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Volume 19, Number 11

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Friday, July 17, 2026

Teddy Bear picnic



Piper held the Teddy Bears she collected around the bandstand.



Alida, age 6, attended the Teddy Bear Picnic with her mother Sonya. Alida brought her stuffed animal named Rainbow to the picnic.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY PAULA OUIMETTE

Cultural Council held children's event and concert

By Paula Ouimette
Editor

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BROOKFIELD – The Brookfield Cultural Council held a Teddy Bear Picnic last Friday evening, wel-

coming children and their favorite stuffed animal for fun and games.

While enjoying a picnic meal, the children also played a game of “Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, Turn Around” and joined council member Jeanne Lytle in a search for 24 carefully hidden Teddy Bears around the bandstand.

Participants were en-

couraged to either bring a picnic meal from home, or order one from the Smashing Patties food truck, owned and operated by Nate Lundstrom.

Following the Teddy Bear Picnic, the Friday night concert series continued with a performance by the Moonlight Saints.

Other events planned by the Brookfield Cultur-

al Council include July 24 from 6-8 p.m., concert by Triple Tribe Band; Aug. 1 from 3:30-8 p.m., concert at Oakholm Farm lakeside by Coffey Anderson; Aug. 7 from 6-8 p.m., concert by Glen Fant Band; Aug. 15 from 10 a.m.-7 p.m. 250th celebration/Freedomfest;

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Former BOH member Maureen Lepak resigns

Recall petition certified after departure

Staff Report

BROOKFIELD – Former Brookfield Board of Health member and chair Maureen Lepak resigned from her elected position effective June 29, prior to the certification of signatures on a petition seeking her recall.

A recall effort had been initiated by resident Brad Kadelski, who circulated a petition containing a number of allegations concerning Lepak’s conduct and tenure on the Board of Health.

Among other claims, the petition alleged that Lepak created a hostile environment, treated residents and businesses unfairly, contributed to resignations of town officials and employees, and pursued excessive regulation. It also criticized her handling of public comment and enforcement matters.

Lepak has disputed those allegations and has stated

that many of the claims can be evaluated against Board of Health meeting minutes, meeting recordings and other public records documenting the actions and votes of the Board.

On a website she created in response to the recall effort (www.01506.org), Lepak addressed the allegations individually and encouraged residents to review the underlying public records and complete meeting recordings. She has maintained that decisions attributed solely to her were, in many instances, actions or votes of the Board as a whole.

Lepak has also stated that her approach while serving on the Board was based on consistent enforcement of public health requirements and the principle that residents and businesses should be subject to the same rules without favoritism.

Regarding criticism that she did not permit public comment during a particular meeting, Lepak stated that public comment was not included on that meet-

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Board appointed new Town Planner

By Paula Ouimette
Editor

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STURBRIDGE – Aiden Adams was appointed to serve as Town Planner, following the upcoming retirement of Jean Bubon.

At the July 6 Select Board meeting, Town Administrator Robin Grimm said Adams was unanimously selected to the position, and currently works in Rhode Island.

“I think he will do a great job,” Bubon said.

Bubon said there is a transition plan in place for Adams to take over the position.

Town Administrator’s report

Grimm talked about the recent 250th celebration

parade and festival. She credited the volunteers for making it a success, and she also thanked voters for approving funding for the celebration, as well as state Rep. Todd Smola who secured an earmark.

Grimm said she would like to offer a formal thank you to the volunteers at the July 20 Select Board meeting.

“For volunteers to step up and do that amount of work is just tremendous,” she said.

Grimm also recognized town employee Leslie Wong for her participation, Old Sturbridge Village, and Lieutenant Larry Bateman and the Police Department for ensuring safety, and the Department of Public Works.

“A collective effort on a lot of parts,” she said.

Fire Department report

Fire Chief John A. Grasso Jr. presented his May and June department reports to the Select Board.

During the month of May, the department responded to 233 emergency incidents, of which 148 were EMS patient encounters with 75% of those encounters resulting in transport to area hospitals.

“Our crews maintain an average response time of 6 minutes and 12 seconds, with 74% of all of our emergency responses arriving in under 8 minutes,” Grasso said. “I’m very proud of

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TURLEY PHOTO BY RYAN DRAGO

Teagan, front, and Evelina are shown on the car ride at the carnival featured in this year's Independence Day celebration in East Brookfield.

SB discusses potential charter school

By Zacharias Fragkiadakis
Staff Writer
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WEST BROOKFIELD –The Select Board met July 7, where they discussed the possibility of bringing in a charter school to take over the property of the now closed West Brookfield Elementary School.

The school closed after the 2025-2026 school year due to a failed override vote.

Resident Denise Pontbriand attended the Select Board meeting of June 23, saying there was a charter school in the state interested in expanding to West Brookfield.

Pontbriand has not yet revealed the name of this

school that has been in operation for 31 years, since there was no official vote of interest taken by their board. She did not know the exact date a vote would be taken at the July 7 meeting, but said it would likely happen in early August.

Pontbriand had little information to give about the operations of the school, saying the estimated number of students is unknown, along with the grade range. She said students from West Brookfield would get some priority, but it would serve other towns.

She said it would be a lottery system.

According to Pontbriand, she met with officials including Alyssa Hopkins,

the assistant director of charter schools at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education along with Erica Brown of the Massachusetts Public Charter Schools Association. She said they are supportive of the idea, and other charter schools’ testing scores are similar in low and high income areas.

Discussing the costs, Pontbriand said a team is in the process of setting up a non-profit to raise money to set the school up, but did not know if that money continues to come in after it is operational. Resident Doreen Piechota said there are

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Independence Day celebrated at Connie Mack Field

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
rdrago@turley.com

EAST BROOKFIELD – The Independence Day celebration at Connie Mack Field took place this past weekend and was a celebration to remember.

This annual community celebration is made possible by the efforts and coordination of the Friends for the Community. This community group works in conjunction with the East Brookfield Fire Association to continue to offer this annual celebration around Independence Day.

