reimbursement that would be available for eligible work.

More fundamentally, the repair estimate is not the price of an alternative project designed to meet Beecher’s needs differently.

That is what the two out-voted selectmen at the Sept. 23 meeting were asking the town to explore. They made clear that they were not asking to revisit the option that would have partially demolished the school but retained the rotunda and other areas requiring extensive ADA modifications, while “gut-renovating” other retained portions – scrapping much of the 2016 renovation work.

I was particularly interested when local architect David Barkin recently toured Beecher and asked a different question: What if we kept and repaired the portions worth keeping, removed those presenting the greatest

problems, and added only the space needed for the proposed pre-K expansion? No such alternative appears to have been developed and priced.

When I chaired the Woodbridge Board of Education, Barkin served as vice chairman and led our Facilities Committee, bringing both a deep commitment to our schools and his professional experience to the role. In his recent proposal he makes an important point about sustainability that can get lost when we talk about replacing an aging building: one of the most sustainable things is to continue using and investing in sound construction that already exists.

Some of us may be old-timers, but experience has taught us the value of looking carefully at alternatives before committing to a future path. As our community approaches this important decision, let’s ask whether the other roads were given the same careful consideration – and if not, take the time to do so.

Sheila McCreven is a Woodbridge resident and publisher of the Woodbridge Town Chronicle, an independent hyper-local news publication covering government, schools, and community life. She’s also the founder of TownHistory.org, a website dedicated to preserving local history through research and storytelling. Read more about her at <https://about.me/sheilamccreven>.

Boy Scout Food Drive Kicking Off In Woodbridge

The annual town-wide Boy Scout Food Drive to benefit the Woodbridge Food Pantry will take place on Saturday, Nov. 7.

Each year the Boy Scouts collect thousands of pounds of food for the benefit of

Woodbridge residents in need. Last year they collected three tons of non-perishable items.

Flyers with additional information will be mailed to Woodbridge residents.

Woodbridge Offering Naloxone Training Session

Woodbridge Center members and town employees can attend a free naloxone training session at the Woodbridge Center with Director Kimberly Rihel on Nov. 6 at 10 a.m.

Learn the signs of an opioid overdose, how to administer naloxone, and more about the opioid crisis. Naloxone will be supplied to Woodbridge residents.

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Bless His Overzealous Heart

Our toaster oven is very old. It looks worn and is no longer dependable. If you actually desire that your bread or bagel be crispy on both sides, you must commit to a process. This will require clearing your schedule and being present for the whole ordeal. You will also need a timer, a long-handled pair of plastic tongs and a folded paper towel.

Upon hearing me complain about this for the sixteen hundredth time, my husband, Harvey, surprised me with a new Black & Decker stainless steel toaster oven the size of a refrigerator. He had to rent a dolly, drive on the grass and pull up to the front door in order to haul it into the house.

He was beaming. I was horrified. Harvey's new gleaming buddy was so enormous that

he couldn't lift it out of the box. It had to be rolled onto its side and slid out horizontally.

As he worked, he ran down the list of time saving tasks I could expect from this new kitchen miracle. Not only does it perfectly toast six slices of bread, it defrosts, roasts, grills, purees, pours you a drink, vacuums the blinds and bakes wedding cakes.

My heart sank. The monstrosity did not fit into the area that was vacated by our defunct appliance. My precious counter space right next to the stove was gone. This was my veggie cutting area, my batter pouring place and the home of my beloved knife



BONNIE FEUER

block.

Before I could say anything, Harvey pulled a large plastic bag from the box. It held a grill plate, a screen, three metal racks, two trays, a sack of gadgets and a two-inch-thick user's guide with bookmarks.

I only wanted toast.

When I went into the kitchen this morning, Harvey was already gazing lovingly at his silver friend.

"Before you plan a future with that thing, we have to talk," I announced.

I had lost sleep over how to let him down, as I know how children become attached to

new toys.

"Bigger is not always better," I offered, and explained why we cannot keep the hideous imposter. I told him he was wonderful and generous and I appreciate where his heart is – but again, I only wanted toast.

I do hope he maintains the same over the top enthusiasm the next time I need a new car.

Bonnie Feuer is a published author and former columnist (thrilled to be back). Her happy place is the middle of an essay, where she creates stories and shares anecdotes pertaining to empathy, humor and her favorite emotion - gratitude. She can be reached at bon53@yahoo.com.

Your Health

Staying Ahead Of Mosquito-Borne Illness In Orange

As summer draws to a close and fall begins, mosquitoes remain an important public health concern throughout the state. While mosquito activity generally declines as temperatures fall, mosquito-borne diseases such as West Nile virus and eastern equine encephalitis can continue to pose a risk until sustained cooler temperatures reduce mosquito activity.

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, working with the Connecticut Department of Public Health and local health departments, conducts statewide mosquito trapping and testing to identify mosquito species and monitor the circulation of mosquito-borne viruses. CAES operates approximately 108 permanent mosquito-trapping stations in 88 Connecticut municipalities.

For example, CAES maintains a designat-

ed mosquito-trapping station in Orange at Meeting House Lane. Mosquitoes collected at these stations are identified by species and then tested for viruses such as WNV and EEE.

As of the Sept. 22 CAES update, WNV-infected mosquitoes have been detected in 45 Connecticut towns this year, including Orange. This means that the virus is circulating in mosquito populations in those communities and that residents should take appropriate precautions to reduce mosquito bites.

What can Orange residents do? Mosquito surveillance is only one component of prevention. Residents can reduce their risk by taking several practical steps.



DR. AMIR MOHAMMAD

- Avoid mosquito bites by minimizing outdoor activities during periods when mosquitoes are most active, particularly from dusk through dawn. Wear long sleeves, long pants, socks and shoes when outdoors.
- Use an EPA-registered insect repellent. For example, clothing and outdoor gear can also be treated with permethrin products designed for that purpose. Permethrin intended for clothing should not be applied directly to skin.
- Check window and door screens and repair holes or gaps to keep mosquitoes outside.
- Eliminate standing water. Empty, scrub, turn over, cover or otherwise eliminate con-

tainers that collect water once a week. This includes flowerpot saucers, buckets, bird-baths, clogged gutters, wheelbarrows, discarded tires and other water-holding containers.

- Swimming pools should be properly maintained, and rain barrels and other water-storage containers should be securely covered.

As we enjoy New England's beautiful autumn/fall season, let us continue to stay informed and vigilant, taking simple steps to protect ourselves, our families and our community.

Dr. Amir Mohammad is the Director of Public Health for the town of Orange.

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Book Reviews

Parton’s Imagination Library Legacy

The world lost – and Heaven gained – an angel on Aug. 25 when Dolly Parton passed away.

There is no doubt that she was a music legend: 11 Grammy Awards, three Emmy Awards, 25 number one country hits, 44 top-10 country albums and inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2022. She wrote the music for the film 9 to 5, which earned her Grammys for Best Female Country Performance and Best Country Song. Islands In The Stream, her duet with the great Kenny Rogers, stayed at the top of the pop charts for an amazing six weeks.

