

CIGAR BOX BULLETIN



Retired Men's Association of Greenwich, Inc.
1 West Putnam Avenue, Greenwich, CT 06830



www.greenwichrma.org

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Fellowship, Volunteerism, Service

VOLUME 71 NUMBER 37 June 26, 2024

SCRIBE: MIKE ABRAHAMS

Next Meeting Scribe: July 3 – MIKE Tebay (mdtebay@aol.com)

Log your volunteer hours at www.greenwichrma.org/log

“Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.”
– Albert Einstein

President **WILL MORRISON** opened the meeting at 9:45 am. The Pledge leader was **GERRY BOYLE**, piano player **JIM SANTORA**, and the song leader, **GRAN BURGESS**, who led us all in “God Bless America,” “In the Good Old Summertime,” and “When You're Smiling.”

President **WILL** then followed with recognition for greeter **DAN ROTZIEN**, mentor **SAM MARASSO**, CBB scribe **MIKE ABRAHAMS**, volunteer advocate **CRAIG WALTERS**, and refreshments provider **MICHAEL AMBROSINO**. This was followed by recognition rotations mentors **JIM DEAN, DON ROTZEIN, PETER UHRY, ANDY HOLMES, JOE MANCINELLI, TAD LARRABEE, JIM SANTORA, SKIP AUCH, KRIS BRATBERG, HOLLISTER STURGES, PATRICK MACCARTHY**, and **SAM MARASSO**.

Additional comments from President **WILL MORRISON**:

- Annual membership renewals:

- Starting next Wednesday, the Board will start calling members who have not renewed. Thank you all who have shown their commitment to the RMA through their renewal.

- Members Only website update:

- The profiles of 164 members, those renewed as of 6/21, have been uploaded to the site.
- They are in a position to search the Directory and update their profiles with biographical and emergency contact info and a photo, as well as to check out the upcoming special events.
- Personalized passwords and instructions have been emailed to all those who have not yet logged into the site. This removes to need to create one's own password.

[See the Members Only [email](#).]

- Check your SPAM folder for emails from “wildapricot.org.”
- If you need *any assistance*, email help@greenwichtma.org

- Volunteer Hours:

- We're coming to the end of the third quarter of the volunteer hours year.
- All hours volunteering count, including internal roles such as scribe, A/V, Program Committee
- Our goal is to exceed 50% of members reporting
- Log your current and past hours at the desk in the lobby or online at greenwichtma.org/log

Corresponding Secretary **ARNOLD GORDON** provided another update on **JACK WEIR**'s condition. He was transferred on Monday to the Van Munching Rehabilitation Unit (203-276-2233) at Stamford Hospital and has begun a series of programs (occupational therapy, physical exercise and stroke education). He welcomes visitors, but you must call his wife, Lucy (203-249-6582), the day before you would like to see him, since his schedule changes a lot. He can converse but may be hard to understand. He would welcome phone calls but his room phone number is not available as of this report.

ARNOLD reported that **TOM MCGUIRE's** memorial mass will be at 10 am, Friday, July 29 at St. Michael Parish, on North Street.

TAD LARRABEE called **ARNOLD's** attention to a useful service known as "Project Sunroof" via a web site that will tell you whether your roof is appropriate for solar panels, based on satellite information; if yes, it will calculate your estimated costs and how much money you can save by going solar. It is very easy to use. You only have to enter your home address on their website: <https://sunroof.withgoogle.com/>

The CDC is reporting that Covid-19 cases are growing in most states and they are anticipating a possible summer wave. If you have not had a vaccination for six months or so, it is advisable to get one now. New variants are emerging, but thus far it appears that the latest vaccine will still be effective. See https://www.medpagetoday.com/publichealthpolicy/productalert/110802?id=nl_mpt_morningbreak2024-06-25&eun=g1787845d0r&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=MorningBreak_062524&utm_term=NL_Gen_Int_Daily_News_Update_active

ARNOLD closed with a few serious reflections on being a senior.

