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NEW HAVEN RANDY COX INJURY CASE

Chief recommends firing cops

CRIMINAL CHARGES STILL PENDING: The five officers who were charged in connection with the incident that left Richard "Randy" Cox paralyzed last June all pleaded not guilty. New Haven Police Chief Karl Jacobson said he did not think it necessary to wait to take action until the criminal charges are resolved. "The community has asked us to ... be accountable," he said.

Futures of 4 police officers involved in arrest that left man paralyzed are subject to board decision

By Ed Stannard
Hartford Courant

New Haven Police Chief Karl Jacobson recommended to the Board of Police Commissioners termination for four of the five officers involved in Randy Cox's injury case.

The hearings will be held starting at the end of April. Each officer

will have an individual hearing. Officer Ronald Pressley retired in January, so he is not subject to discipline.

"I've sent all the officers to the Board of Police Commissioners, and I'm recommending termination," Jacobson said. "It was a long process."

"This department has gone through a lot since that incident.

This community has gone through a lot. And the message to the community is that we will be transparent, we will be accountable and we will hold our officers accountable.

"The message to the officers is that this administration does have your back and that mistakes do happen. But we will not treat this community disrespectfully, as happened in Randy's case."

The five officers who were



Jacobson

charged in connection with the incident that left Richard "Randy" Cox paralyzed last June appeared in court in January and pleaded not guilty.

Officers Oscar Diaz, Pressley, Jocelyn Lavandier and Luis Rivera and Sgt. Betsy Segui all pleaded not guilty to misdemeanor second-degree reckless endangerment and cruelty to person, according

Turn to Chief, Page 2



Camper Amrey Brookshire 13, of West Hartford, and her mom, Amarilis Franjul, celebrate after they cut the ribbon for The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp's new Creative Complex in Ashford on Tuesday. **AARON FLAUM/HARTFORD COURANT PHOTOS**

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

GOP wants tighter parole

Reforms lauded by advocates go too far, conservatives say

By Alison Cross
Hartford Courant

Carleton Giles, chairman of the Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles, landed in the hot seat Monday as Judiciary Committee members grilled Giles on his controversial new commutation policy that trimmed the sentences of dozens of violent offenders last year.

Debate over the merits of the June 2021 policy shift, which saw the historical rates of one-to-two commutations a year skyrocket to 71 in 2022, consumed Monday's public hearing on the re-nomination of Giles and nine other members of the State Board of Pardons and Paroles.

Applauded by prison reform advocates and vilified by tough-on-crime proponents, the new commutation policy opened the door for roughly 1,000 inmates to apply for a reduced sentence by offering eligibility to incarcerated individuals serving more than 10 years for their crimes.

In 2022, the program saw 310 applicants, of which 98 received a full hearing and 79 received a commutation, shaving an average of 15.4 years off the prison sentence of offenders convicted on charges that range from property crimes (12 counts commuted) to murder (44 counts commuted).

Giles and Democratic allies said state statute granted Giles the purview to formulate his own policy. Republican adversaries argued that the sweeping changes in the revamped commutation program were not a matter of policy but regulation — a classification that would have triggered a

Turn to Parole, Page 2

RISEN 'FROM ASHES'

Two years after fire, Connecticut's Hole in the Wall Gang Camp unveils rebuild

By Alison Cross | Hartford Courant

After a fire destroyed part of the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp in Ashford in 2021, Amarilis Franjul said the event shook the spirit of the "magical place."

The camp, a summer retreat for seriously ill children, like Franjul's 13-year-old daughter, Amarey Brookshire, who has been hospitalized dozens of times for sickle cell disease, provided a space where Franjul said kids could be kids and families didn't need to "sit and cry over stories" because parents "know exactly what you're going through."

Franjul said the fire "created many broken hearts."

"In that moment, we felt hopeless, scared and a bit confused. We didn't know what it would mean for the future. We had so many memories at the paint and glitter tables in arts and crafts, smelling the wood in the woodshop, picking out what we wanted to buy each visit we were here from the camp store. It was extremely sad to think about all the children over the years that came here and created their own memories, those who were eager to come back, and

those who may no longer be with us," Franjul said.

