

QUABOAG CURRENT

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Newspaper

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Volume 18, Number 6

Friday, January 3, 2025

Looking back on

2024



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LOOKING BACK
PHOTOS
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Marking its 30th anniversary year, the East Quabbin Land Trust held its annual New Year's Day walk on the Mass Central Rail Trail to kickoff 2024 events. FILE PHOTO

School Committee discusses concerns about staff departures

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
pouimette@turley.com

NORTH BROOKFIELD – Superintendent Timohty McCormick told the School Committee that three staff members in a special education classroom have resigned.

At the Dec. 16 meeting, several of the School Committee members expressed concerns about staff injuries and how these are dealt with. They also discussed an email that was sent to Chair John Magario, from one of the former staff members.

McCormick said this particular classroom sometimes requires physical restraint in order to support students. He said a physical restraint is always the last resort used in order to keep a student safe.

“There’s been a lot of work by both Ms. Emory and Mr. Murphy to kind of look at the

schedules of the staff members who are in there to make sure that we’re maximizing the support,” he said.

This includes having the Board Certified Behavior Analyst work with students who require a plan to support their behaviors.

McCormick said at no time, do they ever want a student or staff member hurt when engaging in a restraint and he said these staff members receive annual training on how to safely restrain a student and rotate staff members out. He said physical restraints are reported to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

School Committee Secretary Tonya Matthews said she would like to know how many physical restraints are occurring in this classroom. McCormick said due to confidentiality, DESE reports physical restraint data according to how many students are

involved, how many restraints occurred and if there were injuries; it does not show how many restraints occurred with specific students or classrooms.

“A student that is not appropriately serviced here in the town, if the problems are too much, the difficulties...the struggles are too much for the town to handle and we have to trust that the school and the administration is making sure that that child is getting the education that they deserve in the safety environment for them and for the staff,” Matthews said.

Matthews said she is also concerned with the number of resignations related to this classroom.

“I feel like there’s a statement being made here,” she said.

Superintendent’s report

McCormick said the school district was accepted into part

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State looks at redoing Route 67 this summer

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
pouimette@turley.com

NORTH BROOKFIELD – Town Administrator Michael Szlosek told the Board of Selectmen he met with the Highway Department and the state about a summer project aimed at redoing Route 67 from the New Braintree town line to Spring Street.

“This will be done by the state with their contractors,” Szlosek said at the Dec. 17 meeting. “They will be taking financial responsibility for it.”

Spending requests

The Highway Department requested approval to spend \$685 to purchase a new salt calibration computer sensor after the old one shorted out from corrosion. Board of Selectmen

See ROUTE 67 | PAGE 12

Library offers story times and drop-in crafts

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
rdrago@turley.com

EAST BROOKFIELD – Looking for something to do with your little ones? Visit the East Brookfield Public Library at 122 Connie Mack Drive.

If you want to get your kids

more involved in social interactions, the library has great activities for them.

Join a story time, an activity fun for children ages 6 months to 6 years old. Children will have a good time by playing games, listening to stories and creating art projects they can

See LIBRARY | PAGE 5

- community -

Berthiaume and Durant hold office hours across region

State Rep. Donnie Berthiaume's Chief of Staff Donna Farmer and State Sen. Peter Durant's District Liaison Jared Grigg and Communications Director Kim Mongeau invite constituents and town officials to meet them to express any concerns, ideas or issues that they may need assistance with.

Upcoming dates include Monday, Jan. 6, East Brookfield Senior Center from 9-10

a.m., Brookfield Town Hall from 10:15-11:15 a.m. and West Brookfield Senior Center from 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.; Wednesday, Jan. 8, Ware Senior Center from 9-10 a.m., Hardwick Municipal Offices from 10:15-11:15 a.m., New Braintree Town Hall from 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and North Brookfield Senior Center from 12:45-1:45 p.m.; Monday, Jan. 13, Hubbardston Senior Center from 9:30-

10:30 a.m., Barre Senior Center from 10:45-11:45 a.m. and Oakham Town Hall from noon-1 p.m.; Tuesday, Jan. 14, Spencer Town Hall (Tammy Ruda from State Rep. John Marsi's office will also attend) from 10-11 a.m. and Leicester Senior Center from 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

To arrange a private meeting, contact Farmer by calling 774-402-4742.



PHONE
413.967.3505
Fax: 413.967.6009
Subscriptions: 413.283.8393

EMAIL
Advertising Sales
Dan Flynn
dflynn@turley.com

Tim Mara
tmara@turley.com

Editor
Paula Ouimette
pouimette@turley.com

WEB
www.quaboagcurrent.turley.com

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Knights host spaghetti dinner on Jan. 18

WEST BROOKFIELD – Knights of Columbus Council 11080 is sponsoring a spaghetti dinner on Saturday, Jan. 18 in Dugan Hall, Sacred Heart Church, 10 Milk St.

Proceeds from this event will benefit Supporting Orphans Nationally & Globally (S.O.N.G.).

Dinner includes pasta fagioli, garden salad, meatballs and sausage, spaghetti and sauce, Italian bread, dessert, water, soda and coffee. The cost is a \$15 donation for adults and \$10 for children under 12 years old.

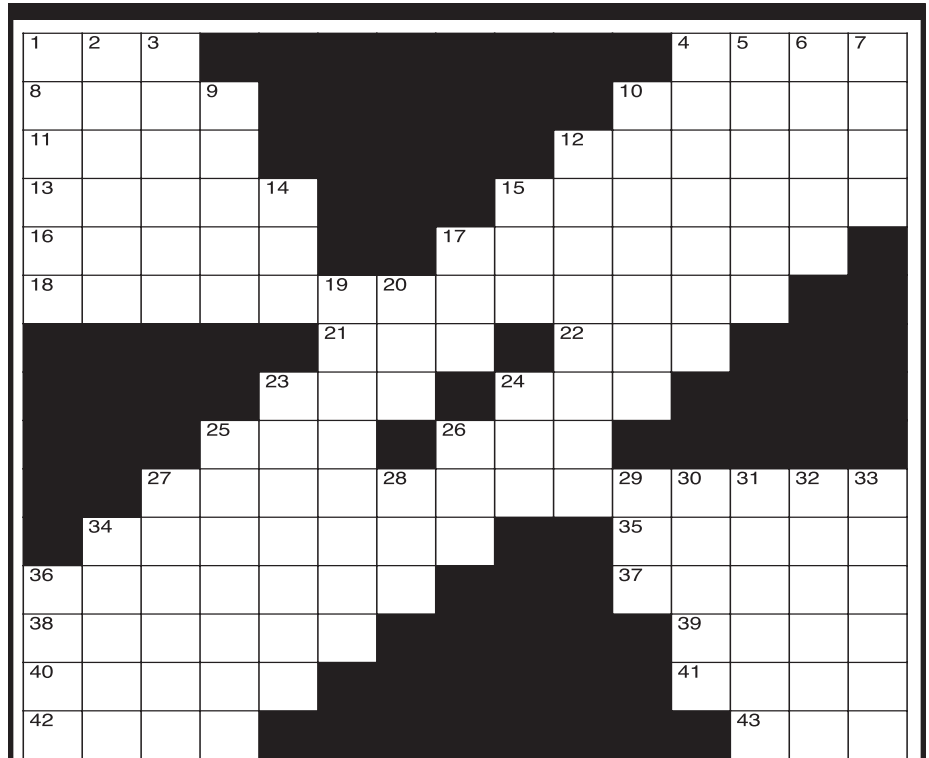
Take-out is available at 6 p.m. and sit-down dinner is served at 6:30 p.m.

Admission tickets are also good for entry for a special door prize. Raffle tickets for a 50/50 raffle and more will be available.

Advance ticket purchase is encouraged and appreciated. Tickets are available from any Knight or by calling 413-813-8100 or by emailing wallyconnor122@gmail.com. Tickets will only be available at the door while they last.

