

# MARKETPLACE: Not everyone sees benefit

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longer helping economic development," she told the commission.

The Torrington Arts & Culture Commission came up with the idea, and volunteer commission members plan, organize, and staff the event each summer, including after-event trash pick-up patrols each week. Ponte, who is an arts commission member, told the economic development commission last week that the arts group plans and discuss both the accolades and the criticisms. Planning for each summer's street fair begins in January and starts to pick up in February.

Ponte said she has heard from merchants who do not want to see Marketplace continue, and others who would hate to see it end. She said the commission needs to listen to all and consider what might happen — a question colored this year by a wide-open mayoral race. Incumbent Ryan J. Bingham, a supporter of the event, decided not to run for re-election, and wound up resigning Oct. 1, two months early.

The new mayor ultimately will decide if Marketplace will continue, and if anything should change, Ponte said.

Ida Dean, owner of Ida's Bridal Shop, said she likes Marketplace, but not when it is held. "The Marketplace is a good thing, but it should be held on Sunday," she said. "That way any businessperson will not have nothing to complain to or to be extremely happy about. Either way it is their own choice if they want to open or not."

Dean said the timing is difficult for her customers who cannot find parking to visit her shop. "The Marketplace is taking over on a Thursday night," she said. "I close the business at 4:30. I have to tell (customers) don't come that day because you are not going to get parking."

Dean said she has no set hours and often is open later into the evening. "Everybody enjoys it, but do it on Sunday," she said. "That way it will not interfere with my clients that have to come and get the goods."

Karen O'Donnell, owner of Ritz Crystal Room at Remember When, said Marketplace is great for her business. Like Bogey's Restaurant & Pub, her restaurant takes advantage of the foot traffic to fill dining tables. With 20 seats inside her restaurant and 20 on the sidewalk, there were times during Marketplace where all 40 seats were full, she said. "It has been very good."

O'Donnell said her only concern is the age of visitors. She said she would like to see vendors who attract an older age group. "It seems like there is a lot intended toward kids," she said.

**WILLIAM BATTLE**, a member of the Economic Development Commission, said the EDC is kicking around ideas that could lead to moving the event north on Main Street closer to Torrington Historical Society. Another idea is to have different vendors come with themes that keep the weekly scenes fresh.

"Obviously there is some talk of it changing, of being upgraded," Battle said. "There are some issues as to whether or not it fulfilled its economic development initiative or it morphed down to a city carnival type arrangement."

Battle said O'Donnell's restaurant has been one of the greatest successes. He said he would like to see downtown restaurants run sidewalk cafes during all the warm months, not just for the eight-week sanctioned event. "We want at least three more sidewalk cafes to be present," he said. "If we can use the ex-



REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN ARCHIVE  
The fire-eaters are always a popular show for children and families during Main Street Marketplace, but the city's economic leaders are questioning if the street fair has become a carnival with little economic benefit to Torrington.

perience of the downtown markets, that will be an economic development booster and a way to make Torrington a more hip place."

Ponte said some business, like S&S Sweet Treats, thrive on Marketplace. She said the owners are begging her not to move it away from their shop. At Arts Desire, Ponte said, the owners report new customers who dropped in during Marketplace and returned the next day to spend money. Five Points Gallery, the Children's Museum, and Bogey's are all seeing positive results, Ponte said.

"It's not for everyone," Ponte said. "It's important to see what these businesses are saying."

Ponte said a goal when Marketplace began in 2010 was to bring business to downtown merchants.

She said Thursday night was chosen so Marketplace could act as a kick-off to the weekend on a night when historically shops stayed open late, because Thursday was payday at Torrington Company. The reference truly is historical, as the Torrington Company heyday is long gone, but Ponte noted that Sundays are generally quiet business days downtown. Switching to Sunday could defeat the purpose of giving shops the opportunity to draw in Marketplace visitors, if the shops are closed.

**THE DECISION WILL BE** among the new mayor's first tasks next year.

Both the Democratic and Republican mayoral candidates said if elected they will support Marketplace continuing. City Councilwoman Elinor C. Carbone, who is running on the Republican ticket, called Marketplace a great addition to the community. "There is nothing more pleasing to me as a resident of the com-

munity then to be downtown and see Main Street alive," she said.

Carbone said the street fair is a complement to other events such as baseball games at Fuessenich Park, concerts in Coe Memorial Park, and the farmers market. "All those events just make downtown Torrington a destination," she said.

Carbone said cultural events, such as Marketplace, make the city more attractive to businesses as it gives them a sense of community that Torrington has to offer.