Two years later, exploring the newly rebuilt 11,000 square-foot Creative Complex, Franjul and Brookshire beamed as they thought of all the new memories to be made at the new facility.

"It's really cool," Brookshire said. "My favorite part (of camp) is probably just doing the different activities. There's a lot to do here ... I think this year will be

Turn to Ashes, Page 2



The facade of the brand-new Creative Complex.

US studies ways to insure all bank deposits if crisis grows

By Jeanna Smialek
The New York Times

WASHINGTON — Lawmakers are looking for ways to resolve a major concern that threatens to keep the banking industry in turmoil: the fact that the federal government insures bank deposits of no more than \$250,000.

Some members of Congress

are looking for ways to raise that limit, at least temporarily, in order to stop depositors from pulling their money out of smaller institutions that have been at the center of recent bank runs.

Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., and other lawmakers are in talks about introducing bipartisan legislation as early as this week that would temporarily increase the deposit

cap on transaction accounts, which are used for activities like payroll, with an eye on smaller banks. Such a move would potentially reprise a playbook used during the 2008 financial crisis and authorized at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 to prevent depositors from pulling their money out.

Others, including Sen. Elizabeth

Warren, D-Mass., have suggested lifting the deposit cap altogether.

Any broad expansion to deposit insurance could require action from Congress because of legal changes made after the 2008 financial crisis, unless government agencies can find a workaround.

The White House has not taken a public position, instead emphasizing the instruments it has

already rolled out to address banking troubles.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen projected calm Tuesday but told a gathering of bankers that additional rescue arrangements "could be warranted" if any new failures at smaller institutions jeopardize financial stability.

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Bid to sell wine in grocery stores blocked by committee

A controversial move that would allow Connecticut supermarkets to sell wine for the first time was blocked Tuesday in Hartford by a key legislative committee. **Connecticut, Page 1**

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Chief

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to state police and court records.

Cox and his family have filed a \$100 million lawsuit against the city and the five officers. The city is holding settlement talks with the Cox family.

Jacobson said the department has undergone several types of training and that the transport vans are now equipped with seat belts. He said they would only be used to transport prisoners to court. More than 50 policies have undergone review, he said.

“We have been trained to deescalation, specifically ICAT, which is integrated communications, assessment and tactics,” Jacobson said. “We have tried to enable active bystander which, in this situation, when viewing the video, if one of the officers said, ‘Let’s stop and keep Mr. Cox in the

same position,’ maybe we wouldn’t be here today.”

Cox was paralyzed on June 19, 2022, after he was arrested at a Juneteenth party on Lilac Street in New Haven, allegedly carrying a gun, records show.

He was being driven to the police lockup in a transport van. He was handcuffed but otherwise unrestrained in the van when Diaz hit the brakes and Cox was thrown headfirst into the front of the rear compartment, records show.

The five officers turned themselves in to state police Troop F in Westbrook on criminal charges in late November, records show. Each posted a \$25,000 bond. Virtual pre-trial hearings are scheduled for February.

Jacobson said the internal affairs investigation found the officers violated general orders involving abiding by the law, integrity, trustworthiness, courtesy and respect, among others. He said two other officers

have been identified in the case, but that he would not be recommending termination for them.

He did not name them because he has yet to talk to the police union, he said.

Jacobson said he did not think it necessary to wait to take action until the criminal charges are resolved.

“I think the days of waiting for criminal cases to conclude need to stop,” he said. “That’s one of the things the community has asked us to do. The community has asked us to be transparent, be accountable and be swift about it.

“This is not swift; it’s been nine months. There’s been a lot of thought and investigation put into this.”

Jacobson said once the police board reaches a decision, which could be less than termination, the union can contest it.

At a separate news conference New Haven Mayor Justin Elicker said he was pleased with the internal

affairs report’s conclusions.

“I stand by the chief,” Elicker said. “I appointed the chief. I’ve seen the videos, like everyone else here, and what happened was totally unacceptable. And so I stand by the chief in this decision.

