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# AGAWAM

## ADVERTISER NEWS

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# Residents react to domestic partnership comments

By Gregory A. Scibelli  
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AGAWAM – Last Tuesday night, Feb. 17, about a dozen residents shared their reactions, mostly negative, to comments made by City Councilor George Bitzas.

The main criticisms surrounded two comments, both made by Bitzas in arguing

against the Town of Agawam enacting a domestic partnership ordinance, which would have allowed for unmarried individuals living together, but unmarried, to receive town benefits if one of those individuals worked for the Town of Agawam.

Bitzas, who was one of eight councilors voting against the ordinance at the

Feb. 2 City Council Meeting, said he believed the ordinance would discourage younger people from getting married and carrying on family names, which would upset older members of the community. Later, an even more polarizing comment, Bitzas described the 13 cities and towns in Massachusetts, two of them Somerville and Cam-

bridge, Boston suburbs, as “extreme radical left liberal” cities and he went to say he did not want Agawam to become “one of those cities.”

Multiple residents signed for the council’s “Citizen Speak Time,” a public comment portion of the meeting that involves no back-and-forth with the council members.

“I’m here to denounce the comments made by one of our town councilors regarding domestic partnerships,” Guy Qvistgaard said. “Because silence is the voice of complicity. In addition to the out-of-touch comments made at the Legislative Sub-Committee about extreme, radical left-wing liberals, this same councilor also

said it would discourage people from getting married... this councilor’s defensive rhetoric has no place on our city council and this councilor should at the very least be censured. Agawam is the butt of online jokes due to one councilor’s remarks. To this councilor I say, first, your

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By Monday evening, DPW crews had cleared Agawam High School and other school parking lots so classes could resume Tuesday morning. School had to be closed for two days last month because of a larger snowstorm. TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

# Town deals with high winds, spared large snow total

By Gregory A. Scibelli  
gscibelli@turley.com

AGAWAM – Some called it “Snowmageddon, Part 2.”

Others used the term “Snowpocalypse.” Certainly, the people on Cape Cod and in Providence, RI might describe it that way. While Providence will be digging out of more than 33 inches of snow from last Sunday and Monday’s nor’easter, Agawam and much of the southern Connecticut River Valley were spared high snow totals.

Westfield reported just five inches of snow and parts of Feeding Hills and Agawam experienced between six and eight inches of snow depending on the area. Reported “blizzard” level winds also did not come to fruition on Monday and snow drifting into the evening was not as bad as originally forecasted, though there were gusts at times.

Agawam’s mid-winter vacation for school students did have to be extended by one day, with classes set to re-start on Monday. But classes were called off late Sunday in anticipation of a forecasted 8-14 inches of snow by several forecasts.

Snow also cleared up in the area much sooner than expected, with just



Above: Sidewalks leading to AHS have been cleared. Residents who are responsible for their own sidewalks are reminded to try and clear them within 24 hours of a snowstorm.

Right: Despite less than expected snowfall, piles at many public places, including schools, are building up this year because snowfall as a whole is up this winter.



SNOW | page 12

# Bitzas responds to criticisms, comments from other councilors

By Gregory A. Scibelli  
gscibelli@turley.com

AGAWAM – In the days following the Feb. 17 Agawam City Council meeting with several residents made criticisms of Councilor George Bitzas (see related story), the Agawam Advertiser News reached out to Bitzas directly and other councilors to talk about resident comments and other reactions.

Bitzas was heavily criticized for describing 13 cities and towns in Massachusetts that had domestic partnership ordinances as “extreme radical, left-liberal cities,” and he did not want Agawam to be “one of those cities.” He also received criticism of what speakers described as “out-of-date” comments about modern families. Bitzas said the ordinance would discourage younger people from getting married and parents and grandparents would not like that because family names would not be carried on.

In regard to the “extreme radical, left-liberal” comment, Bitzas told the Advertiser that his comments were about the cities themselves and their policies and was not directed at people.

“I want to be clear about what I did and did not say,” Bitzas said last Friday. “I did not refer to the residents of any community as ‘radical,’

nor did I attack individuals based on who they are. My comments were directed at policy differences between municipalities, not at the character of the people who live in them. I have great respect for all people regardless of where they live, and I have said repeatedly that I respect every individual regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, or how they choose to live their lives.

“My reference to cities such as Somerville and Cambridge was made in the context of their policy records, which are widely recognized as being more liberal than many other municipalities in Massachusetts. Describing a city’s policy direction as liberal or conservative is a common part of political discourse and is not an attack on its residents. My point was that Agawam has its own identity and traditions, and I believe our policies should reflect the values of our community.”

When Bitzas spoke on Feb. 17 at the end of the meeting, he did not address the Citizen’s Speak Time speakers, and instead addressed what he called false accusations made about him online on social media. He responded to an Advertiser question about the speakers who came to the Feb. 17 meeting.

BITZAS | page 12

# Celebrity bartenders help raise money

AGAWAM – Last Thursday evening, Feb. 19, Dunne’s Tavern hosted a fundraising event for the Be Kind To Your Mind Foundation. Dunne’s had a Celebrity Bartending Event to raise money in honor of Kayla LeBlanc, who passed away on Sept. 5, 2023.

The foundation submitted the following on the fundraiser:

“To give you a little rundown of how celebrity bartending works: these awesome individuals take time out of their busy schedules and away from their families to volunteer their time — for free — to pass around our donation buckets, share some laughs, mix a few beverages, take food orders, and help us

raise money for an awareness cause that is so close to our family’s heart.

Her parents have endured one of the most horrific, unexpected tragedies of their lives — losing their beautiful, fun, kind-hearted, sweet girl to suicide, someone you would have least expected to ever do this.

The foundation would like to give a huge thank you to our wonderful and generous celebrity bartenders:

- Nick Cocchi, Hampden County Sheriff
- Rosemary Saccomani, Register of Probate
- A.J. Christopher and Shelley Borgatti-Reed, Agawam

FOUNDATION | page 12



# Registration open now for HCC Summer Youth programs

HOLYOKE — It's still winter, but it's not too early to start thinking about summer. Registration is now open for 2026 Summer Youth Programs at Holyoke Community College.

Starting July 7 and running through August 8, HCC will offer 16 week-long, in-person summer programs for youth aged 8 to 16.

For more than 40 years, HCC has offered fun, challenging summer education activities for youth, providing early opportunities for students to experience a college environment guided and encouraged by experienced professionals.

HCC's 2026 on-campus summer youth programs run Monday through Friday, some for a full day and others for a half day.

All in-person programs will be held on the main HCC

campus, 303 Homestead Ave., except for cooking classes, which are held at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute, 164 Race St., Holyoke:

**July 6-10:**  
 Cooking without Borders with Chef Marangelly Vargas-Gonzalez (ages 9-16): In this lively hands-on camp, young chefs will team up to chop, stir, and create tasty dishes from around the world. Each day brings a new theme and a chance to discover fresh ingredients, cool cooking techniques, and the joy of working together in the kitchen. By week's end, they'll walk away with new cooking skills, delicious recipes to show off at home, and plenty of tasty memories. (9 a.m. - 3 p.m., \$425)

**July 13-17:**  
 Cooking without Borders with Chef Marangelly Vargas-Gonzalez (ages 9-16, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., \$425)

**July 13-17:**  
 Fun Bites with Chef Diana Swanigan (ages 9-16, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., \$425)

**July 13-17:**  
 ROBLOX Coders (ages 8-10; 11-14): Discover the Lua coding language while designing experiences in ROBLOX, an online universe where you can create anything you dream of. New

chefs will discover the joy of cooking delicious, easy-to-prepare meals to share with family and friends. Participants will work together to chop, season, cook, and taste a variety of recipes - all made from scratch. Each day introduces new menu themes, ingredients, and techniques designed to build confidence in the kitchen. (9 a.m. - 3 p.m., \$425)

**July 13-17:**  
 Fun Bites with Chef Diana Swanigan (ages 9-16, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., \$425)

**July 20-24:**  
 Around the World with Chef Diana Swanigan (ages 9-16): Cuisine around the world serves as a universal language that unites people across cultures through shared flavors, traditions, and stories. Learn to prepare full-course meals from Asia, Puerto Rico, Greece, Italy, and New Orleans. (9 a.m. - 3 p.m., \$425)

**July 20-24:**  
 Make Your First Video Game (ages 8-10; 11-14): Go beyond the limitations of traditional 2D game design classes and create an immersive 3D world. Students will learn the physics behind 3D games,

explore beginner event scripting, level design, controlling the flow of gameplay, and storytelling. Instructor Brittany Pietskowski. (9 a.m. - noon for ages 8-10; 1 - 4 p.m. for ages 11-14, \$199)

**July 20-24:**  
 Passport to Flavors with Chef Marangelly Vargas-Gonzalez (ages 9-16): This hands-on cooking camp takes kids on a delicious journey across global cuisines, exploring flavors, techniques, and ingredients that make each culture unique. Dive into fun daily themes like diner classics, Mexican favorites, Mediterranean feasts, Filipino street bites, and southern comfort food, all while building confidence one tasty dish at a time. (9 a.m. - 3 p.m., \$425)

**July 27-31:**  
 Around the World with Chef Diana Swanigan (ages 9-16, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., \$425)

**August 3-7:**  
 Python Programmers (ages 8-10; 11-14): Learn the world's fastest-growing programming language favored by Google, NASA, YouTube, and the CIA. Learn how to code with Python to create engaging apps and games. Instructor Brittany Pietskowski. (9 a.m. - noon for ages 8-10; 1 - 4 p.m. for ages 11-14, \$199).

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## ACC to host author showcase Saturday

AGAWAM - Fourteen local authors will give 10-minute presentations during the first yWrite Author Showcase on Saturday Feb. 28, at the Agawam Congregational Church. This Showcase will be much different than normal Author Book Fair for even though the writers will be selling their books, the day will be filled with author readings, book discussions, and Q&A sessions.

This event is hosted by the international podcast yWrite, which streams online and on local cable access channels. Each of the participating authors has appeared as guests on the yWrite podcast and are considered part of the yWrite family~ sharing their writing experiences to help other writers.

yWrite is a televised podcast produced by Angela

Grout, an award-winning author and the former owner of the Agawam Flower Shop. Angela Grout began the podcast after closing her business during the pandemic. The audience of the podcast has spread over continents. The purpose of the podcast began as a mission to interview authors about their writing process. In the past two years, and with over one hundred episodes recorded, the audience has expanded to readers wanting to know the stories behind the stories.

The first yWrite Author Showcase will be held on Saturday Feb. 28 in Agawam. Reverend Daniel Cohen, the pastor of the Agawam Congregational Church as teamed up with yWrite's Angela Grout to host this event from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Reverend Cohen has also been fea-

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## Stanley Park announces exclusive Carillon Tower Dinner Experience Raffle

WESTFIELD - Did you know that Stanley Park of Westfield offers a private dinner inside its iconic Carillon Tower? The community has a rare opportunity to win this truly unforgettable experience.

Stanley Park is hosting a special raffle for a once-in-a-lifetime evening inside the historic Carillon Tower. On Saturday, May 2 at 5 p.m., one lucky winner and three guests will enjoy an exclusive four course gourmet dinner, perfectly paired with wine, in a setting few ever get to experience.

The evening begins with appetizers and wine or champagne served on the

outdoor balcony overlooking the Park's stunning Rose Garden. Guests will then move inside the Tower for a candlelit dinner surrounded by the glow of its beautiful stained-glass windows, creating an intimate and memorable atmosphere.

Private Chef Daniel Mahoney has curated three distinct menu options, allowing the winner to personalize this extraordinary culinary experience to suit their tastes.