"It certainly has grown," she said of the event, in its fourth summer this year. "I don't think it has reached its full potential. There is so much more that could happen."

George Craig, the Democratic mayoral candidate, said he sees Marketplace as beneficial. Moving the event up a block between City Hall and the historical society may be a good idea, he said. Doing so would still bring people downtown and they would walk past the shops on the way to the new location, he said.

Craig said he heard the pros and cons from merchants during Marketplace.

"It's hard. Some people are happy with it, some aren't," Craig said. "The nice thing about it was the exposure to downtown Torrington."

Ponte said the arts commission will develop a report and suggestions for the new mayor.

Contact Alec Johnson at [ajohnson@rep-am.com](mailto:ajohnson@rep-am.com), on Facebook at [RA Torrington](https://www.facebook.com/RA_Torrington) or on Twitter @[@RA\\_Alec](https://twitter.com/RA_Alec), and Bruno Matarazzo Jr. at [bmatarazzo@rep-am.com](mailto:bmatarazzo@rep-am.com), on Facebook at [RA Torrington](https://www.facebook.com/RA_Torrington) or on Twitter @[@RA\\_BrunoJr](https://twitter.com/RA_BrunoJr).

# Help on the way for traffic woes on Strongtown

BY CHRIS GARDNER  
REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

**SOUTHBURY** — Gani Metaj is tired of watching customers contend with oncoming traffic when they turn out of his store's driveway.

Metaj owns Patty's Pantry, the food store on Strongtown Road just off Interstate 84 at Exit 16.

Customers who try to make a left turn onto Route 188 have to avoid cars and trucks that travel down Old Waterbury Road to the intersection, and Metaj says he has lost customers because people don't want the hassle.

"The biggest problem has always been the people coming from Old Waterbury Road. They always think they have a right. They both get green lights," Metaj said. "Coming in the morning, forget it. When there's buses and traffic there's no way you can get in."

Help will soon be on the way for Metaj, other merchants and motorists who battle congestion at the busy intersection of Strongtown and Old Waterbury roads, and the Exit 16 off-ramp to Interstate 84.

The state Department of Transportation appears ready to move ahead with long-awaited plans to reconstruct the intersection.

The DOT sent representatives to town in August and September to speak to local officials about the improvements.

Preliminary designs have been completed, and the DOT will now prepare final designs and obtain permits for the work, which involves lane widening on the exit ramp, Strongtown Road and Old Waterbury Road to push more traffic through the

area. "It's such a tight area to move the traffic through," said DeLoris Curtis, the town's planning administrator. "It needs to be done."

The project has been on the books since 2003, when the state identified several interchanges off the highway west of Waterbury that needed upgrades to ease the flow of traffic. Southbury's four exits were among them.

Work never got underway because there was no money to fund it, but the projects were put back on the DOT's radar last year by First Selectman Ed Edelson, who contacted the agency and inquired about the work.

"This area is of importance to the town (in) order to improve traffic patterns and movement through this very busy intersection, as well as to accommodate additional traffic from the proposed expansion of commercial development in the office park on Old Waterbury Road," Edelson wrote last week to Andy Fesenmeyer in the DOT's consult and design department.

Construction on Strongtown Road would begin west of the highway bridges, where a second eastbound lane would be added to offer left turn options to I-84 west and Old Waterbury Road.

Coming west, Strongtown Road would be widened to three lanes from just past Judd Road to the Old Waterbury Road intersection.

One lane would allow motorists to turn left into Patty's Pantry.

Motorists in the center lane would go straight, and a right turn lane would take traffic onto Old Waterbury Road.

# FAIR: Hop on over to catch the rabbit

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Goule said the drier the wood, the harder it is to chop because the ax can get stuck.

Before competitions, some woodman rub their axes with oil to prevent sticking.

Choppers Saturday ranged in age from high school to retirement. The UConn Timber Team uses the fair to prepare for collegiate competitions. Darcy Rose, a senior double-major in agriculture and resource economics, has been on the team since her freshman year.

She split her piece in the standing chop category in one minute, eight seconds.

"I think that might have been a personal best for me," she said. "It's always nice to beat a personal best and compete with the professionals."

Rose's favorite category is the underhand chop, which is when competitors stand on top of a beam of wood and chop down.

She is one of eight females on the UConn team, but she said being a girl in this sport is not really a big deal.

There were fewer females competing Saturday, but they seemed to get louder applause from the spectators. For the first time at the fair, there were enough competitors for an all-female underhand chop competition.

