

DAN HAAR

Anger, but not surprise for Dreamer watching SOTU

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OUR CAPITOL BUREAU

Malloy: OK tolls, gas tax hike

Gov urges lawmakers to shore up transit funding

By Ken Dixon

HARTFORD — Motorists would navigate under dozens of overhead toll gantries along state highways throughout Connecticut under a funding plan for transportation that would also raise the state's gasoline tax to 32 cents from 25 cents per gallon over the next few years.

While legislative Republicans balked after Gov. Dannel P. Malloy's Wednesday morning support for the new revenue generators, Democratic leaders including

Speaker of the House Joe Aresimowicz conceded the issue will likely be a major debate for the upcoming legislative session.

For the first time since taking office in 2011, Malloy came out in support of high-speed electronic tolls that could raise up to \$800 million a year for the cash-strapped state transportation fund.

"I wish we had it two years ago, because maybe we wouldn't be in the predicament we are in today," Malloy said during a 45-minute news conference in the Capitol. Malloy also wants lawmakers to approve a



Malloy

transportation advocates and unionized construction workers.

He said that if the General Assembly adopts the various options, which will be presented Feb. 7, it would assure that \$4.3 billion in highway projects recently

multiyear addition to the 25-cents-per-gallon gas, to raise it to 32 cents, generating \$105 million more per year by 2022. In 1997, the 39-cent gas tax was cut to a quarter.

"The future is now,"

Malloy told reporters,

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Hearst Connecticut Media file photo

Gov. Dannel P. Malloy urged lawmakers to raise the state gasoline tax to 32 cents from 25 cents per gallon over the next few years.



Matthew Brown / Hearst Connecticut Media

City officials have issued more than 500 tickets to vehicles parked in the same spot for at least 120 straight hours.

GOVERNMENT

Officials: Parking law needs tweaking

By Angela Carella

STAMFORD — A law designed to clear the streets of parked cars that sit for days in the same spot is working, but needs tweaking, city officials said.

Since May, 511 vehicles have been ticketed \$50 after owners left them on the street for 120 hours or more, Transportation Bureau Chief Jim Travers told the Board of Representatives' Transportation Committee, which heard a progress report on the law at its January meeting.

Travers said Wednesday the new law seems to be doing its job.

"We don't want a car sitting on the street — it's a hindrance for a neighborhood, where parking may already be limited," he said. "This is resolving some of the issues."

But some officials think the limit should be reduced to 72 hours, and that leeway should be written into the law.

Two Democratic representatives from District 16 who advocated for it, Steven

See Parking on A5

CITY ARTS

'Landscapes' at the Loft



Bob Luckey Jr. / Hearst Connecticut Media

Artist Elizabeth Hasegawa Agresta with her painting "Summer Rain" in the Loft Artists Association Gallery in Stamford.

By Alexandra Villarreal

STAMFORD — "I would make some pretty good things out of snow, when it snowed," remembered Elizabeth Hasegawa Agresta.

As a child, she packed the flurries tight to build animal sculptures — like typical snowmen, she said, but with a little more experimentation.

Artist primed for a big 2018

Unlike the stout, round archetype with his pipe dangling squarely below a carrot nose, she carved creatures that felt more real in a three-dimensional space.

Decades later, Agresta has left Vancouver for Old Greenwich. It snows often in town, and she

could have continued with her snow sculptures had she so desired. But with age, she traded those in, too — first, for pencils and paper, then a paintbrush, and then non-toxic acrylics.

"It kind of snowballed," Agresta said. When she came to town in

1989, the move was supposed to be temporary. She and some friends from nursing school chose Greenwich Hospital because, for young people, the bustle of the city waited only minutes away.

Then, she met her husband, and what was originally termed a blip on her biography proved a permanent home.

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PERFORMING ARTS

Violin prodigy prepares for chance at Juilliard School

By Liz Skalka

STAMFORD — To the dozen or so people who saw Cameron Chase perform at St. John's Lutheran Church last weekend, the young violinist's intimate recital was a revelation.

