

Former Town Manager Deposed In Lawsuit

Council Votes Tonight On Chief's Position

By **ERIK HESSELBERG**
Special to The Courant

EAST HAMPTON — Former Town Manager Jeffery O'Keefe was deposed Monday in Middletown in the lawsuit stemming from his June dismissal of Police Chief Matthew Reimondo. Earlier Monday, a judge rejected O'Keefe's request to block the deposition.

Reimondo's attorney, Leon Rosenblatt, said that the questioning of O'Keefe in a Middletown law office was not completed on Monday, and that another session will be scheduled. As part of a court agree-

ment, the deposition will not be made public for at least a week after it is completed, Rosenblatt said.

The deposition is part of the lawsuit filed by Reimondo — police chief for 12 years and a member of the force for 25 years — who claims that he was removed because of his investigation into sexual harassment complaints against O'Keefe by three female town employees. O'Keefe, who resigned as town manager on Sept. 17 with a \$170,000 severance package approved by the council, denies Reimondo's claim.

Judge Robert Holzberg, who ruled at Superior Court in Middletown against O'Keefe's request to block the deposition, is also considering a motion filed last week by O'Keefe's attorneys seeking to have Reimondo's suit dismissed. The judge also has yet to rule on a request by Rosenblatt for a temporary injunction

that seeks to have the police chief reinstated.

The citizens group Take Back Our Town, meanwhile, organized a petition drive to fight the anticipated approval tonight of an ordinance that would abolish the position of police chief. The ordinance is supported by six of the seven town council members, who maintain — as O'Keefe has — that Reimondo's position was eliminated as a cost-saving measure.

Heavy turnout is expected for tonight's council vote, which will be preceded by a public hearing at 6 p.m. at the high school.

Members of Take Back Our Town plan to begin gathering signatures immediately after tonight's vote. The group on Monday also circulated a brochure claiming that East Hampton actually spends less on police services than other Connecticut towns of similar size. The bro-

chure also claims that the effort to eliminate the police chief has already cost the town close to \$500,000, offsetting any projected savings.

Bill Marshall, a member of Take Back Our Town, said in a statement Monday, "The petition drive is the vehicle for ordinary citizens to have some degree of control and influence over the events that are unraveling in our town. In our form of government, veto power is invested in the people by the town charter, which gives us the ability to have checks and balances over our elected officials."

The group says that, by charter, the signatures of at least 10 percent, or 1,200, of the town's registered voters are required to force a town meeting or referendum within 20 days of the town clerk's verification of the signatures. The meeting or referendum would consider overturning the ordinance.

WETHERSFIELD ENTREPRENEURS



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TEN Wethersfield High School students formed a company that grew from their passion for engineering and desire to help people. Among the members are, clockwise from left, Matthew Thomas, 17; Matthew Wilson, 15; Ben Grant, 16; Andrew Braren, 17; and Jeff Epp, 17 (seated).

Students Minding Their Own Business

Group Forms Firm; Hopes To Market Inventions

By **AMANDA FALCONE**
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WETHERSFIELD — It started out as an ambitious extracurricular activity — a chance for some bright and innovative high school students to put their engineering skills to the test.

Now it has become a business venture.

In began in 2008, when Wethersfield High School's Junior Engineering Technical Society team entered the National Engineering Design Challenge. For the competition, it had to build an "assistive technology device" that could help a disabled person.

When looking around for ideas, the team turned to one of its own members, Griffin Latulippe, who uses a wheelchair.

Latulippe said it was difficult to carry books at school, said Andrew Braren, 17, noting that his friend used zip ties to secure a backpack to his chair.

To help, the team designed the Easy Access Transport System, or EATS. It's a wooden structure with a hook that sits on a wheelchair's handles and swings around to allow for easy access. The device placed in the top five at the National Engineering Design Challenge in Washington, D.C.

The following year, the team entered the competition with the Walken, which uses a motor to help people with walkers go up and down stairs. It also placed in the top five in the national competition. The Walken was developed after a meeting with the town's advisory committee for people with disabilities.

"It's almost like having your own personal pair of dual railings," Braren said.

After returning home, the group wanted to continue developing prod-

ucts. Over summer vacation, the members worked with the Intellectual Property and Entrepreneurship Clinic at the University of Connecticut law school to form their own limited liability company.

InvenTech Enterprises is now up and running and an operating agreement should be filed soon, Braren said. He said 10 students who are considered the company's founding members will share any profits made from their inventions.

InvenTech is in the process of applying for a patent for the Walken. The EATS must be redesigned to get a patent, the students said, and they are currently working to improve the device.

"We are not expecting this to be a huge moneymaker," Braren said, noting that it would be great if InvenTech could find a local manufacturer as a partner.

The goal is to help the community, Braren said, adding that he and his friends are also gaining business experience and learning about marketing and legal issues. The business shows that students do not have to wait until they are older to do something notable, he said.

"They are awesome," said Susan Fennelly, the engineering club's adviser, describing her students as creative, hard-working and inspirational.

To raise money for both the high school's engineering team and InvenTech, the students have launched InvenTechies, a personalized computer help service.

For more information about InvenTech, visit www.inventechenterprises.com. For more information on InvenTechies, or to make an appointment, visit www.inventechies.com, or call 860-940-0027.

