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# AGAWAM

## ADVERTISER NEWS

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## Council candidates speak on issues

By Gregory A. Scibelli  
gscibelli@turley.com

AGAWAM – With the election less than a couple of weeks away, the Agawam Advertiser News asked the candidates for city council some questions to get an idea of where they stand on current and future issues. Each candidate was asked six short-answer questions. Due to space issues, we are publishing four of the six answers in this edition. The questions were as follows: 1. Following the town's approval of a new high school and police headquarters which come with sizeable debt payments, what should be the town's next big capital improvement project, and how does the town make it a reality without a major budget/tax impact? 2. What resolution, order, or ordinance would you personally file in the first six months of your term and why would it be positive for the community? 3. Do you support battery energy storage facilities being built in Agawam? If yes, why? If no, how can the community gain more input on the permitting process of these facilities? 4. Please list three things the town's government does well, and three things it needs to work on. We also asked candidates: 5. Do you think the town needs to offer more affordable child care and after school program options and how can the town afford it? 6. What streets should the town create bike lanes on and how should the town fund it? The answers from the candidates to those questions will be published on Facebook on Friday, Oct. 24. You can access it by searching Agawam Advertiser News.

*Editor's Note: The responses appear in the order they were received by the candidates. Photos are included for those candidates that sent one.*

### Uduak Enyiema

Relevant political experience: Vice President of Development and Community Relations at Gándara Center. Former CEO of Thames River Community Service, Inc. Advocate for equitable funding, family stability, and local partnerships across Western MA and CT.

Capital project: Agawam's

next priority should be improving municipal infrastructure, updating aging buildings, expanding accessibility, and investing in stormwater systems that protect homes and roads. These are essentials, not luxuries. My experience as CEO of Thames River Community Service taught me how to secure funding through capital block grants and targeted infrastructure allocations. With smart grant writing and collaboration with state partners, we can make these projects happen without heavy local tax increases. Strategic funding and phased implementation are key to managing cost while improving quality of life.

Sponsor new legislation: I would sponsor an ordinance creating a public transparency dashboard that centralizes spending, contracts, and project updates. While Agawam's website already shares budgets and reports, this dashboard would make data easier to access and understand. Residents deserve real-time visibility into how decisions are made and where money goes. Having managed grants and audits, I know transparency builds trust and accountability. A user-friendly dashboard would move Agawam from static reports to active engagement, giving residents a clear view of progress and reinforcing confidence in how their tax dollars are used.

BESS stance: I don't support installing large-scale battery energy storage facilities without meaningful community input. Current state law limits local say, and that must change. Agawam has already taken steps through local ordinances and by supporting legislation for local approval before permits. Other towns like Medway and Oakham have enacted moratoriums and zoning changes to give residents a voice. I would work with state legislators, environmental advocates, and municipal leaders to strengthen these protections. My experience facilitating dialogue between communities and lawmakers has shown that strong advocacy and collaboration lead to smarter, safer policy.

Government strengths/  
COUNCIL | page 6



Train rides were available for families to enjoy.



Owen Elwell works on his robot during a demonstration.

## Harvest Fair falls on School Street Park

AGAWAM – Last Saturday, the Agawam Rotary Club hosted its annual Harvest Fair. The event has become a fall tradition since it began at the old Veterans Green years ago. Now, there are more activities and tons of vendors who attend the event.



Several people brought their classic cars to display at the fair.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



King Ward brought its traveling haunted house for visitors to enter.

## School committee candidates weigh in

By Gregory A. Scibelli  
gscibelli@turley.com

AGAWAM – With the election less than a couple of weeks away, the Agawam Advertiser News asked the candidates for school committee some questions to get an idea of where they stand on current and future issues. Each candidate was asked four short-answer questions. The questions were as follows: 1. With the high school project underway, what do you believe is the next big priority for the public schools? 2. Do you believe bullying is a problem in the schools. If no, why? If yes, what should be done to stop it? 3. Name a class or program not offered that should be in the schools. 4. Should MCAS be replaced with another graduation requirement? Why or why not?

*Editor's Note: The responses appear in the order they were received by the candidates. Photos are included for those candidates that sent one.*

### Heather Zielenski

Relevant political experience: I am not a politician, however, I am a parent of a second grade student currently attending Agawam Public Schools, just as I once did. I am a lifelong resident of Agawam and have spent my professional career working closely with families in our community. Because of this, I deeply care about the education, safety, and well being of every student in our schools.

Priorities: I believe it's important to always take a data-driven approach, to look closely at the numbers and evaluate what makes the most financial sense while aiming for the greatest impact on the broader student population. At the same time, it's essential to ensure that the needs of students in the CONNECTIONS program are fully considered in any decision-making process.

Bullying: Unfortunate-

SCHOOL | page 12

## Student representative Aiden Therrien provides school updates to committee

By Amanda Munson  
amunson@turley.com

AGAWAM – Student Representative Aiden Therrien provided the school committee updated information regarding the Agawam Public Schools on Oct. 14. Therrien began with the Early Childhood Center stating that students have been enjoying their music lessons from the Springfield Community Music School, opening up the invitation to the committee members to attend one of

these sessions.

Therrien continued, "Later this month, ECC will celebrate movie and book character day on Oct. 30. Next at Clifford M. Granger Elementary School, the fall book fair will be held from Oct. 20 through 24 and parent-teacher conferences will take place on Oct. 23 from 1 to 3 p.m., and again in the second session from 6 to 8 p.m. The first grade family luncheon falls on Oct. 24. On Oct. 31, kindergarten students and families luncheon

as well, and will also enjoy a wellness day with a pie in the face fundraiser," said Therrien. The annual Veterans Day program is occurring on Nov. 7 at Granger Elementary.

Moving onto Benjamin J. Phelps Elementary School, a couple of weeks ago, the school held the Scholastic Book Fair and had their annual ice cream social on Oct. 9. Looking ahead, Phelps Elementary will be hosting a trunk or treat event on Oct. 29.

William P. Sapelli Elementary School held their first fall picnic on Oct. 3 and Therrien reported that it was a great success from parent and student feedback. Sapelli Elementary will be hosting their trunk or treat event on Oct. 25.

James Clark Elementary School will be hosting third grade parent luncheons on Oct. 24 and the schools trunk or treat event will be occurring on Oct. 28. The fourth graders will be hosting their luncheon on Nov. 7 and the

kindergarteners will be hosting their luncheon on Nov. 14.

Roberta G. Doering Middle School recently held their first election for the new student advisory council. Therrien explained, "The student advisory council is made up of 12 student representatives and was created to give students more voice and leadership opportunities within the school," said Therrien.

Agawam Junior High School recognized National Sports Day on Oct. 16 and

encouraged students to wear their favorite team attire and on the following day, Oct. 17, the school hosted the first social night of the year that featured video gaming, karaoke, gym activities, and snacks.

Ending with the Agawam High School, students participated in UMASS band day on Oct. 16 and will host their fall concert on Oct. 22. Early dismissal will be occurring on Oct. 23 and host teachers got talent later on Thurs. The annual college fair is scheduled for Oct. 24.



# Fitness First Health & Fitness Center celebrates 40th anniversary

By Amanda Munson  
amunson@turley.com

AGAWAM – “Family, caring, and loyalty.” Fitness First Health & Fitness Center originally opened in the fall of 1985 and Co-owners Paula and Kurt Welker with Fitness Director and Assistant General Manager Brandon Welker wanted to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the center by hosting an open house on Nov. 1.

Based on the website, Fitness First Health & Fitness Center is more than just a gym, it’s an exclusive health club that is a privately owned, family oriented athletic club that’s focused on helping all members to achieve their fitness and health goals in a friendly, safe, clean, and non-intimidating environment. All members are considered to be part of the Fitness First family and share a strong sense of community with each other.

With facilities like an in-

door pool, studios that include spinning, yoga, and Zumba, boot camps, small group training to personal training, kid’s club childcare, youth fitness and much more; Fitness First is passionate about serving members through class options like cardio conditioning, meditation, relaxation, and stretching, to strength and conditioning seven days a week.

Being involved within the fitness world for years, it made sense when Paula and Kurt shared, they met at a spa in Agawam and began working together since 1978 and have been together ever since; they share sons Brandon and Garrett.

With a background in public relations and touring with a musical group, Paula explained that her background lent itself in creating a successful business.

“The lessons I learned working and learning about publicity and marketing was great, community outreach



Co-owners of Fitness First Kurt Welker and Paula Welker, with Fitness Director and Assistant General Manager Brandon Welker near the front desk were all proud of their 40th anniversary accomplishment.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY AMANDA MUNSON

has been a huge piece in what we do. I became involved in the group fitness component, I got certified in several different programs initially starting as an overall group fitness certification and then we moved into more specialized programming,” said Paula.

Kurt shared he attended Springfield College and then moved to Dallas, Texas teaching high school biology and coaching wrestling and football. Coming back to Agawam to continue his education, Kurt went for his master’s in exercise physiology whilst working at health clubs but opened Fitness First before he could finish his studies.

Following in his parent’s footsteps, Brandon shared he’s been working at the center since 2002 and started with birthday parties and cleaning equipment, to then filling different roles by becoming a trainer in 2008 and eventually becoming the center’s fitness director. Over the summers when Brandon was home from college, Kurt encouraged him to become certified as a trainer to fill in and work different shifts to help.

“I kept reading and learning about fitness, it became a passion on top of what I was learning at school, so then when I graduated it just fell in naturally. I’m very blessed and lucky that I have such great parents and we have such a great relationship where it just is natural. It’s just easy to come in and do everything, there are obviously challenges but we have such a great rapport,” said Brandon.

After becoming married, Paula and Kurt moved to Kentucky for two years after an opportunity arose to become district managers

FITNESS | page 14

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 40th Anniversary

## Fitness First holding Open House

AGAWAM – Fitness First Health Club, a cornerstone of the Agawam community for four decades, is thrilled to announce a major milestone: its 40th Anniversary. To celebrate four decades of commitment to health, fitness, and wellness, the club invites the entire community to a Grand Open House event.

The celebration will take place on Saturday, Nov. 1 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Fitness First Health Club facility. This event is free and open to the public—a gesture of thanks to the community that has supported the club since 1985.

“Reaching 40 years is a testament to the loyalty of our members and the dedication of our staff,” said Paula Welker, Co-Owner and General Manager. “We’ve seen generations of families improve their health here. This open house isn’t just a celebration of our health and fitness center; it’s a celebration of the community we’ve built together.”

The Grand Open House will feature a packed schedule of activities for all ages:

- Local Vendors & Partners: Explore tables from local businesses focused on health, nutrition, and well-being.

- Special Class Demos: Participate in or observe a variety of the club’s most popular fitness classes such as Group Power, Zumba, Yoga and Aqua Fitness.

- Exclusive Offers & Prizes: Guests will have access to anniversary-exclusive membership offers and a chance to win significant prizes through raffles.

- Family Pool & Pizza Party (1 to 3 p.m.): A special, supervised event for families featuring swimming, games, and complimentary pizza and refreshments.

- Complimentary Refreshments, Chair Massage and In Body Assessments

Fitness First Health Club’s 40th Anniversary Open House promises to be a fun, engaging event celebrating not just the gym’s history, but a future focused on making fitness accessible and enjoyable for everyone.

# Granger School receives monetary prize from the Friends of the Agawam Library

AGAWAM – The “Level Up at Your Library” Summer Reading program at the Agawam Public Library was a great success. The whole community worked together to meet the challenge of logging a cumulative 5,000 hours of reading. We even exceeded that goal and were able to log a cumulative 7,846 hours of reading.

Every summer the Friends of the Agawam Public Library hold a contest to see which of the elementary schools in town can encourage their students to log the most time reading during the Summer Reading Program. Granger School students logged an average of 735 minutes of reading per Summer Reader. Granger School won the prize of \$400. The other three elementary schools in town each received \$200. For a total of \$1,000 being given from the Friends of the Agawam Library to the local elementary schools.

The Friends of the Agawam Public Library are a not-for-profit membership organization composed of a small group of very active members. Since the group’s inception in 2003, the Friends have donated over \$60,000 to the library. This has enabled the library to supplement their regular operating budget and to acquire resources and equipment that they would not



Pamela Weingart (Youth Services Librarian), Wendy Matys (Library Media Assistant Granger School), Marcia Capuano (President of the Friends of the Agawam Public Library) Kathy Arnold (Treasurer of the Friends of the Agawam Public Library), Stephanie Gendron (Principal of Granger School).

