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Sitting councilors face six challengers

By Gregory A. Scibelli
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AGAWAM – All 11 of Agawam's current city councilors will run for re-election this year, including current Council President Rosemary Sandlin and Vice President Anthony Russo. Last election's leading vote-getter Ed Borgatti, a first-time councilor, will run for a second term as well.

The rest of the sitting

councilors are: George Bitzas, Thomas Hendrickson, Dino Mercadante, Robert Rossi, Gerald Smith, Peter Smus, Anthony Suffriti, and Maria Valego.

Borgatti, Smus, and Valego were elected for the first time to the City Council in 2023.

Those three seats became open with the retirement of longtime councilor Paul Cavallo and the departures of Christopher Johnson and

Cecilia Calabrese, who both ran for mayor. Johnson won the mayor's seat by a wide margin over Calabrese, and is now running for his second term since returning to the top office. Johnson was the town's first mayor in 1990 and held the seat for 10 years. He also had seven terms as a City Council, six of them as the council president.

Johnson is the only unopposed candidate in the

election this year. No one besides Johnson pulled papers to run for mayor. Nomination papers were due last Tuesday, Aug. 19.

Barring a write-in campaign, Johnson will easily win re-election.

Johnson's former opponent, Calabrese, will be among six challenging the incumbents for one of the 11 seats on the City Council.

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Festival highlights local artists, newest Mosaic

By Quinn Suomala
Correspondent

AGAWAM – Agawam Community Arts and Artisans held their annual Art Festival last weekend at the Polish-American Club.

With 75 artists and artisans participating as vendors, attendees could find and enjoy almost any kind of art or craft they could think of.

President of ACAA Ceil Rossi was delighted by the variety of artists she was able to bring in for the festival and excited to see people from the community come out for the day.

"I look forward to having



The New England Mosaic was on display at the Agawam Community Arts and Artisans Art Festival.

a good time, meeting new people and making new friends," Rossi said.

Rossi hoped that this event would be a way to remind the community of the art that exists around them.

"I think it is very important to keep art alive," Russi said.

Through this art festival the ACAA hoped to help keep art alive not just through the vendors, but also by raising funds for scholarships.

All artists at the festival donated one piece of art for a silent auction. All proceeds raised from this auction will go to the Gloria McClellan Scholarship, which is a scholarship that gives funds to high school seniors that intend to go into the arts.

"Last year we gave out three \$1,200 scholarships to high school seniors," ACAA Art Education Co-Chair Robin Fernandes said.

Additionally, the New England Mosaic also helped to raise funds for this scholarship.

This mosaic is created in conjunction with many local communities. Different libraries sign up for the program and receive a variety of six-inch by six-inch canvases that community members are welcome to pick up and decorate.

"It is this full circle thing where the community gets to experience and try art," ACAA Member and New England Mosaic Head Karen Conkey said. "It also gives

people a chance to do some good and encourage art through the students that are going to get the scholarships."

The community members then return their canvases, or tiles, and they become part of the mosaic. The mosaic was revealed in July, and since then community members have been encouraged to come out, take a look and purchase one of the tiles.

All proceeds from the mosaic also go towards the Gloria McClellan Scholarship.

To make this year's festival especially unique, the ACAA asked the Agawam

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McCormick settles in as town assessor

By Quinn Suomala
Correspondent

AGAWAM – Kelly McCormick has been welcomed to Agawam as the new town assessor.

McCormick brings with her decades of experience, as she had previously been the principal assessor for the town of Hampden.

"I have approximately 10 years of experience working in an assessing office, valuing residential and commercial properties," McCormick said. "I have also successfully managed evaluations, improved data integrity and built public trust."

On top of that experience, McCormick has also been an elected member of the executive board for the Hampden and Hampshire Assessor Association since 2018 and has served as president for the last two years.

Moreover, she is also a member of the Massachusetts Association of Assessing Officers where she has been a member of the Education Committee since 2020.

"I help to organize educational classes and seminars for assessors across the state," McCormick said.

McCormick plans to bring this experience and passion

TOWN | page 15



Agawam High School graduates Hannah Parker and Lisa Pikulska display their artwork.

TURLEY PHOTO BY QUINN SUOMALA

Opponents of battery storage facility present information session to community

By Brendan Rooney
Correspondent

AGAWAM – Last Monday, Aug. 18, more than 50 people gathered in unison to voice their frustrations, including city council representatives and members of the public, all sharing general disapproval of the town's Planning Board's approval of the lithium-ion battery storage facility, near 404 Silver Street.

The meeting was organized and facilitated by Nick and Jessica Dion, two frustrated Agawam residents who have assisted in spearheading opposition to the facility. The couple brought

forth a presentation along with various slides, full of tons of critical information, to help better offer additional information about the safety and housing of the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) facility, which, to members of the community, was thought to be beneficial.

"Tonight is just about the facts that we found, and not always about opinions, but this is just an informational session," Jessica Dion said. Before providing a breakdown about the purpose and design of a BESS, and the key differences that many usually get wrong, Dion's presentation revealed that the storage

system stores excess electricity, usually gathered from outside clean renewable energy sources such as solar and wind, while housing a multitude of lithium-ion batteries, which are the same ones found in almost all electronic devices, for example, phones and laptops.

In addition, Dion touched upon the critical difference between a local solar farm on Tuckahoe Turf, which is powered directly by solar energy, and batteries that only charge when the panels are generating electricity, while being self-contained, mean-

BATTERY | page 15



Jessica Dion presents information to the public last Monday evening.

TURLEY PHOTO BY BRENDAN ROONEY



ZBA question in limbo in state legislature

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

AGAWAM – While the election ballot has been determined (see related story), whether or not town residents will see a ballot question on Nov. 4 remains to be determined.

But according to an update from the mayor's office earlier this week, the town learned a ballot question that would expand the membership of the Zoning Board of Appeals is still in committee. The measure must make it out of committee and be passed by the legislature in order to be sent back to Agawam for inclusion on this year's ballot.

If it is not passed through the legislature in the com-

ing week, it is possible the town will not receive the approval in time to make a ballot question official for this November. The town would have to wait until next year to have the ballot question during the state election.

Zoning Board of Appeals has been in the limelight from time-to-time when residents or businesses have come forward seeking special permits variances that are often against typical zoning bylaws. Decisions of the ZBA then become controversial depending on which way they go.

Councilors George Bitzas, Anthony Russo, and Anthony Suffriti proposed the expansion of the board, which passed through the

council earlier this year.

It has since been submitted to State Rep. Nicholas Boldgya and introduced to the legislature.

The proposal suggests there would be five members on the ZBA and they would be elected each January to three-year terms. The re-election of the five members would be staggered.

The proposal does not say whether alternates would continue to be selected.

Massachusetts General Laws allow for ZBA's to consist of three or five members. In the case of the Town of Agawam, the City Council is responsible for bringing forward candidates and voting on them.

The current members of

the ZBA are Chair Doreen Prouty, who has been on the board for many years. She is joined by Vice Chair Richard Maggi, and Clerk Gary Geiger. Additionally, the alternate members of the board are Vincenzo Ronghi and Aldo Mancini, Jr.

On a case-by-base basis, the Board of Appeals has the power to hear and decide on petitions for:

- Appeals from the decisions of the Inspector of Buildings
- Special Permits as allowed under the Zoning Bylaw
- Variances from the requirements of the Zoning Bylaw
- Comprehensive Permits under Chapter 40B of Massachusetts General Laws

Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day to be held on Sept. 6

AGAWAM – The Agawam Department of Public Works is planning to hold its annual Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day on Saturday, Sept. 6 at the DPW Annex, 1000 Suffield Street between 9 a.m. and 12 noon. Although this event is free to Agawam residents, pre-registration is required.

Appointments may be scheduled by calling the DPW at 821-0600 ext.4 or 821-0624 beginning Monday, Aug. 19.

Participants should remain in their vehicle and place all waste in the

trunk, rear cargo area, or truck bed.

This program offers residents a safe, economical way to dispose of household items that are flammable, reactive, corrosive or toxic.

Solvents, pesticides, caustic cleaners, and oil-based paints are some examples of the different types of items that will be accepted. Latex paint will not be accepted at this event.

For a more detailed list of acceptable materials visit the town website at www.agawam.ma.us

Senior Center announces new trips

AGAWAM – Insider's Travel, in collaboration with the Agawam Senior Center, has added two new one-day bus trips to its fall lineup for active seniors:

• **Tuesday, Sept. 9** – WatersEdge Spa Luncheon and Clinton Outlets - Enjoy a relaxing lunch at this oceanfront spa plus outlet shopping.

• **Tuesday, Oct. 14** – Aqua Turf's "Legends of Las Vegas" Show and Evergreen Walk - A fabulous Vegas-style performance and time to stroll or shop.

• **Thursday, Nov. 6** – Mystery Trip - A surprise destination filled with fun and discovery.

• **Wednesday, November 19** – Radio City Rockettes 100th Anniversary Spectacular - Celebrate the

season with this once-in-a-century New York holiday tradition.

• **Thursday, Dec. 4** – Encore Casino or New England Aquarium - Choose your day—try your luck or explore underwater wonders.

New Standby Seating Now Available! Want to travel but keep it flexible? Now offering Standby Seating for all Insider's Travel bus trips! No commitment • Free to sign up • Pick your trips & save up to 25% with last-minute pricing • Perfect for spontaneous travelers looking for a great deal and a little adventure

All Trips depart from the Agawam Senior Center. Seats are limited—Call Jo at (413) 478-4698 or Email: Insiderstravel2025@gmail.com.

Cat sanctuary seeking supplies

AGAWAM – To all of our valued friends and supporters: The Cat Sanctuary is running short of supplies this month. Could you help out with an extra boost by donating unscented clumping cat litter, Kirkland purple bag dry food, Xlarge peep pads, Temptations. For financial donations, checks can be mailed to P.O. Box 174, Feeding Hills 01030. PayPal: @FelineFriendsRaffle. Venmo: @FelineFriends. New drop off location: 532 Springfield St., Feeding Hills. *Look for the Feline Friends sign on the side door. Please put donations inside the door. *

Just a reminder that we have a donation bin at the Agawam Public Library. Please include contact in-

formation with donations if you would like an acknowledgement. We are grateful for every donation. Local pick up is available by calling 786-5019.

Thank you to everyone who donated goods or monetary donations in July. Your generosity is appreciated by the cats and their humans. We are still looking for a location for a food drive.

Feline Friends Inc. is a

community-based, non-profit sanctuary that does not discriminate against any cat based on age, gender or disability.

