

A house without a garden or orchard is unfurnished and incomplete.
~ A. Bronson Alcott (1799-1888), quoted from louisamayalcott.org

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AN INDEPENDENTLY OWNED FREE COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

BEE INTELLIGENCER

Informing the towns of Middlebury, Southbury, Woodbury, Naugatuck, Oxford and Watertown

Volume XXII, No. 5

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May 2026

Budget Referendum

Wednesday, May 6

Polls open 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Middlebury residents vote at Shepardson Community Center, 1172 Whittemore Road

The following four questions will be on the ballot:

Question 1: "Shall the proposed 2026-2027 Budget of the Pomperaug Regional School District #15 in the amount of \$95,639,220 be adopted?" ___ Yes ___ No

Question 2: "Shall Regional School District Number 15 appropriate \$224,000,000 for the construction of two new elementary schools to replace Pomperaug Elementary School and Gainfield Elementary School, and authorize the issue of bonds and notes in the same amount to finance the appropriation; such borrowing authorization shall be reduced by grants received (currently estimated to be 64.2% of eligible costs)?" ___ Yes ___ No

Question 3: "Shall the 2026-2027 proposed Town of Middlebury Municipal Budget in the amount of \$13,985,958 be approved?" ___ Yes ___ No

Question 4: "Shall the Town of Middlebury appropriate \$583,000 for 2026-2027 Pay-As-You-Go Infrastructure / Capital / Reserves from State Grants and Revenues?" ___ Yes ___ No

Copies of the municipal budget are on file and open to public inspection in the office of the Town Clerk, 1212 Whittemore Road, Middlebury. They are also posted on the Town Website, www.middlebury-ct.org, and shall also be made available via email by calling 203-758-2557. The votes on the questions are taken in accordance with Connecticut State Statutes and the Middlebury Town Charter.

Property owners who are not electors but are Qualified Voters pursuant to Section 7-6 of the Connecticut General Statutes, as amended, shall cast their votes. A Qualified Voter is any U.S. Citizen who is of the age of eighteen years or more who, jointly or severally, is liable to the Town of Middlebury for taxes assessed against him or her on an assessment of not less than one thousand dollars on the last completed Grand List of the Town, or who would be so liable if not entitled to an exemption under subdivisions (17), (19), (22), (25) or (26) of Section 12-81 of the Connecticut General Statutes, as amended.

Calculate property taxes

By MARJORIE NEEDHAM

Incorrect statements about property taxes coming from multiple sources are causing confusion among Middlebury taxpayers. Here's our attempt to sort out the facts.

It is inaccurate to declare taxes are going up by a set percent in a year in which properties have been revalued. Properties increase in value by varying percentages, so not all taxpayers experience the same increase in their taxes. This year's taxes are the first Middlebury taxpayers will pay since properties were revalued.

In "normal" years one thing changes: the mill rate. A revaluation year is more complicated because two things change: the assessed value of each property and the mill rate. As of press time, Middlebury's proposed mill rate is 26.55 for 2026-2027. That is down from 32.52 in the current year (2025-2026), but property values have increased across the board as far as we know. This means your taxes likely will increase even though the mill rate dropped.

You can do the math to see how much your taxes will change. Here's how to calculate them: Use the assessed value on the statement you received from the town and the proposed mill rate of 26.55. As an example, we will use a home with an assessed value of \$100,000.

Multiply your assessed value (\$100,000) x 26.55. That equals \$2,655,000

Then you can either divide by 1,000 to get the \$2,655 in taxes OR

You can move the decimal point three spaces to the left of the decimal point as in \$2,655,000 to get \$2,655 taxes

Now you have the amount of your new taxes. Get out the copy of your 2025 tax bill and subtract the 2025 amount from the amount calculated as explained above to see how much more you will pay this year. If you want to calculate the percentage increase, divide the increase by the amount of last year's taxes.

Using the example above, say last year's taxes were \$2,000. The dollar increase is \$655. To figure out the percentage your taxes increased, divide \$655 by \$2,000. The answer is 0.3275. Your taxes went up 32.75%.

If the town budget passes on May 3, the Middlebury Board of Finance is expected to set the mill rate at 26.55 mills. If the town budget fails on May 3, the budget will need to be revised, and the revised budget will generate a new mill rate.

