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GREENWICH TIME

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Coordinating buses can be a ‘nightmare’

Driver shortage puts managers behind the wheel in Greenwich

By Ignacio Laguarda

GREENWICH — Some days, it’s a “nightmare.” That’s how Elmer Reynoso described coordinating buses for Greenwich schools amid a pandemic and a nationwide school bus driver shortage. Reynoso, terminal manager for

Student Transportation of America, which provides bus services to the school district, said when the company is short-staffed, managers and assistant managers are taking over bus driving duties, to ensure the service is not drastically interrupted. But delays have happened, he *See Managers on A7*



Tyler Sizemore / Hearst CT Media file photo
Students board a bus in Riverside on March 2.

Confusion, few bus problems reported as vaccine rule kicks in

By Julia Bergman

Few disruptions were reported to school bus routes Monday, the first day after a COVID-19 vaccination deadline, despite a threat that hundreds of drivers would walk off the job to protest the mandate. Still, there was confusion

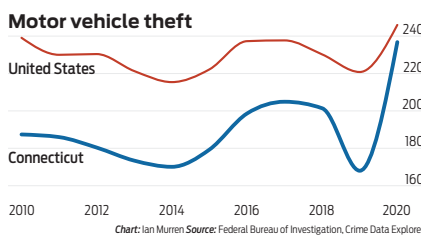
throughout the day about how, when and whether the vaccination rule was being enforced, as some drivers apparently worked without showing proof of vaccinations or negative tests for the illness. Likewise, employees and contractors faced a vaccination *See Vaccine on A7*

FBI data: State homicides, car thefts rose in pandemic

By Peter Yankowski

Amid the height of the COVID-19 pandemic last year, homicides spiked by more than 31 percent, while car thefts increased even more dramatically, newly released data from the FBI shows. In total, 140 people died by homicide in Connecticut in 2020, compared with 107 the year prior. Last year’s death toll by homicide is the highest the state has seen since 2012, the year of the Sandy Hook school shooting, the data shows. The spike is also the highest one-year increase in killings since the crime wave of the early 1990s, according to historical FBI data. *See Data on A7*

FBI 2020 Crime Statistics
Rates per 100,000 people



State House again extends Lamont powers

By Ken Dixon

HARTFORD — The Democratic-dominated state House of Representatives voted Monday to extend Gov. Ned Lamont’s emergency powers until mid-February amid Republican claims that the measure put in place to stem the COVID pandemic is no longer needed. The sixth extension of emergency powers would keep in place a number of mandates stemming from the COVID pandemic, including the face mask requirement in schools. The *See Lamont on A4*

‘It should be shared.’ Fred Landman, Sleepy Cat Farm



Tyler Sizemore / Hearst Connecticut Media

Gourds hang from an archway trellis as Fred Landman leads a tour of the sprawling 13-acre Sleepy Cat Farm.

A gardener’s garden of delights

Sleepy Cat Farm blooms in the backcountry

By Meredith Guinness

GREENWICH — Upon retiring, many people take up gardening — digging a new perennial border or adding a few bright mums to herald the coming of fall. Fred Landman has taken the concept to a whole new level, lovingly and methodically creating Sleepy Cat Farm, a 13-acre oasis on Clapboard Ridge Road. More than 25 years in the making, it represents a close collaboration with landscape architects, designers, artists and skilled workers who tend its lush meadows and groves, pavilions and pools. Begun as “a garden of which the house could be proud,” the property is now a

Begun as “a garden of which the house could be proud,” the property is now a much-anticipated stop for garden tourists who Landman happily welcomes to promote a love of horticulture, design and the value of plants in our lives.

much-anticipated stop for garden tourists who Landman happily welcomes to promote *See Garden on A4*



A feline roams the grounds at Sleepy Cat Farm.



Brian A. Pounds / Hearst Connecticut Media

A memorial marks the site of a fatal automobile crash on East Putnam Avenue.