More information about our sanctuary may be found on our website at felinefriendsinc.org or our Facebook page at Feline Friends Cat Sanctuary. Contact us with questions at info@felinefriendsinc.org or by phone at 413-786-5019.



AFD to host 9/11 ceremony

AGAWAM – The Town of Agawam will be conducting a brief September 11th remembrance ceremony on Thursday Sept. 11 at 9 a.m. in front of Agawam Fire Department Headquarters, 800 Main Street, Agawam.

The ceremony will honor those who lost their lives in the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Speaking in remembrance at the ceremony will be: Agawam Fire Chief Alan Sirois, Agawam Mayor Christopher Johnson, Father Bill Hamilton, Agawam Fire Department Chaplain, Pastor Daniel Cohen, Agawam Congregational Church

Catholic Women's Club holding Potluck Supper on Sept. 8

AGAWAM – Catholic Women in the area are invited to join the Catholic Women's Club of Agawam at their Sept. 8 meeting for a Potluck Supper.

It will be held at the St. John the Evangelist Parish Center, 833 Main St., Agawam, MA beginning at 6 p.m.

Members will be con-

tacted by phone or e-mail.

The club's monthly business meeting will take place following the dinner. Club members may pay their dues (\$15) that evening.

Anyone interested in attending this event or for more information, please contact club president, Paula at 789-0244.

Habitat holding Fun Fest event scheduled for Oct. 5

WEST SPRINGFIELD – Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity (GSHFH) is excited to announce its inaugural Habitat Family Fun Fest, taking place Sunday, Oct. 5 from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Morgan Street Pavilion in West Springfield. This free, family-friendly event invites the entire community to come together for an afternoon of fun, food, and festivities—all while supporting Habitat's mission of building strength, stability, and self-reliance through affordable housing.

The Habitat Family Fun Fest will feature:

- Free kids' activities to

keep little ones entertained

- Raffles with great prizes
- Live community atmosphere for all ages to enjoy
- A variety of food trucks
- Local craft beer for adult guests
- Craft vendors and community resource tables

There is no admission fee, making the event accessible for everyone.

"We're thrilled to host an event that brings people together in a joyful, family-friendly way," said Aimee Giroux, GSHFH executive director. "The Habitat Family Fun Fest will not only provide a day of fun for our community but also high-

light the importance of affordable housing and how everyone can play a part in making that vision possible."

GSHFH is currently seeking:

- Event Sponsors who want to showcase their support for affordable housing while connecting with hundreds of local families.

Community resources to share helpful information with attendees.

- Craft vendors, food trucks, and local craft beer to make the day even more festive.

Businesses and organizations interested in partic-

ipating or sponsoring can visit habitatspringfield.org/fun-fest for details.

GSHFH is dedicated to strengthening communities by empowering low-income families to change their lives and the lives of future generations through homeownership and home preservation opportunities. Since 1987, Greater Springfield Habitat has built or repaired 129 homes in Hampden County.

For more information, contact Olga Callirgos, Homeowner Programs coordinator, at callirgos@habitatspringfield.org or (413) 739-5503 x1003.

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<p>GREAT ON THE GRILL</p> <p>USDA INSP. STOREMADE ALL VARIETIES ITALIAN SAUSAGE..... \$2.77 lb</p> <p>USDA INSP. STOREMADE BONELESS CAROLINA GOLD MARINATED CHICKEN THIGHS..... \$3.69 lb</p> <p>USDA INSP. STOREMADE BBQ SWEET MARINATED BEEF BLADE STEAKS..... \$6.99 lb</p>	<p>USDA INSP. FROZEN SARA LEE COOKIES & CREAM CHEESECAKE FRENCH STYLE WHIPPED 24 OZ..... \$5.99 ea</p> <p>USDA INSP. IQF FROZEN COOKED SHRIMP 21/25 COUNT 2 LB BAG..... \$16.99 ea</p> <p>USDA INSP. SLICED IN OUR DELI HORMEL VIRGINIA HAM..... \$3.99 lb</p>	<p>USDA INSP. KAYEM OLD TYME NATURAL CASING HOT DOGS 2 1/2 LB BOX..... \$9.99 ea</p> <p>USDA INSP. STORE MADE FROZEN HAMBURGER PATTIES 80% LEAN 20 CT BOX 3 OZ 4 OZ..... \$15.69 \$19.99 ea</p>

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Students able to get that fresh look at haircutting event

By Quinn Suomala
Correspondent

WEST SPRINGFIELD – The Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative helped kids to get in style for the school year.

LPVEC offered free haircuts to students from their community, which includes: Agawam, West Springfield, Hampden-Wilbraham, Longmeadow, Ludlow, East Longmeadow, and Southwick-Tolland-Granville school districts.

Executive Director of LPVEC Alvin Morton wanted to ensure that all students from LPVEC's member districts were welcome.

"It's the opportunity to show that we're trying to support all our seven member districts," Morton said. "I think we are a centerpiece, so to speak, in that table of education so we're here to provide services for everybody and all types of services for all our member districts, students and their families."

The goal of this event was to try to relieve some stress from families as they prepared for the school year.

"We know that everybody wants to 'look fresh' for the school year," Morton said. "So we wanted to offer hair cuts to make it a little easier on families."

Morton thought this event would be a good way to connect with and give back to the community.

"We are just trying to build community and give back to the community we build," Morton said. "This is a good way and a simple way to give back by showing that you care about the students and about the community that the students come from."

LPVEC brought in some of

their cosmetology students and partnered up with Monarch School of Barbering for this event.

The event itself was a great way to highlight the cosmetology program that LPVEC offers for its students.

"Our cosmetology lab will open back up in the fall to do facials, manicures, coloring and all types of haircutting," Morton said.

Morton hoped that this experience would give some of the students a chance to practice their skills and meet with adults in the field they're interested in.

"I just think it's about working with kids and showing and modeling behavior and modeling work ethic for the students that are here," Morton said. "The kids get to see adults in action and get to learn."

He was thrilled that he could offer the students the chance to work side by side with adults in this profession.

Morton was grateful to everyone who came together to help make this event possible.

The teachers at LPVEC and the workers at Monarch were all eager to make this event possible.

Additionally, Morton was glad the superintendents of all seven school districts involved were so willing to spread the word about the event.

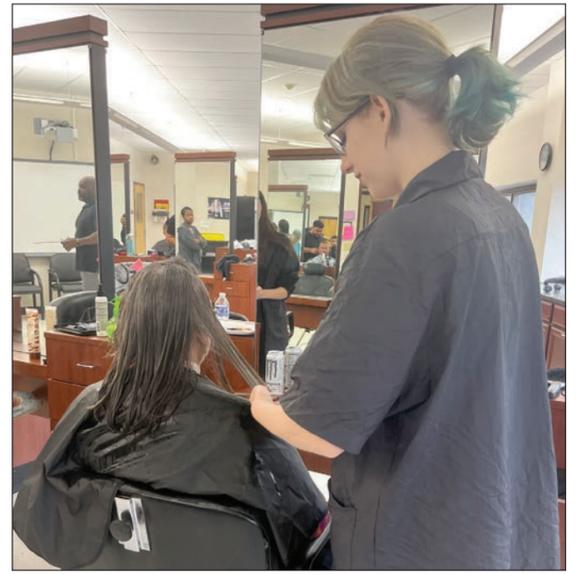
Furthermore, Morton gave thanks to Director and Principal of Career and Technical Education Don Jarvis for all of his support in making the event possible.

"I worked with him hand to hand to get this set up," Morton said.

LPVEC is planning to offer an event like this again right before Thanksgiving so families can look nice



Raylen Nai from LPVEC helped to cut people's hair at the LPVEC haircutting event.



Simon Cusson from LPVEC lent their time to cutting people's hair at the LPVEC event.



Community members received a free haircut from LPVEC students and staff and workers from Monarch School of Barbering.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY QUINN SUOMALA

for the holiday.

"I hope this was the first of

many haircut events," Morton said.

At that event, they hope to offer manicures, hair coloring

and even pedicures on top of the free haircut services.

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Opinion

From the Editor

Elections, fall sports, much more on the slate

Once again, I would like to thank you for picking up the Agawam Advertiser News. This is our second week being delivered right into your home. And I sincerely hope you make the choice to continue having the people delivered to your house, or continue to pick it up at one of many locations throughout the community.

In this week's edition, you'll see more about the issue with the lithium-ion battery storage facility as residents seek to inform the public about the dangers of it despite assurances that the facility will be safe.

For the past two weeks, we have heard from a lot of people who are against this facility as well as the laws coming from the state level that allow them to be installed with a lot less red tape.

But maybe you have a different opinion on the issue. Maybe you believe this storage facility is a great thing and advance step forward in technology and clean energy. If you have the opinion, we would love to hear from you. We would love to get that other side of the coin in our paper. Consider sending us an email with your thoughts on the situation or maybe even a letter to the editor.

Also in this week's edition is a short article on the final election ballot. The due date to submit nomination papers has closed and now it is time for the townspeople to head to the ballots in November and select who your 11 city councilors and six school committee members will be.

Please be sure to read our election edition in late October where we will ask candidates questions about their vision of Agawam moving forward. It's an in-

teresting time now that we have a new school building underway and are on the cusp of a new police headquarters opening. What other ways can members of the city council move the town forward and earn your vote. If you have a question you would like to see me ask the candidates, please send it in for consideration to aan@turley.com.

Finally, the star of the show in this week is the great arts festival held by the Agawam Community Artists and Artisans.

If you are a fan of art and creativity, please check out all the photographs from this past weekends event. The ACAA puts on a phenomenal event and so many people come out to Agawam to see all the beautiful art and demonstrations.

If you missed it, we had it covered in this week's Agawam Advertiser News.

As we continue into the fall, there will be more great events we hope to get and cover. If there is one you're worried we may not make, please remind us that it's happening. Again, contact aan@turley.com with all your event information and press releases.

Finally, an appeal to the educators in the Agawam Public Schools. The work you do is incredibly underrated and definitely underreported. If you have something great going on in your classrooms that you think the community should see, please contact us or have your team leader or administrator contact to come out and show of the accomplishments of students in all of the schools.

Thank you again for reading and I hope you continue to support our community publication in the coming year.

Letter to the Editor

Councilor Bitzas asks for your vote in election

Dear Editor:

It has been my great privilege to serve you and our City of Agawam for many years, and I am proud of the progress we have made together.

As your councilor, I have always worked with honesty, integrity, professionalism and common sense to protect taxpayers, improve public safety, support our children and schools, and advocate for our seniors and veterans. I have consistently supported lowering the tax burden, fighting for property tax exemptions for seniors, and reducing small business taxes to keep jobs in Agawam.