President of the Friends for the Community, Holly Spahn, shared that the celebration in East Brookfield has been around for the last 75 years. The event has seen a lot of growth over the years as far as participation.

The Friends for the Community Board and their volunteers recruited craft vendors, food trucks, entertainment and other enjoyable amenities. This year, for the first time in nearly 20 years, the Independence Day Celebration welcomed a carnival at Connie Mack Field.

The group providing

carnival games, food, and rides was Rockwell Amusements.

Prior to the fireworks, Spahn came up to the gazebo at Connie Mack Field with her fellow Friends for the Community with a few announcements. The board consists of seven members who want to continue this celebration in the community they grew up in.

“We’re seven friends who grew up in East Brookfield, who didn’t want this tradition to die,” Spahn said.

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- community -



The Green Sisters performed for last Wednesday's Concerts on the Common series.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY CAMREN ROBERTSON

Summer concerts continue on Wednesdays

WEST BROOKFIELD – The Green Sisters performed during the Concerts on the Common series hosted by the Friends of the Bandstand last Wednesday. Concerts are held every Wednesday evening from 7-9 p.m. throughout the summer. Upcoming concerts include July 22, Dan Gabel and the Abeltones; July 29, The Deloreans; and Aug. 5, Disco Lemonade. For more information and updates on weather cancellations, follow “Friends of the West Brookfield Bandstand” on Facebook.



A child played with a hula hoop during the concert.



A large crowd filled the common to hear The Green Sisters perform.

Town Clerk lists Special Election information

WEST BROOKFIELD – Town Clerk, Klarissa Rose, announced that nomination papers are now available for the upcoming Special Town Election to be held on Sept. 1. These papers must be filed with the Board of Registrars, in the Town Clerk’s office, for certification on or before July 28 at 5 p.m. Final day to withdraw as a candidate is July 30 at 5 p.m. Appearing on the ballot will be the following: Select Board member, two-year term. Last day to register to vote before the Special Town Election is Friday, Aug. 21 from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. at the Town Clerk’s office at 2 East Main St.

East Brookfield summer concerts held Thursdays

EAST BROOKFIELD – The East Brookfield Summer Concert Series presented by the East Brookfield Bandstand Committee will be held at Connie Mack Field on Thursday evenings from 6-8 p.m. Upcoming concerts include July 23, Big Gunz; July 30, Brookfield Rhythm; Aug. 6, 4 Ever Fab; Aug. 13, ‘Dentity Crisis; and Aug. 20, Moonlight Saints. This year’s Summer Concert Series sponsors include Howe Lumber, Audette’s Towing, Cultural Council, North Brookfield Savings Bank, Lamoureux Ford and Klem’s.

Concerts on the Common continues on Saturdays

NORTH BROOKFIELD – North Brookfield Parks and Recreation, in conjunction with North Brookfield Cultural Council, will be hosting Concerts on the Common this summer season. A Mass Cultural Council grant is making these concerts possible for all residents to enjoy. Dates and bands include July 25 from 6-8 p.m. – Sue Lyons, an acoustical guitar player and vocalist; Aug. 15 from 6-8 p.m. – Stan Matthews, country music with some exceptional Johnny Cash tunes; and Aug. 29 from 3-5 p.m. – the Superchargers, a fun rock and roll band. All concerts are free. Food will be available for purchase but folks are welcome to bring their own. Feel free to bring chairs, blankets, bug spray and sunscreen – whatever makes you comfortable. The playground is right on the common, located on Grove Street in town. There will also be games for families to enjoy and some surprise craft tables during some concerts.

Registration open for Alex Cordy memorial golf tournament

St. Carlo Acutis Parish, Brookfield/West Brookfield/Warren, is having its 9th Annual Alex Cordy Memorial Charity Golf Tournament at Quail Hollow Golf and Country Club, 1822 Old Turnpike Road, Oakham, on Saturday, Sept. 12. Registration begins at 7:15 a.m., with a shotgun start at 8 a.m. Alex Cordy was an integral part of the West Brookfield community for many years. In memory of his outstanding service to his community, his parish and being a founding member of our Knights of Columbus Council 11080, this tournament will once again benefit the Youth Activities Fund to support the youth in the local community, a cause that was very important to Alex. The golf tournament organizers were able to award two \$1,000 scholarships this past year from the proceeds of this event to two local high school seniors, as well as fund many other youth activities. Consider supporting this event by sponsoring or participating in the tournament individually or with a foursome. Tournament raffle items and general donations to this event are always welcomed and appreciated. Registration and sponsorships are now available for this tournament. To register, and for more information, please call 413-813-8100 or email wally-connor122@gmail.com.

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- community -

Lions host community service carnival to launch new club

WARREN – The public is invited to experience the service, fellowship, and community spirit of Lions Clubs at the upcoming Lions Service “Carnival” on Saturday, July 18 from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at the St. Stanislaus Polish Club, South Street, West Warren, in conjunction with the Ware Lions.

The family-friendly event will showcase the many ways Lions Clubs serve their communities while offering a day of fun activities, food, and entertainment for all ages.

Visitors will have the opportunity to learn about Lions Club membership and community service programs, as well as participate in free eye screenings. Children can enjoy a bounce house and games, while complimentary refreshments – including snow cones, cotton candy, popcorn, hot dogs and water – will be available for children while supplies last.

A highlight of the day will be a Cornhole Tournament beginning at noon. Registration and warm-up activities start at 11 a.m. The entry fee is \$20 per person, with cash prizes awarded to top competitors.

Participants may register in advance through the Scoreholio app or sign up on the day of the tournament. All proceeds from the tournament will benefit local veterans.

“This event is a way we can make the community aware of what the Lions have to offer the community, and it is also part of a membership drive with the hopes of starting a new club in Warren,” said Curt Jameson, past district governor of Lions Clubs District 33A and chair of the event.