The Harwinton Fair, which stays true to its agricultural history, celebrates its 157th year this weekend. Ribbons for crops,

## IF YOU GO

The Harwinton Fair continues today from 8 to 5 at the fairgrounds on Locust Road. Today's highlights include all-day displays by the Old 19th CT, a Civil War group, an antique tractor show, and a country store with items for sale. Events include the women's skillet throw at 10:30 a.m., the horse pull at noon, and a magic show at 4 p.m. Music today includes the Redstone Ridge Bluegrass Band from 10 to 11:30 a.m., the Bristol Oly Tyme Fiddlers from 10 a.m. to noon, and Dave Quick & Sidekick Band from 1 to 5 p.m. Parking is free; admission is \$7 for adults, and children 12 and younger get in free.

livestock, poultry, produce and baked goods will be handed out on both days. The wood chopping, women's skillet throw and live music also continue today.

For those who missed Saturday's festivities, the fair will run until 5 p.m. today at the Harwinton Fairgrounds off Locust Road.

One new competition to look out for today: The Rabbit Dress-up Competition at 1 p.m.

Contact Alexa Gorman at [agorman@rep-am.com](mailto:agorman@rep-am.com), on Twitter @[RA\\_Alexa](https://twitter.com/RA_Alexa) Gorman or on Facebook at [RA Harwinton](https://www.facebook.com/RA_Harwinton).

# HOARDING: Control officers see the signs

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the municipalities left footing the bills for the care of the animals they seize. While the first concern for animal control officers is removing the pets from the hoarder's home, towns can be left pay for the animals' health and well-being for months — or even years — after the animals are seized.

Hoarders will frequently shrug off problems such as unmanageable levels of filth, destroyed furniture and unhealthy air quality, as simply non-existent, Lockwood said.

And officials, who may spend months building a case before seizing endangered animals, often find the hoarder beginning to collect more animals hours or days later.

State law requires that municipalities pay for the well-being and upkeep of the animals while officials build a case to gain custody to put the animals up out for adoption or gather evidence for animal cruelty charges.

The animals also may require additional help.

Alice Moon-Fanelli, an applied animal behaviorist with

an office in Brooklyn, Conn., said hoarded animals may adopt a pack mentality and struggle with conditions outside of a group.

The animals could suffer the opposite, too, she said, preferring isolation with symptoms similar to post-traumatic stress disorder. "Each situation is different depending on how well the animals have been housed or managed," Moon-Fanelli said Friday. "There is no single answer. Some may find a pack safe. Others may just shut down and pretend they're simply not here, living a muddled existence. It's a crapshoot."

Animal hoarding has only recently become a recognized mental condition.

The state has the power to prohibit people convicted of animal cruelty from having animals ever again, but the law remains difficult to enforce. These people also can be jailed, but Lockwood said a more comprehensive approach is necessary.

"We don't accomplish anything by putting these people behind bars," Lockwood said.

In town, officials are only

beginning to deal with how to manage the 31 dogs and three cats seized late last month from Nancy Boeckel's home on Georges Hill Road, where she lives with her mother and brother.

Officials are building a case to keep custody of the animals and possibly file animal cruelty charges against Boeckel.

The Southbury case isn't the only one in the state where a large number of animals have been held in a small space in recent years.

In February, the state Department of Agriculture seized 41 malnourished animals including chickens, cats and miniature horses from Karen Desrosiers in Oxford at 48 Condon Road.

Daryl Masone, of Poodle Rescue Connecticut in Naugatuck, has worked with hoarders on the verge of arrest. Sometimes when threatened with action, hoarders have approached her rescue agency and given their pets away, if only as a last resort to avoid fees or prosecution.

Still, Masone said the situation is frequently tragic.

"You'll always hear them

saying, 'It's everyone else's fault' and what's sad is that they have very little else in their lives," Masone said. "It's not about the dogs, ever. It's about them and how they feel."

While not all cases may be hoarding, Ray Connors, supervisor of the animal control division of the state Department of Agriculture, said hoarding has become visible enough in popular culture so that neighbors are noticing issues faster than before.

The trouble is finding a long-term solution, not only for the pets but also for giving proper mental care to the hoarders.

"The challenges still exist on the enforcement end, with the cost of man-hours, veterinary treatment and care for the animals," Connors said. "The problem is now starting to get more out in the open. The stigma for getting help is starting to fade."

Contact Matthew O'Rourke at [morourke@rep-am.com](mailto:morourke@rep-am.com), on Facebook at [RA Middlebury](https://www.facebook.com/RA_Middlebury) or on Twitter @[@RAOutsider](https://twitter.com/RAOutsider).