There is so much more to Parton than her incredible musical talent. She was an amazing philanthropist, donating money to a variety of causes. Dollywood, an entertainment park and resort, draws millions of visitors each year and provides thousands of jobs for local residents. She created the Dollywood Foundation in 1981, whose aim was to improve educational outcomes for children in her home county in Sevier, Tennessee. Included in the foundation is the iHeartDogs program, which provides meals to dogs with

all of the proceeds going back into the program.

The biggest part of the foundation is the Imagination Library. She founded the library in 1995 in honor of her father, who never learned to read or write. According to the library’s website as of this writing, 3,197,250 children have been registered and 332,411,218 books have been distributed to children in Australia, Canada, Ireland, England and the US.

Amy Slovic of the Middletown Library, which is one of Connecticut’s libraries involved with the program, explained that from birth to age 5 a child receives a book a month. At age 5 they receive a letter from Parton thanking them for their participation and encouraging them to continue reading. In Connecticut, 5,579 children have benefited from the program.

Slovic said that parents and children adore the program. Kids especially love getting a monthly package with their name on it. Slovic believes (as Parton did) that getting



CARMELA DEVITO

children reading at an early age spurs them on to continue reading as they get older. (I love seeing the little ones leaving the Milford Public Library with stacks of books and big smiles on their faces.)

In a press release, Eric Harrison, president and CEO of United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut, said that United Way agrees with Parton that investing in a child’s literacy would have a positive lifelong impact on that child’s life. He said that the Imagination Library is a proven program that improves literacy skills for young children and helps to end cycles of poverty.

In a phone conversation, Harrison said the program is a great example of Parton being committed to community and reading.

I was interested in learning how Connecticut became involved with the program. He reported that the past president of the Connecticut chapter of United Way had worked with Parton at a children’s hospital in Ten-

nessee. When he moved to Connecticut, he contacted Parton, and thus the Imagination Library came to the state.

Harrison’s biggest concern in expanding the program throughout the state is funding. With budget cuts across state and federal programs, the best way to ensure the program continues is through charitable donations.

Director of Communications for Gov. Ned Lamont Cathryn Vulman said, “Dolly Parton was a true champion of literacy whose generosity and commitment to children helped instill a lifelong love of reading in generations of children. Governor Lamont shares that commitment and firmly believes that every child should have the opportunity to develop a lifelong love of reading and learning.”

Visit the library’s website at imagination-library.com to get a better understanding of the program.

Carmela DeVito, a voracious reader with a journalism degree from Marquette University, is a retired social worker and a member of the Friends of the Milford Library.

Orange Board of Finance

School Construction Grants Are Saving Towns Millions

If you’re a mayor, first selectmen or superintendent of schools, you better be dialed into the state’s school construction grant program. It’s now at the forefront of discussion with every official in Connecticut.

Based on today’s volatile economic market conditions and with the 10-year Treasury yield now over 5 percent for the first time since 2007, there are a lot of leaders considering various financing options. They’re wondering whether they can move forward with bonding for large capital projects with the borrowing rates today.

Orange is a AAA-rated town by S&P on Wall Street. Eight months ago, a AAA-rated town could have gotten a 3.5 percent interest rate on a \$20 million bond issuance. Today, that same bond will likely be between 4 and 4.25 percent. That raises the cost to borrow \$20 million by between \$1.1 million and \$1.6 million over the life of the loan.

What drives the higher cost of borrowing? First, the Federal Reserve increased its target federal funds interest rate by 0.25 percent to a range of 3.75 percent to 4 percent, a decision most investors expected. It was the first

Fed rate hike in more than three years, and there will be surely more over the next year.

Second, rising oil prices this year drove rate hike expectations higher, in turn pushing both short- and long-term bond yields up.

Longer-term inflation expectations remain well-anchored, with investors anticipating that rate hikes will eventually bring inflation under control.

Fortunately, there is some good news in Connecticut. The state provides school construction reimbursement on eligible expenditures for municipalities that have an approved capital plan. Compared with other states, Connecticut has a substantial role in capital construction and is somewhat unique in that its formula is based on redistributing funding toward municipalities with lower property and income wealth.

For example, Meriden is AA rated by S&P. The city recently approved a new elementary school for \$122 million. That project has a 75 percent reimbursement on all eligible



KEVIN McNABOLA

expenditures for construction, equating to a \$91.5 million state reimbursement.

Conversely, Woodbridge has a higher bond rating at Aaa and is a more affluent community. In that town, a \$118.5 million elementary school replacement has a state reimbursement rate of just 38 percent, or \$45 million.

Connecticut recently passed legislation that incentivizes cities and towns to build new or renovate existing schools. There is also an additional 15 percent reimbursement if the school district builds a new school that includes additional square footage dedicated for pre-K. In Meriden that would be equal to a 91 percent reimbursement, and in Woodbridge it would be 53 percent.

If the state funds an additional \$17.8 million to Woodbridge for this dedicated square footage, the town saves \$7.8 million in interest that would normally be funded through the town’s operating budget.

Branford, which has the same AAA rating

as Orange, is renovating two existing elementary schools at a cost of \$196 million. Branford is receiving 72 percent state reimbursement which includes that additional 15 percent pre-K reimbursement. So Connecticut is funding \$141 million, and Branford’s share is only \$55 million bonded over 20 years. Branford saves \$11.3 million in interest for the project.

There has been a lot of discussion about the age of the elementary schools in Orange, with Racebrook School built in 1959, Turkey Hill in 1964, and Peck Place built in 1968. As a member of the Board of Finance, I can attest that there have been significant upgrades and investment throughout the past two decades. However, there needs to be a strategic plan for the future useful life of these schools.

If there was ever a time to take advantage of an opportunity to build a new school or renovate an existing school, that time is now.

Kevin McNabola is the chief financial officer for the city of Meriden and a member of the Orange Board of Finance.



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Orange Country Fair Gets Rolling



The Orange Country Fair returned to the High Plains Community Center fairgrounds on Sept. 19 and 20, featuring a variety of farm-themed activities for patrons. *Photos by Lexi Crocco.*

No Pirate Gold, But Trees Are Treasure On Charles Island

By Marilyn May

Even the most casual observer could see that the trees on Charles Island were beginning to thrive again this past summer. Its lush, dense forest was recovering after years of decline. That means new trees will again grow an upper canopy, creating nesting habitats for ospreys, egrets, glossy ibis and other birds.

There's no Capt. Kidd's treasure out there as local legends proclaim, but 1,000 trees are worth more than gold.

Thanks to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and hundreds of Milford volunteers, the island is healing and beginning to look healthy again. Neither the state nor Milford volunteers could do all the work, but together the partnership is getting the job done.

It's amazing that what started out as a two-person, citizen-led, grassroots effort will end up with the planting of 1,000 trees and the saving of a vital bird sanctuary. Not only that, but enough money for the project has been raised, and organizers Dolores Hannon and Bill Pursell have lined up all the volunteers needed to clear the island and do the planting. That's a success story in itself.