I am proud of my role as chairman in building our

Senior Center, sponsoring resolutions to protect Social Security and veterans' services, and pushing for more state education funding for our schools. I will continue working to repair our streets and sidewalks, continue having our Town great services without fees and keep Agawam an affordable and welcoming place to live and raise a family.

Together, we can preserve the small-town character we all love while building a stronger future for Agawam. I humbly ask for your support and your vote for re-election.

Sincerely

George Bitzas,
Agawam City Councilor



Guest Column

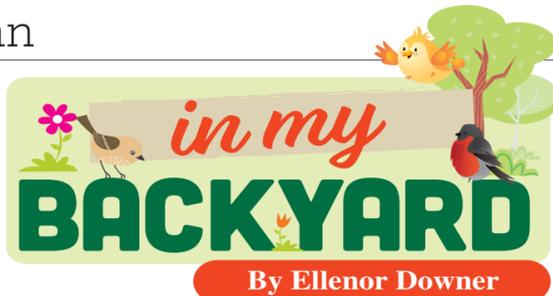
A Brimfield resident reported he visited Lake Wallace in Belcher-town with a friend last week and saw a great egret.

They also saw a great blue heron, at least three green herons, a few Phoebes and an Eastern kingbird. There were also several ducks, mallards and wood ducks. The two male wood ducks were in eclipse plumage.

The great egret is slightly smaller than the great blue heron, but they are still large birds with an impressive wingspan. They hunt in the classic heron way standing immobile or wading through



Great egret



water to capture fish with their bill. At one point, egrets were hunted to near extinction for their feathers for hat decoration. The great egret is the symbol of the National Audubon Society.

Rivalry among nestlings is common and the larger chicks frequently kill their smaller siblings. The great egret is white with a yellow bill and black legs. During breeding, a patch of skin on its face turns neon green and long plumes grow from its back called aigrettes. These aigrettes were prized for ladies hats.

Great egrets fly slowly, but powerfully with just two wingbeats per second at a speed of about 25 miles per hour. The oldest known Great Egret was 22 years, 10 months

old and was banded in Ohio.

Eagle sighting

A New Braintree resident and a friend went bass fishing on Brooks Pond in North Brookfield in a canoe recently. Half way out on the pond, they started to hear the seagull like calls of an eagle. As they rounded a little peninsula on the left side up in the top of a broken pine was a large eagle's nest.

The broken pine made a perfect platform for them to build a nest. They then saw the two mature adult pair with their white heads on a stump near the water. Up in the pine near the nest were two juvenile eagles, all dark brown. They weren't flying,

BIRDS | page 5

Gardening tasks best accomplished now

The mornings have been a little cooler this last week or so. I must admit that after the summer we had, the respite from the heat is a welcome relief.

With the unofficial end of summer just a few short days away, folks are starting to think about winterizing their pools, getting their boats in storage, closing up their cottages and the like. There are a number of things that we gardeners can do now to ease winter's blow and set the stage for a successful garden next year!

Here is a replay of a timely column that lays it all out there.

Order spring flowering bulbs now. I ordered mine just last week!

For the widest array of tulips, daffodils, crocus and the like, consider making your selection from a mail order company. Most have great web sites, offering photos of pretty much everything they sell. Our bulbs will arrive in early October - the perfect time for planting!

We get them into the soil prior to the ground freez-

ing so that they will have a chance to send out roots, perfect little anchors for winter heave/thaw cycles. Once spring comes it is all about flowering. Yippee - a welcome sign that brighter days lie ahead!

Cure squash and pumpkins well prior to storage. Give your cucurbits a couple of weeks in the sun up off of the ground before you bring them indoors. This will harden the vegetable's skin and improve its longevity.

If temperatures dip below 50 degrees at night consistently, find a dry, sunny spot inside to complete their curing, otherwise chilling injury may occur. It's also important to remove them from the garden if bugs or disease threaten.

In my garden I am vigilantly squishing the gray

colored squash bugs that like to accumulate under the fruit. Once curing is complete, store squash and pumpkins where there is good air circulation and where temperatures stay around fifty to sixty degrees, with relative humidity between fifty and seventy percent.

Under these conditions most will last eight to twelve weeks depending on variety.

Dig up tender plants. Did you buy rosemary, bay tree, lemon verbena, French lavender or scented geraniums this spring? Unfortunately, not one of these favored herbs is winter hardy in our area.

I usually get them out of the ground once frost threatens, and will bring them inside overnight and back outside during the day for a few weeks until it gets too cold. From that point most of them will thrive in a bright but cool room of the house.

Don't be surprised if the lemon verbena loses its leaves soon after you pot it up or that the French laven-

GARDEN | page 5



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must include a name, address, and daytime telephone number for author verification purposes. We do not publish anonymous letters.

All letters are subject to editing for content and length. The deadline is Monday at noon. Please send letters to Agawam Advertiser News, care of Turley Publications Inc., 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, or e-mail aan@turley.com.



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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. 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

Friday'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 newspaper

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.

SOCIAL SECURITY Matters

By Russell Gloor



How do I apply for Social Security and receive my payments?

Dear Rusty:

I'm ready to apply for my Social Security benefits, and I'm aware of how my benefits are calculated. What I would like to know about is how the application process actually works and how my benefits are received.

Signed: Ready to Collect

Dear Ready to Collect:

Essentially, you have two main options for applying for Social Security benefits, and also two separate options for receiving your payments:

To apply for benefits, you can either contact Social Security

at 1-800-772-1213 to make a telephone appointment to complete your application while speaking to an SSA representative on the phone or you can submit your application for SS benefits online.

When using the telephone option, you will be guided by an SSA agent while completing your application and can discuss your benefit options directly with that agent, just be sure to be available to receive SSA's call at the scheduled time. You can also make an appointment by calling your local SS field office directly

get the number for your local SS office at this link: www.ssa.gov/locator. It is not usually necessary to visit your local SSA office in person to apply.

If you are reasonably proficient with computers, you can, instead, apply online, but you will first need to create your personal SSA account online at www.ssa.gov/myaccount. Once you have your personal account set up, you will be able to see your estimated benefit amount at different claim ages, which should help you decide when it is best to apply. Here is a short video which explains the process for applying for benefits online: https://www.ssa.gov/hlp/vid-eo/iclaim_r01.htm.

If applying online, you can start your online application at www.ssa.gov/apply and

re-access it multiple times as needed until you are ready to submit it; just be sure to write down the "reentry code," which is provided when you begin your online application.

When you are ready to submit the application, just select "Submit" and your application will be sent to SSA's application processing unit for review. They will contact you if there are any questions about your application or if any additional documentation is needed. Note that it typically takes a couple of months for your payments to start and note that payment is made in the month following the month earned. For example, if you begin your benefits in August your first payment will be received in September on either the second, third or fourth

Wednesday of each month thereafter, depending on your birthday.

For receiving your monthly SS payments: you will (on you application) be able to specify how you wish your monthly payments to be made. The preferred option used by most beneficiaries is to have your monthly Social Security payment deposited into a financial (e.g., bank) account, details for which you will specify when applying. However, you can also choose to receive your monthly payments in the form of a debit card called "Direct Express," which will be replenished monthly. If you choose to have your payment deposited in your bank account, be sure to have your bank account information ready when you apply. Note

that Social Security no longer issues payments via printed checks except in rare circumstances.

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

BIRDS ■ from page 4

but just squeaking for food. They actually looked quite big for baby eagles. His friend said it was because they still had their fluffy feathers and developing new feathers. They fished nearby and watched them hop around. They seemed unbothered by them being about 60 feet from the shore of the peninsula. Eventually the two adult eagles flew off probably in search of a meal for their babies. So neat to be able to see eagles fairly common now in Massachusetts.

Male cardinal

I received this email, "I was just was walking the dog after dark and my flashlight came upon this guy (male cardinal). I have seen him every night since. We just stare at each other for a few seconds and say good night."

Loon census

The Loon Preservation Committee reported on Saturday, July 19 from 8-9 a.m., 566 volunteers simultaneously surveyed 135 lakes across New Hampshire for loons. Together, they counted 541 adult loons and 109 loon chicks during the census hour. The New Hampshire loon census is part of a larger regional effort. While

N.H. participants were out surveying for loons on their lakes, hundreds of volunteers in Maine, Vermont, and New York were doing the same. This simultaneous survey of so many lakes helps create a "snapshot in time" of not just the loon population here in New Hampshire, but across the Northeast.

Helping birds

A reader from South Hadley suggested I include a section about ways to help birds. She even provided several tips for future columns. Some people also continue to put out suet and that is so dangerous. It gets rancid in the heat and that's bad for birds. Perhaps even worse, it gets their feet and chest feathers greasy and when the preen, they spread the grease all over their bodies. This interferes with a bird's natural waterproofing and can also cause their nestling to be covered in grease.

Sandhill cranes

An Oakham resident saw two sandhill cranes in Barre on Aug. 14 in a field across from the Listening Center. Sandhill cranes also visit his field in Oakham as well.

Warren birds

The Brimfield resident said, "In Warren this week

there are still adult ospreys about, on two visits I saw and adult on or near the nest. I have not seen a juvenile out of the nest so am not sure if any young fledged this year. I saw one chick in the nest earlier this summer and there is an eBird report from July with a picture of a fully grown chick in the nest with an adult. It's unknown if the chick fledged successfully?" In Warren at the pond on New Reed Street the past several years I had seen Great Egrets there in August but none have been seen there this year.

Cedar waxwings

The Brimfield resident in referring to recent mention in this column about cedar waxwings, said a large part of their diet is fruit based. He read an article that stated that because their diet is mostly fruit based that if a waxwing nest is parasitized by a brown-headed cowbird the cowbird chick is not likely to survive because it can't survive on the fruit based diet.

I visited the section of Ware River recently where my daughter has seen cedar waxwings and I was not disappointed. I stood and watched them fly over the water and into nearby trees. They moved so quickly I was unsuccessful in watching them through binoculars.

Bird bath

The Brimfield resident reports the bird bath in his yard is getting lots of use, especially by catbirds and blue jays. Goldfinch show up and drink from the drip as well as black-capped chickadees, chipping sparrows and house finches.

Four juvenile raccoons are regular visitors to the bird bath. He has a trail camera near the bird bath and it captures lots of pictures of the raccoons in the bird bath. Not sure what they are doing, it doesn't look like they are drinking and sometime the stones in the bath are moved around. A couple of times he's seen a pickerel frog in the bird bath.