Tickets are \$20 each, and only 200 tickets will be sold, making this a limited opportunity to support Stanley Park while entering to win an exceptional evening.

The dinner will take place on May 2 at 5 p.m. The date and time are not subject to change. The drawing will be held on Friday, April 10 at 3 p.m. The winner will be notified through Auction.com and by Stanley Park staff.

An extraordinary setting, a remarkable meal, and an evening you will never forget.

Tickets may be purchased online at: <https://carillontowerdinner.auction.com>

For more information about Stanley Park and its programs, please visit [www.stanleypark.org](http://www.stanleypark.org).

## Tax work-off program returning this year

AGAWAM - The Town of Agawam is accepting applications for the 2026 Senior Citizen/Veteran Property Tax Work-Off Program from Feb. 23 to Mar. 10. This initiative allows eligible seniors, age 60+ and veterans to earn credit toward their property tax bills by working in the Senior Center or Veterans Office. "We are committed to supporting our senior citizens and veterans through this meaningful program," said Mayor Christopher John-

son. "This initiative not only assists our residents in managing their property taxes but also fosters a strong sense of community involvement and civic engagement." Eligible tasks may include administrative duties, cemetery headstone restoration, and other municipal assignments.

Applications must be picked up at the Council on Aging/Senior Center, located at 954 Main Street in Agawam.

A lottery will be conduct-

ed on March 11, 2026, if applications exceed available spots. If the senior/veteran declines participation based on placement then another senior/veteran will be chosen in their place until positions are filled or applications are exhausted whichever comes first.

For questions or to submit applications, contact Cindy Sullivan, Executive Director of the Council on Aging, at 413-732-2835 or [csullivan@agawam.ma.us](mailto:csullivan@agawam.ma.us).

## Learn about little-known abolitionists

HOLYOKE - On Saturday, Feb. 28 at 11 a.m. at Holyoke Public Library, join us for an hour of inspiring stories of commitment, courage, and resistance. Speakers Tom Weiner and Dr. Amilcar Shabazz will share from their recent book, "In Defiance: 20 Abolitionists you were never taught in school," which uncovers stories of individuals who risked their lives in the struggle to end enslavement. The event is free and open to the public and will be held in the Community Room. After their talk, the authors will

be available for questions and book signing.

Authors Tom Weiner and Dr. Amilcar Shabazz will offer an engaging discussion of their recent book, In Defiance, which uncovers the stories of 20 individuals who risked their lives to fight enslavement and serves as a compelling call for justice and the preservation of history.

The talk focuses on the lives and words of a few of these individuals, highlighting their courage, activism, and unwavering commitment to freedom. Amid ongoing efforts to

erase history, these stories serve as a powerful corrective—meant to challenge, inspire, and ignite action.

Tom Weiner is a Northampton-based writer, educator, and anti-racist activist, and Dr. Amilcar Shabazz is professor of History and Africana Studies at UMass/Amherst and former president of the National Council for Black Studies.

Sponsored by the Holyoke History Room.

Recommended for middle school through adult. Light refreshments will be served.



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# Abigail Adams subject of next historical association presentation

AGAWAM – The Agawam Historical Association’s commemoration of the United States Semiquincentennial continues on Thursday, Mar. 19, when the public is invited to the Captain Charles Leonard House, 663 Main Street, Agawam for the association’s Spring Meeting. At 6:30 p.m., actress Sheryl Faye will perform her new multimedia live show “Abigail Adams – Liberty & Legacy,” and bring Adams’ words, wit, and wisdom vividly to life for modern audiences.



The Agawam Historical Association will hold a presentation featuring the history of Abigail Adams.

Blending live performance, immersive multimedia, original music and visual design, Liberty and Legacy reintroduces Abigail Adams not simply as a founder’s wife, but as a fearless political thinker, advocate for women’s rights, and moral compass during the Ameri-

can Revolution and the birth of a nation. Through Adams’ own letters and writings—paired with contemporary staging and technology—the show invites audiences to experience her enduring relevance in conversations about liberty, equality, lead-

ership, and civic responsibility. This event is free and open to the public.

Other semiquincentennial events planned by the Agawam Historical Association include the dedication of Agawam’s Liberty Tree at the Thomas Smith House

on Apr. 19; presentation of George Baker’s “Meet John Adams — A Lively and Revolutionary Conversation with America’s Second President” on May 28; US Semiquincentennial Observance & Celebration at the Thomas Smith House on July 4; “The Noble Train Arrives” Henry Knox 250th commemoration and demonstration with live oxen from Fort Ticonderoga on Aug. 1; Sept. 12 presentation by master stone carver and gravestone conservator Randall Nelson about his work carving replicas of badly deteriorated gravestones of Revolutionary War veterans as replacements for the original stones; and presentation of “Who Made the Gravestones in Agawam’s Old Burying Grounds” which will also mention gravestones of Revolutionary War veterans buried in Agawam,

by Bob Drinkwater, on Oct. 15. Eighteenth century encampments and living history demonstrations by the 25th Continental Regiment will be featured at the Thomas Smith House on July 4, and Oct. 10.

Information about these, and other Agawam Historical Association events planned for 2026, can be found at [agawamhistory.org](http://agawamhistory.org) and the Agawam Historical Association’s Instagram and Facebook pages.

The private non-profit, all-volunteer Agawam Historical Association preserves and presents Agawam and Feeding Hills history, and provides educational opportunities at its quarterly meetings. The association archives and displays artifacts pertaining to the Town of Agawam and its Fire Department in the Marilyn

P. Curry History Room and Chief Russell “Rusty” Jenks Apparatus Room, both located in the Agawam Historical & Fire House Museum, housed in the former Elm Street Fire Station at 35 Elm Street in Agawam Center. The association owns, and has preserved, the ca. 1757 Thomas Smith House, at 251 North West Street in Feeding Hills, in largely original, unrestored condition; the property was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2005. The association also offers an annual scholarship to an Agawam high school senior pursuing higher education in a history-related field. For more information, please visit [agawamhistory.org](http://agawamhistory.org) or follow the Agawam Historical Association on Instagram and Facebook. Volunteers and new members are always welcome.

## STCC to host eighth annual Community Dental Day offering free dental care

SPRINGFIELD – The Springfield Technical Community College Dental Sciences Department, in partnership with the Valley District Dental Society, will host the eighth annual Community Dental Day on Saturday, March 28, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., in Building 20 at STCC.

This free event provides an opportunity for area residents who may not be receiving regular dental care to obtain necessary treatment at no cost.

Licensed dentists from the Valley District Dental Society, along with STCC dental hygiene and assisting students, will provide a range of services, including patient education, health screenings, diagnosis, X-rays and limited treatments such as fillings, extractions, sealants and assessments of urgent issues. While cleanings will not be provided during the event, patients needing one may schedule a low-cost follow-up visit at ST-

CC’s dental clinic.

“Community Dental Day plays an important role in helping meet the needs of our community while giving our students meaningful, real-world clinical experience,” said Christopher Scott, Dean of the School of Health and Patient Simulation at STCC. “We invite community members who need dental care to make use of this no-cost service. Through our collaboration with local dental professionals, we’re able to provide high-quality care while also equipping our students with the skills they need to succeed in their future careers.”

STCC offers pathways to dental careers through two programs. Students can seek a two-year associate degree in Dental Hygiene or a one-year certificate in Dental Assisting.

Dr. Michael Nardi, an event organizer with the Valley District Dental Society volunteer dentists, high-

lighted the impact of Community Dental Day.

“Too often, people delay getting dental treatment because it can be expensive or difficult to access,” Nardi said. “This event allows us to offer timely care to individuals who need it most, while also helping them understand how to maintain their oral health in the long run. I’m proud to take part in an initiative that has such a positive impact on our community.”

Valley District Dental Society is a supporter of STCC through generous financial support for scholarships and dental kits.

The event is open to the public, and no insurance is required. Patients can also return to STCC’s dental clinic for affordable follow-up care if needed.

Community Dental Day is open to the public on a first-come-first-served basis. Please call (413) 755-4900 if you have questions.

## Ventilation work causes fire at mall

By Gregory A. Scibelli  
[gscibelli@turley.com](mailto:gscibelli@turley.com)

HOLYOKE – The Holyoke Mall was originally set to re-open for regular business on Thursday following a fire that took place late Tuesday night.

However, just prior to The Sun’s press time, mall officials released a statement saying common areas in the mall would remain closed for all of Thursday so remediation teams could complete their work. The statement was released early Thursday morning after a previous statement said the mall’s common areas would re-open.

All anchor stores with exterior entrances such as Target, Best Buy, and Macy’s were open Thursday with no mall access.

The update is the latest new after a fire took place in the ventilation system of the basement level of the mall.

According to the Holyoke Fire Department, officials were called to the

mall, located at 50 Holyoke St., at approximately 11 p.m. Tuesday night. The fire department was alerted to a fire that was taking place on the roof of the building.

The fire department, which issued a short story on its Facebook page, said heavy smoke was coming from the roof and a fire was caused by a ventilation shaft cleaning. Workers doing the maintenance job, was cutting ductwork as part of the process sparked the fire.

Flames begin to spread throughout the system and out through the roof. Anyone passing by the building could have possibly seen the flames coming from the south side of the mall, near the south-side Target entrance just above the Hobby Lobby sign.

At first, firefighters had a hard time reaching the flames, but crews were able to open interior walls and accessed the ventilation system as the fire began to spread. The fire went from the basement food court through to the roof of the

three-story mall.

The incident required dozens of local firefighters to assist and mutual aid in order to cover the depleted manpower in the rest of the city.

Fire crews were on the scene until 3 a.m. Wednesday morning putting out the fire. There were no injuries to anyone involved with the mall or firefighters responding to the incident.

On Wednesday, mall staff worked to inspect the rest of the building and prepare it re-open.

The Holyoke Mall released a statement on Wednesday encouraging customers to contact desired stores to find out if they will be open and when.

For now, the fire is being ruled as accidental. The statement said professional remediation teams will remain on site and the formal investigation into the incident is ongoing. Tenants of the mall are encouraged to contact mall management for further assistance or guidance.

## Annual CROP Walk set for April 26

AGAWAM – The Agawam/West Springfield CROP Hunger Walk will take place on Apr. 26 to help neighbors facing hunger around the block and around the world. With recent cuts to federal nutrition, healthcare, and humanitarian aid programs, organizers say this year’s Walk is more urgent than ever. A portion of funds will support the Parish Cupboard, which serves people from Agawam, Feeding Hills and West Springfield. The balance of money raised will support CWS (Church World Service) programs worldwide.

Across the United States, reductions to key safety net programs - including SNAP (food stamps), Medicaid, and the Child Tax Credit - are pushing more families to seek help from commu-

nity food programs. At the same time, the withdrawal of U.S. foreign assistance has shuttered lifesaving services abroad, leaving organizations like CWS to keep vital food, health, and shelter programs running in refugee and crisis-affected communities.

Here in West Springfield, Agawam and Feeding Hills, the annual CROP Hunger Walk helps to stock the Parish Cupboard with emergency groceries and supports the lunch program. Globally, donations sustain emergency food assistance, healthcare access in refugee settings, climate-smart agriculture, and long-term solutions that strengthen food security.

Faith communities, school and civic groups, and local businesses can all participate in the Apr. 26 event.

To register or donate, visit <https://events.crophunger-walk.org/chw/event/agawamma>. Groups can also form a walk team online. Promotional resource packets will be available at the Mar. 7 Parish Association meeting at Grace Lutheran Church, 1552 Westfield Street in West Springfield from 9 to 10 a.m. Materials are also available by contacting Diana Forfa at First Congregational Church in West Springfield. For more information, please email [drforfa@hotmail.com](mailto:drforfa@hotmail.com) or call 413-739-6608.