- "No, I cannot do SnapChat or TikTok, but I can write in cursive, do math without a calculator, and tell time on a clock with hands."
- "These days, you can tell if a person is 'old' when: they want to talk to a real person on the phone; they do not usually wear headphones in public; run to help someone rather than film it; know someone's gender just by looking at them."
- "A few days ago, my wife and I decided never to go to bed angry. We've been awake since Friday."
- And some gems from grandchildren. Grandma was in the bathroom, putting on her makeup under the watchful eyes of her young granddaughter, as she'd done many times before. After she applied her lipstick and started to leave, the little one said, "But Gramma, you forgot to kiss the toilet paper good-bye!"

- A 6-year-old was asked where his grandma lived. "Oh," he said, "she lives at the airport, and when we want her, we just go get her. Then, when we're done having her visit, we take her back to the airport."
- "My Grandparents are funny. When they bend over, you hear gas leaks, and they blame their dog."

Before leaving the mic, **ARNOLD** introduced **TOM HEALY**, jokester for the day.

- A young mother took her son to the beach where she asked him "Do you think I'm a good mom, Jimmy?" To which her son responded, "My name is Johnny."
- Doctors have just identified a food that can cause grief and suffering years after it's been eaten, it's call Wedding Cake!
- If you can't afford a doctor go to an airport where you will get a free X-ray and breast exam; and if you mention Al Qaeda you'll get a free colonoscopy.
- Never hike alone in bear country! Always hike with someone you can trip and outrun.
- Most seniors never get enough exercise. In his wisdom God created that seniors become forgetful so that they have to search for their eyeglasses, keys, and other things, thus doing more walking. And God looked down and saw that that was good.
- Then God saw that there was another need. In his wisdom He made seniors lose their coordination so they would drop things, requiring that they bend, reach and stretch more. And God looked down and saw that it was good.
- Then God considered the function of bladders and decided seniors would have additional calls of nature requiring more trips to the bathroom. And God looked down and saw that that was good.
- So if you find, as you age, you are getting up and down a few more times, remember it's God's will. It is all in your best interest even though you mutter under your breath.
- Nine important factors to remember as we grow older:
 #9 Death is the #1 killer in the world.
 #8 Life is sexually transmitted.

#7 Good health is merely the slowest possible rate at which one can die.

#6 Men have two motivations: hunger and sex, and they can't tell them apart. If you see a gleam in his eye, make him a sandwich.

#5 Give a person a fish and you will feed them for a day. Teach a person to use the internet and they won't bother you for weeks, months, maybe they won't bother you for a year.

#4 Health nuts are going to feel stupid someday lying in the hospital, dying of nothing.

#3 All of us could take a lesson from the weather. It pays no attention to criticism.

#2 In the '60s people took LSD to make the world weird. Now the world is weird, and people take Prozac to make it normal.

#1 Life is like a jar of jalapeno peppers. What you do today may be a burning issue tomorrow.

Membership Chairman **PETER STERN** reported that attendance today was 86 in-person plus six on Zoom, for a total of 92 (count by **RICK HOLZ**). This was followed by a listing of birthday boys, serenaded by **JIM SANTORA** at the piano.

| | | |
|-------------|-------------------|----|
| BILL | MCKIEGAN | 83 |
| AK | KASSABIAN | 79 |
| TOM | NACINOVICH | 84 |
| PETE | UHRY | 85 |
| CRO | MARTIN | 71 |

The sole guest today was Dean Gamanos, guest of **JIM BUTLER** and **JEFF JUNKER**. Returnees were **BOB MEANEY** from Berlin, Germany and London, **FRANK SCARPA** from Seattle, Washington, and **PHIL SCIBONA** from Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

Upcoming Speakers. **HORST TEBBE** announced that today's will be Alexis Voulgaris, moderator of the Greenwich Representative Town Meeting. Her topic will be "Greenwich Representative Town Meeting (RTM): A Unique Form of Local Government." **BOB MEANEY** then advised that next week's will be

Anastasia Mills Healy, on her book “100 Things you can do in Connecticut Before you die.”