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- CLUES ACROSS**
- 1. Americans' "uncle"
 - 4. Chair
 - 8. Ancient kingdom
 - 10. Egyptian city
 - 11. Alaskan glacier
 - 12. One from Somalia
 - 13. Ancient alphabets
 - 15. Relating to vocabulary
 - 16. Small mongrels
 - 17. Natural settings
 - 18. Weekend entertainments
 - 21. Line from which light seemingly streams
 - 22. Your own private code
 - 23. Swiss river
 - 24. Satisfaction
 - 25. A person's brother or sister
 - 26. Folk singer DiFranco
 - 27. The Blonde Bombshell
 - 34. Kids' school project
 - 35. Bluish greens
 - 36. Classifying
 - 37. Cube-shaped
 - 38. Choo-choos
 - 39. Indian religious god of dissolution
 - 40. French department
 - 41. Leak into gradually
 - 42. Foundation
 - 43. Midway between south and southeast
- CLUES DOWN**
- 1. Counterbalancing debt
 - 2. In slow tempo
 - 3. Glamorous city
 - 4. Japanese lute
 - 5. Makes law
 - 6. Informative book
 - 7. Animal's body part
 - 9. American playwright
 - 10. Blood poisoning
 - 12. Angels
 - 14. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
 - 15. Written account
 - 17. Unwelcome pest
 - 19. Saddle horses
 - 20. Type of gibbon
 - 23. Delta is one
 - 24. NE Massachusetts cape
 - 25. Soup cracker
 - 26. Yes vote
 - 27. Muddy ground
 - 28. Physics apparatus (abbr.)
 - 29. Type of drug
 - 30. German city
 - 31. Animal disease
 - 32. Martini ingredients
 - 33. Get away
 - 34. Spanish municipality
 - 36. Thrust a knife into

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- community -

Feedback sought about station for East/West Rail Project

By Marcelo Gusmão
Staff Writer
mgusmao@turley.com

PALMER – The Department of Transportation held a meeting at the library to solicit feedback from the public about the East/West Rail Project.

Members of the public were invited to a public information meeting in the Palmer Public Library's Community Room on Dec. 16, where the project team provided an overview of the study's background, the station site alternatives and evaluation, and design considerations for the potential future rail station. After the presentation, the attendees were asked to provide feedback on the site alternatives and design considerations.

Andy Koziol, the director of the project, has been with MassDOT since June of last year.

"We received quite a bit of feedback, there was a lot of public participation," Koziol said.

Of the previous 11 sites, the project team has narrowed the focus to six that meet the ideal criteria for the new site.

"One of the reasons we went out for public feedback was to give public a chance to highlight anything we might have missed," Koziol said. "We feel pretty confident, with the local knowledge of the Steering Committee, together with that we've done a comprehensive look at each site, but the public can bring additional factors. I think committee is being patient to make sure we use all the information available to us before we make any further decisions."

The meeting involved some controversy, much of which was centered on the elimination of Steaming Tender Restaurant as a potential site for the station.

"Very early in our process we identified what we refer to as the requirements for rail infrastructure," Koziol said.

Koziol explained that the designs require a high-level, 800-foot platform to allow for level boarding on all coaches. There will also need to be about 1,775 feet of an adjacent track.

Koziol said that this is complicated by the properties near Steaming Tender, citing the CSX yard across from the tracks.

"Part of that is the CSX yard right across from tracks," Koziol said. "Then the horizontal width beneath the South Main Street bridge. Not only would the bridge have to be reconstructed, but this particular layout would require purchasing several properties,

which would make that not feasible."

This was countered by Blake Lamothe, the owner of Steaming Tender, who argued at the meeting that another proposal could fit in the space provided by the restaurant and would be a better use of the town's assets.

"News stations are categorizing it a Category Four with Amtrak, which means they want to build these big long platforms," Lamothe said. "We could have gone under Category Two or Three, which would allow us to use the existing structure for the station stop."

Another concern Lamothe voiced was for the central corridor passage coalition. He said that combining a North/South line with the East/West station would allow passenger service up to Montreal, and would trigger growth and overnight stays in the center of town.

"By managing assets, what you can do is put a couple million dollars into an existing station and develop a North/South line along with the East/West line and take the money to put into town to upgrade parking lots, infrastructure, sidewalks, and the stuff we need to get good, healthy growth downtown again," Lamothe said.

"The amount of people in town who are going to take the train are minimal," Lamothe said. "So you've got to create economic growth here."

Koziol agreed with Lamothe that a station far from the town center would not be ideal for economic growth, and mentioned it as a focus for the project.

"The general sentiment is that having the meeting station as close to downtown is desirable, we've heard that repeated several times through multiple mediums," Koziol said.

This project is currently ongoing, with the first route currently in the works. Koziol said that the team is going to use the feedback its received to hone in on a site that is both feasible to MassDOT and supported by the community, at which point the project team will be able to work on a conceptual design for the station.

"Along the way, there will be supportive planning activities to plan for things like various mobility options – like a bus service that can serve the station to bring additional passengers," Koziol said. "We'll be

looking at environmental constraints and preparing ourselves to go after federal funds. We're really not getting involved in those quite yet, but setting the stage in background data analysis."

An informal meeting with the public concerning the station is scheduled for Monday, Jan. 27, from 6-8 p.m. You can continue to send your feedback to MassDOT by sending an email to Andrew.M.Koziol@dot.state.ma.us.

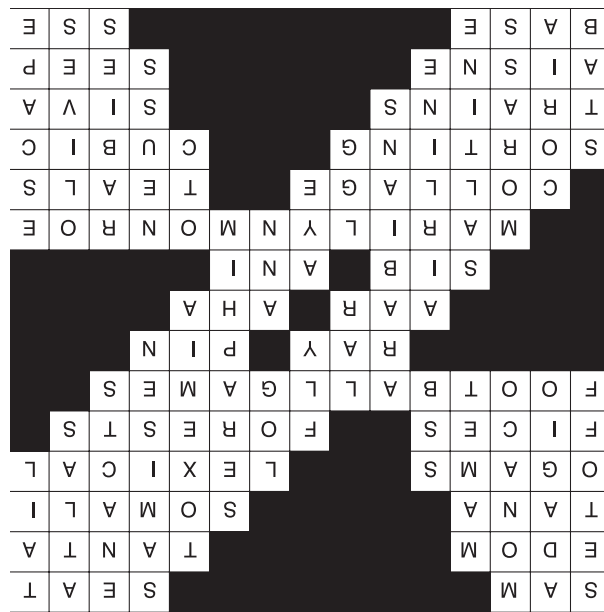
FSU lists winter graduates

FITCHBURG – Fitchburg State University recently held the winter ceremony of its 128th commencement exercises, conferring hundreds of graduate and undergraduate degrees.

It was the first ceremony for Dr. Donna Hodge, who joined the Fitchburg State campus this summer as its 12th president.

Local graduates are Morgan M. Button of Fiskdale, Master of Education in special education; Jonathan Edward Parent of North Brookfield, Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study in educational leadership/management; Margaret A. Smith-Michunas of North Brookfield, Master of Education in educational leadership/management and Anthony Paul Giuggio of Sturbridge, Master in Business Administration.

"Today, I am filled with profound pride and gratitude," she told graduates and guests at the ceremony, which was held in the university's Athletics and Recreation Center. "This marks my inaugural semester as president of this esteemed institution and it is an honor to witness this pivotal milestone in your academic journeys. I am particularly humbled to serve as the first woman president in Fitchburg State's 130-year history. You are my first graduating class, among some of the first students I met upon my arrival this summer, and officially tonight, you have all become part of my own story. Our historic moment underscores the progress we have achieved as a university committed to equity, inclusion, and the pursuit of excellence."



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- opinion -



A New Year of possibilities

I spent last night curled up on the couch with a seed catalog in hand. It was a nostalgic few hours for me, in which I was transported back decades, to when gardening was new and my time and energy were boundless.

Regardless of it being the present day, I began circling this and that, and even curled a few pages too. All the fruit and vegetables I could grow, and store, and preserve, and eat, all year long.

Could my homesteading nature be bubbling back up to the surface? Perhaps. And wouldn't that wonderful if it could be a reality? It surely would.

Talk about an admirable ambition for the New Year.

I started to think about what my family eats on a regular basis and what I would have to do to grow enough food to last throughout the year or at least seriously supplement what we typically buy. The most important considerations are taste and productivity.

If a variety is productive, but doesn't taste great, then what is the point?

I have "plugged" Fedco Seeds a number of times through the years. The newsprint catalog is full of such great information; follow up by looking online (fedcoseeds.com) to get a color picture of what you will grow. I specifically enjoy reading the personal recommendations from the trialers in many of the descriptions!