Those who can’t walk can donate or sponsor a walker - every step and dollar helps! The local event raised over \$11,000 in 2025. Organizers hope to surpass that total this year to meet the growing need.

## Kids used clothing, books sought for exchange

AGAWAM – The Agawam’s Zero Waste Club along with Agawam High School’s Environmental Club and National Honor Society are hosting their Eighth Annual Kids’ Used Clothing & Book Exchange. This event was created to normalize the reuse of clothing and books that remain in good condition.

Clean, gently used, kids’

clothing and books will be collected at the Agawam Public Library on Friday, Mar. 13 from 1 to 4:45 p.m. All types of clothing and books, from infant through teen are desired. No footwear will be accepted. All donations will be pre-screened before the donors leave.

General, free, public shopping of clothing and

books will take place on Saturday, Mar. 14 at the Agawam Public Library from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Shoppers are asked to bring reusable shopping bags, as this is a zero-waste event. Any clothing or books that remain will be donated to local charities.

For more information, email Nancy Bobskill at [AgawamZeroWaste@gmail.com](mailto:AgawamZeroWaste@gmail.com)

## Lions Club to hold corned beef and cabbage dinner

AGAWAM – The Agawam Lions Club will holding its annual corned beef and cabbage dinner on Wednesday, March 11 from 5 to 7 p.m. at

Agawam High School. You can dine in or take out and there will be a raffle table at the event. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$7 for chil-

dren under 12. You can purchase tickets at the door or contact the Lions Club for a QR code to buy tickets in advance.

### Preschool Enrollment

Are you an Agawam resident looking for a comprehensive, competitively priced preschool experience for your 3 or 4 year old child? The Agawam Early Childhood Center (ECC) will begin accepting applications for both morning and afternoon sessions for the 2026-2027 school year beginning March 23, 2026.

- The ECC provides all students with a standards-based education that builds the foundation for all future learning with the Agawam Public Schools.
- We meet the needs of children with and without disabilities and follow a developmentally appropriate curriculum where all children learn through play hands-on activities.
- We offer half-day sessions at both the Agawam Early Childhood Center (ECC) at 108 Perry Lane and at Sapelli School 65 Begley St.
- Applications are currently available at the Family Resource Center or you can download the application via the Agawam Public Schools website ([agawamed.org](http://agawamed.org)). Select “Schools” - Early Childhood Center, select “Menu” - select “ECC Enrollment Information.”

**Agawam Early Childhood Center**

Contact Us  
**(413) 821-0597**




### Agawam Public Schools

## Kindergarten Information Night

For ALL Agawam students who will be 5 by September 1

# March 12, 2026 ~ 6pm-7pm

### Sapelli Elementary School, 65 Begley Street

- Learn about the screening process
- Receive enrollment information
- Learn how to prepare your child for K
- Meet educators and principals

Questions? Contact Andrea Polley [apolley@agawamed.org](mailto:apolley@agawamed.org)

Scan below to RSVP



Snow Date  
**March 19, 2026**



# Opinion

## Guest Column



### My friend is 65; shouldn't she be exempt from Medicare payroll taxes?

Dear Rusty:

My girlfriend is 65 and she just enrolled in Medicare.

She is still working full time as a nurse, but they are still deducting Medicare taxes from her paycheck. I thought as soon as you started Medicare, that they would no longer take any Medicare taxes from her paychecks. Is that not correct?

Signed: Concerned Friend

Dear Concerned Friend:

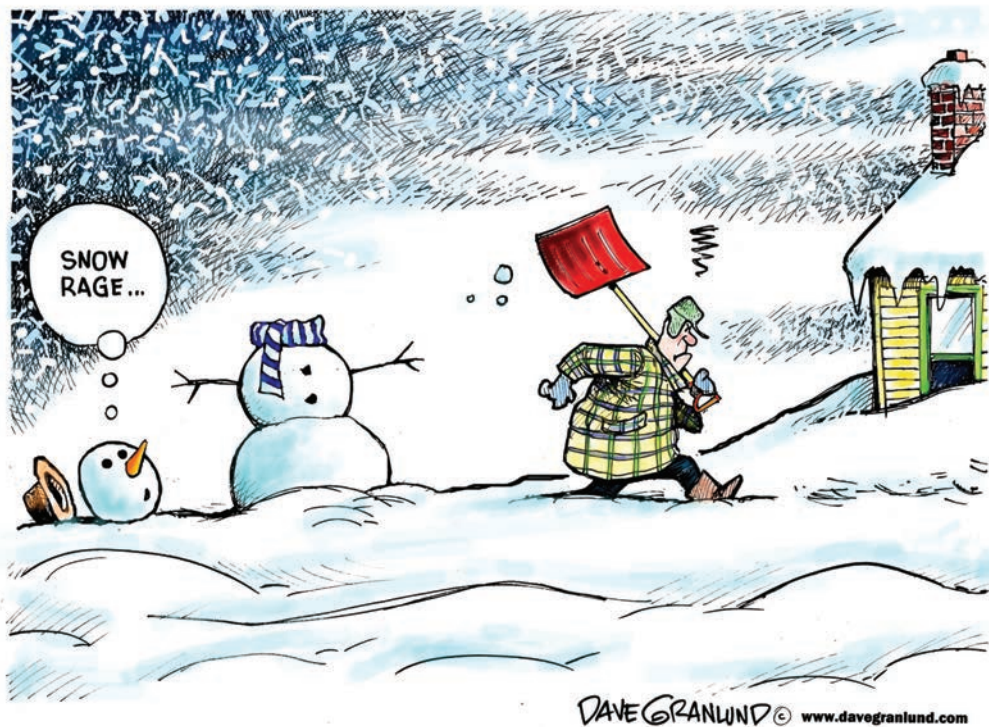
Your understanding about Medicare payroll tax is, indeed, not correct. Medicare taxes are levied on everyone, who works and earns, regardless of whether or not they are currently enrolled in the Medicare program. That is how Medicare has worked since it was first enacted in the mid-1960s and how it still works today.

For Your Information, everyone who works for an employer must pay Federal Insurance Contributions Act payroll tax of 7.65%. Most (6.2%) of that payroll tax goes to support Social Security, but 1.45% goes to support Medicare Part A. Self-employed individuals must also pay this tax under the Self-Employed Contributions Act, which is equivalent to FICA, except the self-employed individual must also pay the employer portion of the payroll tax. The Social Security portion of the FICA/SECA tax has an earnings cap (\$184,500 in 2026), but there is no cap on earnings for the Medicare portion of the FICA/SECA payroll tax. FYI, employers pay an equivalent amount of Social Security and Medicare taxes and the Medicare portion of the payroll tax is

paid on all earnings. There is no cap on earnings from which the Medicare payroll tax is withheld.

To ensure understanding, Medicare Part A provides healthcare coverage for inpatient hospitalization services and Medicare Part B provides coverage for outpatient medical services (doctors, medical tests, etc.). That 1.45% of the FICA and SECA tax for the self-employed is paid by those who work to help fund the Medicare Part A program, which is premium-free for most Americans after age 65. For Medicare Part B, there is a separate premium which helps pay for Medicare outpatient healthcare services. The standard Medicare Part B premium for 2026 is \$202.90 per month, compared to Medicare Part A which is free to all who are eligible for Social Security benefits. But the 1.45% payroll tax which is being withheld from your girlfriend's paycheck is paid by everyone who has work earnings, even if they are enrolled in Medicare.

*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](http://amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at [ssadviser@amacfoundation.org](mailto:ssadviser@amacfoundation.org). Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.*



## Editorial

### Councilor's comments offensive, regardless of intent

By Gregory A. Scibelli  
[gscibelli@turley.com](mailto:gscibelli@turley.com)

You don't have to be liberal or conservative to have a strong reaction to the words spoken by Councilor George Bitzas at the Feb. 2 meeting while he was making his argument against a domestic partnership ordinance.

After watching and re-watching the videos from the Feb. 2 and 17 meetings of the Agawam City Council, gathering comments from Bitzas himself and some members of the council, I have formed my own opinion.

My main conclusion is Councilor Bitzas is unapologetic of his comments and has shown little remorse toward the many people he has offended. He was confronted by several speakers at the Feb. 17 meeting, upset that he referred to the 13 cities and towns, among them Somerville and Cambridge, as "extreme, radical left liberal" cities and that he did not want Agawam to become "one of those cities." Those words are clearly heard in the meeting video.

Instead of simply apologizing for those comments, he used his speaking time on Feb. 17 to address what he described as false accusations made about him on social media. If that's not a career politician, I don't know what is. Because instead of apologizing to the people who came in person to the council meeting, he deflected from it and looked to paint himself as some sort of a victim of "character as-

sassination."

In his comments to me and the Agawam Advertiser, he states his comments were a description of the city and their policies, and not of the people themselves living in those cities. I'm pretty sure the people of Cambridge, Somerville, and 11 other communities would not see it that way. The speakers at the Feb. 17 meeting did not see it that way. And for a city councilor of 37 years experience, I think it is outrageous that Councilor Bitzas does not know the impact of comments like his would have.

I think the comments made by Councilor Robert Rossi are quite appropriate. Rossi agreed Bitzas offended a lot of people and that Bitzas has a responsibility to protect the interest of the people they serve without bias or prejudice. Councilor Thomas Hendrickson was very respectful in his criticism of Bitzas' points of view.

It's perfectly okay to disagree with people's points-of-view, or their ideas, or even their lifestyles. But when you refer to people whose lifestyles you describe as "extreme radical," you are showing bias. And if Bitzas, after 37 years, thinks his comments about cities and their policies also don't extend to the people who live in those communities, he is tone deaf.

And its even worse to use words like that and then turn around and say you respect people of all types and lifestyles. You're better off saying nothing at all if you're going to stand by your comments.

One speaker whose comments I would like to recognize, is Uduak Eniyema. She criticized members of the council for not taking a hard line against Bitzas and condemning his comments. When people speak for nearly 40 minutes against the comments of an individual, it undoubtedly made an impact. In Agawam, it is rare for more than 2-3 "regulars" from the public speak at council. Our elected councilors, leaders of our community, should recognize that and speak out. And they do not have to do that at a meeting. They can do so through social media, a letter to the editor, or any public forum.

The solution ought to be obvious: Councilor Bitzas should publicly apologize to the members of the community he offended, along with the people throughout this state he has also offended. Sadly, judging by the comments Bitzas has made to the Advertiser, he will not be doing so. That is the most disheartening part of this.

To the community that I wrote this editorial for, I sincerely welcome feedback and dialogue on this subject. I appreciate respectful letters to the editor or other comments agreeing or disagreeing with my column, or if you wish to otherwise weigh in on this story.

Editor's note: The opinions expressed in this editorial are that of the writer and not in any way a reflection of the newspaper's stance on this story.

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## Northern Flicker

On President's Day I saw a northern flicker fly up into a tree as I traveled in Barre.

The white rump patch was clearly visible. A Brimfield resident said he has a friend in Belchertown, who occasionally has a flicker come to his suet feeder. Four or five bluebirds also frequent his suet feeder.

Northern flickers are a fairly, large woodpecker

about 11 to 12 inches long. They are larger than a hairy woodpecker and smaller than a pileated woodpecker.

They appear brownish overall with a white rump patch that's conspicuous in flight and often visible when they perch. The undersides of the wing and tail feathers are bright yellow for eastern birds or red for western birds. The brown plum-

age has black spots, barring and a black "bib." The sexes are similar, but the male has a black mustache.

