



Brian A. Pounds/Connecticut Post
A section of Cross Highway in Westport. The roadway's failing, 100-year-old bridge is being replaced.

Bridge replacement scheduled for summer on Cross Highway

By Shaniece Holmes-Brown
STAFF WRITER

WESTPORT — The failing bridge on Cross Highway in Westport will be rebuilt next year, officials said.
Town Engineer Keith Wilberg said replacing the nearly 100-year-old bridge will start this coming summer, after school lets out, and is expected to be completed by the start of the 2026-27 school year.
“It’s near two schools right there. It’s

near Wakeman Town Farm,” he said. “A lot of students walk across the street to one of the stores there when school gets out. So, it’s a high profile, dangerous kind of area with a lot of traffic, and it needed some improvements.”
Wilberg said there will also be other traffic improvements made to the area, such as adding new sidewalks.
“We’re putting sidewalks along Cross Highway where there hadn’t been any, or there had been sidewalks that were in disrepair,” he said. “As part of that, we

want to have a sidewalk that’s going over an existing bridge.”
Wilberg said the sidewalk construction was paused a couple of months ago for safety reasons as well as due to the weather. He said the next step is to build the new bridge and then install the rest of the sidewalk, which will stretch from Wakeman Town Farm to North Avenue heading westward.
Wilberg said the roughly 34-foot-wide new bridge will accompany the five-foot
Bridge continues on A6

Law boosts veterans’ services

New legislation aids recognition, creates Veterans’ Month

By Eric Bedner
STAFF WRITER

A sweeping new law related to military veterans aims to provide more services and recognition for service members, including establishing a Veterans’ Month, adding commemorative license plates and expanding family services.
The comprehensive bill that tweaked existing law unanimously cleared both chambers of the General Assembly before Gov. Ned Lamont signed it into law in June.
“On behalf of veterans throughout Connecticut, we commend the work of our Connecticut General Assembly this past legislative session,” Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner Rob Welch said. “They passed several laws that elevate recognition for veterans; strengthen and expand social services for veterans, service members and their families; and celebrate the countless contributions our veterans have made to our great country and state.”
State Rep. Jaime Foster, D-Ellington, who serves as co-chairwoman on the Committee on Veterans’ and Military Affairs, said two so-called “aircraft carrier bills” combined
Veterans continues on A7



Courtesy of Michael Quick

The future of farming?

New CT law lets farmers use drones to plant crops, spray pesticides

By Austin Mirmina
STAFF WRITER

Connecticut has about 3,000 certified drone pilots – and even more recreational users – who increasingly rely on unmanned aircraft to make their work faster, safer and more precise.
For home inspectors, drones have become an extra set of eyes to survey

a roof without the added burden of climbing a ladder. Law enforcement agencies are using them as well: Connecticut State Police operate a drone unit for investigations, and other municipal police departments are exploring similar ways to implement the technology.
Now, a new state law will expand drone use into agriculture, allowing farmers to use the aerial devices to

survey crops, plant seeds and apply fertilizer and pesticides across their fields with greater precision. Supporters say the change could help modernize and streamline Connecticut’s farming industry by giving farmers a clearer picture of crop health and a way to target problem areas without spraying or fertilizing entire fields.
Farming continues on A6

An agricultural drone hovers in the air during a test flight at Cushman Farms in Franklin in July. Connecticut recently passed a law that allows farmers to use drones for tasks like scouting crops, planting seeds and applying fertilizer and pesticides with greater precision.

Naugatuck wants to turn factory site into massive industrial park

By Christian Metzger
STAFF WRITER

NAUGATUCK — On the banks of the Naugatuck River, a vast parcel of land sits overgrown with trees and strewn with rubble. Little remains of what was once the beating heart of the town’s industry: the factory for the Uniroyal Chemical Company, a sprawling 86-acre complex that once prospered by producing both chemicals and rubber-based products.
No evidence remains of it now, beyond heaps of old concrete and retaining walls.
Yet the land may again become the heart of Naugatuck’s industry, as Mayor Warren “Pete” Hess has an ambitious plan to turn the disused property into a vast industrial park.
Hess said the property was primed for large-scale development opportunities with the revitalization of the rail network, which is ongoing and would see freight moved onto the line for the first time since roughly the 1950s. He



Jim Shannon/Hearst Connecticut Media

Naugatuck Mayor Pete Hess talks about an unused trail line he hopes to utilize in the future during a tour of Naugatuck’s new industrial park project on Dec. 5.

“We’re going to create a large warehouse for regular and cold storage that any company in the region can use to either have goods brought in or to send things out by freight rail.”
Naugatuck Mayor Warren “Pete” Hess

said the project could meet a growing demand in the region.
“Everyone wants to get the trucks off the road. So now we’re going back to freight rail,” Hess said.
With the property’s access to rail and relative proximity to major east coast cities like New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Atlantic City, Hess said manufacturers were taking an intense interest in restoring the rail line to transport material to Naugatuck and then across the entire New England area.
Within the next six to eight years, Hess said, the town would work to develop the site to include warehouses, propane storage, a lumber yard, storage for earthen materials, and more.
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