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

GARDEN ■ from page 4

der doesn't look all that zippy during the winter -both are normal responses. New leaves will sprout and luster will return come March.

Instead of digging tender plants up, some folks prefer to take tip cuttings. During the rooting process, mist a few times a day to prevent wilting. You will have especially good luck rooting scented geraniums - it should take just about a month.

Take cuttings now, before the plant starts prepping for winter (yes, plants do, too!), and you'll have better luck.

Plant some autumnal color. Mums and kale are at their peak at local garden centers now. Choose a plant that is healthy, free of brown leaves and with a root ball that fills the pot and isn't sunken away.

Use these plants to fill in

places in the border where annuals have gone by, or, fill a container or two for a quick burst of fall at your front door. Die-hard gardeners have no problem staying off the onset of winter with a last minute plant installation.

Be sure to cover with a sheet if frost threatens, to prevent the flowers from being nipped. With careful watering and some good luck, the mums may even return to the garden next season-just as we intend to!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 32 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.



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Communities gather for county sheriff's annual cookout

By **Brendan Rooney**
Correspondent

SPRINGFIELD – Last Wednesday, Aug. 20, more than 1,500 people gathered under the Elks lodge pavilion as Hampden County Sheriff Nick Cocchi held his Eighth annual cookout, which consisted of elected officials, friends, and a plethora of community members.

Some notable names that were in attendance were Springfield Mayor Domenic Sarno, Chicopee Mayor John Vieau, and Holyoke Mayor Joshua A. Garcia, along with State Senator Adam Gomez and Hampden County DA Anthony Gulluni, and even the previous Hampden County Sheriff, Michael Ashe, who served 42 years in the role, who was known for his clam bakes back in the day stopped by to greet Sheriff Cocchi, along with Springfield PD commissioner Albert Tranghese.

Offering insight despite the rainy and inclement weather was Cocchi, who reflected on the chance to continue the legacy left behind by Ashe in the pursuit of bringing the community together.

"We do it in August, just before Election time, so a lot of people running for office come, which allows the public to express their concerns or interests to get to know who they will be potentially voting for, and it allows me to



The raffle table was full of prizes run by the sheriff's volunteers.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY BRENDAN ROONEY

offer an ode of gratitude and just a thank you to the people who have been the Sheriff's office," Cocchi said. "I just feel this love and support from the community, but make no mistake about it, the Hampden County Sheriff's Office is the people's, and I'm very grateful to have the awesome responsibility to run day-to-day operations.

Cocchi noted that the key to keeping the event fresh and unique as the years continue to pass, by summing it up to the fact of building relationships and staying true to what you mean.

"It's about providing services to the people in the

community who need help and support, to allow offenders who are incarcerated that opportunity for redemption, and give them a piece of hope," he said.

Cocchi also discussed the overall elation of seeing familiar faces and the foundational pillars of colleagues who helped pave the way for him, such as a former Correctional Officer SGT. James Rooney, who was a mentor to Cocchi when he first started, back during the days of the old York Street Prison being in use.

"It was so great to see Jimmy (Rooney)," Cocchi said. "I have had so much respect for him, since the days of when I was a young CO, and he (Jim) was one of my mentors in one of the toughest areas in the facility. Before adding 'I'm just so grateful to see this level of support in 2025; it's extremely humbling.'"

Providing similar comments to Cocchi's gratitude was Springfield Police Commissioner Tranghese, who kept his thoughts simple, highlighting the support and unity from the community.

"This is a great function for all of Western Mass, and it brings us all together, and it's always a big occasion," Tranghese said.

Touching upon the resilience of the community, showing up strong, despite the rainy and wet conditions,

was Mayor Garcia.

"You would think with rain, you would expect low turnout, but that's not the case," Garcia said. "But this turnout is a testament to Sheriff Cocchi, and again, that has to do with good leadership, good direction, and I'm here to contribute and offer support, and everyone here in some way, shape, or capacity are doing important work in the community, and we show up to show support for each other, for the Sheriff to continue the good work of improving quality life of people."

Offering similar sentiments to Garcia's comments was State Senator Adam Gomez (D-Springfield).

"Even when it rains, people are going to come out and support Sheriff Cocchi," Gomez said. "From the work he and his team have been doing, it shows that the public is still with him, and they enjoy this annual event."

"We have children here, grandparents, we have everybody, and everyone is enjoying good food and conversation, and just remember to stand tall and keep pushing our region forward," he said.

Following suit in the ode of gratitude centered around Cocchi, while branding a new name for supporters of



Volunteers cooked all the food at this year's event.

the Sheriff was Mayor Vieau, who attributed the 'Cocchi army.'

"I'll tell you that Sheriff Cocchi is just beloved by this community, and it's not just Western Mass; it's beyond," Vieau said. "And Nick (Cocchi) is a great guy, and I'm grateful and thankful to call him a great friend."

In addition, even DA Gulluni offered his initial thoughts about the event, confessing that the support from everyone was 'phenomenal'.

"It's a testament to Cocchi's community outreach and engagement due to the credibility he's achieved as Sheriff over these years, to bring out this number of people in a washout, and I'm happy to be here to support Nick (Cocchi) and his team," Gulluni said. He also talked about the passion for being in the position he is in.

"I feel privileged to have had this job for almost 11 years, and I worked in the office as an assistant DA, so I have a great appreciation for the impact that we can have," he said. Gulluni cited the

success as due to his staff.

"I've been really fortunate to have great people around me through all the projects and the initiatives that we have, but particularly on unresolved cases, we've had a lot of success, and that is meaningful to the community, and it's obviously tremendously meaningful to the families and loved ones involved who lost someone and never got answers and that is a trauma I can't even envision, so if we can give back in that capacity, I'm really honored to do so," said Gulluni when reflecting on the progress made during his career allowing a sense of justice and closure to be offered families affected by cold case murders.

The all-day event kicked off with a golf tournament in the morning, and for those in attendance were treated to grilled foods like Italian sausage, burgers, corn, grilled chicken, and BBQ ribs, along with plenty of drinks, were provided to bring a classic cookout feel. The event also featured live music, cornhole, and tons of raffle prizes.



Hampden County Sheriff Nick Cocchi with a couple of his supporters.

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Quabbin Days celebrates beauty and heritage of region

BELCHERTOWN – This fall, the Friends of the Quabbin invite residents and visitors alike to discover the beauty, history, and importance of the Quabbin Reservoir during Quabbin Days (www.quabbindays.org), a celebration of the region's role as both a critical drinking water supply and one of New England's most scenic outdoor destinations. Quabbin Days will be held the holiday weekend of Oct. 10 to 13.

Taking place in the Quabbin Region (www.quabbindays.org/quabbinregion),

which is made up of the dozen towns in the Quabbin Watershed, Quabbin Days is a community-driven initiative designed to raise awareness about the Quabbin as the primary water source for 2.7 million Massachusetts residents, and a breathtaking landscape that offers world-class hiking, fishing, birdwatching, and photography opportunities.

"Most people don't realize that one of the most pristine and carefully protected water supplies in the country is also an incred-

ible place to explore," said Ed Comeau of the Friends of the Quabbin. "Quabbin Days is about encouraging people to connect with this resource as a place of remarkable natural beauty and cultural history by exploring the Quabbin Trail(www.quabbindays.org/quabbintrail) that connects these towns."

Held during the peak of fall foliage season, October 10 to 13, Quabbin Days encourages towns, businesses, and organizations within the Quabbin Region to host events, walks, tours,

and open houses that spotlight what this area has to offer. Participation is informal and flexible: anyone can contribute an event, and visitors can plan their own adventures through www.QuabbinDays.org, which offers a growing calendar and interactive map of the region.

The Quabbin Reservoir, created in the 1930s, is one of the largest man-made public water supplies in the United States. Managed by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the

Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA), the reservoir and surrounding lands form a protected ecosystem that supports wildlife and clean water while offering miles of trails and stunning vistas.

Whether you're a hiker, angler, nature photographer, or history enthusiast, Quabbin Days is your invitation to rediscover, or discover for the first time, this extraordinary region.

To learn more, plan your visit, or submit an event, visit www.QuabbinDays.org.

Pickleball fundraiser

AGAWAM / WEST SPRINGFIELD – West Springfield Agawam Parish Cupboard 3rd Annual Pickleball FUNdraiser will be held Saturday, Sept. 13 at Mittingeague Park in West Springfield. All ages welcome – Recreational and Competitive play divisions.

For info or to register: www.theparishcupboard.org or call 413-734-7969.

AHS Class of 1975 to hold reunion

AGAWAM – The Agawam High School Class of 1975 will hold a reunion on Saturday, Oct. 4 from 4:30 to 10 p.m. at the Polish American Club in Feeding Hills. Please email conniebeaudette@yahoo.com for any questions. There is also a Facebook page dedicated to the reunion, which can be accessed by searching "Agawam Class of 75 Reunion."

New ACC pastor to be installed

AGAWAM – The Agawam Congregational Church will official install Pastor Daniel Cohen following a five-year search. The installation ceremony will take place on Sunday, Sept. 7 at 4 p.m. The service will be presided over by representatives of the United Church of Christ from local churches.

Veterans Cemetery friends holding golf tournament

AGAWAM – The Friends of the Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Agawam and the Friends of the Agawam Veterans Council proudly announce their First Annual Golf Tournament in support of Wreaths Across America, a national effort to honor and remember our fallen veterans during the holiday season.

This exciting event promises a day of camaraderie, remembrance, and community support. Golfers, sponsors, and community members are invited to participate and help lay wreaths at the graves of veterans resting at the Agawam Veterans Memorial Cemetery this December.

Event Details: 18 Holes of Golf with a cart, lunch, dinner and a raffle entry.

Location: Agawam Municipal Golf Course

Date: Aug. 31
Time: 12 noon
Registration Options:
• Individual Golfer: \$125
• Team of Four: \$450
• Dinner Only: \$30
• Tee Sponsor: \$100 (Company or "In Memory of" dedication)
• Other Sponsorship Opportunities Available
Payments Accepted:
• Check (payable to FM-VMCA, PO Box 03, Feeding Hills, MA 01030)

• Venmo
• Credit Card (by phone)
To Register or Sponsor: Contact Marline Claremont at 413-221-9548 or email wreathfriends@gmail.com.
Registration forms are available upon request.
Join us in honoring those who served with a round of golf, good food, and great company—all for a noble cause.

