

HARTFORD EDUCATION

Who's Paying Magnet School Tuition Bills?

By **STEVEN GOODE**
sgoode@courant.com

When Bloomfield resident Florence Johnson got letters from the state's education commissioner last week informing her that her three children could receive notice from the Hartford school district that they may not be eligible to return to their host magnets schools, she had an immediate thought:

"I think it's a scare tactic," Johnson said. She may be right, but Hartford Superintendent of Schools Steven Adamowski has said publicly that state funding for the city's magnet schools is not adequate to cover costs associated with running them. Hartford has also sent tuition bills to school districts sending

students to the city's magnets this year and has informed them that he plans to charge \$4,600 a student next year, according to Bloomfield Superintendent of Schools David Title.

Title said the district has not paid about \$27,000 in tuition bills from Hartford this year and has no plans to pay Hartford the magnet school tuition it wants next year.

"I'm not paying it because I don't think they are entitled to it," Title said. "Hartford is trying leverage parents' consternation to get what they want from the legislature."

Title said Adamowski also sent out letters in April asking suburban districts about paying tuition next year.

"Our joint response was that we're going to have to postpone any decision because it may be a moot point," Title said, adding that it was his understanding that the legislature's

appropriations committee has approved a budget that contains the funding Hartford needs.

In his letter to parents, State Education Commissioner Mark McQuillan also said that, too, but he added that "we must wait until the close of the session to know for certain what the final numbers will be and whether or not the anticipated funding will be available to operate Hartford's host magnet schools." He also asked parents to wait until the budget is finished before re-enrolling students in their home district, private schools or some other program.

Christopher Leone, Hartford's director for the Regional School Choice office, said in a written statement that Hartford has been asked to absorb more than 2,200 suburban students to meet the quotas mandated by the landmark Sheff v. O'Neill desegregation case, and that state Department of Education funding for

them was not included in Gov. M. Jodi Rell's proposed budget.

"Hartford's ability to meet these Sheff demands depends on state funding or on charging tuition in the same manner that the Capitol Region Education Council has charged Hartford for years to send city students to CREC schools," Leone said. "Hartford will not be able to educate suburban students without the necessary funding."

And if Hartford doesn't get it from the state and turns away Bloomfield students unless the district pays tuition?

"We'll take them back," Title said.

If Bloomfield and other districts do that, Johnson said, the purpose of magnet schools will be defeated.

"There will be no more magnets," she said. "It will be all Hartford kids."

WEST HARTFORD

Solar Panels Saved \$3,493

Less Emissions, Too, Since 2006

By **BILL LEUKHARDT**
bleukhardt@courant.com

WEST HARTFORD — Solar panels on three municipal building rooftops have cut electric bills by \$3,493 since the first one was installed on town hall in July 2006, town records show.

"These systems don't produce enough power for us to sell, but we consume it all and get credit," Robert L. Palmer, the town's plant and facilities services director, said Thursday.

The systems on town hall and Conard and Hall high schools have so far produced 14,933 kilowatt hours worth of electricity, an amount that would have emitted slightly more than 12.5 tons of carbon dioxide if the power had been produced by burning fossil fuel, town records show.

It's part of the town's push to use clean energy generated by solar or other methods that don't pollute the atmosphere. The solar panels went into use this winter on the high schools.

Plans are in the works to install four systems capable of generating up to 30 times the power of the original three solar panel systems. These bigger systems would be on Bristow Middle School, Smith Elementary, the Bishops Corner library branch and the public works department, Palmer said.

None of these systems will cost the town anything. The original three systems were paid for by the CT Clean Energy Fund. The four new systems will be installed by a private company that will pay for the equipment and earn money by generating electricity and selling environmental credits it will receive because of its "green-energy" systems, Palmer said.

The four larger systems could produce enough power to meet a third of those buildings' daily usage, he said.

Town records state that the 3 kilowatt system harvesting sun on the town hall roof since July 12, 2006, has so far generated 10,997 kilowatts hours worth of electricity, saved the town \$1,649 in energy costs and cut greenhouse gas emissions by just under 9.5 tons.

