

# THE NEWS-TIMES

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## Gas prices spike by over 40 cents

By Luther Turmelle  
STAFF WRITER

Connecticut motorists are seeing dramatic increases in gasoline prices that show no signs of letting up any time soon, due largely to the United States' war with Iran,

Statewide average gasoline prices in Connecticut increased 44 cents per gallon over the past week to \$3.36 per gallon on Monday, according to AAA Northeast. The national average price of gasoline is up 48 cents per gallon since the last week, averaging \$3.47 per gallon on Monday.

"Even with strong domestic production of oil and refined products, gas prices are heavily influenced by the price of crude oil," said Lauren Fabrizi, spokesperson for AAA Northeast. Crude oil prices increased by about 30% last week, according to Fabrizi, the biggest weekly gain since 1983.

"Global supply issues caused by the conflict in the Middle East could cause additional export pressure on the United States as more countries look to different sources to meet their energy needs," she said.

Average gasoline prices Bridgeport, New Haven and

Waterbury saw increases similar to the statewide average, according to data from GasBuddy, a national price tracking platform.

Stations in Bridgeport saw the smallest increase in gasoline price, up 41.2 cents per gallon to \$3.29 per gallon on Monday. The average gasoline price in the New Haven area increased by 42.2 cents per gallon to \$3.27 per gallon on Monday, while prices in the Waterbury area were up 43.6 cents per gallon to \$3.30 per gallon, according to GasBuddy.

About a half dozen gas stations  
**Gas prices continues on A4**



Luther Turmelle/Hearst Connecticut Media

**Gasoline prices in Bridgeport, New Haven and Waterbury increased between 41 and 43 cents per gallon over the past week.**



Photos by Arnold Gold/Hearst Connecticut Media

**Fred Miers, owner of Simple Bottle Return, on Friday outside of his recycling facility in Bridgeport with people waiting in line to redeem bottles and cans.**

## New bottle deposit law has unintended consequences

By Ken Dixon  
STAFF WRITER

BRIDGEPORT — Connecticut's problem with cross-border fraud, in which people from New York, Massachusetts and beyond bring in their nickel-deposit empty cans and bottles to take advantage of the region's only 10-cent redemption system, is not occurring at Fred Miers's massive recycling operation on Boston Avenue here, he says.

Outside, in all weather, people wait in line for as long as two hours, then show photo identification to prove their residency. Eventually, they are directed to one of eight lanes where



**Bags of cans and bottles waiting to be redeemed Friday at Simple Bottle Return in Bridgeport.**

employees dump out the bags on steel tables and put the containers through digital counters. The cans and bottles then fall onto conveyors running to a back room, where dozens of workers sort them by hand. Plastic water bottles here, beer and soda cans there. Odd-shaped containers are put into their own clear plastic bags.

The sorting operation is fast-paced at Miers' Simple Bottle Return. Back near the entrance, people line up at pay windows for their cash on the way out.

Farther back in the sprawling warehouse at the corner of Helen Street, 125 big bags of cans at a time get  
**Deposits continues on A4**

## Bethel budget would hike taxes 4.15%

By Brian Gioiele  
STAFF WRITER

BETHEL — Residents could see a more than 4% tax hike, if the budget going before the town's Board of Finance is approved in its present form.

The overall proposed spending plan stands at nearly \$102.5 million, a 5.13% jump over this year's budget.

The schools' side makes up \$62 million, a 6.23% increase year over year, with the town needing nearly \$35 million, a 3.53% hike from this year, for its operating budget.

The total budget number also includes debt service and school maintenance costs — all of which together would increase the mill rate 4.15% to 31.67 mills if approved as presented.

**Budget continues on A4**

## State gives tentative OK to Aquarion merger

By Luther Turmelle  
STAFF WRITER

State utility regulators late Friday issued a preliminary ruling approving the proposed merger between the Aquarion Water Co. and the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority.

In its 42-page ruling, commissioners with Connecticut's Public Utilities Regulatory Authority noted that opponents of  
**Aquarion continues on A4**

## Danbury downtown streetscape project gets \$4M boost

By Brian Gioiele  
STAFF WRITER

DANBURY — Plans to improve downtown's walkability, appearance and economic viability have received a financial boost thanks to a \$4 million state grant.

State and city officials announced the grant allocation Monday at City Hall for what Mayor Roberto Alves calls the next phase of a multiphase project. City officials say they will continue to seek additional grant funding for the remaining phases of the downtown re-

vitalization.

"It's time to get to work," said Alves, standing alongside Lt. Gov. Susan Bysiewicz, state Department of Transportation Special Advisor Carlo Leone, state Senator Julie Kushner and state Reps Bob Godfrey and Farley Santos at the announcement.

The new funds will support the \$20.5 million Downtown Danbury Streetscape Renaissance Project, which calls for redesigned sidewalks and roadway improvements, as well as other enhancements like landscape improvements



Brian Gioiele/Hearst Connecticut Media

**Danbury Mayor Roberto Alves talks about the city receiving a \$4 million state grant for downtown streetscape improvements March 1, at Danbury City Hall.**

in areas like the intersection of Main, West and Liberty streets.

In addition to new sidewalks, the city could see landscape improvements, such as tree plantings to replace aging trees whose root systems are lifting and damaging sidewalks.

Phase one included improvements along National Place, Ives Street, Railroad Place and Delay Street at a cost of \$2.2 million. That work was completed in 2021, according to the mayor's office.

This next phase will add new  
**Streetscape continues on A7**

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**Weather:** Mostly sunny.  
High: 73. Low: 45.  
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