The event is open to the public and admission is free. For more information, contact Jameson at curt6203@gmail.com.

Registration open for Lions Club golf tournament

NORTH BROOKFIELD – Registration is now open for the 2026 Brookfields Lions Club golf tournament, according to event chair, Marc Kokansky.

The annual event is taking place on Saturday, Aug. 22 at the Quail Hollow Country Club, 1822 Old Turnpike Road, Oakham. The four-person scramble tournament begins with registration at noon, followed by a 1 p.m. shotgun start.

The entry fee is \$100 per golfer, which includes 18 holes of golf, cart, skins competition, closest-to-the-pin contests and a meal following the tournament at Quail Hollow Country Club.

Proceeds from the tournament will benefit the Brookfields Lions Club’s charitable programs and community service projects throughout the area. Through fundraising

events such as this tournament, the club supports local organizations and individuals while carrying out the Lions’ mission of serving those in need.

To register a team or obtain additional information, contact Kokansky at 508-847-9843. Registration is open now through Aug. 15.

About the Lions Club

As the world’s largest, youngest and most active service organization, the mission of Lions Clubs International is to empower volunteers to serve their communities, meet humanitarian needs, encourage peace, and promote international understanding.

Members of the Brookfields Lions Club are dedicated to service and support in the communities of Brookfield, East Brookfield, North Brookfield, West Brookfield, and New Braintree.

next steps for filling the vacant position.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Accepting the certificate of award of the MassTrails grant are shown from left, Garcia Guadalupe, MassTrails Grant Coordinator; Fritz Reeve and Tom Chamberland, Sturbridge Trails Committee; and Amanda Lewis, MassTrails Program Director.

Sturbridge awarded \$500,000 MassTrails grant

STURBRIDGE – The Sturbridge Trails Committee was awarded a \$500,000 MassTrails grant for the 469a Trail & Bridge project.

The award was announced at the annual Mass Trails Grant ceremony held in Clinton. This grant will fund a portion of the \$2 million project that will construct a shared use path from 501 Main St. to the Riverlands, installing a bridge to cross the Quinebaug River and a boardwalk over the his-

toric canal that took water from the river to the former “auger shop” on Route 20.

This project was first envisioned over 20 years ago as a part of the town wide goal of connecting neighborhoods too our open space properties.

Attending the ceremony to receive the grant were Trails Committee members Fritz Reeve and Tom Chamberland. Both were instrumental in completing and submitting the grant application.

Town Administrator

Robin Grimm said of the award, “I am excited to announce this grant award and the tireless efforts of the Sturbridge Trails Committee in achieving this grant towards the bridge project recently voted at the town meeting. This bridge will connect the trails system to our parking lot in the commercial retail district giving trail users access to and from our restaurants and small retail shops on Route 20. This money will directly offset the costs approved

by the Town Meeting from the CPC funds freeing up that amount for future CPC projects”

Trails Committee Chair, Brandon Goodwin added, “This trail and bridge project will complete a key connection of the Riverlands and Grand Trunk Trail to our Route 20 commercial and residential areas, a major goal of our trails master plan.”

Construction is expected to start in the fall of 2026 and be completed in late summer 2027.

Tournament to be held by Sons of A.L.

WEST BROOKFIELD – Sons of the American Legion, Post 244, West Brookfield is hosting its 21st Annual “Scholarship Scramble” Golf Tournament on Saturday, Aug. 8 at Quail Hollow Country Club in Oakham.

The 18-hole tournament will have a 8 a.m. shotgun start. Chicken dinner, raffles and prizes to follow at the Legion Post 244 in West Brookfield.

The registration fee is \$120 per person and must be received by Aug. 1. To register, contact Kevin at 774-230-3262 or Gary at 508-450-8643.

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ing’s agenda and that she supported holding a separate public hearing where all interested residents would have an equal opportunity to participate.

In her June 29 resignation letter, Lepak stated that her decision to resign should not be viewed as validation of the allegations advanced in connection with the recall effort. She cited concerns regarding conflicts of interest and circumstances she believed had compromised the Board’s ability to provide consistent and impartial regulatory oversight.

The Brookfield Board of Registrars subsequently met on July 8 and certified 662 signatures on the recall petition. According to Town Clerk Mike Seery, 576 valid signatures were required for the recall process to move forward.

The certification occurred nine days after Lepak’s resignation. Because Lepak had already left of office, the recall process did not result in her removal from the Board of Health.

The Board of Health is expected to determine the

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- opinion -

An endless supply of flowers for the windowsill

I must admit that I feel unmotivated in the flower garden this summer. It took me forever to sow my seeds, and even longer to install the resulting plants.

The seedlings finally went into the ground a good two weeks after Memorial Day (gasp!) but they are making up for lost time despite my bad attitude! Just last week the first bouquet graced the kitchen windowsill.

In a few weeks I will have a collection of different vases filled with flowers in that very spot; it's something I look forward to doing every summer. But if I am going to have flowers to fill the vases, I have to keep up with maintenance.

It's not enough to sit back and watch them grow.

Here is some great advice worth repeating that will help to keep summer annuals looking their best.

Deadhead

Most annuals will continue to bloom abundantly if they are deadheaded on a regular basis. Deadheading is an entertaining term used to define the removal of spent flowers.

You see, a plant produces flowers for one purpose: to survive. Once a flower has been pollinated it will produce seed, seed that will grow future plants.

If a plant has produced enough flowers that have gone to seed it will consider its job to be done, flower production will cease and it will begin to decline.

By deadheading, we keep the plant in reproductive mode, in other words, in flower! When you remove dying blossoms, make sure to pinch off the entire flower, not just the petals, or it will do no good. Include the stem as well to keep the plant tidy.

Petunias, marigolds, zin-

nias and salvia, among others, are examples of plants that require regular deadheading to look their best throughout the growing season.



Shear them back to encourage new growth

Some annuals start to get a leggy appearance about now. Others may have brown tips. These plants require more drastic measures to bring back their youthful good looks.