Grange holding open house

AGAWAM – Community Grange #382 of Feeding Hills will hold an Open House on Saturday, Sept. 6 from 12 to 2 p.m. in honor

of our 100th Anniversary. The Grange Hall is located at 47 North West Street. Stop in, say hello and enjoy some light refreshments.

Chamber to host business expo Oct. 8

AGAWAM – The West of the River Chamber of Commerce will hold the Western Mass. Small Business Expos on Wednesday, Oct. 8 from 3 to 6 p.m. at the Carriage House at Storowton Tavern on the fairgrounds of Eastern States Exposition.

Registration open for Run Stanley 5K

WESTFIELD – Come run, stroll and roll. Stanley Park will be hosting the 13th Annual Run Stanley which has grown into a fun yearly tradition for the whole family, whether they like to run, walk, roll, or bark. Join us for this all-inclusive event on Sunday, Oct. 5 at 10 a.m. at Stanley Park. This event includes the 5K trail run/walk, a 5K K9 trail run/walk, the Munchkin Run hosted by Dunkin' Donuts, and The

Stroll & Roll. The Stroll & Roll is a wheel friendly 1-mile non-competitive walk-through Stanley Park's accessible pathways.

There is also the Stanley Cup School Spirit trophy for the school with the most participation in Run Stanley. Form a team and get friends and family involved. When you register, be sure to enter your school name.

Run Stanley 2025 continues our fundraising efforts to

benefit the care of the Frank Stanley Beveridge Wildlife Sanctuary. Please join the community of runners, walkers, hikers, dog owners, and nature lovers of all ages who care about Stanley Park for a fun event that will help to improve the safety and accessibility of its wildlife trails.

Registration is now open. You can register by going to <https://runsignup.com/Race/MA/Westfield/Run-Stanley>

Commerce holding reunion

SPRINGFIELD – The High School of Commerce Class of 75 is holding their 50th class reunion. It will take place at the Storow-

ton Tavern, West Springfield, MA, on Saturday August 30, 2025 at 6 p.m. Contact Janet at jan0826@comcast.net to learn more.

St. Peter's Church holding anniversary lunch

SPRINGFIELD – St. Peter's Episcopal Church is delighted to announce its' 120th Anniversary Luncheon with a special live performance by Connie Fredericks-Malone. Connie is an immense singer

of blues, jazz, soul and the sister of the great bluesman Taj Mahal.

This is set to take place on Sunday, Oct. 12 at 52 Sumner located at 52 Sumner Avenue in Springfield, MA

The time of the event is 1 to 6 p.m., cost per adult is \$100, RSVP by September 30, 2025. For more information contact Debbie (413)782-7050. Tickets also available at Eventbrite.com.

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15. Yemen capital	55. Breezes through	7. Spanish saloon	40. Mass of rocks and sediment
16. Misleading gesture	56. Child	8. Pitch black	41. Two-year-old sheep
17. Cain and ___	57. NBA legend	9. S-shaped lines	42. Area units
18. Simple shoe	59. Horsley and lacocca are two	10. Statistical test	44. Prison overseer
20. Hundredweight	60. Midway between northeast and east	12. ___ Paulo, city	45. Walked
21. Children's toy in the snow	61. Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation	14. Graduation garb	46. Wartime escort aircraft carrier
22. Gets rid of	62. U.S. leader during much of WW2	19. A way to record	47. Tax
25. Free of deceit	63. Lair	23. Not good	48. 50 percent
30. Performed a dance	64. Fibrous material	24. Weather events	51. Swiss river
31. Chinese philosophical principle		25. A pituitary hormone	52. Tattle
32. Exaggerated		26. Jamie Foxx film	53. Actor Idris
33. Refrain from inflicting		27. Rocker's accessory	54. Resist authority (slang)
		28. One point east (clockwise) of due north	58. Egg of a louse

CROSSWORD SOLUTION ON PAGE 17

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Left, Betty Boffing and Dori Nekwirth from Agawam Community Arts and Artisans also represented a partner organization called Art 4 Good, which donated proceeds to local food pantries. Above, artists and artisans set up their tents.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY QUINN SUOMALA

MOSIAC ■ from page 1

Historic Association, and some other local historic associations, to come by and display some of their historic photographs and artworks.

The 25th Continental Regiment was also invited to give an insight into historic life in this area.

The members of the historic associations wanted to help spread the stories of history in their towns through photography and art.

They hoped that their stands would help to keep the histories of their towns alive.

"I have had people born and raised in Westfield ask me why Westfield was called the Whip City," Agawam and Westfield Historic Association Member Bruce Cortis said. "It made me realize that without these organizations presenting the history, much of it will be forgotten."

Also present at the art festival was Steve Jones from Warriors Art Room Inc. Jones is a veteran and he has found art to be healing for his PTSD.

"We were all made to create and when we are able to create, we are able to heal," Jones said.

Once he discovered this, he wanted to make art more accessible for other veterans. So, he created Warriors

Art Room, which is open to veterans and their immediate families.

"It gives veterans a place to be with people who understand, and it brings back that sense of camaraderie that they may not have had since they came back from war," Jones said.

Jones encourages any veteran to come by and enjoy the programs and workshops at the art room. He also is looking for veterans who want to display their art for an upcoming art show in November.

To find out more about the Warriors Art Room, go to their website at <https://warriorsartroom.org/>.

On top of this art festival, the ACAA has a variety of opportunities for people to get involved in the arts throughout the year.

One of their biggest arts opportunities is their arts education program. They offer introductory through advanced level art courses throughout the year that anyone is welcome to participate in.

For the introductory level courses they even provide materials for participants, so they can have a chance to find their art style without purchasing materials.

To learn more, visit <https://www.agawamarts.com/>



Cindy Bouley and Karen Conkey from the Agawam Community Arts and Artisans were in charge of the New England Mosaic display.



Agawam Historic Association Members Carolyn Cortis and Charlotte Fields displayed some of the history of Agawam.



The Agawam Community Arts and Artisans Art Festival featured some work by Noah Aguiar.



Member of Agawam and Westfield Historic Associations Bruce Cortis shared the histories of his towns.



A variety of artists had their work on display in the hall at the Agawam Community Arts and Artisans Art Festival.



The 25th Continental Regiment enjoyed their time at the festival.



People attending the Agawam Community Arts and Artisans Art Festival were encouraged to participate in the silent auction to raise funds for scholarships for high school seniors.



Alexandra Walters displayed her incredible drawings.



Agawam High School Art Teacher Rebecca Osborn had some of her artwork on display.



Darlene Pinkos had her paper flowers and other designs up for sale at the art festival.



Jennifer Baginski-Pronovost from Agawam Rocks encouraged kids to come by and get creative with some rock paintings.



For those interested in woodcarvings, George Marek had his work on display.



A variety of community artists and artisans displayed their work at the Agawam Community Arts and Artisans Art Festival.



Don Jones had some of his pottery up for sale at the art festival.

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Programs ramp back up after summer events at library in September

AGAWAM – Celebrate September at the Agawam Public Library with National Library Card Sign-Up Month. It's the perfect time to sign up for a library card if you don't already have one, or encourage a friend to sign up for their own. To make it even better, we'll be running a month-long bingo game with two grand prizes: a Book Lovers Reading Bag and an Agawam Attractions Bag. Visit the Information Desk to learn more or to get started. The drawing will be held on Oct. 1.

We have many fun and informational programs taking place this month, including our ongoing virtual **Career Workshops and Networking Group** held in collaboration with Tewksbury Public Library. Are you age 50 (or thereabout) and looking for your next career move but aren't sure how to begin? Join this vibrant group of networking professionals led by Professional Coach and MBA, Deborah Hope. This month's topics include: Career Story (How to Answer "Tell Me A Bit About Yourself") on Wednesday, Sept. 3 at 9 a.m., and LinkedIn (Professional Connecting) on Wednesday, Sept. 17 at 9 a.m. Register online to receive the Zoom meeting links.

Get active at the library. Drop in for an hour of gentle **Chair Yoga** on Wednesday mornings at 9:05 a.m. in the Judith Clini Community Room. Looking for some fresh air, exercise, and a great way to increase your daily step count? Try out our Walking Group this fall led

by librarian Kristen Frost. Our first meeting will take place at School Street Park in Agawam at 9 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 6. Registration is required so we know how many walkers to expect. Qigong Instructor Pamela Cincotta is back with another series of relaxing and meditative sessions. Evening Qigong on Thursday, Sept. 11 at 6:30 p.m. will help you soothe your mind, ease emotional stress, and release physical tensions. Welcome in the slower seasons with our Fall Qigong classes, centered around on strengthening the breath, expanding the chest, and fortifying the immune system in preparation for winter. Fall Qigong takes place at 10:30 a.m. in the Judith Clini Community Room on Tuesday, Sept. 16, 23, and 30, and will continue into October and November. Qigong classes are kindly sponsored by the Agawam Center Library Association.

If **games and puzzles** are more your style, then look no further. Check out our monthly Adult Board Game Night on Wednesday, Sept. 3 at 6:30 p.m. We'll have games like Banagrams, Anomia, Code Names, and more. Have a favorite game you'd like to share? Bring it along! This is a drop-in event for adults ages 18 and older, and light refreshments will be served. Do you like puzzles? Try your hand at our literary-themed Adult Escape Room. Mystery novelist Penelope Nightingale has passed away and you have the chance to inherit her vast fortune and rare book collection. Solve

the puzzles and crack the codes before time runs out, or your inheritance is forfeit! We will have four time slots available: Wednesday, Sept. 10 at 5:30 and 7:30 p.m., and Tuesday, Sept. 23 at 5:30 and 7 p.m. Please register for only one time slot and date. This is the same escape room that took place in July, so please do not register if you have attended before. Tea & Trivia returns on Tuesday, Sept. 16 at 6:30 p.m. and Wednesday, Sept. 17 at 2:30 p.m. in the Judith Clini Community Room. Come by yourself or with a team; prizes will be awarded to the winning players. We will use the same questions for both sessions, so register the time you prefer and join us for some fun! These programs are for patrons ages 18 and older.

The library is pleased to welcome **M.J. Schwartz of Studio 138 for an Introduction to Mindfulness** on Monday, Sept. 8 at 6:30 p.m. in the Judith Clini Community Room. In this Mindfulness Workshop, participants will learn about the scientifically backed benefits of having a regular mindfulness practice, such as better sleep and improved concentration. M.J. will then guide you through seated exercises and meditations. There will be a Q&A period at the end of the event. No previous mindfulness experience is necessary! This program is sponsored by the Agawam Center Library Association.

