

# The Norwalk Hour

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## Probe: Ex-officers 'betrayed the public trust'

By Richard Chumney

NORWALK — A state agency revoked the law enforcement certifications of two former city cops after an internal investigation by the Norwalk Police Department found they "betrayed the public trust" by consuming alcohol on the job, documents show. The Police Officer Standards and Training Council voted last week to decertify former Norwalk police officers Michael DiMeglio, 39, and Sara Laudano, 32, effectively barring the two from working as police officers in Connecticut.

"I was not surprised by their decision," Norwalk Police Chief Thomas Kulhawik said of the council's actions.

Norwalk police arrested DiMeglio and Laudano in January 2021, about three months after the two were caught in hotel room under the influence of alcohol while on duty, according to arrest warrants and court records.

At the time of their arrest, police said officers found the pair at a Main Street hotel after a dispatcher could not reach Laudano over the radio or on her cellphone. Police

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Ned Gerard / Hearst Connecticut Media

School buses line up along Strawberry Hill Avenue to pick up Norwalk High School students on Wednesday.

## More money needed for new high school

City officials put estimated cost of project at \$225M

By Emily Morgan

NORWALK — City officials say they will need to go back to the state to fully fund the new Norwalk High School project.

The estimated cost of the total project is \$225 million. However, the state reduced the city's initial request and approved \$189 million for the project at a reimbursement rate of 80 percent in 2020.

"The city would need to request to increase the project budget in the amount of \$36 million," said Alan Lo, Norwalk Building and Facilities Manager.

Lo told the Board of Education this week that the city tried to design the project toward the \$189 million, "but we had so much trouble trying to do that." The reality is the \$225 million is the amount needed, Lo said.

The board approved the city's recommendation to move forward with design "option B" for the new high school, which would construct the building on the existing football field. The Common Council's Land Use and Building Management committee will discuss the recommendation next before moving it to the full council.

Officials said the hard costs for "option B," which include the physical construction of the building, equipment and materials used, and labor costs, is \$193 million. The remaining \$32 million would be soft costs, including builder's risk insurance, architectural fees, design fees and developmental consultant fees.

The city already approved more than \$50.5 million for the high school project in 2020 to cover the 20 percent that was not going to be reimbursed by the state plus costs that would have a lower reimbursement rate like the athletic facilities

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Erik Trautmann / Hearst Connecticut Media file photo

Norwalk police officer Michael DiMeglio, who was arrested in January for drinking on the job with another officer, appears with his attorney Jessica Kordas on Feb. 17, 2021, in state Superior Court in Stamford.

## Taxi driver's killer seeks shorter sentence

Man convicted in 2004 murder says the remorse is 'indescribable'

By Pat Tomlinson

STAMFORD — A Norwalk man convicted of murder as a teenager in an armed robbery-turned-fatal shooting of a taxi driver has asked the court to consider lessening his prison sentence. If granted, the 34-year-old, who said the remorse he feels is "indescribable," could be released as soon as next year.

Rick Felix, 34, was sentenced to 40 years in prison in 2006 after a jury found him guilty of felony murder in the fatal shooting of 28-year-old Ralph Morneau, a Yellow Cab driver, on Nov. 13, 2004.

Felix and four friends, all teenagers at the time, had attempted to rob Morneau at gunpoint near the Roodner Court housing complex, but when Morneau tried to drive off, Felix shot him twice — once in the leg and once in the chest.

Felix has been imprisoned since December 2004

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## Connecticut could be heading for a telework train wreck

Two years after a pandemic-stricken state sent its office employees to work from home, Wednesday brought the full-staff return at the Department of Transportation, one of the largest Connecticut agencies.

It was dubbed the first "All Hands Wednesday," a weekly event. Hundreds, perhaps more than 1,000 people came together at the DOT headquarters in New-



DAN HAAR

COMMENTARY

ington — planners, designers, inspectors and more — connecting with old friends

and colleagues on a sunny, pre-spring day.

Parking lots filled.

But the moment also signaled dark clouds of discord as the issue of telework — who can work from home, and how often — hung, for many, over the reunion. Like all state executive branch units, the DOT is now operating under the ruling of an arbitrator who rejected Gov. Ned

Lamont's plan to set caps on how much time unionized employees can spend working remotely.

As the tens of thousands of state employees return to "normal," how many will request and win telework, for what percentage of their time? No one can say.

The new rules, negotiated under the state's 2017 labor agreement, give a

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## UConn men's basketball team befriends young fan fighting cancer

By Mike Anthony

BUFFALO — When the most devastating news was delivered by doctors last Tuesday, Mario Jimenez turned to his 15-year-old daughter and said, "What do you want to do, Sweetheart? Where do you want to go?"

Months of chemotherapy and radiation and surgery had eradicated the cancer from Aubrien Jimenez's head but the first post-treatment MRI indicated that it had spread to her back, her hips, maybe into her bones and liver.

This was a very dark time. "I want to see snow," Aubrien Jimenez said.



Mario Jimenez / Contributed photo

Aubrien Jimenez, 15, is battling a rare form of cancer, seen here with UConn coach Dan Hurley.

NCAA first round

UConn men vs. New Mexico State

Full recap online at www.ctinsider.com.

So that's what happened. Three days later, the Jimenez family left their Bradenton, Fla., home and flew to New York City, the plan being to head upstate so Aubrien could watch flakes fall and accumulate.

The trip became so much more, though. Mario Jimenez, a Bridgeport native and lifelong UConn fan who passed that basketball passion to his

See Cancer on A4

## Rescuers search theater rubble as Russian attacks continue



Rescuers are searching for survivors in the ruins of a theater ripped apart by Russian airstrikes in the besieged city of Mariupol, while ferocious Russian bombardment killed dozens in a northern city over the past day, according to the local governor.

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Weather: Patchy fog in the morning; then partly sunny. High: 66, Low: 46. Page A12