Give them a good haircut. Simply look within the plant and find healthy, green growth. Cut calendulas, pansies and snapdragon back to that point.

Alyssum or lobelia can often be sheared to within inches of the ground.

Don't worry; they won't look bad for long! You can jump start regrowth with a bit of liquid fertilizer.

Feed your plants

Occasionally, even plants that are well fertilized at planting time begin to have issues. If foliage is pale and flower production is nil, pull back the bark mulch and sprinkle some organic fertilizer granules at the base of each plant.

Cultivate gently and water in.

You can also use a water soluble liquid fertilizer every couple of weeks. If going natural is your cup of tea, make some!

Compost or manure tea has long been used to keep growth lush. Steep a burlap bag of either compost or aged manure in a large trash bucket filled with water and use as needed. Smaller

batches can be made right in a watering can.

Likewise, there are numerous blends of seaweed and fish emulsion on the market that can be watered in or used as a foliar feed.

Water, water, water

If Mother Nature fails to provide at least an inch of rain each week, then unfortunately we must make up the difference. It is so easy to forget to perform this very obvious maintenance task, especially when we are busy doing other things.

If we are negligent often enough, however, our plants will suffer.

Sometimes pale green foliage is a nitrogen deficiency from simply a lack of water. When you water the garden, remember to do so in the early morning, if possible, to avoid evaporation.

Early evening is another good option, but try to get the job done with enough time for the foliage to dry before darkness sets in.

Deep waterings twice a week are far better than numerous quick showers. The former will promote deep, penetrating roots and future drought tolerance.

Well-watered, well-fed and well-groomed annuals will reward you with beautiful bountiful blossoms for another two months or more – well worth the effort for vases of flowers on the windowsill!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 34 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.



Black and white warbler

My daughter, Paula, saw a black and white warbler and as the name implies it has black and white feathers.

The black and white warbler is easy to spot and easy to recognize. Its former name was the black and white creeper. Like the white-breasted and red-breasted nuthatches and the brown creeper, it climbs about on the trunks and major limbs of trees seeking insects in the bark crevices. It often feeds low, and nests even lower, usually on the ground.

This warbler inhabits forests, woodlands, shrubs, Savannas, and thickets from Alaska and the north, California, eastern Canada, Florida, Great Lakes, mid Atlantic, New England, northwest, Plains, Rocky Mountains, southeast, southwest, Texas and Western Canada.

Spring migration begins rather early and takes place mainly at night. Migration is spread over a lengthy period in both spring and fall.

The sexes are similar and are about 4.3 to 5.1 inches long. The black and white warbler feather pattern is stripes, white central crown stripe and black streaks on back and sides.

The adult male has black throat and cheeks and the female and young paler or whitish there.

Their song is a thin, high-pitched, monotonous "weesy-weesy-weesy" like a squeaky wheelbarrow. The call is a chirp or chip.

The black and white warbler breeds in mature or second-growth forests, deciduous and mixed. Males arrive on breeding grounds in late April, before the females.

During courtship, a male chases female, with much singing and fluttering. The female lays five creamy white eggs flecked with brown in a cup shaped nest on the ground or less than than two feet above under dead leaves or limbs or against a shrub or tree. They are commonly

parasitized by cowbirds.

Both parents feed the young and the young leave the nest in eight to 12 days after hatching. The young are able to fly well.

Adapted to creeping along limbs and on tree trunks to feed, they forage on dormant insects from tree trunks and branches in early spring. They switch body from side to side at each hop while foraging. Sometimes, they fly out after insects in the air.

They eats primarily insects. It feeds on a wide variety of caterpillars including those of spongy moth, beetles including bark beetles, click beetles, and wood borers, ants, flies, bugs, leafhoppers, aphids and other insects, spiders and daddy longlegs.

Massachusetts Audubon sightings

Unusual bird sightings reported in late June to the Massachusetts Audubon Society included swallow-tailed kites in Mashpee, a Mississippi kite in Harwich and a Franklin's gull and two royal terns in Provincetown.

Central Massachusetts sightings in the Ware River watershed included: a great blue heron, belted kingfisher, yellow-bellied sapsucker, two northern flickers, two eastern woodpeckers, two alder flycatchers, two least flycatchers, three eastern Phoebe's, four great crested flycatchers and two eastern kingbirds, a yellow-throated vireo, a blue-headed vireo, six warbling vireos, 110 red-eyed vireos, a common raven, two red-breasted nuthatches, two house wrens an eastern bluebird, 43 veery, a hermit thrush, a wood thrush, 34 gray catbirds and four cedar waxwings.

Also reported were a blue-winged warbler, four yellow warblers, seven chestnut sided warblers,, three black-throated warblers, three green warblers, a Blackburnian warbler, seven pine warbles, on prairie warbler, three black and white warblers; two redstarts, 56 ovenbirds, 28 yellow-throated warblers, a Canada warbler, nine scarlet tanagers, six eastern towhees, a field sparrow, three swamp sparrow, a rose-breasted grosbeak, four indigo buntings, two bobolinks and three red crossbills..

People may report a bird sighting by emailing edownner@turley.com or calling or texting 774-262-5882.

Why can't I get a lump sum death benefit from my wife?

Dear Rusty:

My wife passed away in September 2025 at age 64.

We had been married for 43 years and started collecting benefits when I turned 62 and she was 63. She did not have enough work credits to claim her own SS and thus collected on my record. SSA told me that I was not entitled to receive the lousy \$255 death benefit because my wife was collecting on my work record. Is this correct?

Signed: Grieving Widower

Dear Grieving:

We extend our sincere condolences on your wife's passing.

But I must tell you that what the Social Security Administration told you is correct.

Although we often see assertions that the so-called "one-time lump sum death benefit" is always paid, there are specific rules for when that admittedly small SS benefit is available. And there are also specific rules regarding who is eligible to receive it.