SUBMITTED PHOTO

have been able to get without help from the Friends group. The Friends are always looking for additional members who will help to support the library, and li-

brary programs. To learn more about the Friends of the Agawam Public Library please visit their website at: <http://agawamlibrary.org/about/friends/>.

To stay informed on other wonderful programs and events that are going on at the library visit the website: [www.agawamlibrary.org](http://www.agawamlibrary.org).

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## BOB ROSSI

### Real Leadership Real Results for Our Community

I have lived in Agawam my entire life, attending Agawam public schools, raising and educating my three children, Gina, David and Margo.

I have earned a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice from Western New England University and a Master's Degree in Criminal Justice Studies and Interpersonal Relationships from American International College.

U. S. Navy veteran, and a retired Agawam Police Lieutenant, with 32 years of credible service in addition to my duties, I served as an adjunct professor at Westfield State University, Springfield Technical Community College as well as the Western Mass Regional Police Academy, major area of instruction was constitutional law and legal updates.

After retirement, I went on to becoming an Arbitrator with the Better Business Bureau of Central New England, earning several accommodations and the distinction of Arbitrator of the Year in recognition of outstanding service to the Dispute Resolution Program.

My commitment to community has continued by serving the people of Agawam on the City Council during the past several years. Actively involved in working to make Agawam a better, more enviable and more desirable place to live.

Appointed Committee Chairperson of the Feeding Hills Sewer Project, Phase One completed in June of 2011. The project was abruptly halted by a previous administration, where it continues to sit in limbo today. I still believe the project is a key to Agawam's financial stability, and a community in desperate need of services.

Appointed to the Energy Conservation Commission, authored a Resolution to make Agawam by proclamation energy Efficient Community to be known as "Green Community".

Created special legislation to align our police reserve officers with Massachusetts General Laws, to allow for the use of retired police officers to supplement Agawam's public safety programs.

A member of Agawam's Friends of the Senior Center, I was a founding member and active fundraiser for the new and very successful Senior Center building we enjoy today.

Being a strong advocate for the elder population, I believe that our senior population is the most viable and underutilized asset to our community; a condition which I would like to see changed.

I will always continue to honor my commitment to community, and remain constant to a goal of making Agawam a world-class city that everyone can afford, and be proud to call home.

I favor expanding our tax base, to stabilize Agawam's future growth and controlled spending. Creating transparent initiatives and performance budgeting practices that produces results, not guess work, which can produce lower tax rates, especially for those in need of services

As your city councilor, I believe that it is my job to make life easier, not more difficult. And, a goal to make our community a better, more inclusive and enviable place to live.

As always, I thank You. I hope I have earned your trust, respect, your vote, and continued support.

PAID FOR BY THE COMMITTEE TO ELECT BOB ROSSI

# Opinion

## Guest Column



### How do I navigate the Social Security maze?

**Dear Rusty:**

I am a woman, turning 65 this October (2025). It seems that deciding when to claim Social Security is complicated. I would like more information to navigate through this maze. Thank you.

**Signed: Ready to Claim**

**Dear Ready:**

Deciding when to claim Social Security can be challenging, but we hope to make it a bit easier for you. You can, of course, call us at any time to speak to one of our certified Social Security Advisors, but I'll share some pertinent information here as well.

Be aware that at age 65, you have not yet reached your Social Security Full Retirement Age. Born in 1960, your FRA is age 67 and that is when you can get 100% of the SS benefit you've earned from a lifetime of working.

If you claim SS at age 65, your monthly amount will be reduced by about 13.3% from your age 67 entitlement, a permanent reduction. If you wait a bit more and claim at age 66 the reduction would be about 6.7%. To get 100% of your "primary insurance amount" you should wait until age 67 to claim. Note you can also wait longer than your FRA and earn Delayed Retirement Credits up to age 70, when your monthly amount would be about 24% more than your FRA entitlement.

If you are still working, at age 65 you will also be subject to Social Security's Annual Earnings Test, which limits how much you can earn when collecting SS benefits before your full retirement age. The earnings limit for 2025 is \$23,400 (changes annually) and if you earn more than that, SS will take away \$1 in benefits for every \$2 you are over the limit.

There is also a special rule for the first calendar year you are collecting early benefits, which will result in you not getting benefits for any month your work earnings

are more than \$1,950 after your early benefits start. So, if you claim SS at age 65 and continue to work, you won't get any SS benefits in any 2025 month thereafter that you earn more than the monthly limit unless your total annual; 2025 earnings are less than the annual limit. FYI, the earnings limit no longer applies once you attain your full retirement age.

In the end, deciding when you should claim Social Security should consider your need for Social Security money, your life expectancy, your plans for working and your marital status. If you are or were married, you may be eligible for a spousal or ex-spouse benefit. You may also want to peruse the Social Security Question and Answer section at our website [www.SocialSecurityReport.org](http://www.SocialSecurityReport.org). So, as you have already discerned, deciding when to claim Social Security can be confusing, but we are always here to assist you as needed. You can either call us directly at 1-888-750-2622 or email your specific Social Security questions to us at [ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org](mailto:ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org). In either case, we will be most happy to help you decide when to claim, based on your unique personal 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](http://amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at [ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org](mailto:ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org). Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.*



### More review: What worked and what didn't

Last week I wrote about two new winter squash varieties

I grew in this past summer's garden, as well as a Barbie doll sized melon.

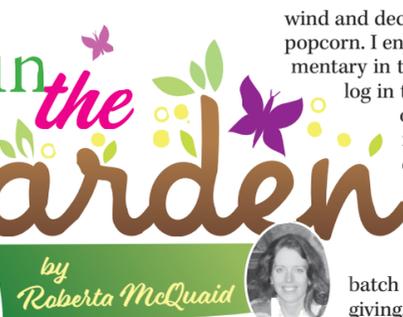
According to Mom, it made for a good read. Let's keep the momentum going with more "new to me" varieties in this column.

As dedicated readers may remember, this past summer's garden was to accomplish the goal of growing more food, food that would cut down on the grocery bill and feed the family through the winter. I took my chances growing a hybrid paste tomato by the name of Plum Regal. Its accolades were many: late blight resistance, moderate resistance to early blight, a the promise of a good yield and a tasty outcome.

I typically only grow heirlooms, so this tomato really had to prove itself. My only dilemma was that I sometimes have issues with blossom end rot, and specifically on paste types.

I tried a new fertilizer formulated specifically for members of the Solanacea family, aptly named "Tomato Sauce." You know what? It worked.

No blossom end rot and a freezer full of sauce, tomato chucks and roasted tomato blends. I will be ordering both the seeds and the fertilizer from Fedco ([fedco-seeds.com](http://fedco-seeds.com)) in anticipation of next year's garden.



by Roberta McQuaid

With every success comes not quite a success. I'll call Muskmelon "Melonade" one of those adventures. I was intrigued by the description in the Fedco catalog, "firm orange flesh is tart, punchy and refreshing," and had hoped it would keep our family in melons for a month or so. Not exactly.

I couldn't get over the fact that what looked like a cantaloupe tasted like a lemon! No one in the house liked it. I'm not going to call it a failure, because if anything, I learned that I could grow a muskmelon successfully.

I worried I would harvest them too early, or too late, but I harvested them just right, and they grew exceedingly well on black plastic down the middle of my heat retaining rock wall raised beds. Next year I will search for a variety with a more typical flavor and it could just be a win-win.

I have always wanted to grow Indian corn as a fall decoration, but was leery of the space needed for such an endeavor. The experts talk about growing corn four rows deep for proper pollination and kernel formation.

I threw caution to the

wind and decided I'd grow a popcorn. I enjoyed the commentary in the Fedco catalog in the description

of a variety named "Calico." "you can hang it on your door in fall and pop the very same batch come Thanksgiving." Sold.

I grew only eight plants, set out in a four by two pattern. Shucking the corn felt a lot like Christmas morning with the surprise factor involved. Will the kernels be gold, blue, mottled or bronze?

I ended up with enough to decorate with and come Thanksgiving I will indeed try and pop some. I've had some experience popping eared corn before.

At our family vacation my sister in law tried it out. She put the dried ear she had purchased in a paper bag and folded it shut, placed it in a microwave on high for about 3-4 minutes and yum!

What else worked out well in my garden this year? The succession planting of green beans seeded immediately after my garlic was harvested worked out superbly. No additional fertilizer required.

I was able to freeze a lot of beans from that second sowing. I guess I always wish there are more to freeze, so maybe next year the row will be longer.

I didn't utilize the wide row method this year. Two parallel rows with a walking row down the middle made

GARDEN | page 5

## Black vultures are expanding their range into Massachusetts

On Monday, Oct. 6, an Oakham resident watched a kettle of 28 black vultures circling above the Harrington Hospital in Southbridge.

He said, "As you may know, the species is expanding its range northward into Massachusetts." A kettle is a large group of vultures circling in a thermal, using the rising air to conserve energy during migration.

The black vulture has sooty, black plumage, a featherless black head and neat white stars under the wing-tips.

Turkey vultures are lanky



By Ellenor Downer

birds with a teetering flight. Their cousin the black vultures are compact birds with broad wings, short tails and

powerful wingbeats. Turkey and black vultures often associate together. The black vultures have a poor sense

of smell, but by following turkey vultures by following them to carcasses. They often soar high in the sky in search of lower soaring turkey vultures. When the turkey vultures descend on a carcass, the black vultures follow them.

Black vultures are highly social and share food with relatives, feeding young for months after they've fledged. In the United States black vultures are more plentiful than turkey vultures. Black vultures lack a voice box and their sounds are limited to hisses and grunts.

The oldest black vulture on record was a least 25 years, six months old when it was found in 1965 in Louisiana. It was banded there in 1940. They may live even longer in captivity.

**Brimfield resident**

On Sunday, Oct. 5, I received an email from a Brimfield resident commenting about my seeing a moose in Oakham. He said, "Seeing a moose in Massachusetts is exciting. My wife and I saw a moose in Canada, it ran across the road in front of the

BACKYARD | page 5

## Agawam Advertiser News welcomes letters to the editor

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

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

### Campaign news

As part of its election coverage, the 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*.



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[wdelcamp@turley.com](mailto:wdelcamp@turley.com)

Editor

Gregory Scibelli  
[aan@turley.com](mailto:aan@turley.com)

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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](mailto:aan@turley.com).



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### AGAWAM ADVERTISER NEWS TEAM

**EDITOR/SPORTS**  
Greg Scibelli  
[aan@turley.com](mailto:aan@turley.com)  
[sports@turley.com](mailto:sports@turley.com)

**ADVERTISING SALES**  
Wendy Delcamp  
[wdelcamp@turley.com](mailto:wdelcamp@turley.com)

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# ACAA to host Donna Carmel

AGAWAM – On Wednesday, Nov. 12, the Agawam Community Artists and Artisans will host Donna Carmel, who will be demonstrating the fine art printmaking process.

This demonstration will take place at the Agawam Public Library, 750 Cooper Street, Agawam, beginning at 6 p.m.

Donna Carmel is a resident of Westfield. Growing up in an agricultural family, she learned to observe and appreciate nature, and cre-

ates landscapes from memories that express these feelings. She finds skies, water, and fog to be dramatic, but also soothing. Natural landscapes evoke a calmness and splendor through her paintings and printmaking.

Her art has been shown in Florida, Boston, New York City, and regionally in New England.

Donna, a graduate of the University of Florida with an art and printmaking degree, has worked as a recreational therapist. She conducts

workshops in printmaking, painting and watercolor. Through real life experiences some of the workshops include therapeutic methods.

Donna currently is a member of the Agawam Community Artists and Artisans, Monotype Guild of New England, Artworks Westfield and Westfield on Weekends.

The meeting is free and open to the public. For further information please contact Ceil Rossi (413) 207-1247.

# Volunteers wanted Oct. 25 to flag veterans graves

AGAWAM – The Agawam Veterans' Council is seeking volunteers for flagging veteran graves at local cemeteries

in preparation of veteran's Day on Saturday, Oct. 25.

Anyone interested in participating, please meet at 8

a.m. in the Springfield Street Cemetery (across from Sacred Heart Church) in Feeding Hills.

## BACKYARD ■ from page 4

car and disappeared into the woods. My wife said "look a horse with no rider, similar to your reaction."

