

Groton City looks to increase fire department staffing

By **KIMBERLY DRELICH**
Day Staff Writer

Groton — The city is looking to increase its fire department staffing following a fatal fire last fall.

City resident Linda Bennett, 78, died as a result of the Oct. 11, 2025, fire at Groton Towers at 39 Broad St. Extension.

The firefighters' union released a statement after the fire that the "tragedy

highlights the importance of adequate staffing on initial units."

City councilors and the mayor said they support raising minimum staffing from four to five firefighters per shift, but questions remain on how to fund the proposal and the timeline for adding the firefighters.

The city is surveying residents to decide how it should move forward. "The City of Groton is committed

to enhancing public safety by increasing minimum fire department staffing to five firefighters per shift," the city said in an online survey posted on the city's website and Facebook page. "This means hiring three additional full-time firefighters. This improvement strengthens emergency response capability, firefighter safety, and overall service to our community."

"Before determining how to phase

in this staffing increase, the City is seeking input from taxpayers," the city continued. "Your feedback will directly inform budget planning and the path forward."

Union wants more firefighters

Groton Firefighters Union Local 1964 President Kevin Price said that the union wants the city to hire three more firefighters immediately. The

department is currently is staffed by 12 firefighters, three battalion chiefs, a chief and a deputy chief.

The department typically has five firefighters per shift and the union wants to increase that to six. The current contract, though, requires a minimum of four firefighters per shift but the union wants to increase that to five.

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SHOWING OFF DOWNTOWN MYSTIC



DANA JENSEN/THE DAY

Meagan Jaglowski, right of Mystic, shows her friend, Esem Imamoglu, of Arlington, Va., downtown Mystic on Tuesday. Jaglowski, who is from Connecticut, moved to Virginia, and that's where she met Imamoglu.

NL ends its year-round school option

Alternate schedule part of budget cuts

By **JOHN PENNEY**
Day Staff Writer

New London — The school district will eliminate its year-round class schedule option as part of a \$1.3 million budget cost-cutting package approved by the Board of Education on Monday.

The cuts, recommended by Superintendent Cynthia Ritchie and district Director of Finance Rob Funk, came a week before the school board is expected to vote on a proposed spending plan and forward it to Mayor Michael Passero by March 13.

The bulk of the savings — more than \$855,000 — would come shifting 10 full-time teachers from the year-round program into "traditional" teaching slots that need to be filled, Board of Education President Elaine Maynard-Adams said Tuesday.

"The savings would come from not paying the extra stipends those teachers got for working a year-round schedule and from us not having to pay new teachers to come in to fill our regular schedule vacancies while also still paying a year-round teacher," she said.

But the changes will effectively end the district's yearslong experiment with all-year classes.

The district introduced the year-round school program in 2022 with federal pandemic funding, which has since been spent. The option allowed students from pre-kindergarten through sixth grade to take classes on a six-week on, two-week off schedule while still attending 180 days each school year.

About 150 families signed up for the program this year. Ritchie as recently as March 2025 was touting the flexibility of the program along with its smaller class sizes and work/vacation time balance for some families.

SEE NEW LONDON PAGE A6

East Lyme to study possibility of elementary school redistricting

By **JACK LAKOWSKY**
Day Staff Writer

East Lyme — The school district has hired a firm to study whether some students in its three elementary schools need to switch buildings, an effort to correct an enrollment imbalance.

Superintendent of Schools Jeff Newton said Tuesday there won't be any changes this year. The redistricting, if the Board of Education eventually decides such a move is necessary, wouldn't occur for another year or two.

Newton said among the three K-4 schools — Lillie B. Haynes Elementary School, Flanders Elementary School and Niantic Center School — Lillie B. Haynes shoulders a disproportionate number of the district's youngest students. This raises class sizes and can strain teachers and staff.

District documents project Lillie B. Haynes will have 327 total students next school year with 20 teachers. To compare, Niantic Center is

estimated to have 176 students and 11 teachers while Flanders is predicted to hit 211 students with 12 teachers.

"We went through this process about seven or eight years ago, after we renovated our elementary schools," Newton said. "At that time, there were discussions that we might have to look at this again in the next few years."

"The numbers are not balanced across the elementary schools," Newton added. "It's very hard for staff to maintain appropriate class sizes."

"School districts go through this pretty often," he added. "Sometimes it's associated with closing a school. We're not doing anything like that, we're just looking at the numbers and what could be feasible."

Newton said the \$36,000 study is expected to be done late this fall. At that time the district would begin discussing the results with parents

SEE EAST LYME PAGE A6

Yantic firefighters surprise Singh at business recognition ceremony

By **DANIEL DRAINVILLE**
Day Staff Writer

Norwich — City officials on Tuesday morning were surprised to see members of the Yantic Fire Engine Co. No. 1 and their supporters at Dixie Donuts Tuesday morning, as they presented the new business with a certificate.

Though Mayor Swarnjit Singh was at the doughnut shop to present the award to its owner, the visit quickly evolved into an impromptu discussion of the city's shutdown of the Yantic department, which is less than a half-mile walk from the shop.

Hours after the visit, Singh said he had no idea the Yantic firefighters, who included Chief Bobby Allen, Deputy Chief Frank Blanchard and 70-year volunteer Ron Stolz, were going to be there.

"I didn't expect them," Singh said. "It was on my schedule for the past so many days. I guess somehow they got to know my calendar. Or maybe it was just (a coincidence)."

When Blanchard was asked how he knew about the event, he said he "stopped by for a tea" and to meet another firefighter.

When asked if his firefighters were there because they knew city officials were showing up, Allen said "No, not at all."

Most of the interactions between city officials and the volunteers were congenial, save for a few pointed jabs, and the conversation between Blanchard and Singh, during which Blanchard quickly became frustrated when Singh walked away from him.

When the event began, Allen, Stolz and Blanchard stood or sat with other supporters, sipping coffee on one side of the cramped rooms. Also on hand were Norwich Republican Town Committee Chairman Rob Dempsy, Board of Education member Heather Fowler, and her husband, Josh Chapman, and local radio host Pietro "Rocky" Camardella.

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WEATHER

Today, partly sunny and milder. High 47. Thursday, mostly cloudy, chance of showers. High 42. **A6**

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EAST LYME GRAND LIST GROWS BY 1.1%

East Lyme — The town's 2025 grand list shows about a \$32 million increase in real estate, motor vehicle and property values.

That's about a 1.1% increase, raising the grand list to \$2.9 billion. The 2025 grand list will be reflected in July tax bills.

Real estate values rose 0.7% to \$2.6 billion while motor vehicles increased 5.5% from \$199 million to \$210 million. Personal property values increased 2.2% from about \$89 million to \$91 million.

The town's top 10 taxpayers were:

1. Connecticut Light & Power (Eversource), \$37.5

2. Sound Apt. Ventures, \$29.1 million
3. Cove Apt. Ventures, \$18.5 million
4. GDEL Commercial (Costco w/out personal property values), \$13.8 million
5. L&L East Lyme LLC, \$10 million
6. Bride Lake, LLC, \$9.8 million
7. KRE-BSL Husky Niantic, \$8.4 million
8. Mitchell Trust LLC, \$7.2 million
9. Flanders Plaza Association, \$6.6 million
10. Evans, Hugh D & Saskia, \$5.5 million

Moon over the past



PETROS GIANNAKOURIS/AP PHOTO

The Worm Moon sets behind the Monument of the Salamis Fighters, also known as Salaminomachoi, on Tuesday on Salamina island, Greece, honoring the ancient Greeks who died in the naval Battle of Salamis in 480 B.C.

