

QUABOAG CURRENT

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Newspaper

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Friday, January 24, 2025

Market Spotlight

Ware and Fiskdale send artisans to the Winter Market

Editor's note: The Quaboag Current will regularly feature a spotlight story on different farmers market vendors. Learn about the people that bring food and locally sourced items to your community.

By Richard Murphy
Correspondent

WEST BROOKFIELD – Yes, it's cold, and we won't belabor that other than again to point out as we do most weeks, that there is warmth within a winter farmers market, specifically the one in session every winter Wednesday from 3-6 p.m. at the First Congregational Church, 36 North Main St.

Jan. 15 was not an exception. With no hint of snow falling, though we do need moisture, navigating to downtown and parking was not an ordeal. Neither was entering the hall with vendors against all walls and the center with tables covered in vegetables.

There was a mix of products on display. One of them, a cottage industry manufacturer, who was with the market last

year and is back again.

When we met Ware native Bernie Wilson in 2024, he was a world-class recycler as he makes pens out of old pallets. As noted last year, he confessed to being "too cheap to buy wood."

This year he stepped it up a bit. The historic covered bridge between Hardwick and Ware is made of wood that will periodically be replaced.

Not surprisingly, that chestnut wood is becoming pens.

Why stop there? There are

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Deep Roots provides a variety of fresh baked goods.

The Deep Roots team is at the Winter Market on Wednesdays. Shown are Chef Adam and Keith. TURLEY PHOTO BY RICHARD MURPHY

Ice sculpture contest returns to Grand Trunk Trail

STURBRIDGE – The Friends of Sturbridge Trails with support from the Sturbridge Tourist Association, is holding its annual ice sculpture contest on Saturday, Feb. 15 starting at 11 a.m.

Ice sculptures will be set out along the Grand Trunk Trail located on the Riverlands, 52 Stallion Hill Road. In addition to ice sculpture judging, there will be family/kids' games of ice golf, ice bowling and an ice obstacle course.

Also, an ice carving demonstration will take place from 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

If you would like an ice block to sculpt, the theme is snowman and snowflakes. Ice blocks are free for the first 12 entries, and additional entries will cost \$20/block.

Ice blocks must be reserved by Tuesday, Feb. 7 by emailing Jen Scherer at Jenchris27@aol.com. Ice blocks will be available for pick up on Tuesday, Feb. 11 at 5 p.m. at the Riverlands parking lot, 52 Stallion Hill Road.

The ice block set out will be Saturday, Feb. 15 from 8-10 a.m., along the Grand Trunk Trail on the Riverlands open



The Friends of Sturbridge Trails will be hosting its annual ice sculpture contest on Feb. 15. SUBMITTED PHOTO

space property located at 52 Stallion Hill Road. Volunteers will be available to assist in set out.

Judging of the ice sculptures will start at 11 a.m. Ice sculptures will be on display until they melt. The grand prize is a gift card to a local restaurant.

Please direct all questions to Jen at jenchris27@aol.com.

Selectmen appoint new library director

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
pouimette@turley.com

NORTH BROOKFIELD – Board of Selectmen Chair Jason Petraitis read a letter from Library Trustee Chair Peg Bodine announcing the selection of resident Lia Reilly as the new director of the Haston Free Public Library, effective Jan. 27.

Reilly has lived in North Brookfield since 2010 and has a strong sense of community and solid background in program development, staff leadership and resource management. She also has experience in school library settings.

"She's eager to guide the Haston Free Public Library into the future," Bodine said in the letter.

At the Jan. 14 meeting, Library Trustee Harbour Fraser Hodder introduced Reilly to

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Planning Board approves site plan for urgent care facility

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
pouimette@turley.com

STURBRIDGE – A public hearing was held to approve the site plan and signage waiver for a proposed urgent care facility to be constructed on the north side of Route 20.

At the Jan. 13 Planning Board meeting, Town Planner Jean Bubon said the board heard a proposal two years ago to construct a Con-

venientMD Urgent Care, but the original developer pulled out of the project. She said Mike d'Hemecourt of Harborlight Properties and his team have been working on the project for about a year and a half.

"He expressed interested and Convenient MD was really interested in this site, they still wanted to be in Sturbridge," she said. "We've all reviewed the plan and appli-

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Ground breaks on \$30 million Route 9 reconstruction project

WEST BROOKFIELD – When West Brookfield Highway Superintendent Jim Daley was hired in 2010, he knew something had to be done about the dangerous section of West Main Street/Route 9 between West Brookfield and Ware.

At his request, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation agreed to perform a Road Safety Audit

in 2012 which confirmed his fears. This specific portion of road was found to be one of the most dangerous segments of Route 9 in the state due to its high incidence and severity of motor vehicle crashes.

He quickly realized that annual Chapter 90 funds which most small towns rely on to fund their road proj-

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- community -

Quabbin NHS students complete community service project



Quabbin Regional National Honor Society students recently completed a community service project for East Quabbin Land Trust. The students built an Americans with Disabilities Act accessible picnic table that will be placed at the Pynchon's Grist Mill preserve in West Brookfield. The scenic location of the table is inaccessible by truck, so they plan to drag the 400 pound table on a sled over the 1/2 mile trail once there's snow cover. Testing out their completed table from left to right are Ethan Salvadore of New Braintree, Jaxon Warburton of Hardwick, Quinn Geary of Hardwick, and Adam Faulha of Hardwick. *SUBMITTED PHOTO*

Senior Center open house to be held March 1

STURBRIDGE – The town of Sturbridge invites the public to the Senior Center Open House.

Please join them as they celebrate the opening of the newly renovated Senior Center on Saturday, March 1 from 1-3 p.m. at 480 Main Street. A ribbon cutting will begin at 12:30 p.m. with a blessing of the building to follow.

Come for a tour, light refreshments and meet the Senior Center staff and learn about its programs. This event is free and open to the community.



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Annual Hearts for Heat spaghetti dinner is Jan. 25

NORTH BROOKFIELD – The 16th Annual North Brookfield Hearts for Heat spaghetti dinner will be held on Saturday, Jan. 25 from 5-7 p.m. in the North Brookfield Elementary School cafeteria.

The dinner is \$12 per person with a cap of \$36 for a family of four or more. Takeout available. Tickets are only available at the door.

Sponsored with the Hayden Masonic Lodge and supported by Hannaford Supermarket, this is truly community helping community.

Big ticket raffles include: Celtics team signed basketball and a pair

of home game tickets, WooSox tickets for four, Boston Bruins signed puck, Springfield Thunderbird Hockey tickets. Local gift certificates donated so far include: Angel Nails, Bemis Farms, Brookfield Orchards, City of Smoke, Connecticut Restaurant, Inishowen Farms, JARS Cafe, Jim's Pizza, Marks of Asgard, NB Liquors, Red Robin, Salem Cross Inn, Second Chance Animal Shelter, Shaman's Closet, Subway, and Whitco.

The Otters will provide musical ambiance all evening. Students from the North Brookfield High School National Honor Society and Valley View School will assist.

The dinner's snow date is the following Saturday, Feb. 1.

NB Hearts for Heat is a 501(c)3 charitable organization to help North Brookfield residents in need of emergency home heating assistance for Oil, Propane, Natural Gas, Electric, Pellets, or Cord Wood. 100% of donations are used for fuel purchases. We have assisted 158 families since 2009.

Donations can be mailed to NB Hearts for Heat, P.O. Box 44, North Brookfield, MA 01535. To access the printable 2024-25 application, visit <http://www.heartsforheat.org/NorthBrookfield/assistance.html>

Nomination papers for town elections available Feb. 3

WARREN/WEST BROOKFIELD – The Town Clerks' of Warren, Laura Stockley, and West Brookfield, Heather Gough, announce that nomination papers are available on Monday, Feb. 3 for the Annual Town Election, which will be held on Tuesday, May 6.

Office hours in the town of Warren are Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. and Thursday from 1-6 p.m.; and for the town of West Brookfield, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Quaboag Regional School Committee nomination papers will be available for pick up on Tuesday, Feb. 4 at the Quaboag Regional Middle High School front office between the hours of 8 a.m.-3 p.m. School Committee positions open are: two members from Warren for a three-year term and two members from West Brookfield for a three-year term.

Are you having difficulty communicating with your partner, struggling with boundaries, and healthy relationships?

We invite you to join us Friday afternoons from 1-2:30 pm to explore these topics and more.

This group will be held in zoom, is educational, confidential, and free.

Please contact **Pat James 413-726-8661**.

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Addressing the health and health care needs of Ware and surrounding communities through collaboration

Baystate Health has its roots in one local physician who started lobbying during the Civil War and was finally successful over a decade later in founding a hospital for our community. Pioneering mergers into the 1970s and beyond created health care stability in our region and unlocked opportunities for innovation, growth, and medical education. Today, Baystate's "North Star" is moving toward being a clinically driven, physician-led health system that seamlessly integrates community-based, safety net care with the innovation and research of our academic enterprise to deliver high-quality care, access, and experience to our neighbors.

I am honored to be part of this amazing and diverse organization as only the fourth CEO and the first from outside the organization. In just seven months in the role, I have been inspired, energized, and renewed by our Board of Trustees, physicians, providers, caregivers, and volunteers who value our Mission and the communities we serve.