### Eagle sighting

On Wednesday, Oct. 1, I received an email from a reader. He said, "I was in my car last evening around 6:30 when I saw a huge, black-winged bird come over Main Street in Barre Plains. When we were kids it was called Canal Road. It was flying low over the street and was trying to gain altitude. The bird appeared just before Rich's Pond and it had what looked like a recent kill in its talons. It accidentally dropped the dead animal, which appeared to be a rabbit, onto the road and what I thought was a vulture turned out to be an adult Bald Eagle."

He said, "Its stark white head and white fanned tail, along with its bright yellow feet and beak were clearly seen and it was startling to be only 25 or 30 feet away from it. The eagle's wing span was enormous. It made an attempt to recapture its prey by diving quickly back to the road and it had to widely fan out its tail feathers to slow its descent and gain flight control."

He said, "The Bald Eagle then flew high up into a tree along the road near the pond and was waiting for me and all cars to pass before descending on its prey. It was breath taking. We never saw



Black Vulture

such things as kids."

### Cedar waxwings

The Barre resident said on recent warm September days he also has been seeing a small flock of cedar waxwings in Gilbertville, along the Ware River, taking bugs in midair over the river and also working trees and bushes that still have some fruit on them.

### Helping birds

People may also help birds by keeping their cats indoors. Many birds are killed by cats. It is safer for people's pet cats to kept indoors as they also succumb to predation. If a cat is an outdoor cat, people may put a bell collar on their cat with a quick release

mechanism if their pet's collar should get hung up on something.

### Dark-eyed Juncos

An Oakham resident reported seeing a dark-eyed junco in his yard last week. I saw a small flock of juncos along the road where I live on Oct. 13. Their white tall feathers identified them as they flew up from the side of the road. It was my first sighting this fall.

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.

# Taste, vote, and celebrate at Food Fest West 2025

AGAWAM — The West of the River Chamber of Commerce is excited to announce the return of Food Fest West, a community-favorite culinary celebration, on Thursday, Nov. 13 from 5:30 to 8 p.m. at Crestview Country Club in Agawam, MA.

This highly anticipated event showcases the region's finest eateries, offering guests the opportunity to sample a wide variety of delicious dishes and vote for their favorite restaurant of the night.

From savory bites to sweet treats, attendees will experience the very best of Western Massachusetts' local cuisine — all under one roof.

In addition to the mouthwatering food, guests will enjoy a fun-filled evening featuring a silent auction, raffles, photo booth, and cash bar. It's the perfect way to connect with friends, colleagues, and community members while supporting local businesses and restaurants.

"Food Fest West is one of our most exciting community events of the year," said Robin Wozniak, Executive Director of the West of the River Chamber of Commerce. "It's a great opportunity to bring people together, celebrate our local dining scene, and have a great time doing it."

Tickets are available now through the West of the River Chamber of Commerce. Don't miss your chance to eat, mingle, and vote for the best cuisine in Western Mass.

# Senate expands 'Move Over' law to protect workers and motorists

BOSTON – Last week, State Senator Jake Oliveira (D-Ludlow) and his colleagues in the Massachusetts Senate passed legislation that strengthens roadside safety protections for drivers, utility crews, and others who must work or stop along state highways and local roads.

The bill, An Act relative to the Move Over Law, expands existing protections for emergency vehicles to include utility trucks and any disabled vehicle displaying hazard or flashing lights. It requires motorists to slow down and, when possible, move over a lane when approaching a stationary utility vehicle or car stopped on the shoulder. The goal is to prevent more crashes, injuries, and fatalities on Massachusetts roads.

Senator Oliveira stated

that the measure has particular importance for the safety of workers and drivers in rural Western Massachusetts, where many roadways have limited shoulders and visibility.

"Whether it's a lineman restoring power after a storm or a driver stuck on Route 202 in Belchertown, everyone deserves to feel safe when they're pulled over," said Senator Oliveira. "This bill is a common-sense step that will save lives, especially on our rural roads where there's little room for error."

Under the legislation, fines for violating the Move Over law will increase to \$250 for a second offense and \$500 for third and subsequent violations. Repeat offenders will also be required to complete a driver education program to reinforce safe driving

practices.

The original Move Over law already covers police, fire, EMS, tow trucks, and highway maintenance crews. This expansion ensures that utility workers, who often face the same roadside dangers, and stranded motorists receive the same level of protection.

"In communities like Granby, Palmer, and Ludlow, our utility workers are out in all conditions fixing downed lines, restoring heat, and keeping people connected," Oliveira added. "We owe it to them and to every driver on the road to build a culture of caution and respect behind the wheel."

Having passed the Senate unanimously, the bill now moves to the House of Representatives for consideration.

# ACC welcoming new members to playgroup

AGAWAM – Come join the Agawam Congregational Church Family Playgroup - where we will play, learn and grow together.

Every Tuesday from 10 to 11 a.m. starting on Tuesday, Sept. 16, Agawam Congregational Church at 745 Main St. Agawam. The group is for all children from birth to five-years-old.

## GARDEN ■ from page 4

the harvest easy.

I hope you had your share of successes this past summer, and if you are anything like me, you are already scheming next year's veggie garden.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 33 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.

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**CLUES ACROSS**

1. Remark
5. Upper body part
8. Expression of dismissiveness
12. Alternate name
14. Popular beverage
15. Swiss river
16. Step-shaped recess
18. Rocker Stewart
19. Bright shade of color
20. Popular "street"
21. Wrath
22. Heat units
23. Nocturnal omnivorous mammals
26. Fall back into record
30. Remove from the record
31. Sound a splash made

32. Popular Dodge pickup model
33. Jamaican river
34. Notable event in Texas history
39. Cool!
42. Subset of Judaism
44. Newly entered cadet
46. Duct in urinary system
47. Exterminator
49. Snatch quickly
50. Have already done
51. Less healthy
56. Therefore
57. What couples say on the altar
58. Mysteriously
59. Look angry or sullen
60. Bird's beak
61. Taco ingredient
62. Square measures

**CLUES DOWN**

1. Pubs
2. Wings
3. Popular BBQ dish
4. Small sponge cake
5. Open-roofed entrance halls
6. Organize anew
7. Type of wine
8. Forums
9. North Atlantic islands (alt. sp.)
10. Pond dwellers
11. Large integers
13. Signaled
17. Brief
24. Type of student
25. Tibetan monasteries
26. Revolutions per minute
27. NY Giants great Manning
28. Local area network
29. Residue from burning
35. Illuminated
36. Vasopressin
37. Notable space station
38. Wood sorrel
40. Adhering to laws
41. Chose
42. Hovel
43. Stood up
44. European city
45. Works ceaselessly
47. Mistake
48. Sun-dried brick
49. Sicilian city
52. A steep rugged rock or cliff
53. Murder
54. Other
55. "Deadpool" actor Reynolds

**COUNCIL** ■ from page 1



**Uduak Enyiema**

weaknesses: Agawam has invested heavily in infrastructure, spending over \$3 million on paving and upgrading public fields and facilities. The town also maintains strong local control, setting priorities around housing, safety, and economic growth. Ongoing downtown revitalization efforts show a clear vision for long-term development. Still, residents continue to raise concerns about road and sidewalk conditions, calling for steady investment. Expanding affordable housing for seniors and families through grants and partnerships is critical. Finally, investing in municipal internet could lower costs and increase competition, helping Agawam stay connected and competitive.

**Christine Rickmon**



**Christine Rickmon**

Relevant political experience: Former elementary teacher and union representative; previous PTO member and Faculty Advisory Council leader

Capital project: I would prioritize turning the Perry Lane facility into a community center, since the Early Childhood Center will be moving to the new high school, and explore other town-owned properties for recreational use. Additionally, I want to make Town Hall fully ADA compliant—improving access for seniors, parents with strollers, and differently-abled residents.

Sponsor new legislation: If elected, I would sponsor a resolution to increase transparency and accessibility for town meetings and records. This would include transcribing meetings so residents can easily search and review them online, and creating plain-language updates on town projects, budgets, and decisions. As a former teacher, I know that knowledge is power—residents make better decisions when they have clear information. This resolution would empower the community, build trust in local government, and set a standard for open communication.

BESS stance: I understand why residents are concerned—there's a lot of outdated or false information circulating about battery energy storage facilities. The fires in older systems were hazardous, but modern systems have far more safety precautions. Transparency is key, which is why I made a series of videos explaining how these systems work, available on my website (www.christinerickmon.com) and social media. I also believe the town should coordinate with surrounding communities to ensure consistent, high safety standards across the Pioneer Valley because unsafe systems in nearby towns can affect Agawam residents, as well.

Government strengths/weaknesses: Agawam's local government does well in supporting our seniors, maintaining our public safety departments, and running an inclusive, welcoming library that serves all residents. Areas that need improvement include increasing transparency and communication so residents are better informed about town projects and decisions, expanding recreational programs and public spaces for families and youth, and

improving the town's website and digital resources to make information more accessible and easier to find. Strengthening these areas will help make Agawam more welcoming and responsive to the needs of all residents.

**George Bitzas**



**George Bitzas**

Years on city council: 36

Capital project: The next big capital improvement project will be the much-needed roads and sidewalks

a concern many residents have shared. Well maintained infrastructure improves safety, accessibility, and quality of life. Funding should come from a balanced approach, State and Federal aid, available grants, and responsible city budgeting. I will also advocate for fair distribution of State resources to reduce the tax burden on residents, who already contribute significantly. By combining outside funding with smart fiscal management, we can address long standing infrastructure needs without overburdening our taxpayers.

Sponsor new legislation: As a city Councilor I sponsored numerous ordinances and resolutions that benefited our city and our residents as my records show and I will continue to do so. One of my first resolutions is to introduce a resolution supporting the building of 2 small neighborhoods parks one on Valley Brook Road in Feeding Hills and the other off River Road in Agawam, for the neighborhood kids and families to enjoy. The funds will come from the Community Reservation Fund that we already have.

BESS stance: I do not support these facilities in Agawam and I hope they will never come. What I did to prevent them for coming, was a resolution that I co-sponsored to support the State House amendment to change the law, requiring local approval for battery storage facility permitting. The resolution passed unanimously and a copy of our resolution was sent to the Governor, our State Senator and our State Representatives. The local elected officials who represent the people must make the decisions to allow or deny such facilities and not have the State dictate to us what to do.

Government strengths/weaknesses: I am very proud to serve the people of Agawam with integrity professionalism and common sense keeping Agawam moving forward into the right direction and Agawam is doing well in every area. The top three things are: 1. We continue to maintain the lowest tax rates in the Pioneer Valley with continued great city services. 2. We have a great Police and fire protection. 3. We are doing very well with our children education. The three things that need improvement are: 1. Streets and sidewalks 2. Athletic fields 3. Bring more quality business in our town to bring us more tax revenue.

**Dino Mercadante**



**Dino Mercadante**

Years on council: 8

Capital project: The town of Agawam has been quite ambitious regarding capital improvements.

The new high school and the new police station are mentioned in the question. Several other large items include a new aerial platform fire truck, Still Brook Park, and the remodel of the library, including a new roof. I would like to see a new townhall. One that will be easier to navigate and more accessible. This will be quite an ambitious project and will take some time to realize. In-

creasing our business tax base will allow us more capital to accomplish these larger projects.

Sponsor new legislation: I am a firm believer that if we enforce the ordinances and laws on the books now, we would do well. That being said, I would like to strengthen our blight and litter ordinances. All too often, I see that some have lost pride in their town. Litter on streets has become so unsightly and does not reflect the wonderful town we live in. If we all do our part, this town will be a showcase for other communities. Our code enforcement departments can lead the way in this area.

BESS stance: My voting record speaks for itself. In the question, the state gave us virtually no control over lithium battery storage. The only leverage the town had was to place on any of these developments, the toughest safety measures allowed by the state, which I voted for. Other communities that did not take this measure, left themselves open to whatever the battery storage company wanted to do. The measure acts as a deterrent. Would you rather go to a community with regulations or without? Second, I've voted for a resolution, sent to the Massachusetts statehouse to allow Agawam more local control.

Government strengths/weaknesses: What we do well:

1) Police, fire, and ambulance provide excellent service.

2) DPW – all they do to keep our community in great shape.

3) Teachers – always go above and beyond for our children.