Police search for answers in fatal car crash

Teen killed in Greenwich accident ID’d by medical examiner

By Robert Marchant and Tara O’Neill

GREENWICH — Police are investigating a fatal car crash in the east end of town Saturday night. The Office of the State Medical Examiner confirmed Monday that Jordan Martinez, of Stamford, had been classified as an accidental death. “We’re still investigating, interviewing witnesses, trying to find out the cause,” Greenwich Police Capt. Mark Zuccerella said Monday. He said officers had heard reports about a Honda racing with another car, but the case was in

the preliminary stages and it was too soon to draw conclusions. The Traffic Reconstruction Unit is investigating. Greenwich police said officers responded to the east end of Greenwich near the Stamford city line about a major accident around 11:30 p.m. Saturday.

day, in the area of 1700 E. Putnam Ave., near the Hyatt Regency Hotel, after a 911 call. Medics and fire units also responded. Police said a Honda slammed into a pole and the driver, the sole occupant of the car that crashed, died from injuries suffered in the collision. *See Crash on A4*



FROM THE FRONT PAGE

GARDEN

From page A1

mote a love of horticulture, design and the value of plants in our lives.

“Should I just sit here and be a miser with my pot of gold?” said the former president & CEO of PanAmSat, who first moved to the stately brick Georgian home in 1994. “It should be shared.”

Garden enthusiasts far and wide can get a peek inside the enchanting gardens in the new book “Sleepy Cat Farm: A Gardener’s Journey,” due out next month (October 2021, Monacelli, A Phaidon Company).

With text by Caroline Seebohm and lush photography by Curtice Taylor, the nearly 200-page book chronicles the evolution of the property and pays homage to some of the key players in its creation.

One need only look at Landman to be convinced of the restorative nature of gardening. Asked by a visitor to tour the property, he excuses himself briefly.

“Let me just change my shoes. It might be a little wet outside,” he says, returning with a sturdy pair of rubber boots.

From there it’s out to the circular drive, where he points back to the neo-Georgian home built in 1942. While it had great bones and elegant detail, it felt a bit lopsided, he says.

Enter Charles Hilton, a locally based, nationally respected architect known for his grounded, classicist style.

Hilton added a full wing to the home, changing the lines of axis and updating the long-overlooked kitchen, and eventually, the bedrooms and bathrooms.

Meanwhile, Landman was trying his hand at beautifying the front of the home along the driveway. He added a vegetable garden, some flowers, even a neoclassical tool shed.

During breaks, the two men talked about their work and the rest of the property. They realized they had both been eyeing the pool area and its pavilion, which Hilton pro-

nounced “very small and quirky.”

A neighbor offered to sell Landman a quarter-acre of land and Hilton and Landman were off and running, designing and building a stylish pool house with an open pergola and two brick pavilions that would encompass the dining area, changing rooms, kitchen and bathroom they envisioned.

It was the first of many such newer parts that have led to the whole that is Sleepy Cat Farm.

While Landman worked on the initial planting beds, very early on he brought landscape architect Charles Stick into the fold. Based in Charlottesville, Va., Stick shares Landman and Hilton’s classicist aesthetic and has been instrumental in turning Landman’s visions into realities that work in harmony with the property’s natural attributes, Landman said.

“I have done a lot of traveling and when I traveled the world, I saw gardens,” he said.

The distinct sections of the garden are a bit like a world tour — from the parterre and putti fountain to the urn-topped grotto and arresting Porta Paradiso to the Chinese pavilion, prayer wheels and raised wooden-plank spirit walk through an iris garden.

The current vegetable garden next to the lower greenhouse fuels and services the imagination of Landman’s wife, Seen Lippert, a professional chef who worked with Alice Waters of Chez Panisse fame. Walking through a long arbor strung with long-necked winter squash and the berry wedge protected by a woven willow whip “fedge” (a fence/hedge), he extolled the virtues of her fresh fruit cobbblers and rose petal syrup-infused cocktails.

While each garden area represents a specific design — and often another land purchase — the overall plan was to enchant and entice visitors, Landman says.

