

# The Hour

**Trendsetters**



It's a little black dress rebellion.

**B1**

**Sports**

Barbaro euthanized; owner calls it 'the right decision.'



**A9**

Tuesday, January 30, 2007 Vol. 136 No. 30 The Independent Voice of Our Community for 136 years www.thehour.com 50¢

**Business / C1**



Karate Universe expands; future plans call for more growth.

**World / A7**



200 dead after fierce battle in Iraq.

**Editorial / A6**

Changes needed before NCLB law gets a new life.

**Calendar**



Check out *The Hour's* online community calendar for events in your area. Go to [www.thehour.com](http://www.thehour.com).

**Weather / A2**



Mostly cloudy today with highs in the low 30s. Mostly cloudy tonight with lows in the 20s.

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Hour photo / HANS HALLGREN

Norwalk-based attorneys Anna Eason, left, and Nora Belanger of NorwalkSEEKS give a lecture on "Understanding the changes in the IDEA 2004." SEEKS is a nonprofit organization based in Norwalk that provides an advocacy and support network for parents with children with special needs.

## Advocates inform public on special education issues

By ANNA GUSTAFSON  
*Hour Staff Writer*

**NORWALK** — Parents of children with disabilities can often feel overwhelmed by the detailed legislation governing their child's education. Sifting through page after page of federal documents chock full of acronyms can seem too daunting a task — which is why a new Norwalk nonprofit held its first lecture on special education legislation.

NorwalkSEEKS — Norwalk

Special Education Empower Through Knowledge Source — sponsored Monday night's lecture on the Individual with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, in order to better educate parents in the law that governs special education nationwide.

"This was really helpful," said Norwalker Jeff Spahr. "I can't always get past some of the acronyms, so this helped me learn more about IDEA."

NorwalkSEEKS is a newly

organized network of parents and professionals in Norwalk who are interested in special education issues.

Two Norwalk-based lawyers, Anne Eason and Nora Belanger, discussed the legislation with about 15 parents and school administrators present at the lecture.

It's crucial for parents to learn as much as they can about IDEA — the federal legislation that dictates everything from who can create an

See **NONPROFIT, A8**

## Group seeks funds to back city energy study

Committee reviewed qualifications of firms interested in performing public power feasibility survey

By ROBERT KOCH  
*Hour Staff Writer*

**NORWALK** — Members of the Common Council's Public Power Authority Committee resolved Monday night to search for dollars to launch an estimated \$200,000 feasibility study of public power in Norwalk.

Committee members reviewed qualification statements submitted by four firms interested in performing the study. Afterward, they directed Director of Public Works Harold F. Alvord to write the

firms, as he and they seek dollars for the study.

"If you tell them the (city) budget isn't done yet, you might as well tell them there is no money," said Alvord, before recommending a sample response to the firms. "The committee has deemed you to be qualified. You can expect a broader request-for-proposals, which you'll see in the not-too-distant future."

Answering the city's request-for-qualifications — a first step in hiring a firm to perform work for

the city — were Navigant Consulting, Inc., of Westbury, N.Y.; Energy and Resource Consulting Group, LLC of Denver; EES Consulting of Kirkland, Wash.; and Accion Group of Concord, N.H.

Alvord found all four firms experienced, but said he was most impressed with Navigant, based on its following the city's instructions and its preliminary research of Norwalk.

Enticing the firms to submit detailed proposals could prove difficult, given that dollars haven't been set aside for the study. Alvord has asked for \$200,000 in his 2007-08 operating budget request for the study.

See **PUBLIC, A8**

## Review finds many Louisiana residents reluctant to rebuild along coast

By MICHELLE ROBERTS  
*Associated Press*

**NEW ORLEANS** — More than 16 months after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita forced an unprecedented exodus from the Louisiana Gulf Coast, tens of thousands of homeowners have decided not to rebuild or have yet to make up their minds, an Associated Press analysis found.

The AP looked at applications to the federally funded Louisiana Road Home program, which dispenses up to \$150,000 per homeowner to rebuild or sell out to the state. Nearly 98,000 people have applied so far.

Two-thirds of all applicants said they want to rebuild their damaged properties, while more than a quarter have indicated they want out or can't decide what to do.

But in dozens of towns and

neighborhoods, particularly those closest to the coast, the percentages of homeowners on the fence or on the way out are higher than average, with as many as two out of three homeowners not committed to rebuilding. The areas, 31 ZIP codes in all, include several heavily damaged New Orleans neighborhoods such as Lakeview and the Ninth Ward.

Michael Kurth, a McNeese State University economics professor who has done research for the Louisiana Recovery Authority, said he is not surprised.

"With the scale of destruction that occurred in those coastal areas, it wasn't a matter of 'Let's return in a month or in two months,'" Kurth said. "In a lot of cases, you couldn't go back to what was there before. It's just not there."

Homeowners who remain undecided could still rebuild their

destroyed homes. But by now, many are resettled in new homes, schools and jobs. Louisiana demographer Elliott Stonecipher said it is safe to assume that those who were going to commit themselves to rebuilding would have done so by now.

