

SEEC: East Windsor first selectman violated state's election laws

By Eric Bedner
STAFF WRITER

EAST WINDSOR — First Selectman Jason Bowsza has been found to be in violation of state election laws by using the town's publicly funded communication system to advocate for passing a referendum to convert the Scout Hall Youth Center into a multigenerational facility.

Because Bowsza cooperated with the State Elections Enforcement Commission and has no prior history of violations, he did not face a fine or any other repercussions from the commission.

The highly debated \$5 million Scout Hall project initially failed by 23 votes in 2022 before passing last year in a landslide.

When considering the complaint brought by political opponent and current Selectman Keith Yagaloff, the

SEEC factored in whether Bowsza's communications advocated for the referendum, whether they were made using public funds, and whether they were made while a referendum was pending.

State law says, in part, that "no expenditure of state or municipal funds shall be made to influence any person to vote for approval or disapproval of any such proposal or question or to otherwise influence or aid the success or defeat of any such referendum."

While the Scout Hall referendum was pending, Bowsza used the town's communication system — Everbridge — to send out two messages in question when speaking about the project.

Excerpts included the following: "The new arrangement to use Scout Hall for multigenerational programming and service delivery makes sense from a financial position and organizational one," and "... approval of the pro-

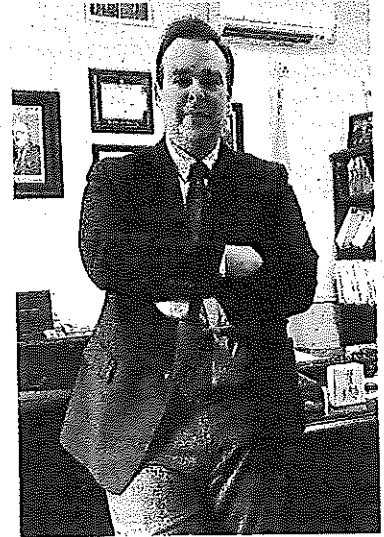
posed project will allow better customer service to people who are in need of social intervention and will allow for more expansive utilization of the Scout Hall location."

In its decision, the SEEC found that "though some of the wording of the two messages disseminated over the Everbridge communications differ slightly, the commission finds that both recordings advocate in favor of approval of the Scout Hall funding referendum in violation of" state law.

Bowsza agreed with the commission's decision.

Yagaloff brought four other alleged violations regarding advocating for the referendum, but all four were determined not to be in violation of state law and were dismissed.

"The commission found four out of the five complaints that were filed were baseless," Bowsza said on Tuesday. "After doing somewhere between 150 and



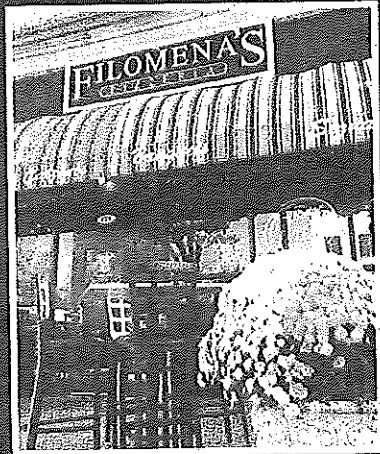
Hearst Connecticut Media file photo
East Windsor First Selectman Jason Bowsza

200 communitywide phone calls, the commission found that two sentences that I used were borderline inappropriate and I'm going to be more careful about it in the future."



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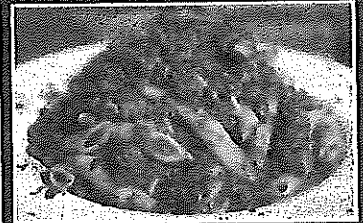
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HARRISBURG
Lionel MacDonald

HEBRON
Nellie Rose Molinari

SOMERS
Carolyn M. Palomba

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Emil Ostrowski



Emil Ostrowski, 91, of Glastonbury died peacefully at home on December 31, 2023 with his wife, Susan, by his side. Born on May 14, 1932 in New Britain, CT, he graduated from Central Connecticut State University in 1954 and received his Master's in Education from the University of Hartford in 1958. Emil proudly served in the United States Army and loved to share stories about his days at Fort Polk, Louisiana. Upon leaving the Army, he began his 35 year career as a teacher and administrator at Manchester High School and Manchester Community College. He was a dedicated and passionate teacher and in 1977, was honored as Educator of the Year by the Hartford Chapter of the Administrative Management Society. In 1960, Emil married Susan Kelly of Hartford who was by his side every day for the next 63 years. The two of them shared a rich life together in Vernon where they raised their three children, John (Linda) of Knoxville, TN, Mark (Janey) of Glastonbury and Kim Piela (Chris) of Rye, New Hampshire. Emil retired from the Manchester Public Schools in 1992 and shortly thereafter began his second career as grandfather to Jack, Matt and Julia of Glastonbury, Corey and Connor of Knoxville and Stella and Aidan of Rye. In his retirement, he also enjoyed gardening, golfing, cooking, cheering for the UConn Huskies and playing cards