Areas to improve:

1) Code enforcement – daily rounds to keep properties in compliance with blight ordinances.

2) Being more responsible with our tax revenue. Needs and wants are very different.

3) Being more aggressive with road and sidewalk improvements, even at the expense of less important wish-list items. People will notice.

**Anthony Russo**



**Anthony Russo**

Years on council: 4

Capital project: Agawam's next major capital focus should be upgrading our aging water

mains, water lines, and roadways, along with improving sidewalks and walkability in our neighborhoods. These core infrastructure investments protect public health, support growth, and improve safety for drivers and pedestrians. To fund this responsibly, we can pursue state and federal infrastructure grants, coordinate water and road projects to reduce costs, and phase improvements over several years. By planning smartly and leveraging available aid, we can modernize essential systems without placing a heavy tax burden on residents.

Sponsor new legislation: I would sponsor a Seniors and Veterans Cost-Saving Ordinance to help two of Agawam's most deserving groups. This could expand property tax relief, offer discounts on town services, and create programs to reduce utility and transportation costs for seniors and veterans. By coordinating with local nonprofits and state programs, we can maximize support without straining the town budget. Helping seniors and veterans save money ensures they can remain independent, live with dignity, and fully participate in our community. This legislation would demonstrate Agawam's commitment to honoring service and supporting those who built and sustained our town.

BESS stance: No, I do not support battery energy storage facilities being pushed into Agawam without community input. I have repeatedly spoken out against state legislation that strips local control from municipalities on projects like this. Decisions that impact our safety and neighborhoods should never be made behind closed doors. To change this, we must pressure our state delegation to restore local control, require public hearings, and mandate safety and environmental reviews. Agawam residents deserve a voice — not an afterthought — in decisions that affect our town, and I will continue fighting to make sure that voice is heard.

Government strengths/weaknesses: Agawam excels in public safety, supported by a top-tier ambulance service that delivers rapid and reliable emergency response. Our youth sports programs are well-organized and widely accessible, fostering teamwork and community pride. The town also demonstrates fiscal responsibility, maintaining one of the lowest tax rates in the region. However, there are areas for improvement. Agawam should increase the amount of road and sidewalk work to enhance accessibility. Communication with residents needs to be clearer and proactive. Finally, the town would benefit from building a recreational center offering activities beyond sports, creating a welcoming space for learning, creativity, and community connection.

**Gerald Smith**



**Gerald Smith**

Years on council: 6

Capital project: I would like to see the development of Still Brook Park. This park will

be a perfect place for the residents of Agawam to go for a day of walking and enjoying the beautiful views and take advantage of the children friendly facilities. Funding will come from CPA funds, grants (Mayor Johnson has already been able to obtain over 1.8 million dollars in grants this year) and donations (such as benches with plaques marked "in memory of".

BESS stance: I am not in favor of Battery Energy Storage Facilities. We must work with surrounding communities to make our voice heard in Boston. We need to work with the communities in our area and make sure Boston knows we want to make our own decisions about Agawam.

Government strengths/weaknesses: The services provided to the Town of Agawam are outstanding. We have an excellent school system, our police and fire services are as good as it gets. Our trash services are by far the best in the area. Our athletic fields are getting the attention they need. I just want to make sure that we continue to maintain at the level we are now at.

**Rosemary Sandlin**



**Rosemary Sandlin**

Years on council: 8

Capital project: I do not think the town should enter into any new capital project that require us to bond in the next year. Until we see the impact of our High School bonds will affect our tax rate we should hold large capital items.

Sponsor new legislation: Re-introduce the Noise Ordinance. My time 4 years on the Zoning Sub-Committee opened my eyes to the fact that presently we have nothing in places and the amount of complaints reflect the need to create a balanced Noise Ordinance for the town.

BESS stance: I neither support nor am I opposed to Bess in the Town of Agawam, Governor Healy and the state legislator took the local power away from Cities and Towns. We, the city council passed an ordinance that spelled out where they could be located. We trained our local fire staff and put restrictions that only allow them in Industrial zone parcels. I support filing legislation to control back to the people in each community.

Government strengths/weaknesses: 1, Filming live the Agawam City Council Sub-committees before Council meetings. That is where much of the discussion takes place and give the residents valuable information.

2, How Agawam uses Community Preservation Funds to enhance our recreation through new parks and recreation enhancements.

3, The creation of a committee to study and report back to the state of our athletic fields and in turn recommend solutions.

Three needs:

1, upgrading handicap access to our town hall. Installing electronic door openers so that people with disabilities can enter easily.

2, Improve our webpage and make it user friendly to that its easy to get alerts, check out town services and reach the departments for answers.

3, More Mayor updates via Public Service Announcements. Taxpayers need to see what's our tax payments are being used for. Communications is the key to understanding.

**Anthony Suffriti**



**Anthony Suffriti**

Years on council: 12

Capital project: None, if plausible, allow our town debt to reduce and taxpayers to take

a breath. But if I was to look at the town for what the next capital town improvement we should look at; I would say the overdue continuation of the section of feeding hills that lack sewer lines. All avenues of federal and state funding options, along with continued conversations with our local state and federal representatives expressing such urgent needs.

Sponsor new legislation: Term limits, local elected positions should not be for decades. Extended terms with limits. I hear many times of people that would like to run for elected positions but are intimidated by long term incumbents. "can't beat embedded incumbents" though this should not be a reason of intimidation, it would open up the ending of worries of such.

BESS stance: I personally do not support these storage facilities in our town. Unfortunately, the town does not have a seat at the table to weigh in on them. This is permitted at the state level and concerned residents need to voice their opinions to your district state level elected officials. With that being said, as a town elected official knowing our limited abilities, I will work with the community and the development of such for a compromised outcome that takes in consideration, complete transparency of the project; community safety, input concerns from residents at open forums with the development.

Government strengths/weaknesses: Incredible public safety, police, fire and ambulance service are top rated, impressive education system, continued town services to residents. We need to work on community outreach of opportunities to our seniors, infrastructure improvement, government transparency.

**Robert Rossi**

Years on council: 26

Capital project: The town has already many issues, if future new capital improvements become necessary, the town can explore a range of alternative financing strategies, including grants, low-interest loans, user fees, and public-private partnerships. These methods will allow the borrowing, or generating new revenue streams without placing a larger burden on taxpayers, allowing the town to borrow funds and pay them back over time without raising the tax rate.

Sponsor new legislation: Being a proponent of local control, I believe Agawam is capable of determining its own priorities, and making their own decisions, that reflect how they wish to live. The City Council must adopt or expand some form of home rule authority, which will empower the Town to manage its own affairs without absolute state approval or options to reject them. i.e. Bess systems. Agawam has always been a creature of the state, On a leash, with a very short and strong state chain, and Beacon Hill has always aimed to keep it that way; A leash I would like to break., or at least unbuckle

BESS stance: "BESS systems, as a standalone, is not the end all for sustainable energy consumption. There are several valid concerns that pose significant risks to the community, raw materials, such as lithium and cobalt that raises ethical and environmental problems, Thermal Runaway, a dangerous chain reaction that can lead to fires and toxic spills, (hydrofluoric acid) which is a common occurrence. The State, in general does not outright prohibit bess systems, it does allow the town to establish some reasonable regulations that protects the health, safety, and welfare of the public. The City Council must recreate an ordinance that doesn't have inadvertent or unintended consequences. The City Council cannot not ask the citizens of his community to live under such a risk; we need greater autonomy through local regulations.

Government strengths/weaknesses: (Public Safety) I think Agawam does extremely well in Public safety that encompasses the finest police, fire and emergency services, Agawam also provides a state-of-the-art and world-class Emergency Medical Services (EMS delivering optimal ambulance service.

(Education) Agawam provides the best possible learning experience for our students tailored and personalized for personal growth that allows a greater chance of students success. Agawam has always been a model of incorporating sports and other activity programs within the school setting, that is critical for student development. (Needs Work) challenges, escalating inflation.

(Public works/infrastructure): infrastructure is the most common concern in any city. The poor conditions always start with a lack of funding. Agawam's budget will only carry us so far. without state and federal subsidies, which are diminishing. (Needs Work) Budget constraints.

**Peter Smus**



**Peter Smus**

Years on city council: 2

Capital project: Based on the growing needs of Agawam's youth, the next capital

improvement project should be a multi-use community recreation center. With the completion of the new high school, the Perry Lane Park

**COUNCIL** ■ from page 6

will become available for reuse. The pool has already undergone upgrades as well as the grounds so the renovations should be minimal. We can apply for Community Development Block Grants, Federal Earmarks, National Fitness Campaign Grants and C.P.A. Funds would help cut costs to taxpayers with a positive impact to support a recreational center.

**Sponsor new legislation:** As your city councilor I would sponsor a resolution to establish a municipal youth recreation and wellness programs. I feel we need to invest in our youth and encourage engagement in structured activities. In promoting physical and mental wellness, we reduce idle time and risky behavior.

**BESS stance:** I do not support these facilities in Agawam. Fire prevention has not yet caught up to the new technology of the BESS facilities, I don't believe the benefits outweigh the harmful impact. I, along with 2 other councilors, have brought forward a resolution from our city councilors to the state for more regulation on the BESS facilities to local government. We must support the movement at state level to give us back control of where the BESS facilities should go in "OUR" community.

**Government strengths/weaknesses:** I believe our local Agawam government has done well with repairing our infrastructure. We have been repaving more roads and sidewalks than in previous years. Our town government has been proactive in securing many federal and state grants for our schools, infrastructure upgrades, and public safety systems. And lastly, the strong response from our town in supporting our new high school project. A major investment in the future of education in our town.

The three areas I would work on as your city councilor would be:

- #1.-Affordable Housing Development
- #2.-Waste Management and Environmental Planning
- #3.-Longterm Capital Planning amid rising costs

**Peter McNair**



**Relevant political experience:** New candidate

**Capital project:** I would begin on the revenue side of any future projects.

Agawam has not seen its new tax bill which is due of Jan 2026. This would allow the residents to digest the new increases and how they will pay for it. I would put moratorium period until we figure debt repayment on the taxpayers.

**BESS stance:** My campaign is "No Lithium Battery Storage". Here are few questions that need to be answered. Do the lithium batteries have fire suppression? If worst case scenario occurs, what is the procedure for evacuating surrounding homes? Why are we not preparing the town for worst case scenario? This is not the same as a traditional fire as the chemicals will likely cause health related issues. No long term data exists for exposure to these chemicals. We need strong city councilors now not councilors who will support citizens against these sites.

**Government strengths/weaknesses:** We get outstanding DPW services and local fire and police services. Our city council really doesn't know its customer (the taxpayer). I've knocked on over 3,000 doors and seeing the hard times out there. People are falling through the safety net and feel out council does not care! Also, needs fight for reductions in our budgets and lower our property taxes.

**Cecilia Calabrese**

**Relevant political experience:** Former city councilor

**Capital project:** The town debt service on the new high school building will amount to approximately \$130 million over 30-years. The estimated interest rate will be approximately 4-5%. No new large capital improvement projects should be initiated until after we know the financial impact upon our citizens for capital improvements already in progress.

**Sponsor new legislation:** I would sponsor legislation to make photo identification free and easy to obtain right from Agawam Town Hall. With the growing trend toward requiring photo ID to vote, it is vital that our voters are not disenfranchised. Further, there are other situations where having a government-issued photo ID is necessary (purchasing certain medications for example). Therefore, I would sponsor legislation to make photo ID free, and easily obtained from the Town of Agawam.

**BESS stance:** I do not support Battery Storage Facilities coming to Agawam. The current project was foisted upon our citizens in one-size-fits-all legislation out of Boston. Potential risks for environmental and health hazards are real. The location of the project recently approved by the Planning Board poses substantial risk for fire, ground-water run-off, and contamination of our air and Silver Lake. Our City Council must be more pro-active in bringing our concerns to the State Legislature to reverse the existing law that disorged our citizens of their rights to determine how our land in Agawam will be used and developed.

**Government strengths/weaknesses:** Town Hall and Public Works personnel are responsive to the needs of our citizens. Our Fire/Ambulance services are the Gold Standard. Our Police are dedicated professionals that keep our community safe.

There is a trend of sub-contracting services previously conducted by town personnel, Inspection Services for example. All services should remain with town employees, not subcontracted out. Our town needs a higher Social Media profile to make best use of digital services to keep our citizens informed of events and important notifications. Our Town Charter is embarrassingly out-of-date. The next City Council needs to prioritize updating our Town Charter.

