

# State budget experts share warnings

Point to federal uncertainty, aging workforce

By Ken Dixon  
STAFF WRITER

HARTFORD — Two of Connecticut's top state budget experts on Thursday told lawmakers that Connecticut's finances are in good shape for the next

couple of years, but they warned that uncertainty from Washington, the state's aging workforce and the possibility of a nationwide recession present dangers that require planning. Speaking to a joint

meeting of the legislative Appropriations Committee and the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, Jeffrey Beckham, the secretary of the Office of Policy and Management and Neil Ayers, director of the non-partisan Office of

Fiscal Analysis, detailed a state economic landscape that currently shows a "K-shaped" pattern, with higher-income Connecticut residents able to spend larger higher percentages of their income than lower-earning residents who are feeling less of the current economic recovery. Beckham, in his final

appearance as Gov. Ned Lamont's budget chief, said that the state's robust \$4.3 billion emergency reserve could withstand an economic turndown equivalent to the 2002 recession of \$2 billion, but a moderate recession, with a \$5.4 billion revenue loss would put the reserves under water.

"In the severe Great Recession scenario, it would consume all of the budget reserves and you would still have about a \$4.5 billion problem, which you would have to make efforts on," he said, recalling \$900 million in borrowing the state made at the time that took years to pay off. *Budget continues on A6*



A bulldozer sits atop a dirt mound with the Riverpointe apartments at 106 Stonebridge Court in Cheshire in the background, next to the Stonebridge Crossing development where new stores opened in 2025.

Alexander Soule/Hearst Connecticut Media

## 'There's extreme pressure'

Across Connecticut, a decade of development has reshaped the landscape

By Alexander Soule  
and Darryl Laiu  
STAFF WRITERS

The white apartment buildings burst out of the Connecticut woods heading east on Interstate 691 through Cheshire, with the 1,000-foot-plus West Peak looming ahead. A line of cathedral pines marks where nature ends and human development begins — in this instance, the new Stonebridge Crossing on the Cheshire-Southington line just off I-691, among the largest nearing completion in Connecticut. Over the years, Cheshire has been increasingly mindful of balancing economic development with the wishes of many in town to preserve the town's natural vistas. It is part and parcel with the "town and country" mystique that appeals to many people who choose to live in Connecticut, whether to raise their children or stay for the duration of their retirement years. "These are things that have to go hand in hand — it sounds counterintuitive because you



Images courtesy Nearmap

Two photos taken 10 years apart show a tract fronting Interstate 691 as the highway passes through Southington and Cheshire. The one at left was taken in 2015 before the subsequent construction of residential and retail elements of the Stonebridge Crossing development, shown in 2025 in the photo at right.

would expect them to be mutually exclusive," said Mike Ceccorulli, a commercial real estate attorney who is both president of the Cheshire Land Trust and a director of the Connecticut Economic Development Association. "But a lot of development presents op-

portunities for conservation to happen, and you see this in towns where there's extreme pressure because of affordable housing demand." In the case of residential developments, that has resulted in plans like the new Riverpointe apartments in Cheshire

along Interstate 691, where hundreds of units are clustered together close to retail. That preserves more open space elsewhere in town, compared to earlier development trends in Connecticut that focused on subdivisions of *Development continues on A6*

## L.I. Sound projects get \$12M in grants as 59K acres of Conn. wetlands put at risk

By Austin Mirmina  
STAFF WRITER

Just two weeks ago, Lee Zeldin, chief of the federal Environmental Protection Agency, proposed to narrow federal water protections — a change that critics warned would jeopardize nearly 59,000

acres of Connecticut wetlands. But during a virtual news conference Tuesday, the EPA and its partners touted nearly \$12 million in new grants to restore many of the same waterways now at risk of weaker oversight under Zeldin's plan. Federal and state officials said the \$11.7

million in grants would support 36 projects across Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont. They said the projects would prevent 618,934 gallons of stormwater and 2,996 pounds of nitrogen pollution from entering Long Island Sound; remove *Wetlands continues on A4*

## Ten town 'Schools of Distinction' set record for district

Total also most in state

By Ignacio Laguarda  
STAFF WRITER

GREENWICH — It was a banner year for Greenwich Public Schools last school year. Ten schools in the district made the list of the state Department of Education's "Schools of Distinction," the most Greenwich has ever had, and outpaced all other Connecticut school districts. On top of that, the 2024-25 school year also marked the first time all three of the school system's Title I elementary schools — Hamilton Avenue School, Julian Curtiss School and New Lebanon School — made the list. Title I schools are those that receive federal funding due to a large number of low-income students. Schools earn the "Schools of Distinction" recognition based on their performance in the Next Generation Accountability System, which rates schools based on 12 factors: academi- *Distinction continues on A4*

## Blumenthal, Himes call for Hegseth to resign or be dismissed

By Alex Putterman  
STAFF WRITER

Multiple members of Connecticut's congressional delegation are calling for Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth to resign or be fired amid controversies involving air strikes on Venezuelan boats and the sharing of classified information through a messaging app. In recent days, Hegseth has faced scrutiny about the use of military force in the Caribbean Sea after a special operations team reportedly attacked survivors of a strike on an alleged drug boat off the coast of Venezuela, in what some legal experts consider a clear violation of the laws of armed conflict. Meanwhile, a Pentagon watchdog determined Hegseth put U.S. personnel and their mission at risk when he used the Signal messaging app to convey sensitive information about a military strike against Yemen's Houthi militants. *Hegseth continues on A4*

Advice/puzzles.....D2, D7  
Business.....B8-9  
Classified, public notices .....B7

Comics.....Inside  
Obituaries .....A14  
Opinion.....A16-17

Sports.....B1-6  
Sunday Arts & Style .....D1-8  
Television .....D8

8 52433 00111 2

© 2025  
Hearst Media  
Services CT  
LLC



Weather: Mostly cloudy.  
High: 42. Low: 27.  
Page A18

FOR ALL YOUR PERSONAL AND BUSINESS BANKING NEEDS

THE FIRST BANK OF GREENWICH

WESTCHESTER  
500 Westchester Avenue  
Port Chester, New York  
Tel 914.908.5444

GREENWICH  
444 East Putnam Avenue  
Cos Cob, CT  
Tel 203.629.8400

STAMFORD  
900 Summer Street  
Stamford, CT  
Tel 203.413.6101

www.greenwichfirst.com | NMLS#510513