“This path encircles this area and leads back to the way we came,” he says,



Tyler Sizemore / Hearst Connecticut Media

Fred Landman walks past a marble statue through the Porta Paradiso section of the sprawling 13-acre Sleepy Cat Farm in Greenwich. Landman acquired the Georgian Revival house and grounds in 1994 and collaborated with Greenwich architect Charles Hilton and landscape architect Charles J. Stick to create a majestic and magical garden that would come to be known as Sleepy Cat Farm. The property will be the subject of a book “Sleepy Cat Farm: A Gardener’s Journey,” to be released Oct. 19 by Monacelli Press.

bending to pull up an errant weed from a patch of ground cover. “If you’re curious, you can go off and do other things. You can go off and discover.”

The beckoning spirit is evident in the statuary that anchors the landscapes.

Along the path to the Sacred Grove, a bronze figure of Echo stands against massive rocks. A dramatically stretched warrior sculpture by Emile-Antoine Bourdelle guards a reflecting pool, while Adrian Melka’s imposing Atlas hefts the world at the end of a gracefully undulating hedge.

While on a trip to Rockport, Me., Landman found an unusual sculpture of a female Bacchus by turn-of-the-century artist Alice Cooper. “Not the rock star,” Landman says, with a smile.

The dancing figure blowing two reedy flutes invites visitors down a secret path.

Though Sleepy Cat Farm makes ample use of its



An aerial view of the 13-acre Sleepy Cat Farm.

acreage, Landman said he’s not sure the site is complete. With four gardeners and ongoing inspiration from Hilton, Stick, Lippert and a host of kindred spirits, there may be more to discover.

“I’ve never said I was

done,” Landman says as he sat under a gently arched wisteria trellis. “I always say if you have a chance and you can... you should always make something beautiful.”

“Sleepy Cat Farm: A Gardener’s Journey” will

be published in October. Fred Landman and Charles Stick will discuss their work and the book at 1 p.m. Nov. 16, at the New York Botanical Gardens. For more information on this event, visit www.nybg.org.

LAMONT

From page A1

legislation, which passed 80-60 with 10 Democrats voting along with the GOP minority, will be debated in the Senate on Tuesday.

“I haven’t gotten one phone call or one email asking to extend these emergency powers,” said conservative Rep. Gale Mastrofrancesco, R-Wolcott, starting off the afternoon-long debate. “There is no public-health emergency. Let’s give the power back to the people.”

She began a cascade of Republican grievances that stretched through the afternoon, claiming that Gov. Ned Lamont is overriding the power of the General Assembly. None of the 10 Democrats who voted against the bill spoke during the debate.

“Gov. Lamont, I think you deserve some time off,” said a sarcastic state Rep. Holly Cheeseman, R-East Lyme. “I think you need a vacation and I think we need to go back to work.”

State Rep. Craig Fishbein, R-Wallingford, the top Republican on the law-writing Judiciary Committee, noted that while lawmakers were told the extension would continue Lamont’s powers until Feb. 15, the actual bill doesn’t mention the date.

Another lawyer, Rep. Tom O’Dea, R-New Canaan, noted that Lamont recently bragged that Connecticut leads the nation in vaccinations. “Thankfully we are

not as dysfunctional as Washington, D.C.,” he said. “That’s a low bar, I know. There is no reason to extend these executive powers.”

Shortly after 2 p.m., O’Dea submitted an amendment that would have required public hearings withing three days of any future emergency orders. House Majority Leader Jason Rojas, D-East Hartford, pointed out that the proposal did not fit into the scope of the special session and it was rejected in a 84-49 vote when Republicans contested the ruling.

“We are the Constitution State,” O’Dea said. “I do not believe we should be extending these executive orders. We are a long way from where we were in March of 2020. I believe we should be having public hearings on these orders.”

First-Term Rep. Kim Fiorello, R-Greenwich, praised the dozens of people who testified in a hearing last week sponsored by conservative House Republicans, and she defended those opposed to vaccines and masks. “It’s not the government’s job to pass judgment on these people,” Fiorello said. “Those who are making their own decisions on vaccines, a reasonable mind can understand their hesitation.”

“There’s a lot of questions and a lot of anxiety,” House Minority Leader Vincent Candelora, R-North Branford, said at the end of the debate, citing the toxic political atmosphere. “With anxiety comes fear, comes anger. I think we have the ability to take the

temperature down by being deliberative again. And that’s why today, I think a no vote is appropriate.”