This past spring's planting brought the number of new trees to 784 that have been planted since about 2020. It will take three or four more fall and spring plantings to reach their goal.

"I was driving by Gulf Beach maybe about seven years ago, and I saw there was something wrong with the trees on the island," said Hannon, whose many phone calls to DEEP put her in touch with Pete Picone, a wildlife biologist for the state. "I kept calling and calling him and asking what was going on with the island."

Picone told her there was another person, Bill Pursell, who also kept calling about the same thing.

"Why don't the two of you get together, and then we'll all meet," Picone suggested.

When the three went out to Charles Island, Picone showed Pursell and Hannon what was going on. He wanted very much to restore the once-vibrant environment, but the few trees left were being destroyed by a fungus. An invasive, fast-growing vine commonly called mile-a-minute was covering and choking everything.

Picone told them the state had been trying to maintain and replant the land since 2014, but the work became overwhelming. He said the island was on a list of environmental issues that needed attention, but the state did not have the money to get new trees.

"So, I said, 'Listen, I can get the money,'" Hannon recalled. "I knew I could get the money, because Charles Island means so much to the people of Milford. I think people would donate."

"My name is very well known, because I taught in every school in Milford in the last 30 years," Hannon explained to Picone. "Let me put out a flyer and...oh, my God...I was deluged (with responses). I kept all the cards and letters with people asking how much money we needed."

People wrote about their memories. "Oh, I used to go out there when I was a kid," one said. Another wrote, "My father always told me it was his island, because his name was Charles."

Ever more confident she could raise the money, a Charles Island Reforestation LLC was formed. They circulated another flyer with information on how to donate or help. The Devon Rotary got on board, and with the help of the Milford Rotary, they raised \$45,000 for the project. Former Mayor Benjamin Blake also helped secure a grant. He even had t-shirts made up for the volunteers.

A plan began to emerge. Picone would oversee the work and advise the volunteers beginning in spring 2020. He got the state to lend a small boat (and life jackets) to transport volunteers and scheduled state workers to bring out heavy equipment to clear the land and dig holes for larger trees. The equipment was driven out on the tombolo (sandbar) when it was exposed at low tide.

Picone made a grid of the island and indicated where trees should be planted, while selecting species that could tolerate salt exposure and survive the cold, blustery winters. The best trees are the American sycamore, red maple, sassafras, red cedar, black cherry, American basswood and bitternut hickory. He inspects the health of every tree before it's taken to the island.

The rule on the island is "birds have priority." Reforestation is not done when the birds are nesting and raising their young. From late May until October, no foot traffic is allowed in



Volunteers and Department of Energy and Environmental Protection workers cleared the ground and fenced areas to keep deer away from new trees that have been planted on Charles Island off the Milford coast in recent years. Just 216 more trees to go to reach the goal of 1,000. Photo courtesy of Charles Island Restoration LLC.

the interior. But still, people ignore the warning signs. The state uses a drone to see if people are disturbing the birds, Hannon said. Also, Silver Sands State Park workers and lifeguards on shore keep watch, and if necessary, park workers go out and ask those people to leave.

Visitors may walk around the island's edge at any time, but because a full circuit can take an hour, they must plan around the tide before it covers the tombolo.

Wildlife control was another problem, so some 8-foot fences that the deer cannot jump over to get food had to be built. Deer are very good swimmers and are drawn by hunger.

"The only problem was that the mile-a-minute vine started crawling up on the fences," Hannon said. "So, then every time we went out, we had to spend more time stripping away as much of it as possible."

They realized that no matter how much weed was removed there would still be roots and seeds that would grow the next summer. The only solution was to spray the island. But that became a very complicated issue. The island is a bird sanctuary, and the Audubon Society did not want chemicals sprayed out there. It took a lot of research, but eventually the state and Audubon Society did agree on a spray product that would work. It can be used only three times a year.

"The mile-a-minute invasive will probably always still be there, but now we can control

it," Hannon said.

And then they saw that the island was hopping with rabbits – lots of rabbits that traveled along the tombolo and damaged early growth on trees. Plastic tree protectors were wrapped around the trunks so there wouldn't be enough food available to tempt the bunnies to hop back out there.

In a few years, when the 1,000 trees are planted, DEEP will again take over full responsibility for the area. But Hannon's work may not be done.

When the island's interior is open to the public, October through most of May, she said she would like to set up a self-guided educational walk designed with signs describing the flora and fauna.

"I come from a family of teachers," she said.

The walk could also have signs to remind people about the power of the Long Island Sound and the need to pay attention to the tide and weather when walking the tombolo. Even good swimmers can be swept off it by a wave and immediately end up over their heads with currents pulling them down.

Always remember, Hannon said, "When the wind's from the east, the Sound is a beast."

Marilyn May is a lifelong resident of Milford and is on the board of the Milford Historical Society.

RWA Accepting Applications For Emergency Responder Grants

The Regional Water Authority is accepting applications for its 2026 Emergency Responder Grant Program, offering grants of up to \$2,000 to fire departments and emergency service agencies serving communities across its service area.

"While our primary mission is delivering high-quality drinking water, the RWA also provides a lifeline for emergency services

like firefighting," said RWA President Sunder "Sunny" Lakshminarayan. "We collaborate closely with first responders daily, and we are proud to use this grant program to support the organizations safeguarding our communities, customers and employees."

Since launching in 2024, the RWA's Emergency Responder Grant Program has awarded more than \$30,000 to 23 local fire,

ambulance and emergency services organizations. Funding has supported the purchase of protective gear, thermal imaging cameras, training materials, rescue equipment and other essential resources.

Grant eligibility is limited to professional and volunteer fire and emergency service agencies that operate within the RWA's service territory. The maximum available

grant is \$2,000, which can be combined with other funding sources to supplement larger funding needs.

Eligible fire and emergency service organizations can apply using the form on the RWA's website. Grant applications will be accepted through Oct. 21, and winners will be announced on Oct. 27, ahead of National First Responders Day on Oct. 28.

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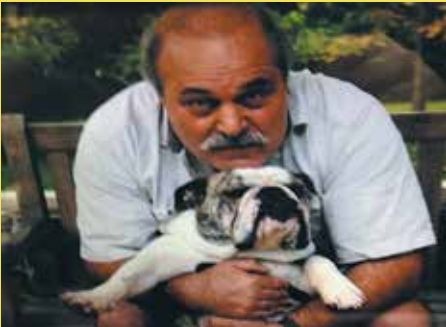
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Milford Ceremony Marks 25 Years Since 9/11



Milford marked the 25th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center Memorial Garden at Live Oaks Elementary School on Sept. 11. Photos by Robert Creigh.

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Members of the Orange Volunteer Fire Department on Sept. 11 held a ceremony at the Orange Town Green to honor firefighters and other first responders killed in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. *Photos by Lexi Crocco.*

Milford Performance Center is a 501(C)3 Organization

The Garden Spot

Get Ready For Fall

After such a hot and wet summer, we welcome the fall weather. Mid-to-late fall is a great time to plant trees, shrubs, bulbs and perennials. And many will be on sale as nurseries reduce their stock prior to shutting down for the winter.