We understand that our actions to close Baystate Mary Lane and merger of services into Baystate Wing had far-reaching implications for access to care, economic development, and employment in Ware and the surrounding communities. Volatile patient volumes and acuity, rising costs and inflation, workforce challenges, inadequate payments (Medicare, Medicaid, and health plans), and economic, demographic, and policy factors all contributed to Baystate Mary Lane's unsustainability.

Since 2010, on average, more than 13 hospitals close each year in our country (24 in 2024 alone). According to the Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform (CHQPR), more than 30% of hospitals in the United States are at risk of closing over the next five years. Today, three-quarters of the health systems in Massachusetts are experiencing significant operating losses. We have seen other hospital closures in our state while other hospitals have restructured, decreased services, or sought affiliations with large systems. The trend of hospital closure and consolidation will only increase as organizations try to adapt to a rapidly evolving health care delivery and payment system.

While the decision to close Baystate Mary Lane was absolutely the right decision, our communication, transparency, and planning around the closure and future for health and health care in the area left a lot to be desired. Today, I want to share with you the steps we are taking – in partnership with key community leaders – to explore how to best address the needs of Ware and surrounding communities.

Starting in September 2024, my team and I personally started meeting with the area's State Representative, Ware Town Manager, and Ware Hospital Committee Chair. The Ware Selectboard Chair joined our group in December. These meetings are an opportunity for me and Baystate to listen and understand, demonstrate respect for the stakeholders involved, start Baystate's path toward rebuilding trust, and initiate collaborative actions in the community.

Baystate has committed to delaying the demolition of the six connected hospital buildings and house and garage at 89 South Street for a reasonable period of time when the nine-month demolition delay expired on October 17, 2024, identifying meaningful and visible ways to memorialize Mary Lane and its place in the history of Ware, delivering health care to the community, spurring economic development and investment into the site, and ensuring the appropriate use of the trust funds and endowments for health care in the community.

It is time to cut through the rhetoric, personal attacks, conspiracy theories, and idleness over the past three years. All this noise – especially from "friends" of the hospital – has accomplished nothing but sow division in the community and serve as a distraction from actual progress. It has directly impacted potential organizations from investing their time, talent, and treasure in meaningful solutions. Despite dozens of attempts from individuals and groups including Baystate, no health care organization other than Baystate has expressed interest to establish a presence in Ware. No new businesses are interested. No housing organizations as well. There will be swift consequences for those continuing to share false information that is harming the reputation of individuals, organizations, and the community.

The Gilbert Trust Fund was intentionally and specifically created to benefit the health and health care needs of Ware and the village of Gilbertville in the town of Hardwick. Up until the end of 2023, Baystate used these monies for the operation at Baystate Mary Lane. The Gilbert Trust is held by Bank of America as the trustee and the current market value is approximately \$7.7 million. We regularly report to Bank of America on the use of those funds by Baystate to ensure that the funds spent meet the intent of the Trust. When all services on the Mary Lane campus concluded in December 2023, distributions to Baystate from the Trust were put on hold. When Baystate starts providing direct services in Ware, we intend to draw on the Trust again. If Baystate is unable to bring needed health care services to Ware, we will work with Bank of America and the State Attorney General's Office to ensure a new beneficiary is identified for the Trust.

Baystate Wing also became the beneficiary of several additional trusts and endowments (not restricted to the limited use at Baystate Mary Lane or Ware) when Baystate Mary Lane merged with Baystate Wing in 2016. The total market value of these funds is approximately \$1.3 million, and Baystate Health Foundation receives regular distributions from the trustees on behalf of Baystate Wing, which had income of approximately \$32,000 in 2024. Baystate is accountable to the State Attorney General for the appropriate use of these funds. However, to demonstrate our transparency in the use of both sets of funds, I will be commissioning a third-party assessment to ensure Baystate's complete compliance and stewardship of the funds for which we were entrusted.

In early January, we brought to our stakeholder group meeting specific plans on our physical and programmatic presence in the community to address the health and health care needs of the community. Based on the direct feedback from this group, we are specifically addressing primary and convenient care. We are currently in the process of looking at potential existing space in Ware for up to three primary care providers to practice. Since 2020, we have invested more than \$14 million in Baystate Wing in convenient care, clinic renovations, and imaging. As part of our current Baystate Health 2030 system strategic plan, we intend to further our commitment and expand services at Baystate Wing over the next five years to distribute care and expand access throughout Western Massachusetts. We will continue to bring the right people to the table – including the Baystate Wing Community Advisory Council – to find solutions for the ongoing growth and development at Baystate Wing. We will hold ourselves accountable for urgent follow-through and action on all our commitments.

This is a new time at Baystate Health. We are ushering in a new era of healthy growth – in business, in community, and in spirit. In wanting to be part of transforming health and health care, we are committed to working with our community to make it happen.



Peter D. Banko
President & CEO
Baystate Health

- opinion -



Catching up on questions for the Garden Lady

This column will be used to play catch-up. I received a couple of questions a few weeks back on Christmas plants and then another looking forward to the new gardening season.

Read on as I do my best to answer them!
 Connie is the keeper of her mother's poinsettia and it's become tree-like! "We read your article about poinsettias in the Country Journal. I have been caring for my mother's poinsettia she purchased three Christmases ago. She is hoping you can help us as I never cut it back because I didn't know to do that. Now it is a small tree. There is bark on it. I had one red bract last Christmas but no yellow center. I did try to put it in a dark room but as you can see, it is too big now to do that. Any suggestions?"

Many years ago when I joined my brother on a trip to St. Thomas, I became fully aware of the poinsettia and its true, tree-like form. It looks like you are well on your way to replicating that in your house!

First, congratulations, from the picture you provided you are clearly growing a healthy specimen. The leaves are a beautiful shade of green. I would recommend that, if you want to make it more manageable in size, you do try to cut it back.

It looks as if there is a lower "tier" of leaves. If you can cut it back to those stems, I think that is a good place to start. Do that in April when it will be in active growth.

At that time, I would also transplant it into a container one size bigger. So, if it's in a six inch pot now, try one that is seven or eight inches, but not any bigger.

Fertilize with an all purpose houseplant fertilizer once a month. New growth should appear by the end of May.

After the danger of frost has passed, move the plant outdoors. Continue to water but increase fertilization to every two weeks. Pinch plants in late June or early July to promote bushy growth. Bring the plant indoors as temperatures fall in September.

The poinsettia is photoperiodic, and long nights of uninterrupted darkness encourage it to bloom. Bracts will turn red and the small yellow flowers in the center will form. Most people get on a 5 p.m.-8 a.m. schedule beginning on Oct. 1 and continue it for eight-10 weeks until color shows on the bracts.

Placing the plant in a closet or basement with no light interruption will work fine. It is a commitment, that's for sure. Night temperatures should be no higher than 70 degrees or flowering may be delayed.

Good luck; I bet you will be successful this year!

Beverly has me stumped!! She wrote in with this question: "After my Christmas cactus has bloomed, I get very tiny buds (like pimples) all over the plant. However, they quickly fall off so no more blooms. Can you explain what to do about this?"

This is a tricky one, Beverly! I am wondering if this is a newer breed of Christmas Cactus that is expected to bloom over a longer period of time than the old-fashioned types.

Usually buds fall off if there is a change somehow. Overwatering, underwatering? Perhaps a change in location whereby the plant is now near a heater when it wasn't be-



SOCIAL SECURITY Matters
 By Russell Gloor

Can my wife claim her SS now and get half my SS benefit later?

Dear Rusty:
 My wife will reach her full Social Security benefit at 66.5 years of age which is just under two years away for her now.

If she were to begin to get her monthly check now (i.e. early), would that prevent her from being eligible for the spousal benefit to receive half of what I am currently drawing?

Signed:
 Curious Husband

Dear Curious:
 If your wife claims her own SS retirement benefit now (e.g., at 64.5 years) and you are already collecting your own SS benefit, then she will be automatically deemed to be filing for her spousal benefit immediately when she claims her own benefit. She does not have the option to defer claiming her spousal benefit until later.

This is a change made by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015, which requires all those first claiming SS to file for all benefits they are eligible for when they claim. What that would mean is that your wife's benefit now, including her spousal boost from you, would be actuarially reduced by the number of months early she claimed.

Her own SS retirement benefit would be permanently reduced by about 15% and her "spousal boost," the additional amount she would get as your spouse, would be reduced by about 19%, yielding a combined benefit which is roughly 42% of your Full Retirement Age SS benefit.

The only way your wife can get half 50% of your FRA benefit entitlement is by waiting until her own full retirement age (66 years and 10 months) to claim. Note too

that your wife's spousal benefit will be based on your FRA entitlement, so if you claimed earlier or later than your own full retirement age, her spousal benefit will still be based on your FRA entitlement.

Also, your wife should be aware that anyone, who claims early, is subject to Social Security's "earnings test," which limits how much can be earned while collecting early benefits. Thus, if your wife is working, she will be restricted on how much she can earn before Social Security takes away some of her benefits.

FYI, the earnings limit changes annually, but for 2025 it is \$23,420 and, if that is exceeded, SS will take away \$1 in benefits for every \$2 over the limit. And, FYI, the earnings limit goes up a lot during the year FRA is attained and the earnings test no longer applies once full retirement age is reached.

I hope this answers your question, but if you have need additional information, please feel free to contact us directly at SS-Advisor@amacfoundation.org, or call us at 1-888-750-2622.