Essentially, the lump sum death benefit is paid when the deceased person was collecting Social Security retirement benefits or at least entitled to SS retirement benefits. And that one-time



lump sum death benefit usually goes to the deceased person's surviving spouse, more on that later.

But for the death benefit to be paid, the deceased person must have been collecting Social Security retirement benefits or was at least entitled to SS retirement benefits.

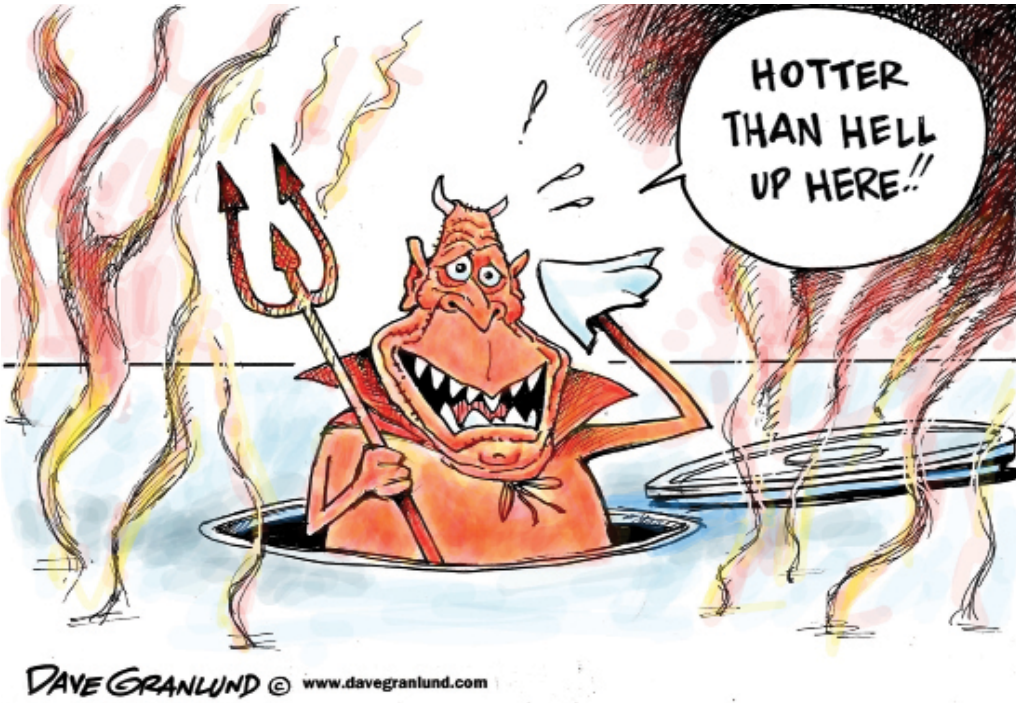
In your specific case, because your wife was not eligible for her own SS retirement benefit and was, instead, just collecting a spousal benefit from your SS record, you unfortunately are not able to collect the lump-sum death benefit as your wife's surviving spouse. So, what you were told by Social Security about this special survivor benefit is, indeed, correct.

For information, here is a bit more on who can collect the SS death benefit: the one-time lump sum death benefit is normally paid to the eligible surviving spouse of a deceased person, who was collecting Social Security.

But if there is no sur-

living spouse to receive the onetime payment, the death benefit may be paid to someone else who was also a dependent of the deceased. That might be a minor surviving child or a surviving adult disabled child, who

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QUABOAG CURRENT

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Great on the Grill **\$8⁹⁹** lb

USDA INSP.
GROUND FRESH DAILY
**DIET LEAN
GROUND BEEF** 5 LB BAG **\$5²⁹** lb

CHICKEN TENDERLOINS 10 LB. BAG **\$1⁸⁷** lb

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TURLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO
Independence Day was celebrated in East Brookfield with festivities taking place at Connie Mack Field.

**INDEPENDENCE DAY
FROM PAGE 1**

The Friends of the Community thanked all the support throughout the community they have gotten leading up to the Independence Day celebration. The event was supported by numerous businesses, town departments, and community members who come together to celebrate community and the birth of the U.S., which is now 250 years old. Spahn and her fellow

Friends for the Community would lead the packed crowd on Connie Mack Field in a countdown to the fireworks to conclude the Independence Day Celebration. There was a concert during the celebration as guests gathered at Connie Mack Field to listen to the classic rock band, She's Busy. This talented group played many classic rock covers, including songs by U2 and the Rolling Stones. The carnival was a new

addition to this year's Independence Day celebration, and included food trucks, games, prizes and rides. Guests also shopped locally as craft vendors were set at Connie Mack Field. One vendor, Tiger Spirit Martial Arts of Spencer, had an obstacle course set up for kids to enjoy. Bri's Sweet Treats were set up and had free samples and desserts for sale. The Friends for the Community was operating under the Connie Mack Snack Shack



Sensei Jamie Nelson of Tiger Spirit Martial Arts in Spencer set up a fun obstacle course at Connie Mack Field.



Michael made his way down the fun slide.



The dragon-themed roller coaster was enjoyed at the carnival, provided by Rockwell Amusements.

Earlier in the day, the East Brookfield Independence Day celebration featured the Boat Parade on Lake Lashaway, which was organized by the Lake Lashaway Lake Association. The parades continued in East Brookfield with the Kids Wheels parade and the Main Parade featuring a lot of patriotic floats. For more information, follow the Friends for the Community on Facebook, "FFTC (Friends for the Community.)"



A 3D print of Uncle Sam's hat commemorated the 250th anniversary of the U.S.



The carnival featured a lot of fun games including Milk Can Toss.



A fun ring toss game called "Ring A Duck."

SEPTEMBER 2026

magazine

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SPORTS

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Here for Beer shuts out Monson Mustangs



Gwen Duggan makes a pass toward midfield.



Martine Worrall-Turgeon eyes a teammate up the field.