It's also a good time for splitting and re-locating perennials. Perennials should be divided every few years so that the root structures remain healthy and blooms remain strong. Those with "fleshy" roots, such as peonies, daylilies, iris and Hosta are easily split and replanted in the fall. But they should not be split until several weeks have passed since their last bloom. Dig the entire plant up and then use a pitchfork, shovel or even a hand saw to split the clump into two or three separate plants. Put the new plants

in a bucket of water to remove loose soil and any insects that might be hiding in it. You can inspect the roots closely, and if there are any dead roots prune them off.

Now your new plants are ready to be planted. Plant them at the same depth that the original one was growing.

If any of your spring-blooming shrubs are crowded, this is also a good time to do some pruning and re-locating. Prune from the base of the shrub, rather than at the top. Avoid giving a "hair-cut." Most shrubs should be pruned into a Christmas tree shape, letting more sunlight and air into the center of the shrub to im-



PAT DRAY

prove plant health.

If a shrub is in the wrong place, either for plant health or aesthetics, you can transplant it. Make sure you dig up as much of the root ball as possible. The transplant hole should be the same depth as the original hole but twice the diameter. Water well, and push down, but don't compress the soil so that any air pockets are removed. You will need to deeply water the transplant several times a week until there is frost.

I recently transplanted my old foundation plantings of azalea and rhododendron to my woodland border where they are thriving. Remember "right plant in right place" so

that the new spot has the required sunlight and water requirements.

It's also time to plan a spring bulb garden. You can plant spring-blooming bulbs up until the ground is frozen. The "pointy" side is usually the side that goes up, and the planting depth is generally three times the height of the bulb. If you are in an area where you see a lot of deer, you should consider your tulips to be annuals.

Once you're finished with your pruning and transplanting, be sure to clean and sterilize your tools so that they are ready for use in the spring. Then sit down and relax.

Pat Dray is a past president of the Garden Club of Orange and a master gardener.

Time Management

Dealing Effectively With Difficult People

We encounter difficult people almost every day. They may be customers, coworkers, friends, family members or simply someone we happen to meet in a public place. Their behavior can increase our stress and decrease our productivity. Dealing with them can drain our time, emotional and physical energy, patience and ability to focus.

But here is the good news: In many situations, we have more control over the outcome than we realize. By changing how we respond, we can often prevent a difficult encounter from becoming a major problem – and sometimes even turn it into a positive and productive experience.

Here are three practical tactics for dealing effectively with difficult people.

1. Don't Take the Bait

Difficult people often invite us into a confrontation. They may raise their voice, criticize us, complain or make unreasonable demands. Our natural reaction may be to fight back. Don't.

When you respond emotionally, you give the other person control over your behavior. Instead, pause before responding. Lower your voice rather than raising it. Keep your words calm and your body language relaxed.

You might say, "I can see you're frustrated. Let's see what we can do about this."

Your objective is not to win an argument. It is to prevent the situation from escalating and move toward a productive outcome.

2. Ask Questions – and Listen

One of the most effective ways to defuse a difficult situation is to ask the right questions and then listen carefully to the answers.

A difficult person may be angry about one thing but actually concerned about something else. Perhaps they feel ignored, misunderstood, disrespected or that they have lost control of a situation.



DON WETMORE

Instead of immediately defending yourself, ask:

"What is the most important thing you'd like me to understand?"

"What would you like to see happen?"

"What can I do to help resolve this?"

Then listen. Don't interrupt. Don't prepare your rebuttal while they are talking. People are often more willing to cooperate once they feel that they have been heard.

3. Look for the Need Behind the Behavior

Difficult behavior usually has a reason behind it. That doesn't mean the behavior is appropriate, but understanding what is driving it can help you respond more effectively.

Some people need to feel respected. Others need information, control, reassurance, recognition or simply to know that someone

cares about their concern.

Rather than asking, "Why is this person being so difficult?" ask yourself, "What does this person need right now?"

Once you identify the need, you may be able to address the real problem rather than simply reacting to the behavior.

You cannot always control what another person says or does. But you can control your response.

The next time you encounter a difficult person, don't automatically match their negative energy. Stay calm, ask questions, listen and look for the need behind the behavior. You may be surprised at how quickly a difficult situation can become a cooperative one.

Don Wetmore is a certified business coach and the author of "The Productivity Handbook" and "Organizing Your Life." Contact him at 203-394-8216 or ctsem@msn.com.

Orange Housing
(Continued From 1)

growth targets to all of the regional councils of government by Dec. 1. By June 1, 2027, the councils of government must submit back to OPM a housing needs assessment and proposed allocation for each municipality of affordable housing goals.

Orange is part of the South Central Regional Council of Governments and could choose to opt out of the council's plan. If it does, then it would need to develop its own plan. In either case, the final plan would be approved by the OPM by 2029.

Once the plan goes into effect, the town has to submit annual progress reports.

Town Attorney Owen Weaver said the housing growth plan would be a document that "demonstrates and explains how a municipality is going to plan for and implement changes in their housing stock and how they're going to increase housing opportunities."

Weaver explained that the plan would cover four broad components: an inventory of developable land, a state and regional housing needs assessments, a suitability analysis of what housing might fit in the available spaces, and an implemen-

tation plan.

"Unfortunately, I don't think we can just sit back and say, 'Oh, is the [council of governments] plan going to be suitable for Orange,' which is one of the reasons why I'm recommending a working group," Weaver said.

Orange bills itself as a mainly rural community, although major thoroughfares run through it, including the Boston Post Road, I-95, the Wilbur Cross Parkway and Route 34. Most of its housing stock is single-family residential. It is decidedly less built up than some of the municipalities that surround it, such as Milford, West

Haven and Derby.

The town has in the past identified locations where denser housing could exist, particularly in the Boston Post Road corridor, but has also cited a lack of sewer systems and other limitations to restrict multifamily housing in other sections of town.

Developers have shown interest in building more apartments in Orange. A plan to create a 75-unit apartment building on Peck Lane behind the shopping plaza that contains the DSW store was set to be heard by the Inland Wetland and Water Courses Commission on Sept. 30.

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Woodbridge Center

The Power Of Vaccines

It's that time of year again: respiratory season. Soon our news cycles, social media and talk around town will center on the flu, COVID, RSV and other vaccines. There is so much information out there that it can be overwhelming.

Before we dive into which vaccines to consider, let's talk about why vaccines are important, especially for those over age 55.

The first vaccine ever given was developed by Dr. Edward Jenner in 1796 to protect against smallpox. For those of us too young to remember smallpox, it involves a high fever, severe fatigue, headache, intense back pain and a rash with fluid-filled blisters, along with a 30 percent risk of dying.