Next year will be a "normal" year with only the mill rate changing. In normal years, only improvements to your home can make it increase in value. Therefore, barring any improvements, if your assessed rate this year is \$100,000, that is what it will be next year. It will remain unchanged, but the mill rate will change.

Three things affect the mill rate calculations: the grand list (the total assessed value of all taxable property in a municipality), the town budget, and the town's share of the Region 15 budget. However, the final mill rate is determined on referendum day when voters have the final say in determining the mill rate.



Vandals destroyed Will's bench, shown on the left. The bench as it appeared before the destruction is on the right, and the memorial plaque is shown center bottom. (Submitted photos)

Vandals destroy vet's bench

By MARJORIE NEEDHAM

For 15 years, the wooden bench with the plaque that reads, "In loving memory of William J. Keys, 4/22/88 - 4/16/11, U.S. Naval Corpsman, Honor, Courage, Commitment" stood overlooking Will Keys' favorite place - Middlebury's Lake Elise. The second weekend in April, just days before both his birthday and the 15th anniversary of his death, that bench was destroyed. Vandals kicked out the slats on its back, tore it off its foundation and used the slats to build a fire beside what remained of the bench. The plaque remained as a testament to the love friends, family and the

community feel towards William, better known as Will.

Middlebury Police Sgt. Guerera is investigating the vandalism. Anyone who may have witnessed this crime or has information about it is encouraged to contact the Middlebury Police at 203-577-4033.

Shortly after learning of the bench's destruction, Will's friend Julianne Rowland started a Go Fund Me campaign to raise money for a replacement bench made of stone. Just as they had done for the first bench, people quickly responded with donations, reaching the goal of \$2,000 and continuing to \$5,000, when the campaign was closed. The additional funds will be used to

support the installation, maintenance, and landscaping of Will's Bench. Any additional donations will go toward causes that were meaningful to William and the Keys family.

Will's mother, Lisa Keys, said on April 27 that she has ordered a beautiful granite bench with an arched back where Will's memorial plaque will be embedded. "It will be there for eternity," she said. The bench is being created by a Newtown, Connecticut, company and will probably be installed on its concrete platform in early June. Lisa said, "I want to thank Alice Hallaran, Carol Walsh, Julianne Rowland and all who donated to make this happen."

Funds for the original bench were raised by Walsh, a close family friend and the mother of Will's best friend since childhood, Tyler. Donations poured in from across the community. Lisa Keys said at the time that the bench was beautiful and, "It's just so touching that the town would support us in that way. It was made possible by donations from all kinds of people - people that we don't know." She said of Lake Elise, "It's just a peaceful place to be - a place my son really loved. You can kind of feel his presence there."

The location was chosen because Will loved to fish at Lake Elise. His family has a picture

See Vandals... Page 5

Total air pollution matters

By RAYMOND PIETRORAZIO and TERRY MCAULIFFE

For decades, Ray Pietrorazio has been paying attention to Middlebury's air quality. The licensed combustion specialist and longtime town volunteer first raised his hand in the 1990s when he represented Middlebury as an intervenor before the Connecticut Siting Council during permitting of the Towantic Oxford Power Plant. He didn't stop the plant. But he put Middlebury on record.

He's still at it - and in his mid-eighties, he has two things he didn't have 30 years ago. One is a map showing five air pollution sources - four existing and one proposed - within three miles of two Region 15 schools. The second is the knowledge a gap exists in state and federal protections against air pollution. Regulations govern pollution levels from each individual source; no regulations govern the cumulative pollution level caused by multiple pollution sources.

Illustration 1 shows a circle with a 3-mile long radius within which sits much of the town Middlebury residents live in - or drive through, or send their children to school in.

Inside that circle are five sources of air pollution: Interstate 84, the Towantic Power Plant, Oxford Airport, an Algonquin natural gas compressor station, and a proposed ware-

house and logistics complex at Southford Park. Also inside that circle are Long Meadow Elementary School and Pomperaug High School.

Each of the sources is legal. Each is permitted. Each is regulated.

