

# QUABOAG CURRENT

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Friday, March 7, 2025

# School Committee accepts proposed FY 26 budget

By Paula Ouimette  
Editor

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NORTH BROOKFIELD – Superintendent Timothy McCormick told School Committee members there are no changes to the proposed fiscal year 2026 school budget that he presented at a previous meeting.

Last year's approved budget was \$7,028,605.89 and the current recommended bud-

get for FY 26 (with offsets) \$9,763,911.89. Of this, the town would be responsible for paying \$8,227,837.31.

This is an increase of 17% over last year.

At the Feb. 24 meeting, School Committee Chair John Magario said this number is "still in flux" due to ongoing negotiations with teachers' contracts. He said salaries are projected to increase by 6.7%.

Magario said the major

budget drivers are salaries, special education and transportation – with transportation increasing by 11% for the next fiscal year.

"This is the current working number," he said. "We have to start somewhere."

The budget proposal includes the addition of two positions; a sub-separate teacher and a full-time ABA. These new positions would create an additional sub-separate classroom for special

education students.

McCormick said this classroom would serve students with specific needs in the elementary school. He said creating this classroom could prevent students in need of additional support from having to be placed out of district.

"It's keeping those kids in district, it's keeping those kids closer to home and it's also a short and long term savings," he said. "When we

look at our special education numbers, specifically our out of district placements, it is always with students in mind."

School Committee Vice-Chair Tim Canada said the cost of out of district placements "is a big impact on the overall budget" for the school district. This year, the cost for out of district tuition for 15 students totaled \$1,797,939.30.

"This is a big part of the budget," Magario said.

"Being able to keep some students within the district would certainly offset some of this cost. I think it's a great goal to move toward."

McCormick said if this program is successful, it could also be a draw for student choice families.

The School Committee members voted to approve the budget as presented.

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# Q-munity Closet holds grand opening Monday

By Ellenor Downer  
Editor

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NEW BRAINTREE – A teacher's idea with the help of eight dedicated Post Grad students and the community came to fruition this Monday, March 3.

Post Graduate Employment and Community Specialist Ashley Roy thought creating a Q-munity Closet modeled on the one at the Quabbin Regional Middle High School would be a great learning experience for the class, but also a resource for the community at large.

New Braintree Grade School, located at 15 Memorial Drive, where the Post Grad class meets, was a perfect location for such a project. The former cafeteria provided the ideal seating.

It is located in the front section of the building just off the main entrance, where it has plenty of natural light and has a department store look.

The department store



COURTESY PHOTO BY ASHLEY ROY  
Kylie Gagnon takes new winter jackets out of their packaging to hang on the rack before the grand opening of Q-munity Closet at the New Braintree Grade School.

vibes were due to the fact a former plant and facilities manager for the Quabbin Regional School District was able to acquire display stands and racks from a department store.

On the day of the Grand Opening staff member Michaela Valley was applying white sticky paper to a dis-

See **Q-MUNITY CLOSET**  
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# Planning Board OKs special permit for tree removal

By Paula Ouimette  
Editor

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STURBRIDGE – The Planning Board held a public hearing regarding the removal of public trees along Podunk Road.

At the Feb. 24 meeting, Town Planner Jean Bubon said the Select Board, Conservation Commission and private property owners have been working with National Grid to review the large number of both private and public trees that will need to be removed to accommodate a solar project in a neighboring town.

"There's the need to remove a significant amount of trees to upgrade the lines to connect a solar facility that was built in Charlton and also to improve service in that section of town for Sturbridge residents," she said.

Bubon said there were four different approvals needed for the project, in-

cluding having private property owners sign off on the removal of trees located on their properties. She said she believes every resident has signed off on agreements with National Grid.

She said the Select Board has also entered into an agreement with National Grid to have access to the Podunk Road annex, a portion of road that is not traveled and has grown in. She said National Grid had to file a request for a notice of intent with the Conservation Commission for tree work within the annex.

Bubon said there are 110 public trees that need removal, with 55 dead or in decline, or ash trees which are subject to the emerald ash borer. The remaining trees are healthy, but will need to be removed to provide clearance for utility lines and poles.

Bubon said there are also trees that will be trimmed.

Bubon said the 31 remaining trees to be removed

"are healthy and contribute to the qualities of a scenic road."

She said they are asking National Grid to provide a two-to-one replacement on those trees in terms with the scenic road. She said the bylaw for shade tree removal requires inch-per-inch compensation, with every two inch diameter at breast height counting as one tree.

"With that, we've taken the DBH and divided into trees and come up with 202 shade trees," Bubon said. "And we have deducted the 55 that were dead, in decline or subject to the emerald ash borer, and using a figure of \$1,000 per tree, we come up with \$147,000 in compensation for the public shade tree removal."

Bubon said they are also requesting that no tree cutting occur until all necessary permits have been obtained, any appeals of any deci-

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TURLEY PHOTO BY PAULA OUIMETTE  
Quabbin Regional High School senior Ellie Frost stands next to a chart that tracked the number of pints of blood collected during a community blood drive she organized on Feb. 27.

# Quabbin senior organizes community blood drive

By Paula Ouimette  
Editor

pouimette@turley.com

BARRE – In less than one hour, a single person can save the lives of up to three people by donating blood.

Hardwick resident and Quabbin Regional High School senior Ellie Frost

and her team of volunteers helped to save dozens of lives on Feb. 27, when they organized an all-day blood drive in the school's gymnasium, in partnership with Rhode Island Blood Center.

This blood drive was

See **BLOOD DRIVE**  
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## Market Spotlight

# Winter Farmers Market continues

Editor's note: The Quabog 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.

## Still Life Farm holds the center

By Richard Murphy  
Correspondent

WEST BROOKFIELD – The beginning of the week was horrendous. Driveways resembled skating rinks and the town barn, where they keep the sand, may have been the most popular place in West Brookfield.

Slipping and sliding all over the place gave way to surer footing as the sand was spread.

The week got even better as a warming trend began. So, it was happily we took off down to the First Congregational Church, 36 North Main St., beginning at 3 p.m. to enter the Winter Market with its many ven-



Winter greens grow in the greenhouse at Still Life Farm in Hardwick

dors and shoppers buying and catching up.

Again, over toward the corner, there was music. The trio performing this day were three skilled ladies playing harps.

The harp is not something you pick and are expert a week later. It takes time, and training and as the three have been at the craft

for around a quarter century, it was obvious they have that just from listening to them.

They are Susan Lincoln from next door in Ware and Paula Moore and Barbara Russell from Shutesbury west of the Quabbin, and go by the name of Valley Harp Trio. Wednesday was the first day out since the pan-

demic.

The ladies play music from a variety of regions such as Celtic from Ireland and Scotland, also some from Spain and New England traditional as well. They go as far afield as the Middle East with Sephardic

See **MARKET SPOTLIGHT**  
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- community -

Pasta for Paws

Here Today  
Adopted Tomorrow's  
'Spay'ghetti Supper

BRIMFIELD – Here Today Adopted Tomorrow invites all animal lovers to its annual “Spay”ghetti Supper fundraiser at the First Congregational Church of Brimfield on Saturday, March 15.

Enjoy a chef-prepared dinner while helping cats in need right here in the community. Whether you dine in or take your meal to go, it's the perfect way to gather with friends and family while supporting a great cause. Plus, enjoy raffles, prizes, and plenty of fun throughout the evening.

Now more than ever, shelters like HTAT are stepping up to help cats in need. Rising costs, limited access to veterinary care, and financial and housing challenges have led to more pets being surrendered.

According to HTAT Executive Director Rachael Max, “Every ticket sold helps HTAT do what we do best – care for cats that might otherwise fall through the cracks, cats that might be traditionally seen as ‘unadoptable.’”

Max continued, “Each year, this event brings our community together in support of local cats who need us most. The funds raised allow us to care for cats who might not get a chance anywhere else – those with medical needs, behavioral challenges, or simply a harder time finding a home. It's more than just a meal – it's a way to make a real difference.”

Every bite supports HTAT and helps cats (and the people who love them) in the community. Bring your appetite, bring your friends, and enjoy an evening of great food, great fun, and giving back.

The “Spay”ghetti Supper takes place from 5-6:30 p.m. Advance tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for seniors and kids. To pur-

chase tickets at a discounted price, visit www.heretodaysanctuary.org or call 413-324-8224.

If you need assistance feeding or caring for your pet, HTAT can help. Local cat owners can spay or neuter their cats for \$80 or less, and strays and ferals can be fixed for free. Visit www.heretodaysanctuary.org to learn more about our community assistance programs.

About Here Today  
Adopted Tomorrow

Here Today Adopted Tomorrow was founded by mother-daughter team Barbara Horn and Rachael Max. HTAT is a volunteer driven group focused on helping cats and the people who love them in the community.

In 2012 HTAT opened its no kill, cageless cat adoption center for adult cats and kittens in Brimfield. It is deeply important to HTAT that every resident's stay at HTAT is comfortable and healthy, making for well-adjusted, happy animals.

Shortly after opening, HTAT realized there were more homeless cats than the center could handle by adoption alone. HTAT believes that pets are cherished members of the family and its ultimate goal is to keep pets and people together.

HTAT has programs to help special needs cats flourish and get adopted, as well as community assistance programs to help pet owners keep their pets, such as its Pet Food Pantry, low-cost spay-neuter program, and free cat behavior program. Each year, HTAT helps over 1,500 animals and their families.