The biggest problem I have growing tomatoes is with early blight. Last night I found a great disease resistant paste tomato called Plum Regal that will suit my needs well, hopefully yielding many quarts of sauce for the cupboards.

And what about that Little Dipper Butternut Squash? Disease resistance reigns true here, with taste and productivity ranking high too. Twenty-two fruits from three plants? I'll take it.

Succession planting is paramount if I want to grow lots of food consistently. This planting method is defined as "planting more than once."

It can be planting lettuce, for example, every two weeks throughout the growing season or planting beets in the spot the peas vacated. Reading the catalog reminded me that not every variety is suited for successional sowing.

In other words, the lettuce I sow for an early spring sowing might not be best for planting in the summer, and summer lettuce definitely won't be the best to extend my growing from fall into winter. I will definitely plan accordingly.

Likewise, I may love "Jade" green beans, but they wouldn't be the best for my first sowing because they are white seeded and typically white seeded beans rot in cool soil. I'll start with a dark seeded bean.

I am really looking forward to trying to grow a few new things this year, watermelon and cantaloupe to be exact. Less fruit to buy is a good thing, right?

I learned some tips from the catalog. Namely, to start the melons indoors, then transplant at two or three weeks old, before the roots tangle, into soil that has been amended with lots of aged manure or compost and prewarmed with black plastic mulch.

See GARDEN | PAGE 5



I received an email from a Brimfield resident on Dec. 15.

He said he checked out a pond in Ludlow in preparation for doing the Christmas Bird Count with the Allen Bird Club. He said, "My wife and I have been covering the town of Ludlow since 1989 and did my first count with the club in the late 1970s."

He saw four American Wigeons. He said, "Males with white crown/forehead and female with gray head brown body was swimming with the males. The male's white spot was very visible even to the unaided eye."

The American wigeon is 21 inches long. The male has a white forehead and crown, gray head and a green iridescent patch through the eye. The male has a white spot before the tail, which the Brimfield mentioned in his email.

The female has brownish sides, grayish head and sides, a dark eyespot and light gray bill with black tip. The female wigeon lays six to 12 white eggs in a grassy nest. The nest is concealed in rushes, sedge or under tree clumps.

American wigeons feed on pond weeds, milfoil, wigeon grass, wild celery and eelgrass. They may eat vexation stirred up by diving ducks such as canvasbacks. They summer on lakes and marshes and winter on wet meadows, lakes and protected coastal waters. They are usually found in small flocks. During courtship competing males give whistling calls and lift folded wings nearly vertical above their back. Males give soft descending three syllable whistles.

Other birds

Other birds seen by the Brimfield resident at the Ludlow Reservoir were 63 Canada geese, six mallards, 83 hooded mergansers, 161 common mergansers, one ring-billed gull, three common loons and one bald eagle flew directly overhead just above the tree tops. Other birds were two American crows, two tufted titmice and two dark-eyed juncos.

Hooded mergansers

I received an email from a woman on Dec. 14. She said, "The ponds on Brook Road in West Warren have more treasures. Two days ago I saw a pair of hooded mergansers. I sat

and watched for several minutes and they spent most of the time under water."

Bird at feeder

I received an email from a woman on Dec. 20. She wrote, "I have spotted a bird I believe to be a yellow warbler coming to my feeder. My knowledge of the bird is that it migrates south or the winter." She sent a photo, but the bird was eating so the beak and head were not visible. It had two white wing bars, olive color and some yellow. It may be a male American goldfinch in winter plumage. They do spend the winter here and retain some of their yellow feathers.

Loon fact

Most of the fish loons catch are small enough to be swallowed whole when they're still underwater. However, when a loon captures a larger fish, it may need to return to the surface to subdue it before it is able to consume it. Loons may slap a fish against the surface of the water or repeatedly drop and recapture it until the fish stops struggling and is manageable enough to be swallowed.

Loons swallow fish whole, headfirst. When a loon starts to swallow a large fish, it will first ensure that it is oriented properly, sometimes dropping the fish and picking it up several times until it is properly positioned. Once the fish is aligned so that it is headfirst in the loon's mouth, the loon begins the process of swallowing. Loons have sharp, rear-facing projections along the roof of their mouths and on their tongues. These projections, called denticles, interlock with the fish's scales, ensuring that the fish is not able to escape back into the water. Loons then press their tongue into the fish and begin to inch it down the throat, into the esophagus.

Depending on the size of the fish a loon is trying to eat, it may take a few seconds to several minutes for the loon to swallow. Once in the esophagus, the fish moves down into the gizzard. A loon may open its mouth and repeatedly extend its neck upward and then contract it back towards its body to help move particularly large fish through the esophagus to the gizzard.

American crow

I saw about five or six American crows foraging on a lawn on my way to church this cold Sunday morning. With the temperature registering 8 degrees F, the crows had their feathers all puffed up for warmth.

People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by calling me at 413-967-3505, leaving a message at extension 100, emailing mybackyard88@aol.com or edowner@turley.com or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.



American wigeon

OPINION PAGE/ LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the editor should be 250 words or less in length, and guest columns between 500 and 800 words. No unsigned or anonymous opinions will be published. We require that the person submitting the opinion also include his or her town of residence and home telephone number. We authenticate authorship prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions deemed to be libelous, unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks, or defamation of character.

Send opinions to:

Letters to the Editor, 80 Main Street, Ware, MA 01082 OR e-mail to pouimette@turley.com. Deadline for submission is Monday at noon for the following week's edition.

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PATRICK H. TURLEY
CEO

KEITH TURLEY
President

EDITOR
Paula Quimette
pouimette@turley.com

ADVERTISING SALES
Dan Flynn
Tim Mara

SPORTS EDITOR
Greg Scibelli
sports@turley.com

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Quaboag Current Newspaper

- community -



Am I entitled to more Social Security from my ex-husbands?

Dear Rusty:

I am 76 years old and a retired high school counselor/teacher. I was married to my first husband from 1968 until 1981. He is still living and he remarried two more times and, I believe, he is currently divorced. He is 77 years old. His income was always much higher than mine. I was married to my second husband from May 1989 until we divorced in April 2017. My second husband died in June 2023. What I wonder is if I am entitled to receive Social Security benefits based upon the income of either of my ex-husbands?

Signed: Twice Divorced Spouse

Dear Twice Divorced:

Divorced spouses are entitled to the same benefits as a current spouse if their marriage lasted at least 10 years which, in both cases, yours did.

The other caveat is whether your own SS retirement benefit is less than you are entitled to from either of your ex-husbands. If your own SS retirement benefit is less, then you will get an incremental amount on top of your own SS retirement to bring your total monthly benefit up to your spousal or surviving spouse) entitlement.

Since your first husband is still living, it is likely that your best financial option is to claim a surviving ex-spouse benefit from your deceased second husband. The reason is that survivor benefits from husband #2 are based on his actual benefit at his death, whereas benefits from a living ex-spouse, husband #1, are based upon his full retirement amount.

In other words, it is likely that 100% of deceased husband #2's benefit at his death is more than 50% of living husband #1's current benefit at his Full Retirement Age.

It is, of course, possible that 50% of your first husband's FRA entitlement is more than 100% of your second husband's benefit at death, in which case your ex-spouse benefit from your first husband could be more.

The only way to sort this out is to contact Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 to make an appointment to apply for surviving ex-spouse benefits from your deceased second husband. Explain that your first ex-husband is still living and that you are unsure of what your benefits are as your first husband's ex-spouse.

Social Security will be able to determine from their records, which one provides you with a higher benefit amount, provide each husband's Social Security number when you call. As I said, your best financial option will likely be to take your survivor benefit from your deceased second ex-husband note, however, if your first ex-husband also dies before you, you can subsequently file for a survivor benefit from him, if that is more than you are getting from your second husband's record.

The Association Mature Citizens Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. This article is intended for information purposes and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the Association Mature Citizens Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association. To submit a question, visit amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.

Cold weather clothing drive ongoing through spring

WARE – The Recovery Center of HOPE and the Quaboag Hills Substance Use Alliance will be hosting a Community Cold Weather Drive to benefit local individuals and families facing hardships.

They will be accepting new and gently used gloves, mittens, scarves, sweaters, blankets, base-layers, jackets and coats and new beanies and socks.