The statistics for the Conard and Hall solar panels are far less, but those have only been functioning for several months.

The energy tracker website that chronicles the solar panels can be found under the "clean energy" heading on the "what's new" section of www.westhartford.org.

RECESSION

{ A WEEKLY COLUMN }



Every Monday
The Courant
Looks At
The Effects Of The
Economy On
Connecticut People

✱ Tell us your story at
courant.com/recession

Text By **VANESSA DE LA TORRE**
vdelatorre@courant.com

Photo By **ROSS TAYLOR**
rdtaylor@courant.com

NO PANIC YET

The Cutco knives saleswoman props a blade diagram on Yara Montminy's kitchen table in Glastonbury.

"We've been in business since 1949, and everything is made in upper state New York," says Sheri London, a 24-year-old who has pitched cutlery since she graduated from high school.

Montminy, 46, formerly the chief operating officer of an insurance software company, scrutinizes the product like a contract. She hasn't changed knives in all her adult life.

"Plan-for-the-future kind of people" describe herself and husband Joseph Montminy, an annuities research director. When they met as Travelers interns, paychecks got the 401(k) maximum deduction; canned corn and cut-rate tuna made the dinner plate, she says.

Strict budgeting on a spreadsheet provided their spruced Colonial, with Toyotas in the driveway and family-installed crown molding.

The recession halved their 401(k) plans and damaged college funds for their two boys.

Yet Yara Montminy feels no panic — faith in the economy, yes, and an evolving, personal shift. She left her job in 2005 to care for her mother, who suffered a stroke. A friend's son died unexpectedly last year. "We decided we're going to live a little more for the moment," she says.

That explains the European vacation next month — "the kids are going to be out of the house before we know it" — and, after much reflecting, the \$33 investment in a Cutco ice cream scooper.

Officers Involved In Shooting

Responding Police Say Man Levelled Gun At Them

By **DAVID OWENS**
dowens@courant.com

EAST HARTFORD — The state police Eastern District Major Crime Squad has been called in to investigate a shooting where two officers shot an apparently suicidal man who leveled a rifle at them.

STATE INVESTIGATION

The man, who police said was already injured when officers arrived in a wooded area behind 38 Long Hill St., was being treated at Hartford Hospital. Police described his condition as serious. They did not release his name.

Officer Hugo Benettieri, an East Hartford police spokesman, said officers were called to 38 Long Hill St. about 1:35 p.m. The officers found the man, and shots had been fired.

State police Lt. J. Paul Vance said the call came

in as a domestic violence call, and East Hartford officers asked for an officer with a police dog. A West Hartford officer and dog responded.

As they arrived in the area, the officers were directed to the wooded area behind the home where they found the man, Vance said. Vance described the weapon the man was holding as a long gun.

The man appeared to be injured and was conscious holding the weapon, Vance said. The officers told the man several times to put the weapon down, but he suddenly leveled it at the officers, Vance said. They then fired at and struck the man. Neither officer was injured.

Vance said the police chiefs in East Hartford and West Hartford asked state police to investigate the shooting.

Crime scene detectives were on the scene into Sunday evening. The names of the officers involved were not released.

BAD WEATHER

After Wild Sunday, Expect Calm Today

Powerful thunder storms moved across the state Sunday afternoon, prompting tornado watches in Fairfield and New Haven counties and toppling trees and dropping hail in Hartford and Tolland counties.

But the forecast for Memorial Day looks good — sunny and less humid, with temperatures in the upper 70s, Fox61 Meteorologist Rachel Frank said.

Sunday's storms, however, caused significant damage in several places. Trees toppled in South Windsor, including one that fell on a house.

There were also reports of hail in Vernon and heavy rain in Manchester that caused some street flooding, Frank said.

In Fairfield and New Haven counties, the weather service issued three tornado watches because of violent storms.

Roads were closed in several towns as crews worked to clear downed trees and wires.