

DOJ: Epstein's Conn. aide arranged flights and 'massages' for victims

By Nathaniel Rosenberg
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Lesley Groff, Jeffrey Epstein's longtime executive assistant, scheduled "massages" and coordinated dozens of flights around the world for victims of the disgraced convicted sex trafficker, recently released Department of

Justice documents show.

But it remains unknown whether the Connecticut resident knew about Epstein's sexual assaults, which one victim said once happened just on the other side of a closed door from where Groff was working.

Victims interviewed by federal investigators allege that Groff

scheduled "massages" in New York City where Epstein assaulted women, according to internal FBI summaries of those victim interviews.

In some cases, Groff allegedly paid the victims or covered their schooling expenses, according to a December 2019 Department of Justice memo summarizing

nearly 50 interviews federal agents conducted while investigating potential co-conspirators of Epstein's, including testimony from 38 victims, nine of whom referenced Groff.

Groff, a New Canaan resident, also coordinated dozens of flights that brought potential vic-

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Max Rapp/Patrick McMullan Via Getty Images
Lesley Groff attends a gala on Feb. 23, 2010, in New York City. Groff was listed as a potential co-conspirator with her boss Jeffrey Epstein in a newly unredacted DOJ file.

Historic house would swap dental offices for apartments

By Robert Marchant
STAFF WRITER

GREENWICH — Dental offices in a house at a prominent location in central Greenwich, with a significant repository of local history attached to it, are set to be converted into apartments.

The recently submitted plan would convert two former dental offices on the first floor at 23 Maple Ave. off East Putnam Avenue into residential apartments.

According to the attorney representing the owners of the site, Michael Thomason, the dental practice there had ceased, and the building's owners "have been unable to release the dental offices." The site's ownership is listed as Coleman Business Holdings LLC, associated with the family of a dentist and oral surgeon who worked at the site.

The plan calls for the larger office on the south end of the property to be turned into a three-bedroom apartment, and the smaller one on the east side would be made over as a one-bedroom unit.

According to Thomason, eliminating the dental offices would improve traffic in the area. Maple Avenue is a main north-south thoroughfare that is often congested near the intersection with East Putnam Avenue.

"Conversion of the dental offices to apartments will not be more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing use, and, to the contrary, will improve traffic and other impacts associated with the dental practices," Thomason stated.

No exterior alterations are planned. Existing residences in the building will remain. The site has 14 outdoor parking spaces, and only 11 were required under the zoning regulations for the dental operation.

House continues on A6

Schools big winner in passionate funding fight



Gov. Ned Lamont walks through the House of Representatives Wednesday, the final day of the session.

A \$173M school funding boost turned into a Capitol standoff

You might be surprised how hard it is for the state legislature to spread \$173 million of surplus cash around local K-12 schools across Connecticut.

That's what the General Assembly found out last week, leading to the midnight Wednesday night end of the 2026 legislative session.

The money was a centerpiece of the state budget adopted by both the House and the Senate on May 2. Figuring out how much each municipality would receive was the easy part. Just follow the state's education cost-sharing formula.



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la. The tough challenge was blending the money into each town's coffers in a way that assured the schools would receive the boost, while still allowing the towns to cut their property taxes. It reminded us that policy decisions are one thing, making them happen smoothly — especially in a rushed deadline — that's something else.

That challenge led to a

mini-standoff at the Capitol Wednesday, as some town officials — grateful for the aid, to be sure — told me the rules left them confused or even slighted.

In the end, it worked out just fine and everyone, or mostly everyone, was happy. Lawmakers in both chambers adopted a clear-language fix, unanimously, with about two hours to spare before midnight.

It all started when the legislature and Gov. Ned Lamont agreed to the school funding boost. They intended for the cities and towns to use the money for education,

of course, but also to be allowed to use the money to ease local property tax rates if they had already raised school spending and locked in a higher tax rate for next year.

That's what most people at the Capitol believed.

But on Monday morning, cities and towns started contacting the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, saying the language of the bill did not allow them to use the money to offset higher taxes, even if they had already hiked school spending. This would

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Proposed tax rebates went by the wayside

By Natasha Sokoloff and Paul Hughes
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HARTFORD — Thirteen weeks ago, superintendents, mayors, teachers, students and local leaders had strong words for Gov. Ned Lamont's proposed spending plan for fiscal year 2027.

A "trainwreck for public education," one superintendent called it.

But by the end of the legislative session last week, they were praising the governor, who is running for a third term, and the state legislature for saving them from dire fates. The same superintendent even said the funds gave him the best budget in more than a decade.

So what happened between those two starkly different reactions?

Lamont opened the legislative session with a focus on improving affordability for residents, pitching a \$200 per-person tax rebate using a \$500 million pool of state surplus funds. As for education dollars, school districts in more than 150 municipalities across Connecticut would have been flat-funded in fiscal year 2027.

In the days, weeks and months that followed, hundreds of local officials and education advocates filled the halls of the state Capitol and Legislative Office Building, warning that state aid for schools significantly fell short of what they needed.

Students described schools that were in desperate need of dollars, with crumbling buildings and outdated equipment. Superintendents spoke of massive deficits, program

Rebates continues on A6

Coach, mother, trailblazer

Connecticut girls basketball pioneer leaves lasting legacy in retirement

By Bryant Carpenter
STAFF WRITER

STONINGTON — It was a girls night out.

Sisters, sisters-in-law, daughters, nieces — whoever wanted to join newly retired Stonington girls basketball coach Paulla Solar at Mystic Luxury Cinemas for the new Michael Jackson movie.

Here's what immediately caught their eye: Janet and La-

Toya Jackson being relegated to the background while their brothers became the Jackson 5.

"There were seven kids in that family and the five boys were the ones they took to perform," Solar tells a sportswriter a few days later. "The two girls weren't included at all."

This strikes a spot still tender, even at 75, for a daughter of the 1960s. Paulla Solar may have won 510 games coaching 34 seasons at

Stonington, but she hasn't forgotten being Paulla Kolnaski, Grotton High School Class of 1969, with no sports to play beyond intramurals.

"In that era, when I grew up, nobody promoted girls to be athletes," she says, "I know it's in the past, but it still stays with you. It wasn't that long ago."

As Mother's Day arrives, another girls night out is in the works in Connecticut's southeastern-most town. Former players of Solar's will gather to honor the coach who signed off after

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Dave Zajac/Hearst Connecticut Media
Paulla Solar, of Stonington, near the Connecticut River in East Haddam on Thursday.

