

# THE MIDDLETOWN PRESS

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## East Hampton fires WPCA head

### Sewer plant buildout falls through after pushback from town residents

By **Cassandra Day**  
STAFF WRITER

EAST HAMPTON — Robust resident pushback on the town's plan to expand the wastewater treatment plant they say lacked transparency led to the termination of the Water Pollution Control Authority head and dissolution of the board Thursday.

WPCA Public Utilities Administrator Anthony DeSimone no longer works for East Hampton, his office confirmed

on Friday.

Resident objections "catalyzed us to make a hard but necessary decision," Town Council Chairman Dean Markham said Friday morning.

Residents were upset by the plan for Griffin Residuals, a for-profit company, to purchase four acres at 292 West High St., next to the existing regional treatment plant at 20 Gildersleeve Drive.

Griffin Residual would have then built a biosolids facility there to expand the regional

plant's operations but would still be for profit.

Upgrades and renovations are needed to the treatment plant and its systems so it will last another 50 years, Markham said.

Prior to Thursday night's meeting, Griffin Residuals pulled out of the sale, Markham said.

Town Council chambers were packed with residents watching Thursday night's proceedings in person.

Resident Kimberly Tynek told town leaders neighbors are "relieved" at the sale's termination.

*Sewage continues on A4*



Cassandra Day/Hearst Connecticut Media

The head of the East Hampton Water Pollution Control Authority was terminated last week and the entire board disbanded following resident protests against a plant expansion.



Dave Zajac/Hearst Connecticut Media

Dave Duda hugs wife Hong Liang at Duda's Book Trader Cafe in New Haven on Wednesday. Duda and Liang met in China with neither knowing each other's language. The couple uses an AI translator to speak to one another.

## The language of love

### New Haven couple learning to understand one another using translators

By **Cassandra Day**  
STAFF WRITER

NEW HAVEN — When Dave Duda and his wife Hong Liang need to order a pizza, they'll act out words or phrases to help tackle the significant language barrier between them.

With the emergence of more present AI translator tools though they have another way to communicate between his English and her Mandarin.

"We are probably the best two charades players in the country because we can get across things with body language and limited Chinese or English," Duda said.

They also rely heavily on translation tools, according to Duda, who owns the Book Trader Cafe in New Haven.

*Love continues on A6*



Dave Duda and wife Hong Liang converse through an AI translator while at Duda's Book Trader Cafe in New Haven on Wednesday.

## Lawmakers eye easing timeline to zero-emission school buses

By **Jessica Simms**  
STAFF WRITER

Connecticut school districts would get a bit more time to comply with a state law that requires them to switch to zero-emission school buses under a newly proposed bill.

Currently, state law requires all school districts in Connecticut to transition to using only zero-emission school buses by Jan. 1, 2040. Also, all school buses must be zero emission or use alternative fuel by Jan. 1, 2035.

The deadline is even sooner for school districts in environmental justice communities: They must switch over to fully zero-emission buses by Jan. 1, 2030. Environmental justice communities are those where 30% of the population is living below 200% of the federal poverty level or that are among the "state's most fiscally and economically distressed municipalities," according to the state's website.

*Buses continues on A4*

## AAA: Deadly hit-and-run crashes at all-time high

### Study finds 1 in 10 involve driver fleeing the scene

By **Josh LaBella**  
STAFF WRITER

Deadly hit-and-run crashes are at an all time high and nearly one in 10 fatal crashes in Connecticut in 2023 involved a driver fleeing the scene, the American Automobile Association says.

In a release, AAA said its Foundation for Traffic Safety published a study on Wednesday that found over 919,000 police-reported crashes in 2023 were hit and runs. It said those crashes resulted in 242,000 injuries and 2,872 deaths across the nation.

Hit-and-run crashes were 15% of all crashes in 2023, AAA said, adding that is the high-

*Crashes continues on A6*

## Conn. cities crack down on unshoveled sidewalks

By **Brian Zahn**  
STAFF WRITER

After a winter storm hit Connecticut with more than 20 inches of snow in some parts of the state in late January, municipalities took note of property owners who failed to clear their sidewalks.

When a blizzard similarly dumped more than two feet of snow in some parts of the state last month, property owners in New Haven who didn't heed the warning were told to pay

up. But penalties haven't been as swift or severe in some other parts of the state.

New Haven issued 78 citations to property owners who did not clear their sidewalks after February's blizzard. The citation carries a fine of \$250. A city spokesman said repeat offenders from earlier in the winter "get immediate citations."

During a March 5 aldermanic committee workshop, New Haven Chief Administrative Officer Jus-

tin McCarthy said properties that received warnings or fines during the January storm were among those first properties visited for enforcement if the sidewalks weren't cleared after February's blizzard.

"We also want people to remember that their property is their property," he said.

In other Connecticut municipalities, the response has varied. In Stratford, there were zero \$25 citations issued following the blizzard, even though the

town issued eight tickets following January's storm.

In Norwalk, there were a significant number of resident complaints after the February blizzard — 356 of them, according to city officials — which generated warnings placed upon 89 residences informing homeowners of the city's rules, plus five verbal warnings to city businesses.

"Enforcement is a top priority for me, and we have learned a lot from the



Ned Gerard/Hearst Connecticut Media

Cars remain plowed-in by snow along Button Street in New Haven on Feb. 3.

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Weather: Rain and a t-storm;  
windy in the afternoon.  
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