

Lamont pitches tolls to Dems

Tells House members: 'I owe you ... I put some of you in a pickle'

By Eric Bedner

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HARTFORD — Gov. Ned Lamont made his pitch to House Democrats on Wednesday as he continues to seek support for his toll plan that cleared the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee earlier in the day despite objections from Rep-

ublicans who argued that lawmakers shouldn't approve a bill that lacks specifics.

Lamont requested and was given permission to meet with House Democrats when they were scheduled to caucus after Wednesday's session.

He said that while he understands "the middle class feels like it's getting

slammed," there is no other proposal, including the Republican-backed Prioritize Progress plan that relies entirely on bonding, that would adequately fund transportation projects.

Lamont said he recognizes he was unable to live up to his campaign promise of tolling

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Goodwin will build commercial space in EH

By Katherine Eastman

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EAST HARTFORD — Goodwin College plans to build a 23,000-square-foot building with tenant spaces for a bank, restaurant, offices, or retail, in an \$8 million project that's expected to be complete in November 2020.

The Planning and Zoning Commission Wednesday unanimously approved the site plan for the mixed-use building during a special meeting. The plans called for a zone change to consolidate several lots at 391 and 365 Main St., and lots at 9, 13-15, 21, 27-29, and 33 Ensign St., which the college already owns.

The combined parcels create a 3.15-acre property directly across the street from the front entrance to the Pratt & Whitney campus.

Representatives from Goodwin College, based at 1 Riverside Drive, said they have businesses in mind to rent these spaces, but haven't yet named

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Breaking out the Champagne on Wednesday is Michael Maglaras, superintendent of the Connecticut Foundation Solutions Indemnity Co., celebrating the foundation replacement for Tolland homeowners Aisling and Kevin McCloskey, right. At left is Selia Mosquera-Bruno, commissioner of the state Department of Housing. See another photo, Page 3.

Crumbling no more: Tolland family, officials celebrate foundation repair

By Matthew P. Knox

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TOLLAND — Local politicians, activists, and state employees gathered Wednesday morning to celebrate at the home of Kevin and Aisling McCloskey, the first family to have their foundation replaced and paid for by the captive insurance company created by the legislature to

assist homeowners with crumbling foundations.

Michael Maglaras, superintendent of the Connecticut Foundation Solutions Indemnity Co., arrived at the McCloskeys' home at 19 Paula Joy Lane ready to celebrate and lead a Champagne toast.

"This is homeowner No. 1!" Maglaras shouted amid cheers from the McCloskeys and

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Family has been renting another home for the past six weeks

■ FOUNDATION

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onlookers, many of them holding cups of Champagne in the basement of the home.

And the McCloskeys are only the beginning. According to Maglaras, there are currently 80 other homes in various stages of the foundation replacement process, ranging from homeowners just signing contracts to others readying to move back into their homes in a couple of weeks.

But Wednesday was about the McCloskeys and a return to normalcy for the family of five and their dog, who've been renting another home in town for the past six weeks while their home was being worked on.

Aisling McCloskey, beaming throughout the morning, said there was nothing like being back home and being able to sleep in her own bed. The family had just moved back in on Tuesday.

"It's a huge sense of relief," she said.

She also said the Tolland community "has been unbelievable" with its support, and now her family is ready to support others in town facing the same situation with crumbling foundations.

"It's not painless, but it's not overly painful," Kevin McCloskey said of the process to replace his home's foundation.

It's been almost two years since the McCloskeys first discovered that the foundation of the eight-room, 2,344-square-foot Colonial-style home they had bought 11 years ago was crumbling.

So when the captive insurance company opened the application process for the foundation replacements in January, the couple applied right away.

According to Kevin McCloskey, July 3, 2017, was the day the family discovered the problem. They were in the midst of speaking with a real estate agent at the time, exploring the possibility of selling their home, which was built in 1998.

The agent suggested that the McCloskeys first check their home's foundation to ensure it wasn't crumbling. Sure enough, they found cracks, and those were just the ones they could easily see, Kevin McCloskey said.

Their basement was finished at the time, and Aisling McCloskey said they didn't see the full extent of the cracking until the drywall was pulled down. She knew after seeing it that the family wouldn't be able to continue living there unless the foundation was replaced.

But there was no chance they would have been able to pay for the replacement on their own, Kevin McCloskey said.



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In the yard are the beams that were used to lift up the Tolland home of Kevin and Aisling McCloskey to replace their crumbling foundation.

So when the captive insurance company opened the application process for the foundation replacements in January, the couple applied right away, which led, in February, to one of the other most memorable days of the past two years for the family.

Aisling McCloskey, who works in the town's school system, explicitly remembers the day she found out their application had been accepted. She was at work, but knowing that an email was supposed to arrive sometime that day

meant that she couldn't help but check her phone every five minutes because she didn't want to miss it. And when it finally arrived, Aisling said she ran out into the hallway and immediately called her husband to celebrate.

The work was completed by Newcity Builders of Somers, operated by James Newcity and his business partner Daryl Parker.

Timothy Heim, president of the Connecticut Coalition Against Crumbling Basements, and who was present at the

gathering in the McCloskey's basement, gave a shout-out to all of the people that spent thousands of hours, and worked relentlessly to make the foundation replacements possible.

"Today, hope is now reality," he said.

Steven R. Werbner, Tolland's town manager who is also president of the captive insurance company, remarked that throughout his 40 years in government, he has never seen a program move forward so quickly, from idea to action.