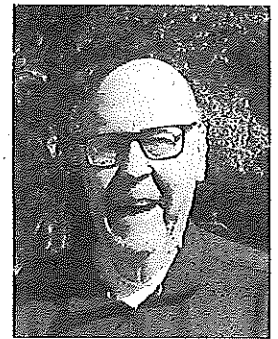
with his long-time friends from New Britain. Emil leaves many nieces, nephews and close family friends whom he enjoyed spending time with over the years. The family would like to express gratitude to his dedicated caregiver, Abraham Bam坡.

Calling hours were at Mulryan Funeral Home, 725 Hebron Avenue, Glastonbury on Thursday, January 4th from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. A Funeral Mass of Christian Burial was held at Ss. Isidore and Maria Parish in St. Augustine Church, 55 Hopewell Road, South Glastonbury, CT at 11:00 a.m. In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to the International Essential Tremors Foundation, PO Box 14005 Lenexa, Kansas 66285-4005, or <https://essentialtremor.org>. For online condolences, please visit www.mulryanfh.com.

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Life Tributes

Lionel MacDonald
October 27, 1930 - January 4, 2024



Lionel R. MacDonald, 93, formerly of South Windsor, CT, passed away, with his family by his side on Thursday, January 4, 2024, at Penn State Hershey Medical Center, Hershey, PA.

Born October 27, 1930, in Northampton, MA, he was the son of the late Rolland and Yvonne (Lupien) MacDonald.

Lionel was a graduate of Saint Michaels School, Northampton, MA. He went on to join the US Airforce where he served as a Staff Sergeant during the Korean War. Lionel was a retired Detail Draftsman with Pratt & Whitney Engines. After his retirement he worked for Southern Auto Auction in East Windsor, CT for 20 years. Lionel had a true love of fly fishing. He enjoyed tying his own flies and teaching others the joy of fly fishing. He started and served as president for several fly-fishing organizations. Every year he would lead the town fishing derby. He was a member of the Super 60's group that would go around town assisting locals with small tasks. He was known as the Blue Bird Man of North Windsor for teaching his friends and community members how to attract blue birds to their yards and build a proper birdhouse.

Lionel is survived by his wife of 68 years, Elizabeth "Betty" (Ferry) MacDonald, of Hershey, PA, a daughter, Ellen Mullady and her husband Michael, of Harrisburg, PA, a brother, Jean MacDonald and his wife Sandy, of The Villages, FL, two

grandchildren, Emily Southall and her husband Kyle, of Hoover, Alabama, and Lindsay Mullady, of Seoul, Korea, and one great-grandchild, Brinley Southall.

In addition to his parents, Lionel was preceded in death by a son, James MacDonald, two brothers, Philip MacDonald and Brother Raymond MacDonald, and a granddaughter, Megan MacDonald.

A Mass of Christian burial is currently being planned for a later date at St. Catherine Church, 6 Windsorville Rd., Broad Brook, CT. Interment will be held following the Mass in St. Catherine Cemetery. Service times will be posted when finalized. Myers-Baker Funeral & Cremation Services, Camp Hill, PA, has been entrusted with funeral arrangements.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Alzheimer's Association, Greater Pennsylvania Area, 2595 Interstate Dr., suite 100, Harrisburg, PA 17110, <https://www.alz.org/pa>



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Life Tributes

Nellie Rose Molinari

Nellie Rose (Lemieux) Molinari, 92, of Hebron, CT passed away peacefully on Sunday, January 7, 2024. The wife of the late Robert Joseph Molinari Sr., she was born on June 13, 1931, to Alfred and Delia Flora (Fournier) Lemieux. She and Robert were married on September 3, 1955, and were together for 61 wonderful years before his passing in 2016.

Nellie was raised in Windsor, CT and became a hairdresser after obtaining her Certificate of Cosmetology from the Connecticut Technical Institute. She went on to become a travel agent at ALA, a skill she had learned from family travel experiences. In the early 1980's she became a real estate agent, most recently working at Sentry Real Estate until her retirement.