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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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- community -

EQLT to host animal tracks and wildlife signs event

HARDWICK – The East Quabbin Land Trust will host a free Animal Tracks & Wildlife Sign Identification event on Saturday, Jan. 25 from 1-3 p.m.

EQLT Steward, Mike Stoll, will lead this interactive event beginning with a “show and share” teach-in of some of the most common wildlife sign in central Massachusetts. From there, participants will head outside to look for real-life examples of what they learned.

Participants will learn how to recognize the telltale signs of animals large and small, from evidence of browse and foraging, to antler “rubs” and gauging an animal’s gait. Attendees are welcome to bring their own animal-track photos to identify.

Open to all ages, participants will come away with a better understanding of how to spot and identify different animal tracks and sign in fields, forests and their own backyards.

The Animal Tracks & Wildlife Sign Identification event will be held at EQLT’s office located at 120 Ridge

Road.

The outdoor portion will be held on hilly terrain in both grassy and wooded areas. Attendees are encouraged to have sturdy footwear and dress for the weather.

About EQLT

The East Quabbin Land Trust fosters a meaningful relationship with the natural world by conserving, connecting with and caring for the farmlands, woodlands and waters in the East Quabbin region of Massachusetts.

Celebrating its 30th Anniversary in 2024, EQLT was formed in 1994 out of concern for the loss of farmland and wildlife habitat to unplanned sprawl in and around Hardwick.

Since 1998, EQLT has expanded its protection efforts to Barre, Petersham, New Braintree, North Brookfield, and other nearby towns. By working cooperatively with property owners, government agencies, conservation groups and other land trust organizations, EQLT has been able to protect over 6,200 acres in the region.

Local author presents writing/publishing workshop

WEST BROOKFIELD – “Everyone has a story to tell,” said award-winning author Ed Londergan.

His ninth annual creative writing and publishing workshop will be held on Sunday, March 9, from 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at the Salem Cross Inn.

“The writing workshop aims to help those who want to write but don’t know where to start or who have had an idea for a story that’s been bubbling in their head for years and finally want to put it on paper. I also help people who have written something and need to know how to move ahead,” said Londergan, who provides a full day of information.

“The workshop will cover the entire process of writing and publishing, including idea development and sources of inspiration, drawing from storytelling traditions, developing the story, structure, and flow, conceiving and bringing characters to life, dialogue, editing, short fiction, writer’s block, and the publishing process,” Londergan said. “The publishing process can be confusing and frustrating. I’ll take the group through the various publishing options available. There will also be

some fun writing exercises.”

Past workshops have been attended by people of all ages and occupations, from 12-year-old students to 75-year-old retirees.

“Five attendees have written books and had them published while others have had stories and articles placed in various publications,” said Londergan.

“One of the things past attendees have enjoyed and learned from is the writing exercises,” Londergan said. “The writing exercises this year are different than what I’ve done in the past. I enjoy seeing the creative ideas that come out of them.”

“Back-and-forth discussion is always a popular part of the day. Attendees learn from each other. Individual issues or problems anyone has with their writing are discussed, and the group helps them with suggestions and observations. At times, a lot of ‘here’s what happened to me, and here’s what I did,’” he said.

The workshop is limited to 14 participants. The cost is \$110, and lunch is included.

Registration is required, and the deadline is Febr. 28. To register, email ed.londergan@gmail.com or call 508-864-8685.

GARDEN | FROM PAGE 4

fore. Or maybe a change in fertilization practices?

That’s about all I can come up with. I do hope that once blooming is over your plant remains healthy and provides many flowers for years to come!

This came to the Garden Lady from Gary: “I enjoy reading your articles.

Is there value or harm mixing old coffee grounds into your flower or vegetable gardens? Thanks!”

Thank you for your compliments on the column! My dad used to sprinkle coffee grounds around our blueberry bushes when I was a kid.

It was his theory that the acidic grounds would be good for blueberry bushes which by nature are acid-loving. Well, it turns out that most of the acid from the coffee grounds is leached into the water when the coffee is brewed, leaving a near neutral product that aligns with pH of most common vegetables and flowers!

Coffee grounds are high in nitrogen and have lesser, but still respectable amounts of the other two major nutrients, phosphorus and potassium, as well as many of the micronutrients. The

nitrogen is “tied up,” however, and not readily available to plants.

It must be composted first to make it available. So, I would recommend you either add it to a compost pile or mix it in with other mulches you may be using on top of the soil.

It can be combined with wood chips, grass clippings or chopped leaves to make a great and fertile mulch, that, as it breaks down, will add organic matter to the soil and be a nutritious food for your plants and the earthworms. In fact, folks who vermicompost (keep a worm bin) notice just how much the worms love coffee grounds mixed in with other food waste.

You’ve encouraged me to get a bit more serious about putting our household coffee grounds to good use!

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.



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- community -

Historical Society and DCR present program about Prince Walker

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
rdrago@turley.com

BARRE – This past Sunday, the Department of Conservation and Recreation’s Les and Terry Campbell Quabbin Visitor Center hosted a virtual presentation about Prince Walker of Barre, who went from being enslaved to a landowner.

Walker was born to an enslaved family in Barre, Massachusetts on June 24, 1774, and spent much of his life on a homestead that is now part of the Ware River Watershed.

The virtual audience joined Lucy Allen from the Barre Historical Society as she presented the life of Prince Walker and his journey to freedom and financial independence. Allen mentioned that Walker was known mainly as being the much younger brother of Quock Walker, who is known for helping in the abolishment of slavery in Massachusetts.

Prince Walker led a remarkable life that is presently marked and discussed.

Allen’s presentation began with sharing a slide featuring an oil painting by Hardwick artist Frank Bly, who in 1990, created a painting of the Prince Walker Burial Ground. This painting is currently housed inside the Barre Historical Society.

The former homestead of Prince Walker is now part of the Ware River Watershed and as time went by after his death in 1858, the area of his burial ground has been grown in with brush and is on a hillside near the watershed. Luckily, his gravestone on the burial ground was preserved.

One of the slides featured maps of the exact location of where Walker lived in Barre prior to his escape from enslavement. The home of James Caldwell was one of Walker’s homes and the map indicates the homestead was right off Route 62 in Barre.

Allen shared a bill of sale modeled from the original bill of sale of when Walker’s family came to Barre. This bill of sale dates to May 4, 1754.

One unique detail Allen shared about Walker’s presence in Barre is that he was born eight days after the incorporation of Barre as a town in Massachusetts.

At the age of 9, Walker was sold to John Watson of East Windsor, Connecticut. He was taken from his family by Nathaniel Jennison, the second husband of Isabel Caldwell, who lost her husband James Caldwell back in 1763.

The home of John Watson was shown in the presentation. The photograph of the home was taken earlier this month.

Prior to his 21st birthday, Walker believed he was going to be sent to Georgia but planned to escape slavery. He was successful and made his way back home to Barre.

By the beginning of the 19th century, Walker would become the head of a household. His first wife was Betsey Daws Walker, who died in 1809. He would remarry and his second wife was Anna Morse.

Between these two marriages Walker had at least nine children. Some of them got to go to school in Massachusetts.

Allen shared a form from the No. 11 School Register form from the 1840-1841 school year. Two Walker children were listed in that form

Allen’s presentation also featured an advertisement from the Barre Gazette back on Oct. 16, 1846. This caution ad from Walker suggested that his wife Anna was no longer with him and he would not pay the debts of his wife or children.

Walker ran another ad in the Barre Gazette in 1847, he was 73 at the time. The ad was him seeking a new wife, particularly of his race, who could “take charge of his household affairs” and “smooth the pillow of his declining years.”

On April 21, 1858, Walker died at the age of 84. The Barre Gazette published an article about his death and it mentioned he owned seven acres of land with a barn and various kinds of fruit trees. He left his estate to six of his children.

The conclusion of the article about his death read, “he escaped from slavery and returned to this town, where he has since resided, leading a quiet and inoffensive life, up to the time of his death.” The article also mentioned that Walker was known as “Little Prince”.

A couple of years ago, Allen and the Barre Historical Society hosted a historic walk to the Prince Walker Burial Ground near the Ware River Watershed. There is a sign posted near the burial ground, which is not too far from the Walker homesite in Barre.

Allen ended the presentation by taking questions from the audience who attended the virtual presentation after sharing the great story about Prince Walker, who began his life enslaved before achieving freedom and becoming a landowner in the town of Barre.

New Braintree library holds story time Jan. 27

NEW BRAINTREE – The New Braintree Public Library, 45 Memorial Drive, is offering a Story Time program for preschoolers on Monday, Jan. 27 beginning at 9 a.m.

The program’s focus is on the wonders of winter. The readings will include “No Two Alike” by Keith Baker and “Winter A Solstice Story” by Kelsey Gross. This reading and crafts program is held at the library.

Parental supervision is required. People may call the library at 508-867-7650 during regular business hours for more information.

Cradle Rock Chapter to hold designer pancake breakfast

BARRE – Cradle Rock Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star, will hold a designer pancake breakfast on Saturday, Feb. 1 from 7:30-10:30 a.m. at Mt. Zion Masonic Lodge hall, 71 Pleasant St.

People may create their pancakes with plenty of chips, fruit, nuts and more. The complete breakfast includes designer pancakes, waffles, sausage gravy with biscuits, bacon, sausage, juice and coffee.