As many as 123,000 homeowners may be eligible for Louisiana Road Home aid. The program dispenses grants not only to rebuild damaged homes, but also to fortify undamaged ones by raising them off the ground or installing hurricane shutters.

Applicants must indicate whether they want to rebuild; sell and move in-state; sell and leave the state; or are undecided.

"The folks in south Louisiana whose houses were flooded by Katrina and Rita are necessarily going to be a little gun-shy," LRA

See **RESIDENTS, A5**

## Councilwoman calls for fire chief's suspension

By ROBERT KOCH  
*Hour Staff Writer*

**NORWALK** — A Common Council panel examining alleged racism in the Norwalk Fire Department may recommend suspending Fire Chief Denis McCarthy with pay pending the outcome of its investigation.

The panel, headed by Councilwoman Phyllis Y. Bolden, is scheduled to hold its first official meeting tonight and discuss a matter in executive session. While Bolden would not disclose the topic, she said panel members have spoken with a half-dozen firefighters and reached some conclusions.

"The committee, in our ad-hoc gathering at City Hall decided that, based on our preliminary findings, in talking with the various firefighters, that the chief should be suspended with pay pending the

"Everything now is, 'He said, she said, we said, they said.' For now, I have to hear what everybody has to say. You can't just make decision without having all the facts in front of you."

Joanne T. Romano  
Common Council member

outcome of the investigation of the hearing," Bolden said. "The videotape opened the door to examine the (alleged) racism."

The council formed the panel, which comprises members of its Personnel and its Public Safety, Health & Welfare committees, after a videotape surfaced last November showing

See **COUNCILWOMAN, A8**

## Attorney: Bombing suspect to take plea

Judge orders Weston resident to two week supervised release to undergo medical tests

By PATRICK R. LINSEY  
*Hour Staff Writer*

**NORWALK** — A federal judge ordered the two-week supervised release of alleged bomber Bruce Forest, after his attorney told the court a plea deal has been struck under which Forest will likely serve three and a half years in prison.

Forest is accused in seven bombings of portable toilets and abandoned buildings in Norwalk, Weston and other Fairfield County towns over the last two years.

At a Monday morning detention hearing at U.S. District Court in Bridgeport, Judge Janet Hall granted a request by Forest's attorney, Bernard Grossberg, that the defendant be released to undergo medical tests. Forest, 49, was indicted last May on seven counts each of using explosive

materials to destroy property and discharging a firearm in relation to a crime of violence in connection with a string of bombings between October 2005 and March 2006.

The Weston resident is to be confined to his home at 10 Spring Valley Road between three scheduled medical appointments, Hall ordered, adding that the defendant must be electronically monitored to confirm his whereabouts. Hall also ordered Forest be accompanied to all medical appointments by Weston Police at his own expense. Forest's wife and mother agreed to a \$1 million bond secured by a \$10,000 cash surety.

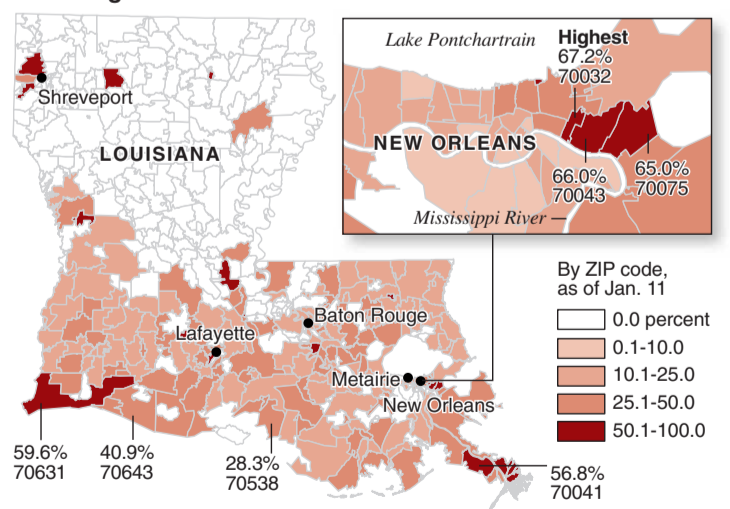
While U.S. Attorney David Ring did not object to the release, it was opposed by Weston Police Chief Anthony Land, who attended the hearing.

See **ATTORNEY, A5**

## Exodus from the coast, New Orleans

More than 26 percent of the nearly 98,000 federal funding applicants have chosen to sell their homes or have yet to decide. In areas along the coast and in New Orleans, it is up to 67 percent.

Percentage of homeowners who decided to sell or were undecided



### Don't Miss Norwalk Hospital's Health Talk

on Cablevision Local Programming Channel 84,  
Sun., Wed., Thurs., Fri., and Sat., at 6:30 P.M., Fri. and Sat. at 7:30 P.M.,  
Sun., through Sat., at 8:30, 9:30, 10:30, and 11:30 P.M.

Topic Week of January 29, 2007 is Preconception Care to Ensure a Healthy Pregnancy with guest, Patrick Nugent, MD, Chairman, Dept. of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Norwalk Hospital



**Norwalk Hospital** | The right care is right here.