But to the musician, there was room for improvement. There always is.

"It was all right," he said, carefully choosing his words. "It could have gone better."



▶ VIDEO: To see a video of violinist Cameron Chase's performance in Stamford, go to: bit.ly/2DQ9fM3

Chase, a 17-year-old Stratford resident, gave the recital in preparation for his upcoming audition at The Juilliard School, where he has studied music in the Pre-College Division for the past two years.

Naturally, Chase, who picked up the violin at age 5, is past the

point of having stage fright, especially when performing for the public. Last Sunday in Stamford, he appeared to sail through a program of Bach, Mozart, Glazunov and Paganini.

"I've pretty much gotten over that," he said. "It used to be a lot more difficult. Obviously, the setting you're in influences how you feel about the performance."

Chase is hoping to be accepted as an undergraduate at Juilliard, See Violinist on A5



Violinist Cameron Chase plays a piece, with the help of pianist Alexis Zingale, during a free recital inside St. John's Lutheran Church in Stamford on Sunday.

Michael Cummo / Hearst Connecticut Media



NEWS/FROM THE FRONT PAGE

DOG-BITING INCIDENTS

Animal shelter manager escapes prosecution

STAFF REPORTS

STAMFORD — The criminal prosecution of Laurie Hollywood has been dropped after the city's former animal shelter manager was accepted into a diversionary program for first offenders that will expunge a single count of reckless endangerment against her.

Hollywood, 46, was granted participation into the Accelerated Rehabilitation program by Judge Gary White late Wednesday afternoon. Hollywood is being made to serve only one day in the probationary program, which can be made to run for up to two years.

By late morning Thursday, Hollywood is expected to walk out of court with no criminal record.

Hollywood was charged in 2014 with three reckless



Hollywood

endangerment charges after police found she downplayed or failed to disclose the biting history of three dogs adopted from the city's shelter that went on to bite again.

But after three years of negotiations and the case nearing trial, the state's facts of the case became much more difficult to prove.

Sources at the courthouse say that the prosecutor on the case, Daniel Cummings, was unable to get one witness to testify to one of the reckless endangerment charges. Then evidence problems surfaced with the second charge, leaving only one of the misdemeanor charges to prosecute.

Lt. Tom Barcello, who

investigated the case, declined comment Wednesday afternoon.

Hollywood has stipulated that police had probable cause to arrest her and she has agreed to make a charitable contribution to settle the case. Two of the reckless endangerment charges are to be dismissed, leaving Hollywood only to serve her one-day probationary sentence for the remaining charge.

Mark Sherman, Hollywood's Stamford criminal defense lawyer said his client felt validated by Wednesday's court disposition.

"Laurie remains thankful to her friends, family and supporters who stood by her and believed in her innocence over these years," Sherman said.

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Hearst Connecticut Media file photo

Supporters of former Stamford animal control manager Laurie Hollywood, charged with three counts of reckless endangerment, protest outside state Superior Court in Stamford in August 2014.

PARKING

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Kolenberg and board President Matthew Quinones, said their constituents have identified circumstances in which violators should be allowed to appeal a ticket.

"There was one instance in which a gentleman was concerned for his mother, who is elderly and uses her car less frequently," Quinones said. "She has no room to park in the driveway so she parks in front of her home, and there are plenty of times where her car is there for 120 hours or more."

Kinks are cropping up and must be corrected, Kolenberg said.

"People are getting fined for having cars parked outside their own homes when they are on vacation," he said.

There are things lawmakers can do, Quinones said.

"We can add a provision that allows for instances where a car is parked in close proximity to the owner's home — maybe a 50-foot or 100-foot rule," he said.

Kolenberg said the need for the law became clear in their Newfield-Turn of River district last year, when constituents were complaining about cars perpetually parked in the street.