The cost is still \$9 per adult and \$5 for children ages 6 and under. Everyone is welcome.

PROJECT | FROM PAGE 1

ects, would not be sufficient to fund an undertaking of this magnitude. Depleting Chapter 90 funds on Route 9 would also make it impossible to do smaller, more routine public works projects in the rest of the town for years to come.

In 2011, the Route 9 Reconstruction project was accepted into the highly competitive, federally and state funded Transportation Improvement Program. West Brookfield was awarded just over \$8 million dollars needed to fund Phase I, which begins at the Ware town line and proceeds to Welcome Road.

Due to the size of the project, it has been divided into three Phases which

will take place in succession starting from the Ware town line up to where the State Highway begins near Cutler and Old Warren Road in West Brookfield, with a total TIP award of about \$30 million. All work is projected to be complete by 2030.

“MassDOT is dedicated to enhancing safety and accessibility along our roadways, and we are proud to collaborate with the town of West Brookfield on this significant reconstruction project,” said Transportation Secretary and CEO Monica Tibbits-Nutt. “We would like to thank our municipal partners for their advocacy on this project and look forward to improved safety, accessibility, and resiliency along Route 9.”

Daley, just a couple years away from

retirement, is pleased to finally be overseeing the start a project he initiated nearly 15 years ago. He is grateful for the guidance he’s received from the engineers at CHA Consulting, the State Aid office at MassDOT, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning, Transportation Improvement Program and American Rescue Plan Act funding, “without these federal and state funding opportunities, professional collaborations and the support of the West Brookfield town leadership and its residents, a project of this scope would not have been possible in our small town.”

“This kind of funding is absolutely essential for the growth and safety of our roadway infrastructure in small-town Massachusetts,” said Chairman

of the West Brookfield Board of Selectmen Eric Von Bleicken. “Thanks to our Highway Superintendent’s due diligence and persistence in applying for these federal and state monies, we can move ahead.”

Identified by a 2012 Road Safety Audit as one of the most dangerous sections of Route 9 in the state due to the high number of motor vehicle incidents, the section between West Brookfield and Ware will be reconstructed with the primary objective of improving safety for all users.

The initial Phase I portion of the project consists of a large amount of full depth road reconstruction as well as resurfacing a one-mile section of West Main Street/Route 9 between Welcome Road and the Ware town line.

The roadway will also be widened to include a five-foot shoulder on each side, to improve safety for all roadway users including emergency vehicles, maintenance vehicles, disabled vehicles, and to provide bicycle accommodation. Drainage modifications will improve stormwater runoff which will also help prevent icing during winter conditions.

All existing guardrails will be replaced, and new signage and pavement markings will be included. Travelers should expect temporary lane closures and increased delays during the construction of Phase I which is scheduled to be completed by the end of April 2026.





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- community -

Quaboag hosts annual craft and small business fair Feb. 8

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
rdrago@turley.com

WARREN – Quaboag Regional Middle High School, 284 Old West Brookfield Road, is bringing back its annual Craft & Small Business Fair on Saturday, Feb. 8 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

With Valentine's Day fast approaching, this fair is a perfect opportunity to shop local and get some

gifts for your loved ones. This annual fair is hosted by Quaboag's Student Council.


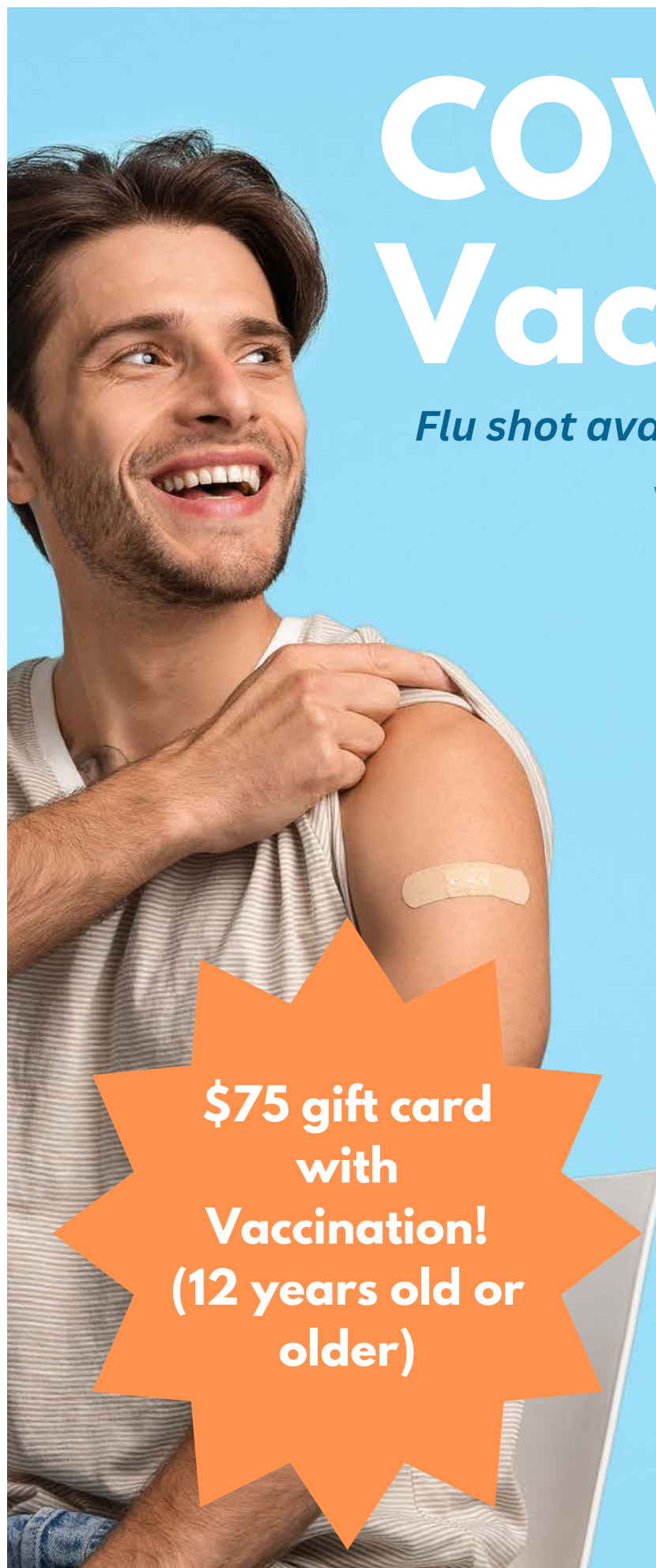
The fair has free admission and features over 80 local crafters and small business vendors that will be set up all across the halls of Quaboag. There will also be concessions available.

The fair will also feature raffle tables with numerous prizes available. Proceeds from the raffle will go towards the Student Council's MASC Leadership conference in Hyannis.

Lily Smith makes Curry College Dean's list

MILTON – Curry College announces the fall 2024 Dean's list.

Making the Dean's list is Lily Smith of North Brookfield. Curry College, founded in Boston in 1879, is a private, co-educational, liberal arts-based institution located on 131 acres in Milton.



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Please direct any questions to Nisha Humayun at nhumayun@townofware.com, (413) 207-7698



MARKET | FROM PAGE 1

road signs all over our region telling us to be on the lookout for deer. Bernie took heed and he also crafts his writing utensils out of antlers.

It was also observed last year that New England is home to another famous maker of pens, known for supplying writing instruments to the presidents. The A.T. Cross Company is headquartered in Rhode Island, but most of its products are made in China.

Well B&D Enterprises makes all of its pens one town over in Ware. Bernie does the work with assistance from Debby Morisseau, a Chicopee native who is his wife.

If the newly elected chief executive of this great nation wants a pen made in this country, he need only come to the West Brookfield Winter Market.

It is not merely in producing writing implements that Bernie displays his artistry.

On the B&D Enterprises table was an array of useful items beside the pens. There were scoops, bottle openers, trowels, carry alls, salt and pepper grinders and new this year, holders for the pens.

So come and see his handiwork through this market season and when it's over, we can start wondering what he will come up with next year.

B&D Enterprises' business card bears the legend:

*Re-Purposed Materials
Into*

Re-Markable Keepsakes

New this year, up from the Mill Building in Fiskdale, is Deep Roots Distillery USA. You might be asking what is an outfit that ferments and distills alcohol doing at the farmers market up in West Brookfield?

Well, Deep Roots does do that and they are rather fond of the work of making such beverages, but the young establishment is not a one trick pony.

At the market on Wednesday was Keith, a co-owner, and Adam, the chef. On their table was displayed a range of comestibles, all looking mouthwatering.

There were fresh baguettes, Savory Pies, Lemon Poppy Cake and much more.

Last week, there was a promise that hot soup would appear and, this week, a creamy tomato soup was being served with pieces of fresh bread added.

Though no alcohol was at the market, they do produce a variety of beverages such as vodka, whiskey,



Bernie Wilson of B&D Enterprises is shown at the Winter Market with some of his quality merchandise. TURLEY PHOTOS BY RICHARD MURPHY

gin and liqueurs that are all natural. They are proud of the apple pie whiskey made with corn from Valley Malt and apple cider from the Greenfield or Brookfield orchards.

How does one get into a business that is more associated with other locales? According to Keith, the project began during COVID. Well, didn't a lot of projects happen then in those long-ago seeming days?