Items will be collected through the spring and can be dropped off at the following locations: Town Hall, 126 Main St., Mondays and Tuesdays from 8 a.m.-4 p.m.; Recovery on Main, 78 Main St., Wednesdays from 1-3 p.m.; Ware Library, 37 Main St., Thursdays from 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; and Recovery Center of HOPE, Fridays from 2-4 p.m.

GARDEN | FROM PAGE 4

Using row covers over the plants until flowers appear will keep off the cucumber beetles and provide additional heat. The catalog also provided some interesting tips on how to harvest ripe melons.

When I did manage to grow a plant to maturity, there is absolutely nothing worse than cutting into a melon notoriously unripe with no way to ripen it. Best to call it chicken food at that point.

So this year I will grow ripe melons, lots of lettuce and butternut squash

along with gallons of tomato sauce. And more. A New Year of possibilities.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 33 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.

LIBRARY | FROM PAGE 1

take home afterwards.

Story times are held on Thursdays at 10:30 a.m., and caregivers are required to stay with their child. One adult caregiver is required for every two children.

Every Monday in the children's room there is a self-directed craft project available. Craft projects may have small parts and children under 12 years old must be accompanied by an adult, with one adult for every two children. This project is available as long as the supplies are available.

The East Brookfield Library's Knit-

ting Group and the Book Club are each looking for new members.

The Knitting Group meets on Thursdays at 12:30 p.m. All skill levels are welcome to the knitting group. Bring a current project or check out our many pattern books for inspiration.

The library's Book Club meets the first Tuesday of every month at 11 a.m. Stop by the library and pick up the book in advance. Patrons are welcome to pick up the book even if they are not attending the discussion.



Free Fly Tying Classes



Sponsored by the Western Mass Fly Fishermen
starting January 9th, 2025.
Held at the Ludlow Elks Lodge,
69 Chapin Street, Ludlow, Mass.

Thursday nights for 8 weeks from 7PM to 9PM.

The classes are open to the public with children 10 years and up being accompanied by an adult.
Classes are geared to the beginner or novice.
Course materials and tools will be supplied!

Space is limited.

To reserve a seat please
contact John Lawor at 413-579-1994.

For more information visit <http://wmffclub.org>



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★ Looking back on 2024 ★



In February, New Braintree residents got into the "swing" of pickleball at Town Hall. Tom Clough is shown giving instructions to players prior to a match. FILE PHOTOS



Retired kindergarten teacher Deb Provencher reads "Thidwick the Big-Hearted Moose" by Dr. Seuss to Laura Marino's fourth grade class during Community Reading Day held at West Brookfield Elementary School in March.



Hazel Gaines, age 7, is all smiles as she makes giant bubbles with her sister Brooke, age 8, at the Friends of the Haston Free Public Library's May Festival.



Volunteer Vendor Coordinators, Emily, Maggie, Anne and baby Muggsy are shown at the West Brookfield Asparagus and Flower Heritage Festival held in May.



Remy and his dad, Lionel Touze, relax in North Brookfield's Engine 2 at the Touch-a-Truck event held at Brookfield Orchards this past June.



Mackenzie Milner of West Brookfield, age 8, presented a donation of \$245 to Wally Connor and Michele Connor, founders of S.O.N.G. (Supporting Orphans Nationally & Globally) at their Ware location. Milner raised the money by selling lemonade to help children in need.

★ Looking back on 2024 ★



New Braintree Firefighters display the new jaws of life spreader tool outside of the Town Hall that was recently purchased by members of the New Braintree Fire Association thanks to fundraisers and generous donors. Association members and donors shown with the firefighters are Dody Ayer, Rehab Officer and Association Treasurer; Andrea Letendre; Assistant Chief Rich Glidden; Rick Wine; Deputy Chief Dennis Letendre; Courtney Letendre and Kathy Letendre.



The 200th anniversary of Marquis de Lafayette's Farewell Tour was celebrated at Sturbridge Common this past September thanks to the reenactments presented by Old Sturbridge Village and the working partnership of the American Friends of Lafayette.



Brookfield's first ever Agricultural Fair in August was a lot of fun for the community. Emily Ellithorpe, right, demonstrates how to saw timber.



Bob Briere (left) talks about his life during the Sturbridge Historical Society's program last month with host Wally Hersee. Following the program, Briere was presented a joint resolution from state Sen. Ryan Fattman and state Rep. Todd Smola.



From left to right, Jamie Dodge, Paul Haynes, Elissa Boos, Jim Boos, Alysia Kubert and Jenn Spangenberg in front of the Tyler's Heart booth during the Band Together event at Common Ground Ciderworks.

- community -

Audit recommends changes to police training records, certification process

BOSTON – Fulfilling a commitment made in her Social Justice & Equity Audit Plan, the State Auditor’s Office has conducted an audit of the Municipal Police Training Committee to examine whether it developed and implemented trainings consistent with the 2018 Criminal Justice Reform Act and the 2020 Police Reform Law.

The audit reviewed the period of Jan. 1, 2021, through Dec. 31, 2022.

The MPTC exists within the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security. Its mission is to set the police training standards for all law enforcement officers certified by the Massachusetts Peace Officer Standards and Training Commission and to develop, deliver, and maintain a record of that training for over 23,000 police officers (municipal, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, environmental, campus, hospitals), deputy sheriffs, harbor masters, constables, and other personnel who perform police duties and functions in the Commonwealth.

The audit found MPTC did not sufficiently ensure that training academies delivered a standardized recruit officer course curriculum, as required. By not consistently delivering a standardized training curriculum, MPTC provided inadequate assurance that all police of-

icers in the Commonwealth have been exposed to the concepts, skills, and tactics that have been determined to be critical for effective policing by the law and MPTC.

This may lead to inconsistent law enforcement practices, which may jeopardize the safety of the public and police officers, because law enforcement officers may not be properly equipped to perform their jobs safely and effectively. This also could create financial risk for municipalities that employ officers who are insufficiently trained.

Moreover, the audit found MPTC did not ensure that all ROCs were taught by certified instructors. Without proper certification, instructors may lack the expertise or experience necessary to effectively teach the concepts, skills, and tactics that MPTC has determined to be critical for effective policing.

This could lead to variations in the instruction that police officers receive, potentially impacting their ability to perform their jobs safely and effectively.

The audit also found MPTC’s internal control plan was not updated annually, and did not address the impact of COVID-19 on its operations, in accordance with guidance issued by the Office of the Comptroller of the Commonwealth.

An ICP identifies objectives and risks and identifies control activities to mitigate risks that might prevent an agency from accomplishing its objectives, in service to the public. Without updating its ICP, MPTC may not identify and/or mitigate all the risks, including those that resulted from the pandemic.

In addition, during the course of the audit, an issue was identified regarding MPTC’s management of police officer training records.

Although MPTC maintained its hard-copy training records in a locked room at their headquarters, it did not maintain an access log to track who accessed the room, when, and for what purpose(s). Some training records appeared to be stored in haphazard fashion – stacked on metal cabinets, without any apparent filing and retrieval method in place. In addition, there were several instances during the audit where hard-copy training records requested to perform our audit work were either missing, not readily available, not properly filed, incompletely prepared or were not certified when required.

It is critical that MPTC maintain a complete, accurate, and secure training record-keeping system. Without an organized record-keeping system, which would include a formal access log, train-

ing records are more vulnerable to inappropriate and/or unauthorized access.

This compromises the integrity of the records and could lead to: (1) officers attending training where the physical record becomes lost, destroyed or misfiled, resulting in their failing to receive appropriate credit for training, or (2) officers being inappropriately certified or appearing to have completed training they never received. Additionally, in the event there is a dispute regarding the integrity of training records, the lack of an effective record-keeping system makes it more difficult to resolve these issues definitively.

“The Municipal Police Training Committee plays a critical role in the public safety of our Commonwealth, establishing police training standards and maintaining records of that training,” said Auditor Diana DiZoglio. “Our audit has identified areas for improvement at the MPTC to ensure increased accountability in its training, certification and record-keeping processes. MPTC’s new leadership fully cooperated with our audit team and has committed to addressing these issues. As is customary, we will revisit these findings to track progress as part of our post-audit review process in roughly six months.”

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SPORTS

Early offense paces Warriors to win

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

FISKDALE—Before being named as the boys' varsity basketball coach at Tantasqua Regional eight years ago, Scott Dion held the same coaching position at David Prouty Regional High School in Spencer for 11 years. He replaced his father, Al, as the Prouty varsity basketball coach.