**Ed Borgatti**

**Years on council:** 2

**Capital project:** First off, I want to thank the residents for their overwhelming support of the new high school. As we await the impact of these projects on our wallets, we must not be in a hurry to do any more capital improvement development unless absolutely necessary. A capital improvement plan must be 5 years and it must allow input from the community, creating transparency while keeping residents informed about changes and increases that may occur from any significant projects the town may require. We must say no to planning that can create a crisis-to-crisis management style.

**Sponsor new legislation:** I have been proactive and unafraid to speak out on issues that need to be addressed. I was outspoken in support of our fields and parks falling into disrepair. My actions in speaking up on this resulted in change. Repairs are underway making our parks and fields safe for our families. I will continue to be a strong independent voice on issues that affect the town and its quality of life. I will use all forms of government action to achieve this and keep the town moving forward. I will only support and present legislation that directly affects Agawam.

**BESS stance:** I do not support legislation that significantly alters our community affecting its small-town charm. It's up to Agawam to decide not the state. I strongly oppose legislation the state tries to ram down our throat. Battery storage facilities have been forced on us with little or no public input. This is unacceptable. Regardless of your feelings on this issue, residents must always have a say in what they want in their community. I will continue to call out these state mandates and oppose any legislation forced on us by the state.

**Government strengths/weaknesses:** With a new high school coming, our strength is providing a first-class education. We must value our senior citizens and their contributions. Our Senior Center is arguably the best in the region. Parks and fields are the heart of a community. I will continue to be a watchdog, making sure, along with roads and sidewalks, they are maintained and safe. We must continue to increase our tax base. Increasing property taxes to balance our budget is unsustainable. We must be more business friendly, improving our business districts to attract and expand quality businesses. Remember elected officials work for you.

**Thomas Hendrickson**

**Years on council:** 4

**Capital project:** For several years, I have advocated for the creation of a municipal internet provider in Agawam to compete with Comcast's monopoly.

**Thomas Hendrickson**

Municipal internet has been successful in neighboring towns (Westfield, Chicopee, and South Hadley). Outrageous internet prices in Agawam are a major cost-of-living concern, and this needs to be addressed by the local government. Additionally, I think there are opportunities to renovate the soon-to-be-vacant Early Childhood Center and current police station. I think the ECC could be turned into a recreation center for teens and youth, and the old police station could be converted into housing.

**Sponsor new legislation:** I have two ordinances that I'm currently working on and that I intend to file next session if reelected. The first is a domestic partnership ordinance, which would grant domestic partners the right to visit one another at healthcare facilities, pick up one another's children from school, and take sick or bereavement leave to attend to their partner. The other is a responsible development ordinance, which would (among other things) prohibit contractors from working in Agawam on taxpayer funded projects if they've committed wage theft violations within the past three years.

**BESS stance:** Battery energy storage systems are designed to receive and store energy from the power grid during low-demand times when there's a surplus of energy on the grid, and then release that energy back onto the grid during high-demand times when the grid needs more energy. They are an important part of our power grid, as they help us maintain a stable supply of energy, improve grid resilience, and reduce energy prices. The facility in Agawam will also provide a substantial amount of property tax revenue to our town, which we can put to good use.

**Government strengths/weaknesses:** Does well: responsiveness to constituent service requests, grant procurement, and responsible financial management

**Needs improvement:** communication with the public, openness to ambitious and creative policymaking, and long-term thinking and planning

**Maria Valego**

**Years on council:** 2

**Capital project:** Downtown revitalization; expand athletic recreation and community programming. Accessing the following grants: MOOR, LWCF, DICKS - Sport Matters Program, ALL KIDS PLAY. Convert empty buildings into mixed use space for business growth, rental space for events at low cost. This allows diversity, infrastructure and building a very strong community with a low impact to the taxpayers.

**Sponsor new legislation:** I would propose monthly pre-council meetings. A city Councilor would be assigned to a precinct, reminder date notice. City Council, Mayor, Chief of Staff would be present at every meeting. As a community, we can address the issues and start building, repairing equally from each precinct. This is how we can move Agawam forward and stronger

**BESS stance:** I do not support battery storage in Agawam! It's extremely dangerous! As a community we should have a say and vote on this. I would entertain a petition, signatures, have a community meeting and bring forth the petition to our Senator, State Reps, Congressman and request it be put on their agenda to have a bill passed and or amendment and brought right to our governor's desk for the safety, health and well-being for our community. We are not the brain of the battery when it chooses to explode.

**Government strengths/weaknesses:** Agawam does well: Respond to 911 calls, DPW related issues; Agawam TV access - channel 15 for the community; Town website is updated daily.

**3 things to work on:** More transparency to the community - robo calls, text, TV, mail notifications to the residents; Addressing budget concerns by accessing more funding through Grants; repairing our city to invite business growth so Agawam can be the city to work, live, thrive and be educated by.

**Richard Borsari**

**Relevant political experience:** New candidate

**Capital project:** With major projects like the new high school and police station underway, the next focus should be upgrading infrastructure—roads, walkways, and common areas—to ensure safety and connectivity, especially for students. These smaller, targeted improvements can be phased in and managed through existing budgets, avoiding major tax impacts while improving daily quality of life for residents.

**Sponsor new legislation:** In my first six months, I would sponsor an initiative to modernize Agawam's communication and technology systems—improving the town website, public notifications, and digital transparency. Efficient information flow builds trust, enhances public participation, and supports better service delivery while reducing administrative waste.

**BESS stance:** I do not support the state's ability to approve these projects without community input. Local residents deserve a voice in decisions that affect their neighborhoods. I would advocate for legislation returning permitting authority to municipalities, ensuring transparency, safety, and local oversight in all future energy storage projects.

**Government strengths/weaknesses:** Agawam does well in maintaining essential services, supporting schools, and fostering community spirit. However, we must improve government efficiency, communication, and infrastructure management. Small, consistent improvements—guided by accountability and smart budgeting—can produce meaningful long-term change without unnecessary spending.

**In-person early voting continues through next week**

AGAWAM – Residents in town looking to get their ballots in for Agawam City Council and Agawam School Committee will be able to do so starting next Wednesday.

From Wednesday, Oct. 22 through Wednesday, Oct. 29, early in-person voting will be available to all residents in the Seminar Room at the Agawam Senior Center on 954 Main St. During all weekdays of that period, voting hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 25 voting hours will be 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. There will be no voting hours on Sunday, Oct. 26.

There will be no early voting after Oct. 29 and then Election Day will be held on Tuesday, Nov. 4 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Voting precincts on

Election Day are as follows:  
Precinct 1 William P. Sapelli School (formerly Robinson School) 65 Begley Street

Precinct 2 Clifford Granger School 31 South Westfield Street

Precinct 3 Agawam High School 760 Copper Street

Precinct 4 Roberta G. Doering School 68 Main Street

Precinct 5 Benjamin Phelps School 689 Main Street

Precinct 6 James Clark School 65 Oxford Street

Precinct 7 Agawam Jr. High School 1305 Springfield Street

Precinct 8 James Clark School 65 Oxford Street

For more information on the upcoming election, go to the town's website, [www.agawam.ma.us](http://www.agawam.ma.us).

**Agawam Congregational Church announces 'Trunk-or-Treat' event**

AGAWAM – Agawam Congregation Church will hold its annual Trunk-or-Treat event in the parking lot of the church on Sunday, Oct. 26 from 4 to 6 p.m. Please bring a box of elbow macaroni or a jar of spaghetti sauce to benefit our loaves and fishes ministry to be entered in a special raffle prize.

Vehicles interested in distributing candy must preregister as there is a limited number of spaces available. To register your trunk contact ACC at 413-

786-7111 or email [office@agawamcong.com](mailto:office@agawamcong.com) with your name, email, phone number, and trunk theme.

\*All candy donations are welcome to be dropped off at the church by Oct. 25.

\*There is no access to electricity and generators are prohibited.

\*Jumper cables will be available for graveyard batteries.

\*Only vehicles participating will be allowed to park in the lot. All others must park along Elbert or Monroe Streets.

**Catholic women invited to listen to Michael Rogers speak about book**

AGAWAM – All Catholic Women are invited to join the Catholic Women's Club of Agawam at their annual Communion Breakfast on Sunday Nov. 9. It will begin with members attending the Sunday 10:30 a.m. Mass at St. John the Evangelist Church, 833 Main St., Agawam, MA, at which the Mass Intention will be for the deceased members of the club.

The breakfast will follow immediately after the Mass in the church parish center behind the church. Speaker for the event will be Michael Rogers, PhD., currently the Regional Director of Mission Integration for Trinity Health of New England. He will speak about his book, Many Ways With Mary, which was published in 2025.

lished in 2025.

The breakfast will be catered by Tansey Catering and will include Pastries, French Toast, Scrambled Eggs, Bacon, Home Fried Potatoes, Orange Juice, Coffee and Tea. Price for the breakfast is \$16. Checks, made out to C.W.C., or cash can be placed in the basket at weekend Masses, left at the parish office or mailed to Paula Raiche, 181 Leonard Street, Agawam, MA 01001. Payments must be received by Nov. 3 and there will be no refunds. It will be an open seating event with tables of 8-10 people.

Members are reminded to gather in the reserved front pews for the Mass.

Any questions or more information contact Katie at (413) 348-9698.

**Mall hosting Halloween event**

HOLYOKE – Families and children of all ages are invited to Holyoke Mall's annual Halloween Mall-O-Ween, trick-or-treating event, on Thursday, Oct. 30 from 4 to 6 p.m. Participating mall retailers will be handing out candy throughout the center, making it the perfect destination for little ghouls and goblins to safely enjoy trick-or-treating.

Attendees can also participate in a Social Media Costume Contest. Simply snap a photo while trick-

or-treating at the mall, post it on Facebook and/or Instagram, follow and tag the mall @HolyokeMall, and use the hashtag #HolyokeMallHalloween2025. Contestants must be at least 18 years of age. Winners will be announced on November 3rd and awarded spooktacular prizes.

For full details regarding Halloween Mall-O-Ween, please visit <https://www.holyokemall.com/event/halloween-mall-oween-2025/>.

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# SPORTS

## GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

# Brownies gets sweep of Lions

AGAWAM – Last Thursday evening, Ludlow High School girls volleyball was defeated on the road at Agawam High School 3-0. Lud-

low gave Agawam two very close matches 25-23 and 26-24, but Agawam made a big impact with a 25-5 win in the second set. Agawam

and Ludlow both finished the regular season at 6-12. Ludlow still qualified for the Western Mass. Class B tournament and was scheduled

to face East Longmeadow on the road earlier this week. Agawam was scheduled to face Amherst in the quarter-finals of the tournament.



Far left: Mia Atkins bumps the ball to the front line. Left: Toni Vassallo serves to start play for Agawam. Above: Hannah Jock sends a hit back over the net.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



Sophia Laprise sends a set toward the net.



Lailah Thee returns the ball.

## Railers suffer pair of losses in opening weekend

WORCESTER – Worcester's 5-3 loss to Adirondack Sunday afternoon made the Railers 0-2-0 for the season.

Easier said than done, perhaps, but one thing the Railers can do to improve the goals against is avoid turnovers. Sunday, they fell behind by 2-0 and battled back to forge a 3-3 tie heading into the third period. Worcester first deadlocked the score at 2-2, then surrendered the go-ahead goal to allow the Thunder to retake the lead.

It was 3-3 going into the third. Another turnover turned into the game-winning goal for Adirondack.

Railers players have to want to play in the defensive zone, coach Nick Tuzzolino said, and so far that has not been the case. "Guys need to play it the way we want them to play it," he added. "They can't go on their own page.

They have to stop and start. They have to be physical.

"D-Zone's not a pretty job, but when you don't do it you give up a lot of goals....it's a full six-man thing, whether it's goaltending, defensemen or forwards. It's a commitment to play defense, to kill penalties, and the last two nights we have had no commitment to play defense."

Worcester got its goals from Matt Stief, Cole Donhauser and Anthony Callin. Henrik Tikkanen stopped 24 shots in net. The Thunder scorers were Brannon McManus with two, Dylan Wendt, Justin Taylor and Brian Carrales into the empty net.