Their love for travel took them on many years of adventures in their camper, and abroad to Europe and Guam. Nel enjoyed playing pool, Canasta and Foxwoods bingo. If you ever had the opportunity to play with Nel, you would have seen her ability to play multiple bingo cards while wearing her signature sequin hat. She was a devoted sports fan cheering on the UConn Women's Basketball, Red Sox and Patriots.

Nellie is survived by her children, Nancy Molinari, Robert Molinari Jr., Mary Jean Wickham and her partner Walter and Paul Molinari; grandchildren, Kristen Soucy and her husband Wendell, Michael Philbrick, Michelle Wickham, Matthew Cloutier and his wife Kayleigh and Nicholas Stanavage and her great-granddaughters, Skylar and Tessa Soucy. She is survived by her sister, Gail Jezouit and her husband



Raymond, sister-in-law, Patricia Lemieux and brother-in-law, Joseph Pepin as well as many nieces and nephews.

A special thank you from the family for their support to Nel's good friends Nicolina Soucy and Bill D'Ambrosio for their love, help and support.

She was predeceased by her beloved daughter Gina Molinari. Her late siblings include her twin sister Irene Marcia as well as Doris Conway, Yvonne Lemieux, Alfred Lemieux, Gloria Pepin, Raymond Lemieux and Robert Lemieux.

All are welcome to attend a wake from 5 pm to 7 p.m. on Monday, January 15, 2024, at Samsel & Carmon Funeral Home, 419 Buckland Road, in South Windsor. Funeral services will be held at the Samsel & Carmon Funeral Home on Tuesday, January 16, 2024, at 10:30 a.m. A private burial will be in Springdale Cemetery in East Windsor, at a later date. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions to honor her late daughter Gina, may be made to Interval House, Hartford www.intervalhousect.org. To leave a condolence, please visit www.carmonfuneralhome.com



Carolyn M. Palomba

Carolyn M. Palomba, 63, of Somers, CT, passed away on Sunday, December 31, with her family at her bedside. She was the beloved wife of Edward J. Palomba. Born in Bronxville, NY, a daughter of Veronica (Pipa) and the late John F. X. Manning, Carol spent her childhood in Crestwood, NY and has been a resident of the Somers community since 1985. Carol was a graduate of Bryant University, where she met her husband, and was a longtime employee of Northeast Utilities/Eversource. Carol was full of love and compassion for her family and friends, and was a woman of great faith. She enjoyed a round of golf, baking, and crafting with her grandchildren, gathering with her book club, traveling the world with Ed, and vacationing at the beach with her family. Carol loved a good party surrounded by her extended family and friends, and she took pride in adding her special touches to every celebration that she hosted.

In addition to Ed, her devoted husband of 38 years, and her mother, Veronica of Enfield, she is survived by her son, Eddie and his wife, Lizzie, of Somers; her daughter, Megan Zeiner and her husband, Michael, of Ellington and four grandchildren, Emilia, Teddy, Elyse Palomba and Nolan Zeiner. Carol also leaves her sister, Kathy Brogini, and her husband, Rich, of Glastonbury; two brothers, John F.X. Manning, II and his wife, Cindy, of Boxford, MA, and Greg



Manning and his wife, Diana, of New Fairfield, CT; her sister-in-law, Lisa Deni and her husband, Nick, of Pawley's Island, SC; two brothers-in-law, Mark Palomba and his wife, Tami, of Grantham, NH, and Joe Palomba and his wife, Kris, of Pawley's Island, SC; and several nieces and nephews who held special places in her heart. She was predeceased by her infant son, Patrick Joseph in 1992.

Relatives and friends may join Carol's family in the celebration of a Mass of Christian Burial on Saturday, Jan. 20 at 10:00 a.m. at St. Michael Church, 128 Maple St., East Longmeadow, MA 01028 (please meet at church). Private burial will be at the Somers Center Cemetery. Her family has suggested that expression of sympathy be in the form of a memorial donation to The Somers Public Library, 2 Vision Blvd., Somers, CT 06071. Please indicate "Children's Program"/Carol Palomba on the memo line. For online condolences, please visit www.Somersfuneralhome.com

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Raises, health insurance drive 3.89% hike in proposed Manchester school budget

By Joseph Villanova

STAFF WRITER

MANCHESTER — Contractual obligations for staff members and rising health insurance costs make up the bulk of a proposed 3.89 percent increase to the next year's school budget in town.