Volunteer Activities. **WILL MORRISON** asked all to log their activities. It is the last week of the quarter, and there will be a summary report next week. The target is 50%-member participation.

Projects of Interest. **WILL** offered the opportunity to share your project.

Human Interest. **GERALD BOYLE** reported that **PJ (JOE) WAIDE**, who earlier established the permanent Center for Applied Ethics at Fairfield University, has now been awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Letters at Fairfield.

SPORTS REPORT

Hearts Report for June 19 by Captain **MICHAEL AMBROSINO**.

Table 1

| Winners | Games | Moonshots |
|--------------------|-------|-----------|
| RICH HOLZ | 1 | |
| JOHN KNIGHT | 1 | 1 |
| JOE DOWLING | 2 | 4 |

Table 2

| Winners | Games | Moonshots |
|--------------------------|-------|-----------|
| ANDY HOLMES | 1 | |
| BOB SHULLMAN | 1 | 1 |
| MICHAEL AMBROSINO | 1 | |
| JACK SWEGER | | 1 |

Bridge Report by **RON MURRAY**. Here are the results for Wednesday, June 19. We had 11 players. The top three scores were **RON FRIEDMAN**, 4970, **ALEX KOSSEIM**, 4840, **ANDRE MAZUREK**, 4750. **ALEX** and **ANDRE** (naturally) bid and made a slam for six clubs worth 920 points. We play every Wednesday afternoon in the ground floor of the Greenwich Library. Lunch is available. We invite all members and guests who are interested in bridge, whether experienced or newer players, to join our group. Do not worry if you

think your game is a little rusty - we have excellent players who will be happy to address your questions.

Golf Report for June 25 by **JIM SANTORA**. We had 19 golfers, 14 played 18 holes and five played nine holes. The winners of our four competition holes:
Closest on Hole 5 – **CHARLIE ADAMS**
Closest on Hole 7 – **MICHAEL ROSS**
Longest drive on Hole 8 – **TONY COCCHI**
Closest drive on Hole 15 – **TONY FITZPATRICK**

Notable scores under 100 for 18 holes were:

PHILIP SCIBONA, 97
PETER TUNLEY, 96
JIM SANTORA, 94
GRAN BURGESS, 87 -best score
TONY FITZPATRICK, 87 – best score

Birdies:

GRAN BURGESS, Hole #3
CHARLIE ADAMS, Hole #8

Next Tuesday our captain is **ANDRE MAZUREK**



Walkers and Talkers report by **JEFF JUNKER**, “Last Thursday, the RMA walkers & talkers met at the ‘red barn’ entrance to Mianus park at the end of Merrybrook Road on the Stamford/Greenwich line. Seven walkers started south on the river trail only to find several steep grades and a lot more ‘trip hazard’ roots sticking up in the trail than I

remembered. Also climbing up away from the river took us away from its

cooling effects. So, we turned back and let **GEORGE WARNOCK** take the lead in guiding the group along old woods roads and flatter trails that stayed close to the Mianus river. The photo shows the group determining which trail to take at an intersection about a mile into the park. After about an hour and a half in the heat, we decided it was time to return to our cars. Though shorter than most walks at 2.6 miles, it was a good day overall.

TODAY'S SPEAKER

HORST TEBBE introduced today's speaker, Alexis Voulgaris, moderator of the Greenwich Representative Town Meeting (RTM), speaking on the topic "Greenwich Representative Town Meeting (RTM): A Unique Form of Local



Government." Alexis has been a member of the RTM since 2005. She is the representative from District 6, and prior to that a licensed social worker. Alexis thanked RMA for the invitation and acknowledged the assistance of **HORST**, book swappers at Book Swap, and several members of RMA. She then provided an insightful

presentation on this distinctive form of local government. The RTM, established in 1933, serves as Greenwich's legislative body, comprising 230 members across 12 districts.