SOUTH HADLEY – Last Thursday evening, Here for Beer scored a big win over Monson Mustangs 5-0 in Women's summer soccer action. The two teams were in a key matchup with

both teams near the top of the Women's Division in the PVSSL. Here for Beer is now alone in second place at 6-1 while Monson is now 5-2 heading into the final weeks of the regular season.



Taryn Carriveau turns play around after taking possession.



TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM
Shean Smith socks a free kick away.



Cassie Ashwell sends a pass away.



TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM
Ronan O'Brien heads past midfield.

Vermont Green hands Pioneers defeat

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

LUDLOW—The members of the Western Mass. Pioneers gathered for a team photo before kicking off their regularseason finale against rival Vermont Green FC last Friday night.

Having been eliminated from the USL League 2 playoffs for the first time since 2018, the Pioneers were hoping to end Vermont Green's long unbeaten streak.

The Pioneers overcame a 2-0 halftime deficit to tie the score early in the second half, but Vermont Green stretched their unbeaten streak to 37 matches following a 4-2 victory before a large crowd at Lusitano Stadium.

"Our main goal was to make the playoffs, which we've been able to do every year since 2018," said Pioneers head coach Federico Molinari. "We battled back in the second half, but it just wasn't enough."

Vermont Green (13-0-1), who are the defending USL League 2 champions, haven't suffered a loss since a 3-0 setback against Seacoast United in the 2024 Eastern Conference semifinals.

Alfred Baafi, who completed his first season playing for the Pioneers, was a member of the Seacoast United squad, which wound up winning the National championship title, two years ago.

"We really wanted to beat our rivals in tonight's game," said Baafi, who



Shun Murasawa sends a free kick away.

led the Pioneers with four assists. "It was a great feeling after my Seacoast team beat them in the playoffs two years ago. I really enjoyed playing for the Pioneers this summer. My dream is to play for a professional soccer team."

One of the Pioneers veteran players is Santiago Blasco Gomez, who was the team captain.

"This is my third season playing for the Pioneers and I love this place," Gomez said. "We've made the playoffs the past two years, which was an amazing experience. It's disappointing not making it this year. I'm hoping to play here again next year."

Gomez, who's from Alborache, Spain, was a graduate student on the Bryant University men's

See PIONEERS PAGE 8

St. Joe's grabs win over PeoplesBank

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

HOLYOKE— Since 1995, the PeoplesBank baseball team has built a dynasty in the Tri-County League, capturing 21 championship titles, including each of the last 13 seasons.

The St. Joseph's Saints, who are looking to win the TCL championship title for the first time in two decades, are determined to knock PeoplesBank from its perch this summer.

In a span of 48 hours last week, the Saints celebrated two victories in the rivalry series.

St. Joseph's traveled to Mackenzie Stadium in Holyoke last Wednesday night and defeated PeoplesBank, 10-5, which kept them in first place in the league standings.

"We've faced Peoples in the championship series the past couple of years, and they've gotten the best of us," said St. Joe's short-stop Devin Slattery, who had a base hit and scored three runs in last Wednesday's game. "We beat them in a regular season game last year and they're a great team. We're also outstanding team this year and we're



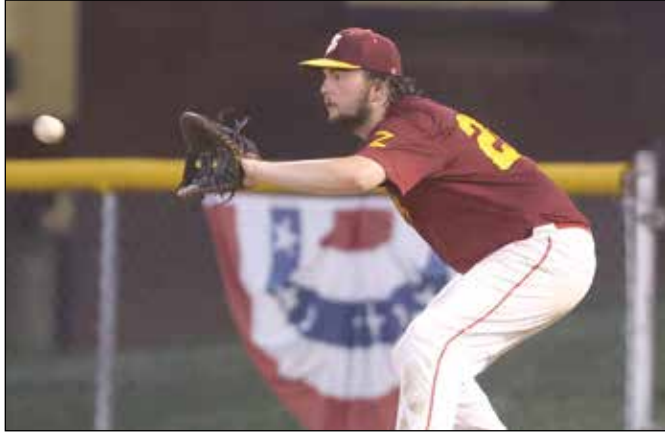
TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM
Jack Feltovic sends a pitch away

trying to win the championship title."

St. Joe's entered this week's action with a 13-3 overall record, while Peoples had an 11-3-1 mark.

"We made a couple of mental errors in tonight's game," said Peoples player/manager Joe Ferry. "We out hit them, but we left too many runners on base. It's a frustrating loss."

Peoples, who fired a 6-0 shutout victory in the first meeting of the regular season between the teams, never held the lead in last Wednesday's game.



Dillon Slattery makes the catch at first for an out.



James Flahive delivers a pitch for PeoplesBank

by the catcher that bounced into left field.

"I believe baseball games are won and loss on the bases," said Devin Slattery, who played for Peoples for one season before moving to St. Joe's. "We put some pressure on them in the second inning, and they made a throwing error."

Dillon Slattery, who finished the game with two base hits and scored three

See TRI-COUNTY PAGE 8



Johnny Gegestkas connects on a base hit.



Alfred Baafi approaches the ball.

- public safety -

East Brookfield Police Log

During the week of June 29-July 4, the East Brookfield Police Department responded to 155 building/property checks, 99 directed area patrols, 22 radar assignments, nine traffic controls, nine emergency 911 calls, one citizen assist, one assist other agency, one stolen motor vehicle, one illegal dumping, one complaint, two animal calls and 55 motor vehicle stops in the town of East Brookfield.