Flickers spend a lot of time on the ground and like many woodpeckers fly in an undulating up and down path with flapping and gliding. They make a repeated flicker or "wicka-wicka-wic-

BACKYARD | page 5

## Agawam Advertiser News welcomes letters to the editor

The Agawam Advertiser News welcomes readers to participate in this year's election campaigns by writing letters to the editor for publication on these pages. Letters of up to 250 words from local residents endorsing candidates on the ballot or discussing campaign issues should be sent to the Agawam Advertiser News, care of Turley Publications, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, faxed to 413-289-1977 or emailed to [aan@turley.com](mailto:aan@turley.com). Please include a daytime telephone number for verification purposes (it will not be printed). Letters must be received by noon Monday to be considered

for that Thursday's newspaper. No attack letters will be printed. No letters written by candidates supporting their own candidacy will be printed. If the volume of letters received is larger than the space available in the newspaper, or if the letters become repetitive, the newspaper reserves the right to print a representative sample. No endorsement letters will be printed in the last edition before the election. For more information, call 413-283-8393.

#### Campaign news

As part of its election coverage, the newspa-

per plans to print stories about contested races for Congress, state Senate, state House, district attorney and Governor's Council during the weeks leading up to the election, as well as a question-and-answer voters guide. In order to ensure fairness to all candidates, no political press releases will be printed, nor will reporters cover political rallies or fundraisers.

Candidates who wish to further publicize their candidacy, beliefs and events may contact advertising, 413-283-8393 about paid advertising in the Agawam Advertiser News.

# Schools & Youth

## Horace Smith Funs Scholarship applications now being accepted

WESTFIELD – The Horace Smith Fund will be awarding \$317,000 in scholarships and fellowships to residents of Hampden County, who have also graduated from an eligible high school or private school. This year 21 scholarships, four fellowships and one William R. Rooney Award for students with special needs will be presented to recipients at the June 18 Awards Night ceremony at Storowton Carriage House in West Springfield.

Scholarships are offered not only to graduating high school seniors but also to students already in college

or those wishing to return to college. Scholarships of \$12,000 are distributed as \$3,000 annually and renewable each year until graduation. Fellowship awards of \$15,000 are distributed as \$7,500 annually and renewable for one additional year to students pursuing a full-time graduate degree. Students must maintain at least a B average to renew.

Recipients are selected on a variety of criteria, including academic records, merit, and financial need. Of great importance is a personal written account of why the student feels deserving

of financial assistance. Applicants must submit their transcripts and, if applicable, college entrance exam scores or graduate degree specific tests, and three letters of recommendation.

Completed applications must be received either electronically or be mailed to The Horace Smith Fund at 16 Union Avenue, Suite 2K, Westfield, MA 01085 no later than March 15, 2026. Applications are available at local high school guidance offices, college financial aid offices, and on-line at [www.Horace-SmithFund.org](http://www.Horace-SmithFund.org) or by phoning (413) 739-4222.

## Garden Club 2026 scholarship applications available

AGAWAM – Applications are now available for the Agawam Garden Club 2026 scholarship. To qualify for the scholarship students must be a graduating senior of Agawam High School or a college student who graduated from Agawam High School and is planning to attend an institution of higher learning in the Fall. Applicants must be majoring in or planning on majoring in one of the fol-

lowing: botany, environmental engineering, environmental science, earths systems, forest management, natural resources, plant soil and insect science, sustainable agriculture, sustainable horticulture or food and farming, turf grass science and management, landscape design and management technology, clean energy, technology studies: waste water or other environmental related

studies. The recipient will be awarded a \$1,000 scholarship at the clubs annual May meeting. Completed applications along with transcripts and references must be submitted to Denise Carmody, 40 Primrose Lane, Agawam MA 01001 by Apr. 1. Applications are available through Agawam High School or can be found on our website at [agawamgardenclub.com](http://agawamgardenclub.com).

## Agawam Junior Women’s Club offering college scholarships

AGAWAM – The GFWC Agawam Junior Women’s Clubs offers scholarships to graduating AHS and home school students who live in Agawam/Feeding Hills.

Please consider applying

through our website ~ easy to do with all electronic applications. Download the application form, save and rename, and submit it.

We offer two separate applications ~ one general and

one for field of education.

The April 1 deadline will be strictly adhered to. For more information, go to <https://www.agawamgfwc.com/scholarships>

## MiraVista expands access to inpatient mental health care

HOLYOKE — At a time when hospitals and emergency departments across Western Massachusetts continue to experience long waits for psychiatric care, MiraVista Behavioral Health Center is expanding access to inpatient treatment with the opening of 10 new adult psychiatric beds.

The expansion increases capacity for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis while strengthening MiraVista’s direct admissions process, which allows people who need inpatient psychiatric care to be admitted without first going through an emergency department. This approach helps reduce delays in care and eases pressure on already crowded ERs.

“This isn’t a countdown — it’s a count up,” said Shelley Zimmerman, Chief Executive Officer and Hospital Administrator at MiraVista Behavioral Health Center. “With these additional beds, we’re expanding access to care while helping people get the treatment they need faster.”

MiraVista currently serves adolescents ages 13 and older and adults through inpatient psychiatric services, along with a continuum of outpatient

substance use treatment and recovery programs. Patients are treated by multidisciplinary teams that include psychiatrists, physicians, nurses, mental health technicians, and therapists.

The hospital’s direct admission model allows referring providers to connect individuals to inpatient care more efficiently — often avoiding unnecessary emergency department visits and helping people reach appropriate treatment sooner.

MiraVista welcomes referrals from a wide range of community partners, including:

- Hospitals and emergency departments
- Primary care and pediatric practices
- Behavioral health and substance use treatment providers
- Schools and school-based clinicians
- Community health centers
- Law enforcement and first responders
- Social service agencies and nonprofits
- Families and individuals seeking help

To support collaboration and education, MiraVista is inviting community part-

ners to schedule:

- Lunch & learn sessions
- Program overview meetings
- Direct admission process walkthroughs

These sessions are designed to help providers understand how to access inpatient care quickly, identify appropriate referrals, and connect individuals to the right level of treatment. At the same time, MiraVista has seen a strong response from clinicians and mental health professionals eager to join the hospital’s growing team — a reflection of both the demand for services and the mission-driven work taking place inside its walls.

“This expansion reflects the urgent need for timely, accessible mental health care in our region,” Zimmerman added. “By growing our capacity and our team, we’re making it easier for people to get the right care at the right time — and giving professionals a meaningful place to do that work.”

For more information, to schedule a visit, or to arrange a lunch & learn, contact: Kim Lee, Chief of Creative Strategy & Development at 413-264-3042 or [klee@miravistabhc.care](mailto:klee@miravistabhc.care).

## Senior Center hosting Murder Mystery show

AGAWAM — The Friends of Agawam Senior Center will host a Murder Mystery Show and Dinner Fundraiser on Tuesday, Mar. 24, from 5 to 8:30 p.m. at the Agawam Senior Center. The event is open to the public.

The evening will feature the interactive murder mystery performance One Slew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, presented by The Comical Mystery Tour, a professional theatre troupe based in Greenfield.

The storyline follows Dr.

Frigmond Zoid, who claims to have developed a miracle cure capable of transforming people who believe they are someone they are not into their “true” selves. While the treatment may seem promising, complications arise—especially when some patients would rather remain superheroes than return to normal life. Guests will enjoy an evening of humor, intrigue, and audience participation as the mystery unfolds.

Dinner will be catered

by Partners Restaurant and includes a choice of roasted chicken or pasta and meatballs, along with salad, sides, and dessert.

Tickets are \$50 per person and must be purchased in advance. Tickets are available at the Agawam Senior Center or by calling 413-786-8010 and leaving a message. No tickets will be available at the door. Seating is limited.

Proceeds from the event will benefit the programs and activities of the Agawam Senior Center.

### BACKYARD ■ from page 4

ka” call and a loud “kleer.”

They inhabit open forests, woodlots, groves and semi-open country. The female lays five to eight eggs sometimes more. Both sexes incubate the eggs with the male incubating at night and part of the day. Both parents feed the young by regurgitation. The young leave the nest in about four weeks after hatching, but parents feed them for whilet. Later, they follow them to good foraging sites. They mainly eat ants and other insects. They also eat fruits and berries in fall and winter.



### Bird bath visitors

A Brimfield resident sent an email recently. He said, “I have a heated bird bath so I modified it by placing rocks in the center so that the only water available is near the edge and birds can’t immerse themselves in water to take a bath. The birds sit on the edge of the bird bath to drink.”

He also said, “I have a trail camera aimed at the bird bath. I was looking at pictures taken during December (40,000) and saw that blue jays, house finches and juncos are the most frequent birds taking a drink. Birds that show up less often are cardinals, titmice and morning doves. Curiously chickadees drink infrequently even though they are often seen in the yard. We seldom see goldfinches drinking, but they are not seen in the yard often. I was surprised to see a downy woodpecker show up twice to get a drink. I can’t recall ever seen a woodpecker drink at the bird bath before, summer or winter.”

### Helping birds

The Brimfield resident said creating brush piles provides shelter for birds. The piles also provide shelter for small animals as well. He said this time of year is a good time to trim trees and shrubs, a source of materials for a brush pile.

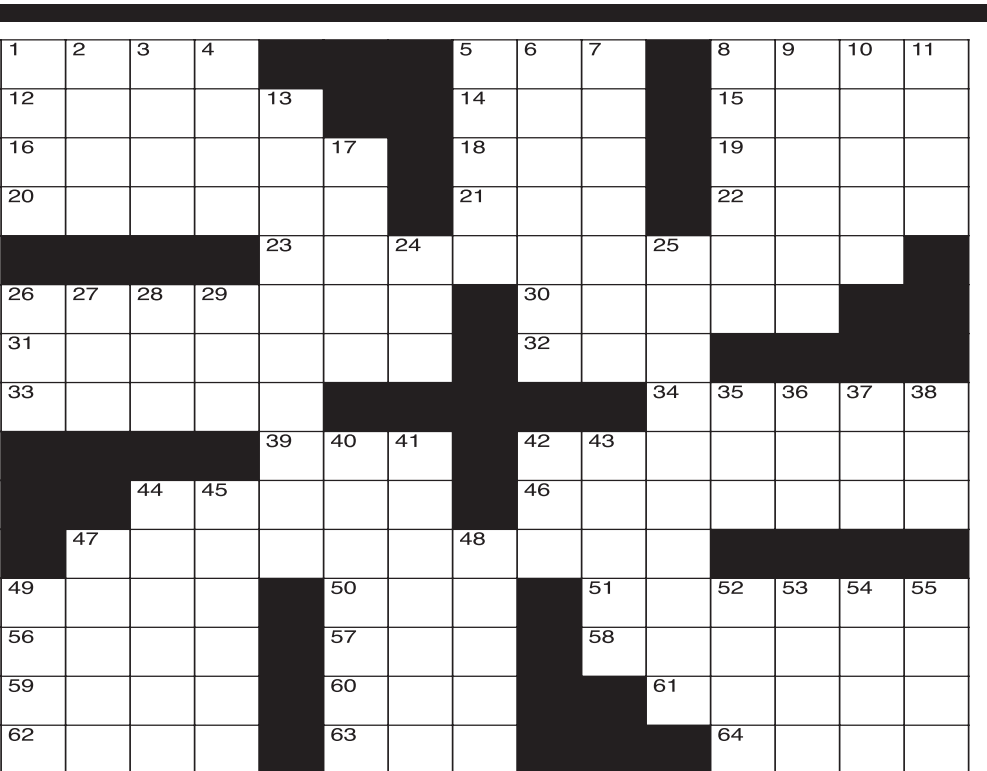
He said someone sent him a link about the possible dangers to birds of their feathers freezing if they take a bath in cold weather. For more information, people may visit the link at <https://blog.nature.org/2022/01/31/should-you-provide-birds-water-in-winter/>.