One of the players on Scott Dion's first basketball team at Prouty was Pat O'Connor Jr., who's currently the Panthers varsity coach.

The two Southern Worcester County League rivals didn't face each other a year ago, but they renewed acquaintances at the Tantasqua Fieldhouse two days before Christmas.

The Warriors, who had lost the previous two meetings in the series, built a double-digit lead at the end of the first quarter before coasting to a 77-39 home victory.

"Having coached at David Prouty for 11 years and having also coached coach O'Connor, this was a game that I wasn't really looking forward to playing," said Dion, who also grad-

uated from Prouty in 1992. "Prouty is a very good basketball team, and we just shot the ball really well against them in today's game."

Dion has worked at O'Connor's Summer Basketball Camp in the past. They're also teammates on the same summer league basketball team.

"Pat was a member of my first team at Prouty and we've been very close ever since. He has done an outstanding job with his team during the past couple of years," said Dion, who played college basketball at Bryant University. "I do

know most of the Prouty players because I work at Pat's summer camp.

In March of 2023, Dion rooted for his alma mater in the Division 5 state finals against Taconic at the Tsongas Center located on the UMass Lowell Campus. The Panthers lost a heartbreaker, 53-51, which was their only loss of that season.

Prouty, who only have a couple of players remaining from the 2023 squad, moved up to Division 4 a year ago and lost to Bourne in the quarterfinals.

A year ago, the Warriors advanced to the round of 16 in

the Division 3 state tournament where they lost at Newburyport.

After losing at Worcester Doherty in this year's season opener, Tantasqua won its third straight game against the Panthers. They also defeated SWCL rivals Southbridge (78-30) and Leicester (64-34).

The Warriors celebrated a win against Prouty on the hardwood for the first time since posting a 71-29 victory during the 2019-20 regular season.

In their only meeting of this season, the senior duo of James

See **WARRIORS** | PAGE 10

Panthers have good showing at holiday tournament



Desmin Neak tries to avoid a takedown. TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



Andie St. Clair locks up in an early round match.



Alex Fors goes for a takedown.

AGAWAM – The Phil Tomkiel Holiday Tournament is a mainstay in Western Mass. wrestling as well as Agawam High School's yearly schedule. Named after Agawam's legendary former wrestling coach, the tournament tradition continues, and has evolved into including a girls tournament thanks to evolution of girls wrestling in the past few years. Agawam, with 92 points, captured the girls tournament win. The Brownies, as a whole, took second place in the main tournament, with 190.5 points. Quabbin Regional finished with 56 points and a runner-up in Davis Burch at 98 points. Granby finished eighth with 78.5 points. Chicopee had 49.5 points and finished 15th.



Abe Brown tries to turn his opponent over.



Brent Benoit goes for the pin.



Kailynn Schuster gets the advantage.

Longtime referee Lavoie wins MIAA award



Referee Joe Lavoie was recently recognized as the MIAA Football Official of the Year. TURLEY PHOTO BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

LUDLOW – Last month, long-time referee Joe Lavoie was recognized as the MIAA Football Official of the Year. According to information provided, Lavoie joined the Western Mass Football Officials Association (WMFOA) in 1974 (51 years) as a junior at AIC in Springfield, MA.

Lavoie was a 3-year starter for Milt Piepul's 8-1 ('75) AIC Yellowjackets. He was selected All-New England Honorable Mention by the AP and Boston Herald ('75), and selected to the ECAC team of the week versus Northeastern University.

After college, Lavoie taught and coached football in Ludlow for Steve Marino and subsequently in Agawam for Roger LeClerc, before joining private industry as a computer systems programmer/analyst. Retired from MassMutual with 30-plus years of service.

He was a 1971 graduate of Ludlow High School playing football for Chick Patullo and baseball for Bill Mullins.

In high school, he was se-

See **AWARD** | PAGE 11

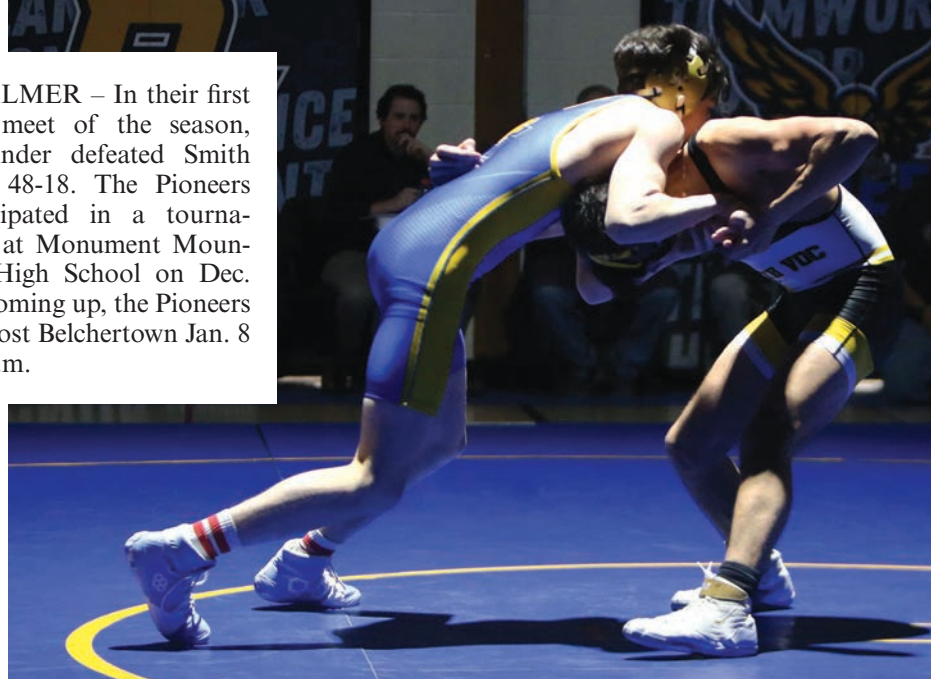
- sports -

Pioneers wrestle past Smith Voke



Ava Swist gets ready to grapple. TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM

PALMER – In their first dual meet of the season, Pathfinder defeated Smith Voke 48-18. The Pioneers participated in a tournament at Monument Mountain High School on Dec. 27. Coming up, the Pioneers will host Belchertown Jan. 8 at 7 p.m.



Logan Hayes attempts a takedown.



Zander Auffrey keeps the leverage at 138 pounds.



Max Alicngena tries to avoid being tripped up.



Jaiden Ambrose wrestles at the heavyweight position.



Gavin Sawabi, of Ware, starts his match at 144 pounds.

WARRIORS | FROM PAGE 9

Sciaraffa, who finished with a game-high 25 points, and Adam Howe (14 points) combined to score just as many points as the Panthers did.

Tantasqua's other three starters in the home victory were senior Max Cohen (6 points), junior Sam Pieczynski (7 points), and senior Noah Wotton (8 points).

"People look at James and Adam's point totals, but I can't say enough good things about our other three starters," Dion said. "Those guys don't score very many points, but they always set the screens and play well defensively. They're starting to fit into their roles nicely."

Rounding out the box score for the Warriors were junior Dariel Correa (7 points), junior Thomas Eldred (3 points), and sophomore Sean Allen (2 points). With the help of four 3-pointers, the Panthers, who were led offensively by sophomore Jayden Rubio (15 points), were able to stay within striking distance early in the game.

The visitors were only trailing, 17-14, late in the opening quarter before the Warriors pulled away with the help of a Sciaraffa inside hoop and a 3-pointer from the left side.

"They did make a few 3-pointers in the first quarter, but I felt like if we kept putting pressure on them, they would start missing those shots," Dion said. "I would've been a little bit more concerned if we weren't scoring points in the first quarter. We were able to keep pace with them."

Cohen also added a lay-up during that run, as the Warriors built a 24-14 advantage with a minute left on the scoreboard clock.

Tantasqua, who outscored Prouty, 23-10, in the second stanza, held a 47-25 halftime lead.

The second quarter began with two 3-pointers by Howe and another one from Eldred. The Warriors' largest lead of the first half was 47-23 following two made free throws from Sciaraffa with 9.9 seconds left in the first half.

Tantasqua outscored Prouty, 30-14, during the second half.