“It’s an important day for the New Haven Police Department and it’s an important day for the city of New Haven. It’s also a sobering day.

“As we have said from day one, what happened to Randy Cox is unacceptable. And we need to do everything in our power to ensure that it never happens again. When someone enters police custody, they deserve the dignity, respect, care and safety that any of us would want.”

Addressing Doreen Coleman, Cox’s mother, Elicker expressed “my deepest condolences to Miss Doreen and Randy and your family. I can’t imagine the challenges that you have experi-

enced over these past many, many months. And I know that because I’ve heard this from you and from Randy’s sisters, that you want to ensure that justice occurs and occurs expeditiously.

“And I know that you share with me the urgency and oftentimes the frustration that these processes take longer than any of us would like.”

The mayor said one settlement conference has taken place with the family but said the discussions were private.

Corporation Counsel Patricia King said the discovery process in the case would last until October 2024, and a trial would begin Dec. 15, 2024, if the case were not settled.

Coleman said Cox is “doing OK. He’s processing it slowly. He’s in good spirits. He can’t wait to go outside.”

Cox is being cared for at a long-term care facility. The family’s attorney, R.J. Weber, said his house is not accessi-

ble by a wheelchair.

“I know that today’s news is taken well by Randy, Doreen and the whole Cox family,” Weber said. He said while it’s taken time to get to the point of recommending firing “the most important thing is to get it right.”

“And the fact of the matter is that, even though it’s been nine, 10 months since Juneteenth, when Randy was paralyzed, it’s not a long time,” Weber said. “What is a long time is 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day of the week, when Randy wakes up, paralyzed from the chest down. ... Every day of the week, every week of the month, every month of the year for years and decades to come, Randy Cox is going to remain paralyzed from the chest down. That is a long time to be paralyzed because of these officers’ actions on Juneteenth 2022.”

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Ashes

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really cool to come in here and start doing the arts and crafts and the woodshop and the cooking.”

With giant scissors in hand, Brookshire cut the ribbon on the brand-new facility Tuesday at a ceremony attended by the governor, camp staff, first responders and program donors.

At the event, Gov. Ned Lamont dedicated his remarks to the memory of Paul Newman, who founded the camp in 1988 to give children with serious illnesses the opportunity to “raise a little hell.”

Lamont recalled a conversation with Newman in which the late actor and philanthropist called the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp “the most important program in the world,” adding that the camp was something “I want my name identified with for the rest of my life and beyond.”

“He’s looking down from somewhere right now, so proud of everything,” Lamont said, before joking — “I’m



Some 4,000 pieces of tiles, each representing a donor, were used by artist Mia Schon to make a mosaic mural at the Creative Complex in Ashford. AARON FLAUM/HARTFORD COURANT

pretty sure he is up there because if he’s not in Heaven I don’t think the rest of us stand a chance.”

“I love coming back here. I love the joy in people’s eyes. I love the hope that it means,” Lamont added. “Connecticut is so proud of what you do, so proud of what it means for these kids — little hope, little joy, and ‘raise a little hell.’”

The newly built complex includes the Alley Cats Cafe and Cooking Zone, Uncle Kasey’s Korner Woodshop,

the Grateful Heart Art Nook, a Serenity Room for parents and caregivers, a sensory-friendly Quiet Corner, and a camp store.

The centerpiece of the facility is a stunning wall-length mosaic landscape piece that radiates in hues of pink, blue, purple and yellow with the boldfaced message “Camp is magic. The magic is in you.”

The artist, Mia Schon of Boston and Tel Aviv, said that after months working

on the mural on her own, it was gratifying to see people finally interacting with and reflecting on the art.

Schon, who worked for the Hole in the Wall Gang as both a counselor and a hospital outreach specialist, said her favorite part of the mural is the moon that lights up the darkness of the night sky.

The camp’s CEO James Canton said that each component of the more than 4,500 piece mural represents the 4,516 donors who supported the construction project. Among the largest donors were Newman’s Own Foundation and Travelers, who contributed \$1 million each to the rebuild.