### Project Feederwatch

The Brimfield resident also said, “I recently visited the Project Feederwatch 2025 results ([https://cdn.feederwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Winter-Bird-Highlights-2025\\_12.22.2025.pdf](https://cdn.feederwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Winter-Bird-Highlights-2025_12.22.2025.pdf)). The chart shows the top 25 birds seen in the Northeast during last year. The top 11 species can be seen most days in our yard.”

Here is the list: 1. chickadee, 2. dark-eyed junco, 3. northern cardinal, 4. downy woodpecker, 5. blue jay, 6. mourning dove, 7. white-breasted nuthatch, 8. American goldfinch, 9. house finch, 10. red-bellied woodpecker, 11. tufted titmouse, 12. American robin, 13. European starling, 14. house sparrow, 15. hairy woodpecker, 16. Carolina wren, 17. white-throated sparrow, 18. song sparrow, 19. red-winged blackbird, 20. common grackle, 21. American crow, 22. brown-headed cowbird, 23. chipping sparrow, 24. northern flicker and 25 purple finch.

People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by emailing [mybackyard88@aol.com](mailto:mybackyard88@aol.com) or [edowner@turley.com](mailto:edowner@turley.com) or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005. The Palmer office has a new phone system and I will be getting an extension where messages may be left. I will publish the number as soon as it is set up.



### CLUES ACROSS

1. What travelers must do
5. Calendar month
8. Hopefully quickly
12. Once more
14. Bravo! Bravo!
15. “Cheers” actress
16. Astronomy unit
18. Savings vehicle
19. Get your ducks in this
20. Right away
21. Popular sports league
22. Containers
23. Entireties
26. One who wassails
30. Turned-up position
31. Extreme modesty
32. Writing utensil
33. Rewards (archaic)

34. Ancient capital
39. S. American wood sorrel
42. General discomfort
44. Philippine island
46. A witty saying
47. One who summarizes
49. Covered in
50. Mimic
51. Henry was a notable one
56. Daughter of Hera and Zeus
57. Retired NFLer
58. Playground equipment
59. Concept
60. Satisfaction
61. Fishing net
62. Hammer end
63. A father’s male child

### CLUES DOWN

1. Off-Broadway figure
2. Gelatinous substance
3. Concern
4. “Lick It Up” rockers
5. Serbian river
6. Part of a hat
7. Bowl-shaped drinking vessel
8. Semitic language
9. Utter a shrill cry
10. Long times
11. Animal parts
13. Causing annoyance
17. Amorous talker
24. Attempt
25. Harmonic effects
26. Cost per mile
27. They \_\_\_
28. Bitterly regret
29. Not even
35. A way to drop

36. Title of respect
37. World leader
38. Georgia rockers
40. National capital
41. Great Plains people
42. Duck-sized dinosaur genus
43. Architectural recesses
44. Member of U.S. Navy
45. Mountainous
47. Kite bird
48. Sweetheart (archaic)
49. Popular snack made of potato
52. 70s songsters The Bee \_\_\_
53. SE China port \_\_\_ - men
54. Something to fill up
55. League of Legends character

# BBB Tip: Don't scan QR codes on unexpected packages

**Paula Fleming**

*pfleming@boston.bbb.org*

A package you didn't order could be a fun surprise, but be careful, especially if it comes with a QR code. It might be the setup for a scam.

What you'll learn:

- How brushing scams use fake packages-and now QR codes-to trick consumers and post fake reviews
- Why scanning a QR code from an unexpected package can expose your personal information or device to scammers

- What steps to take if you receive a package you didn't order, including how to protect your identity and report the scam

In a "brushing" scam, you receive a package you didn't order, often without a return address. This is often a setup

by unscrupulous companies who found your address online. After the company ships the product to you, they can post a fake, positive review on your behalf to improve their store's ratings and get more sales.

Reports to BBB Scam Tracker over the last few months show a twist on brushing scams where the package contains a QR code. The code comes with instructions to scan it to find out who sent the package or how to start a return. Scanning the QR code can lead to a phishing website or download malware onto your device.

In a recent BBB Scam Tracker report, a consumer shared this experience, "I received a small package at my door marked UNIUNI from: LEO This person/company has my name and ad-

dress - when I googled them the information states this is a brushing scam and that someone has obtained my personal information from either AliExpress, TEMU, or Amazon. I have an Amazon account but have not used those other sites. The label has a tracking number, QR code, customer number, and reference number. I have not opened the package, nor do I wish to - this is highly suspicious. I did not order anything from this company/person."

In one BBB Scam Tracker report, a consumer received a package of pasta via Amazon in her name. Thinking it was a gift from a friend, she scanned the QR code that came with the package. The QR code took her to a website that appeared to be Amazon. The consumer said she has received a high-

er-than-normal amount of scam emails since scanning the QR code.

In another BBB Scam Tracker report, a consumer received a ring in the mail that he did not order. The ring came with a QR code. The consumer checked BBB Scam Tracker before scanning the code, and after reading other reports about brushing scams, he decided not to scan it.

It might seem like there are no downsides to a free package, but it could be a sign that someone is using your personal information for their own gain. If this happens to you, BBB recommends checking the security of your accounts and notifying the retailer who sent you the package.

What to do if you receive a package you didn't order:

- Don't scan QR codes.

They might take you to a phishing site that steals your personal information or download malware onto your device.

- Protect your identity. If you did scan the QR code and enter personal information, change your passwords for any compromised accounts and enable two-factor authentication. Also, keep a close eye on your credit reports and credit card bills after you receive the package.

- Notify the retailer. If you can tell where the package is from, go directly to the retailer's website to get their contact information and report the package as a scam. Retailers like Amazon have policies banning brushing and fake reviews, and they will investigate your report.

- Check for fake reviews. If you can identify the company that sent you the packag-

es, look for false reviews in your name and report them to the retailer.

- Pause deliveries. One package is no big deal, but some targets of brushing scams are overwhelmed with a floor of unordered packages, creating a serious problem. If this happens, you may want to consider temporarily refusing package delivery at your home address and directing your real orders to a package acceptance service.

- Keep the package. The one silver lining of brushing scams is that you get to keep the gift - the Federal Trade Commission says you have a legal right to keep unordered merchandise. Don't try to return it, especially if there are instructions to scan a QR code or enter information. It could needlessly compromise more of your personal information.

## Local author coming to March meeting

AGAWAM - Feeding Hills author, Judy Cosby, will be the guest speaker at the March 9 of the Catholic Women's Club of Agawam. Refreshments will begin the evening at 6:30 p.m., in the Fr. Joyce Room of the St. John the Evangelist Parish Center, 833 Main St., Agawam, MA. At 7

p.m., the club's monthly business meeting will take place after which Judy will speak.

Judy has been writing since her college days in 1980 at American International College. The first of her three spiritual memoirs, "Threads," was self-published in 2018. She continues to write, but

transitioned in 2023 to historical paranormal fiction with her book "The Attachment." Her books will be available for purchase and signing after her talk.

All Catholic women are invited to join the club members for this enlightening evening.

## Senior Center announces upcoming activities

AGAWAM - Here are some upcoming activities happening at the Agawam Senior Center. Some require registration or confirmation. Information in the details below:

German Language and Culture Experience

Have you been interested in learning a new language and about a new culture? Now you have the opportunity to do so. We are looking for five or six participants who want to learn to speak German and learn more about its culture, community and population. Call Kristina at 726-2836 to register.

St. Patrick's Day Parade  
The Agawam Senior Center may participate in the St. Patrick's Day Parade this year, if you are interested in joining us please see Cindy to sign up.

Caregivers Connect - Dementia Caregiver Support Group

Tuesday, Mar. 3 from 6 to 7 p.m. in the Garden Room  
Laurie Cecchi, OT, OTR, CAPS (Certified Aging in Place Specialist), CDCS

(Certified Dementia Care Specialist) will be running our caregiver support group. Join us to feel heard, supported, and uplifted as you navigate the complexities of caregiving and celebrate the moments of joy and connection with your loved ones. Caregivers Connect will meet the first Tuesday of the month from 6 to 7 p.m. Join us for soup and crackers beforehand in the coffee shop starting at 4:45 p.m.

Monthly Ballroom Dance  
Mar. 4 from 2 to 4 p.m. in Veterans Hall

Join Richie Mitnick for an afternoon of great tunes, dancing, and snacks. Our monthly ballroom dance takes place in the Veteran's Hall of the Senior Center from 2 to 4 p.m. We look forward to you joining us.

Property Tax Exemptions with Agawam Assessor Kelly McCormick  
Tuesday, Mar. 10 at 1 p.m. in the dining room  
Agawam Assessor, Kelly McCormick, will be at the Senior Center on Tuesday, Mar. 10 at 1 p.m. to discuss

property tax exemptions. She will provide information on the property exemptions available for FY2026, and review the criteria to qualify for each one. Applications will be available and Kelly will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Here are the exemptions she will be covering: there are qualifications to each exemption

- \*Senior Exemption (Clause 41C) - \$1,000.00
- \*Surviving Spouse, Minor and Elderly Exemption (Clause 17D) - \$258.00
- \*Veteran Exemption (Clause 22) - \$400.00
- \*Veteran Exemption (Clause 22E) - \$1,000.00
- \*Veteran Exemption for Surviving Spouse (Clause 22D) - Full Tax Exemption
- \*Blind Exemption (Clause 37) - \$437.50

If you are unable to make it, please contact the Agawam Assessor's Office at (413) 786-0400 x8700 and they can provide you with further information.

## Women needed for state commission

BOSTON - The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women is currently seeking candidates for the Hampden County Commission on the Status of Women, one of 11 Regional Commissions across the Commonwealth that strives to represent women and girls in the areas of equality and opportunity.

The mission of the Hampden County Commission on the Status of Women

(HCCSW) is to provide a permanent, influential voice for women and girls across the county that facilitates and fosters community and inclusiveness. The Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights, and the full enjoyment of life for all women and girls throughout their lives.

HCCSW represents all cities and towns in Hampden County which include Agawam, Blandford, Brim-

field, Chester, Chicopee, East Longmeadow, Granville, Hampden, Holland, Holyoke, Longmeadow, Ludlow, Monson, Montgomery, Palmer, Russell, Southwick, Springfield, Tolland, Wales, West Springfield, Westfield, and Wilbraham. To apply for the Hampden County Commission on the Status of Women and to submit a resume, please visit: <https://masscsw.org/about/regional-commissions/hampden-county/>



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## Wistariahurst Museum celebrates Civic Learning Week

HOLYOKE - From March 9 to 15, thousands of schools and organizations across the nation will celebrate Civic Learning Week, an annual nonpartisan awareness week bringing together students, educators, policymakers, and leaders in the public and private sectors to highlight and further energize the movement for civic education in states and communities across the nation.

Civic education is essential to ensuring each and every person across this country is equipped with the necessary tools to en-

gage as members of our self-governing society. As we look ahead to the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 2026, we have an unparalleled opportunity to shine a light on the importance of civic education and the way in which it can sustain and strengthen our "many voices, one nation" for the next 250 years and beyond.

"Wistariahurst Museum is excited to participate in Civic Learning Week, bringing several events to the museum along with sharing information on how to get involved with your lo-

cal community," says Emily Munsell, Wistariahurst Office Assistant.