She first looked at the RTM's historical context and structure. The RTM emerged from the New England town meeting tradition, transitioning from an open-to-all system to a representative one due to the growing population. This change aimed to maintain fair representation while adapting to demographic shifts. The concept was carefully studied before implementation in Greenwich, with a committee appointed in 1931 to analyze its feasibility. The first RTM election in 1933 saw high engagement, a trend that has

continued to the present day. In 2023, over 300 candidates vied for 230 seats, demonstrating sustained community interest in local governance.

The RTM holds significant responsibilities. It approves expenditures over \$5,000, reviews and approves the town budget, passes ordinances, and acts as the final planning authority on municipal improvements. While nonpartisan, the RTM is not apolitical. Recent terms have seen a slight shift towards a center-left orientation, mirroring changes in the town's voter demographics.

Voulgaris highlighted the RTM's large size as a key strength, allowing for diverse representation and opinions. Greenwich's 230-member RTM is significantly larger than those of neighboring towns, enabling broader community participation in local government. Recent notable actions by the RTM include approving a \$501 million town budget, passing a noise ordinance banning gas-powered leaf blowers in summer, and approving funding for a road safety study. The RTM demonstrated remarkable adaptability during the Covid-19 pandemic, never missed a scheduled meeting and quickly transitioned to virtual and hybrid formats. This required significant technological upgrades and procedural adaptations.

Voulgaris discussed several challenges facing the RTM and local government. These include an increase in citizen-initiated ordinances, the need to balance diverse opinions while maintaining civil discourse, and ongoing debates over perennial issues, such as sidewalk construction. She also noted the RTM's role in addressing contemporary concerns, like the recent leaf blower ordinance and potential future discussions on electric bicycles and scooters.

The presentation clarified the RTM's relationship with other governmental entities. These include the Board of Estimate and Taxation (BET). The RTM can approve or reduce, but not increase, budget amounts proposed by the BET. Regarding the Board of Education, the RTM approves a total sum for operations but cannot direct specific allocations within that sum. It has more control over capital expenditures for education.

The RTM operates with a modest budget of about \$60,000, with a significant portion allocated to technical costs for hybrid meetings. The Town Clerk's office serves as staff for the RTM, handling administrative tasks.

Throughout her presentation, Voulgaris emphasized the importance of civic engagement and the unique opportunity the RTM provides for residents to participate in local government. She encouraged attendees to follow the RTM's work and consider running for seats in their districts.

Q&A Highlights

Q: What percentage of registered voters do the 230 RTM members represent? How do RTM members prepare for debates with many speakers?

A: Voulgaris explained that the 230-member count is fixed, but distribution among districts can change based on the number of electors. She mentioned that RTM members receive comments through a "contact all 230" button on the website. She also described the committee structure, where issues are vetted by various committees before full RTM meetings, allowing members to prepare based on committee reports and recommendations.

Q: What's the process for approving capital spending for something like resurfacing pickleball courts?

A: Voulgaris outlined the process, starting with the Parks and Recreation Department recognizing public interest. The project would need to be added to the Capital Improvement Plan queue. It would then go through the Board of Estimate and Taxation (BET) for approval before coming to the RTM. She emphasized that the process starts with the relevant department and needs to be in a queue for consideration.

Q: Are you considering redistricting, given the size differences between districts?

A: Voulgaris stated she's not considering redistricting, as the current 12 districts work well and represent all sections of town. She explained that the number of delegates per district is based on the number of electors, which can change, but the total of 230 members remains constant.

Q: Is the RTM considering any ordinances regarding electric bicycles, scooters, and lithium battery risks?

A: Voulgaris said she wasn't aware of any current proposals but explained that it only takes 20 interested residents to put an item on the RTM call. She suggested that while it's not currently being considered, it could potentially come up in the future if enough residents express interest.