“The mosaic is intended to remind everyone who walks into this space of the transformational impact of camp, the power of art to lift our spirits and to evoke the extraordinary generosity of a community of compassionate people who stepped forward when the need was great,” Canton said. “I heard camp described as the house that love built. This space is further proof of that.”

In February of 2021, a

fire tore through the camp, destroying the original Arts & Crafts, Woodshop, Cooking Zone and Camp Store facilities. Firefighters from several neighboring municipalities battled the flames, blocking the fire from reaching the camp’s dining hall or infirmary.

Doug Beaudoin and James Roy of the Eastford Fire Department recalled the scene as first responders arrived at the camp.

“Coming up the hill, you could see the header from the fire,” Beaudoin said. “While trying to fight it, there was snow on the ground, so that’s always an obstacle for us ... Our main job at the time was to protect the dining hall and the medical facility.”

“The camp is a special place for a lot of people and for something like that to happen, it’s unfortunate,” Roy added. “They were able to rebuild and here we are today. ... It’s an incredible difference.”

After the event, Korreen Mortimer, an original member of the Hole in the Wall Gang, recalled inviting Paul Newman to eat lunch at her table during the camp’s

first summer in 1988.

Mortimer was 14 years old and undergoing treatment for acute myeloid leukemia when the program reached out to Boston Children’s Hospital looking for its first group of campers.

“There were four kids in my cabin that year, and now there’s a waiting list and people can’t wait to come,” Mortimer said.

Mortimer gained lifelong friends and memories during her three years as a camper and four years as a counselor.

“It’s always been such an important place,” Mortimer said. “It gave me back so much of what I missed when I was sick.”

Mortimer described Tuesday’s homecoming to the new facility “overwhelming” and “emotional.” She marveled at how different the state-of-the-art facility, with all the modern comforts of air conditioning and appliances, looked from the rustic building that once was.

“The kids that will be coming will be in this fantastic facility,” Mortimer said. “It’s just going to be a wonderful place for them.”

Parole

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review by the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies before the policy’s codification.

Ranking member of the Judiciary Committee Sen. John Kissel, who presented Giles with one of the toughest lines of questioning, raised concern over the fact that Giles did not run the new policy by the governor’s office or members of the legislative branch before implementing the rule change.

“It’s very disconcerting to me that he almost unilaterally came up with this policy and implemented it without reaching out,” Kissel said. “I think that has the potential to undermine competence in our entire judicial system as it pertains to criminal justice.”

Kissel hounded Giles on the precipitous factors that led the policy change to which Giles suggested that commutations were the next step in a series of criminal justice reforms initiated with legislative support in 2015 that included early terminations, expedited pardons, and representation in probation revocation proceedings.

“I know that you feel that you’re acting in simpatico with the legislature, but not

with this legislator,” Kissel said as he wrapped up his questions. “I have no problem with a commutation once in a while, if someone’s older in years or ill or something like that, to have it as a wholesale, open the back door on a sentence for every inmate that’s in there for over 10 years if they show any kind of rehabilitation progress is not justice in my mind.”

Republican leaders and crime victims called on the governor and Board of Pardons and Paroles to suspend commutations at a press conference in Hartford earlier this month.

Gov. Ned Lamont responded, saying “it’s time” for the board “to step back.”

“The commutation process has accelerated rapidly since coming back online mid-2021. Given the substantial progress the Board already has made in hearing commutation cases, it’s time to step back and see how the policy is working,” Lamont said in a statement following the press conference. “The seriousness of the topic demands a careful approach involving the General Assembly as well as stakeholders, especially victims.”

The program excludes inmates that have a life sentence without the possibility of release. In order to

qualify, incarcerated individuals must complete at least 10 years of their sentence and be more than two years away from parole eligibility. Unresolved criminal charges, court fees, fines and outstanding warrants, as well as nolle charges issued within the last 13 months also preclude eligibility.