The Railers got off to a muddy start. As a result, Adirondack had a 2-0 lead before the game was 10 minutes old.

Wendt put a wrist shot home from about 30 feet at 2:51, then Taylor had a gimme

from just outside the crease at 11:21 with the Thunder on a power play. It stayed 2-0 heading into the second period and Worcester made it a tie game before that period was half over.

Lincoln Hatten gave the offense some energy when he worked a breakaway at 3:30, although he did not convert. The Railers then went on a power play at 3:41 and Stief took only six seconds to make it 2-1. He was set up when Drew Callin made a clean faceoff win by Ryan Miotto.

Stief scored from the right point as Anthony Callin also got an assist on the play. Donhauser tied it at 8:04 off a faceoff win by Ryan Miotto.

A dreadful giveaway allowed McManus to score unassisted and make it 3-2 at 14:41 but Worcester answered that goal just eight seconds later when Anthony

Callin scored from in close after being set up by Matt DeMelis.

It took Callin two games to score his first goal this season. It took him 16 to score his first goal last year.

McManus scored unassisted on another turnover three minutes into the third period and the Railers could not answer that one.

"We had a game plan going into the third and didn't touch it for nine minutes," Tuzzolino said.

Stief was the eighth different player to score the season's first goal in the Railers' eight seasons, the second defenseman. Nick Albano is the other.

In order, first goals have been scored by Wade Murphy, Barry Almeida, Jordan Samuels-Thomas, Albano, Brent Beaudoin, Quin Ryan and Stief.

## T-Birds come back

HERSHEY, PA – The Springfield Thunderbirds (1-2-0-0) rebounded in a big way from a defeat the night before as they dispatched the Hershey Bears (1-2-1-0) by a 5-1 score on Sunday inside Giant Center.

For the first time in the young season, Steve Konowalchuk's team finally vaulted to a lead at the 7:06 mark of the first period off a clean rush. Corey Schueneman carried the puck deep into the Hershey zone before slipping a perfect drop pass onto the blade of Jakub Stancl. The rookie connected off the inside of the post, beating Clay Stevenson on the stick side to give Springfield a 1-0 lead on Stancl's first professional tally.

Springfield dodged a dangerous chance from ex-Thunderbird Calle Rosen, who emerged from the penalty box and skated in on a breakaway against Vadim Zherenko,

but Rosen missed the target on the blocker side.

Both teams failed to connect on power play chances, but Springfield was not done on the offensive end. With just 24 seconds left on the clock, Hunter Skinner joined a rush, one-timing a Nikita Alexandrov pass through Stevenson to make it a 2-0 game into the intermission. Matthew Peca also picked up an assist on the play for his first point of the season. In the process, the T-Birds captain became the first player in the T-Birds' 10-year history to record 200 points as a member of the Thunderbirds.

Zherenko stood tall through the opening half of the second period, with Hershey linking lengthy shifts in the offensive zone, threatening to cut into the Springfield lead. After surviving the on-

# Brownies defeat Minnechaug, pick up ninth win



Kaitlyn Maloney tries to get the ball by a defender's stick.

AGAWAM – Last Monday night, Minnechaug Regional High School field hockey was defeated 2-0 by Agawam. The Brownies got two goals from Alyssa DaSilva to lead Agawam to its ninth victory of the season and a likely berth in the Western Mass. tournament. Minnechaug fell to 1-12-3 and is likely in nonplayoff action this week. Agawam's final regular season game was Monday against Greenfield.

Olivia Govoni sends the ball by a Minnechaug midfielder.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



Olivia Govoni sends the ball by a Minnechaug midfielder.



Alexina Lentas looks to steal the ball away.



Alyssa DaSilva is pursued by Minnechaug's defense.



Brooke Dwyer sends the ball pas midfield.



Dharbi Cooper takes her shot.



Bernard Wangamati gets ready to shoot.



Nicholas Albro makes his way down the court.

## Unified basketball in action

MONSON – Last week, Agawam High School's Unified Basketball continued its season with a matchup last Friday at Monson High School.

The Brownies faced Northampton earlier this week and their next matchup is at home against Palmer High School on Wednesday, Oct. 29 at 3:30 p.m.



Declan Eagan gets the easy shot.



Left: Massimo Laprise eyes the hoop as he heads into the paint. Above: Kevin Destin looks to one-hand a shot.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

# School Street Park to host 'Out of the Darkness' walk

AGAWAM – Suicide is a leading cause of death in the United States and the 16th leading cause of death in Massachusetts. It is also the second-leading cause of death for individuals age 15-34, yet suicide can often be prevented.

Volunteers from western Massachusetts are joining

the thousands of people who are gathering this season in towns across the United States to promote suicide prevention. The annual Greater Springfield Out of the Darkness Community Walk, hosted by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention - Massachusetts Chapter will be held on Saturday, Oct. 25 at 10 a.m. (registration begins at 9 a.m. at School Street Park, Agawam, MA.

This gathering will support the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's education, research and support for survivors of suicide loss. In addition to raising awareness and funds to fight

suicide, the walks give those who attend a chance to connect with others and know they are not alone, whether they walk in memory or in support of a loved one or in honor of their own mental health journey.

"Suicide touches one in five families in the United States. We hope that by connecting with one another, we will draw attention to this issue and keep other families from experiencing a suicide loss. Our goal is to save lives and bring hope to those affected by suicide," said Lyndsey Nunes, Greater Springfield co-chair and AFSP Massachusetts Board Member.

The Greater Springfield Out of the Darkness Community Walk is one of the hundreds of events being held nationwide this year. Speakers at the Greater Springfield Out of the Darkness Walk will include local legislators and Western Mass community members who have been personally affected by suicide.

## Fire department celebrates new members



Left: Tiana Roy and Nolan Arbuckle were sworn in to the Agawam Fire Department last week. Above: The new recruits pose with other members of the department.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS

## Grange hosting Feline Friends fundraiser

AGAWAM – Feline Friends are happy to announce that the Community Grange #382 has invited us to participate at their Halloween bake sale and small tag sale on Saturday, Oct. 25 from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. The address is 47 North West Street in Feeding Hills. Their sale benefits Wreaths Across America.

We will have three raffle baskets. Winners to be drawn at 1 p.m. We will be selling beautiful and fragrant catnip mats for \$10 or 2 for \$18 as well as catnip toys for \$3 or 2 for \$5. All donations are welcome.

We are incredibly grateful for the response to our appeal for help with supplies. We have received packages at the dental office at 532 Springfield St. (at the corner of Cleveland St.) in Feeding Hills and at the Agawam Public Library. Financial donations have arrived by check

at P.O. Box 174, Feeding Hills 01030 as well as PayPal: @FelineFriendsRaffle. Venmo: @FelineFriends. Please include name/ contact information with donations if you would like an acknowledgement. Venmo donations do not provide addresses or email information.

We are grateful for every single donation. Local pickup is available by calling 786-5019

Feline Friends Inc. is a community-based, nonprofit 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](http://felinefriendsinc.org) or our Facebook page at Feline Friends Cat Sanctuary. Contact us with questions at [info@felinefriendsinc.org](mailto:info@felinefriendsinc.org) or by phone at 413-786-5019.

## NAMI Western Mass. offering family education

HOLYOKE – NAMI Western Massachusetts is pleased to offer their NAMI Family-to-Family Education Program in person, starting Saturday, Oct. 25 from 9 a.m. to 12 noon in Holyoke.

NAMI Family-to-Family is a free, 8-session educational program for family, significant others, and friends of people with mental health conditions. It is a designated evidenced-based program. This means that research shows that the program significantly improves the

ability of the people closest to a person with a mental health condition.

NAMI Family-to-Family is taught by NAMI-trained family members who have been there and includes presentations, discussions, and interactive exercises.

NAMI, is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental health conditions. NAMI-WM is an affiliate of

NAMI Massachusetts. NAMI Western Massachusetts and its dedicated volunteers, members, and leaders work tirelessly to raise awareness and provide essential education, advocacy, and support programs for people in our community living with mental health conditions and their loved ones.

Pre-registration is required.

For more information contact: Bonnie Pueschel at 413-426-7644 [BpishL21@gmail.com](mailto:BpishL21@gmail.com) or visit: [nami-wm.org/support](http://nami-wm.org/support).

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**SCHOOL** ■ from page 1

ly, instances of bullying do occur in Agawam Public Schools. The district must continue to support students through social and emotional programs that strengthen their connection to school. These programs should be expanded to make social inclusion a top priority, ensuring that every student feels a strong sense of belonging within their school community. The administration and we as a parents have a responsibility to provide a safe and supportive environment for all students, both in the classroom and during school activities. Bullying should never be tolerated, and there must be serious consequences, up to and including expulsion, depending on the severity of the incident.

**Program/Class:** Social skills are essential for becoming a successful adult. However, in today's world of cell phones and constant technology use, these skills are becoming less common among students. Although social development is touched upon in many classes and parts of the curriculum, schools should offer dedicated courses that focus specifically on building this critical life skill.

**MCAS Replacement:** Most people recognize that standardized tests are often inaccurate and ineffective at measuring what students truly know. These tests are commonly known as "one size fits all" failing to account for individual differences in learning styles, backgrounds, and experiences. A strong alternative to standardized testing would be performance based assessments, which allow students with different learning styles and strengths to demonstrate what they've learned in more authentic and meaningful ways.

**Wendy Rua**

Wendy Rua

Years on committee: 14

**Priorities:** Agawam is a diverse and wonderful community with extraordinary teachers. Thank you to the community for supporting the high school build! Our biggest priority is not a new building, but should be to focus on attendance and outreach—getting our kids to school and ensuring that everyone feels that they are welcomed and that they belong. I'd like to see us expand project-based learning, career pathways, and cross-disciplinary experiences. Agawam can create classrooms that inspire curiosity and ensure every graduate is ready to thrive in the 21st-century global community.

**Bullying:** Bullying is real; no community is immune.

Bullying isn't always big or visible. It's often exclusion, rumors, social snubs, or online messages. The first step is to listen. Safe, anonymous ways to report, active peer mentorship programs, prompt responses and follow-through from administrators when reports of bullying are made will all help our students feel safer. We have amazing counseling staff and social emotional supports available, but we can always do better.

**Program/Class:** I think we can improve by offering practical courses on budgeting, civic engagement, and everyday problem-solving to prepare students with lifelong skills. I'd also like us to do more hands-on STEM projects that integrate art and design thinking. Lastly, introduce more early exposure programs—robotics, coding, healthcare, or technology to connect academics with real-world careers.

**MCAS Replacement:** I think we need to let the experts—the teachers—inform us as to what they need! Perhaps instead of one big standardized test, allowing the teachers to collaborate and offer projects to students that require applying content in real world contexts: e.g. designing solutions to local problems, science investigations, historical simulations, or multimedia presentations would provide assessment of critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. Reducing anxiety from one big test might provide a true profile of student abilities and allow our teachers to teach (not strictly to a test).

**Shelley Borgatti-Reed**

Shelley Borgatti-Reed

Years on committee: 16

**Priorities:** I think the next big priority is new roofs for our four elementary schools, as some date back to 1997. Agawam Public Schools receive a check for \$125,000 from the state to assist us in starting the process. Hopefully, with some additional funding, we can have them all replaced within the next few years.

**Bullying:** I believe our schools have a strong culture of respect and kindness. Our PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support) programs in the elementary schools have proven to be very successful. Bullying is not a widespread issue in our schools, thanks to clear anti-bullying policies and the dedication of our staff that works hard to ensure every student feels safe and supported.

**Program/Class:** In recent years, we have made personal finance a required course to ensure students gain essential life skills such as bud-

geting and understanding credit. In addition, we continue to offer a broad range of classes through the Lower Pioneer Valley Career and Technical Education Center. Looking ahead, I believe expanding Health and Wellness programs to include cooking basics, nutrition, stress management, effective communication, conflict resolution, relationship building, and self-advocacy would further prepare our students for success in life beyond the classroom.

**MCAS Replacement:** I do not believe in MCAS as a graduation requirement, as I don't think a single standardized test accurately reflects a student's abilities or potential and not all students test the same. However, I do believe there should be some form of local assessment that allows students to demonstrate their learning and readiness to graduate as I do think that accountability is important. This could include a portfolio review, project-based assessment, or other performance-based evaluations developed locally that better measure real-world skills and allows students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills to ensure they are ready for the future.