For more information, visit heretodaysanctuary.org. Visit Here Today Adopted Tomorrow on Facebook at facebook.com/heretodaysanctuary, and follow it on Instagram at @heretodayadoptedtomorrow.

Chess returns in March at Joy of Beans

By Richard Murphy  
Correspondent

WEST BROOKFIELD – Chess does seem to be catching on in the Brookfields.

Saturday, on the first day of March, the ages and generations of contestants were varied as players met again at Joy of Beans Coffee in downtown West Brookfield.

When your correspondent arrived, a couple of contestants were already at play. More would arrive. In the meantime, I was challenged to a contest by Joy Hinton, the eponymous impresario of Joy of Beans, the gourmet coffee locale of the day's contests.

The games take place on tables in a room decorated with wildlife pictures by photographer Chris Hinckley

Knowing my limitations, I am normally reluctant to engage in a game that I know is not my game. No matter, the challenge was accepted, and we proceeded.

Into the room came Chase, Joy's grandson, and when she was called to wait on customers, Chase took her chair. The young middle schooler then proceeded to complete what Joy started, and I was done.

Oh well, defeat liberated me to observe the state of play of other games. At the table by the picture window at the front of the building were two competitors, Bri-



Chase and Joy are shown playing chess at the Joy of Beans Coffee.

an and Jared, playing. After they finished, I talked with Jared who spoke to what chess means in Joy's family.

Jared is the son-in-law of Joy and the father of Chase, so three generations of the family were competing on the day.

Some years ago, Joy gave Jared and her son, Travis, both marble chess boards and so began playing chess as a family event at Christmas.

Jim Spaulding was back, and began the afternoon playing John McNeil who has been coming these last few weeks as well.

Jim, like Joy, was one of the people who wanted to see chess take flight locally and was part of that originally at the Brookfield Library. He is happy to play



Brian and Jared play chess at the front window.

here at the West Brookfield venue which now is the place to be.

Spaulding is also a devotee of the Asian board game known in Japan as Go. He talked it up on Saturday. It might take some time for that to catch on.

Your correspondent will not be part of Go as the only person he ever knew who played it avidly was a mathematician who had gotten two double promo-

tions in grammar school and whose thinking was on another level.

And so, the day continued pleasantly. Indeed, the most unfavorable aspect of the afternoon came upon leaving. The temperature had taken quite a downturn in the time we had spent inside.

Oh well, the next time, it will be closer to spring and temps should be up. That will be Saturday, March 8.



Jim and John were concentrating on their game.




Chris Hinckley's wildlife photography adorned the walls of the Joy of Beans.

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- community -

Board hears CDBG project proposal for FY 25

By Paula Ouimette  
Editor  
pouimette@turley.com

NORTH BROOKFIELD – Joe Ferguson, Principal Planner with Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission and Janet Pierce, Executive Director, discussed the town’s application for the fiscal year 2024 Community Development Block Grant. “Tonight’s forum is meant for an open discussion but also to get some direction related to the FY 25 funding cycle for CDBG,” Ferguson said at the Board of Selectmen’s Feb. 25 meeting.

He detailed recent projects funded by the CDBG program, including the FY 21 cycle which included housing rehabilitation and improvements to the Senior Center, as well as comprehensive design and phase 1 construction for the Mount Pleasant Street project.

Ferguson said the town sat out of the FY 22 and FY 23 cycle (which the state combined due to the pandemic), and received funding to complete the final phase of the Mount Pleasant Street project with FY

24. He said to develop the application for the FY 25 CDBG program, they are looking at previous studies funded through the program including the West Side and East Side neighborhood infrastructure studies.

“There’s two main national objects that CDBG has to operate within,” Ferguson said. “It’s either you’re providing benefit to a low/moderate income population, or you can do another national object around the prevention of blight,” he said.

Ferguson said they have been focusing on projects to benefit low/moderate income populations.

“We see the need...we know projects can happen in these areas,” he said, adding that CMRPC is having difficulty income-qualifying individual streets.

He said the next street they were going to focus on was Batchelor Drive, which needs surface and subsurface improvements, but it did not qualify for income range. They have now shifted their focus to creating a design/construction project for South Common Street.

Ferguson said South Common Street would qualify for the CDBG program due to the Grove Street Apartments family housing. CMRPC will also look at St. Claire Avenue as well as South Common Street.

“We have a conceptual cost estimate [for South Common Street] which fits well under the FY 25 maximum budget of \$850,000,” Ferguson said. “We think this will work very well for FY 25.”

Ferguson said he believes the next grant cycles for FY 26 and FY 27 should focus on preventing blight. He said many towns comparable to North Brookfield have designated a blight district through the state, where at least 25% of the infrastructure is in fair to poor condition.

If the town has a neighborhood with the blight designation, it will eliminate the need for income qualification from individuals.

“With approval of that designation, it allows the town to do design and construction projects for a period of 10 years within that district,” he said. “And that gets us over the income

qualification piece.”

Ferguson said some towns that had this blight designation were able to complete six-to-seven streets in that 10 year period.

A public hearing for the FY 25 CDBG application is scheduled to be held on March 18.

Pierce said it is great to work with the town of North Brookfield and thanked the board for their partnership with CMRPC.

“It’s great to see the improvements coming in,” she said.

**Fire Department report**  
Board of Selectmen Vice-Chair Elizabeth “Brooke” Canada read the monthly Fire Department report submitted by Fire Chief Darin Anderson.

For the month of December, the department responded to 34 calls which included two building fires, one chimney fire, one natural/vegetation fire, 12 medical assists, one motor vehicle accident with injury, two motor vehicle accidents without injuries, two assist to police of other governmental agencies, one good intent, five false alarms, one sprinkler activation due to

malfunction, two smoke detector activations due to malfunction, one unintentional transmission of alarm, two smoke detector activations (no fire, unintentional).

Anderson stated that 23 permits and inspections were issued and completed during this time.

The Fire Department participated in the Spencer Parade of Lights and held its annual pizza with Santa at the fire house as well as the annual Santa tour.

“We had a lot of happy people, young and old, that enjoyed seeing Santa and Buddy the Elf,” Anderson wrote.

The Fire Department also participated in the town’s First Night event held on Dec. 31.

**Concerts on the Common**  
The Parks and Recreation Committee and the North Brookfield Cultural Council will hold monthly concerts on the common this summer. Concerts will be free and held on the last Saturday of each month: May 31, Ravenwood; June 28, Tabby LeBlanc; July 26, Stan Matthews and the Rough Riders; and Aug. 30, The Super Chargers.

The committee is also looking to host movie nights on the common throughout the summer, and plan a “Gobble Wobble” 5K run/walk on Thanksgiving morning.

**Public comment**  
Resident John Tripp asked if the American Rescue Plan Act money set aside to fund the Town Administrator’s salary could be reallocated to another department, such as the Highway, Police or Sewer departments.

Canada said it is past the date that the town can identify where that money is being spent.

**Spending requests**  
The board approved the following spending requests: \$1,100 to purchase air hose reels for the new Highway Department building on Donovan Road; \$1,358 for two laptops to replace broken equipment for the Fire Department; \$2,445 for five pairs of structural fire boots for the Fire Department; \$800 for a battery operated saw for the Fire Department; \$2,013.60 for a pump unit on a Highway Department truck; and \$520 to upgrade the fire monitoring system at Senior Center.

Antique appraisal event offered at historical museum

NEW BRAINTREE – A much anticipated “Antiques Roadshow”- like event has been scheduled at the New Braintree Historical Society museum, 10 Utley Road, on Saturday, March 22 from 1-3 p.m.

Renowned appraiser and auctioneer, Kenneth Van Blarcom from South Natick (<https://kwvbauctions.com/about/>), will conduct an individual appraisal and his-

tory of your item, for all to learn about.

The Society is thrilled to have Van Blarcom’s expertise here in New Braintree. His impressive credentials include antique appraisal positions with Shreve, Crump and Low, Co. and a Boston Directorship at the fine art and antique company of Skinner Auctions. Van Blarcom went on to start his own auction and appraisal

business conducting over 850 auctions over a 40 year period.

So, dust off your favorite treasure, and prepare for some historical entertainment. Limit of two items. Cost per appraisal \$5. No jewelry, please.

Refreshments will be served. For more information, visit <https://newbraintreehistoricalsociety.org/> or call 508-867-3324.

QHMA invites public to Bingo Night fundraiser

PALMER – The Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce, the non-profit organization that promotes business and development within surrounding communities of Hampden, Hampshire, and Worcester counties, has announced its Handbag & Hand Tool Bingo Night fundraiser.

The event will take place on Friday, March

21 at AMVETS Post 74 in Three Rivers. The Chamber will produce 10 exciting bingo rounds, each with a grand prize featuring one of seven designer handbags or one of three premium tools up for grabs.

Tickets can be purchased on QHMA.com. The registration fee is \$40 per person and includes 10 bingo cards, bingo

dauber, delicious snack platters, bonus raffle tickets and a cash bar.

Proceeds from the bingo event will benefit the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce and its on-going mission to assist its more than two-hundred member businesses succeed and grow with programs and initiatives throughout the year.



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- opinion -



And just like that it’s spring

Well, maybe I am getting a bit ahead of myself. This coming weekend the days will feel a little longer because of Daylight Savings, when we “spring forward” an hour.

