

Hartford Courant

# CONNECTICUT

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## CORONAVIRUS IN CONNECTICUT

# Hospitalizations keep climbing

As state's positive case rate dips slightly, health experts urge continued vigilance

By Alex Putterman  
Hartford Courant

Connecticut's COVID-19 positivity rate has leveled off over the past week, state numbers show, even as hospitalizations continue to accelerate.

Four of Connecticut's eight counties, Hartford, New Haven,

Middlesex and New London, have been identified by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as having a high level of community transmission of COVID-19, with an average of 100 cases per 100,000 people over the last seven days.

The state's four other counties have substantial transmission, the

CDC says.

The state Department of Public Health is urging all residents, regardless of vaccination status, to wear masks in indoor public spaces.

Some municipalities, such as Hartford and New Haven, have mandated mask wearing in restaurants and businesses.

**Cases and positivity rate:** Connecticut on Friday reported 542 COVID-19 cases out of 20,236

tests, for a positivity rate of 2.68%. The state's seven-day positivity rate now stands at 3.17%, down slightly from Thursday and practically unchanged from late last week.

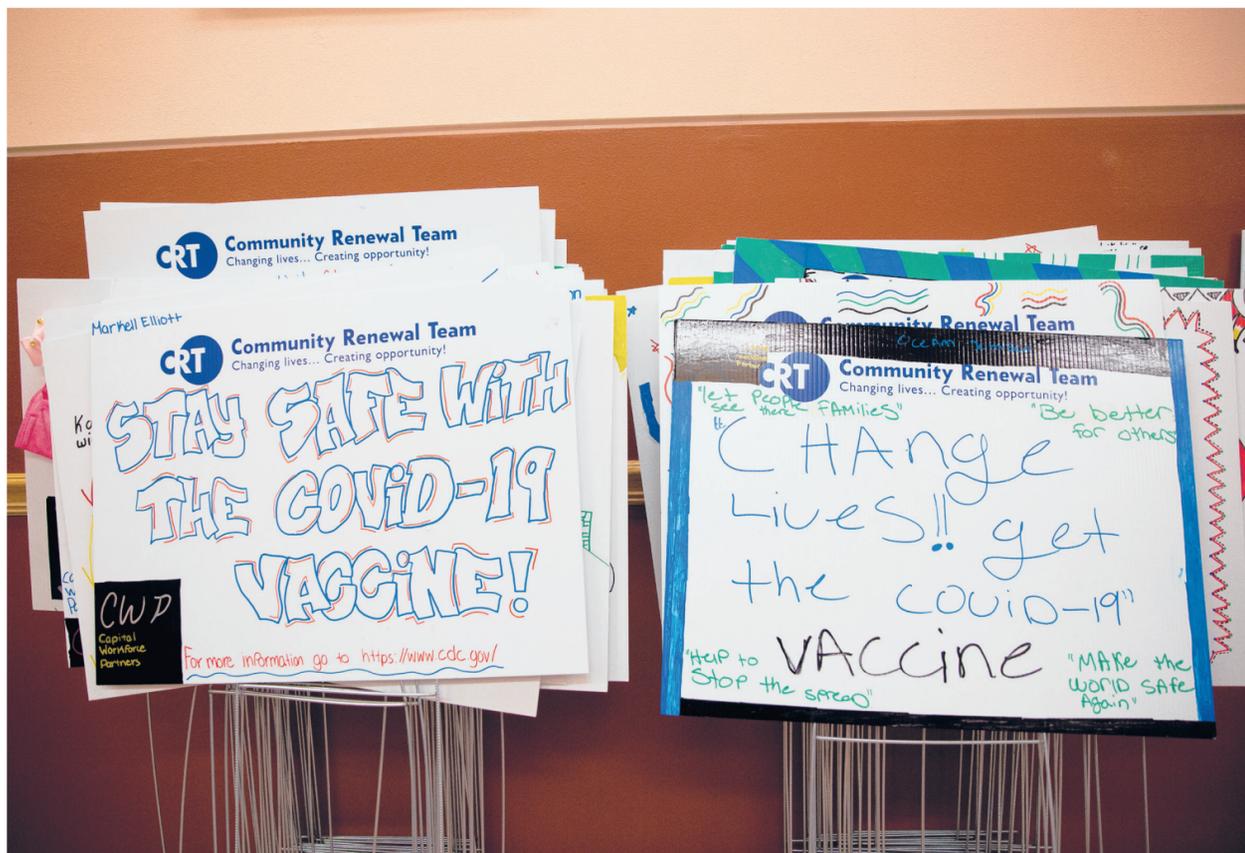
Connecticut has averaged 537 cases a day over the past week, down from Thursday though still higher than through most of the summer.

