

Lawmakers take pass on gun control

Apparent inaction follows last year's passage of sweeping reforms

By John Moritz
STAFF WRITER

HARTFORD — A year after reenforcing one the nation's strictest gun control laws, Connecticut legislators are not expected to mount a serious effort at passing new restrictions on firearms or gun ownership during this year's short budget session, according to legislative leaders.

Of the hundreds of bills that remain viable ahead of the legislature's May 8 deadline, only a handful deal directly with firearms and none would restrict ownership of

particular weapons. The co-chairman of the legislature's Judiciary Committee, state Rep. Steve Stafstrom, D-Bridgeport, said lawmakers have decided not to pursue "major" gun legislation in 2024.

As of Wednesday, the only gun bill passed by Stafstrom's committee was H.B. 5467, which he described as a "technical" fix to comport with changes to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System passed by Congress in 2022. The bill passed out of the committee with bipartisan support in March, and is awaiting action in the House.

A second measure, H.B. 5448, was referred to Judiciary this week after passing out of the committee on Government Administration and Elections. The bill would make it a felony to possess a firearm within 250 feet of a polling place, as well as protecting the addresses of election workers from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. The Senate's signature healthcare bill, S.B. 1, also includes a provision mandating that doctors offer patients with materials about firearm safety.

"I think there's always an extent to
Guns continues on A6



Ken Dixon/Hearst Connecticut Media
State Rep. Steve Stafstrom, D-Bridgeport, co-chairs the Judiciary Committee — starting point for most firearm-related measures.



Tyler Sizemore/Hearst Connecticut Media

The blue house at 233 Hillspoint Road has finally been removed from the town's blight property list in Westport.

'Blue House' site ready to complete construction

By Kayla Mutchler
STAFF WRITER

WESTPORT — A blue house sits on the waterfront of

Hillspoint Road. It's not actually supposed to be blue. It's only blue because it's unfinished, so the wrap underneath the siding is showing — but this won't be the case forever.

For three years, the property has been on the town's blight list, but with the Blight Prevention Board recently voting to remove it from the list and a new developer on the project, it's finally moving forward.

"I've lived in Westport for 35 years and it's the most spectacular house location that I've ever seen in Westport," said new owner James Pendry.

The structure at 233 Hillspoint Road is infamous in town, and is colloquially referred to as "the blue

"I've lived in Westport for 35 years and it's the most spectacular house location that I've ever seen in Westport."

James Pendry

house." It used to be the site of Positano restaurant, and is being developed into a single-family house.

Blight Prevention Board Chair Joseph Strickland said the previous developer did not construct the building according to plans filed with town departments. This caused a halt in the building process for about three years.

Records from the planning and zoning department show the development dates back to December 2017, when the Zoning Board of Appeals denied an application for lot coverage and setback for the construction of a new single-family house on the property. The applicant came back

in May 2018 and it was approved, with a house slightly reduced in size and a pool removed from the proposal.

In December 2019, as construction was going on, the department received a complaint that the construction was not in compliance with the approved ZBA plans, including a fireplace and copula that were not allowed. A stop work order was issued that same month by the Building Department.

It turned out the denied application from ZBA was filed instead of the approved one to the Planning and Zoning Department. Appeals were eventually filed, with a settlement

coming in July 2022.

The blue house was added to the blight list because certain violations of the town's Blight Ordinance were committed, Strickland said.

Summit Westport LLC is the new owner of the property and is fixing those issues, allowing it to be removed from the blight list.

Pendry said he hopes "to be able to construct it well and quickly."

As a real estate developer who lives in the neighborhood, Pendry has been walking past the house for about four years. He jokingly once told the property's broker he would take over the project if he could raise \$50,000 for it.

The broker hounded him a few times about actually taking it over. Pendry eventually went to see the inside of the house, and was surprised to see how much was
Blue continues on A6

BRIDGEPORT

City police phasing out tinted glass on cruisers

By Brian Lockhart
STAFF WRITER

BRIDGEPORT — The city's police patrol cars are clearly designated by lights and markings, but their uniformed occupants are often hidden behind dark window glass.

Critics say that's an intimidating look for public servants, but that look is slowly changing.

With no fanfare Police Chief Roderick Porter, who became top cop in late 2022, has been phasing out the use of tint in his department's fleet.

"One of our goals is to reduce or eliminate the tint windows," the chief revealed this past week to the City Council's budget committee, which is meeting with department heads to craft a new
Police continues on A6



Ned Gerard/Hearst Connecticut Media
A photo of a Bridgeport police cruiser shows tinted windows.

'Getting rid of the shame'

Program offers innovative approach to reduce chronic absence in Conn. schools

By Alex Putterman
STAFF WRITER

WATERBURY — Alejandra, a junior at Crosby High School, has missed nearly two dozen days of school so far this year.

Sometimes, she's had a good explanation — a family trip, a minor illness. Other times, she just hasn't quite felt like going. Having grown up in Puerto Rico, she speaks little English and struggles in her ESL class, which she is currently
Absence continues on A4

Milford business rallies to help family displaced by fire

By Nick Sambides
STAFF WRITER

MILFORD — Workers at a 49-year-old custom embroidery shop on Route 1 have launched a GoFundMe page to help one of their bosses recover from the loss of his Seymour home to a two-

alarm fire.

On April 9, Nantucket Embroidery co-owner Michael Smith, his mother and wife were home on Patrick Drive when the blaze started in a crawl-space beneath the back deck and burned into the eaves and main level of
Fire continues on A4



Highview Commercial/Contributed image

A rendering of the apartment plan proposed for Fountain Square off Bridgeport Avenue in Shelton.

Shelton P&Z plans to deny proposal for Fountain Square

By Brian Gioiele
STAFF WRITER

SHELTON — Members of the city's Planning and Zoning Commission want to deny a plan to build apartments at Fountain Square — for the second time.

At its Wednesday meet-

ing, the Planning and Zoning Commission asked zoning staff to prepare a resolution denying Highview Commercial's plans to construct 170 apartments as part of an affordable housing proposal filed under state statute 8-30g toward the
P&Z continues on A4