The evenings will begin to lure us outside after supper, maybe for a walk or just a look-see around the yard. For me, one sign of “spring” is starting my pepper seeds indoors.

They are the earliest transplants I grow at home, and I am so excited to get started!

Regular readers of the column may remember that I love growing peppers. Perhaps it is because I have the perfect spot- stone edged raised beds – that contain the heat and help them to grow quite successfully.

By week’s end my pepper seeds will have been sown in moist lightweight seed starting mix and placed on bottom heat. Seventy-eight to 80 degrees is perfect for germinating pepper seeds; at those temps I expect to see sprouting in eight days or so.

Once they sprout, I will place the flats within inches of my shop lights and adjust the lights as they grow. When the second set of leaves form, known as the “true leaves,” the pepper seedlings will find their way into six packs or their own two inch pot.

By late April or early May, they will be given a larger pot once more; usually a four inch pot will do. After a hardening off period, I will transplant them into the ground once it has warmed considerably- usually by June first.

A couple weeks prior to that I provide black plastic mulch on top of soil to get it pre-heated and ready for these tropic loving plants.

Although there are over 20 species of pepper, just one is known to American gardeners. It goes by the Latin name Capsicum annuum. Five categories of peppers fall under this heading, but I typically grow only the sweet types.

Green when immature, sweet bell peppers ripen to a rainbow of colors: yellow, orange, red, purple, ivory and even chocolate brown. We eat them in the green stage more so than when fully ripe, and that’s a shame. A little patience and a week or two longer in the garden will yield a sweet treat.

If I had to choose only one variety to grow it would be AAS award winner “Carmen,” bred right in Maine at Johnny’s Selected Seed.

Numerous six inch by two and a half inch red peppers make an appearance beginning in late July and continue through the first frost.

Yes, I did say “late July!” If I’d dare to guess at the total yield of peppers per plant, one dozen would be a fair estimate. They are great fresh, frozen or fire roasted!

Renee’s Garden sells a lovely little pepper by the name of “Yummy Belles.” The description is accurate when they say that the plants are “highly productive” and “load up” with lots of little three to four inch bright orange peppers.

They call them snack peppers, and they are just that. Make a decadent snack by filling with veggie cream cheese, or stick to healthier eating by adding one or two to a personal salad.

Paprika peppers also fall into the sweet pepper category. Fruits are up to six inches long and three inches wide at the top and come to a blunt point.

Dry and grind to make your own paprika spice in a coffee grinder. Indispensable when sprinkled on deviled eggs!

Frying or pickling peppers go by the names Sweet Banana, Sweet Hungarian, or Cubanelle among others. They are good candidates for frying because of their thin walls and scant water content.

Sweet Banana was noted in 1941 as an All American Selections winner and is still growing strong 60+ years later!

Pimento peppers are those used to stuff with green olives. My Italian husband just loves it when his sister Denise makes this holiday treat!

They grow a squatty three by four inches and are ripe when red or orange, depending on variety. Expect these to take a bit longer than the other types, a full 85 or more days from transplant to harvest.

If you too are a pepper lover, and want to see the earliest yields possible, get ready, get set, and get sowing those pepper seeds!

*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.*

Funhouse mirrors

Junior high school teachers have very challenging jobs. Successful ones know all too well, it is not just your subject you teach but, in your position, you help build character at the most impressionable age.

I certainly took that part of my job as seriously as my subject matter. I would always use the analogy of a mirror.

In my later years of teaching, I would always include a discussion that involved the importance of looking inward. My introduction as to how was simply say, “When you get up in the morning or go to bed at night, look into the mirror. If you ‘like’ that person looking back, you will always know that you are on the right track.” That would always get them thinking and I really do think it helped children want to be better.

Of course, I knew that my job every day was to practice what I preached or that message would never take hold.

That was then. This is now.

That message would always assume that my students had a compass to work with. They would have to believe that honesty, integrity, empathy...you know, all those elements that were supposed to go together for good character to exist in the first place, was something important to have.

That mirror had to reflect truth and goodness.

Now, we are living in a world of mirrors that, by

design, bend and distort truth, deflect empathy, and hide the path that always before lead to good character. We are in a new world of funhouse mirrors, but “fun” is nowhere in that picture.

How do teachers explain to students now, if you are even allowed, why certain innocent people are being abused? How do you explain that people who literally stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, maimed and killed police officers, put up a hang-man’s noose for VP Pence, damaged and stole property, and literally left urine, feces, and trash in their wake have been pardoned, lauded, and even venerated by the POTUS?

How do you explain to them why it’s okay to round up those desperate people they call “illegals,” the vast majority of which have no criminal connections, and place them in camps to be thrown out of our country without knowing why they fled their own?

How do you justify to them that some of their own friends who are LGBTQIA are no longer recognized as equals and their rights are beginning to be stripped away? How do you explain to children that they will no longer have access to the beautiful parks in our country because Park Rangers jobs have been taken?

How in the world do you explain why a multi-billionaire is firing people with no right to do so at the behest of the president? How will you explain to them why the

special needs students will no longer be helped? What do you say when the contributions of black Americans are no longer recognized?

What will you say to them when they treat trans kids with disdain and even abuse when they simply mimic what leadership is doing? How will you justify the fact that a girl they may well know who was raped will now have to carry the child of her rapist to term because the rights their mothers and grandmothers fought for no longer exist?

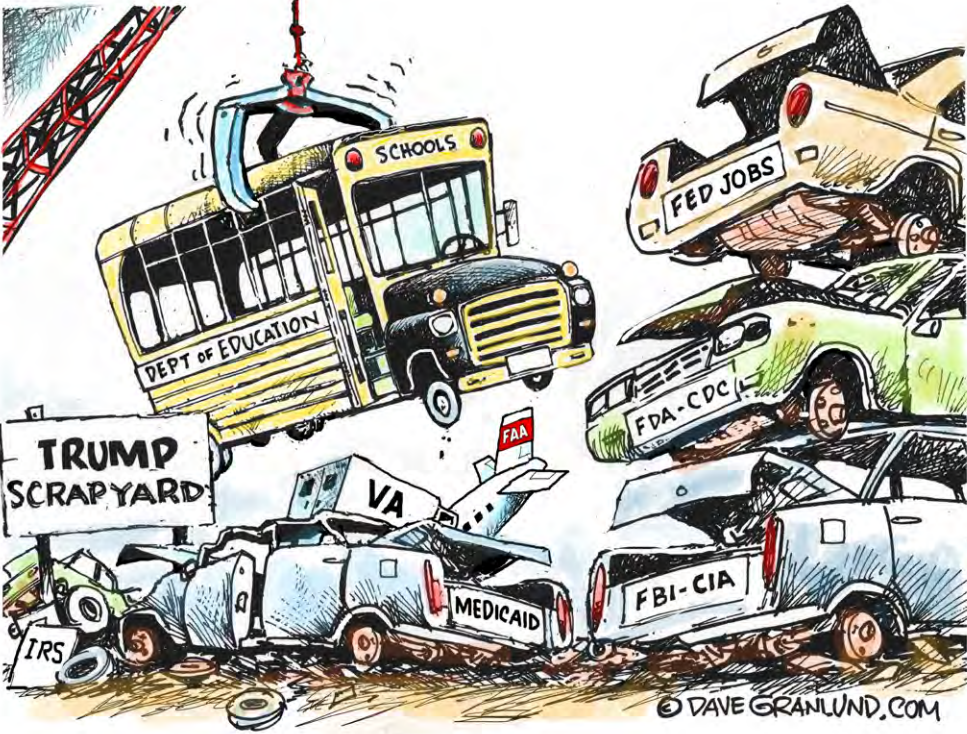
How do you teach the truths of History, or Civics, or Science when doing so comes with the potential loss of your job? How do you teach them to look in that mirror when so many people with power deliberately lie to save their own skin, knowing that what they are saying is literally destroying the fiber of Democracy and tearing us apart as a functioning society?

How in the world does a teacher, or a parent for that matter, ever begin to help a child understand how to be a good human being of good character in this country now?

How will we all feel when the students we teach have only those distorted funhouse mirrors in which to view the world...and eventually, themselves?

That time is coming. If you don’t recognize it, you are already looking in one. Are you having fun?

**Eric von Bleicken**  
West Brookfield



Reader seeks clarification of Medicare IRMAA and MAGI

Dear Rusty:  
I am confused by an article in my local newspaper which said that Modified Adjusted Gross Income, on which my Medicare Part B premium is based, is my Adjusted Gross Income, plus any non-taxable interest, plus 50% of the social security I received.

The part that is confusing is the 50% part. When I look at my tax return my Adjusted Gross Income includes the taxable portion of my Social Security benefit which, in my case, is 85% of my total benefits. Why must 50% of benefits be added to my AGI if it is already in-

cluded in my total AGI?  
Signed: Confused

Dear Confused:  
The article you refer to was misleading for stating that the Modified Adjusted Gross Income used to determine your Medicare premiums includes your normal Adjusted Gross Income from your income tax return, plus any non-taxable interest you may have had, plus 50% of the SS benefits you received during the tax year. What the article should have said was that the MAGI, which determines your Income-Related Monthly Adjustment

Amount to your Medicare premiums consists of your normal AGI from your tax return, which includes the taxable portion of your Social Security benefits, plus any non-taxable interest you may have had.