Earlier this week, Dr. Ulysses Wu, an infectious disease specialist at Hartford HealthCare, said

he thought the ongoing spike was beginning to slow.

"[The numbers] are still rising, but they're not rising at the rate that we had seen," Wu said. "That doesn't mean that everything is tapering off, but hopefully it means that people are starting to mask and hopefully it also means they're not engaging in risky behavior and hopefully it means people are getting vaccinated."

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Dozens of local youth are working to encourage Hartford residents to get vaccinated against the coronavirus. SOFIE BRANDT/HARTFORD COURANT

# Hartford youth cover city with signs in vaccine push

Data shows younger individuals at higher risk of contracting virus

By Belén Dumont  
Hartford Courant

HARTFORD — Some 370 hand-made signs are now on display around Hartford, created by dozens of local youth working to encourage residents to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

The civic engagement campaign comes as infection rates have risen

due to the highly contagious delta variant and city vaccination rates remain low despite ongoing free, easy access to the vaccine.

The posters, with messages like "Two shots can save the world" and "We're in this together, get vaccinated today," were created by about 85 young people who gained paid work experience this summer through the Summer

Youth Employment program.

The signs are now spread across the city, including areas around Stonington Street, Market Street, Main street, and the Blue Hills neighborhood.

The annual program, run by Capital Workforce Partners and The Community Renewal Team, connects local youth between the ages of 14 and 24 with "career

exploration" opportunities and paid work experience. CRT regularly participates but Program Manager Cynthia Baisden said the ongoing increase in COVID-19 cases inspired the vaccination campaign.

"The COVID vaccination is something that I truly feel very

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*"I'm not only proud of myself but also my co-workers. Because I got the vaccine, I am protected from COVID. It helps me be able to get back to normal and protect myself and family members."*

— Rhaili-Em Lowe, 16, Hartford resident and Community Renewal Team summer intern

# Police unite to curb car crimes

Regional task force will target recent rash of thefts and violence

By Don Stacom  
Hartford Courant

With a rash of catalytic converter thefts happening across the country, police in central Connecticut are organizing a task force to curb those crimes as well as car thefts and car break-ins.

Hartford police will be the lead agency, with help from nearby towns. Investigators and patrol officers will focus on recent violent crimes — and the stolen cars that are often used in them — but also will try to track down what they believe are groups of criminals stealing catalytic converters and wheels from parked cars.

West Hartford Chief Vernon Riddick said Friday that his department is ready to lend two officers to the campaign.

"We believe there is a ring for catalytic converter thefts — it's filtering down to south Jersey, probably with some overseas element," Riddick told local business owners in an online meeting about public safety in West Hartford.

"We also have pockets of people who see this as a crime of opportunity," Riddick said.

West Hartford, like communities throughout the Capitol region, has seen car-targeting crimes fluctuate in the past two or three years. Despite a jump during 2020, car thefts are down slightly in West Hartford. There were 60 in the first six months this year, compared to 65 in the first half of 2020.

Thefts from cars totaled 189 in the first half of 2020, but 197 in the same period this year.

"It's not just West Hartford, it's statewide," Riddick said.