Monday, June 29
5:49 a.m. 911 Misdial, Harrington Street, Officer Handled
3:25 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
5:47 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
6:10 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Howe Street, Written Warning
7:16 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued

Tuesday, June 30
6:43 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
5:23 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued
5:35 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
7 p.m. Traffic Control, East Main Street, Citation Issued
7:10 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
7:39 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued
10:12 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, West Main Street, Citation Issued

Wednesday, July 1
12:04 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
11:12 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Brookfield Road, Citation Issued
11:39 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
11:49 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Vehicle Towed

12:19 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Podunk Road, Citation Issued
12:37 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Podunk Road, Citation Issued
12:44 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Podunk Road, Citation Issued
12:55 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
1:11 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
1:54 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
2:07 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
2:14 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
3:28 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Connie Mack Drive, Officer Handled
4:32 p.m. Radar, Route 49, Citation Issued
4:35 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Route 49, Citation Issued
4:43 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Route 49, Citation Issued
5:33 p.m. 911 Misdial, Drake Lane, Services Rendered
6:59 p.m. Illegal Dumping, Lakeview Avenue, Officer Handled

Thursday, July 2
12:07 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
5:41 a.m. Fire/Alarm, East Main Street, Investigated
6:16 a.m. Fire/Alarm, North Street, Investigated
9:11 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Pleasant Street, Transported to Hospital
2:31 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, South Pond Road, Patient Refusal
5:27 p.m. Stolen Motor Vehicle, West Main Street, Services Rendered
7:03 p.m. Radar, Route 49, Citation Issued
7:07 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Route 49, Citation Issued
7:49 p.m. 911 Misdial, Jean Avenue, Services Rendered
9:41 p.m. 911 Fire/Oth-

er, East Main Street, Services Rendered
Friday, July 3
7:23 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
7:38 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
8:01 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Mechanic Street, Citation Issued
8:11 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
8:46 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
8:53 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
9:03 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
9:19 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
10:22 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
10:38 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
10:52 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
11:35 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
12:18 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Cottage Street, Citation Issued
2:50 p.m. Assist Citizen, West Main Street, Officer Handled
6:33 p.m. 911 Fire/Other, Adams Road, Services Rendered
8:46 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued

Saturday, July 4
9:10 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued
12:08 p.m. 911 Complaint, Route 49, Unfounded
1:25 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Wildwood Road, Transported to Hospital
5:47 p.m. Directed/Area Patrol, Howe Street, Arrest(s) Made
7:33 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, East Main Street, Citation Issued

New Braintree Police Log

During the week of July 7-13, the Hardwick/New Braintree Police Department responded to 20 building/property checks, 24 directed/area patrols, seven radar assignments, two traffic controls, one emergency 911 call, two citizen assists, one complaint, two safety hazards, three animal calls and six motor vehicle stops in the town of New Braintree.

Tuesday, July 7
11:18 a.m. Assist Citi-

zen, McEvoy Road, Services Rendered
12:56 p.m. Safety Hazard, West Brookfield Road, Services Rendered
Wednesday, July 8
6:24 a.m. Safety Hazard, West Brookfield Road, Referred to Other Agency
2:22 p.m. Assist Citizen, Memorial Drive, Officer Handled

Friday, July 10
4:50 p.m. Motor Vehicle

Stop, Hardwick Road, Written Warning
5:03 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Hardwick Road, Written Warning
9:52 p.m. Complaint, Memorial Drive, Officer Handled

Sunday, July 12
7:51 a.m. 911 Misdial, Moore Road, Spoken To
4:26 p.m. Suspicious Activity, Unitas Road, Investigated

- public notices -

INVITATION TO SUBMIT PROPOSAL
The Town of West Brookfield, Massachusetts, will receive sealed proposals for:
Route 9 Reconstruction, Phase III:
From Pierce Road to The State Highway at Cutler Road Contract #612779-2
The Town of West Brookfield, acting through its Department of Public Works, is requesting proposals from MassDOT pre-qualified individuals and firms for the design, and engineering consulting services for Route 9 Reconstruction, Phase III: From Pierce Road to the State Highway at Culter Road. The consultant will work with the Town and the community to develop a project design that is advanced into construction ready documents. The consultant will design, prepare construction plans, specifications, construction cost estimates, prepare and obtain all required permits and approvals as necessary, and provide

bidding and construction phase services for the project in accordance with all MassDOT and FHWA requirements. The goal is to have the project constructed with funding through the Central Massachusetts MPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).
The Request for Qualifications (RFQ) may be obtained from West Brookfield Highway Department (agarwood-hampp@wbrookfield.com), 15 Front St., West Brookfield, Massachusetts, during normal working hours from Tuesday, July 15, 2026 until the expiration of the time for the filing of the proposals.
Sealed, Responses to the RFQ will be received by the office of the Highway Department, 15 Front St., West Brookfield, MA 01585, **until 10:00 A.M. Local Time on Monday, August 24, 2026.** Proposals delivered after the appointed time and date will not be considered.
The proposer agrees that this proposal shall be good and may

not be withdrawn for a period of ninety (90) calendar days after the proposal deadline. The Contractor must comply with all applicable federal, state and local law and regulations. Five (5) hard copies of the RFQ proposal and one (1) electronic copy of said proposal on a USB flash drive shall be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "**RFQ - Contract # 612779-2 Route 9, Phase III Reconstruction**".
The Town reserves the right to cancel any request for qualifications, and to reject in whole or in part any and all proposals, when it is deemed in the best interests of the Town to do so.
Theresa A. Cofske, MCPPO
Town of West Brookfield,
Town Administrator
07/17, 07/24/2026



SOCIAL SECURITY FROM PAGE 4
was collecting dependent benefits from the deceased person's SS record. In rare cases, a dependent parent may be paid if no other surviving dependents are eligible. FYI, ex-spouses are not eligible for a death benefit from a former spouse.
The lump-sum death benefit must be applied for by contacting Social Security and the benefit must be claimed within two years of the person's death. You will need to verify your identity and confirm your eligibil-

ity for this survivor benefit and you will need to provide other information about the deceased also including a death certificate.
There is an SSA form to apply for the lump sum death benefit (SSA-8), but calling your local SS office or 1-800-772-1213 to make an appointment to apply for the one-time lump-sum death benefit in person is usually all that is needed.
The Association Mature Citizens Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or