For additional clarity, the Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount is a supplemental amount added to the standard Medicare premium for those with higher incomes. The thresholds at which the IRMAA supplements apply depend on your IRS filing status, and your MAGI determines the amount of supplement which will be added to the standard Medicare premium.

Single filers with MAGI over \$103,000 or married filers with MAGI over \$206,000 will see an IRMAA supplement added to their Medicare premium. Those whose MAGI is under the first IRMAA threshold pay the standard

**See SOCIAL SECURITY**  
**PAGE 8**

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For more information, or to submit people or milestone news for the Quaboag Current, please email pouimette@turley.com.



- community -

NORTH BROOKFIELD  
FROM PAGE 1

Superintendent's report

McCormick said on Feb. 6 he went to Boston with High School Principal John Diorio and teacher Caitlyn Malone to visit Boston Collegiate and John D. O'Bryant School as part of the One8 Foundation's Applied Learning grant.

He said they observed 10 classrooms and experienced what applied learning is.

"This workshop really kind of gave us an idea of what we want to see in our classrooms," McCormick said. "We want to see that student discourse. We want to see the release from the teacher to the students where the students are doing the learning."

McCormick said they will bring this information back to the school district and support staff with some of these changes.

"This grant opportunity will allow Mr. Diorio and two teachers to attend a conference in Denver in April, it's paid for by the grant," he said. "It allows one of our leaders and two of our teachers to observe in real-time, some exemplars of what this applied learning concept looks like," he said.

McCormick said last summer the school district received \$15,000 as a startup grant for its Innovative Career Pathways. He said they have submitted part B of the application and should hear back from the state this month.

"We did receive an additional \$35,000 to support the durable hardware for those programs...that's a good sign," he said.

McCormick said on Feb. 13 he attended a legislative luncheon with other school superintendents, state sen-

ators and representatives. Topics included Chapter 70 funding and increased need for special education funding such as Circuit Breaker.

"We talked about small rural schooling and how we need to make sure that we continue to see that grow at the state level," he said. "It was a good conversation."

McCormick said he will be meeting with a newly formed superintendent's advisory committee comprised of six students from the high school and middle school. He said they will be working on creating positive messaging geared toward elementary school students.

Administrators' reports

Diorio said the high school celebrated senior night for the boys' basketball team and dedicated a 1,000 point banner to Class of 2024 graduate Jose Rivera.

"He's currently one of our success stories," Diorio said. "He attends Assumption College as a finance major."

Rivera scored over 1,000 points during his high school basketball career.

Diorio said an awards ceremony was held on Feb. 14 to celebrate middle school students for achievements in attendance, academic excellence and overall growth.

Hope Rudzinski from the Worcester County District Attorney's office will speak with high school students about healthy relationships and preventing teen violence.

Diorio said the girls will participate in dating and

positive relationships workshop presented by the Vanessa T. Marcotte Foundation, which includes a self-defense class. The boys will listen to a keynote speaker and have a discussion with the District Attorney and the legal ramifications around dating violence, as well as building positive and healthy relationships.

Diorio said juniors and seniors will be visiting Flexcon as part of the Innovative Pathways program.

"This is the second year of our program," he said. "Our students will have an opportunity to apply for a paid internship at Flexcon and earn a full-time job after graduation."

He said about five students took advantage of this program last year.

A career fair will be held at the high school on March 11, featuring 25 different companies and speakers.

"It's a great opportunity for our students to prepare for their future," he said.

The school's first STEAM night will be held on March 25 at 6 p.m. He said STEAM education combines science, technology, engineering, the arts and math to help students solve problems.

Elementary School Principal Arthur Murphy said Camp Read-a-Lot had eight stations for classes to rotate through during the school day. He said local firefighters also came and spoke about fire and ice safety.

Murphy said the PTO do-

nated pancakes to the event, and he said they do great work for the students and families.

He said the high school's adjustment counselor Tova Margolis led a presentation about identifying trauma in the classroom and how trauma impacts the brain and development.

"Teaching is hard work, but it can be made easier if we use a trauma informed lens," Murphy said.

Murphy said the PTO hosted a "glow" dance in February which had a huge turnout. He said there was music and photobooth as well.

Student Services Director Amy Emory said access and alternate access testing for English Language Learners was completed the past week. She credited ELL teacher Kailyn Lachapelle and the teachers for their work and flexibility during this process.

Emory said she participated in a training session held by Department of Elementary and Secondary Education about utilizing the EL data dashboard.

Public comment

Town Accountant Shiela Leblanc said she received a school budget report from the Board of Selectmen that doesn't show how much of the budget has been spent for the school district. She said her own records shows there is \$3,550,712.30 remaining of the more than \$7 million approved for the annual budget, but the report from the

school still shows the starting balance.

McCormick said they are working through some technology issues and staff are receiving training to utilize the software.

Resident Matt Grant asked about the possibility of revisiting regionalization after watching the video from the Quaboag Regional School Committee meeting where the decision to move forward with the amended regionalization agreement was voted down.

Grant said it was a multi-year process, and he thinks regionalization is a direction the school district should explore.

Leblanc, who served on the Regional Agreement Amendment Committee, said some members from the Quaboag Regional School District didn't think adding North Brookfield would be a financial benefit.

Magario said he believes both committees should have voted to put the decision in front of residents, but there has been no further discussion about joining the Quaboag Regional School District.

New member

The School Committee welcomed Ralph Kay as its newest member. Kay is filling a vacancy until the upcoming annual town election.

Recognitions

McCormick recognized reading teacher Clementine McNamara for organizing Camp Read-a-Lot, an annu-

al tradition that occurs the Friday before February vacation.

"Every classroom in the Elementary School spends parts of the day reading together, out loud, individually...another way to instill the love of reading into our students," McCormick said.

McCormick also recognized the school district's custodial staff for cleaning up after winter storms.

"They've done a nice job of making sure that our sidewalks and our parking lots are clear," he said.

He also recognized the girls' basketball team, which qualified for the MIAA State Tournament. He congratulated the team and the coach for a winning season.

Student Council update

Student Representative Dante Giangrande said the Student Council has submitted its Massachusetts Association of Student Councils' Excellence Book and applied for the National Council Excellence Award.

He said Unity Week took place before February break to show support for people including members of the LGBTQ+ community and children with special needs.

"Even just everyone's individuality," he said.

The MASC Spring Conference will be held March 4-7 in Hyannis and the Spring Conference will be held in April. He said about 10 students will be attended the Hyannis trip and said, "it's a great experience."

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- community -

Q-MUNITY CLOSET  
FROM PAGE 1

play box. This was a quick way to give the display stand a new look without having to paint it. The one she worked on was headed for the infant area which had many 0-3 month sizes.

An email sent to parents said, “This is also very beneficial to our Post Grad students, who are able to work on their communication skills while dealing with the public, inventory of items, organization skills, as well as building a small business.” The email also said, “This space is designed for all com-

munity members to pick out clothing items that you, your family or someone you may know could benefit from free of charge. We currently have a significant supply of brand new winter coats in a variety of sizes. If you, or someone you know could use one for this year, or looking ahead to next winter, please stop by.”

The Q-munity Closet will be open on Mondays from noon-2 p.m. at New Braintree Grade School, located across from the Town Hall on Memorial Drive. If people are unable to make it at that time, they may email Ashley Roy at aroy@qrsd.org to make an appointment for a time that

is convenient for them.

Roy said this new student run business endeavor needed donations of plastic coat hangers as well as used and new clothing. They may be dropped off on Mondays from noon-2 p.m.

There are plans in the future to extend the hours of operation to Saturdays as well. Both Roy and Superintendent Mucha were willing to man the store on Saturdays.

Post Grad student Gagnon quickly offered her assistance on Saturdays when she was available. Two Quabbin High School students, who earn community service, vol-

unteer time during the week at the Post Grad program.

The school has a washer and dryer to clean the used clothing. In addition to washing all the used clothes, the students sorted through it to make sure the clothing was free of stains, which the wash did not remove and tears.

Everything is free, but there will be a donation jar at the closet for those wishing to make a monetary donation. Any proceeds would help fund, field trips for the students.

The email concluded, “As this is a new venture for our Post Grad students, we invite you to extend this invita-

Staff member Michaela Valley puts sticky paper on this display box, which will be used to display infant clothes. There are several more displays behind her as well as circular units for displaying items at the Q-munity Closet.

TURLEY PHOTO BY ELLENOR DOWNER



tion to family members and friends, even if they do not have a need for resources at this time. We want to provide the students with a lot

of foot traffic to build their communication skills and praise them for all the hard work they have done getting this venture off the ground.”

PLANNING BOARD  
FROM PAGE 1

sions have been resolved, the special permit and order of conditions be recorded at the Registry of Deeds and until the sum of money has been provided to the town’s tree account.

“In terms of the replanting of the 62 trees, we feel that it’s best to allow some latitude for the Tree Warden

to work with National Grid,” she said.

Bubon said the replanting of the annex will be under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission.

During the public comment period of the public hearing, resident and Select Board member Mary Dowling asked the Planning Board to consider asking National Grid to do more than the minimum two-inch diameter

with regard to the replanting of trees. She said the project will have a lasting impact on residents and could reduce property values.

The board voted to approve the scenic roads special permit with four conditions and a list of trees not approved for removal.

**Town Planner’s update**

Bubon said the Building Inspector completed a final inspection of the new movie

theater on Feb. 18. She said the theater should be opening soon.