Author Katherine Anderson returns to lead our Writers Group on Thursday, Sept. 18 at 6 p.m. in the

Peirce Conference Room. This in-person workshop is open to writers of all levels and genres. There will be opportunities for peer and host feedback, learning the basics of self-publishing, finding opportunities for submission to magazines, literary journals, and presses, assembling a portfolio, and the basics of a query package for submissions and publications. Please register for this program.

Spooky season is almost upon us, and what better way to get in the spirit than learning all about ghosts? **Agawam Paranormal** is back by popular demand with Ghostology 101, an introduction to the basics of paranormal investigations. Learn about terminology, equipment, EVP (electronic voice phenomena), spirit photography and video, and ghost hunting skills and suggestions. This event will take place on Thursday, Sept. 18 at 6 p.m. in the Clini Community Room. Register early for this popular program. Sponsored by the Agawam Center Library Association.

Are you green thumb challenged? Are your houseplants looking lackluster and somewhat sad? If so, this is the activity for you! Join the Agawam Public Library's very own "Plant Whisperer," librarian Chad Pelley for Houseplant Happiness: Bringing the Outdoors In on Monday, Sept. 22 at 6 p.m. Chad will guide you through the history, essential knowledge and maintenance basics of houseplant care. We will take a walking

tour of the library's extensive plant collection, highlighting the many ways you can use plants as decor. All attendees will also select a plant cutting to pot and take home, and supplies will be available for everyone to make a decorative plant stake for their new houseplant. Join us for this informative, interactive and crafty program.

Recovery Coach Supervisor Tommy is back again for **Coffee with a Recovery Coach** on Wednesday, Sept. 24 at 2 p.m. in the Peirce Conference Room. He will be available to answer any questions and provide support. Free coffee, resources, and Narcan will be available.

Adult Services Librarian Cher Collins marks **Climate Preparedness Week** with a Community Screening and Discussion of a 2018 documentary about understanding and navigating the impacts of climate change. Join us on Friday, Sept. 26 at 10 a.m. in the Judith Clini Community Room to learn more about our changing planet and how we can prepare ourselves for the future.

Let's talk about death – over something sweet. **Death over Donuts** is a welcoming, no-pressure space to explore death, loss, and the liminal spaces in between. Inspired by the Death Café movement but with a looser structure, this gathering invites open conversations through books, movies, art, poetry, and nature. Whether you're drawn to the topic by curiosity, personal experience, or a love for the mysteries of life and beyond, there's a seat at

the table for you. Come as you are, and let's navigate the unknown together—one donut at a time. This event will take place on Monday, Sept. 29 at 6:30 p.m. in the Judith Clini Community Room. This is a partnership between Agawam Public Library, West Springfield Public Library, and Hidden Hollow Holistic. Sponsored by the Agawam Center Library Association.

The library has a great selection of authors for our **September Virtual Author Series!** Embrace your dark side (and your best evil laugh) and join us in conversation with Hannah Nicole Maehrer, creator of the bestselling Assistant to the Villain series, on Wednesday, Sept. 3 at 7 p.m. Be ready to take notes at our afternoon virtual conversation with communication expert Jefferson Fisher, as we chat about his book *The Next Conversation*: Argue Less, Talk More on Wednesday, Sept. 10 at 2 p.m. Have you ever wondered why the English spelling of words is sometimes... well... just weird? Come on a surprisingly hilarious journey with us and author Gabe Henry through the history of the English language on Wednesday, Sept. 17 at 2 p.m. To register to attend any of these author talks, please visit our virtual authors' events page <https://library.org/agawamlibrary>.

Please note that the library will be closed Monday, Sept. 1 in observance of Labor Day. Our Saturday hours resume Saturday, Sept. 6. Registration for adult programs is now open.



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SPORTS

Girls soccer gets bronze at Bay State Games

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

FITCHBURG – Both the Central and West girls' soccer teams began the annual Bay State Summer games with losses last month from July 10 to 12.

A couple of hours later, the West squad celebrated a 6-1 victory over the Central team at the Game On Sports and Performance Center in Fitchburg.

"We didn't play very

well in our first game this morning," said West head coach Matt Mosher, who also coaches the St. Mary's (Westfield) girls' varsity soccer team. "Once we got into a rhythm, especially during the second half, we took it to them in this game. We were a lot more aggressive."

The members of the West team, who are from the Turley Publications coverage area, are Allison Fleury (South Hadley), Kiana Ramos (South Hadley), Hannah



Hannah Haesaert, of South Hadley, plays the ball off her chest.

Haesaert (South Hadley), Kayleen Sullivan (Agawam), Lylia Ellis (Monson), Kyra Lippmann (Holyoke), Mia Oylar (Agawam), Riley Platt (South Hadley/Williston Northampton School), Kylie Warner (Agawam), Gabriella Ramos (Agawam), Alexis Canoa (Belchertown) and Laura Parolo (Agawam).



Grace Sherman, of Holyoke, passes the ball up the field.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

GIRLS | page 10

West dominates Bay State Games

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

FITCHBURG – The West boys' soccer team won the gold medal at the 2022 and 2023 Bay State Summer Games. After finishing in third place a year ago, the West squad didn't have very much trouble capturing the gold medal this year.

The boys' soccer showcase took place at the Game



Enrique Galfour heads up the field.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

On Sports and Performance Center in Fitchburg last month July 10 to 12.

The West team began the tournament with a pair of victories.

After overcoming an early 1-0 deficit to defeat Metro, 5-1, in the morning match last Thursday, the West team dispatched the Central team, 6-0, in the af-

ternoon affair.

"We're off to a very good start in this tournament, but we haven't accomplished anything yet," said Hugo Destapdo, who coached the West boys' soccer team at the Bay State Summer Games for the first time. "We do have a solid

WEST | page 11



Evan Tyrrell looks up the field as he makes a pass.

Quabbin Valley playoffs get underway

SOUTH HADLEY – Last Sunday, the Quabbin Valley Baseball League playoffs got underway with a pair of quarterfinal games. In one match-up, the Tigers defeated the Braves 12-8 thanks to some great pitching late in the game by the Tigers' Brad Bullough. The Dodgers walked off on the Pirates in the other matchup 17-16 when a hit by Andrew Tuck plated the winning run. The Cardinals defeated the Dodgers 9-7 and the Orioles defeated the Tigers 17-7 in the semifinals held on Aug. 24, setting up a Cardinals-Orioles championship game on Sunday, Sept. 7 at 10 a.m. Booster Field in Easthampton.



The Pirates' Sam Crotto delivers to the plate.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM



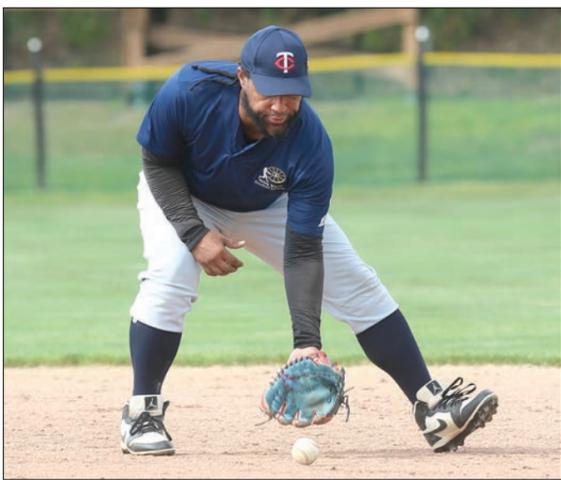
Steven Bilodeau slings a throw to first.



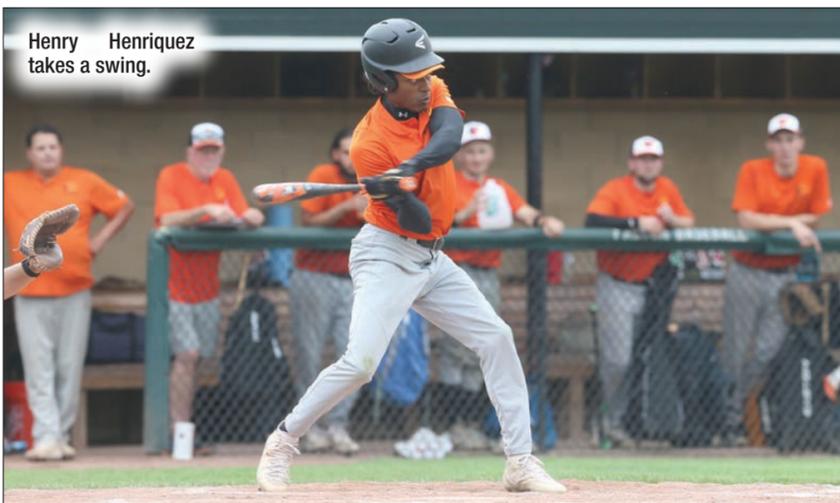
Pitcher Mike Afflitto sends a pitch home.



The Dodgers' Josh Turner attempts to make a backhand.



Jorge Figueroa fields a grounder to short.



Henry Henriquez takes a swing.

Orioles hold on for Valley Wheel title

WILBRAHAM – On Sunday, Aug. 17 at Spec Pond, the Orioles staved off a big comeback from the top-seeded Twins to win the Valley Wheel Over-28 Baseball League championship. The Twins would hold a 4-2 lead until the Orioles rallied and eventually held an 8-4 lead going into the bottom of the ninth inning. The Twins would score three times and get the tying run to second base before the Orioles were finally able to close it out for the title.



The Orioles claimed the 2025 Valley Wheel Over-28 Baseball League Championship on Sunday, Aug. 17, beating the Twins 8-7.

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The Twins Jordan McCarthy fires away.



Mike Burgos delivers a pitch home for the Orioles.



Todd Bergstrom sends a throw to first.

GIRLS ■ from page 9

Mosher has been coaching at the Bay State Summer Games for the past five years. His teams have won two Silver Medals and two Bronze Medals.

Mosher was assisted by Laura Wray-Ramos, who's the longtime girls' varsity soccer coach at Agawam High School.

"It took Laura and I a game to find out which players play well together. We moved some players around to different positions," Mosher said. "A lot of the players have played on the same club teams. It's been a lot of fun coaching at the Bay State Summer Games."

Both starting goalies in last Thursday afternoon's match attend Agawam High School

Sullivan was the starting goalie for the West team, while Talia Oliveira was the starting goalie for the Central squad, which took home the Gold medal last year.

Because there weren't enough girls' soccer players from Central Mass. to fill the Central team roster, more than half of the players listed on their roster are from Western Massachusetts.

