

Six key takeaways from report on Region 12 text messages

Investigation launched by a sexual harassment complaint filed by a Shepaug Valley School teacher

By Michael Gagne
STAFF WRITER

WASHINGTON — An independent investigator who reviewed the contents of a text thread that

involved four Shepaug Valley School employees, including Region 12's now-former superintendent of schools Donald R. Schels, recommended the regional Board of Ed-

ucation consider firing two of them: Schels and one other administrator. The Region 12 Board of Education for the district that includes Washington, Roxbury and

Bridgewater hired Elisa Bartlett, an outside attorney, to investigate a sexual harassment complaint filed by a Shepaug Valley School teacher.

The board in July received two separate e-mailed complaints, one anonymously and the



H John Voorhees III/Hearst Connecticut Media file photo
Shepaug Valley School in Washington is part of the Region 12 district, which serves students in Washington, Roxbury and Bridgewater.

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IMAGES OF FALL



Fall foliage surrounds First Congregational Church in Litchfield on Oct. 15. See more photos on Page A4.

DAVE ZAJAC/HEARST CONNECTICUT MEDIA

More state 9th graders on track to graduate

By Patrick McCaslin
STAFF WRITER

More Connecticut students are on track to graduate high school on time than any other year since 2019–2020, according to data recently released by the state — reversing a slide that accompanied the COVID-19 pandemic. The “on track” metric measured by the state Department of Education looks at the proportion of students in ninth grade who have completed roughly a quarter of

their required credits to graduate (six out of 25). “The 9th grade year is often considered as a pivotal year for continued persistence and success in high school,” said state Department of Education Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan. That claim is supported by the University of Chicago’s Consortium on School Research, which indicates that students who fail in the first year of high school are much less likely to graduate. The recovery is especially strong at sev-

eral school districts that saw rates jump substantially. Those districts range from Derby, a low- to middle-income urban school district outside of New Haven, to Thompson, an upper-middle-income rural school district in Connecticut’s northeastern “quiet corner.” Enfield School District and Windsor School District, both based in middle- to upper-income towns, saw rates fall during the pandemic and remain lower through the 2025-26 school year.

Graduate continues on A4

Proposed Ridgefield center would offer adult day care for people with memory loss

By Sandra Diamond Fox
STAFF WRITER

RIDGEFIELD — An adult day care center in Ridgefield could address what one Planning and Zoning Commission member described as a gap between the town’s senior center and full-time care. Eric Berkley, founder of Safe at Homes, an aging-in-place support service, submitted a preapplication concept to the commission for an adult day care center at St. Andrew’s Lu-

theran Church, 6 Ivy Hill Road. The center, called Serenity Memory Center, would be run through a nonprofit Berkley is spearheading. “This is for adults who have aged out of Founders Hall. Founders Hall is a very active environment. There’s a lot going on. People who are very able-bodied and an adult day care program would be for those at the next level,” he said, at the commission’s Oct. 13 meeting. A 2025 state Healthy Aging

Data Report estimates that 11.4% of Ridgefield residents age 65 and older have Alzheimer’s disease or a related dementia. Of the 4,678 Ridgefield residents in that age group, that amounts to about 530 people, the report said. The program would focus mostly on people with memory impairment, Berkley said, because social engagement — being around others and staying mentally active — can benefit them.

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H John Voorhees III/Hearst Connecticut Media
Volunteers put food in a car at St. Andrew’s Lutheran Church, 6 Ivy Hill Road. The Ridgefield Planning & Zoning Commission is considering a plan to open an adult day care at the church.

El-Sayed clip exposes fight over belonging



Philip Bump
COMMENTARY

By now, you’ve likely seen the clip. Recorded over the weekend at a campaign event for Abdul El-Sayed, the Democrat running for Michigan’s open seat in the U.S. Senate, it shows an exchange between the candidate and a young man in a gray shirt, who identifies himself as Tommy.

“I have a simple question,” Tommy says, grinning. “Will you disavow the Muslim Brotherhood?” “Yes, absolutely,” El-Sayed replies, without hesitation. Then, as quickly, he asks Tommy why he’s asking.

As Tommy hedges, the candidate presses the point. No, Tommy, why are you *really* asking. It’s not because you ask this of everyone, certainly. “Everybody knows the answer to it,” El-Sayed notes, to the audience’s assent. “Answer the question, Tommy.” Eventually, he gives up on the idea that Tommy — later revealed to be a former aide to Republican Sen. Josh Hawley (Mo.) — will offer an honest assessment of his motivations. “You assume, Tommy, that because I am Muslim, that somehow, I would have allegiance to something that is not our Constitution,” El-Sayed explains. “That’s your assumption.”

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Weather: Partly sunny, breezy and pleasant.
High: 63. Low: 35. **Page A10**



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