“It was a lot of work for them, they’ve done a good job down there,” Bubon said.

Bubon said Noble Energy signed a lease with Sturbridge Coffeehouse to open a second location at the gas station. Noble Energy also features a taco restaurant.

Bubon said she joined the Building Inspector for a final

inspection of Interstate Towing but will need to return on June 1 to review parking lot striping and plantings.

“Everything’s shaping up very nicely,” Bubon said.

Bubon said she recently received some Federal Emergency Management Agency maps with possible revisions. She said the Chicopee River watershed was just studied, and this created potential amendments around South

Pond and some of the roads next to Big Alum.

“There are about 35 properties effected,” Bubon said.

She will be mailing maps to those impacted and the information is also posted on the town’s website, www.sturbridge.gov. She said FEMA is expected to have final maps completed by the end of December to be adopted by the town.

SUMMER CAMP GUIDE

The benefits of attending summer camp

Summer camp is something akin to a rite of passage for millions of youngsters each year. Many adults look back fondly on their experiences at summer camp, often crediting such times as formative periods in their lives. Summer camp benefits children in a myriad ways.

- Campers continue to socialize throughout summer. Socializing isn’t just for the school year. While children in high school might be independent enough to come and go with their friends during summer break, kids who are still in elementary school or middle school might not be old enough to handle such freedom. That

- can make it hard to stay in touch with friends, which in turn can contribute to feelings of boredom and loneliness. Camp provides ample opportunities for young children to socialize during a time of year when they might not see their school friends as often as they’re used to.
- Campers can expand their horizons. Though some summer camps are exclusive to residents of certain communities, many tend to feature children from numerous towns or municipalities. Such camps provide an opportunity for campers to expand their horizons by engaging with youngsters who come from different backgrounds.

- Camp can get kids off their devices. Modern children are growing up in a digital world, and parents know how hard it can be to get kids to put down their devices and get outdoors. But the key to making that pivot could be access to outdoor play spaces. Many summer camps are structured around outdoor play, making them a potentially invaluable ally as parents seek to help children cut back on the time they spend using their devices. Children who do not attend camp and live in households where both parents work or in single-parent households where Mom or Dad works may be forced to spend much

of summer indoors, which could increase the frequency with which they turn to devices to occupy their time.

- Camp adds structure to summer days. Once a school year ends, the structure a school day provides vanishes into thin air. Couple that with extracurricular activities that go on hiatus during summer vacation, and kids accustomed to structure are left with little to do and no need to schedule their time.

There’s no shortage of benefits to enrolling youngsters in summer camp, where kids can socialize, grow and get off their devices while engaged in structured but stress-free activities.

Camp by the numbers

Each year, campers of all ages head off to nearby recreation centers or travel to rural areas to claim their cabins and bunks. Here’s a deep look at some of the statistics surrounding summer camps.

**1,467:** The number of day camps in the United States run by the YMCA. - *YMCA*

**\$3.91 billion:** The peak market size of the summer camp sector in the United States in 2019, before stay-at-home-restrictions affected statistics in subsequent years. - *Statista*

**14 million:** The average number of American summer camp registrants each year. - *American Camp Association*

**1 week:** The most popular session length for summer camp, although the majority of independent camp operators offer four-, six- and eight-week sessions. - *American Camp Association*

**50:** The percentage of respondents whose camps charge \$1,000 or more per session, with most programs costing between \$1,000 and \$1,500. - *CampMinder*

**58 to 63:** The percentage of female staff members at overnight and day camps, respectively. - *American Camp Association*

**200 to 300:** The average number of campers served each session. - *CampMinder*

**7 in 10:** The number of camps that run 10 or more different programs. - *CampMinder*

**79:** The percentage of camps that maintain a screen-free environment. - *CampMinder*

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# SPORTS

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## Cougars scored tournament-opening win

WARREN – Last Tuesday night, Quaboag girls basketball scored a win in a preliminary round game of the Division 5 State Tournament against Lynn Vocational 52-34. The win brought Quaboag into the Round of 32 against Millbury High School. Highlights from that matchup will be in a future edition.



Parker Tunley tries to get around an opponent.



Isabelle Manzano goes for a three-pointer.



Maddie Potvin looks to pass.



Madeline Dufresne looks to intercept a rebound.



Juliette Boos crosses midcourt.

## Auburn co-op wins state tourney matchup with Beverly

By Tim Peterson  
Sports Correspondent

AUBURN—The Auburn hockey team only lost one match at the Horgan Skating Arena during the regular season. The Rockets began the Division 2 state tournament by celebrating another home victory in the round of 32.

The score was tied, 1-1, with a little more than four minutes remaining in the second period when the eighth-seeded Rockets scored back-to-back power-play goals. The home team added two more goals in the third period leading to a 5-1 win over the 25<sup>th</sup>-seeded Beverly Panthers before a large crowd, last Wednesday night.

“There is always a great environment whenever we play here,” said Auburn junior Nathan Dono, who contributed with a goal and two assists in the round of 32 victory. “We’ve qualified for the state tournament during the past couple of years, so we do have a lot of postseason experience. It’s a very good feeling winning another game in the state tournament.”

Since the MIAA changed the postseason format in 2021, Auburn now has a 4-3 record in the Division 2 state tournament. They’ve also posted a 57-27-1 overall record since the start of the 2021-22 regular season.

Dono is one of the seven players listed on the Auburn varsity hockey roster that attend Tantasqua Regional High School. The other six players from Tantasqua are Nathan’s older brother, Austin, who’s a senior captain,

junior captain Ethan Laplante, junior Jake Tully, junior Max Sealey, sophomore Daniel Miedona, and freshman Trevor Resener.

“It has been an awesome experience playing for this hockey team during the past three years,” Laplante said. “I grew up playing youth hockey with the guys from Auburn and everyone gets along with each very well. We just want to make it as far as we can in this year’s state tournament.”

Auburn, who also co-ops with Millbury High School and Shepherd Hill, has been co-oping with Tantasqua for more than ten years.

Last Wednesday’s match was very memorable for Nathan Dono, who assisted on the go-ahead goal in the second period. He then scored an unassisted goal eight seconds later, which was his 100<sup>th</sup> career point.

“I definitely wanted to reach the milestone in tonight’s game, but I’m very glad that we were able to win the game,” Dono said. “I have to give a lot of the credit to my teammates, especially my linemates.”

The Dono brothers are members of the Rockets first line, along with Ethan McDermott, who’s also a senior captain.

“My brother and I have been members of the Auburn hockey team for the past three years now,” Nathan Dono said. “It has been a great experience playing with him. We really want to keep our season going as long as

See **HOCKEY**  
PAGE 8

## Registration now open for Quabbin Valley baseball

The Quabbin Valley Over-28 Baseball League is looking to infuse new talent into its league for the 2025 season.

Registration for the 2025 season is now open and any interested players can go to [www.quabbinvalleybaseball.org](http://www.quabbinvalleybaseball.org) to get registered, or to seek more information or make inquiries about the league. The league website will also be updated over the next month with information about the upcoming season.

There are many open roster spots available in the league for the 2025 season, which is tentatively sched-

uled to begin on Sunday, April 27. The league plays most Sunday from late April through mid-August with playoffs following that. The league plays a 15-game schedule and typically fields six teams each year. Games are usually played at 10 a.m. with fields in Easthampton and South Hadley normally used.

The Quabbin Valley league is an all-abilities league and all are welcome to join. Eligibility is players who are age 28 and over. You must be 30 to be eligi-

See **BASEBALL**  
PAGE 8

## Railers outlast Bloomington

WORCESTER – Officially, baseball is the only sport with doubleheaders, but it felt like the Railers-Wrenches played one Saturday night.

Worcester tied the first game, 4-4. It won the second one, 2-0. That added up to a 6-4 victory over the Bloomington Bison and two more points in the North Division playoff race.

The home team got big offensive performances from Griffin Loughran, Matthew Kopperud (again), Lincoln Hatten and Matt DeMelis.

Loughran and Kopperud were 1-1-2. DeMelis scored two goals. Hatten had the first three-point game of his career going 1-2-3.

Worcester winger Ryan Mahshie did not record a point. He did, however, record a hit that changed the nature of the night. At 14:26 of the second period, Mahshie delivered a clean, hard body check that led to a fight. He knocked down Bloomington’s Josh Boyer with a couple of

See **RAILERS**  
PAGE 8

## Pioneers win first-ever state tournament game

PALMER – For the first time since the MIAA changed tournament formats, Pathfinder Regional High School girls basketball won a matchup in the Division 5 State Tournament. Last Tuesday evening, the Pioneers defeated Boston United 47-36. Megan Clark had a huge game with 24 points. Addison Doktor had 17 points and Greenly Lagimoniere scored six points. The Pioneers moved into the Round of 32 after that. Highlights from that game will be in next week’s edition.

Megan Clark tries to get control of the loose ball.



Desiree Croteau eyes the hoop as she drives the lane.



Taylor Allen heads into the paint.



Addison Doktor tries to keep the ball in play.



Greenly Lagimoniere gets ready to shoot the three-pointer.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



- sports -

T-Birds take the win in a shootout over Providence

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — The Springfield Thunderbirds (27-19-2-4) dispatched 2-0 and 3-2 deficits en route to a 4-3 shootout win over the Providence Bruins (30-17-4-2) on Saturday night at Amica Mutual Pavilion.