"There were eyesore vehicles, there were vehicles that made it hard to get in and out of driveways, there were commercial vehicles parked outside of homes for long periods of time," Kolenberg said. "It wasn't just my district — it was happening in the South End, the downtown. In the Cove, there was no more street parking for residents. They were parking two or three blocks away and walking home every night."

The law does not target abandoned vehicles, which the police department can remove. It targets registered vehicles, which police couldn't do anything about.

"We realized we needed a legal mechanism to correct this behavior," Kolenberg said. "It's a very real problem."

And not just in Stamford, Travers said.

"Other cities — New Haven, Bridgeport — do this. It's pretty standard," the transportation chief said. "We were behind the eight-ball on it."

The ordinance is driven by complaints, Travers said. A resident who spots a car that hasn't moved for many days can report it to the Citizens Service Center. Parking Enforcement then dispatches a vehicle

equipped with a license-plate reader.

That triggers the count-down.

"The 120 hours starts when we see the car," Travers said.

The traffic enforcement officer takes a photo of one of the car tires to document the position of the stem. After 120 hours, the officer returns to see whether the tire stem is in the same position. If it is, it means the car has not moved.

"Then we issue a ticket," Travers said. "After that, we call the police department and they put it on the tow list."

If the ticketed car is there when the tow truck arrives, it is hauled away.

"This is about education and changing behavior, not just for the car owner but for the general public," Travers said. "They have to know we are not scanning the streets. This ordinance is dependent on citizens alerting us to a situation."

It was reported during the Transportation Committee meeting that the city has collected \$25,000 in fines so far, but Travers recommended that the law stay as it is for a little longer.

"I think it's too early to do an assessment," Travers said. "Maybe it should be 72 hours, I wouldn't dispute that — many cities use 72 hours. But let's do a review in May, when it's a year old and there will be a lot of information to look at and decide if we should make amendments."

Waiting is a good idea, Quinones said.

"We need time to see how things play out — as long as it gets remedied," the board president said. "We still want it in place so people can't park a car in front of your house and forget about it for a week, but we have to be fair to the homeowners paying property taxes and vehicle taxes."

The Board of Representatives will discuss the time-limit parking ordinance when it meets at 8 p.m. Monday, Kolenberg said.

"I hope that any representatives who have a question about it speak up so we can take more points of view into account," Kolenberg said. "Just like any other piece of legislation, it takes a while for flaws to become apparent, but it was a good start toward making the streets clearer and the city more livable."

To report a vehicle in violation of the parking ordinance, call the Citizens Service Center at 203-977-4140.

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Violinist Cameron Chase plays a recital inside St. John's Lutheran Church in Stamford on Sunday. Chase, a Stratford resident, began playing the violin when he was 5 years old and is currently enrolled in the Juilliard pre-college program.

Michael Cummo / Hearst Connecticut Media

VIOLINIST

From page A1

one of the world's most prestigious performing arts conservatories, where he wants to study violin performance as well as composition and conducting.

"Some schools are about being in a room and practicing almost all day," he said, "and I have other interests besides just working on the violin."

After showing an early interest in learning the instrument, Chase's parents, Tucker and Ginnie, got him a 1/8 violin — 10 inches long — and enrolled him in classes at the Little Red School of Art & Music in their hometown. Since then, he's had several teachers. He now studies with Hyo Kang and I-Hao Lee at Juilliard in Manhattan.

"I always loved listening to classical music and then as I got older and more acquainted with the intricacies

of the violin, it appealed more and more to me as a wonderful instrument for making music," he said.

When he's not at Juilliard, Chase is homeschooled, which allows him the flexibility to practice for up to seven hours a day.

Like most kids, he didn't start out with the discipline for hours of intense training.

"When I was young, I hated practicing. For almost everyone, I think it's that way. You don't start to reap the rewards of it until you start sounding good," Chase said, adding that his father's pushing also helped him excel.

"He was always the main supporter," he said. "He was the classical music lover in the family."