All really nasty business. But thanks to the vaccine, the last documented case was in 1977. The World Health Organization declared the disease eradicated on May 8, 1980. According to the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases, smallpox was the first and remains the only infectious disease eradicated in humans due to a global public health campaign. Smallpox no longer exists naturally anywhere in the entire world.

For 89 long years, the smallpox vaccine was the only vaccine used worldwide, as the science behind vaccines was limited. That all changed in 1885 with Louis Pasteur's discovery of a vaccine for rabies.

These discoveries laid the foundation for the continuous innovation in vaccine science over the last 230 years. Early in-

oculation practices involved giving people a small dose of the toxin to trigger an immune response. Vaccine technology has progressed; now inactivated or killed pathogens are used, making them safer for vulnerable populations that may not be able to tolerate even a minimal exposure to a virus or bacteria without dire effects.

An example of this technology is the annual flu vaccine. Messenger ribonucleic acid vaccines, famously created during COVID, highlight the most recent advancement in vaccine science. mRNA vaccines build a harmless piece of virus in your body, which trains your immune system to recognize and mount a defense if exposed to the infectious agent later.

Regardless of the technology, all vaccines have the same goal: to allow your body to develop defense mechanisms against the virus/bacteria to prevent severe infection, hospitalization or death. In fact, data from the Mayo Clinic collected since 2009 shows that the annual flu vaccine provides anywhere from 22-56 percent protection. This translates into millions of fewer illnesses annually.

According to the National Council on Aging, the American Medical Association, The American Academy of Family Physicians, Infectious Disease Society of America, the



KIMBERLY
RIHEL

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the US Department of Health and Human Services, the following vaccines are recommended for those over age 55 and covered by Medicare: the annual flu shot, shingles, pneumococcal, RSV, COVID and hepatitis B. There are various dosage recommendations, and the best place to explore your needs is with your physician.

Vaccines have safely prevented historically dangerous and debilitating illnesses for decades. For those of us entering our second chapter, seasonal vaccines can be especially important. As we age, changes in our immune system function and the impact of chronic health conditions increase the risk of severe illness and hospitalization from the flu, COVID and RSV. Additionally, the risk of complications and death from vaccine-preventable infections are higher in older adults.

Senior citizens are social, out in their communities and may unknowingly encounter someone who has a communicable infection without realizing it. Older adults may have grandchildren or even great-grandchildren who are not yet eligible to receive vaccines and be at risk for severe infection.

Receiving recommended annual vaccinations protects the individual and their friends, family and community from severe illness, potentially life-changing complica-

tions, and death.

While vaccines are a hot topic right now, there is a lot of false information circulating. I encourage everyone to consider receiving annual vaccines and to bring any questions or concerns to your physician. Physicians chose their profession because they care, endured 11 years of schooling and residency to become experts on evidence-based practice and have real, lived experience with infectious disease prevention. Your personal physician has the latest information regarding local respiratory trends and can best advise you.

Access is everything. Vaccines build a wall of defense against viruses and bacteria that want to make you sick.

Woodbridge Human Services is hosting vaccine clinics for center members, Woodbridge residents and town employees. They are scheduled for Oct. 9 and 23. Call 203-389-3429 to reserve a spot.

Kimberly Rihel, PT, MPH is the director of the Woodbridge Center and holds degrees in physical therapy and public health. The Woodbridge Center is a community space dedicated to promoting independence, creating community, supporting physical and emotional health, and lifelong learning for residents over the age of 55. For more information on programs and services, call the center at 203-389-3451 or email krihel@woodbridgect.gov.

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Milford Students Win In State Chess Competition



Sevillano. Two Milford students reached significant milestones in their chess journeys at the Connecticut State Chess Association’s 2026 Connecticut Summer Classical Tournament in Norwalk on Aug. 29.

Adrian Sevillano won the first place trophy in the New England Regional-rated section, just two days after starting at Harborside Middle School.

Sevillano began playing chess with Julianna and David Dawson from The Dawson Chess Academy in an after-school chess program at Orange Avenue Elementary School, where his fellow chess club members elected him president of the club. Shortly before graduating from Orange Avenue, he won a gold medal in their chess tournament.

Li. Louis Li also entered the tournament just two days after beginning at Joseph A. Foran High School. Li began with the Dawson Chess Academy through its group chess coaching program at the Margaret Egan Recreation Center in Milford while he was a student at Harborside Middle School.

Li went undefeated in Norwalk, finishing 4-0 and winning first place in the U800 dual-rated NER and US Chess Federation section.

Their accomplishments came from two different chess journeys, but both students had to do the same thing when tournament day arrived: sit across from unfamiliar opponents and make their own decisions over the chessboard.

Orange Garden Club Hosting Flower Design Workshop

The Garden Club of Orange will host its second annual Flowers with Friends event on Saturday, Nov. 21 from 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Holy Infant Education Center, 456 Racebrook Rd. in Orange. The afternoon will offer participants an opportunity to enjoy flowers, refreshments and fellowship while creating a seasonal centerpiece.

Each guest will receive step-by-step instruction from experienced flower designers and all the materials and tools needed to create a beautiful fresh floral centerpiece for the holiday season. The event is designed for both experienced arrangers and beginners who would enjoy an afternoon of creativity with friends.

The ticket price of \$85 also includes refreshments and dessert. Guests may participate in a raffle featuring handcrafted items.

Space is limited. To reserve a spot, email ginny.proestakes@gmail.com. The event is open to anyone in the community.

Milford Garden Club Hosting Wreath Making Demonstration

The Milford Garden Club will host Laura J. Scott on Tuesday, Oct. 13 for a wreath making demonstration.

Scott learned the art of wreath making from her father, and she has created a niche of her own in Connecticut.

The presentation begins at 1 p.m. and will be held at the DAR Chapter House, 55 Prospect St. in Milford.

The guest fee is \$10. To reserve your space, call-203-848-7459, email milfordgardenclubct@gmail.com or contact through the Facebook page at facebook.com/MilfordCtGardenClub.

Elton John, Billy Joel Songs to Be Performed at Case Memorial Library

The Friends of the Case Memorial Library will host an afternoon concert at the library featuring the hits of Elton John and Billy Joel on Saturday, Oct. 24.

Pianist and vocalist Jay Daniels will bring the music of these pop legends to life at 2 p.m. Daniels will celebrate their hits in his lively tribute, with storytelling to add a nostalgic depth to his renditions of their iconic songs.

The event is free and open to the public, but registration is required. Registration begins three weeks before the performance. Register at casememoriallibrary.org or by calling 203-891-2170. The library is located at 176 Tyler City Rd. in Orange.

For more local coverage, go to milford-orangetimes.com

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Cable Council Offering Media Scholarships

The Cable Advisory Council of Area 2 is offering two \$2,500 scholarships in memory of former longtime Chairperson Howard Jacobson open to residents of Milford, Orange and Woodbridge.

The CAC of Area 2 serves the towns of Fairfield, Bridgeport, Stratford, Milford, Orange and Woodbridge promotes quality community access television.