In New Britain, police have

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# Democratic primaries ahead for top jobs in Stamford, New Britain

East Hartford working to verify petition from mayoral challenger

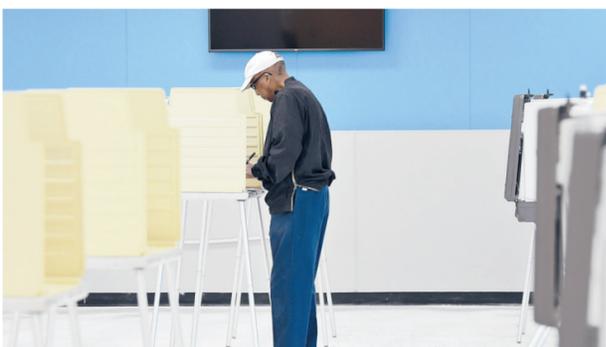
By Don Stacom  
Hartford Courant

Democratic voters in New Britain, Stamford and possibly East Hartford will be choosing candidates for mayor in primaries next month.

In Bloomfield, a six-member challenge slate, including the current mayor and two councilors, is running against the party-endorsed ticket.

Municipal elections aren't until Nov. 2, but primary voters will be going to the polls Sept. 14 to choose who will be on the ballots.

Wednesday was the deadline for challengers to try for party nomination, although there is still time for individuals to run as petitioning candidates without party backing.



Primary voters will head to the polls Sept. 14 to choose candidates for Connecticut's Nov. 2 municipal elections. CLARENCE TABB JR./AP

The most widely watched primary race in Connecticut will be in Stamford, where Mayor David Martin is trying to hold onto his job against a challenge by state Rep. Caroline Simmons.

Simmons narrowly edged out Martin at the party's nominating convention in late July. Since then,

Martin and his supporters gathered about 3,000 petition signatures to force a primary.

As of Wednesday afternoon, city registrars had not finished verifying that all signatures were from registered voters. But they

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# Panel votes for removal of Native American imagery from Canton school logo

By Isabella Chan  
Hartford Courant

CANTON — A Canton Public Schools committee unanimously voted to recommend the removal of Native American imagery on the school's logos and athletic equipment to the Board of Education after a yearlong evaluation and significant feedback from the public.

During a public Zoom meeting on Wednesday, the 17-member committee discussed Canton High's Warrior mascot, which has been a part of the school's logo since the 1950s. However, due to its Native American depictions and images, the committee is examining the implications of the current mascot and its alignment with the Canton Public Schools and Canton High's values.

The committee consists of members of the school board,

school administrators and teachers, students and Canton community members. Based on their findings, the committee's final recommendation, to be presented to the board of education in September, may influence the fate of the Warrior mascot.

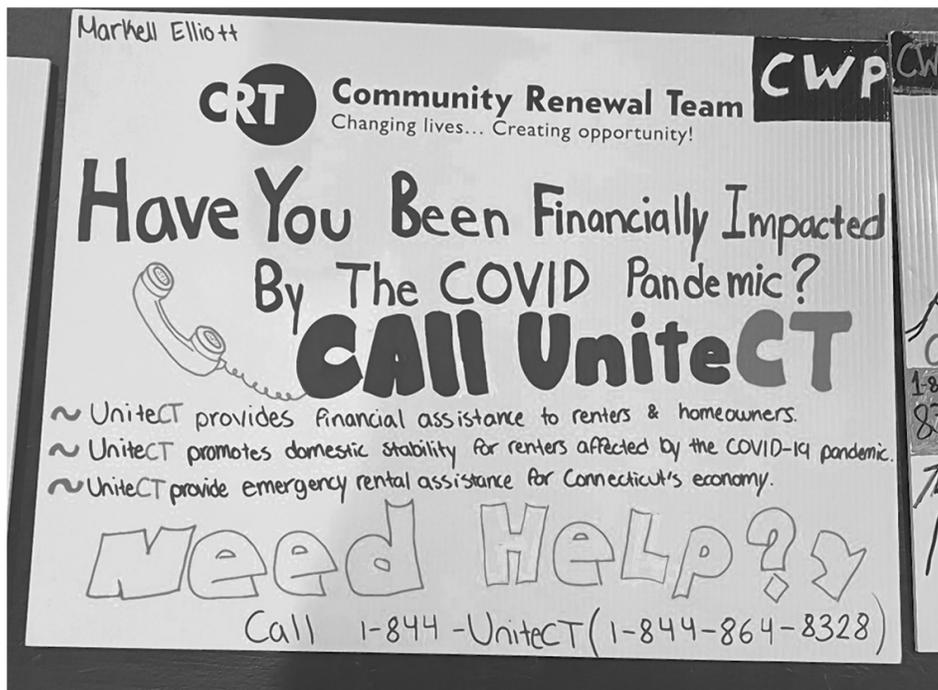
In Connecticut about a dozen schools still hold Native American-themed mascots, including Canton, Conard, Derby, Killingly, Montville, Nonnewaug, North Haven, Wamogo Regional, Wilcox Technical, Wilton, Windsor and Torrington.

