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Portland proposes \$109M school renovation plan

Voters to decide in May referendum

By Crystal Elescano
STAFF WRITER

PORTLAND — Portland Public Schools and town officials are advancing a major plan that would renovate and expand multiple schools across the district, aiming to address aging facilities through significant upgrades.

First Selectman Michael Pelton said the town held a referen-

dum two years ago to close two elementary schools and consolidate into one, but voters rejected the proposal.

He said residents were concerned about the future of Brownstone Intermediate School, a historic building, and pushed back against the idea of a single large elementary school.

Under the current proposal, Brownstone would close but be repurposed. Pelton noted that the school's location on busy Main Street has raised long-standing safety concerns, particularly for students walking to

and from school.

"Portland is known for brownstone. It's a beautiful old building," he said. "There'll be a lot of cool opportunities to do something really neat for that building."

The town instead plans to renovate Valley View and Gildersleeve elementary schools as new, a process that involves significant interior demolition while preserving the existing structures.

The Board of Selectmen is scheduled to approve language
Portland continues on A4



Friar Architecture Inc.

The exterior of Gildersleeve School in Portland.



Contributed by the Coleman family
Tim Coleman, co-owner of the family-run Coleman Bros Carnival, died March 28 at 70. He's shown here with his truck about a decade ago.

'Heart of the show'

Coleman Bros Shows co-owner Tim Coleman recalled as a generous man

By Cassandra Day
STAFF WRITER

MIDDLETOWN — Just two weeks short of the Coleman Bros Carnival's opening day, co-owner Tim Coleman died, but his presence is being felt everywhere, the family said.

His daughter Kristy Coleman said Tuesday her father was "the heart of the show."

Coleman, 70, who died of pneumonia March 28 in Florida, was battling esophageal cancer, Kristy Coleman said.

"It's heartbreaking for all of us," she said.

Coleman and his sister Mary Oakes

are the fourth generation of the family. The carnival first opened in 1916 by their late grandfather Dick Coleman and great-uncle Tom Coleman. This is the 110th year.

The family, which lives in Florida seven months of the year and in Middletown the rest, has been pitching in as the carnival prepares to open this weekend.

"It's very hard," Oakes said. "You expect to see him all over the place."

Tim Coleman had a great sense of humor and was always happy, Kristy Coleman said.

"You could meet him the first time and think you've known him for a lifetime," she said. "He made you feel

welcomed."

His employees knew him affectionately as "Uncle Tim," Oakes said.

"He had a heart of gold, would help anybody in any way he could — always looking out for the underdog," Kristy Coleman said.

"He was the heart of the show," she added. "He was out here late nights, early mornings when we got there, getting the rides on location, figuring out the layouts and everything."

Kristy Coleman said her father had an infectious personality.

"Anybody walking around, he'd throw a joke at him, make them smile, make it fun to be out here," she said.

Coleman continues on A4

New deal clears way for major Tweed Airport expansion



Dan Haar

COMMENTARY

After years of public haggling and back-room talks, Tweed New Haven Airport has a flight plan to launch its long-awaited expansion, powered by tens of millions of dollars from the state and a new traffic pattern that spreads the passenger vehicles in East Haven and

New Haven.

The landmark "memorandum of understanding" between Avports, the airport operator; the two municipalities; and the Tweed New Haven Airport Authority is just that — a roadmap pointing

Haar continues on A5

Rents flatten in some Conn. cities

By Alexander Soule
STAFF WRITER

Rents appear to be flattening early this year in at least a few major apartment markets in Connecticut, according to Zillow — but landlords continue to hike monthly rates in a number of cities and towns, at a pace that some renters are struggling to keep up with.

February rents were up about 1% in Stamford and Hartford from a year earlier, as captured in the Zillow Observed Rent Index, and 2.3% in Norwalk. That compared to a 2.7% increase in the consumer price index over 12 months in the northeast United States, according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates.

But despite easing pressure on renters in the three cities and other population centers like Meriden and Middletown, rents rose in 25 of 40 Connecticut locales where Zillow has year-over-year data.

Rent continues on A5

Lawmakers press about 'disturbing' report on abuse in disability system

By Ken Dixon
STAFF WRITER

HARTFORD — The head of the state agency responsible for Connecticut's 14,000 individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities told state lawmakers that a recent report on more than 4,200 instances of neglect and abuse and 15 deaths in 2024 was slightly mis-

leading about the potential severity of the various cases.

But Jordan Scheff, commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services, said Tuesday there is a need for better training and more concise ways to keep track of annual data on incidents.

"These types of reports are concerning," Scheff told state law-

makers at a forum in the Legislative Office Building. "I think I'm less startled, but that's partly because I have some insight into how we got to the report before you today."

Some of the reports are the result of the re-opening of the state after the COVID pandemic, Scheff said.

"I think I was startled by the decrease in abuse

and neglect reports during COVID more than I was by the increase of cases out of COVID," Scheff said, saying that systems have improved with support from the federal government in training and detection. "I am pleased to see higher numbers in reporting abuse and neglect. It means I have more eyes and ears from
Abuse continues on A4



Ken Dixon/Hearst Connecticut Media

Jordan Scheff, commissioner of the state Department of Developmental Services, speaks Tuesday during a hearing in the Legislative Office Building in Hartford on a report detailing claims of abuse and neglect in the DDS system.

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Weather: Mostly sunny and breezy.
High: 53. Low: 33. Page A10