Superintendent of Schools Matthew Geary presented Monday night his \$127.5 million proposal for the 2024-25 school year, roughly \$4.8 million higher than the current school year budget.

The Board of Education is expected to approve a 2024-25 budget by Feb. 12 and is scheduled to hold at least two "budget workshop" public meetings before approval.

"This is just step one," Geary said.

Geary said \$2.5 million of the proposed increase would go to previously negotiated wage increases for staff members across the district, and a projected 12 percent increase in health insur-

ance costs will lead to \$1.6 million more in expenses.

"There really isn't a lot you can do about health insurance," Geary said.

Geary said the proposed budget comes with some savings, with a \$1.7 million chunk stemming from recent legislation that changes the responsibility placed on districts for magnet schools.

Geary said a recent law caps magnet tuition for 2024-25 at 58 percent of what it cost in the current school year. Another piece of legislation that went into effect last year means that once a district has 4 percent of its school-age population enrolled in magnet schools, the state reimburses \$4,400 in expenses for each additional magnet student beyond that.

"If either of those things change, we'll need to ask you for more money, but that's our best estimate based on the current law," Geary told the Board of Education.

Geary said Manchester Public Schools is not funded by the Board of Education budget alone, and many of the district's "innovative and new" projects are covered by grants from the state, the federal government, or private groups. He said one example is the district using grant money to pay for the IXL math practice software, which thus far has demonstrated "significant growth" in proficiency for students between grades 2 and 8.

"The part that's in the (Board of Education) budget is to maintain our schedule structure and class size for grades 2 through 8," Geary said.

Geary said the district will be losing out on the federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, a grant program fueled by the pandemic that is set to expire in this summer. He said \$4 million in additional expected funds from the state's Alliance District grant will help cover positions and pro-

grams previously funded by the relief program.

The Alliance District funding will also help Manchester schools take on new staff members to further goals like improving student achievement and chronic absenteeism, he said.

"People say there's nothing in the budget to improvement achievement. If I put that in the budget to improve achievement, it would be almost a million dollars" and an additional 0.9 percent increase, Geary said.

Comments from members of the Board of Education were light, mostly centered on clarification of certain parts of Geary's presentation.

Board of Education Secretary Tracy Patterson encouraged members of the public to attend the budget workshops and gain a deeper understanding of the budget, as the meetings will cover each line item in more depth.

"It's certainly a huge undertaking and not one to be taken lightly," Patterson said.

SOMERS

Schools closed Friday to allow mourning of fire victims

By Christine Dempsey

STAFF WRITER

SOMERS — Somers Public Schools will be closed Friday to give students and staff extra time to continue mourning the loss of four schoolchildren in a house fire.

Calling hours for Lukas Koropatkin, 11; Genevieve Koropatkin, 9; Benjamin Koropatkin, 7; and Archer Koropatkin, 5, are scheduled for 5 p.m. Thursday at Leete Stevens Enfield Chapels, 61 South Road in Enfield.

Lukas attended Mabel B. Avery Middle School, accord-

ing to his obituary. Genevieve, Benjamin and Archer were students at Somers Elementary School.

Two of the three surviving older sisters attend Somers High School; the oldest sibling, a 19-year-old, graduated.

Firefighters were alerted to the fire about 10:20 p.m. Jan. 2, and the first-arriving responders found the entire front of the duplex at 42-44 Quality Ave. in flames. The family of four on the 42 side of the house was able to get out of the burning structure, but only three of the seven siblings on the 44 side made it out on their own. The oldest sis-

ter, who burned her hands, jumped from a window to escape, fire officials said. The siblings' mother wasn't home at the time of the fire because she was working.

The fire appears to have started on the first floor, in an area at the bottom of the stairs leading to the second floor and near the front door, which hampered the children's escape, said Fire Chief John Roache.

Electronics were plugged in where the fire started, but it's too early to say whether the blaze was electrical in nature, Roache said. Insurance investigators will try to pinpoint the

cause.

Residents of the small northern Connecticut town and others have donated money, toiletries, clothes and furniture to help the family. GoFundMe online fundraisers have raised more than \$130,000 for the fire victims, and money has been pouring into a fund the town set up, as well. (The Angel Fund, 619 Main St., Somers, CT 06071.)

Somers Public Schools acknowledged the expressions of sympathy on its website, saying, "The outpouring of support from Somers and the surrounding communities has been overwhelming and remarkable."

Parking for those attending visitation Thursday will be available at Eli Whitney School, 94 Middle Road, starting at 5 p.m., according to the funeral home.