The team was happy to share what's coming down at the Mill Building. They are planning a Valentine's Day Dinner. Also, a Korean dinner, with help from the Korean Market in the Mill Building, is coming as is a Murder Mystery themed evening.

It's a busy enterprise, but you can experience some of it at the Winter Market.

So, give yourself a break on Wednesdays and come to church across from the Common through March 12.



These pens and holders, made by Bernie Wilson of B&D Enterprises are new for 2025.

BOARD | FROM PAGE 1

cation."

Bubon said the plans were approved by the Conservation Commission, the Design Review Committee and all staff have issued their reports.

D'Hemecourt said this is his company's sixth ConvenientMD Urgent Care build, with the most recent having been constructed in Worcester.

He said his team is looking to build a 5,300 square foot building to be used as a ConvenientMD Urgent Care medical facility on a 2.25 acre parcel at 216 and 226 Charlton Road.

There will be 37 parking spaces at the site, of which eight will have electric vehicle charging stations.

Sixteen trees will be planted, and existing trees located on the eastern portion of the site will remain. The trees in the front of the lot will be removed to accommodate the building and driveway.

"We're going to more than replace them with the trees that are going to be going on site," d'Hemecourt said. "We've also expanded upon the landscaping in front of the building where the pilon was, per the recommendations from the city."

There will be three wall signs and one freestanding sign to identify the urgent care. The building signs are larger than the 30 square foot allowed in the bylaw, measuring 111.8 square feet each.

D'Hemecourt said the larger signs would be helpful for people seeking medical attention, allowing them to see the signs from a further distance.

"The combination of the nature of the business, patients coming in distress, unfamiliarity with the area and the speed limit on Route 20, necessitates a larger signage to allow patients to react in a safe and timely manner to get into the site," d'Hemecourt said.

He said the size of the signs is still less than is recommended in a best practices study by the U.S. Sign Council Federation. He said if they went with the size the town allows, it would be "very difficult" for drivers to see the urgent care from the road.

Joining d'Hemecourt was Shaun Kelly of Chapell Engineering Associates, who gave a detailed report about a traffic study for the property. He said a highway access permit is required from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation.

He said the proposed access to the ConvenientMD Urgent Care will form a four-way intersection with the existing commercial driveway on the southside of the corridor, which serves a hotel, gas station and restaur-

rant.

Kelly said the traffic study involved collecting existing traffic conditions and daily traffic counts during peak hours.

"Today on a daily basis, Charlton Road carries about 24,500 vehicles a day. Peak hour flows range from about 1,200 vehicles in the morning [two-way flow]...to about 1,800 an hour in the evening," Kelly said.

He said the weekday peak hour in the morning is between 7:30-8:30 a.m. and in the evening from 4:30-5:30 p.m.

Kelly said the traffic volume was adjusted for future growth and the resulting anticipated increase in traffic.

"We've taken all those volumes...and that's all been factored into our analysis," he said.

Kelly said the ConvenientMD Urgent Care is expected to increase traffic counts by about 194 total trips on a daily basis, including patients, employees and deliveries. He said they expect that most of the traffic will be coming from the west, due to the interchange.

"It's a less than a 1% increase in traffic, both on a daily basis as well as a peak hour basis," he said.

He said they plan to create a 300-foot left turn lane to accommodate traffic turning into the site.

The board members discussed the potential need for slow down and speed up lanes to allow for safer entry and exiting from the site, pending MassDOT approval.

Bubon recommended the board approve the site plan with 24 conditions. The board members voted in favor of granting site plan approval.

The board members also approved the proposed signage and granted a waiver to allow for the larger wall signs.

Zoning bylaw amendments

The board reviewed several proposed amendments to the town's zoning bylaws, including three related to accessory dwelling units.

"Some of these are necessitated by the Housing Bond Bill that was approved and signed into law earlier this year, we have some changes that we are legally obligated to make," Bubon said.

Two other amendments were related to nonconforming lots and the other to correct an error in the bylaws that lists the Board of Selectmen as being one of the enforcing bodies for the zoning bylaws; and changing it to just the Building Inspector.

The board members voted in favor of supporting

these amendments. These amendments will be listed on the annual town meeting warrant for voter approval.

Septic installation and permits

Bubon read correspondence from the Board of Health, which notified the Planning Board that the installation and permits of all septic systems for new construction projects will be suspended until March 31 or until the weather allows.

"This decision is not made lightly, and is made with regard to the extreme cold weather that we have already experienced in our area already this season," the letter stated.

Tree hearing

A public hearing will be held on Feb. 10 to address the removal of over 100 trees on Podunk Road to accommodate utility lines.

Bubon said some of the trees are considered hazards, but some are healthy. She said the abutters had been notified.

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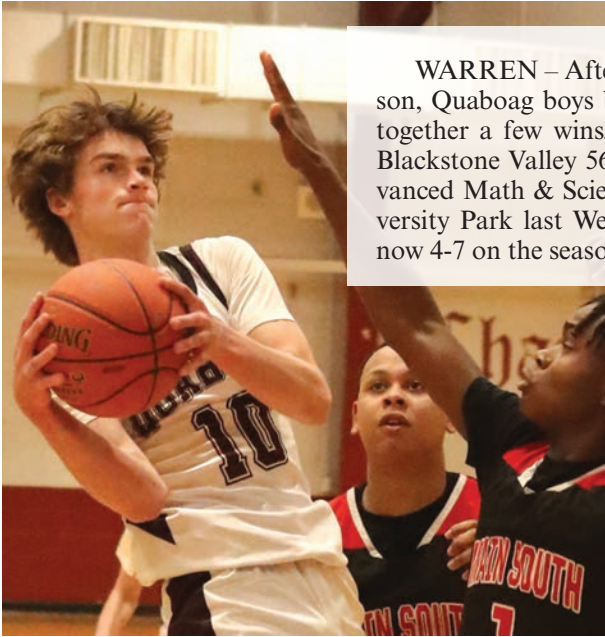
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SPORTS

Cougars win three of last four



Jacoby Toomey takes flight between these three defenders.

WARREN – After a tough start to the regular season, Quaboag boys basketball team is starting to put together a few wins. Quaboag picked up a win over Blackstone Valley 56-49, then also had wins over Advanced Math & Sciences and then also defeated University Park last Wednesday 56-38. The Cougars are now 4-7 on the season.



Christian Ruiz gets off a smooth pass.



Reilly Comptois thwarts the double defense at mid court.



Jacoby Labillois and Hart Waz attack the opposing offense.

Kadin Dufault scans his offense as he brings the ball down court. TURLEY PHOTOS BY JACK CASCIO NEAP.SMUGMUG.COM

Panthers fall at home to Littleton



Abby Rogowski fields the rebound. TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

BARRE – It was a pair of setbacks last week against Littleton and Hudson. The Panthers girls basketball team lost at home against Littleton last Tuesday 34-27. Later in the week, the Panthers fell on the road at Hudson High School. The Panthers are now 4-7 on the regular season and faced Clinton earlier this week. Quabbin travels to Maynard on Friday, Jan. 24 at 6 p.m.

See MORE PANTHER PHOTOS | PAGE 10



Makaylah Kingsbury tries to get around her opponent.

Falcons hockey suffers tough loss to Auburn

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

WEST SPRINGFIELD—When the MIAA released the state power rankings for the first time last Friday morning, the Auburn hockey team, which co-ops with Tantasqua Regional were the 10th ranked team in Division 2.

The following day, the Rockets showed why they were one of the top ranked teams in Division 2 after dispatching the Falcons of Minnechaug Regional, 8-1, in a non-conference match held at the Olympia Ice Center in West Springfield.

“This is a fun group of guys to be around, and they always work very hard,” said Auburn head coach Glen Bombard, who’s planning to retire from coaching at the end of this season. “We were able to score a bunch of goals in today’s game, but this wasn’t our best performance of the season. These guys can play a

See HOCKEY | PAGE 11



Nathan Dono advances toward the Minnechaug goal. TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM

- sports -

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Turleysports

Athlete of the Month

NAME: Nathan Dono
SCHOOL: Tantasqua

Nathan Dono, who plays for the co-op hockey team between Auburn and Tantasqua, scored two goals in a game against Minnechaug earlier this month.

To nominate someone for Athlete of the Week, contact Managing Sports Editor Gregory A. Scibelli at 413-283-8393 ext. 258 or send an e-mail to gscibelli@turley.com.



T-Birds get win at Bridgeport

BRIDGEPORT, Conn. — The Springfield Thunderbirds (17-15-2-1) had six players record multiple points in a 6-4 triumph over the Bridgeport Islanders (8-25-2-2) on Saturday night at Total Mortgage Arena.

The T-Birds and Islanders' netminders had all the answers in the opening 20 minutes, as Colten Ellis picked up where he left off from his shutout performance on Wednesday with 10 more stops in the opening frame. In the Bridgeport net, Hunter Miska made his first AHL start in nearly three years and was up to every Springfield challenge with 11 first-period stops.

The night marked the much-anticipated debut of Blues' 2023 first-round pick Otto Stenberg, and the 19-year-old wasted little time in period two making his mark on the game, taking a drop feed from Hugh McGing in the left circle and roofing a wrister short-side on Miska for his first AHL goal on his first shot at 2:43.

