

Shelton school officials warn of cuts

Sports, full-day kindergarten, 70+ jobs could be cut under mayor's budget

By Brian Gioiele
STAFF WRITER

SHELTON — School officials say athletics, full-day kindergarten and the jobs of dozens of teachers are on the chopping block if Mayor Mark Lauretti's proposed 2026-27 fiscal year budget is approved. Lauretti last month put forward

his \$146.5 million proposed spending plan — about \$5 million more year over year — resulting, if approved as presented, in a mill rate of 15.42, an 18% decrease. It would mean flat funding for the schools, with a budget of \$80.8 million as opposed to the \$90 million requested by the Board of Education.

In response, Superintendent Ken Saranich and Board of Education Chair Jim Feehan — in front of a standing-room-only crowd in the City Hall auditorium Tuesday night — painted a bleak picture to the boards of Apportionment and Taxation and Aldermen of what a 0% increase would look like. One scenario calls for elimi-

nating all athletic and extracurricular activities and 72 positions across all departments. The second option keeps sports and extracurriculars but jumps the positions eliminated to 94. In either case, Saranich said, the cuts would increase class sizes. And no matter which option the district chose, they

would also need to eliminate full-day kindergarten and World Languages at the middle school level and reduce academic support services, Unified Arts courses and Advanced Placement/college credit course offerings. Saranich said the options each tally up to \$3.9 million; the amount needed to meet the year-over-year increase in contractual obligations. **Shelton continues on A7**

Changes to unclaimed property law proposed

By Paul Hughes
STAFF WRITER

HARTFORD — Legislators and State Treasurer Erick Russell are exploring changes to Connecticut's unclaimed property law as they look to revise how bank accounts are classified as abandoned and transferred to the state.

The treasurer's office holds funds from abandoned bank accounts and other unclaimed assets until rightful owners or their heirs claim the money, including through the Connecticut Big List at the CTBigList.gov. The property is returned at no cost when proper evidence of ownership is supplied.

Under current law, a bank account reverts — or escheats in statutory terms — to the state after three years of inactivity unless the owner takes certain actions to show interest in the account, such as depositing or withdrawing money, or presenting a passbook.

The legislature's Banking Committee and the treasurer's office have each proposed legislation to change the criteria used to determine when checking and **Unclaimed continues on A4**



Ned Gerard/Hearst Connecticut Media

Traffic moves along Route 8 on a rainy morning in Bridgeport on Feb. 20.

'EYES FORWARD, CAR STEADY'

DMV warns rubbernecking can cause crashes, traffic

By Brianna Gurciullo
STAFF WRITER

Many Connecticut drivers are familiar with finding themselves in slow or stopped highway traffic, not knowing what the holdup could be.

Eventually, they may see something off to one side — cars pulled over after a crash or a traffic stop by police — and once they pass it, the congestion eases.

Drivers turning to get a good look at the scene, also known as rubbernecking, could be at play in such instances. The driver's manual from the state Department of Motor Vehicles urges drivers to resist the temptation to gawk.

"If you take your eyes off the road to look at something, you could run into a vehicle ahead that has slowed or stopped," the manual says. "Rubbernecking can also increase congestion. When you pass these roadside activities, keep your eyes on the road and get past them as quickly and safely as you can."

Connecticut law requires drivers to reduce their speed and, if safe, move over a lane if a vehicle is stopped on the side of the highway in the direction they're traveling. But the state Department of Transportation cautions drivers not to come to a crawl: "It can actually be even more dangerous, as vehicles behind you won't expect it and can

crash into you or others around you," the agency says on its website.

Yet, rubbernecking still occurs. Lauren Stornelli, an assistant professor in the University of New Haven's Department of Psychology, said morbid curiosity is part of it. "We are just inherently curious," Stornelli said. "And it's also this concept of: 'This is different and not what we see every day.' Even though ... car accidents are common. It's just different. We can drive a long stretch of road and not necessarily see something that piques our interest as much as a car accident ... because driving is something that a lot of us just do, kind of on autopilot." **Rubbernecking continues on A4**

Parole officer left gun in Milford mall fitting room, police say

By Jessica Bravo
STAFF WRITER

MILFORD — A parole officer on paid administrative leave since November was charged last week with leaving her firearm inside a Connecticut Post Mall fitting room, officials said.

Wendy Vereen, 47, of Bridgeport was charged April 3 with criminally negligent storage of a firearm, according to Milford police.

Officers responded to an Express store in the mall around 6 p.m. Friday after the gun was found, police said. An investigation revealed the gun belonged to Vereen, police said. **Milford continues on A4**

State says \$500M mistake should force Aquarion sale approval to be reconsidered

By Luther Turmelle
STAFF WRITER

Connecticut's attorney general and consumer counsel are asking state utility regulators to reconsider their approval last month of the sale of Aquarion Water Co. to the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority because of the discovery of a significant miscalculation they say results in nearly \$500 million in projected rate increases that customers of the Bridgeport-based

"PURA completely missed half a billion dollars in rate increases. Their entire decision rested on bad math based on incomplete information."

Connecticut Attorney General William Tong

utility would be forced to pay. Attorney General William Tong and Consumer Counsel Claire Coleman filed a joint petition with Connecticut's Public Utilities Regulatory Authority requesting that commissioners with the regulatory

agency reconsider the approval they gave to the acquisition on March 25. The petition identifies major financial and legal errors that understate the cost to customers and undercut PURA's claim that the deal is in the public interest.

Eversource Energy and Regional Water Authority officials were not immediately available Wednesday to comment on the request for reconsideration made by Tong and Coleman.

Tong and Coleman contend that PURA's approval of the deal would result in Aquarion customers having to pay about \$5.9 billion in acquisition and financing costs, including \$3.6 billion in interest on the purchase price. The petition also **Aquarion continues on A7**



Luther Turmelle/Hearst Conn. Media
Connecticut Attorney General William Tong testifies before the state's Public Utilities Regulatory Commission on March 16.