We know that the best civic learning happens both in and outside of the classroom, and is a lifelong endeavor touching every facet of society. In order to underscore the need to prioritize civic learning across the country, Civic Learning Week highlights the civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions that provide the foundation for an informed and engaged populace, sustaining and strengthening constitutional democracy in the United States.

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# SUMMER CAMP

Check Out These Great Camps!

## Registration open for HCC Summer Youth Programs

It's still winter, but it's not too early to start thinking about summer.

Registration is now open for 2026 Summer Youth Programs at Holyoke Community College.

Starting July 7 and running through August 8, HCC will offer 16 week-long, in-person summer programs for youth aged 8 to 16.

For more than 40 years, HCC has offered fun, challenging summer education activities for youth, providing early opportunities for students to experience a college environment guided and encouraged by experienced professionals.

HCC's 2026 on-campus

summer youth programs run Monday through Friday, some for a full day and others for a half day.

All in-person programs will be held on the main HCC campus, 303 Homestead Ave., except for cooking classes, which are held at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute, 164 Race St., Holyoke:

**July 6-10:**

**Cooking without Borders with Chef Marangelly Vargas-Gonzalez (ages 9-16):** In this lively hands-on camp, young chefs will team up to chop, stir, and create tasty dishes from around the world. Each day brings a new theme and a chance to dis-



cover fresh ingredients, cool cooking techniques, and the joy of working together in the kitchen. By week's end,

they'll walk away with new cooking skills, delicious recipes to show off at home, and plenty of tasty memories. (9 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$425)

**Fun Bites with Chef Diana Swanigan (ages 9-16):** Join us for an exciting week of hands-on culinary fun, where young chefs will discover the joy of cooking delicious, easy-to-prepare meals to share with family and friends. Participants will work together to chop, season, cook, and taste a variety of recipes – all made from scratch. Each day introduces new menu themes, ingredients, and techniques designed to build confidence in the kitchen. (9 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$425)

**July 13-17:**

**Cooking without Borders with Chef Marangelly Vargas-Gonzalez (ages 9-16, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$425)**

**Fun Bites with Chef Diana Swanigan (ages 9-16, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$425)**

**ROBLOX Coders (ages 8-10; 11-14):** Discover the Lua coding language while designing experiences in ROBLOX, an online universe where you can create anything you dream of. New developers will learn to use ROBLOX's Studio software to reimagine the popular game genres with their own custom code. Instructor Brittany Pietskowski. (9 a.m. to noon for ages 8-10; 1 to 4 p.m. for ages 11-14, \$199)

**July 20-24:**

**Around the World with Chef Diana Swanigan (ages 9-16):** Cuisine around the world serves as a universal language that unites people across cultures through shared flavors, traditions, and stories. Learn to prepare full-course meals from Asia, Puerto Rico, Greece, Italy,

and New Orleans. (9 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$425)

**Make Your First Video Game (ages 8-10; 11-14):** Go beyond the limitations of traditional 2D game design classes and create an immersive 3D world. Students will learn the physics behind 3D games, explore beginner event scripting, level design, controlling the flow of gameplay, and storytelling. Instructor Brittany Pietskowski. (9 a.m. – noon for ages 8-10; 1 – 4 p.m. for ages 11-14, \$199)

**Passport to Flavors with Chef Marangelly Vargas-Gonzalez (ages 9-16):** This hands-on cooking camp takes kids on a delicious journey across global cuisines, exploring flavors, techniques, and ingredients that make each culture unique. Dive into fun daily themes like diner classics, Mexican favorites, Mediterranean feasts, Filipino street bites, and southern comfort food, all while building confidence one tasty dish at a time. (9 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$425)

**July 27-31:**

**Around the World with**

**Chef Diana Swanigan (ages 9-16, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$425)**

**Minecraft Designers (ages 8-10; 11-14):** Learn how to create a custom map, design structures to share between worlds, build with Redstone and Command blocks, and create custom textures for you to import at home or share with friends. Instructor Brittany Pietskowski. (9 a.m. – noon for ages 8-10; 1 – 4 p.m. for ages 11-14, \$199).

**Passport to Flavors with Chef Marangelly Vargas-Gonzalez (ages 9-16, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$425)**

**August 3-7:**

**Python Programmers (ages 8-10; 11-14):** Learn the world's fastest-growing programming language favored by Google, NASA, YouTube, and the CIA. Learn how to code with Python to create engaging apps and games. Instructor Brittany Pietskowski. (9 a.m. – noon for ages 8-10; 1 – 4 p.m. for ages 11-14, \$199).

For more details or to register for Summer Youth Program classes, please go to: [hcc.edu/summer-youth](http://hcc.edu/summer-youth).

## summer@HCC

### Holyoke Community College Summer Youth Programs for Ages 8-16

Save your spot and register today for summer fun!

- July 27-31, Minecraft Designers (ages 8-10, 11-14)
- August 3-7, Python Programmers (ages 8-10, 11-14)
- July 20-24, Make Your First Video Game (ages 8-10, 11-14)
- July 13-17, ROBLOX Coders (ages 8-10, 11-14)
- July 6-10 and 13-17, Fun Bites with Chef Swanigan (ages 9-16)
- July 20-24 and 27-31, Around the world with Chef Swanigan (ages 9-16)
- July 6-10 and 13-17, Cooking without Borders with Chef Vargas-Gonzalez (ages 9-16)
- July 20-24 and 27-31, Passport to Flavors with Chef Vargas-Gonzalez (ages 9-16)

Check out our adult enrichment courses, too! [hcc.edu/bcs](http://hcc.edu/bcs)

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Deerfield, MA 01342

Registration Link  
[bement.org/summer](http://bement.org/summer)

# SPORTS

## Brownies edge Holyoke in finale



Dylan Jorgensen sends a pass inside the arc.



Trevor Moynihan flies for a shot.



Gavin Cruz tries to overcome a block to shoot.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM



Caeden Roeder looks to change the direction of play.



Brody Sheehan enters the paint.



Yusuf Ebrahim looks for an open teammate.

## Registration for Pioneer Valley Baseball League opens for 2026 summer season

SOUTH HADLEY – The Pioneer Valley Baseball League, an adult baseball league for players who are age 18 and over, has just opened up its registration for the 2026 season.

The adult league will be administered by the Quabbin Valley Baseball League, and a registration link is on the home page of the league's website [www.quabbinvalley-](http://www.quabbinvalley-baseball.org)

[baseball.org](http://www.quabbinvalley-baseball.org). Thought it will be under the Quabbin umbrella, there will be no major changes in how the league is operated.

This year, the PVBL will have a 22-game regular season schedule followed by a double-elimination playoffs. The league, which had five teams last year and had to utilize multiple byes throughout the season, will be fielding a

sixth team this season.

There are several spots open for that sixth team, so players interested in joining the league should get signed up as soon as possible to claim a spot.

The league is a wood-bat only league utilizing playing under regular baseball rules though all players do bat. The league operates on a Saturday-Tuesday schedule.

Games are played on Saturday mornings with 10 a.m. starts typical and on Tuesday evenings with start times in the 5:30 to 6 p.m. range. The league will start play in late April and running through the end of August. There are slots open for both full-time players and part-time players. The fee for full-time players will be \$260 with part-time players getting up to 11 games for

\$130. Fees paid go toward the operation of the league, paying for insurance, umpires, fields, and baseballs and no one profits in any way.

In addition to the new sixth team, there are limited open roster spots on the other teams in the league, so get your registration in as soon as possible to participate in this season.

Games are played at

ballfields throughout the region from as far south as Southwick's Whalley Field, through South Hadley's Beachgrounds and up north at Frontier Regional High School in South Deerfield.

For any questions, please go to the league website for more information. The league hopes interested players will come out and join the fun this spring and summer.

# Sports

## Agawam hockey regular season ends with overtime loss

AGAWAM – On Feb. 14, the Agawam High School hockey was handed a loss in overtime by league rival Chicopee 4-3. Agawam was trailing 3-2 in the game before they scored the tying goal in the third period. Agawam

got goals from three different players, Jackson Bates, Andy Holton, and Nick Brown. Agawam finished with a 2-16 record. Highlights from Agawam's time in the Western Mass. tournament will be in next week's edition.



Clockwise from above: Andrew Holton runs into an opponent; Anthony Barbarini heads up the ice with the puck; Brady Klinakis makes a stop; Jackson Bates races up the ice; Braden Parrelli considers his next move.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM



## Thunderbirds come up with win in shootout with Islanders

SPRINGFIELD – The Springfield Thunderbirds (19-25-4-2) rode a turbulent night to an eventual 5-4 shootout win over the Bridgeport Islanders (21-21-3-4) on Friday night inside the MassMutual Center.

Unlike their last contest on Wednesday, the T-Birds and their opposition had a much slower start to the night offensively, with a scoreless struggle carrying late into the first. Thomas Bordeleau finally broke the

ice at 14:54, winning a draw and darting to the right wing circle and rifling home a feed from Calle Rosen to give Springfield a 1-0 advantage.

Just 1:16 later, and less than half a minute into their first power play of the night, the T-Birds built a cushion as Chris Wagner jammed a loose puck through the legs of Marcus Hogberg from the blue paint to make it 2-0.

Bridgeport's power play provided a response at 19:05 when Julien Gauthier inter-

cepted a loose puck deep in the offensive zone before sifting a forehand over Vadim Zherenko to make it a 2-1 game into the first intermission.

Zherenko proved to be pivotal in the second, especially when he made a lurching post-to-post skate save on Matt Maggio to keep his team in front. Later in the same sequence of play, Matt Luff hit Alek Kaskimaki on a 2-on-1 pass, and Kaskimaki picked the glove-side corner

on Hogberg, making it 3-1 for Springfield at 6:53 of the second.

Down 3-1 heading into the third, the Islanders turned the game upside-down in the span of just over six minutes. After Springfield killed two straight Islander power plays, Hunter Drew finally got Bridgeport's second goal of the night at 5:02, moments after Hogberg kept Springfield from goals on two straight odd-man rushes.

Liam Foudy followed

Drew's lead with a sneaky wrist shot from the left side at 8:42, tying the score at 3 before Pierrick Dube got a fortuitous bounce in the slot and whistled a shot over Zherenko's blocker at 11:31 to get Bridgeport its first lead of the night, 4-3.

In desperate need of a momentum shifter, Hugh McGing delivered just that for Springfield, crashing the low slot area and firing a forehand over a fallen Hogberg at 14:28 off a centering pass

from Juraj Pekarcik.

For a fourth time in 10 meetings, overtime was needed between the clubs, and for a third time, it reached the shootout. Bordeleau put his stamp on the night with a gorgeous backhand deke to beat Hogberg in the opening round. Zherenko then stood his ground and made three successive saves on Adam Beckman, Gauthier, and Dube to secure Springfield's first shootout triumph of the season.

# Sports

## Worcester Railers score win in overtime

RAPID CITY, SD — The Worcester Railers HC (23-19-5-1 pts) grabbed a 5-4 overtime victory over the Rapid City Rush (21-23-4-0) on Friday, February 20th at The Monument in front of a crowd of 3,409. The Railers will wrap up their three-game road series against the Rush on Saturday, February 21st, with puck drop at 7:05 p.m. MST.