Candelora said the state has reached the list of goals that Gov. Ned Lamont outlined in May of 2020, and warned that the legislature needs to create a standard on what is an actual emergency. “I feel as if now the emergency is: COVID exists and therefore the declaration needs to exist,” he said. “I would say that democracy is stronger than COVID.”

“What has become painfully apparent to all of us is that the COVID virus is unpredictable,” said Rojas said at the end of the debate. “We’ve seen multiple variants that act in different ways.” He warned that much of the partisan rhetoric around the issue has been inappropriate, while Lamont’s response has been steady, and the state has benefited.

“He has not acted like a king,” Rojas said. “He has not acted like a tyrant, nor have we abdicated our responsibility as a equal branch of government to work with the governor to meet the challenges we have faced since March of 2020. I’ve grown weary myself of the rhetoric, denying what we all know to be true; denial that we still face the threat of disruption to our lives from COVID. That denial is irresponsible.”

“Our democracy is in tact,” State Rep. Stephen Meskers of Greenwich, one of the few Demo-

crats to speak among the dozen or more conservative Republicans. “We are not threatened by that.” Meskers said Lamont has been exemplary at a time when the state needed to leadership, and the emergence of the delta variant warrants his continued flexibility.

“With all due respect, I am doing my job in supporting this request for an executive order,” Meskers said. “We may disagree, but that is the nature and inherent bias of a democracy. But I challenge anyone to question my integrity and my decision making as a duly elected member of this body.”

Outside the historic State Capitol, about 100 protesters held conservative flags and signs including the “Don’t Tread On Me” Gadsden flag and “Represent, not Mandate.” They were divided between those watching a giant TV with the House proceedings on the north side, and those shouting on the south side. By mid-afternoon they began to disperse.

The bill on the governor’s powers was introduced by state Rep. Dan Fox, D-Stamford, co-chairman of the Government Administration & Elections Committee.

In the late morning, a group of unmasked protesters tried to enter the Capitol in a side entrance and were turned away by security teams who pointed to rules requiring masks.

In a strange juxtaposition to the chanting outside the Capitol, formal tours went on as usual for

masked visitors, including busloads of elderly people, although they were limited to the first floor and could not get upstairs to the House or Senate chambers, or the governor’s second floor suite.

Democrats who voted against the legislation included Rep. Raghib Allie-Brennan of Danbury, Rep. Andrew Baker of Bridgeport, Rep. Jill Barry of Glastonbury, Rep. Pat Boyd of Pomfret, Rep. Michael DiGiovancarlo of Waterbury, Rep. Jack Hennessy of Bridgeport, Rep. Anne Hughes of Easton, Rep. David Michel of Stamford, Rep. Robyn Porter of New Haven and Rep. Travis Simms of Norwalk.

Speaker of the House Matt Ritter, D-Hartford, began off the early afternoon gathering by reminding the nearly full chamber that rules require masks unless when lawmakers are speaking. “A mask must be worn over your mouth and your nose,” Ritter said. “There will be no medical or religious exemption from this mask requirement.” He said that if the rule was not complied with, he would make legislative history and allow the final vote to occur immediately, ending the precedent of unlimited debate.

“By not wearing a mask, you are also depriving people the right to feel safe in the chamber and to speak and represent their constituents,” Ritter said.

kdixon@ctpost.com Twitter: @KenDixonCT

CRASH

From page A1

A nearby neighbor who lives in the area, Tony Rinaldi, said the sound of the collision was startling.

“Loud, very loud,” he said Monday.

Rinaldi said soon after the crash firefighters worked to free the driver from the wreckage of the silver Honda. “They had to tear the whole car apart, it was really bad. Very sad,” Rinaldi said.

Debris still littered the sidewalk Monday after-

noon near where friends of Martinez gathered to mourn his loss and light candles at an impromptu memorial on East Putnam Avenue.

“He was the best, I never knew anybody like him,” said Martinez’s friend, Katherine Garcia, brushing

away tears.

The 18-year-old said she and Martinez spent many hours together with friends this summer.

“This is so shocking, heartbreaking,” she said.

rmarchant@greenwichtime.com

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