Applicants must be a high school or college student pursuing a career in film, mass communications, television, journalism or e-media. The selected students will each receive a scholarship to help further their education. They must be enrolled in high school, community college, college or university.

Applicants must be actively majoring in, taking classes or engaged in independent studies in one or more of the qualifying media fields for the fall/spring terms of 2026/2027. They must also be in good standing with their academic institution.

Entrants must submit an essay under 500 words describing their creative coursework, portfolio or project and how it relates to the scholarship award. Supplemental links to media projects are welcome. Winners will be selected based on their overall academic performance, portfolio and their personal statement.

The application deadline is Dec. 1. To apply, email info@cacarea2.com.

Woodbridge Musician To Perform In Bridgeport

Woodbridge resident and retired Stratford educator Garrett Stack will perform his show American Jukebox Live – Baby Boomer Classics at Bridgeport’s Bijou Theatre on Sunday, Oct. 11.

For the past 20 years Stack has hosted and produced his Saturday radio show called American Jukebox on WMNR-FM. Stack dusted off his old guitar after retirement and in 2019 he set out on a lifelong dream to perform for adults in adult settings. He started playing condo communities and nursing homes. Since 2021 he's booked into the Milford American Legion regularly. He has also performed at the North Haven Fair, summer concerts on the Woodbridge Green, private events and in the Catskills this summer.

Stack will present the music of the Baby Boom generation in a two-hour show at the Bijou. The live show is an offshoot of his radio program, except instead of playing records, he sings the songs with his guitars and uses additional electronic backing tracks.

The show covers rock & roll, pop, folk rock, country, soft rock – the stuff woven into the fabric of American culture of the late 50s, 60s and 70s. Examples include Elvis Presley, The Beatles, Carole King classics, Creedence, John Denver, The Eagles, Stevie Wonder, Willie Nelson and Johnny Cash.

The show begins at 4 p.m. The Bijou is located at 275 Fairfield Ave. For tickets and more information, go to bijoutheatre.net.

Or Shalom Hosts Shabbat At Gazebo



Congregation Or Shalom held its annual shabbat at the gazebo at High Plains Community Center in Orange on Sept. 4 to celebrate the transition of summer to autumn. *Photo courtesy of Congregation Or Shalom.*

Milford Resident, Woodbridge Employee Of Senior Facilities Recognized

An employee at Coachman Square in Woodbridge and a resident at Carriage Green in Milford are among those who were recently recognized in the 2026 Connecticut Assisted Living Association Outstanding Employee Service and Outstanding Resident Accomplishment Awards.

The annual CALA awards celebrate individuals who exemplify the best of senior living in Connecticut.

Coachman Square Resident Care Director Lindsay Ressler was a recipient of the Outstanding Employee Service Award, which recognizes associates whose dedication and contributions make a meaningful difference in the lives of residents and their senior living communities.

Doris McCarthy of Carriage Green at Mil-

ford received the Outstanding Resident Accomplishment Award, which celebrates residents whose achievements, talents, service and involvement have had a positive impact on their communities and others.

Both facilities are part of Benchmark Senior Living.

“To have so many of our associates and residents recognized across Connecticut is incredibly meaningful,” said Tom Grape, founder, chairman and CEO of Benchmark. “Our communities are built around people and the relationships they create. These associates demonstrate every day what it means to be called to care, while our residents continue to inspire us with the ways they contribute, connect and enrich the lives of those around them. We couldn’t be prouder of all of them.”

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Beecher Road School (Continued From 1)

through the Town Clerk’s Office.

The plan up for a vote would raze the existing school and construct a new, state-of-the-art school in its place, along with a new Board of Education central office. The school would also include dedicated pre-K classrooms.

If the plan is approved by voters, the state is set to reimburse about half of the cost. Woodbridge taxpayers would be on the hook for approximately \$55.5 million. The town would seek bonding for that portion, repaying it with interest over a number of years.

The school referendum is the culmination of a multi-year process during which the Beecher Building Committee and other town officials considered multiple options for bringing the school up to date.

There is little doubt that the school as it stands today can’t meet the needs of Woodbridge students. The main portion of the building was constructed in 1960, with some additions added subsequently. The existing building lacks enough classrooms, particularly as Woodbridge’s student population is projected to grow. It does not meet Americans with Disabilities Act standards. The current infrastructure would need substantial investment to stay in operation.

The more contentious question has been over whether an entirely new building should be built, or whether major renovations would be a better option.

Though the building committee had ultimately decided in favor of a full replacement, some residents and town officials have voiced disagreement with that conclusion.

Several members of the Board of Selectmen expressed concern about how rising federal interest rates and construction costs would impact taxpayers.

“It’s not being advertised as an unknown,” said Selectwoman Andrea Urbano of the projected interest payments. “So the voters don’t think it’s an unknown.”

First Selectman Mica Cardozo pushed

back at that characterization, saying that the numbers given were derived in consultation with the town’s financial adviser.

“It’s based on what we understand the situation to be right now,” he said. “You have a finite amount of information.”

“I want to put this out there as a marker of concern,” Selectwoman Amey Marrella said, “so that we all know going forward we should be doing a very good job of explaining things to people.”

Marrella also criticized the way that the option to repair the school was presented has been presented to the public, noting that it did not show cost reductions from possible reimbursement grants.

“Certain categories of things that are on here would be subject to grant reimbursement,” she noted.

However, Selectwoman Maria Madonick pointed out that grant rules can change from year to year.

“Some years things aren’t reimbursable, and some years things are. So it was very difficult for them when they took that into consideration to predict which costs of those would be reimbursable in any given year,” she said.

That didn’t satisfy Marrella, who noted that state grants also change from year to year for a full school rebuild, yet those reimbursements were included. She argued that the building committee had not sufficiently considered compromise solutions that might have cost taxpayers less.

Madonick explained that the committee had explored various versions of a renovation or partial rebuild.

“It is much more expensive on a cost per square footage to do an option like that,” she said.

“The issue of affordability and how much debt could be taken on wasn’t factored in in terms of then figuring out what were the options that were going to be costed,” Marrella responded.

“If we had built a school 20 years ago, when it was on the table to be done, we would not be in the situation that we are now,” Cardozo said. “I think the building committee has done their job, has identified what the best options are here.”

Milford Public Library Events

The Milford Public Library is located at 57 New Haven Ave. in Milford. Visit milford-library.org for more information about Milford Public Library book clubs, online author talks and other upcoming programs, as well as to register for events.

Tuesday Movie Matinees
Tuesday, Oct. 6 and Oct. 20 at 2 p.m.
Visit milfordlibrary.org for more details.

Wicked Strange New England with Jeff Belanger
Wednesday, Oct. 7 at 6:30 p.m.
New England is a strange place full of ghosts, monsters, aliens, weird history and roadside oddities that make this region like no other. For more than 25 years, Emmy-nominated host and writer Jeff Belanger has been exploring the unexplained. Drawing from hundreds of strange tales he has chronicled over the years as one of the world’s foremost storytellers and researchers of lore and legend, Belanger’s program offers a different set of stories every time it’s offered.