Route 72 Extension Opens To Traffic

By **DON STACOM**
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BRISTOL — After more than 50 years, the highway finally reached town Monday.

Almost. Following a nearly hourlong ceremony, the freshly constructed Route 72 from the Plainville line to Todd Street opened to traffic at midday. Drivers got a faster, easier way to get from I-84 into the city — or least a bit closer.

The new four-lane boulevard isn't the superhighway that residents had talked about in the late 1950s.

BRISTOL

Instead it has a 40 mph speed limit and traffic lights. And Manafort Construction hasn't finished the last half-mile or so, so drivers get as far as Todd Street on the new pavement before the road merges into Pine Street. By Emmett Street, Pine narrows to two lanes, meaning traffic is still a slow go from there to Route 229.

But by next spring, the full 2.4-mile boulevard should be finished, transportation officials said during a ribbon-cutting ceremony Monday morning. Surrounded by city leaders and state lawmakers, Gov. M. Jodi Rell predicted it will transform the city.

"By extending Route 72, we are not only helping central Connecticut commuters; we are providing a big boost for economic development for the city of Bristol, local downtown merchants and companies along this corridor," she said.

When it's finished, the new Route 72 will give Bristol its first relatively high-speed access to a major highway. For decades, business leaders have complained that the city was cut off from economic development because there was no easy way to get in and out.

"It's been such a long time coming; people have waited so pa-

tiently. This is a major step," Mayor Art Ward said.

"With the increase in traffic we have, this will help. Even if it saves just five minutes, it helps," council member Kevin McCauley said.

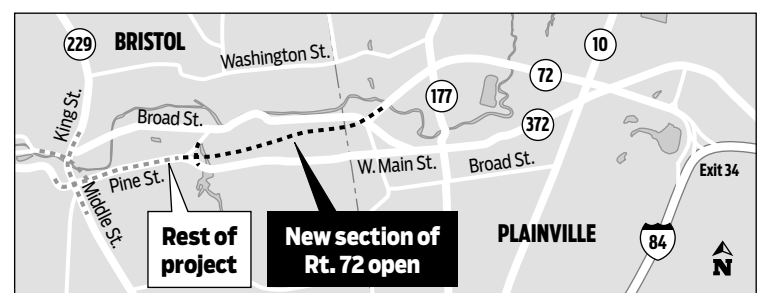
Renaissance Downtowns, the company planning a broad-scale rejuvenation of the downtown, has been eager for the new Route 72, Ward said. The old Route 72 was a twisting two-lane street with lots of driveways, a railroad crossing and a poorly designed five-way intersection in Forestville notorious for rush-hour backups. At Route 372 in Plainville, it becomes a high-speed, limited-access connector to I-84.

Michael Nicaastro, president of the Central Connecticut Chambers of Commerce, said Monday that its replacement will help the city but cautioned residents and drivers against expecting too much too soon.

"We have to manage expectations here. We have to remember they're not done, so everyone has to be patient," Nicaastro said. "And it's not the raised expressway that some people were thinking of years ago."

The governor's office estimated the cost of the project at \$46 million, which includes a short bridge over the Pequabuck River and a pedestrian bridge over the roadway itself. Workers have cleared hundreds of trees and dug a trench for the boulevard for part of its length. In 2008, transportation department managers projected the cost at \$40 million and expected work to finish in 2009.

This may be the state's last all-new stretch of highway for some time. The transportation department is widening and improving Route 7 and plans an extensive upgrade of the I-91 and I-95 interchange in New Haven but has shelved new construction proposals because of the budget crunch and a policy shift toward mass transit and away from more roads



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Open House On Town Center Plans

By **PETER MARTEKA**
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GLASTONBURY — Hoping to build on the momentum from the spring, town officials and the consulting team working on the future of the town center will hold an open house Wednesday followed by another workshop in November.

The goal of the open house is to have residents, business and property owners drop in and talk with representatives of BFJ Planning, Basile Baumann Prost Cole & Associates and Stantec, who are working on a plan to help shape the center over the next decade and beyond. The inaugural workshop was held in June.

GLASTONBURY

The town is hoping to develop a shared vision for the center — an area along Main Street, Hebron Avenue, New London Turnpike and Welles Street. "Glastonbury Center 2020" will integrate community input with an analysis of market and economic conditions, land use, transportation, traffic and pedestrian circulation and parking to help guide the town center through the next few decades.

"The presentation will showcase the concepts for how the town center might change and evolve

over future years," Town Manager Richard J. Johnson said. "We had more than 100 people at our June workshop, and this is their opportunity to come back and see what we've done with some of their ideas and suggestions. Anyone can drop in and see what the concepts are and tell us what they like and don't like."

According to director of community development Kenith E. Leslie, the planning group has spent the summer completing a 60-page market analysis on the town center. The report noted the types of businesses in the center, forecasted future opportunities and noted the strength and weaknesses of the center.

Leslie said the open house will also include numerous information boards dealing with street-scapes, landscaping, traffic and parking, as well as future reconfiguration and redevelopment of some areas if opportunities arise.

"The open house is really about getting people re-acclimated and re-energized about the town center prior to November's workshop," Leslie said.

Both the open house and the Nov. 4 workshop will be held at the Riverfront Community Center, 300 Welles St. The open house will run from 5:30 to 8 p.m. The workshop will be at 6 p.m.