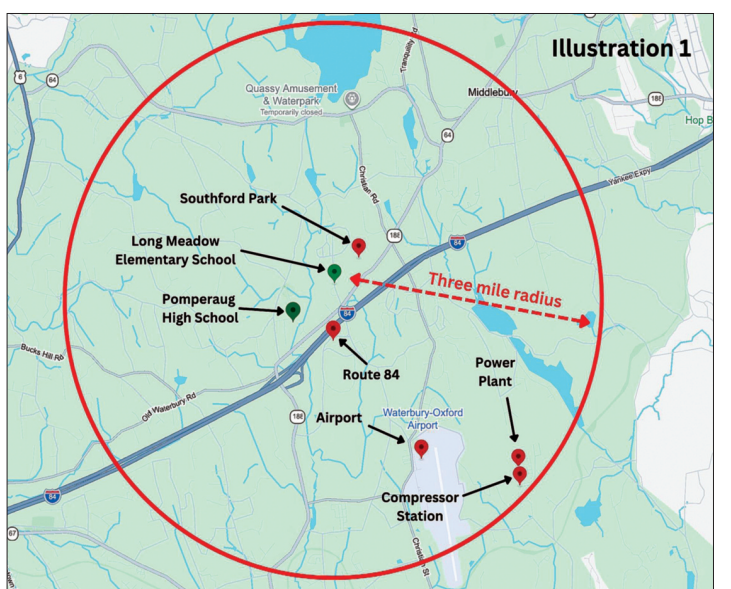
The total (cumulative) amount of air pollution generated by those sources is not regulated.

That's not an accident or an oversight by any single agency. It's simply the existing system.

Air pollution regulation in Connecticut is divided by source. The state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection handles stationary sources - power plants, compressor stations, permitted facilities. The federal Department of Transportation and the FAA govern highways and airports. The Torrington Area Health District monitors public health. Middlebury's Planning and Zoning Commission reviews land use. Middlebury's Conservation Commission watches wetlands and water bodies.

Every permit has an owner. The air those permits allow to be collectively produced has no owner.

Illustration 2 (on page 5) visualizes the regulatory gap between individual air pollution emitters on the left and the total air pollution emitted on the right. Each pollution source on the left is regulated and each contributes to the much larger



The illustration above shows a circle with a 3-mile long radius within which sit five sources of air pollution: Interstate 84, the Towantic Power Plant, Oxford Airport, an Algonquin natural gas compressor station, and a proposed warehouse complex named Southford Park. Also within that circle are Long Meadow Elementary School and Pomperaug High School.

cumulative air pollution on the right. No agency regulates that cumulative pollution, and that's the air Middlebury's schoolchildren breathe.

The authors brought this regulatory gap to DEEP's attention in March. Connecticut DEEP confirmed this gap exists.

On March 20, 2026, we convened a video conference with two senior DEEP officials (Paul Farrell and Tracy Babbidge), State Rep. William Pizzuto, and a staff member from State Sen. Joan Hartley's office. Ray pre-

sented the case methodically: the overlapping sources, the modeling limitations, the absence of any clear authority for cumulative assessment. The purpose was not to object to Southford Park. Not to accuse anyone of wrongdoing. But to ask a structural question: who is responsible?

Paul Farrell of DEEP was direct. Warehouse-driven truck traffic - diesel engines running in and out all day - falls into a

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UPCOMING EVENTS

WEDNESDAY
May 6

Budget referendum - See questions listed top left on page 1 of this newspaper

What: Vote on Region 15 budget and bonding and town budget and Pay-As-You-Go funding
When: 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Where: Shepardson Community Center, 1172 Whittemore Road, Middlebury

THURSDAY
May 14

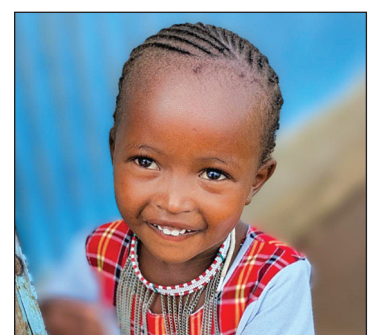
Public Meeting on Middlebury's Air Quality

What: A question and answer session will following a 20-minute presentation on cumulative air pollution in Middlebury.
When: 7 p.m.
Where: Shepardson Community Center Auditorium, 1172 Whittemore Road, Middlebury

SUNDAY
May 24

Memorial Day Parade

What: Parade goes from Bronson Drive to Town Hall for a ceremony
When: Steps off at 5 p.m.
Info: For more information, call Parks & Rec at 203-758-2520.



Resident visits Kenya ... See Page 2

Send mail to:

P.O. Box 10, Middlebury, CT 06762
203-577-6800