**AJ Christopher**

AJ Christopher

Years on committee: 4

**Priorities:** While the high school project is exciting, what matters is what happens inside our school buildings. Agawam is fortunate to have exceptional personnel guiding our students every day. We must continue to provide teachers with the resources and support needed to navigate today's complex school days. It was great to see the shift toward a more collaborative teacher-student approach that many principals discussed at the October 14 School Committee meeting. I look forward to the continued progress we make under the "Listening, Learning, Leading" model embraced by Agawam Public Schools.

**Bullying:** Yes, bullying remains a concern in all school districts, including Agawam. The administration has taken a proactive approach, shown by the rise in reports of discrimination and hate language—an indication that students feel more comfortable speaking up. Office staff must continue enforcing policies consistently and working with building staff to identify issues early. By maintaining strong relationships between students and staff, Agawam can ensure bullying is addressed promptly, fostering a safe and supportive environment where every student feels respected in a

safe learning environment.

**Program/Class:** I believe Agawam Public Schools offer an excellent selection of programs that meet the interests and goals of many of our students. Agawam continues to lead in student enrollment at the Lower Pioneer Valley Collaborative, providing valuable trade education and hands-on training opportunities. While the district continues to expand its career pathways, one program I would love to see added is a culinary program. Such a program would teach students not only how to cook, but also how to manage inventory, plan and maintain budgets, operate POS systems, and provide quality customer service in a sometimes stressful environment.

**MCAS Replacement:** I believe there should be an assessment system to replace MCAS—one that measures teaching and learning rather than test preparation. It's critical to develop evaluation tools that monitor students' academic progress throughout the year, instead of relying on a high pressure test focused on scores and rankings. This method would promote learning and ensure the focus remains on educating our students and not test results.

**Michael Perry**

Years on committee: 4

**Priorities:** Did not answer

**Bullying:** While I don't believe bullying is a prominent issue, I have been made aware of some incidents by other parents. Any acts of bullying or harassment should be taken seriously and I believe we should have a zero tolerance position on such behavior. Positive behaviors begin in the home and, as parents, we must talk to our kids about treating others with respect. As a district we must ensure all students are aware of policies prohibiting such behavior and be willing to enforce them. Promoting student leadership can help establish model behavior.

**Program/Class:** I am proud to have initiated the effort to require all high school graduates to complete a personal finance course as a graduation requirement. I believe the primary role of our public schools is to prepare every student for success after high school, which means providing life skills which can apply to all students regardless of their path in life. I would like to see more classes offered for personal financial management, home economics, civics, and other similar offerings which will provide students with transferable skills that can make them successful adults.

**MCAS Replacement:** Yes, I believe there must be a comprehensive assessment requirement. While I agree that MCAS testing was ineffective and flawed, it was the only standard by which we could evaluate student and teacher performance which was valuable to measure the progress of

academic success in Agawam and among similar districts. Standardized, one-size-fits-all testing from the state level is not appropriate for Agawam. I would like to see a more meaningful standard developed within our district, perhaps to include mid-term and finals testing as is common at the college level, so that we can measure effectiveness of our curriculum and practices.

**Catherine McDougal**

Years on committee: 2

**Priorities:** In terms of infrastructure, the most urgent need for our schools is new roofs for the 4 elementary schools. The current roofs are nearly 30 years old and well past their expected lifespan and the Mayor and City Council have already taken steps to address this pressing need. But schools are more than just buildings, they are also a lynchpin of the community, and we need to continue investing in programs that meet the needs of our community; including Special Education, Arts education, and Career and Technical education programs.

**Bullying:** Yes, I believe that bullying is a problem in our schools which must be addressed. APS has a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan in place, but our greatest asset to address bullying is the community. It's the parents, teachers, staff, and bus drivers who build relationships with our students so that they have a trusted adult they can tell if they are being bullied or see someone else being bullied, and the administrative team (building and district) who take the time to investigate reports of bullying, in all its forms, and follow up.

**Program/Class:** I would like to see American Sign Language (ASL) offered as a language. ASL is an essential skill for communicating with people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or non-verbal and it is a valuable skill in any job that involves working with the public. As the home of Anne Sullivan I think it makes sense for Agawam to be a champion for teaching ASL to anyone who wants to learn it.

**MCAS Replacement:** Let's be clear, the MCAS were only one part of the graduation requirements. Students still need to meet the graduation requirements set forth in the 2025-2026 APS 9-12 Code of Conduct. In addition, in May 2025 the State required districts to establish a Competency Determination to ensure all students have mastered the areas assessed by the MCAS. The removal of the MCAS graduation requirement allows students to demonstrate their mastery over the course of the year, rather than relying on a single high stakes test. I think this requirement is fair and appropriate.

**Dawn DeMatteo**

Years on committee: 6

**Priorities:** With the high school project underway, our

next priority should be district-wide academic recovery and advancement, particularly in elementary and middle schools. We must continue investing in literacy and math interventions, expand social-emotional supports, and ensure classrooms are fully staffed. Strengthening CTE pathways earlier will help students make informed choices before high school. While infrastructure matters, it's equally essential to focus on curriculum, staffing, and student support moving forward.

**Bullying:** The word "bullying" is a very strong term and should be used carefully. While unkind behavior or conflicts can occur in Agawam Public Schools, not all incidents meet the true definition of bullying. Many are misunderstandings or poor choices that can be corrected through guidance and education. Our staff continues to be trained to recognize when behavior crosses the line into bullying and to respond consistently and appropriately. The administration should keep promoting a positive school climate built on respect, empathy, and communication so that early intervention and education help prevent serious issues from developing.

**Program/Class:** Agawam High School offers a strong Life Skills and Financial Literacy course, but it should begin earlier, ideally in middle school. Introducing these skills sooner would help students build a foundation in money management, decision-making, communication, and everyday responsibilities. Early exposure encourages confidence and responsibility while better preparing students for high school and life beyond graduation. Starting this program earlier would ensure all students leave Agawam Public Schools with the practical skills needed for success in college, careers, and adulthood.

**MCAS Replacement:** I don't believe the state or local committee should immediately replace the MCAS with another high-stakes test. While accountability and measuring learning are important, a single standardized exam doesn't fully reflect a student's growth or potential. Instead, schools could use a portfolio-based assessment that allows students to demonstrate mastery through research, presentations, or real-world problem solving. This approach encourages critical thinking, creativity, and applied learning rather than memorization. By evaluating students through multiple measures, we can more



Dawn DeMatteo

accurately assess readiness for graduation while promoting meaningful learning experiences.

# Westfield Owls suffer defeat against Framingham State

WESTFIELD – Framingham State QB Michael Marcucella completed 12-of-19 passes for 187 yards with three touchdowns to lead the Rams to a 35-24 win over Westfield State in the Rams' homecoming game at Bowditch Field in Framingham on Saturday afternoon.

Westfield was led by a pair of touchdown runs by Aidan Patterson.

Framingham improves to 5-1 overall and sits atop the

MASCAC with a 5-0 record in league play. Westfield is now 2-4 overall and 2-3 in the conference.

The Rams jumped out to a 14-0 lead on a pair of 18-yard TD passes, before Patterson got the Owls on the board with a 29-yard touchdown run, but the Owls try for the point after failed, trimming the lead to 14-6.

Framingham led 21-6 at the half, and extended that lead to 28-6 on a 64-yard TD

pass from Marcucella to Stephen Gallant early in the third quarter. Westfield answered with Patterson's second TD run of the day, a 3-yarder that capped an 11-play, 77 yard scoring drive with 7:21 left in the third quarter, cutting the Framingham lead to 28-12.

The Rams marched down the field on their next series, getting a 29-yard scoring strike from Marcucella to Alex Maia to push the lead to 35-12 with 3:35 left in the

third.

A pair of odd sequences led to Westfield scoring on back-to-back safeties in the fourth quarter, pinning the Rams in their own defensive end before a bad snap led to a safety on fourth down, then the Owls drove the ball all the way to the Framingham one-yard line before a fumble on fourth down cost Westfield a touchdown, but the Owls got two points back on the second safety of the sequence,

cutting the lead to 35-16.

Westfield mustered one more drive, with Will Brewster scoring on a 19 yard run, and Patterson converting the 2-point run to trim the final score to 35-24.

Jaheim Daniels finished with 102 yards rushing and a TD for the Rams. Manny Mengata led Westfield with 48 yards on 17 carries, with Curtis Dion adding 46 yards and Patterson 43 on the ground and 33 more on three

receptions. Owls QB Miles Foerster was 11-20 for 110 yards passing.

Andrew Lovell led the Owls defense with six tackles and a sack, with Dylan Zuerblis adding five stops with a sack.

The Owls come home next weekend to host Westfield State homecoming, with the Owls kicking off with Plymouth State at 2 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 25.

**T-BIRDS** ■ from page 8

slaughter, Otto Stenberg alertly spotted Matt Luff coming off the T-Birds' bench, and the veteran winger roofed a breakaway snapper over Stevenson's glove to make it a 3-0 score at 11:45.

Dalibor Dvorsky joined the scoring party next at 14:11, as the 20-year-old got a fortunate bounce to cash in his first of the season. He was hoping to slip a pass to his left side, but the puck ricocheted right back onto his

stick in the low slot, giving Stevenson no chance to defend it. Alexandrov picked up his second assist on the tally.

Hershey finally broke the four-goal blitz at 15:24 as Henrik Rybinski crashed the blue paint to chip a loose

puck over Zherenko for his second goal in as many nights, cutting the margin to 4-1.

Still, the T-Birds offense was not finished, and with a power play in the closing minute, Theo Lindstein ri-

fled home his first goal in the AHL with just 23 seconds left in the frame to make it a 5-1 score. Luff picked up his second point and Alexandrov garnered his third assist on the rookie's first North American tally.

Zherenko had a sizable lead, but the fourth-year pro slammed the door shut in the third, as Hershey failed to pierce the netminder on 14 third-period offerings. Zherenko has now stopped 47 of the last 49 shots he has faced.

## Elks Lodge hosting Hoop Shoot Free Throw contest Nov. 8

HOLYOKE - The Holyoke Lodge of Elks #902 proudly announces its annual Elks Hoop Shoot Free Throw Contest, to be held on Saturday, Nov. 8, at the Holyoke Boys and Girls Club.

Registration begins at 9 a.m., and the contest starts promptly at 9:30 a.m.

This event is free of charge and open to all boys and girls ages 8 through 13 as of April 1, 2026. Contestants will compete within their age and gender divisions.

Winners from the local contest will advance to the district competition, with the opportunity to continue on to the state, regional, and national levels. Na-

tional champions will have their names permanently inscribed on a plaque at the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Massachusetts — an honor that celebrates their dedication and achievement.

The Elks Hoop Shoot is a proud tradition that encourages youth to develop character, sportsmanship, and perseverance — one free throw at a time.

Don't miss this exciting opportunity to test your skills, have fun, and represent your community.

For more information, please contact Sal Canata at (413) 883-1561.

## Hibernian Clothing and Food Drive for Providence Ministries

HOLYOKE - The Ancient Order of Hibernians of Hampden/Hampshire Counties along with the Polish National Credit Union Announce the Annual Clothing and Food Drive for Providence Ministries from September to Dec. 1.

Please drop off gently used clothing, blankets, sleeping bags, and/or non-perishable

food items to the Polish National Credit Union 270 Westfield Rd. Holyoke. Make a donation and be entered to win a raffle basket.

Please help those who are experiencing food insecurity and assist Providence Ministries as they continue to transform lives through their life-changing programs.

## Holy Eucharist at St. David's to be held at Oct. 26

The Rt. Rev. Douglas J. Fisher, Bishop of Western Massachusetts, will join the people of St. David's Episcopal Church, 699 Springfield Street, Feeding Hills, MA for Holy Eucharist on Sunday, October 26 at 10 am. Bishop Fisher visits all the 50+ congregations in the diocese every two years. This will be his last visit to Agawam in ad-

vance of his retirement, which begins on April 25, 2026. The Rev. Dr. Harvey Hill, rector since 2011, will welcome the Bishop to this growing community of faith. Bishop Fisher will preach, preside, confirm several members and baptize one adult during the Sunday service. The Rev. Terry Hurlbut, Deacon, will proclaim the Gospel and assist the

Bishop at the altar. Following the service on Sunday, the Bishop will enjoy Coffee Hour. He will meet with the vestry afterwards. This is the governing body of the congregation elected by the members. St. David's is celebrating its centennial — one hundred years of worship in Agawam. Of the many ministries this congregation supports, the

labyrinth on the property is place of prayer and solitude. A monthly meal for veterans is sponsored by the Agawam Lions Club and Building Bridges Veterans Ministry. Veterans and their families are invited every First Tuesday of the month from 12p - 1pm. The 10 am Sunday service is broadcast by Agawam Media, Channel 1074

## Wreaths Across America holding event at Veterans Cemetery

AGAWAM - On Saturday, Dec. 13 at 10 a.m., the Friends of the Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Agawam will join Wreaths Across America in our annual mission to Remember, Honor, and Teach.