A provision passed in Connecticut's state budget will withhold some state money — slot machine revenue from the Mohegan and Mashantucket Pequot tribes — from towns whose schools have Native American mascots.

The Canton vote came after a

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A handmade sign with information on UniteCT, a program that offers rental relief assistance. COURTESY

## Youth

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passionate [about] that our youth need to be vaccinated, especially now that Connecticut has become a hot spot," Baisden said.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has classified Hartford as having "high" COVID-19 transmission, with Connecticut's positivity rate at its highest level since April. Statistics show that the capital has one of the lowest COVID-19 vaccination rates in Connecticut, with 41.3 percent of Hartford residents being vaccinated.

As an effort to increase vaccination rates, the city has been awarding prizes to its residents who get vaccinated at local clinics as well as those who post on social media about why they chose to get the vaccine, in hopes of persuading others. Since April, data has shown that younger individuals are at higher risk of contracting COVID this time around.

"The students came up with a model for the younger generation to get the COVID vaccination because it's important for them to relay to students, people, their age that the COVID vaccination is

important for them as well," Baisden explained.

Baisden said the program's participants also created signs that promote rental assistance support from the UniteCT Program, which is administered by the State Department of Housing to support households across the state that have been financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic; Connecticut residents can apply online or call 1-844-864-8328.

"So that families also can know that if the COVID-19 [pandemic] affected your family, this is how you can get assistance from the state of Connecticut. You can contact this phone number and you can get assistance with electricity, with your mortgage, and different things," she said.

Youth enrolled in the five-week program also spent time learning about financial literacy, working on their resumes, researching careers they might be passionate about, and understanding the importance of self-care — especially when working and studying amid a pandemic, Baisden said.

"Some people might think 'I want to be a nurse' because their mom is a nurse or their aunt is a nurse... but then we look at what

[they're] really passionate about and 'oh you really love photography,'" Baisden explained. "We lay a foundation so they can begin to really think about what they want to do in life."

Ivana Fisher, one of the program's participants, will be getting vaccinated this week.

"I believe that we did the correct thing making the boards and talking about it because we needed to spread awareness so people don't get seriously hurt," Fisher said.

Also enrolled in the program, Rhaili-Em Lowe said she felt nervous about the COVID-19 Conference she and her coworkers held on Aug. 4, but they all worked hard for the panel and it went smoothly.

"I'm not only proud of myself but also my coworkers. I have a feeling that more youth will get the vaccine because of this campaign and the outreach we have done," she said. "Because I got the vaccine, I am protected from covid. It helps me be able to get back to normal and protect myself and family members."

Information about The Summer Youth Employment and Learning Program (SYELP) at capitalworkforce.org/syelp.

## Primaries

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had certified more than enough to put Martin above the roughly 1,500-signature requirement.

The winner of the Martin-Simmons primary will face a three-way race in November against Republican Joe Corsello and unaffiliated candidate Bobby Valentine, a former New York Mets manager.

In East Hartford, Democratic Registrar Stephen Watkins reported Wednesday afternoon that the town won't know until Friday whether there will be a primary. Democrats endorsed Michael Walsh, the former finance director, in July; Treasurer Lee Griffin is trying to force a primary.

Registrars are still verifying roughly 750 petition signatures that Griffin submitted; to get on the ballot, he'll need at least 713 of those to be certified. Griffin expects between 4 and 7% of the signatures will be discarded; he'd succeed with the low end of that spectrum, but would fail if the rate is above 5%.

In New Britain, Democratic voters were preparing for a three-way primary, but that won't happen.