Comedy Improv Slam: An Intro to Improv
Thursday, Oct. 8 at 6 p.m.
Build creativity, confidence and communication skills while having fun in a small supportive group. Participants will act out comedic sketches, create hilarious situations and develop quirky characters under the guidance of experienced theater teacher Ingrid Schaeffer. All you need to bring is the willingness to have fun. Registration is required.

Scams and Protecting Yourself
Tuesday, Oct. 13 at 1:30 p.m.
Learn how to spot red flags, protect yourself and keep our community informed and secure. This program is part of a the Senior Series in partnership with the Milford Health Department, Bridgeport Hospital, Milford Senior Center, Milford Public Library, UConn Extension, and Agency on Aging of South-Central CT.

“Lessons from the Stage” with Author and Local Theater Legend Gary Scarpa
Saturday, Oct. 17 at 1 p.m.
The founders of Center Stage Theater

share their theater memories, reflect on the impact they have had on the hundreds of actors whom they directed, and the importance of local amateur theater.

The Caring Network: A Grief Support Group of Bridges Healthcare
Monday, Oct. 19 at 10:30 a.m.
A support program for adults who have suffered a loss through death. In an atmosphere of safety and support, the group is facilitated by a professional counselor who reviews the normal ranges of grief and mourning. Questions? Email Brooke Torres of Bridges Healthcare at brtorres@bridgesmilford.org.

Medicare Enrollment Workshop with Licensed Broker Susan Stokes
Monday, Oct. 19 from 1 p.m.-4 p.m.
The first hour will be a review of key Medicare plans available for 2027. Beginning at 2 p.m., Stokes will assist participants in their actual enrollment, both the supplement and Medicare Advantage plans.

Autumn Mosaics with Veronica Arias Art
Wednesday, Oct. 21 at 4 p.m.
Use colored pasta to create beautiful seasonal mosaics. No experience needed. All materials are included. Space is limited. Registration is required.

Devoted: A New Medicare Advantage Plan
Friday, Oct. 23 at 2 p.m.
Natalie Araniti, broker manager of Devoted, a newly available Medicare plan in Connecticut, will be on hand to answer questions. The event is facilitated by Susan Stokes, a local, certified broker representing Devoted.

Live Music with the New England Guitar Society
Saturday, Oct. 24 at 2 p.m.
Enjoy classical guitar music with the amateur musicians and guitar enthusiasts of the New England Guitar Society. NEGS provides local classical guitarists with a place to meet, share ideas and perform for each other. NEGS is a member committee of the Milford Arts Council.



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Milford’s Bulk Waste Pickup Schedule Announced

Milford Mayor Rich Smith has announced the schedule for Milford’s fall 2026 bulk waste pickup program.

The residential service requires homeowners to properly prepare and separate acceptable bulky waste items. Similar items should be grouped together in bags or containers. All acceptable items placed at the curb will be collected, including containers.

Bulk waste pickup will begin on a given Monday based on a resident’s regular garbage pickup day.

For those whose garbage day is Monday, bulk pickup begins on Oct. 12. For Tuesday, bulk pickup begins Oct. 19. For Thursday, it begins Oct. 26. And if Friday is the regular garbage pickup day, bulk pickup begins Nov. 2.

Items must be manageable in weight so one employee can safely lift them. Small bulk items must be bagged or boxed. Compostable yard waste must be placed in disposable paper bags only; no plastic bags. Brush and wood must be cut, tied and bundled in lengths of four feet or less. Passenger car tires (maximum of four) must be separated from other waste. Metal must be no longer than four feet and separated from other waste. Electronics and white goods must be separated from other waste. Bulk waste must be placed away from regular trash and recycling containers. Items must also be set out no earlier than the Saturday prior to the scheduled pickup date.

Certain items are not accepted through the bulk waste or transfer station programs. These include hazardous waste; liquid waste, including oil-based paint; propane and helium tanks; grass clippings, logs and stumps; and sheetrock, concrete, bricks, porcelain tubs, sinks, toilets and other demolition materials.

For questions or more information, contact the Public Works Office at 203-783-3265.

Adopt A Pet: Ivy



Petite Ivy was abandoned with her three one-week-old kittens on the side of a busy road in Orange. When the crate was found, the door was open, kittens were inside, but no sign of mom. A good Samaritan saw Milford Animal Control’s post and went out that night and found her. Ivy could not produce enough milk to feed the kittens, so they were taken in by a bottle feeder and are thriving. Despite all Ivy has been through, she is sweet, gentle, loving and ready for a forever home. She is believed to be between a year and a year-and-half old, has been spayed and has all her vaccinations. She has especially soft fur. If you would like to meet Ivy, visit Milford Animal Control at 49 Silver Sands Parkway. Kennel hours are Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Call the shelter at 203-783-3279.9. Photo courtesy of Milford Animal Control.

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Milford Columbus Committee Names 2026 Award Winners

The Milford Columbus Committee has announced the 2026 award recipients for Italian-American of the Year, as well other awards and 2026 scholarship recipients.

Milford Alderman Ray Vitale was named Italian-American of the Year. Vitale grew up in New Haven, and went on to spend 44 years as an educator in the Milford school system, with 42 years coming as an elementary school teacher and the final two years as a middle school principal. Over the course of his career, he has worked at Orange Avenue School, Calf Pen Meadow Elementary School, Live Oaks Elementary School, Seabreeze School, Live Oaks Elementary School and Harborside Middle School.

After retiring, Vitale spent the next 18 years serving on the Milford Board of Aldermen. In that capacity, he has worked closely with the Board of Education, Library Commission, Board of Health and the Mayor’s Committee for People with Disabilities. He has also served as president or chairman of CommuniCare, the United Way of Milford and the Milford Prevention

Council. Vitale has received numerous awards, including the Bridges Community Service Award, the Mayor’s Committee for People with Disabilities Humanitarian Award, the United Way Champion of Caring Award, the Milford Chamber of Commerce Human Service Award and the Liberty Bell Award from the Milford Bar Association. He received the key to the city in 2025.

The committee has given a Special Achievement award to Anthony Fabrizi, the recently-retired chief of the Milford Fire Department.

At the age of 20, Fabrizi joined Huntington Fire Company No. 3 in Shelton, where he discovered his true calling. He joined the Milford Fire Department in 1993. Throughout the early years of his career, he worked in various stations throughout the city, gaining a broad range of experience and becoming deeply connected within the Milford community. Fabrizi was promoted to lieutenant in 2007, and his continued excellence earned him several more

promotions, including training chief and public information officer.

Fabrizi was selected to serve as a charter member of Connecticut Task Force 1 – the state’s urban search and rescue team – where he would serve as a rescue specialist. He was appointed as chief of the MFD and the city’s emergency management director in 2023. After nearly 33 years of service, he retired on May 29.