"We're now 3-1, but we do have a couple of tough games coming up," Dion said. "I'm hoping that we can continue to play well."

One of the Warriors upcoming home games will be against Uxbridge on January 24. The Spartans varsity coach is Ryan Hippert, who's Dion's cousin.

- community -

Islanders outlast Thunderbirds in 7-5 track meet

Headline:SPRINGFIELD — The Springfield Thunderbirds (13-13-2-1) could not escape a furious push by the Bridgeport Islanders (7-19-2-2) in a high-flying 7-5 contest on Saturday night inside the MassMutual Center.

The Islanders tried to spoil the T-Birds debut for rookie netminder Will Cranley when Liam Foudy opened the scoring on a rebound to the goaltender's right at 7:36.

Springfield would be tested after the Islanders went to a power play at the 13:04 mark, but captain Matthew Peca took matters into his own hands to change the tide. After skating out of his zone with possession, he challenged a forward wide on the left side before surprising Henrik Tikkanen with a short-side snapper to tie the score, 1-1, on Springfield's second shorthanded tally of the season. Peca's tally was his team-leading 12th of the campaign and second in as many nights.

Peca was in the middle of things again just 5:04 later, weaving into the offensive end to create a 2-on-1 outnumbered attack. This time, Peca played the role of playmaker, laying a perfect pass to the blade of Matt Luff in the right circle. With no wasted movement, Luff one-timed it past a sliding Tikkanen, giving Springfield the 2-1 lead with just 1:26 left in the frame. Peca's assist was his 100th as a member of the T-Birds, making him the first player in club his-

tory to hit the 100-assist plateau.

The Islanders gave a glimpse of what was to follow in the middle period when Tyce Thompson one-timed a slapper off the post and off Cranley to tie the game, 2-2, at 3:15 of the second period, as the T-Birds were scrambling to get back into position.

The T-Birds' special teams had the next notable moment just 2:09 later, as Marcus Sylvegard beautifully spotted Luff on a pass from the left corner to the top of the crease, allowing the veteran winger a tap-in for his second of the night to restore the Springfield lead, 3-2, at 5:24.

After a rare stretch of scoreless hockey on this evening, the Islanders found their way to a tie score again when Matt Maggio surprised Cranley with a quick wrister from the left circle off a setup from Grant Hutton, evening the game, 3-3, at 14:20.

Before the T-Birds could escape the onslaught, the Islanders got their second lead of the night at 19:06, when a poor Springfield line change set up a 3-on-2 for Bridgeport. Gemel Smith neatly left a puck for Foudy near the crease, and the veteran winger had an open net for his second of the night and a 4-3 Islanders lead after 40 minutes.

Midway through what had been a quiet third period, the T-Birds power play connected for a second time as Sylvegard deflected an attempt from

Aleksanteri Kaskimaki over Tikkanen's shoulder, and the game was tied again, 4-4, at 10:04 of the third.

Despite their scrappiness to get back even, the T-Birds could not salvage a point on this night, and Maggio capped his four-point night with a corner-picking wrister at 16:20, which gave Bridgeport a 5-4 lead. Cole Bardreau added an empty-net tally at 18:45 to push the lead to 6-4.

That Bardreau tally proved pivot-

al when Hunter Skinner found the net from the right side with 25 seconds to play, trimming the margin back to 6-5. Ultimately, however, the T-Birds ran out of time, and with the clock about to expire, Marc Gatcomb flung a clearing effort into the empty cage to round out the scoring. Cranley finished his T-Birds debut with 35 saves, while Tikkanen escaped with his first win in six tries with 31 stops.

Railers fall to Thunder in first half home finale

WORCESTER — The Railers lost 7-3 loss to the Adirondack Thunder on Sunday afternoon to close out the first half of the 2024-25 home schedule.

Worcester went into the second period with the scored tied, 1-1. The Railers then allowed four goals in a little less than seven minutes starting at 3:53 and their afternoon was over.

Coach Nick Tuzzolino refused to place the blame for the defeat on Bullion's shoulders when asked if it was his fault.

"I would never say that in that light," Tuzzolino said. "We've got to be good in front of him and could have been better. Could have blocked a couple of those shots. I'm sure he has his own thoughts on those goals but we're a team."

Worcester got two goals from Jordan Kaplan and one from Griffin Loughlan. Anthony Repaci assisted on all three goals. Repaci's historic season continues unabated. He extended his points streak to seven straight games. He is 3-10-13 during the streak.

The game was his 193rd for Worcester, passing Barry Almeida as the all-time franchise leader in that category. The assists give him 90 in a Worcester

uniform, tied with Almeida on that list. They are tied for fourth among all Worcester pro players with Tom Cavanagh of the Sharks next at 92.

The Railers were 2 for 5 on the power play and are among the league leaders in that category. They have at least one power play goal in seven straight games. That ties a team record set in February of 2022.

"That's probably the most frustrating thing," Tuzzolino said. "It's all those little pieces. We just have to find the right piece."

Loughran gave Worcester an early lead at just 2:36 of the first period. Repaci found his linemate all alone at the bottom of the left circle and Loughran made no mistake burying a 15-footer.

It was 1-1 after 20 minutes, then the Railers hit an iceberg.

"I think we got confidence early," Tuzzolino said, "then some of those goals they scored killed our confidence, and confidence is the easiest thing to lose and the hardest to get back."

Ryan Francis was 2-3-5 to pace the Adirondack offense. Josh Filmion, Ryan Wheeler, Alex Young, Grant Loven and Dylan Wendt had the other Thunder goals.

AWARD | FROM PAGE 9



Referee Joe Lavoie (center) officiates with his crew on a rainy Thanksgiving morning at Agawam High School this year. TURLEY PHOTO BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

lected All-Suburban League and All-Western-Mass as a tri-captain for Chick Patullo, Jim Cavallo, Dave Dzura, and Joe Andreis, who instilled the love of football, hard work, and fair play into their teams.

As an official, he was elected president of the WMFOA in 1993, and started and taught a first, second, third-year official's training class, and game sign-in requirement for new officials to attend pre-games and work the chains in varsity games. That process is still in effect today. In 1994, amended the training classes to have a separate class for first-year officials and started instructing the second and third-year officials' class, and still instruct that class today.

Among his many accomplishments, he officiated numerous MIAA playoff

and championship games around the state and at Gillette Stadium. He joined the Western Mass Basketball Officials Association in 1980, was elected board President in 2013, subsequently elected sec-treasurer from 2015-2017. He still officiates basketball games.

Lavoie earned a CAGS from Springfield College, an MS in management from RPI Hartford, and an MBA from Western New England College. He has taught business and computer systems courses at HCC for over 25 years.

Lavoie has been married to high school sweetheart, Edna (Robertson) Lavoie, for over 45 years, and has three wonderful sons. Two sons live and work in Boston, and one son lives in Longmeadow and is an attorney in Springfield.

Coaching classes available

Coaches hired after Aug. 1, 1998 are required to take a coaching course to be eligible to coach high school sports in Massachusetts.

According the Pioneer Valley Interscholastic Athletic Association, all coaches hired prior to Aug. 1, 1998 are exempt from taking the Fundamentals of Coaching Course. Coaches hired after that and before July 1, 2005 must have completed the NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching Course with the exception of Certified MA teachers.

All coaches (stipend or volunteer) first serving as an interscholastic coach after July 1, 2005 must complete the NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching Course, and an approved Sports First Aid course.

The NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching Course requirement must be met through attending an MIAA sponsored Fundamentals of Coaching Class with MIAA Certified Instructors. Must be completed and passed prior to coaching a second year.

The NFHS Sports First Aid may be met by completing on-line courses with the NFHS www.nfhslearn.com. Must be passed prior to coaching a third year.

Additional requirements for all coaches:

Massachusetts requires coaches to be certified in CPR per Section 1. Section 47A of chapter 71 of the General Laws. Additionally, AED training is required and will most likely be done in conjunction with the existing mandated CPR training.

All MIAA member school coaches (stipend or volunteer) are required to take annually the on-line National Federation Concussion Course, or other MA Department of Public Health recognized education program, prior to the start of their season. Rugby Coaches must see Rule 76.2 for additional coaches' education information.

Any questions, please call Donna Harrington at 508-541-9804 or email dharrington@miaa.net.