The game's scoring began with a flurry in the final three minutes of a first period that had been quiet until that point. Vadim Zherenko had a tremendous highlight-reel moment past the period's midpoint as he stretched out the right leg to make a break-away save on a Vinni Lettieri backhand bid.

Providence, though, got back to work and took advantage of a 5-on-3 situation when Oliver Wahlstrom beat

Zherenko as the first penalty expired to give the Bruins a 1-0 lead at 17:04. Wahlstrom's goal marked his first in the AHL in nearly five years, as he was playing his first game in the league since March 11, 2020.

The Bruins lead grew to 2-0 just two minutes later as Riley Tuftte crashed the net to tip a Patrick Brown centering attempt by the skate of Zherenko. In the process, however, Tuftte was penalized for interference on Zherenko after the puck crossed the line.

While Tuftte's goal stood, the T-Birds' power play got a pivotal answer with just 12 seconds left in the first as Dalibor Dvorsky snapped a five-game goal drought with

a sizzling wrister from the right circle off a cross-seam pass from Nikita Alexandrov.

The Springfield power play continued its potent night just 2:07 into the second period, as Matthew Peca deflected a Matt Luff snapper past Michael DiPietro to tie the game, 2-2. Peca's goal tied his career-high in a single season (23) and tied Adam Gaudette for the longest goal-scoring streak in team history, as the captain has tallied a goal in six straight contests.

The Bruins generated most of the chances the remainder of the middle frame, but Zherenko stood firm in his crease, turning aside all 17 Providence attempts to carry the 2-2 game into the final

period.

Tuftte made things difficult on the T-Birds again when he broke in and beat Zherenko on a forehand chip shot 22 seconds into the final period, restoring the Providence lead to 3-2.

From that point onward, though, Zherenko made sure the home team would not get any insurance, keeping the deficit at a single goal. After getting a clutch penalty kill with less than 3:30 remaining in regulation, Corey Andonovski picked a fantastic time to net his first goal as a T-Bird. The newly acquired winger stopped at the bottom of the left circle and proved to be in the perfect spot as a MacKenzie MacEachern

rebound off DiPietro's pads found his stick. Andonovski snapped it by DiPietro, setting the stage for Springfield's third straight overtime game.

The visitors carried the play in the extra session with five of the six shots on net, but DiPietro fended off each bid, including a breakaway effort by Luff. For a third straight contest, the game advanced to a shootout. After neither team converted on the netminders in the first two rounds, Tanner Dickinson finally elevated a backhandler under the crossbar to give Springfield the edge. Needing a goal from John Farinacci to extend the shootout, the Bruins got just that, as the centerman faked beautifully to

the backhand side and forced a fourth round.

Alexandrov had his chance at redemption after coming up short on a game-winning attempt on Friday, and the T-Birds' jack-of-all-trades made a magnificent backhand-to-forehand maneuver to beat DiPietro. Tuftte was unsuccessful in his bid to solve Zherenko in the bottom of the round, and the T-Birds completed their comeback and victory. Zherenko finished the night with 42 saves in regulation and overtime, followed by three saves on four shootout attempts. In defeat, DiPietro stopped 31 attempts in 65 minutes before the shootout.

HOCKEY  
FROM PAGE 7

possible for the seniors."

According to Auburn hockey coach Glen Bombard, Nathan Dono is the first Auburn hockey player to reach 100 career points since 2007.

"I don't believe we've had a player reach 100 career points since 2007, so it's an awesome accomplished for Nate," said Bombard, who'll be retiring from coaching at the end of this season. "He's a very hard worker. He plays on the same line as his older brother, and they feed off each other. We played very well in tonight's game."

Bombard, who was a goalie when he played for the Auburn hockey team, formed a very good relationship with

LaPlante.

"I've built a very good bond with coach Bombard," LaPlante said. "It'll be strange not having him on the bench next year, but he always wants us to do our best."

LaPlante is also a catcher for the Warriors varsity baseball team. He normally starts whenever left-hander Miles Blake is on the mound.

"I love catching for Miles," LaPlante said. "He's always working very hard to become a better pitcher."

At this time next year, Blake will be playing Division 1 college baseball at Northeastern University.

The Tantasqua varsity baseball coach is Jon Leroux, who was an outstanding three-sport athlete at Auburn High School. Marcus Back-

lin, who's the Warriors AD, was a member of the Auburn hockey team when he was in high school.

The only hockey team to beat Auburn (17-3-1) on their home ice this season was Nashoba Regional, who pulled out a 5-4 overtime victory on January 22. The Rockets then closed out the regular season with an 8-0-1 record. The tie was against Mansfield, 3-3 at Horgan on February 8.

Auburn is looking to capture the state title for the first time since 1973. They were also state champions in 1968.

The Rockets took a 1-0 lead against the Panthers (10-9-2) at 2:09 of the first period following a goal by McDermott, which was assisted by senior Aidan Caron.

The Panthers fans, who

made the long trek from the North Shore, had something to cheer about when junior Matt Rice scored a power-play goal at 8:57 of the second period.

Laplante, who's been the Rockets starting goalie since he was a freshman, didn't see very much action after that, as he was credited with 14 saves.

Less than a minute later, Beverly sophomore Anthony Barror was sent to the box with a five minute major following a slashing penalty.

With 4:24 left in the second period, the Rockets retook the lead following a power-play goal by senior Landon Connor.

Because it was a major penalty, Auburn's power-play lasted the entire five minutes.

Nathan Dono made a lit-

tle bit of history by scoring a goal eight seconds later.

"I was skating down the ice and I saw an opening," he said. "I took a shot and scores a goal. It felt very good."

Austin Dono added his name to the scoring column with a goal with less than four minutes remaining in regulation. The goal was assisted by his younger brother and McDermott.

Connor capped off the scoring for the Rockets with an unassisted goal a minute later.

The Rockets were scheduled to host the ninth-seeded Whitman-Hanson Regional (14-4-3), who are also nicknamed the Panthers, in the round of 16, last Saturday night.

BASEBALL  
FROM PAGE 7

ble to pitch in the league. Your age for eligibility is whatever age you will turn in 2025.

The next league board meeting is scheduled for Sunday, March 23 at 11:45 a.m. at the Hangar Pub & Grill in South Hadley. The league has also scheduled two open practices on Sunday, March 30, and Sunday, April 6. Both practices are scheduled to be held at Beachgrounds Park in South Hadley and are weather-permitting. The league website and social media accounts will have updates as the preseason continues.

RAILERS  
FROM PAGE 7

hard punches early and got the building energized.

"That hit by Mahshie was the turning point of the game," coach Nick Tuzzolino said.

The first 27 1/2 minutes of the match were wild. There are next-goal-wins

games, but this was like next-shot-wins. The teams traded eight goals in that span and Worcester chased Bison goalie Yaniv Perets after Kopperud made it 4-3 at 2:43 of the second period.

Bloomington tied it at 7:30 on a goal by Jake Murray, who had a great night at 1-3-4. Kasimir Kaskisuo replaced Perets, but Tuzzolino

stuck with Hugo Ollas.

Ollas played shutout hockey the rest of the way. Kaskisuo played well, also. The Railers finally regained the lead on DeMelis' goal at 7:24 of the third period then Anthony Callin hit an empty net at 18:21.

How did Worcester regroup and play shutdown hockey after the early bar-

rage?

"I yelled loudly," Tuzzolino said.

"We talk about it all the time. Our biggest flaw as a team is goals against. If you look at the numbers, we have the worst goals-against stat in our division for the spot we're in. If we fix that, we're gonna win games, plain and simple.

"We have to understand that if we don't sell the farm and play systematically, we're gonna beat most teams."

The victory allowed Worcester to be able to control its fate. If it wins the rest of its games, it makes the playoffs no matter what anybody else does. That is the math, anyway. The reality is

different, particularly since the home team faces a tough schedule.

Worcester plays three at first place Trois-Rivieres next week, then three against third place Norfolk here from the 13th through the 15th. Both teams can score. Tuzzolino is hoping he won't need a megaphone.

2025 Fly Fishing Expo

Hosted by: Western Mass. Fly Fishermen  
Established in 1971

Monday, March 17th  
6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.



Speaker at 7:30 p.m.  
Ludlow Elks Lodge 69 Chapin Stree, Ludlow, Mass  
ADMISSION: \$8.00; Free for children under 12 years  
Guest Speaker: Harrison Anglers!

We target trout, pike, shad and smallmouth bass on the rivers on Western Mass and Southern VT.

We'll focus on our winter fisheries but will discuss our warm water options as well.



**Exhibitors:** Fly rod builders, fly fishing/material vendors. Mass State and Wildlife experts, other related exhibitors, and WMFF member demonstrating fly tying.

**Giant Raffle:** Many fishing items, a complete fly-tying kit. Bucket raffles for custom tied flies. Door prize is a fly rod combo.

Refreshments/Food for sale

Mention where you saw this advertisement or show your WMFF membership card and get \$1.00 off your admission

BLOOD DRIVE  
FROM PAGE 1

Frost's community service project as a member of the school's National Honor Society.

"I really liked the idea of a blood drive," Frost said. "I don't think we've done one in about 11 years."

Once she settled on the idea of hosting a blood drive, Frost reached out to several blood donation centers and quickly heard back from the Rhode Island Blood Center, which was eager to be involved.

"They set it up quick and easy," Frost said. "They were really great."