Together, we will lay Remembrance wreaths on the graves of our nation's heroes at the Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemetery, located at 1390 Main Street, Agawam, MA.

Parking and Shuttle Information:

Parking will be available at Six Flags New England, with shuttles running to the cemetery beginning at 8 a.m. Please plan to arrive early to allow for shuttle

transport and seating before the ceremony begins.

The Friends of the Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Agawam is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to honoring those who have served, comforting their families, and enhancing the beauty and dignity of this eternal resting place.

By sponsoring a wreath through the Friends, you help ensure that every veteran resting at the cemetery is remembered with a wreath of honor and gratitude.

For more information or to sponsor a wreath, please visit our website at agawamfriends.org or email us at wreathfriends@gmail.com.

## RMV announces driver's ed returns to in person format

BOSTON - The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles announced that, starting Monday, Sept. 22, all classroom instruction provided by professional driving schools will transition back to an in-person format.

The RMV has been in communication with driving schools, customers and other stakeholders, explaining how this change will result in enhanced student engagement, stronger learning outcomes, equal opportunities for all schools and improved road safety.

The option of remote (virtual) classes was introduced as an accommoda-

tion during the pandemic. Effective Sept. 22, a live instructor will be required to teach all classes including the parent class. There will be a maximum of 30 students per class for a student/teacher ratio of 30:1. Research supports that in-person learning fosters better focus, higher engagement and more effective preparation for safe driving.

For information, people may visit <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/drivers-education-programs>. For the latest RMV updates and information, people may follow the RMV at MassRMV on X, formerly Twitter.

## Public Notices

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.  
HD25P2023EA  
Estate of:

Richard Thomas Gawron, Jr.  
Also known as:  
Richard T Gawron,  
Richard T Gawron, Jr.  
Date of Death: 07/19/2025  
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 **Maryann Gawron of Feeding Hills, 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: **Maryann Gawron of Feeding Hills, 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 10/29/2025**. 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: October 01, 2025  
Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate  
10/23/2025

Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
The Trial Court  
Probate and Family Court  
Hampden Probate and Family Court  
50 State Street  
Springfield, MA 01103  
Docket No.  
HD25P2079GD  
In the interests of Hassan Imad of Agawam, MA  
Minor

NOTICE AND ORDER: Petition for Appointment of Guardian of a Minor  
NOTICE TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES

1. **Hearing Date/Time:** A hearing on a Petition for Appointment of Guardian of a Minor filed on 10/08/2025 by **Judd Jackson** of Agawam, MA will be held **11/06/2025 08:30 AM Guardianship of Minor Hearing**. Located: **50 State St, 4th Floor, Springfield, MA 01103**.

2. **Response to Petition:** You may respond by filing a written response to the Petition or by

appearing in person at the hearing. If you choose to file a written response, you need to:

File the original with the Court; and

Mail a copy to all interested parties at least five (5) business days before the hearing.

3. **Counsel for the Minor:** The minor (or an adult on behalf of the minor) has the right to request that counsel be appointed for the minor.

4. **Counsel for Parents:** If you are a parent of the minor child who is the subject of this proceeding you have a right to be represented by an attorney. If you want an attorney and cannot afford to pay for one and if you give proof that you are indigent, an attorney will be assigned to you. Your request for an attorney should be made immediately by filling out the Application of Appointment of Counsel form. Submit the application form in person or by mail at the court location where your case is going to be heard.

5. **Presence of the Minor at Hearing:** A minor over age 14 has the right to be present at any hearing, unless the Court finds that it is not in the minor's best interests.

Date: October 08, 2025  
Rosemary A. Saccomani Register of Probate  
10/23/2025

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.  
HD25P2149EA  
Estate of:  
Loretta Marie Partner  
Also known as:  
Loretta Petersen  
Date of Death: 09/13/2025  
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION

To all interested persons:  
A Petition for **Formal Adjudication of Intestacy and Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Kenneth J Petersen of Latham, NY** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that: **Kenneth J Petersen of Latham, NY** 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 11/14/2025**. 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: October 16, 2025  
Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate  
10/23/2025

Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
The Trial Court  
Probate and Family Court  
Hampden Division  
Docket No.  
HD25P2096EA  
Estate of:  
Mary Hoai Vu  
Also Known As:  
Hoai Khanh Vu  
Date of Death: 12/25/2024  
INFORMAL PROBATE PUBLICATION NOTICE

To all persons interested in the above captioned estate, by Petition of Petitioner **Thuy T. Nguyen of Agawam, MA**

a Will has been admitted to informal probate.

**Thuy T. Nguyen of Agawam, MA** has been informally appointed as the Personal Representative of the estate to serve **without surety** on the bond.

The estate is being administered under informal procedure by the Personal Representative under the Massachusetts Uniform Probate Code without supervision by the Court. Inventory and accounts are not required to be filed with the Court, but interested parties are entitled to notice regarding the administration from the Personal Representative and can petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including distribution of assets and expenses of administration. Interested parties are entitled to petition the Court to institute formal proceedings and to obtain orders terminating or restricting the powers of Personal Representatives appointed under informal procedure. A copy of the Petition and Will, if any, can be obtained from the Petitioner.  
10/23/2025

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
WILLIAM FRANCIS GALVIN  
SECRETARY OF THE COMMONWEALTH  
WARRANT FOR 2025 GENERAL ELECTION SS.

To the Constables of the City/Town of Agawam

### GREETINGS:

In the name of the Commonwealth, you are hereby required to notify and warn the inhabitants of said city or town who are qualified to vote in the General Election to vote at:

**Precinct 1:** William P. Sapelli School, 65 Begley Street

**Precinct 2:** Clifford M. Granger School, 31 South Westfield Street

**Precinct 3:** Agawam High School, 760 Cooper Street

**Precinct 4:** Roberta G. Doering School, 68 Main Street

**Precinct 5:** Benjamin J. Phelps School, 689 Main Street

**Precinct 6:** James Clark School, 65 Oxford Street

**Precinct 7:** Agawam Junior High School, 1305 Springfield Street

**Precinct 8:** James Clark School, 65 Oxford Street

On **TUESDAY, THE FOURTH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2025**, from 8:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. for the following purpose:

To cast their votes in the General Election for the candidates for the following offices:

MAYOR  
CITY COUNCIL  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Hereof fail not and make return of this warrant with your doings thereon at the time and place of said voting.

Given under our hand this 20th day of October 2025.

Vincent F. Gioscia, City Clerk  
10/23/2025

## 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](mailto:obits@turley.com).

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

## PUBLIC NOTICES ARE NOW ONLINE

- 1 Email all notices to [notices@turley.com](mailto: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 Mondays at noon, Fridays noon for Monday holidays.

visit [www.publicnotices.turley.com](http://www.publicnotices.turley.com)

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**FITNESS** ■ from page 2

of five women-only fitness clubs, but the couple knew they wanted to come back home. Paula shared she was homesick and missed her family.

Paula began, "When the time was right, we moved back to this area, and we knew really the whole two years we were in Kentucky; we knew our goal was to open our own business someday. We were fortunate and had the opportunity to learn from somebody else, see the ins-and-outs and pros-and-cons, so we used that experience when we came back to Western Massachusetts," said Paula.

While searching for the right building to hold the fitness center, Paula shared that the building they are in currently was a racquetball club with ten courts, a fitness center, aerobic studio, and half a basketball court.

"The folks that built it and were running it wanted to let that aspect of their life go and focus on their other careers, they were amazing and really wanted someone to take it over and they sold us the business. They continued to own the building for 15 years and in 2000, we bought the building," said Paula.

Kurt added, "We came into this business with Partners Steve and Barbara Black, they owned Stark Physical

Therapy. Stark Physical Therapy has always been part of our family and plan for 40 years; they brought in their own physical therapy business along with us and then we bought them out in 1995. In 1988, we put on a big edition, the pool and the physical therapy; we didn't open with that part of it," said Kurt.

Paula continued, "Adding the pool was probably one of the best decisions we made because it opened up so many more opportunities and the pool has been such a large benefit for our membership base, as well for the community at large," said Paula.

Reflecting on the past 40 years, Kurt shared the first few years were risky and stressful, but once the pool was installed, he felt the business became easier. Paula explained that her and Kurt felt they could do this since day one, "We were optimistic and confident, we really thought there was a need for wellness and fitness, a chance to enhance people's lives. We were so excited about the opportunity and very hands-on. I taught a lot of classes each week and Kurt has taught spinning for years. We were really engaged with our members. We really believed that it could be successful," said Paula.

Brandon explained with his point of view, "I've talked to both of them about the

history and about what they wanted and the reasons for everything, and when talking with them, they had such a good foundation and took so many of those lessons from their past work that they had the knowledge base coming into it," said Brandon.

Paula continued, "There was so much opportunity for us to introduce new equipment, new programs, new classes, we've had great experiences in so many different areas like having new workshops. What was really important in the early years is that we really learned from other knowledgeable people. Our focus has always been family; it was around 38 years ago that we decided our niche would be family. We really try to structure everything we do around those values, we look at our staff and members as family," said Paula.

All the instructors are certified specifically for the program they teach, "We really care that we have only professionals working and teaching for us. We have all kinds of court sports available and hold Zumba classes every night, which is very popular. The vision for the future is



Co-owner Kurt Welker shared his favorite aspect of the center was the spinning room that he loves to instruct spinning classes in.

to keep it alive, to keep the community involved in wellness and fitness. In terms of growth, always being willing to grow, being able to embrace new programs and

challenge yourself and research to find out what's out there and what's new. The vision is to continue to thrive," ended Paula.

Fitness First Health & Fit-

ness Center is located at 60 N Westfield St., Feeding Hills, MA. For further information, visit [fitnessfirsthealthclub.com](http://fitnessfirsthealthclub.com)



From heavy weights to multiple bars to do a variety of workouts, Fitness First has the space to attract any person looking to join a fitness center.

**Celebrating Family Values!**  
And Our Lowest Prices Of The Year!

Available 2 Weeks Only!  
**\$49** Reg. \$198  
Enrollment Fee Oct. 12 - Oct. 25 Only!

This month join us in celebrating seven years of providing quality fitness programs to people of all ages! Find out what makes Fitness First so different from other clubs. Take advantage of our guaranteed lowest advertised prices of the year!

30 Day Money Back Guarantee.

Singles \$49 (Reg. \$198)  
Couples \$98 (Reg. \$298)  
Families \$147 (Reg. \$348)

Hurry Offer Expires On Sunday, Oct. 25th!

**FITNESS FIRST**  
RACQUET & FITNESS CENTER  
60 North Westfield Street  
Feeding Hills, MA 01030  
(413) 786-1460

This advertisement was printed in the year 1992 and had members' kids featured in the photographs.

Group Exercise at Fitness First will leave you breathless!

Family Fit

**FITNESS runs in the family!**  
START A NEW FAMILY TRADITION

CELEBRATE FAMILY FITNESS MONTH!

Commit To Get Fit!  
For Only \$49! (Reg. \$122)

Save 50% On New Lower Enrollment Fee

Co-owner Paula Welker shared previous Agawam Advertiser News articles that featured past advertisements with real-life members that still attend the gym to this day.

TOWN HALL NEWS • BUSINESS HAPPENINGS • AREA EVENTS • SPORTS  
COMMUNITY STORIES • SCHOOL COVERAGE • CLASSIFIEDS & MORE!

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**2**

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THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER!

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I want to subscribe to **Agawam Advertiser News**

Enclosed is my payment for:

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- \$40 ..... 1 year out of state
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CHECK ENCLOSED  CHARGE MY CREDIT CARD

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Please complete this form, and mail it in a secure envelope to:

Agawam Advertiser News  
24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069

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