"About five years ago, we noticed that the Central team didn't have enough players," said Central head coach Eric Wood, who also coaches the girls' soccer team at the MacDuffie School in Granby. "We now fill out the Central roster with the players who don't make the West team. We have 15 players from Western Mass. on this year's team. It's been a great situation."

The other members of the Central team, who are from the Turley Publications coverage area, were Rylee Joesph (Holyoke/Hampshire Reg.), Eleanor Szlosek (Granby), Taylor Bartosz (Wilbraham/Minnechaug Reg.) Filomena Stellato (Agawam), Brenna Moreno (Granby), Grace Sherman (Holyoke. South Hadley H.S.) and Kali White (Granby).

Even though the Central team went 0-4, it was still an enjoyable experience for the players.

"I just want my players to have a lot of fun here," Wood said. "I also keep in touch with the players throughout the year."

The Central squad took an early 1-0 lead following an unassisted goal by White.

A couple of minutes later, White had another shot attempt that clanged off the post.

The West team tied the score at 1-1 with less than

two minutes remaining in the opening half.

Willow Claps (Northampton) blasted a shot that deflected off the goalie's hands into the left corner of the net.

At the start of the second half, Warner put a shot into the upper left corner giving

the West squad a 2-1 advantage. She also scored the final goal of the match.

The other three second half goals scored by the West team during the second half were by Kate Moccio (Longmeadow), Addison Perich

(Westfield), and Haesaert.

Central would end up going 0-4 during the Bay State Games while the West prevailed in the Bronze Medal Game on July 12, defeating Southeast 3-0. Coastal won the Gold for girls soccer.



Gabriella Ramos, who plays for Agawam High, sends a quick pass away.



Rylee Joseph sends a pass away ahead of pressure.



Fillomena Stellato fights for possession of the ball.



Talia Oliveira brings in a save for Central.



Allison Fluery, of South Hadley, socks a shot away.



Alivia Marcello chases down the loose ball.



Kylie Warner, of Feeding Hills, sends a shot into the net for the West team.



Laura Parolo makes her way up the field.



Willow Claps is pressured for the West team.



Kallie Tevepaugh clears the ball away for Central.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

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Nicholas Jennings attempts to settle the ball.



A Central midfielder is pressured as he stops the ball.



Griffen Wisley, of Chicopee, heads for the goal with possession of the ball.



Fikayomi Ankitan starts up the field after making a play on defense.



Brandon Barker is pressured near the opposing goal.



Tiago Destapdo, of Chicopee, goes after the loose ball.



Caleb Iborra sends a pass away for Central Mass.

WEST ■ from page 9

group of players, but we're going to be facing some very good competition during the next couple of days."

During the fall, Destapdo is the boys' varsity coach at Chicopee High School. He replaced Marc Atkins as the West coach at the Bay State games.

The members of the 2025 West boys' soccer team, who are from the Turley Publications coverage area, are John Carra (Agawam), Timothy Haley (Belchertown), Yousif Hamid (Chicopee), Spencer Parsons (South Hadley), Tyler Supczak (Wilbraham), Evan Tyrrell (Chicopee), Griffen Wisley (Chicopee), Chase Henderson (Wilbraham), Tiago Destapdo (Chicopee), and Braeden Fitzgerald (Agawam/Pope Francis).

"Several college coaches will be attending these games, so this is a very good showcase for the players," Destapdo said. "There are a

lot of talented soccer players in Western Mass."

The worst part of being a coach of an All-Star team is having to make cuts at try-outs.

"We had 35 players try-out, and we have 20 players on our team," Destapdo said. "Having to make cuts is very difficult. I wish we could've taken all 35 players."

The duo Henderson and Max Graham (Southwick/Pope Francis) combined to post the shutout against Central.

"They're different types of goalies," Destapdo said. "Chase is just tremendous with his feet. If he wasn't a goalie, he would be a very good field player. Max is a physical goalie."

Henderson, who's a raising senior, played the first half against the Central team.

Graham, who's a raising sophomore, played the second half.

The West goalies received

plenty of support from a locked down defensive unit led by Fitzgerald, Supczak, Hamid, and Casey Bestler (Frontier Reg.).

The West scored four goals during the first half against Central.

Glodie Manyegezi (Springfield Central) scored two of the goals. The other two first half goals were netted by Brandon Barker (West Springfield), and Will Senn-McNally (Northampton).

The two second half goals

were scored by Cajun Benson (Smith Academy). Sean-McNally was credited with both assists.

The following day, the West team won two more matches against North-east, 2-0, and Southeast, 5-0.

The West team then captured the Gold medal by squeaking out a 2-1 win against Coastal last Saturday morning.

In their five Bay State matches, the West team out-scored their opponents, 20-2.



Will Senn-McNally takes the shot.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

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AA25TMC

BATTERY ■ from page 1

ing a lower risk of grid malfunctions.

However, many then asked why the proposed BESS on Silver Street couldn't just be a solar farm instead? Dion quickly provided clarity, citing that it came down to two critical factors: location and land.

"So the site doesn't have enough open land to build a large solar array, as it should be noted that Solar requires significant acreage for panels, which this site lacks," Dion said. It was then revealed that the design choice was proposed by the developer, in this case, New Leaf Energy. Additional information showed that New Leaf chose to connect directly to the existing Eversource substation, which yielded ample frustration among those present, due to the massive rate spikes that continue to increase on an upward scale, along with the reveal that lastly, the batteries are charged through the grid, meaning reliance on the grid could lead to additional hazards if not kept in check.

Dion then stressed that the world might not truly be ready for this type of technology, as it's still fairly new, citing it's only been around since 2012, and started to make a full launch in 2017.

"It's fair to confess that the data shows us that due to the infancy of these facilities, the long-term health and environmental impacts are still unknown to us," she said. Before noting that a majority of these systems lack true fire suppression or leak detection, something that foreshadowed the next segment shown about the dangers of what could happen if left unchecked.

Dion brought attention to the Moss Landing incident in California, where this past winter, on Jan. 16, a Vistra BESS facility, suffered a thermal runaway after one of the batteries failed, causing a domino effect, in which massive smoke plume manifest-

ed, prompting evacuations and road closures, and in the fallout, residents reported sore throats, headaches, metallic taste. According to reports, "Contaminants traveled up to 5 miles from the site, and then public agencies initially claimed the site was 'clean'. However, residents of the area didn't agree with the initial findings and sought out an additional perspective, so they reached out to UC Davis labs, which, on second analysis, found traces of nickel, cobalt, and manganese in the soil."

Dion continued to weigh the facts while reinforcing the call to action for the placement of these proposed facilities to come prepared with the proper suppressants, such as CellBlock FCS. The failsafe system uses a proprietary fire suppression media called CellBlockEX, which is designed to contain and extinguish lithium-ion battery fires in a matter of seconds. Dion did note once again that these aren't standard due to factors such as cost, along with not being mandated by current fire codes or energy siting boards, and the option developers often choose to pursue cheaper, legally-allowed choices.

"I feel that if these are coming into our towns, then why can't they put these systems in them, because we are told they are going to be here and help us, and the other towns, then why can't we have something in place for the lifespan of these facilities, to feel rest assured that if anything did happen we would be prepared, then the proper measures would be in place because I don't ever want to go through what Moss Landing is still going through," Dion said.

Dion said the BESS facilities are currently equipped with automatic fire detection and suppression inside the container, which protects HVAC systems, wiring, and auxiliary equipment, while using agents like Novec 1230, FM-200, or CO₂,



Nick Dion watches the slides.

and can stop small fires in a short span; however don't stand any chance against the impending fear of a thermal runaway, which is what happened in Moss Landing, as fire departments are told to let it burn out due to the reality the fire can't be extinguished.

Offering similar sentiments and ample frustration to the lack of protocols in place was Nick Dion, who said, "Why isn't this required in all these types of systems?" he said. "It's now the worst-case scenario, that nobody knows, and they (the developers) claim this is a safer option, and the reality is they weren't prepared, and I just don't understand, because no data exists. Now, the latter, I assume, for why these aren't implemented has to do with cost, which is the primary thing, but at that point, you're putting a value on human life."

Transitioning back to the presentation, Jessica then revealed that she had reached out to Agawam Fire Chief Alan Sirois, who sent back a list of various protocols to follow in case of an unforeseen emergency, as well as other procedures.

"He (Sirois) gave me a lot of PowerPoint presentations from other departments in Massachusetts, along with other states, and the national standard," Dion noted. "The first thing is to establish

a 100-foot safety perimeter. Again, it can go further out, to about 300-400, but the closest he told is that homes are about 300 ft, and again, to reiterate, Moss Landing was over 1500 ft, and close to five miles out."

Dion continued to offer insight, saying Agawam fire protocols are told to allow fire to burn itself out, which is a non-intervention strategy, as you can't get water on the batteries because they will be changed chemically, causing additional problems that could arise. Dion continued by revealing that the fire department relies on regional HAZMAT teams for toxic air monitoring.

However, it was revealed that concerns about timing and who's going to assist were raised, causing the Dion's to note at the board meeting, New Leaf didn't provide an answer, due to allegations of not knowing how to respond, and the fire department wasn't present as well.

"It's all monitored by AI systems, in the containers, and I believe they said 'somebody' is going to come out once a year to check, and no one is there to monitor it every day," Nick Dion admitted.

The final piece of information Jessica provided was the breakdown of NFPA 855, which is a national fire safety standard for battery storage facilities, that provides

general rules such as where BESS systems should be located, along with additional Fire prevention measures, and Safety distances. Jessica cited concerns, "These minimum guidelines are not customized to Agawam's layout, as we have the wetlands, residential homes, and we have Silver Lake in very close proximity," she said. "And it's crucial to consider what risks we might face if a similar incident happened here."

The final thing discussed during the open meeting is that there is a possibility of a much bigger BESS facility this time being proposed. According to reports, earlier this year in February, Agawam Energy Center Holdings, LLC purchased 100% of Hecate Energy Silver St Energy Center LLC, which owns two standalone battery storage projects totaling ~500MW, and to note the CME Energy website confirms this project is in development and jointly developed with Hecate Energy, providing validity to Jessica's presentation.

"People may say that they know where it is or may not, but let me clear it's not confirmed at the moment," Dion said. "But the land in question is not shown where in Agawam, but it points to another place on Silver Street."

City Council Vice President Anthony Russo voiced frustration by calling notice

to the state.

"The state keeps passing these blanket laws, that cover every city and town in the Commonwealth, and it's ridiculous because not every city or town is the same, and what may fit in one community may not fit in another, and that's why I have an issue with it, and I'm really getting tired of the state telling us what we have to do in our home," said Russo in response to the oversight of the town dealing with this issue.