Frost said Rhode Island Blood Center is a subset of New York Blood Center and serves the greater New England region.

By 2:30 p.m. on the day of the blood drive, Rhode Island Blood Center had collected 52 pints of blood from students, school staff and members of the community. Frost said they had 89 people sign up in advance, which was just one person shy of the 90 person maximum for the day, not including walk-ins.

Frost said she also had 18 students sign up to volunteer during the blood drive; with each one earning community service hours.

She said a number of the student volunteers are interested in joining the medical field after graduation and they were able to receive some firsthand knowledge from the nurses on staff with Rhode Island Blood Center.

"This gave them good insight," Frost said.

After graduation, Frost

plans to attend college in New York and study art history and anthropology.

**About Rhode Island Blood Center**

Rhode Island Blood Center was founded in 1979 as a nonprofit community blood center. For over 40 years, we have been the primary supplier of blood and blood products to patients being cared for in hospitals throughout Rhode Island and the New England area.

As part of New York Blood Center Enterprises, with national reach through our many divisions, the Rhode Island Blood Center proudly serves as a vital community lifeline dedicated to helping patients and advancing global public health.

For more information, visit [iribc.org](http://iribc.org).

SOCIAL SECURITY  
FROM PAGE 4

Medicare premium, but those whose MAGI exceeds the first IRMAA threshold above will pay more.

How much more depends on how much their MAGI exceeds the first IRMAA threshold by. The IRMAA supplement (the additional premium amount) could be anywhere from \$69.90 to \$419.30 per month for Medicare Part B (coverage for outpatient services) or an additional \$12.90 to \$81.00 per month to the Medicare Part D (prescription drug plan) premium

- again dependent on how much over the initial MAGI threshold the person is for their IRS filing status. You can see the MAGI levels and corresponding IRMAA supplements by visiting this Medicare website at [www.cms.gov/newsroom/factsheets/2024-medicare-parts-b-premiums-and-deductibles](http://www.cms.gov/newsroom/factsheets/2024-medicare-parts-b-premiums-and-deductibles).

IRMAA and MAGI can be confusing. If people have questions about their Medicare premiums, help is available by emailing [SSadvisor@amacfoundation.org](mailto:SSadvisor@amacfoundation.org) or calling 1-888-750-2622.

The Association Mature

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# - community -

## Thrift Store offers bargains for all



SUBMITTED PHOTOS  
The Thrift Store at the George Whitefield United Methodist Church has everything from clothing to books.

WEST BROOKFIELD – The George Whitefield United Methodist Church in West Brookfield opened a Thrift Store in June 2023 which offers low-cost children’s and adult clothing and shoes, household goods, home décor, books, toys, etc. to the community on the first and third Saturdays of the month.

The Thrift Store, started by a dedicated group of volunteers, has expanded since its opening in size and hours of operation, and has proven popular with the community, as well as supporting the church’s ministry and missions.

Efforts are made to update inventory regularly and seasonally as new merchandise comes in, so that there are always new bargains to discover, whether you are a regular customer or visiting for the first time. Donations of gently used clothing for the current or upcoming season and household items in good condition are always in demand and much appreciated.

Hours of operation are the first and third Saturdays of each month, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at George Whitefield United Methodist Church, 33 West Main St. (Route 9), West Brookfield. For more information or to arrange a time to drop off donations, you may call Jane Dolan at 508-867-5571.



The Thrift Store has a large selection of coats.



The Thrift Store offers a variety of different style shoes.

## New Braintree Library holds story time

NEW BRAINTREE – Story time will be held Monday, March 17 at 9 a.m. at the New Braintree Public Library, 45 Memorial Drive.

The March 17 program for preschoolers focuses on St. Patrick’s Day. The readings will include “The Night Before St. Patrick’s Day” by Natasha Wing and “Pete the Cat, The Great Leprechaun Chase” by James Dean. Parental supervision is required for this reading and crafts program. People may call the library at 508-867-7650 during regular business hours for more information.

## Doolin Lads return to library on March 13

WEST BROOKFIELD – The Merriam-Gilbert Public Library in West Brookfield is pleased to welcome the return of the Doolin Lads on Thursday, March 13 at 6:30 p.m.

This St. Patrick’s Day tradition features traditional Irish music and is sponsored by the Friends of the Library. Please contact the Library by calling 508-867-1410 to register.



TURLEY PHOTO BY RICHARD MURPHY  
Valley Harp Trio plays for the Winter Farmers Market in West Brookfield.

### MARKET SPOTLIGHT FROM PAGE 1

and even Macedonian.

The variety of vendors was again in evidence, with baked goods, crafts, micro-greens, flowers, honey and maple syrup along the walls.

As usual, holding together the center of the room was Halley Stillman ably representing Still Life Farm.

Still Life grows vegetables and in the cold winter, that’s not seeds growing up from the bare ground. Such farming is a combination of art and science.

The farm has been using three high tunnels and an unheated greenhouse. This year, thanks to a NCRS grant, Still Life was able to put up two new unheated greenhouses (i.e. “high tunnels”). With the new infrastructure, the farm was able “to greatly increase the number of winter greens we could offer to our customers, allowing us to bring loads of greens to our winter farmers markets, and offer a Winter Greens CSA Add-on to our Winter CSA customers.”

Halley characterized it as “Having winter greens available on the farm is the equivalent of having raspberries or tomatoes in the summer, so this addition was a huge win for the farm and our customers!”

One has to agree as certainly by volume and probably weight, Still Life Farm has the most product at the market.

Spring is now almost

upon us and seasonal planting must happen soon with trays of thousands of seedlings. It’s serious business that began when her husband, Curtis purchased the farm in 2010, and Halley came on board in 2014. Son Kip and border collies round out the team.

The farm is in the idyllic town of Hardwick as Halley called it and who would gainsay that.

It is a lovely town, but as a farming “community,” it is productive and home to the Farmers Guild of Hardwick. The Guild was formed some years ago, and the Stillmans were part of the impetus.


According to Halley, “The grass-roots non-profit was started to bring awareness of the importance of farming and farmland in Massachusetts, with an emphasis on Hardwick and her surrounding communities. A ton of local food for Massachusetts is being grown, raised and produced right here in Hardwick and the surrounding communities. Our desire is to bring attention to that farming endeavor and encourage people to love and cherish it as much as the farmers do. Keep supporting your local farms, eat local, and protect the small amount of farmland that is still available here in Massachusetts. Keeping it local ensures we have a strong local food system to depend on all the time.”

Thus, the devotion to farming and to the town is strong. Both Still Life Farm and Farmers Guild of Hardwick have informative and active websites that reflect that and are worth visiting.

So is the Winter Market with the last day coming soon on March 12.



Garlic is ready to plant at Still Life Farm.



# Quabbin

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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**LOCAL TREE SERVICE** looking for climber and ground person. Must have driver's license in good standing. Call **413-507-1949**.

## HELP WANTED

**Worthington Police Department Full-time Police Officer**

The Worthington Police Department is seeking qualified candidates for **Full-time Police Officer**. Applicants must be a minimum of 21 years of age or older, a U.S. Citizen and possess a valid driver's license. They should also have a high school diploma/GED, license to carry and be certified by Massachusetts Municipal Police Training Committee and be POST certified.

This is a benefited position with a salary range of: \$52,000.00 - \$75,733.00. The successful candidate shall be highly motivated, self-disciplined, possess a community policing philosophy and live in or near Worthington. This position has the potential to be elevated to Police Chief.

Send letter of interest, resume and three references with relevant contact information to:  
**Worthington Police Department P.O. Box 247 Worthington, MA 01098**  
Or via email to: **sboard@worthington-ma.us**  
Subject line: Employment

Responses will be accepted and reviewed until the position is filled.  
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# 2025 TAX TIME

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- public safety -

New Braintree Police Log

During the weeks of Feb. 17-March 3, the Hardwick/New Braintree Police Department responded to 27 building/property checks, 34 directed/area patrols, four radar assignments, three traffic controls, three emergency 911 calls, two motor vehicle accidents, six safety hazards, three citizen assists, two assist other agencies, one complaint, one fire/illegal burn, three animal calls and six motor vehicle stops in the town of New Braintree.