The committee has also given a Special Recognition award to Benjamin D. Gettinger, who currently serves as the probate judge for the District of Milford-Orange. In addition, he is a commissioner on the Connecticut Law Review Commission, board member of the Rape Crisis Center of Milford, trustee to the Boys & Girls Club of Milford and a board member of the city’s Council on Aging.

Gettinger has also worked on the Milford Planning & Zoning Board, was a board member on the Milford Fine Arts Council, a board member on the Friends of Yale New Haven Children’s Hospital, a member on the Milford Zoning Board of Appeals and a

representative to the South Central Regional Water Authority.

Gettinger is a fellow of the American Bar Foundation, a member of the American Bar Association, Connecticut Bar Association and Milford Bar Association. He is also a member of the National College of Probate Judges, the Connecticut Probate Judge Association and of the Connecticut Probate Court Assembly.

The winners of the committee’s student scholarships are all graduates of Joseph A Foran High School in Milford. Andrew Lord is going to the University of Connecticut; Lily Magnuson is attending the University of South Carolina; and Kaitlyn Vigilante will attend the College of the Holy Cross.

The announcement of the award recipients comes in advance of the committee’s 2026 dinner dance on Saturday, Nov. 14 at 5:30 p.m., which will include an open bar and live music. For tickets, contact Davidespo13@gmail.com or call 203-996-0732. For more information, go to milfordcolumbuscommittee.org.



Ray Vitale



Anthony Fabrizi



Ben Gettinger



Andrew Lord



Lily Magnuson



Kaitlyn Vigilante



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Obituaries

Full obituaries and pictures (if provided) of the deceased are on our website at www.milford-orangetimes.com and are published at no cost to residents of Milford and Orange.



Dr. Darryl P. Abriola, age 64, of Orange, devoted husband of Laura (De-Nomme) Abriola, passed away on Sept. 19, 2026, after a courageous fight with esophageal cancer. (Abriola Parkview Funeral Home)



Leo R. Alaimo, age 89, of Orange and formerly of Milford, entered into peaceful rest on September 21, 2026, with his family by his side. (Gregory F. Doyle Funeral Home)



Marilyn "Lynn" Elizabeth Art, 85 of Milford, passed away peacefully on August 24, 2026. She was the beloved wife of the late Walter F. Art, Jr. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Bernhard Francis Bruder, age 86, of Milford, beloved husband of the late Sandra (Maher) Bruder, entered into peaceful rest with his family by his side. (Gregory F. Doyle Funeral Home)



Janice Frederickson Carter passed away peacefully at home on Wednesday, September 16, 2026, at the age of 80. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Louis James D'Amato, age 89, of Milford, Connecticut, passed away peacefully on August 28, 2026. He was the beloved husband of Theresa D'Amato for over 58 years. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Monica Marie Daniel, 67, of Milford, Connecticut, passed away on September 8, 2026, surrounded by the family she loved beyond measure. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Annette K. Dobbins, 83 of Orange, passed away peacefully on September 6, 2026 while surrounded by her loving family. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Jeanne Penders Esposito, age 97, of Orange, passed away peacefully on Monday, September 7, 2026 at her home surrounded by her loving family. (Abriola Parkview Funeral Home)



Bonnie DeFrancesco Fanning, 72, passed away peacefully September 14, 2026 in Orange, CT. She was the widow of Thomas J. Fanning. (Celentano Funeral Home)



Phyllis Grabinski, age 90, of Orange, CT and Greenacres, FL, peacefully entered into rest in her CT home, with her family surrounding her, on Sunday August 23, 2026. (Riverview Funeral Home)



Frederick Gray, 77, of East Haven, CT, passed away peacefully on September 11, 2026. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Lois Helupka, 89, of Milford, beloved wife of the late Joseph Helupka, Sr., passed away on September 11, 2026. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Joseph W. Hite, age 75, of Milford, beloved husband of Janet Hite, passed away on September 16th, 2026. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Gloria Hoder will be remembered for the love, warmth, and devotion she shared with those closest to her. Gloria is predeceased by her beloved husband, Harold E. Hoder.



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Obituaries

Herman Gordon Holst, “Gordon”, 99, of Milford, Connecticut, passed away peacefully on September 21, 2026. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Erin Ellen Moreshead was love and Erin was loved. She was a miracle from the start. The 11th of 12 children who never gave up trying to survive. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Dana A. (White) Poulin, age 71, of North Kingstown, passed away on Sunday, May 31, 2026. She was the loving wife of Norman M. Poulin. (Fagan-Quinn Funeral Home)



Susan Jane Stover, born in New Haven, and a longtime resident of West Haven, n August 10, 2026, after a courageous two-year battle with pancreatic cancer.



James L. Keating, age 82, of Milford, entered into peaceful rest on August 29, 2026, surrounded by his family. (Gregory F. Doyle Funeral Home)



Mary Fitzpatrick O’Neil passed peacefully on September 19, 2026, to reunite with her beloved husband of 53 years, Gerard (Gerry) O’Neil. (Keenan Funeral Home)



Elizabeth (Betty) Rose Ramadan, 89, of Milford, CT, beloved wife of the late Neal Ramadan, passed away peacefully on September 21, 2026. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Dr. Philip Weisinger attended Midwood High School, Brooklyn College and Buffalo University Medical School. Philip is survived by his wife of 67 years and three daughters.



Benedict Lazdauskas passed away peacefully on September 10, 2026, at the age of 86. Ben is survived by his loving wife of 60 years, Nancy (Sawa). (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Ronald Craig Osach, a man of many talents and interests, passed away at home on August 25, 2026. (Robert E. Shure & Son Funeral Home)



Craig Allyn Renz Sr., age 82, of Milford, beloved husband of Marie Del Vecchio Renz, passed away peacefully on Monday, August 31, 2026, in the comfort of his home. (Abriola Parkview Funeral Home)



Thomas Kenneth Williams Sr., 75, of Milford, passed away on September 11, 2026. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Martin Ledewitz, 80, of Woodbridge, devoted husband of Frances Weiner Ledewitz (Cissi), passed away on Monday, August 31, 2026, surrounded by his loving family. (Robert E. Shure Funeral Home)



Ornella Moretti Palumbo, 92, of West Haven, passed away peacefully on September 2, 2026, with her loving family by her side. (Porto Funeral Home)



Janet Susan Sciarappa, age 74, beloved wife of Michael “Mickey” Sciarappa Jr., passed away on September 3rd, 2026 surrounded by her family. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Naomi Young, 90, of Delray Beach Fl and Woodbridge, CT passed away peacefully at home on August 27, 2026 in the presence of her loving children and caregivers.





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As an attorney and Orange Town Counsel, he works directly with the issues facing local towns. He also serves as President and coach of Amity Youth Lacrosse and on the boards of the Amity Chamber and Orange EDC.

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A lifelong resident of the 117th District, Ray Collins has spent years giving back to the community he calls home. He has served on the West Haven Police Commission and Board of Education, coached youth sports, and worked as a union shop steward. His experience keeps him closely connected to the families and everyday concerns of Milford, Orange and West Haven.

HIS PRIORITIES INCLUDE

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