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

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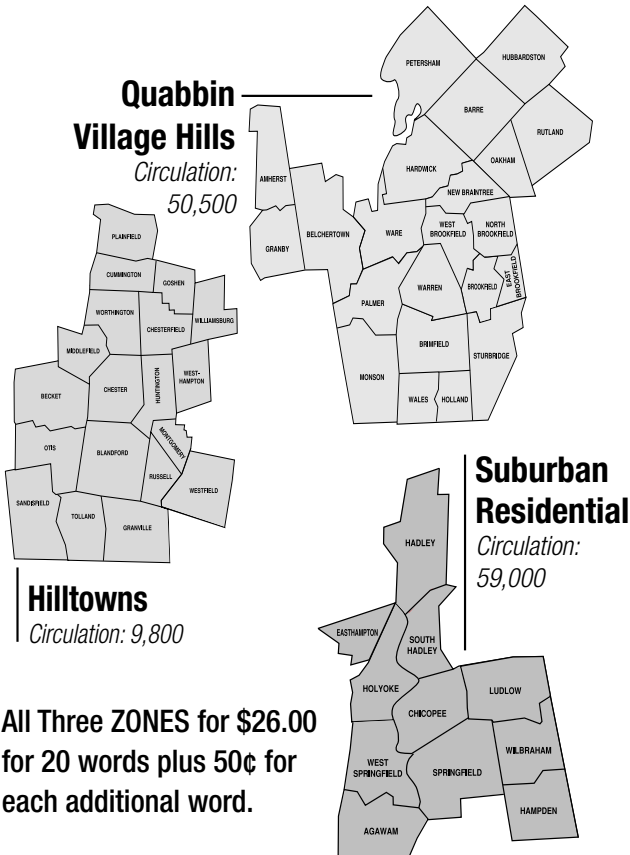
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Local leaders present case for Quabbin funding

By Zacharias Fragkiadakis
Staff Writer
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BELCHERTOWN – Local leaders gathered at the Les and Terry Campbell Quabbin Visitor Center to present their case to the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority board of directors for additional funding for the towns bordering the Quabbin Reservoir.

The discussion centered on Senate bill S546 and House bill H1042, which would, in part, create a \$35 million trust fund for the dozen Quabbin towns to receive annual payments, and give the towns more representation on the MWRA.

Attendees included state Rep. Aaron Saunders, state Sen. Jo Comerford, state Sen. Peter Durant and state Rep. Todd Smola. Members of local leadership such as select boards from several Quabbin towns gave speeches, with the exception of Phillipston and Wendell.

The first to speak was Saunders, who represents the 7th Hampden District, including Belchertown. He talked about how the Quabbin is a water extraction operation, with about 180 million gallons extracted per day.

Despite this, he said, there is little water access in Belchertown, as there is a

mandatory water ban in the town. The only town in the state that receives water from the reservoir and currently has a water ban in place is Reading.

Saunders said the drought in Belchertown was enough to cancel sports because they could not irrigate the fields, and there are no facilities for workers in the New Salem police department to use.

Saunders said the Quabbin towns only get three tenths of a percent of the MWRA's budget, and the new funding per year does not even bring that funding up to four tenths of a percent.

He said the consideration to the towns is "criminally small," and used Belchertown as an example, saying the state has a value of \$3,800 per acre. The state pays each town a certain amount of money per undevelopable acres of land that are protected for the Quabbin, in a payment in lieu of taxes.

Saunders pulled out \$4,000 from his pocket to illustrate the worth, and said it is "time for wholesale change."

The second speaker was Smola, who represents the 1st Hampden District, which includes the town of Ware. He said if the Quabbin crumbles, the rest of eastern Massachusetts does as well.



Secretary Rebecca Tepper of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, and chair of the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority's board of directors, spoke during a meeting held at the Les and Terry Campbell Quabbin Visitor Center in Belchertown on July 10.

He also brought up the reduced levels at Gate 43 in Hardwick, and said the fishermen and hunters who utilize the Quabbin regularly are the best stewards of the land. He said this in response to attempts to reduce access to the land.

The third leader to speak was Durant, who represents the Worcester and Hampshire District, including the towns of Barre, Hardwick, Phillipston and Ware. He said the residents of the Quabbin towns feel slighted, but are passionate about the environment, as he said it is a resource here.

Durant also criticized the proposed battery energy storage system in Oakham, calling it a "horrible idea."

The fourth speech was from Comerford, who represents the Hampshire, Franklin and Worcester District, including the towns of Athol, Orange, New Salem, Pelham, Petersham, Shutesbury and Wendell. She said no towns should face a disproportionate burden of cost, but each of the Quabbin towns are receiving just three cents per day, on average.

Comerford said the proposed legislation is not

an attempt to tax eastern Massachusetts, but for the MWRA to tap into their billion dollar budget. She said there should be a seat from the Quabbin on the board and the trust fund should be implemented.

Comerford also spoke of PFAS being found in the water of Swift Elementary School and insufficient water to fight a fire in Wendell.

Many leaders from local Quabbin towns also spoke at the meeting, with many of them raising concerns about the amount of undevelopable land and the financial impacts to the towns because

of the insufficient funding for that land.

One speaker was Richard Stevens, a member of the Barre Select Board, who said they are seeking equitable funds, and said there is a well water crisis in the town. Lesa Lessard Pearson of the Belchertown Select Board asked the MWRA to uphold their commitment to the towns, and said their economies are connected. She said there are thousands of acres of land that cannot contribute to it.

William Zinni, a member of Hardwick's Conservation Commission, said the water is at risk over time due to development needs to make money for the town. He said there are 5,800 acres of Quabbin land in the town, and the town receives just \$33 per acre.

William Tinker of the Hardwick Select Board said there are services gone in town due to the costs of protecting the water. Tinker said the town was offered \$2 million per year for a landfill, but the town declined to continue protecting the land.

Stuart Beckley, the town manager of Ware said the town provides control burn services for the state, and the water quality in the town is poor, with brown water being common. He said it is safe to drink, but people don't want to.

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