**Monday, Feb. 17**  
11:24 a.m. Assist Citizen, Barre Road, Officer Handled  
3:24 p.m. Safety Hazard, Barre Road, Taken/Referred to Other Agency  
4:06 p.m. 911 Disabled Motor Vehicle, Unitas Road, Services Rendered  
9:07 p.m. Safety Hazard, Tucker Road, Taken/Referred to Other Agency

**Tuesday, Feb. 18**  
2:22 p.m. 911 Motor Vehicle Accident, Barre Road, Report Taken  
3:03 p.m. Motor Vehicle Accident, Barr Road, Services Rendered  
3:35 p.m. Assault, Memorial Drive, Report Taken

**Wednesday, Feb. 19**  
12:27 p.m. Scam, Old Common Road, Unknown Outcome  
3:21 p.m. Assist Citizen, Memorial Drive, Officer Handled

**Friday, Feb. 21**  
7:33 a.m. Safety Hazard, Hardwick Road, Taken/Referred to Other Agency  
10:05 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Hardwick Road, Written Warning  
11:40 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Ware Road, Written Warning  
3:53 p.m. Motor Vehicle

Stop, Hardwick Road, Written Warning

**Saturday, Feb. 22**  
11:15 a.m. Suspicious Activity, Unitas Road, Report Taken

**Monday, Feb. 24**  
4:22 p.m. Serve Warrant, Out of Town, Arrest(s) Made

**Tuesday, Feb. 25**  
1:11 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Memorial Drive, Officer Handled

**Wednesday, Feb. 26**  
8:13 a.m. Complaint, Ware Road, Taken/Referred to Other Agency  
4:06 p.m. 911 Welfare Check, Moore Road, Officer Handled  
6:31 p.m. Assist Citizen, Memorial Drive, Officer Handled

**Friday, Feb. 28**  
12:28 p.m. Disabled Motor Vehicle, Gilbertville Road, Vehicle Towed  
5:19 a.m. Safety Hazard, Gilbertville Road, Taken/Referred to Other Agency  
5:17 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Ware Road, Dispatch Handled

Saturday, March 1  
**7:38 p.m. Safety Hazard, West Road, Services Rendered**

**Sunday, March 2**  
6:32 a.m. Safety Hazard, Gilbertville Road, Taken/Referred to Other Agency  
11:22 pm. Fire/Illegal Burn, Old Common Road, Services Rendered

Police seek information about shooting incident

WEST BROOKFIELD – On Feb. 16, the West Brookfield Police Department responded to a report of shots fired at a Lake Street residence.

Fortunately, the victim was not struck. As part of an ongoing investigation, West Brookfield Police Department is asking for the public's help. They are looking for information about an older-model green Chevrolet pickup truck that was in the area of Cottage Street, Lake Street, and Wickaboag Valley Road around 2:50 p.m. on Feb. 16. At this point in the investigation, police believe but cannot yet confirm that the weapon used may have been a BB or airsoft gun.

Additionally, police have not been able to confirm whether this incident was a random act, targeted for other reasons, or related to the victim's political views. The West Brookfield Police Department is also aware that a neighboring community experienced a similar incident on the same date, and they are actively working to determine if there is any connection between the two cases. If you live in the area and have road-facing security cameras, please check your footage from that time. If you captured images of what may be the suspect vehicle, please send them to CCulver@Wbrookfield.com.

East Brookfield Police Log

During the weeks of Jan. 20-Feb. 9, the East Brookfield Police Department responded to 393 building/property checks, 175 directed area patrols, 19 traffic controls, 17 radar assignments, 32 emergency 911 calls, 12 citizen assists, six assist other agencies, four complaints, two frauds, four motor vehicle accidents, one fire/illegal burn, six safety hazards, one threat, one animal call and 53 motor vehicle stops in the town of East Brookfield.

**Monday, Jan. 20**  
7:03 a.m. 911 Motor Vehicle Accident, East Main Street, Vehicle Towed  
5:26 p.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Officer Handled  
6:18 p.m. 911 Complaint/Motor Vehicle Operations, Route 49, Transferred Call to C3  
7:55 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, East Main Street, Services Rendered

**Tuesday, Jan. 21**  
3:02 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Podunk Road, Services Rendered  
9:24 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Prospect Street, Transferred to Hospital

**Wednesday, Jan. 22**  
11:13 a.m. Safety Hazard, Route 49, Taken/Referred to Other Agency  
12 p.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Officer Handled  
3:12 p.m. Assist Other Agency, North Brookfield Road, Officer Handled  
3:41 p.m. Investigation, East Main Street, Investigated

**Thursday, Jan. 23**  
9:45 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Bridge Street, Transported to Hospital  
11:51 a.m. Assist Other Agency, Dunn Brook Road, Spoken To  
6:14 p.m. Fraud, Park Street, Officer Handled  
8:07 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued  
9:45 p.m. 911 Disabled Motor Vehicle, Howe Street, Vehicle Towed

**Friday, Jan. 24**  
11:13 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued  
2:12 p.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Officer Handled  
4 p.m. 911 Complaint/Motor Vehicle Operations, Pond Road, Citation Issued

**Saturday, Jan. 25**

10:09 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Mechanic Street, Written Warning  
11:59 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Bridge Street, Transported to Hospital  
12:23 p.m. Investigation, North Street, Gone On Arrival  
2:27 p.m. Assist Other Agency, East Main Street, Services Rendered

**Sunday, Jan. 26**  
12:53 a.m. 911 Hang-up/Abandoned, East Main Street, Services Rendered  
3:58 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Harrington Lane, Transported to Hospital  
12:46 p.m. Fire/Illegal Burn, Oakland Drive, Investigated

**Monday, Jan. 27**  
6:11 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued  
9:31 a.m. Motor Vehicle Accident, West Sturbridge Road, Transferred Call to C3  
1:01 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Route 49, Services Rendered  
5:15 p.m. Fraud, Connie Mack Drive, Officer Handled

**Tuesday, Jan. 28**  
1:27 p.m. Assist Citizen, South Pond Road, Dispatch Handled  
3:27 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Route 49, Citation Issued  
4:47 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Hodgkins Drive, Spoken To  
6:50 p.m. Complaint/Motor Vehicle Operations, Route 49, Taken/Referred to Other Agency

**Wednesday, Jan. 29**  
2:33 a.m. Parking Complaint, East Main Street, Citation Issued  
8:36 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Flagg Road, Transported to Hospital  
11:38 a.m. Complaint/Motor Vehicle Operations, Gulf Staton, Transferred Call to C3  
3:05 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Podunk Road, Citation Issued  
4:38 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Podunk Road, Transported to Hospital

**Thursday, Jan. 30**  
3:31 a.m. Medical Emergency, Stone Road, Transported to Hospital  
5:22 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Route 49, Citation Issued  
5:53 p.m. 911 Assist Citizen, East Main Street, Re-

port Taken

**Friday, Jan. 31**  
5:05 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Howe Street, Citation Issued  
3:06 p.m. Safety Hazard, Park Street, Taken/Referred to Other Agency  
9:17 p.m. Complaint/Motor Vehicle Operations, Route 49, Services Rendered

**Saturday, Feb. 1**  
1:45 a.m. Safety Hazard, Town Wide, Taken/Referred to Other Agency  
2:41 p.m. 911 Motor Vehicle Accident, West Sturbridge Road, Vehicle Towed  
3:40 p.m. Safety Hazard, Oakwood Drive, Removed Hazard

**Sunday, Feb. 2**  
8:50 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Flagg Road, Transported to Hospital  
1:11 p.m. 911 Assist Citizen, North Brookfield Road, Services Rendered  
2:52 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Howe Street, Transported to Hospital  
11:23 p.m. 911 Hang-up/Abandoned, Howe Street, Negative Contact

**Monday, Feb. 3**  
6:34 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued  
1:01 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Route 49, Citation Issued  
2:33 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Baker Hill Road, Transported to Hospital

**Tuesday, Feb. 4**  
8:16 a.m. Assist Citizen, Unknown Location, Officer Handled  
8:20 a.m. Suspicious Activity, Bay Path Road, Investigated  
9:02 a.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Officer Handled  
7:14 p.m. 911 Safety Hazard, Haywood Drive, Services Rendered

**Wednesday, Feb. 5**  
10:23 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, North Sturbridge Road, Transported to Hospital

**Thursday, Feb. 6**  
4:30 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Connie Mack Drive, Services Rendered  
4:58 p.m. Assist Citizen, North Brookfield Road, Officer Handled  
9:53 p.m. 911 Complaint/Motor Vehicle Operations, Route 49, Taken/Referred to Other Agency

**Friday, Feb. 7**  
6:54 a.m. 911 Motor Vehicle Accident, Podunk Road, Report Taken  
7 a.m. Safety Hazard, Podunk Road, Taken/Referred to Other Agency  
8:58 a.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Services Rendered  
9:49 a.m. 911 Disabled Motor Vehicle, Podunk Road, Services Rendered  
2:15 p.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Officer Handled  
4:18 p.m. Assist Citizen, Connie Mack Drive, Officer Handled  
8:52 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued

**Saturday, Feb. 8**  
12:30 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Faith Drive, Transported to Hospital  
1:13 a.m. 911 Threat, Flagg Road, Spoken To

**Sunday, Feb. 9**  
12:32 p.m. Medical Emergency, Podunk Road, Transported to Hospital  
1:11 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Draper Road, Transported to Hospital  
3:26 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Adams Road, Services Rendered

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# Historical Commission announces 2025 scholarship

WEST BROOKFIELD – The West Brookfield Historical Commission is pleased to announce its 2025, 14th annual scholarship in the amount of \$2,000.

Qualified students must reside in West Brookfield and may attend Quaboag Regional High School, or be school-choice students, home schooled students, and independent school students.

This award is made possible through the J. Irving and Jane L. England Charitable Trust.

**Application criteria**  
The students must be planning to attend either a four-year college/university program or a two-year college with the intent to a transfer to a four-year college. The commission will show preference to study plans with concentration on history and history-related areas. Major or minors may include political science, social studies, anthropology, archaeology, historical preservation, museum studies, and education in any of these related fields.

Applicants must submit a brief essay based on one of the Notable Persons or Significant Places listed on the application. All necessary information will be found on the West Brookfield Historical Commission website. <http://westbrookfield.org>.

Essays are due no later than April 11 by email to [info@westbrookfield.org](mailto:info@westbrookfield.org) or mail to West Brookfield Historical Commission, P.O. Box 372, West Brookfield, MA 01585.

The application and details can be found on the Historical Commission website- <http://westbrookfield.org>.

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