Q: Is there any discussion about increasing the \$5,000 threshold for expenditures that require RTM approval?

A: Voulgaris mentioned that in 2018-2019, a committee she chaired considered increasing the threshold to \$25,000. However, they decided against proposing this change due to concerns about smaller departments for which \$25,000 would be a significant amount. She noted that for smaller amounts, the RTM uses a Consent Calendar to streamline approvals without debate.

Q: Do Democrats and Republicans on the RTM have separate meetings to determine their positions on issues?

A: Voulgaris emphasized that the RTM is nonpartisan. Members don't typically caucus based on party affiliation. She noted that the large size of the RTM (230 members) makes it difficult for special interest groups to drive decisions, contributing to a more collegial workplace.

Q: Who should be called to enforce the new leaf blower regulations?

A: Voulgaris advised calling the police non-emergency number for leaf blower noise complaints. She noted that until Memorial Day 2025, there would be no penalties issued, only warnings, as part of a grace period built into the ordinance.

Q: Is there any way to address the issue of neighborhoods being "wrapped" by utility cables?

A: Voulgaris admitted she didn't have enough information about this issue. She suggested it might be outside the scope of town departments if it involves private companies like Optimum or Frontier, and apologized for not having a more specific answer.

The full presentation can be viewed by going to the RMA website at <https://greenwichrma.org>, and clicking on “Speakers.” Note: The views expressed in RMA presentations are those of the speakers. They are not intended to represent the views of the RMA or its members.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

TO CBB CONTRIBUTORS: Scribe for the next meeting will be →**MIKE TEBAY**←. Please send a copy of any remarks you want included in the CBB to him, *via email please!*

ALL MEMBERS: Do not forget to report all your inside and outside volunteer hours at www.greenwichrma.org/log.

ALL MEMBERS: The CBB team works every week to write and publish an informative and concise bulletin for our members’ enjoyment. We can always use new members to join the Scribe Tribe. Please contact **TIM BROOKS** at tim@timbrooks.net if you can support this effort.

ALL MEMBERS are reminded that in addition to streaming on the Internet, RMA speakers are normally shown on the local public access TV channels, Verizon FIOS channel 24 and Optimum (Cablevision) channel 79.

Pictures by **ANDY HOLMES, JOHN DENNE.**

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RMA 2024 CALENDAR

| Weekly Repetitive Activities* | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Day | Time | Activity | Contact |
| Mondays | 9:30 am | QiGong and Tai Chi Workout | Register in advance with Will Morrison – wdmorrison@gmail.com |
| Mondays | 11:00 am-1:00 pm | Pickleball | Pat MacCarthy – pmaccarthy415@gmail.com |

| | | | |
|------------|------------------|--|---|
| | | | Michael LaGamma– mdlagamma@optonline.net |
| Tuesdays | 9:30 am | RMA Golf, the Griff Golf Course, Greenwich | Joe Mancinelli - jlmanc@optonline.net |
| Tuesdays | Resumes in Fall | Platform (paddle) tennis | James Dean - Jhdeanco@gmail.com |
| Wednesdays | 9:45 to 10:30 am | RMA Weekly Meeting | Horst Tebbe – onehorst@optimum.net or Len Carusi at lencarusi@gmail.com |
| Wednesdays | 1:00 pm | Hearts | Bob Shullman – bob.shullman@gmail.com |
| Wednesdays | 1:00 pm | Bridge | Ron Murray - mitmurray@aol.com |
| Thursdays | 9:00 am | RMA Walking | Tad Larrabee - tadlarra@optonline.net Jeff Junker - jjunker@optonline.net |
| Thursdays | 9:00-11:00 am | Pickleball | Pat MacCarthy – pmacCarthy415@gmail.com Michael LaGamma – mdlagamma@optonline.net |
| Friday | 1:30-3:00 pm | Indoor Tennis | Andre Mazurek - Mazurek.a.j@gmail.com |

*Day & time of some events may vary; check with contact