Challenger Alicia Hernandez Strong and state Rep. Bobby Sanchez, the party-endorsed candidate, will face off on Sept. 14. But another challenger, Veronica DeLandro, didn't get enough

signatures to qualify, registrars said Thursday.

Strong and DeLandro have been circulating petitions since the Democratic Town Committee backed Sanchez last month. They each needed 753 to get on the ballot. Strong turned in 874 valid signatures, but DeLandro ended up with just 697.

"She was short by 56," Democratic Registrar Lucian Pawlak said.

Strong is heading what she calls The People's Slate, which includes council candidates Richard Lacourciere and Nate Simpson. Lacourciere and Simpson are running against the party's ticket for the five citywide council seats: Chris Anderson, Amy Labas-Barbosa, Richard Reyes, Francisco Santiago and Violet Jiménez Sims.

The winners will run against Republican Mayor Erin Stewart and her council slate in November.

Bloomfield Democrats face a contentious primary for council. The party-endorsed incumbent Danielle D.W. Wong, Sydney T. Schulman, Kenneth L. McClary, Cindi Lloyd, Anthony "Tony" Harrington and Renee D. Coleman-Mitchell.

But a challenge slate calling itself Bloomfield Forward will try to get on the ballot instead. The challengers include Mayor Suzette DeBeatham-Brown and councilors Rickford Kirton and Stephanie Calhoun along with Pat Davis, Jon Colman and Greg Davis.



Connecticut on Friday reported 542 COVID-19 cases out of 20,236 tests, for a positivity rate of 2.68%. COURANT FILE PHOTO

## Virus

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**Hospitalizations:** As of Friday, Connecticut has 259 patients hospitalized with COVID-19, up 12 from Thursday and the most at a time since May 11.

Hospitalizations tend to lag cases by several weeks, meaning any leveling off evident in the state's positivity rate would not yet show up in hospitalization statistics.

According to state data, about three-quarters of people in Connecticut hospitalized with COVID-19 are either unvaccinated or of unknown vaccine status.

**Deaths:** Connecticut now reports COVID-19 deaths only on Thursdays. As of this week's report, the state has recorded 8,307 coronavirus-linked deaths during the pandemic.

There have been 619,250 COVID-19 deaths in the U.S., according to the Coronavirus Resource Center at Johns Hopkins University.

**Vaccinations:** As of Friday, 71.3% of all Connecticut residents and 81.8% of those 12 and older have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose, while 64.1% of all residents and 73.6% of those 12 and older are fully vaccinated, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

COVID-19 vaccination has increased in recent weeks along with cases and hospitalizations. From Aug. 1-7, the most recent days for which data is available, the state administered about 42,000 vaccine doses, per state numbers, up more than 30% from a month prior.

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Canton schools are considering whether to remove Native American themes from its mascot, and whether the district can retain the Warriors name. MARK MIRKO/HARTFORD COURANT

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reading of nearly two dozen written testimonies from the public regarding the Warrior mascot and its potential rebranding and/or replacement. All written comments read during the meeting will be included in the committee's meeting minutes when it becomes public.

For resident Nicholas Cataldo, there is no problem with the high school's current logo and mascot. He expressed being "disappointed to see our town devote this much time and resources to what appears to be a search for a problem that I do not believe exists."

"Perhaps we can better serve our children by devoting our time, energy and resources towards finding ways to make up for the less-than-ideal learning environment that they have had to endure throughout last year's covid-restrictions. My child deserves better education than constant remote schooling. Let's worry more about recovering our educational standards and less time conforming to the latest politically correct trend," Cataldo said.

However, other testimonies offered different viewpoints, like resident Michael Vogel, who believes Canton should not retain the Warrior name and should remove itself of all Native American connotation.

"While such arguments may be well-intentioned, I submit they

**"Aren't we all Warriors in some aspect in our lives? There are many aspects of being a Warrior and we should embrace the Warrior in all of us."**

— Resident Cora Mutch

disregard the history and context of the Warrior's name, both in Canton and nationwide, that make it impossible to redefine the name without making it echo its problematic past," Vogel said.