Rapid City struck first with back-to-back goals from Briley Wood (2-0-2) in the opening half of the first period. Matt DeMelis (1-1-2) got Worcester on the board with a one-timer at 9:35 in the second. Drew Callin (3-0-3) kept it rolling for Worcester with two goals for the Railers, the latter of which was on the power play to put

the team ahead 3-2 heading into the final period of play. Rapid City's Ryan Chyzowski (1-1-2) tied the game for the Rush once more at three apiece early in the third. Linemate Blake Bennett (1-0-1) put Rapid City ahead for the second time of the evening with a power play shot atop the right circle to make the new score 4-3 at 10:31. Callin scored his first hat-trick as a Railer and pushed the night into overtime with a quick shot off from the left faceoff circle over the shoulder of Nathan Torchia (4-4). Anthony Repaci (1-1-2) lit the lamp for a final time for the Railers just fifty-nine seconds into OT and picked up the 5-4 victory off a pass from DeMelis.

Rapid City established an early two-goal lead for them-

selves with back-to-back unanswered goals at 7:05 and 9:43 in the first, both from Briley Wood. Wood (7th) deked out goaltender Tristan Lennox and created an opening along the right side of the Railers' net to score the Rush's first tally. Wood (8th) followed up the play with a second unanswered goal for the team three-and-a-half minutes later, a shot that snuck its way in between the pads of Lennox (0-2). Worcester was unable to respond to the new lead before the horn sounded. No penalties were called in the period. Worcester led in shots on goal with 13 to Rapid City's 6.

The second period was Worcester's turn to chase down the Rush's lead and take the game for them-

selves. In the span of six minutes and twenty-four seconds, Worcester went from trailing by two to a three-goal lead. Matt DeMelis (14th) got the scoring streak going with a quick one-timer assisted on by a pass through the crease from Riley Ginnell at 9:35 (1-2). Drew Callin (16th) capitalized on a center ice breakaway as Rush goaltender Nathan Torchia was unable to block the push (2-2). Khristian Acosta was then sent down to the ice on the next play as he collided with the Rush's net. The act put the Railers on their first extra-man advantage of the night as Mitchell Smith headed into the box for roughing. The two minutes with the man-advantage proved fruitful as Callin (17th) nabbed a

second tally, his fourth in two games. Amidst heavy traffic, Callin finished off a rebound and put the puck into a wide-open Rush net, which gave Worcester their 3-2 lead as the second frame of play came to a close. Shots on goal once again favored Worcester 15-9. Smith's penalty was the only one called for the period.

Rapid City quickly re-tied the game for the second time early in the third. The goal was tucked into the Railers net by Ryan Chyzowski (21st) at 4:18. Rapid City then reclaimed the game lead at 10:31 with a top-shelf shot atop the right circle from Blake Bennett (18th) (4-3). The play came from an man-advantage delivered by a tripping penalty called on Railers' defenseman Adam

Samuelsson at 9:35. Drew Callin (18th) kept a victory in the Railers sights with a late-game hat-trick as netminder Lennox was called to the bench to give Worcester the extra body. Callin drove the puck from the left faceoff dot over the shoulder of Torchia, and both teams skated into overtime, nodded up at four apiece. As the overtime clock began to count down, it was Anthony Repaci (15th) who claimed the game winner just fifty-nine seconds into play. Repaci tipped a backhanded pass from DeMelis out in front to claim the Railers' second victory in South Dakota with a 5-4 final score. Worcester put up 53 shots on goal to Rapid City's 20. Worcester and Rapid City each collected one penalty in the third.

## Class of 1970 planning fall reunion

AGAWAM — Agawam High School Class of 1970 will be holding its class reunion in the fall. We are looking for our classmates. Please contact one of the

committee members listed below with your name and email address. Thank you and hope to see you all soon.

Gale Sullivan: GaleP-Sullivan@verizon.net

ly Cloran: PohnerHolly@gmail.com  
 Scott Macey: mace1459@comcast.net  
 Gail Donais: GCDonais@cox.net  
 Shirley Porter: ShirleyPorter525@gmail.com

## Chamber holding mayoral breakfast

AGAWAM — The VIP Mayoral Breakfast will be held on Mar. 4 from 7:30 to 9 a.m. at Tansey's Catered Table. The event is put on by the West of the River Chamber of Commerce.

The chamber believes the breakfast ought to be a celebration of flavors and a fun way to start the day with the mayors of Agawam and West Springfield. The event will feature updates from

both mayors and questions can be submitted to robin@westoftheriverchamber.com for a Q&A part of the event. Go to the West of the River's website to register for the breakfast.

## Registration now underway for QVBL

SOUTH HADLEY — Registration has opened for the Quabbin Valley Baseball League, an over-28 recreational league, held its first meeting of 2026 to prepare for the upcoming season.

For the 2026 season, the cost will be \$215 and will include a 16th game added to the regular season schedule.

During the 2025 season, the league experimented with playing on Mother's Day Saturday as well as a weeknight game to allow players an opportunity to play under the lights. While the night games were very successful, the Mother's Day Saturday games were rained out.

Those elements will return along with a 16th game with an opponent to be determine as the league's board explores possibilities for interleague matchups with another league in the region.

For returning players to the league, the deadline is Mar. 22 at 12 noon to be registered for the 2026 season in order to be guaranteed a roster spot. There will be open practices for all players but specifically targeted at new players scheduled for March 29 and April 4 at times and locations to be announced. The draft is currently scheduled to take place on April 4 following that practice.

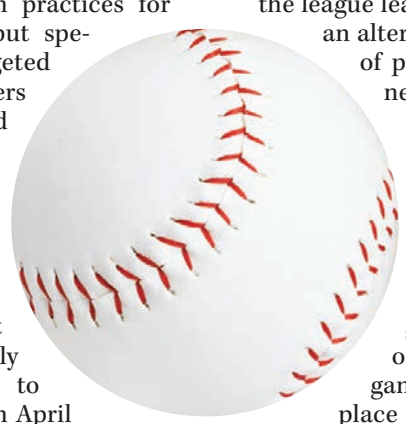
The season is currently slated to start on Sunday, April 19 and following the success of the six-team fall league last year, the league will also have a fall league in September and October this

season.

The registration is live at www.quabbinvalleybaseball.org. Players must register and then pay the league dues via Venmo or contact the league leadership if an alternate form of payment is needed.

Aside from the weeknight and Mother's Day games, other games take place Sundays at 10 a.m. outside of Mother's Day, Memorial Day and July 4 weekends. Play-offs will be in August.

This is the 30th season for the league and league officials are looking to celebrate the anniversary with a couple of events.



## Agawam Day in Florida tradition continues

ST PETERSBURG, FL — The 45nd annual "Agawam Day in Florida" will be held on

Wednesday, March 4, 2026 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Former Agawam residents, old friends, classmates and relatives will meet at Fort DeSoto National Park, St. Petersburg, FL. for a reunion, picnic, raffles, hugs

and to share old memories. For more information, contact: Hank Drewnowski call/text 860-462-7273 or email - hdrew2452@gmail.com.

# Public Notices

**TOWN OF AGAWAM**  
**Public Hearing**  
**Thursday, March 19, 2026**  
**6:00 PM**  
**Agawam Senior Center**  
**954 Main Street**  
**Agawam, MA 01001**  
**Proposed FY 2026 CDBG**  
**Application**

The Town of Agawam, in association with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, will conduct a public hearing regarding the FY26 Community Development Block Grant Program. The hearing will take place at 6:00 PM on **Thursday, March 19th, 2026, in person at the Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, MA 01001.**

The public is encouraged to attend this hearing to discuss the Town's FY26 application to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities for up to \$950,000 in available Community Development Block Grant Funds. All persons with questions or comments regarding the grant application will have an opportunity to be heard. Those unable to attend can send written comments to the Agawam Planning Department, 36 Main Street, Agawam, MA 01001, Attn: Taryn Egerton, Planning Director & Conserva-

tion Agent, or via email at tegerton@agawam.ma.us.

The Town is encouraging input on community needs and projects which would benefit from grant funding. The project currently being considered is the next phase of comprehensive infrastructure improvements on Moore Street, roughly between the High Street and Maple Street intersections. Additional projects may be discussed and may be included in the grant application. Additional community needs that can be addressed through the Block Grant program will also be discussed.

Persons who require special accommodations for the hearing should contact the Town at least one week prior to the hearing date at (413) 786-0400. For further information contact Erica Johnson at PVPC at (413) 781-6045 or ejohnson@pvpc.org. 02/26/2026

**Town of Agawam**  
**Legal Notice**

The **Agawam Planning Board** will hold a public hearing on Thursday, March 5, 2026 at 6:10pm and the **Agawam City Council** will hold a public hearing on Monday, March 16, 2026 at 7:00pm, both in the Veterans

Hall at the Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, MA. The purpose of these hearings will be to hear the petition of Dikan & Ashlaban for a zone change request for **515 & 533 Mill Street** from Business B & Agricultural to Residence A-2. City Council's public hearing will be livestreamed on the Town of Agawam's website at www.agawam.ma.us and will also be televised on Cable Access Channel 15 or Channel 1074. Copies of the proposed zone change can be obtained from the Planning Department between the hours of 7:30am and 3:30pm at the Agawam DPW, 1000 Suffield Street, Agawam, MA or by emailing the Office of the City Clerk for an electronic copy at vgioscia@agawam.ma.us

By Order Of:  
 Violet Baldwin, Chair  
 Agawam Planning Board  
 Anthony Russo, President  
 Agawam City Council  
 02/19, 02/26/2026

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
**The Trial Court**  
**Probate and Family Court**  
**Hampden Probate and Family Court**

**50 State Street**  
**Springfield, MA 01103**  
**(413)748-7758**  
**Docket No.**  
**HD26P0344EA**  
**Estate of:**  
**Irene Marie Kulpinski**  
**Date of Death: 04/20/2019**  
**CITATION ON PETITION**  
**FOR FORMAL**  
**ADJUDICATION**

To all interested persons:  
 A Petition for **Late and Limited Formal Testacy and/or Appointment** has been filed by **Richard M Kulpinski of Holyoke, MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that **Richard M Kulpinski of Holyoke, MA** be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **With Personal Surety** on the bond in **unsupervised administration.**

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**  
 You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: **10:00 a.m. on the return day of 03/12/2026.**

This is **NOT** a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

**UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE**

A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.

WITNESS, Hon. **Claudine T. Stoudemire**, First Justice of this Court.  
 Date: February 19, 2026  
**Rosemary A Saccomani**,  
 Register of Probate  
 02/26/2026

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
**The Trial Court**  
**Probate and Family Court**  
**Hampden Probate and Family Court**  
**50 State Street**  
**Springfield, MA 01103**  
**(413)748-7758**  
**Docket No.**  
**HD23P0839EA**  
**Estate of:**

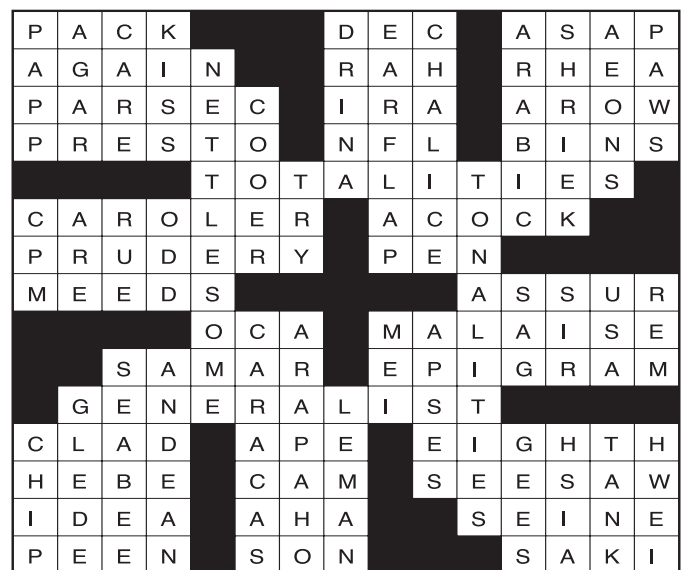
**Joan Wollmershauser**  
**Date of Death: 07/31/2022**  
**CITATION ON PETITION FOR SALE OF REAL ESTATE BY A PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE**

To all interested persons:  
 A Petition for Sale of Real Estate has been filed by: **Michelle J Martin of Feeding Hills, MA** requesting that the court authorize the Personal Representative to sell the decedent's real estate at a private sale.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**  
 You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this court before: **10:00 a.m. on the return day of 03/23/2026.**

This is **NOT** a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

Witness, **Claudine T. Stoudemire**, First Justice of this Court.  
 Date: February 17, 2026  
**Rosemary A Saccomani**,  
 Register of Probate  
 02/26/2026



*Agawam Advertiser News*  
**OBITUARY POLICY**

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

One is a free, brief **Death Notice** listing the name of deceased, date of death and funeral date and place.