Unfortunately, the excitement of Stenberg's opening tally was quickly tempered when Chris Terry evened the slate with a power play goal at 3:29 for Bridgeport, snapping Ellis's shutout streak of over 83 minutes.

The T-Birds returned fire at 8:56 when Hunter Skinner leaned into a one-time slapper off a Matthew Peca drop pass, beating Miska over the stick hand to give Springfield a 2-1 advantage.

Once again, however, the Islander power play had a rebuttal. This time, a

Samuel Bolduc point wrister eluded Ellis and got the game back even, 2-2, at 13:50.

Springfield continued to be just a tick faster than the Islanders in the see-saw second frame as Stenberg let a wrister fly from the left side at 15:45, creating a rebound for McGing to bury behind Miska and restore the T-Birds' lead.

Finally, the Islanders could not get the game back to a stalemate, and Alek Kaskimaki lifted a backhand under the crossbar on a net-crashing play up the left side at 19:20 to send Springfield to the second intermission dressing room ahead 4-2.

Bridgeport still did not keel over, and with the teams skating 4-on-4 in the opening minute of the third, Liam Foudy capitalized on a rebound outside the paint to make it a 4-3 contest.

MacKenzie MacEachern further bolstered the Springfield advantage when he picked the puck off from Bolduc and cruised in on Miska before beating the netminder glove side on a breakaway to make it a 5-3 game at 7:33.

McGing capped off his best night of the season with his second goal of the evening in the dying seconds of a power play at 11:13 of the third to up the lead to 6-3.

Eetu Liukas would get one back for the Islanders with 1:03 to play, but it was too late for the home team as Springfield cashed in its fourth straight win and second in four nights over Bridgeport.

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MORE PANTHER PHOTOS | FROM PAGE 9



Christian Dunn starts her way down the court.



Brooke Austin gets the close range shot.



Mia Ducos heads for the right side to make a pass.



Bella Smith rushes toward the hoop. TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

- sports -

Thompson Speedway to feature 10 events

Headline: THOMPSON, Conn. – After weeks of careful planning, the American-Canadian Tour (ACT) and Pro All Star Series (PASS) have finalized and released the 2025 schedule for Thompson Speedway. Beginning in late March through Columbus Day weekend in October, rolling thunder returns to the ‘Quiet Corner of Connecticut’ for ten individual dates in 2025 including the annual Icebreaker and Sunoco World Series weekends along with a return to monthly Wednesday night racing.

Everything begins on Saturday, March 29 with the first of two days celebrating the 51st Icebreaker weekend to kick off the 2025 New England racing season! Saturday is headlined by the return of the Monaco Modified Tri-Track Series for the first of two spectacular showings on the Thompson highbanks in 2025 plus the PASS Super Late Models, Evolve Bank Pro Truck Challenge and R&R Race Parts NH Open Street Stock Series! Saturday’s showcase also kicks off the 2025 track championship season for the Sunoco Modifieds and

Mini Stocks plus the introduction of Thompson Speedway’s newest division, the Thunderstock Crown Vic Division!

Sunday, March 30 is headlined by the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour Icebreaker 150 plus the second Sunoco Modified event of Icebreaker weekend along with the Thompson Late Models, Street Stocks and SK Light Modifieds for a spectacular closer to the season’s rip-roaring start!

The Monaco Modifieds return to headline the first Wednesday night action on May 14, complete with all six Thompson track championship divisions before the fan-favorite Dash for Cash Series returns for the first of three Wednesday Night programs on June 18, complete with the Evolve Bank Pro Truck Challenge and six Thompson divisions. The Dash for Cash 50 lap sprints will also return with the NEMA Lite special on July 9, the Wednesday, September 17 showdown and the Friday of Sunoco World Series weekend.

The NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour is back for their traditional mid-

week showdown on August 6 headlined alongside the New England Supermodified Series and six Thompson Speedway divisions for a thrilling midweek special that cannot be missed!

The 63rd Sunoco World Series of Speedway Racing begins on Friday, October 10 headlined by the Dash for Cash \$5,000 to win sprint plus the R&R Open Street Stocks and Senior Tour Auto Racers (STAR) alongside track championship finales for the Late Models and Mini Stocks. The Thunderstock Crown Vics will also run on both Friday and Saturday of World Series weekend.

Saturday afternoon is headlined by the incredible 75th annual Race of Champions 150 held for the first time at Thompson Speedway with a \$12,500 prize headed for the winner of the iconic Al Gerber Memorial trophy! Saturday also features the championship finale for the New England Supermodified Series, along with the Evolve Bank Pro Truck Challenge and Harry Kourafas Memorial 22 for the New England Pro-4 Modifieds. The Sunoco Modifieds will

compete in their first of two days during the Sunoco World Series and the SK Light Modifieds will crown their 2025 track champion.

Sunday, October 12 will feature the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour Sunoco World Series 150 with the Sunoco Modifieds and Street Stocks crowning their track champions with the NEMA Lites rounding out the season-closing program.

“We’ve built up a schedule we think works for everyone,” said PASS President Tom Mayberry. “There’s a little bit of everything for each event that we believe works for both fans and racers alike.”

“Both Tom and I have had quite a few conversations with competitors and 2025 looks promising,” said ACT managing partner Cris Michaud. “The return of the Dash for Cash races and expanding the Crown Vic races are something we’re looking forward to seeing grow at Thompson next season.”



Jake Tully looks for the loose puck. TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEET-DOGPHOTOS.COM



Max Sealey gets ready to shoot.



Austin Dono possesses the puck just past center ice.

HOCKEY | FROM PAGE 9

lot better hockey.”

Bombard, who has been a part of the Auburn hockey program for the past 35 years, took over as the varsity hockey coach in 2002. He also played high school hockey at Auburn, along with his two brothers.

The road victory improved the Rockets overall season record to 7-2. It was the second time that they scored at least eight goals in a game this season. They posted an 8-2 home win against Westborough two days before Christmas.

During the past two seasons, the Falcons, who are ranked 35th in the Division 2 power rankings, celebrated one goal victories against the Rockets.

“Auburn is the best hockey team we’ve faced so far this season,” said Minnechaug head coach Kyle Bousquet. “They do have a several talented players and have a little more depth than us.”

Auburn’s two losses so far this season were against Wachusett Regional, who’s ranked 21st in Division 1, and Whitman-Hanson, who’s the 12th ranked team in Division 2.

A year ago, the Rockets advanced to the elite eight of the Division 2 state tournament where they lost to top-seeded Tewksbury, 7-2.

Bombard is a fan of the state tournament format which began several years ago.

“I think the state tournament is one of the best things that the MIAA ever did. Instead of playing the same team three or four times like we did in the old playoff format, you’ll most likely be playing a team for the first time in the state tournament,” he said. “We’re hoping to win back-to-back Quinn Division titles and compete for a state title this year.”

The Auburn hockey team, who won two state titles back in the 1970’s, co-ops with Millbury High School, Shepherd Hill Regional, and Tantasqua Regional.

The Tantasqua players listed on the Rockets varsity roster are junior Nathan Dono, sophomore Daniel Miedona, senior Austin Dono, junior Jack Tully, junior Max Sealey, freshman Trevor Resener, and junior Ethan LaPlante.

The Tantasqua Athletic Director is Marcus Backlin, who graduated from Auburn and is a former member of the Rockets hockey team.

“We do have an outstanding relationship with Tantasqua,” Bombard said. “Marcus played hockey for me several years ago. Their principal and superintendent have also been very supportive of our hockey program over the years. It gives their students an opportunity to play hockey.”

LaPlante, who was the starting goalie against the Falcons, only had to make eight saves before being replaced by

freshman goalie Colin Gaston with 7:24 left in the third period.

“Ethan is just a great kid and is one of our captains this year,” Bombard said. “We’ve built an outstanding relationship since the first day he joined the hockey team three years ago. It’s a lot of fun being around a kid like him.”

When LaPlante came out of the game, Auburn was holding a comfortable 7-0 advantage.

The Rockets, who outshot the Falcons, 37-12, held a slim 2-0 lead after the first period. They broke the game wide open by scoring five goals in the second period and added another in the third. They also had another goal disallowed during that period because it was kicked into the net.

The Dono brothers are members of the Rockets first line, along with senior Ethan McDermott, who scored a second period goal.

“It has been a lot of fun being a member of this hockey team during the past couple of years,” said Nathan Dono, who contributed offensively against Minnechaug with two goals and an assist. “All of the players on the hockey team get along with each other very well. The coaching staff was very welcoming when I was a freshman. It has also been a great experience playing on the same line with my older brother.”

Miedona, who’s a first-year varsity

hockey player, is a member of the second line. He scored the Rockets fifth goal.

Tully is a defenseman and Sealey, who’s a forward, assisted on the Rockets first goal of the second period.

It was a memorable game for Auburn freshman Colson Caron, who scored his first career varsity goal with five minutes remaining in the opening period. He also scored the Rockets final goal of the second period.

Auburn’s other two goal scorers were sophomore’s Logan Rada and Mason Barbale.

One of the few highlights of the game for the Falcons (2-6) took place with 5:34 left in regulation. That’s when freshman Joey Comes scored his first career varsity goal on power-play. Junior Dom Fiorentino was credited with the assist.

“At the beginning of the season, Joey was a bubble player for us as a defenseman,” Bousquet said. “He has been a forward in the past. We used him at that position during the third period and he scored a goal in his first shift. It was a very good thing to see.”