While several statements stated the school board should "embrace" the local Native American history and incorporate the Tunxis tribe into the school's curriculum, opinions varied on what this recommendation could mean for the Warrior's future.

Resident Cora Mutch said the mascot would be additional support in embracing the town's past. "It is our history. We can use the C for the logo," Mutch, who supports the Warrior usage, said. "Aren't we all Warriors in some aspect of our lives? There are many aspects of being a Warrior and we should embrace the Warrior in all of us."

However, Spanish teacher Tara Smith of Canton High said that due to the longstanding history of the Tunxis Tribe and the negligent treatment they received during the

colonial settlement, the committee should recommend changing the mascot altogether.

"I am very much in favor of adding the history of the Tunxis tribe to our social studies curriculum. As someone that grew up in Connecticut, I feel that my knowledge of the indigenous peoples who lived here before the Euro-Americans is very superficial at best," Smith said. "Knowing what I now know, I hope that we decide to remove all Native American symbols from our mascot."

Several testimonies shared similar sentiment and recommended replacements for the current Warrior logo that would highlight other aspects of the town's history, such as Canton's ax manufacturing influence.

"Many symbols of different ax types represent authority, wisdom, power, strength and divine salvation. Incorporating an ax, whether it be a warrior's ax or some other brand, will be a great image to connect our students to the Canton history," a statement from the Negrelli family said.

The committee plans to survey grade 7-12 students to gain input on the decision prior to the committee's final recommendation. Students will likely be surveyed at Canton Middle School and Canton High School at the beginning of the school year.

The committee is scheduled to convene on September 22 for their next meeting. For information on the committee visit <http://www.cantonschools.org/>.

## Police

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seen periodic spikes in car thefts, break-ins and catalytic converter thefts over the past few years, Police Chief Christopher Chute said. For a while last year, city police operated a specialized unit to stop car thieves.

"We get this in waves. On a Wednesday we could get 20 to 30 reports, then for days it's normal," said Chute, who believes part of the problem is roving groups of thieves who travel throughout the region.

"They don't care about town boundaries," he said.

In late June the state government directed \$5 million to help law enforcement in hard-hit areas such as the Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport regions. Each will set up task forces to share resources and information between local police agencies; the state has not announced how much of the money will go to the central Connecticut team.

Hartford police will probably house the unit at their intelligence center, and will coordinate information-sharing between detectives and seasoned patrol officers from more than a dozen communities from Enfield to Bristol, Chief Jason Thody said.

Hartford police have seen a pattern of cars stolen from suburbs being used in shooting and robberies and then dumped or burned in the city.

"The focus will be on catalytic converters and stolen motor vehicles as well as violent crimes around us," Riddick said.

Car owners across the country have suffered a flurry of catalytic

converter thefts. Thieves need less than two minutes to jack up a small car, get under it and then cut off the catalytic converter, Riddick said. If the device is valued at \$800 to \$1,000, thieves can get about half that much — or \$400 to \$500 — on the black market.

SUVs and other larger vehicles are even more popular targets: The pollution control equipment is worth more, and their chassis is so high that a thief can just slide under it to cut away the converter, Riddick said.

West Hartford police for the past six weeks have been fielding some patrols in unmarked cars to try to catch thieves in the act. The agency is also asking anyone with information about the thefts — or any other crimes in town — to call its new confidential tip line at 860 570-8969 or by email at [WHPDTIPS@westhartfordct.gov](mailto:WHPDTIPS@westhartfordct.gov).

Overall, the rate of serious crime in West Hartford has fallen by nearly 6% since the start of the year, Riddick said.

Riddick called on the local community to help by sharing any information about the thefts, the recent rash of unlicensed ATVs speeding through town or other crimes.

Riddick and Town Manager Matt Hart will host a community-wide forum on public safety on Wednesday night at 6:30 p.m. It will be shown by WHCI Comcast Channel 5/Frontier TV 6098. West Hartford residents and taxpayers are invited to participate through [webex.com](http://webex.com) and entering meeting number 1324 39 9054, or by calling 408 418-9388 and entering access code 1324 39 9054 at the start of the meeting.