Before offering insight into the hope of the legislation put forth by State Rep Kelly Pease (R-Westfield) and Lindsay Sabadosa (D-Northampton), which was co-sponsored by Russo, along with City councilors George Bitzas and Peter Smus.

"So what we did was in the hope that it gets kick-back to our state reps and state senators, saying 'hey, we as a City Council of Agawam, want you to actually take action on this, due to the amendment just sitting there,'" Russo said. "So now the hope is that if hundreds of cities and towns in Massachusetts do this, they have to listen, because you get that many people upset, and again, that doesn't say that you can or cannot come, we just want to decide what's right and what's not necessary for our community."

TOWN ■ from page 1

into the town of Agawam to continue to build on the work of the assessors office.

Her main goals are to support fair and accurate assessments in the community and to further education for the other staff in the assessors office.

"I think [what makes me a unique applicant] is my commitment to public service and equitable treatment for all," McCormick said. "I bring a combination of technical experience with a proven track record of transparency and clear communication... and I am always happy to take the time to educate the taxpayers on the assessment process."

As she gets situated in Agawam, her main focus for this first year is to ensure that Agawam continues to receive the highest level of service.

Currently, she is analyzing the recent market sales data to prepare the fiscal year 2026 evaluation.

Additionally, she plans to prioritize efficiency in the office.

"I plan to evaluate and

make any necessary changes to policies or procedures in our office that could help with efficiency and ensure that we remain in compliance with changing laws and continue to adhere to legal and ethical standards," McCormick said.

McCormick enjoys the challenges that come with assessing around keeping up with changes in legislation, so she is eager to dig into that work in Agawam.

Furthermore, McCormick hopes to utilize her experience with educating assessors and assessor office staff to ensure that everyone in Agawam's office has the training and support they need.

"I want to continue to invest in the education for my staff so they can continue working toward their Massachusetts Accredited Assessor designations," McCormick said.

McCormick is also passionate about getting to know the Agawam community. When she worked in Hampden she had a friendly rapport with many community members, and she hopes to achieve the same rapport here.

"I truly love working with the public and I am passionate about helping to provide education for other assessors," McCormick said. "This passion is what drew me to become involved in both local and state assessing organizations."

So far, McCormick has been enjoying her new position and has been working to get up to speed with the various projects and new growth in Agawam.

She is grateful to everyone who has welcomed her in her first few weeks on the job.

"I have a wonderful team here in my office and the residents who have been coming in have all been so kind and welcoming," McCormick said.

ELECTION ■ from page 1

Calabrese is the only former councilor running for a seat.

Other challengers are Richard Borsari, Mark Del Negro, Uduak Enyiema, Peter McNair, and Christine Rickmon.

Del Negro has previously run for state representative, a seat currently held by Nicholas Boldyga. McNair has run for City Council in the past.

All six sitting School Committee members are also running for re-election. The seventh seat on the committee is occupied by the mayor. The mayor serves as the automatic chair of the school com-

mittee.

AJ Christopher, Shelley Borgatti-Reed, Dawn DeMatteo, Catherine McDougal, Michael Perry, and Wendy Rua all had their papers certified by the deadline.

Their only challenger for one of the six seats on the committee is Heather Zielenski.

Because there are not more than two candidates per elected seat, Town Clerk Vincent Gioscia has confirmed there will be no primary necessary. A primary was held two years ago to narrow down mayoral candidates.

The general election will be held on Tuesday, Nov. 4 from 8 a.m. to 8

p.m. at the town's schools. Each school houses a particular ward with the exception of Clark School, which hosts two wards, six and eight.

Early and mail-in voting will also be available to residents for this year's election. In the coming weeks, Gioscia will also hold a random drawing to determine what order the candidates appear on the ballot. Candidates often announce that position in their messaging to voters because voters at the polls are asked to select 11 councilors and six school committee members. Candidates seek to make sure voters check the appropriate boxes.

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Cooper's Gifts accepting supplies for Homework House

AGAWAM – From now through Sept. 14, Cooper's Gifts, Apparel, Home of Agawam, Mass., is accepting classroom supplies donations for Homework House, a nonprofit organization located at 54 North Summer Street Holyoke, MA 01040.

Homework House strengthens our community by promoting educational success and providing free tutoring and mentoring for children living in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. Homework House provides a safe and nurturing place for children to grow and learn. Acceptable supplies includes disinfectant wipes, facial tissues, paper towels, copy paper, dry erase markers and erasers. Donations will be collected at Cooper's for a limited time.

"We invite everyone to help Homework House. Those that donate are entered for the chance to win a

\$100 Cooper's gift card," said Kate Gourde, owner of Cooper's Gifts, Apparel, Home. "We hope that people will remember these needs while they are purchasing items to send their own children back to school, and that guardians will then consider picking up a few extras for Homework House.

"We will swap a raffle entry for every item donated to the Homework House," Gourde continued. "The lucky winner of a \$100 Cooper's gift card will be notified on September 15. It's easier for people in the Greater Springfield area to bring donations here instead of searching for Homework House in Holyoke, and we are open 7 days a week," Gourde explained. Items may be brought to the shop anytime during Cooper's regular hours of operation until September 14. The gift boutique is located at 161 Main St. in Agawam, Mass., and

is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays, Saturday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sundays 12 to 4 p.m.

"Homework House is also our August Round-Up charity, so this is the perfect time to spread the word about their mission and really help them out," Gourde said.

Each month Gourde chooses a local charity to receive the profits of the store's Round-Up Program through which customers are invited to round up their purchase total to the nearest dollar amount. Gourde will then match 50% of the total collected.

The program has totaled more than \$62,000 in donations to local organizations since its inception in 2014. More information on the Round Up program and how to nominate a charity may be found on Cooper's website www.coopersgifts.com/round-up/.



Cooper's Gifts is now accepting supply donations to benefit Homework House. Drop off donations between now and Sept. 14. SUBMITTED PHOTO

CANDIDATE STATEMENT

Councilor George Bitzas announces re-election bid

George Bitzas has officially announced his candidacy for re-election to the Agawam City Council. A longtime public servant and dedicated member of the community, Bitzas is proud to continue his work representing the people of Agawam with integrity, honesty, and common sense.

"It has been my great honor to serve the people of Agawam," said Bitzas. "I am proud of my record of accomplishments, and I pledge once again to work with all residents and my colleagues on the Council to improve our city, protect taxpayers, support our seniors, and strengthen services for our children and families."

During his years of ser-

vice, Councilor Bitzas has championed many initiatives that directly benefit Agawam residents, including:

- Taxpayer Relief & Fiscal Responsibility: Consistently voting to keep property taxes as low as possible, supporting small business tax reductions, and sponsoring property tax exemptions for seniors in need.

- Education & Youth: Advocating for increased Chapter 70 education funding from the Commonwealth, sponsoring efforts to improve athletic facilities at Agawam High School, strongly supported the building of the much needed new High School, and continues supporting programs that benefit local

- Veterans' Advocacy: Leading efforts to protect and support veterans, including sponsoring resolutions to preserve the

students.

- Public Safety & Infrastructure: Working to improve road, sidewalk, and keep all the Town services while supporting our Police and Fire Departments and ensuring resources for first responders to keep Agawam safe.

- Support for Seniors: Serving as Vice President and Chair of the building committee for Agawam's Senior Center, which has become a model facility in the region, and continuing to advocate for programs that enhance the quality of life for seniors.

- Veterans' Advocacy: Leading efforts to protect and support veterans, including sponsoring resolutions to preserve the

Northampton VA Medical Center and expand property tax relief for veterans and elderly residents.

- Community Initiatives: Sponsoring outdoor dining, affordable housing repair assistance through CPA funds, and resolutions to address rising prescription drug costs.

Councilor Bitzas co-sponsored a resolution urging Congress to protect Social Security and preserve the Old Age and Survivors Insurance Fund, reflecting his dedication to protecting seniors and working families.

Councilor Bitzas also co-sponsored a resolution supporting the passage of House bill No 4557 requiring local approval of Battery

Storage Facilities to protect our neighborhoods.

He also sponsored a resolution to accept MGL C59 sections 5N to establish a property tax work-off program for Veterans and Seniors.

"I am deeply committed to preserving the small-town character that makes Agawam such a special place, while ensuring we grow in a way that protects our values and quality of life," said Bitzas. "Together, we can continue to build on our progress, strengthen services, support our businesses, and keep Agawam an inviting place to live, work, and raise a family."

About George Bitzas
George Bitzas has proud-

ly served the City of Agawam for many years as a member of the City Council. Known for his dedication, accessibility, and advocacy on behalf of residents, he has been recognized with the prestigious Anthony Galano Award from the Agawam Council on Aging for his leadership and service to the community. He also received the State of Massachusetts American Legion Outstanding Foreign Born citizen award, the Rotary International Presidential Citation for engaging Rotary and changing lives, the Rotary Club's Paul Harris Award and the Town of Agawam Certificate of appreciation for the 9/11 Memorial, McGrath Park of design and implementation.

Public Notices

Legal Notice
Town of Agawam
The Agawam Planning Board will hold a public hearing on **Thursday, September 4, 2025 at 6:00pm** and the **Agawam City Council** will hold a public hearing on **Monday, September 15, 2025 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 VIP Homes & Associates, LLC for a zone change request for **430 North West Street** from Business B to Residence B. 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 8:30am and 4:30pm 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

Rosemary Sandlin, President
Agawam City Council
08/21, 08/28/2025

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. HD25P1711EA
Estate of:
Andrew Joseph Griffin
Date of Death: 07/18/2025
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION

To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **James Griffin of Boylston, 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: **James Griffin of Boylston, MA** be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without 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 09/16/2025.** 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 CODE (MUPC)

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. Barbara M Hyland, First Justice of this

Court.
Date: August 19, 2025
Rosemary A Saccomani,
Register of Probate
08/28/2025

EARLY DEADLINES

In observance of LABOR DAY, there will be an **EARLY AD DEADLINE**

To advertise, place your ad no later than **NOON Thursday, August 28**

– Thank you!

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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.

The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$275, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice and may include a photograph. **Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.

Exceptions will be made only when the family provides a death certificate and must be pre-paid.

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PUBLIC NOTICES ARE NOW ONLINE

- 1 Email all notices to notices@turley.com
- 2 Access archives and digital tear sheets by newspaper title.
- 3 Find a quick link to the state of Massachusetts' public notice web site to search all notices in Massachusetts newspapers.

Public notice deadlines are Friday at 3 p.m.

visit www.publicnotices.turley.com



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