Fundamentals of coaching classes are being offered on Wednesday, Jan. 29, 2025 from 4 to 8 p.m. and Saturday, Feb. 8, 2025 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Classes are open until capacity is reached and then a waiting list is established. There are online components to the course once the classroom portion is completed

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- community -

BBB offers tips for holiday returns and exchanges

Holiday returns aren't easy, and we don't mean the part where you explain to your mother why you returned the sweater she gave you.

Stores are not legally required to accept exchanges or give refunds unless the merchandise was defective or misrepresented. While most retailers do offer refund and exchange programs, policies vary greatly from one store to another.

Be sure to double-check policies this holiday season, even if you are familiar with the brand, as stores can change their policies whenever they want.

The Better Business Bureau offers

advice to make your holiday returns run more smoothly:

Research retailers beforehand
Look up the business on BBB.org to check its rating, reviews, and complaints before purchasing, especially if you are unfamiliar with the retailer. This can help avoid issues with returns later.

Get to know store policies
Before you make a purchase, find out if the store has a return policy and, if so, how it works. Understand that many retailers change their policies for the holiday season. If the store allows returns or exchanges, find out if you need to pay a restocking fee.

Ask the seller if they offer cash refunds, exchanges, or only store credit. Store policies are usually posted at the check-out counter or printed on the back of receipts.

Understand online store return policies

If you are shopping online, search for the seller's return policy and read it through before clicking "buy." Find out if they accept returns or exchanges and who pays for the shipping when an item is returned.

In some cases, you can save on shipping fees by returning an online purchase to the local brick-and-mortar

store.

Get the details on a product's warranty

Most electronics and home appliances come with warranties that are to be fulfilled by the manufacturer, not the retailer.

Find out how the store handles returns and repairs if an item stops working or needs replacement parts. Will the retailer ship the item to the manufacturer for you? Or will you need to deal with the manufacturer directly?

Knowing the answers will leave you well-prepared for any future issues.

SCHOOL | FROM PAGE 1

Of the Advanced Manufacturing Pathway designation.

"It's a very lengthy process," he said. "We're very excited about this process... we're excited to give kids the opportunity to look at advanced manufacturing as both a potential career pathway but also a college pathway upon graduation."

Last year, the school district had six students working at manufacturer Flex-Con for a work-based learning project.

McCormick said the school district has done a lot of work over the past years with Project Lead the Way as well as OpenSciEd through the One8 Foundation which was recently adopted this past year.

He said another grant opportunity was offered through OpenSciEd to provide collaboration for the school district's teachers with other across the country. He said some teachers using the curriculum will attend a two-day conference to share ideas.

McCormick said the Handle with Care initiative will be put into place when students return in the new year.

Administrators' reports

Elementary School Principal Arthur Murphy said each month, the school celebrates one student from each classroom as "Star of the Month" for displaying model behavior. Teachers nominate students for having a positive impact on the classroom.

Murphy works with the students' parents to organize a surprise breakfast for the students, where they are also awarded \$10 Star buck and a certificate of achievement. Photos of the students with Murphy are then posted on the Star of the Month board in the main hallway of the school.

"We have many kids that are positive peer role models and many more coming through the pipeline at our school, which is fantastic," Murphy said.

Murphy said the Cool Kids Choir had a performance on Dec. 10 and featured solos by fourth grader Mitchell and kindergartener Fallon.

"The kids did an amazing job," he said.

The Instructional Leadership Team has been working to align curriculum and classroom practices in kindergarten through fifth grade. He said they meet twice a month to plan and discuss ideas.

High School Principal John Diorio said the new math intervention program is underway to provide additional assistance to students who were identified as needing support. After this is completed, the school will then provide English Language Arts intervention for the students in need of support.

Diorio thanked the Student Council and the high school band for their efforts during the Christmas in North

Brookfield event, which was held at the high school this year.

He said through STEM teacher John McNeil's efforts, over 200 toys were collected to be distributed to children across Worcester County.

A holiday pajama dance was sponsored by the Student Council on Dec. 13 at the school, helping students get into the holiday spirit.

"It was a great way to get ready for the holidays for our students," Diorio said.

Diorio said a holiday concert will be performed by the band on Dec. 19, with two shows. He said on Dec. 20, students will bring their mugs to school to enjoy hot chocolate and snacks.

Director of Student Services Amy Emory said herself and Pupil Services Administrative Assistant Katelinde Grenevich were able to participate in a professional opportunity offered by the company that provides the school district's new Individualized Education Program system education plan.

She said this was a great opportunity to connect with school districts across the commonwealth and provide feedback and ask questions.

"We are going to participate in future meetings during the school year as part of this ongoing exciting professional opportunity," Emory said.

Emory said Title I reading teachers and kindergarten through eighth grade special education teachers are participating in a reading training opportunity from Imagine Learning to provide additional reading resources.

She said DESE has notified the school district that it will be part of an English Language Learning program, which is conducted every six years. The school district will be reviewed during the 2025-2026 academic year.

Emory said school districts to be reviewed in that cohort will participate in a training session in January.

"During that session they're going to share more information about the process and our preparation activities that we will participate in that will lead up to our review that is scheduled for next year," she said.

Maintenance report

Magario read a report from the Director of Buildings and Grounds Eric Hevy outlining upcoming maintenance projects. The report said the sidewalks at both schools will be repaired and the school district will work to meet the Fire Department's recommendations.

HVAC at both school will be addressed by Snyder Electric. The high school's gymnasium floor was refinished over Thanksgiving break and the school district's truck was repaired after a delivery truck backed into the side of it.

The report said that surplus books

(damaged and outdated) are being removed from the elementary school library and inventoried.

Vendors are being researched to replace the current playground equipment at the elementary school and the school district is soliciting quotes to repave the driveways around the elementary school.

Recognitions

McCormick recognized several staff members who have organized "some amazing" events in the past few weeks including Trish Tarantino who continues to run Cocoa with Cops, which gives local police officers the chance to enjoy hot chocolate and crafts with elementary school students. He thanked the Student Council for helping with Cocoa with Cops and Murphy for hosting the event.

McCormick also recognized the Student Council, Tabby LeBlanc and Caitlyn Malone for continuing the 20 plus year tradition of holding Christmas in North Brookfield.

"This is again, another nice event the district does for its community," he said.

McCormick also recognized McNeil for starting a new tradition of rucking donated toys from the school to the Police Station. He also thanked everyone for donating toys to the Toys for Tots program.

Student Council report

Student Council representative Dante Giangrande said the annual Giving Turkey event was held in November. He said the Christmas in North Brookfield event is the Student Council's most popular event of the year and it is offered free to the community.

Giangrande said the annual Giving

Tree is collecting donations to Abby's House in Worcester.

Unity Week will be held in February and is used to enhance a sense of community within the school district, including members of the LGBTQ+ community and people with special needs. He said the week celebrates every person's individuality.

Giangrande said the Student Council is preparing for its annual trip to Hyanis in March and Spring Conference in April.

He encouraged the community to follow the Student Council on Instagram and Facebook or attend meetings in the high school kiva, typically held every other Monday.

Regionalization update

School Committee Vice-Chair Tim Canada said the Quaboag Regional School Committee voted against accepting the amended regional agreement to include North Brookfield in the Quaboag Regional School District, and the process will not continue.

He said the original grant-funded feasibility study to explore joining a larger regional school district had identified Quaboag Regional School District as the best fit for North Brookfield.

Technology report

Magario also read a report from Technology Coordinator Zack Berridge about upgrades to the technology equipment, including new desktop computers for several teachers and staff. A proposal is being put together for a more comprehensive upgrade.

Title IX/bullying policy update

The School Committee voted to accept the updated Title IX and bullying policy, as required by the state.

ROUTE 67 | FROM PAGE 1

Chair Jason Petraitis said this is a one-time purchase.

The department also requested \$308 to purchase two batteries for one of the trucks. Both requests were approved.

Tree removal

A Hillside Avenue resident asked when tree removal would occur. She said the pine trees are still standing.

Petraitis said he will visit the property the next day to look at the trees.

New agenda item

Petraitis said in the new year, the board will be adding an agenda item to discuss project updates. Department heads can come before the board and update them about the status of ongoing projects.

Resignations

The board accepted the resignation

from Finance Committee member Robert Locatelli and Cultural Council member Jillian Phillips.

The board members thanked both for their service to the town.