Despite having a below .500 record, the Falcons are still hoping to qualify for both the Western Mass. Class B tournament and the Division 2 state tournament.

SELECTMEN | FROM PAGE 1

the board and said she received “glowing” recommendations from her references at North Brookfield and Ware public schools, where she worked as a librarian and media specialist.

“They just loved working with her,” she said. “So we’re just really happy to have her join us at Haston.”

Fraser Hodder also thanked Brianna Lamb and Gabrielle Holmes, who both filled interim roles at the library in the absence of a director. She also thanked the library’s volunteers who helped to keep the library staffed and maintain the same level of services.

“Those two just did an incredible job under difficult circumstances, so we’re so grateful to them,” she said.

Reilly said she is excited to take on this position and work in town again.

“I look forward to it,” she said. The board approved Reilly’s appointment as library director.

Override discussion

Petratis said with the start of budget season, there have been a lot of questions about the budget, with many people asking for an override.

He said they were originally going to have an open discussion at the school, led by the moderator, to allow residents to share views on the need for an override vote, but they probably won’t do that now.

The suggested override amount would be \$2.4 million, spread over three years, to fund the school. The average homeowner would expect to pay an additional \$400 in taxes during those three years.

Petratis said the average individual income for residents is \$32,378, and the average median household income is \$81,010. The town’s unemployment rate is 4.2%, which is higher than the state average.

The town’s population over the age of 60 is 30%, he said.

He said the town’s revenue is generated through various taxes, such as excise and property, along with money collected through the water and sewer enterprise funds. He said 25% of sewer users can’t pay their bills.

“We have, I believe, over 60% of people on fixed incomes in town,” Petratis said.

Petratis said there are many people that work for the town who are underpaid, including clerks and administrators.

“We are a \$20 million business and those clerks and those admins...are underpaid compared to everybody else,” he said.

He said taxes have increased by about \$800 each year, and now residents will be facing an increase in sewer costs due to a mandated upgrade to the wastewater treatment system that the town “really can’t afford.”

The upgrade will cost about \$23 million to complete.

Petratis said an override can only be initiated by the Board of Selectmen, and cannot be brought forward by citizen’s petition.

“Our people can’t afford it,” he said. “As the chairman of the board, I won’t be entertaining any discussion on an override.”

Petratis said he would recommend to the School Committee that they consider sending grades seven through 12 out of district due to the cost of salaries at the high school. He said there are just under 400 students in grades pre-K-12, and attempts to regionalize with the Quaboag Regional School District have ended.

Clerk Vaughn Schlegel said in speaking with residents, most agree that they cannot afford an override due to the al-

ready increased taxes.

“I don’t know that people can really afford anything more at this point,” he said.

Petratis urged residents to contact their state legislators and the governor and “tell them to fix things.”

“The state had billions of dollars in surplus last August,” Petratis said. “They can alleviate a lot of the strain dependent on what they do...with several billion dollars they can help out a lot of towns.”

Recycling Center staffing

Board of Health Chair Ethan Melad submitted a proposal to the board to combine the Transfer Station Manager position with the Board of Health Clerk position.

He said there hasn’t been any issues with people working in these positions as they currently stand, but due to turnover with Recycling Center monitors, he thinks combining the positions will create a more appealing job for candidates.

“Potentially be a full-time, benefited job...and streamline the operations in the department,” he said.

Melad said he has not discussed his proposal with the Financial Committee or the town’s financial team yet.

Petratis said he is not opposed to this change, and based on what Melad said, he could see where it could be warranted. He asked Melad if there is room in the department’s budget to fund this change.

Melad said currently, the salaries for the two positions total just under \$40,000 and this change would require an additional \$49,260 in the department’s budget. The total annual cost

for the combined position would be \$82,150.

Petratis said he would like an additional two weeks to consider this change, and consult with the financial team.

“We really need to reflect on it a little bit more,” he said.

Financial items

The board approved the Treasurer’s request to spend \$1,688 to purchase pre-stamped window envelopes and send payments.

The board also approved the transfer of \$967.25 from the Reserve Fund to reimburse Sheila Buzzell for the cost of postage stamps she purchased on behalf of the town. This transfer was also approved by the Finance Committee.

Petratis said Buzzell had to purchase the postage stamps after the town’s postage machine broke, and the machine’s service company sent the wrong ink to use in it.

Appointment

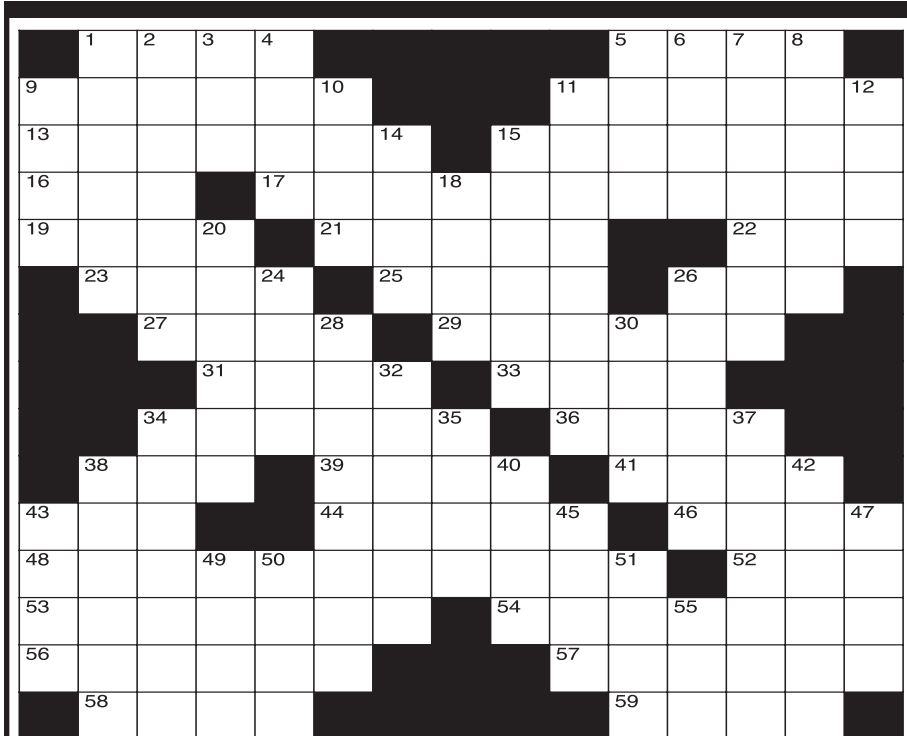
Highway Department Superintendent Jason Morgan presented employee John Mitchell Sr. to be promoted to the position of foreman by the board. Mitchell was hired full-time to the department at the beginning of this past December.

The board also appointed Pete Orsi as a full-time member of the Fire/Highway Renovation Committee.

Schlegel was appointed to represent the Board of Selectmen on Central Massachusetts EMS Corporation.

Resignations

The board accepted the resignations of Eric Hevy, chair of the Fire/Highway Renovation Committee; and Paul Benoit, committee member.



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. “Loser” rocker
- 5. Partner to relaxation
- 9. Mixing
- 11. Winged nut
- 13. Expression of blame
- 15. Vast ocean
- 16. Comedienne Gasteyer
- 17. Multiply
- 19. Meat from a pig (French)
- 21. Related
- 22. Rocker Stewart
- 23. Surprise completely
- 25. Loon
- 26. Canister
- 27. Large, deep-bodied fish
- 29. Takes forcefully
- 31. Oil cartel
- 33. Palmer and

- Hepburn are two
- 34. More than one purposefully
- 38. Pitching stastic
- 39. Type of sword
- 41. Witnesses
- 43. Body part
- 44. Mixes slowly
- 46. Satisfy
- 48. Strong belief
- 52. One’s physique (slang)
- 53. More frightening
- 54. Soup cracker
- 56. Teaches
- 57. One who carries something
- 58. Actor Sean
- 59. Changes

- 3. Type of gene
- 4. Door handle
- 5. Competition
- 6. Muslim ruler title
- 7. Hunting expeditions
- 8. Large mollusk
- 9. Bind securely
- 10. Former U.S. presidential candidate
- 11. 2-point plays in football
- 12. Breezed through
- 14. Type setting
- 15. Felt for
- 18. Codified rules
- 20. Small dome
- 24. Chevrotrain
- 26. Male reproductive gland
- 28. Controversial beliefs
- 30. Z Z Z

- 32. One who confines another
- 34. Bishop
- 35. Garlands
- 37. Bird that flies by the coast
- 38. Optical device
- 40. Greek goddess of discord
- 42. Some are “Rolling”
- 43. Formerly (archaic)
- 45. Thrust a knife into
- 47. German river
- 49. Atomic #26
- 50. Make a grotesque face
- 51. Primordial matter of the universe
- 55. Chinese philosophical principle

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- public safety -

East Brookfield Police Log

During the week of Dec. 30-Jan. 5, the East Brookfield Police Department responded to 125 building/property checks, 66 directed area patrols, eight traffic controls, nine radar assignments, two emergency 911 calls, eight citizen assists, two assist other agencies, two complaints, one larceny/theft, one motor vehicle accident, three safety hazards, one animal call and 35 motor vehicle stops in the town of East Brookfield.