That support has gone a long way in helping Chase become one of the region's top young violin players. In 2014, he won the American Chamber Orchestra Concerto Competition, and

the following year placed second in the Musical Club of Hartford's High School Competition. He has been a featured soloist with the Norwalk Symphony Orchestra and was concertmaster of the Norwalk Youth Symphony's Principal Orchestra for two years.

Chase's background in the arts isn't limited to music. He has also appeared in seven productions of Shakespeare with Penny Lane Players, an acting troupe for homeschooled children run by Tucker Chase.

But music always takes precedence. "Everyone thinks of classical music as boring, which is so the opposite of what it is," he said. "It's a really important art form, and that sometimes gets lost in pop culture."

Chase will perform another free recital at Weston Public Library, 56 Norfield Road, on Feb. 18 at 2 p.m.

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TRANSIT

From page A1

postponed — including the completion of the Interstate-95/Route 7 interchange in Norwalk -- would be back on schedule.

Malloy's initiative was the result of weeks of meetings with advocates and industry experts in attempt to shore up the Special Transportation Fund, which is on track to become insolvent in 2020. Malloy said that if approved the tolls could be erected more quickly than the 2023 time frame some supporters have suggested.

The governor also proposed a \$3-per-tire fee on the purchase of new tires, raising a projected \$8 million a year. The plans will be presented to the General Assembly next week.

Can't do nothing

Republican leaders including House Minority Leader Themis Klarides, R-Derby, and Senate Republican President Len Fasano, R-North Haven, continued to voice opposition to the vehicular tax hikes, stressing that in 2015, they offered a way to pay for transit improvements

without tolls or higher taxes.

But State Sen. Carlo Leone, D-Stamford, co-chairman of the legislative Transportation Committee, said the projected insolvency of the fund for transportation is looming.

"In my mind, the one thing we can't do is do nothing — and that's what some voices in this building are saying," Leone said after Malloy's announcement in a Capitol meeting room. "The governor is on his way out of office and he could have chosen to leave it for the next administration. It's reckless not to do anything."

For the state to enter the bond market for highway and bridge improvements, the Special Transportation Fund (STF) must show a balance over five years. A steep slide in gasoline taxes, combined with years of raiding the STF by the General Assembly, which transferred tens of millions of dollars to the General Fund, has led to the crisis.

In recent years, so-called border tolls have been criticized because they could make the state ineligible for some federal highway funding. But toll supporters say federal cash would not be

jeopardized by statewide tolls activated by transponders in vehicles.

"Within 20 years, half of the cars on the road will be electric," Malloy said. "It is a dying funding source."

Democratic lawmakers earlier this week announced renewed support for a new statewide system of electronic tolls.

Charging electric cars

A longtime opponent of tolls, Rep. Bob Godfrey, D-Danbury, said Wednesday after the House session that the rising number of electric vehicles, many of which are luxury vehicles like Teslas, are being subsidized with free electricity from charging stations throughout the state. He said he would like to see those vehicles pay for the roads in the same way that gasoline-powered vehicles pay.

He noted the amendment to the state Constitution, establishing a so-called lockbox on the transportation fund that will be on the statewide ballot in November, will essentially be a referendum on whether the state wants tolls.

"This is controversial," he said. "It's new. It's being pushed harder than I

thought. My constituents are telling me they are very upset that when rich people buy those electric cars, they pay nothing into the Special Transportation Fund. I think it's time we devote the sales tax on motor vehicles to the Special Transportation Fund. I certainly am leaning to raising and fixing the gasoline tax."

Godfrey said that user fees for state roads is a solid policy. "But those fees need to be adjusted to the higher costs of construction and fixing and snowplowing and everything else that we do, so we need to have the discussion. We need to increase the revenues — but tolls? Not yet ... only after the referendum."

After Malloy's announcement, Danbury Mayor Mark Boughton, a hopeful for the GOP gubernatorial nomination, said he would veto any toll legislation.

"Proposing tolls along with yet another increase in the gas tax, plus a new tire tax, is a slap in the face to every resident of the state of Connecticut," Boughton said in a statement.

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