First Night Out activities

The Parks and Recreation Department and the Cultural Council worked together to host a First Night Out event on New Year's Eve from 2-6 p.m. There will be games, snacks, a scavenger hunt, trivia contest, crafts, music and a bonfire.

Local businesses, churches and the Historical Museum will be open during the event.

Cleaning services

The board approved a contract to receive weekly cleaning services at the Senior Center in the amount of \$200 per month.

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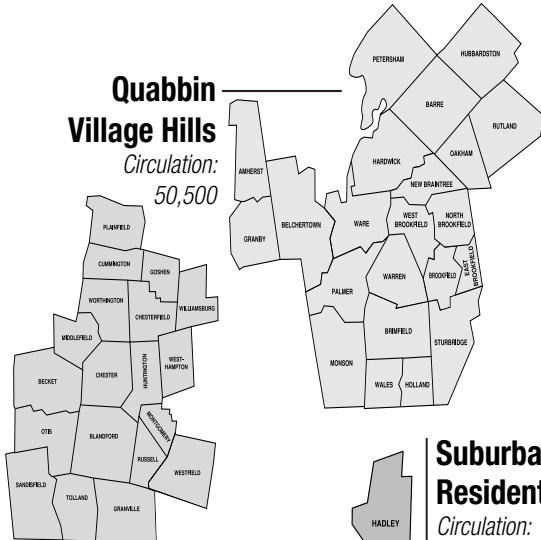


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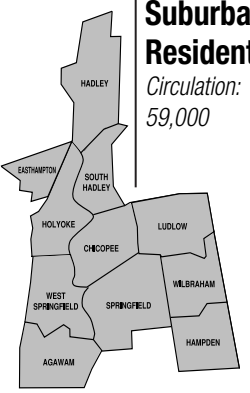
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- public safety -

East Brookfield Police Log

During the week of Dec. 9-15, the East Brookfield Police Department responded to 182 building/property checks, 63 directed area patrols, eight traffic controls, three radar assignments, five emergency 911 calls, seven citizen assists, eight assist other agencies, one complaint, one motor vehicle investigation, five animal calls and 56 motor vehicle stops in the town of East Brookfield.

Monday, Dec. 9

1:41 a.m. Motor Vehicle Investigation, West Main Street, Officer Handled
 8:45 a.m. Assist Citizen, North Street, Services Rendered
 11:21 a.m. Assist Other Agency, West Main Street, Officer Handled
 2:14 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Unknown Location, Unknown Outcome

Tuesday, Dec. 10

11:47 a.m. Assist Other Agency, Connie Mack Drive, Officer Handled
 3:02 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 3:14 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 3:21 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 3:58 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued

Wednesday, Dec. 11

2:40 a.m. Parking Complaint, East Main Street, Officer Handled
 8:17 a.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Officer Handled
 11:15 a.m. Assist Other Agency, Out of Town, Services Rendered
 2:40 p.m. Medical Emergency, Oakwood Drive, Transported to Hospital
 4 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Connie Mack Drive, Officer Handled
 8:17 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, East Main Street, Transported to Hospital

Thursday, Dec. 12

11:41 a.m. Assist Citizen, Harrington Street, Officer Handled
 2:24 p.m. Assist Citizen, Unknown Location, Spoken To
 3:03 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 3:10 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 3:21 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 4:01 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 4:14 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 4:25 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued
 4:35 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, West Main Street, Citation Issued
 5:18 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, West Main Street, Citation Issued

Friday, Dec. 13

10:02 a.m. Assist Other Agency, Po-dunk Road, Services Rendered
 2:39 p.m. Medical Emergency, Po-dunk Road, Services Rendered
 3:06 p.m. 911 Assist Citizen, Meadowview Lane, Services Rendered
 8:20 p.m. Medical Emergency, Po-dunk Road, Transported to Hospital

Saturday, Dec. 14

6:29 a.m. 911 Assist Citizen, East Main Street, Officer Handled
 12:31 p.m. 911 Misdial, East Main Street, Spoken To
 5:40 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, West Sturbridge Road, Vehicle Towed
 6:42 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 6:59 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, West Main Street, Citation Issued
 7:08 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, West Main Street, Citation Issued
 7:19 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Knox Trail Road, Citation Issued
 7:27 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Route 49, Citation Issued
 7:45 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Route 49, Citation Issued
 8:03 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 8:15 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued
 8:55 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Drake Lane, Officer Handled
 8:56 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued
 9:14 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 9:42 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
 10:45 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued
 11:07 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued

Sunday, Dec. 15

12:37 a.m. Assist Citizen, Drake Lane, Spoken To
 12:42 a.m. Assist Other Agency, Gleason Avenue, Officer Handled
 3:46 a.m. 911 Misdial, Drake Lane, Spoken To
 5:24 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Harrington Street, Citation Issued
 5:55 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Harrington Street, Citation Issued
 7:29 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Route 49, Citation Issued
 8:11 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued
 8:25 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Route 49, Citation Issued
 8:31 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Route 49, Citation Issued

Thursday, Dec. 19

7:01 a.m. Safety Hazard, West Road, Taken/Referred to Other Agency

Friday, Dec. 20

5:32 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Ravine Road, Written Warning
 8:27 a.m. Complaint, Ware Road, Taken/Referred to Other Agency

New Braintree Police Log

During the week of Dec. 16-23, the Hardwick/New Braintree Police Department responded to 14 building/property checks, nine directed area patrols, five radar assignments, one traffic control, one emergency 911 call, three safety hazards, one harassment, one complaint, two animal calls and three motor vehicle stops in the town of New Braintree.

Tuesday, Dec. 17

1:36 p.m. Safety Hazard, Moore Road, Removed Hazard

Wednesday, Dec. 18

7:29 a.m. Safety Hazard, Ravine

Road, Taken/Referred to Other Agency
 4:43 p.m. Harassment, Uritas Road, Officer Handled
 7:32 p.m. 911 Animal Call, Barre Road, Services Rendered

- obituary -

Charlotte M. Borlikoski, 100

WARE/WEST BROOKFIELD – Charlotte M. Borlikoski, 100, of Ware, and formerly a long-time resident of West Brookfield, died on Dec. 24, 2024, in her apartment at Cedarbrook Village in Ware.

She wrote the following obituary in her own words.

“She was the wife of Joseph Borlikoski, who died March 31, 2018. They were married for 50 years. She leaves her stepdaughter Lynne Dame and her stepson Joseph Borlikoski, Jr. and his companion, Kathy Pratt; five grandchildren, Joseph and Barbara Young, Dianna and Dan Lussier, Kristy and Christopher Cornelius and Colby Borlikoski, as well as seven great-grandchildren, Alyssa, Bryann, Courtney, Samantha, Mason, Jonathan, and Conner, who brought so much joy and love to gram and grampa. She also leaves her nieces, Charlotte Boos, Michele Massé, and Christine Graham, and her nephews, Edward Massé and George Molinaro.

Charlotte enjoyed spending time with her family whom she loved dearly.

She was born in Ware on Oct. 4, 1924, daughter of the late Francis and Mary Jezyk, and lived in West Brookfield for 64 years. She was predeceased by her sisters, Irene Gryszowka of Ware, Jenie Molinaro of University Place, Washington, and Phyllis Massé of Ware.

Charlotte was employed at the Ware River News (Turley Publications) for 49 years. She began her newspaper career

as a typesetter. Later, she managed the graphic arts department until she retired in 1990.

She was an active person. She enjoyed walking, fishing at the Quabbin Reservoir with her husband, snowmobiling, bowling, playing cards, tending to her flower gardens, and country line dancing.

She was a member of Sacred Heart Church in West Brookfield where she served as a communicant.”

A Funeral Service for Charlotte will be held on Saturday, Jan. 11, 2025, at 11 a.m. in the Varnum Funeral Home, 43 East Main St. in West Brookfield. A calling hour will be held from 10-11 a.m. in the funeral home prior to the service. Burial will be in Pine Grove Cemetery in West Brookfield in the spring.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish, P.O. Box 563, West Brookfield, MA 01585 or Saint Jude Children’s Research Hospital, P.O. Box 1000, Dept. 142, Memphis, TN 38148 or at www.stjude.org

An online tribute book is available at varnumfuneralhome.com.



Death Notice

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QUABOAG CURRENT

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