Monday, Dec. 30

8:38 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Howe Street, Vehicle Towed
3:53 p.m. Motor Vehicle Accident, East Main Street, Report Taken

Tuesday, Dec. 31

12:45 p.m. Assist Citizen, Howe Street, Services Rendered
3:53 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued
4:15 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Podunk Road, Citation Issued
6:53 p.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Services Rendered
8:25 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
8:48 p.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Officer Handled
9:57 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Route 49, Unfounded
10:37 p.m. Complaint/Motor Vehicle Operations, East Main Street, Unfounded
10:51 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued

Thursday, Jan. 2

4:14 a.m. Safety Hazard, Podunk Road, Removed Hazard
5:02 a.m. 911 Safety Hazard, Podunk Road, Negative Contact
8:34 a.m. Assist Citizen, East Main Street, Spoken To
12:58 p.m. Assist Citizen, Howe Street, Spoken To
1:22 p.m. Assist Citizen, West Main Street, Negative Contact
2:27 p.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Spoken To
4:11 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Howe Street, Citation Issued
5:05 p.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Services Rendered

Friday, Jan. 3

4:40 a.m. Parking Complaint, East Main Street, Written Warning
4:12 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Podunk Road, Citation Issued
4:49 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued
8:15 p.m. Safety Hazard, West Main Street, Officer Handled
9:43 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Route 49, Services Rendered

Saturday, Jan. 4

10 a.m. Larceny/Theft/Shoplifting, East Main Street, Report Taken
5:07 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued
6:30 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Mechanic Street, Citation Issued
7:11 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Written Warning
9:06 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued

Sunday, Jan. 5

5:27 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Route 49, Criminal Complaint

New Braintree Police Log

During the week of Jan. 13-20, the Hardwick/New Braintree Police Department responded to nine building/property checks, 11 directed area patrols, six radar assignments, one traffic control, five emergency 911 calls, one assist other agency, five citizen assists, two motor vehicle accidents, one threat, two safety hazards, two scams and six animal calls in the town of New Braintree.

Tuesday, Jan. 14

9:42 a.m. 911 Suspicious Activity, Barre Cut Off Road, Officer Handled
4:23 p.m. Safety Hazard, West Brookfield Road, Officer Handled

Wednesday, Jan. 15

7:27 a.m. 911 Animal Call, Gilbertville Road, Officer Handled
10:21 a.m. 911 Threat, Moore Road, Officer Handled
10:51 a.m. Complaint/Motor Vehicle Operations, Barre Road, Spoken To
11:20 a.m. Assist Citizen, Barre Road, Officer Handled

Thursday, Jan. 16

9:05 a.m. Motor Vehicle Accident,

Barre Road, Vehicle Towed
9:55 a.m. Scam, Barre Cut Off Road, Spoken To

Friday, Jan. 17

7:44 a.m. Assist Citizen, Police Department, Officer Handled
7:58 a.m. Assist Other Agency, Ware Road, Spoken To
2:40 p.m. Assist Citizen, Memorial Drive, Officer Handled

Saturday, Jan. 18

12:29 a.m. Welfare Check, Route 32, Citation Issued
9:19 a.m. Assist Citizen, Memorial Drive, Officer Handled
9:50 p.m. Safety Hazard, Townwide, Dispatch Handled

Sunday, Jan. 19

9:59 a.m. Assist Citizen, Memorial Drive, Officer Handled
1:39 p.m. Scam, Memorial Drive, Spoken To

Monday, Jan. 20

5:21 a.m. Motor Vehicle Accident, Oakham Road, Vehicle Towed

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PUBLICATION DATE

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- legal notices -

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As required by Massachusetts General Law Chapter 132B, National Grid (New England Power and/or Massachusetts Electric Company) hereby gives notice that it intends to selectively apply herbicides along specific transmission line rights-of-way in 2025.

The selective use of herbicides to manage vegetation along rights-of-way is done within the context of an Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) program consisting of mechanical, chemical, natural, and cultural components. In right-of-way vegetation management the pest or target is vegetation (primarily tall growing) that will cause outages and safety issues. National Grid's IVM program encourages natural controls by promoting low growing plant communities that resist invasion by target vegetation. The selective use of herbicides and mechanical controls are the direct techniques used to control target vegetation and help establish and maintain natural controls.

National Grid may utilize any of the herbicides noted the MA Sensitive Materials list. Rodeo, and possibly one of the following herbicides, Arsenal or Arsenal Powerline, will be applied directly to the surface of stumps immediately after target vegetation is cut (Cut Stump Treatment). Garlon 4 or Garlon 4 Ultra will be applied selectively to the stems of target vegetation using hand-held equipment (Basal Treatment and Dormant stem treatment). Krenite S or Rodeo, mixed with Escort XP, and one of the following herbicides, Arsenal or Arsenal Powerline, or Milestone will be applied selectively to the foliage of target vegetation using hand-held equipment (Foliar Treatment). Cambistat as a tree growth regulator. Applications shall not commence more than ten days before nor conclude more than ten days after the following treatment periods. The herbicide mixes and additional information about rights of way management in Massachusetts can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/rights-of-way-vegetation-management>

Municipalities that have rights-of-way scheduled for herbicide treatments in 2025:

West Brookfield

Municipalities that have rights-of-way that were treated in 2024 but may require some touch-up work in 2025:

Sturbridge

Treatment Periods

February 1, 2025 – May 30, 2025

CST

Basal

Dormant Stem

May 30, 2025 - Oct 15, 2025

Foliar

CST

Basal

Cut Stubble

Oct 15, 2025 – Dec 31, 2025

CST

Basal

Dormant Stem

**The exact treatment dates are dependent upon weather conditions and field crew progress.*

Further information may be requested by contacting (during business hours, Mon-Fri from 8:00 am-4:00 pm):

Mariclaire Rigby, National Grid,

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Telephone: (781) 290-8310

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Durant and Berthiaume list office hours

Staff from the offices of state Sen. Peter Durant and state Rep. Donnie Berthiaume will hold office hours at the locations listed below in February.

Feb. 4, 9:30 a.m. Ware Town Hall, 10:45 a.m. Hardwick Municipal Building, noon New Braintree Municipal Building; Feb. 5, 9:30 a.m. Hubbardston Senior Center, 10:45 a.m. Barre Senior Center, noon Oakham Town Hall; Feb. 10, 9:30 a.m. East Brookfield Senior Center, 10:45 a.m. Brookfield Town Hall, noon West Brookfield Senior Center; Feb. 12, 9:30 a.m. North Brookfield Senior Center, 10:45 a.m. Richard Sudden Library, Spencer with State Rep. John Marsi's Chief of Staff Tammy Ruda), noon Leicester Senior Center

Constituents are welcome to drop in to meet with Donna Farmer, Chief of Staff for Rep. Berthiaume, along with Sen. Durant's District Liaison Jared Grigg and Communications Director Kim Mongeau who are available to discuss legislative concerns and ideas or assist with matters involving state agencies.

In cases of inclement weather when schools are closed in the towns where hours are being held, office hours will also be cancelled. The staff will make every effort to quickly reschedule should that happen.

Staff members from both offices are also available by phone or email and can arrange to meet with you privately, if you desire.

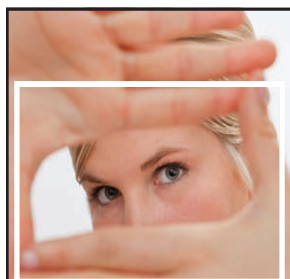


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Responsibilities include responding to emergency and non-emergency calls for Police, Fire and Ambulance services. It is preferred that applicants currently possess valid certification as a Police Officer. Candidates must have strong interpersonal, verbal, and written communication skills. Preferences include an associate degree or higher in criminal justice, serve in the US military, or experience as a Police Officer.

The Patrolmen's contract provides an education incentive and a candidate with prior experience may also be considered to start at a higher step rate of pay.

Resumes and cover letters must be returned no later than **Thursday, January 30th, 2025**, to the attention of **Lt. Kyle Whitcomb, WPD PO Box 606, Warren, MA 01083** or Whitcomb@warren-ma.gov.

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Small church in West Brookfield seeking a **PART-TIME SECRETARY**. Approximately 5 hours/week. Candidate must have organizational and computer skills, social media experience, good communication and people skills a must. Starting paying \$16-18/hr. based on experience. Send resume to: fccwbworship@gmail.com.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR Middlefield, MA.

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The Town of Blandford is seeking a qualified individual for the position of Highway Superintendent. Salary range starting at \$75,000-\$80,000+ negotiable based on experience/skills. Please visit our website TownOfBlandford.com or email Administrator@TownofBlandford.com for more information.

WILBRAHAM UNITED CHURCH is hiring a sexton three evenings, 7-10 hours per week, \$16 per hour. Additional compensation for hours needed for weddings and funerals. Please send resume to admin@wilbrahamunitedchurch.org
More information found at www.wilbrahamunitedchurch.org/about-us-2/

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The Town of Wales is an AA/EOE.

QUABOAG CURRENT

NORTH BROOKFIELD
Fundraiser dinner is
Jan. 25 p2

HARDWICK
Wildlife tracking event
p5

REGION
Legislator office hours
p15

Editorial/Opinion **4**
Sports **9**
Police Logs **13, 15**
Classifieds **14**

Volume 18, Number 9

Friday, January 24, 2025

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