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**FOUNDATION** ■ from page 1

wam School Committee Members

- Ed Borgatti, Agawam City Councilor and owner of EB's

- Anthony Russo, Agawam City Councilor

This was our first Celebrity Bartending event, and with the help of these incredible people, in just two hours we raised \$2,000.

This year, on Sept. 12, we will be holding our Third Annual Be Kind To Your Mind Foundation Tournament at the Agawam Municipal Golf Course.

See more about the organization at <https://www.facebook.com/p/The-Kayla-Frances-Memorial-61561974263923/>



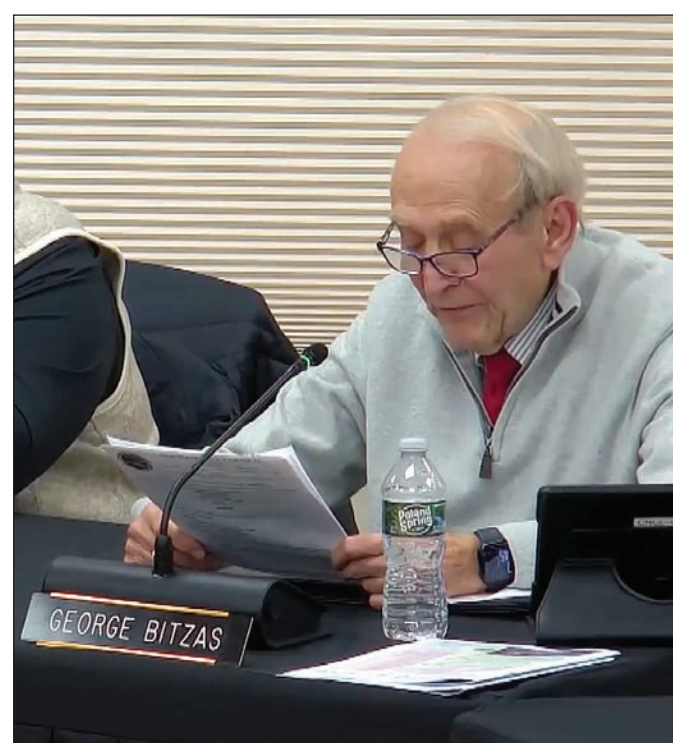
It was a festive atmosphere last Thursday evening at Dunne's Tavern as the restaurant and celebrities helped raise money for the Be Kind To Your Mind Foundation. SUBMITTED PHOTOS



Resident Guy Qvistgaard speaks at the Feb. 17 city council meeting. SUBMITTED PHOTOS



Uduak Enyiema offers her take on the comments made on Feb. 2 by Councilor George Bitzas.



City Councilor George Bitzas speaks at the end of the Feb. 17 meeting. He has been criticized recently by several residents he offended with his comments on a domestic partnership ordinance debated by the council on Feb. 2.

**MEETING** ■ from page 1

1950's values have no place in 21st century Massachusetts, and second, its far past time for you to resign."

His wife, Carolyn Qvistgaard spoke right after him. She echoed her husband's comments. She pointed out that Bitzas' comments from the Legislative Sub-Committee meeting held prior to the Feb. 2 meeting were not available to hear online. According to the town, this was due to bad audio in the recording.

She talked about how viral the comments had been made.

"If this councilor's goal was attention; mission accomplished," Carolyn Qvistgaard said. "This behavior indicates he doesn't understand the younger generation, modern families, or why this kind of commentary is inappropriate coming from an elected official. This councilor's made Agawam the laughing stock in Western Massachusetts and beyond.

She went on to compliment Councilors Robert Rossi

and Ed Borgatti for expressing their stance against the ordinance in a more respectful and inclusive manner.

Uduak Enyiema, who ran unsuccessfully for council during last year's municipal election cycle. She criticized the rest of the council for not speaking up immediately when Bitzas made the comments.

"It didn't sit well with me," she said. "What struck me as deeply as the comments, was what followed. There was no pause, no moment of reflection, no comment saying let us be careful how we talk about people we represent. The council move on. That silence felt heavy."

Corlene Roberts said Bitzas' comments were out of touch and that she was not concerned with her children or grandchildren carrying on her family name.

"As a parent and grandparent, my wish for my kids and grandkids is to be happy and healthy," Roberts said. "Not to carry on a family name. That's an outdated way of thinking."

Lynn Barsh sympathized

with domestic partners who do not marry, saying certain life and financial situation make getting married not feasible.

"I was disappointed that this policy was deemed an extreme, radical, left-wing policy," Barsh said.

Former School Committee member Catherin McDougal defended the people of Somerville.

"I think the people of Somerville would be surprised to learn it is an extreme, radical, left liberal city," MacDougal said.

She went on to criticize Bitzas' final comment saying he did not want Agawam to become "one of those cities."

"As if people who think like that are not welcome here," MacDougal said. "These remarks send a message of who belongs in Agawam and who does not. I don't think that is fair to all the wonderful people from different walks of life who live here. I find these comments divisive and beneath the dignity of the council."

Daniel Arventos, Aleks

Wrobel, and Corinne Wingard also stood up and spoke critically about the comments.

Three residents, Denis Doroshenko, Brian Bacis, and Nick Dion were not critical of Bitzas.

Doroshenko continued his criticism of the ordinance itself.

"I saw healthy debate on this issue, and heard both sides," he said. "It was a bad ordinance. If this was a non-partisan issue, it would have been presented in a non-partisan way. I think character assassination is disingenuous. I think council has duty to debate the ordinances and resolutions that come into the down."

He described the debate as "healthy."

Bacis said he did not take the "extreme, radical left-liberal" comment to mean Bitzas was talking about anyone in the room. He described other cities he believed met that definition like Portland, OR, and Seattle, WA and said he didn't want to see Agawam become like that.

Dion

"What I'm hearing is people's feeling are being hurt by comments," Dion said. "There are more important things happening. In regards to the individual, I can speak on the individual."

Dion said he has known Bitzas for decades and described him a "good man" and as shown he cares for this community.

"I support you and back you 100%," he said.

All of the commenters did not use Bitzas name as Council President Anthony Russo read Citizen's Speak Time rules, which restrict the ability for a speaker to attack a specific person. All of the commenters used terms like "this individual," "one city councilor," though it is clear based of the Feb. 2 meeting video that Bitzas was the councilor being referred to with all the comments.

Bitzas spoke at the end of the council meeting, despite objections from his colleagues it was not the appropriate time to speak back to the residents. However, he did not specifically address

the comments made by the Feb. 17 speakers. Instead, he talked about some of the attacks made about him online through social media postings. He said he refused to apologize for things he did not say and would not accept his reputation being tarnished with false claims.

"I was asked to apologize for words I did not say," Bitzas said. "I will not apologize for something that is untrue. What I will say is that spreading false accusations and mischaracterizing someone's words for political reasons is wrong, and that behavior itself deserves reflection."

Bitzas said he was responding to online comments claiming he described hard-working people as liberals living in tents, and he did not say anything about gays.

While Bitzas spoke, several visitors to the council chambers stood and turned their backs to him.

For more on the fallout of this meeting, see related story, which also began on page 1 and continues below.

**BITZAS** ■ from page 1

"Regarding the Citizen's Speak portion, I listened respectfully to every speaker," Bitzas said. "I understand that some residents disagreed with my position, and they have every right to do so. Disagreement is part of the democratic process. However, I will not apologize for statements that I did not make or for holding a policy position that is shared by many of my constituents. At the same time, I regret if my words were interpreted in a way that suggested disrespect toward any individual or group, because that was not my intent."

Bitzas also maintained he is committed to voting "according to his understanding of what is best for Agawam."

Councilors Robert Rossi and Thomas Hendrickson were the only councilors who spoke directly about Bitzas and his comments. Rossi

criticized Bitzas for offending members of the community.

"Yes, I thought his comments were completely in appropriate and most offensive to a great many people," Rossi said. "Obviously, the comments made by Councilor Bitzas were of significance leading to so many people coming out to speak against him."

He went on to say he agreed Bitzas' comments were unprofessional and unbecoming of an elected official.

"As an elected official it is our responsibility to protect the interest of the people we serve without bias or prejudice," said Rossi.

Hendrickson continued to express disappointment the domestic partnership ordinance was voted down. And while he respectfully disagrees with his colleague, he felt Bitzas went a step too far and should apologize.

"Many of the other councilors' criticisms of the ordinance were fair, and while I obviously disagreed with them," Hendrickson said. "They were a healthy part of the democratic process of debating the policies that come before the Council. But I do think that Councilor Bitzas' statements crossed a line and that he should apologize to those who are upset about this."

Councilor Christine Rickmon, new to the council this year, said Bitzas' comments "did not sit right" with her.

"After reflection, I believe this goes beyond a single comment," Rickmon said. "When someone has served in public office for decades, there is an expectation that they understand the weight their words carry and the responsibility that comes with representing an entire community. Our residents deserve thoughtful, measured leadership — especially in moments of disagreement."

"Agawam is evolving. New families are moving here. Younger generations are growing up here. Many longtime residents are also expressing a desire for a town that feels welcoming, forward-looking, and respectful of all who call it home. Our public discourse should reflect that reality.

When rhetoric becomes dismissive or divisive, it can make neighbors feel unwelcome and can erode trust in local government. That concerns me deeply."

Rickmon, and Rosemary Sandlin, and Councilor President Anthony Russo also emphasized the importance of the council having respectful dialogue when debating issues.

"Public service requires respectful dialogue," Russo said. "Even when we disagree. My focus is on thoughtful debate and making decisions that reflect the best interests of the whole community."

**SNOW** ■ from page 1

occasional flurries floating around by 11 a.m. on Monday, allowing Department of Public Works crews to quickly get main roads clear of snow and most main roads in town were clear by early afternoon, allowing for safe travel.

Side streets were also safer for travel much sooner than expected.

And by mid-evening on Monday night, the parking lots at Agawam's schools were cleared and ready for classes on Tuesday morning. However, the piles have gotten much higher on the sides of the parking lot.

For the most part, Agawam, like the area was spared a second major thumping. For the first time in almost a decade, the region is experiencing considerably more snow. The biggest hit came on Jan. 25, when a major snowstorm came through

the region and Agawam was the recipient of about 18 inches of snow.

Combined with a two-thirds less contracted manpower to help with snow removal, Agawam's DPW, like many communities has digging out for weeks, including moving snow to other locations in an order to increase visibility at street intersections and get snow piles down. School also had to be canceled for two days in order for DPW crews to get all school parking lots, driveways, sidewalks, and entrances cleared.

DPW workers will be coming through this week to clear sidewalks on certain streets, but residents who are required to shovel sidewalks should do so within 24 hours of the end of the storm. Agawam has been lenient in not fining residents this year due to size of the Jan. 25 storm and the higher than usual snowfall this year.