Inmates seeking a commutation go through an initial round where staff sort eligible and ineligible applications, a prescreening that decides whether or not the board will grant a hearing, and a full hearing that determines whether they will receive a commutation. Both the pre-screen and the hearing are overseen by Giles and hand-picked members of the Board of Pardons and Paroles Deborah Smith Palmieri and Michael Pohl.

During the public comment period, Norman Gaines, who was incarcerated before receiving a commutation from the board, spoke about the benefits of the process.

“For the cases that are extraordinary, I think I fit the bill,” Gaines said.

In 2000, Gaines was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole for a 1996 double homicide in Bridgeport when Gaines was 17. In 2014, after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled juveniles cannot

be sentenced to life without parole, Gaines was resentenced to 30 years in prison after pleading guilty through the Alford doctrine which simultaneously allows a defendant to maintain innocence. Gaines was released from prison through the new commutation policy.

Gaine’s story is not unique in the program. The average age of the inmates whose commutation request makes it to a full hearing is 46. The average age at the time they committed their offenses is 22.6 years. The board’s proclivity to commute the sentences of offenders who committed crimes when they were at or below the age of 25 aligns with a general agreement among the scientific community that brain development continues through age 25.

“I am an honors student at Asnuntuck Community College. Right now, I’m in 44% completion of my associates degree for human services and my GPA’s a 4.0,” said Gaines, who is also a coordinator at the Second Chance Re-Entry Initiative Program. “When I was talking to the panel of the Board of Pardons and Paroles, I said that I would do my best to be a beacon of the community. ... I’m just one of many ... that make sure we move forward so that when

these hearings come up, the public understands they’re in good hands.”

The crime victims who testified at the public hearing did not agree, with some calling for the disqualification of all those convicted of violent crimes.

Allegra Weir said that she has received two notices that the man who murdered her mother, orphaning Weir and her four brothers when she was just 17, applied to have his 45-year sentence commuted.

“I was told that he was not eligible (for commutation) but why I had to receive a letter — two letters — was very upsetting,” Weir said. “Do you realize that this paper notification alone rips open a wound that the victims of these criminals, crimes of murder, rape, assault, they have to revisit that life-altering, painful time like it was yesterday, which in turn re-victimizes the victims all over again.”

Giles said that the commutation process seriously takes into account the input and impact of crime victims.

“All victims are traumatized. And when they get a notice, all victims are re-traumatized. But some have processed it in a way that says, ‘if this offender has made progress, it’s not up to me.’ The victim will some-

times say, ‘They should go out and make an impact.’ Some are like our state victim advocate, who says it doesn’t matter what they’ve done, they should serve their time,” Giles said.

Co-chairman of the Judiciary Committee Rep. Steven Stafstrom said that the solution to victim retraumatization is not eliminating the program, but eliminating the notification at application.

“What we heard today is that a number of the applications that come in are summarily denied or rejected before they even get to a hearing. So it would make sense to me that notice go out to the victim only after a hearing date has been set. If what we’re talking about is not retraumatizing a victim by an application being submitted over and over and over again, the solution is not to stop the application from coming in, it’s to make sure there’s that initial case assessment before the notice is sent out,” Stafstrom said.

“I look forward to meeting with the chairman. I look forward to meeting with the governor’s office to continue to work through this,” he said. “But I don’t think we need wholesale change to the policy. I think it’s a couple reasonable tweaks here and there.”

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LOTTERY

Tuesday, March 21

PLAY3 DAY 0 5 0 WB: 8
PLAY4 DAY 0 6 9 5 WB: 0

The late lotto numbers were not drawn in time for this edition. For results, please visit courant.com/lottery.

MONDAY'S LATE NUMBERS

PLAY3 NIGHT 3 6 9 WB: 7

PLAY4 NIGHT 7 2 6 6 WB: 5

CASH 5 11 16 26 30 31

LUCKY FOR LIFE 1 6 12 31 38 LB: 7

POWERBALL 1 27 32 47 67 PB: 14 PP: 2

Friday’s est. Lotto jackpot: \$2.9M
Tonight’s est. Powerball jackpot: \$96M